

Virginia City Territorial Enterprise
December 30, 1863

A Gorgeous Swindle

Dr. May, of the International Hotel, has put into our hands the following documents, which will afford an idea of how infinitely mean some people can become when they get a chance. This firm of Read & Co., Bankers, 42 South Third Street, Philadelphia, will do to travel—but not in Washoe, if we understand the peculiar notions of this people. The accompanying letter, circular, and certificate of stock were sent by Read & Co. to Dr. May's nephew, Theodore E. Clapp, Esq., Postmaster at White Pigeon, Michigan.

Through the Doctor, Mr. Clapp had learned a good deal about Washoe, and saw at a glance, of course, that a swindle was on foot which would not only cheat multitudes of the poorest classes of men in the States, but would go far toward destroying confidence in our mines and our citizens if permitted to succeed. He lost no time, therefore, in forwarding the villainous papers to Dr. May, and we are sure the people of the territory are right heartily thankful to him for doing so.

The certificate of stock is a curiosity in the way of unblushing rascality. It does not state how many shares there are in the company, or what a share is represented by. It is a comprehensive arrangement—the company propose to mine all over "Nevada Territory, adjoining California"! They are not partial to any particular mining district. They are going to "carry on" a general "gold and silver mining business"!—the untechnical, leather-headed thieves! The company is "TO BE" organized—at some indefinite period in the future probably in time for the resurrection. The company is "to be" incorporated "for the purpose of purchasing machinery"—they only organize a company in order to purchase machinery—the inference is, that they calculate to steal the mine. And only to think—a man has only got to peddle forty or fifty of these certificates of stock for Messrs. Read & Co. in order to become fearfully and wonderfully wealthy!—or, as they eloquently put it, "By taking hold now, and assisting to raise the capital stock of this company, you have it within your grasp to place yourself [in] a way to receive a large income annually without spending one cent!"

Oh, who wouldn't take hold now? Breathes there a man with soul so lead that he wouldn't take hold under such seductive circumstances? Scasely. Read & Co. want to get money—rather than miss, they will even grab at a paltry two-and-a-half piece thus: "You can send in \$2.50 at a time." Two and a half at a time, to buy shares in another Gould & Curry!

But the coolest, the soothingest, the most refreshingest paragraph (to speak strongly) is that one which is stuck in at the bottom of the circular, with an air about it which mutely says, "it's of no consequence, and scarcely worth mentioning, but then it will do to fill out the page with." The paragraph reads as follows: "N.B.—Subscribers can receive their dividends, as they fall due, at Messrs. Read & Co's Banking House, No. 42 South Third Street, Philadelphia, or have them forwarded by express, of which all will be regularly notified!"

We imagine we can see a denizen of some obscure western town walking with stately mien to the express office to get his regular monthly dividend; we imagine less fortunate people making way for him, and whispering together, "There goes old Thompson—owns ten shares in the People's Gold and Silver Mining Company—Lord! but he's rich!—he's going after his dividends now." And we imagine we see old Thompson and his regular dividends fail to connect. And finally, we imagine we see the envied Thompson jeered at by his same old neighbors as "the old fool who got taken in by the most palpable humbug of the century."

Who is "Wm. Heffly, Esq., of San Francisco," who knows it all, and who has calmly waited for three years without once swerving from his purpose of "starting a mining company" as soon as he could become satisfied that quartz-mining was a permanent thing? Cautious scoundrel! You couldn't fool him into going into a highway robbery like the "People's Gold and Silver Mining Company," until he was certain he could make the thing look plausible. But if he wrote those circulars and things, he was never a week in Washoe in his life, because we don't talk about "cap rock" in this country—that's a Pike's Peak phrase; and when we talk about "cap-rock," we never say it pays "\$24 to the ton," or any other price; we don't crush wall-rock, as a general thing. There is no "Washoe Mining District" in this Territory, and the President of the People's Company did a bully good thing when he "reserved the right to change the location" of operations whenever he pleased. Mr. Heffly's knowledge of the prices of leading stocks here borders on the marvelous. He says Gould & Curry is worth "\$5,000 per share." A "share" is three inches; but Gould & Curry don't sell at \$20,000 a foot; he puts Ophir at \$2,400 "per share"; now a "share" of Ophir is one inch. All the other prices mentioned by Mr. Heffly are wrong, and never were right at any time, perhaps.

In the items written by Mr. Heffly, and pretended to be clipped from the Bulletin and the Standard, he uses mining technicalities never uttered either by miners or newspaper men in this part of America. The only true statement in these documents is the one which reads—"Therefore, in subscribing to the capital stock of this company, you are acting on a certainty, and taking no risk whatever." That is eminently so. You are acting on a certainty of being swindled, and so far from there being any risk about that result, it is the deadest "open and shut" thing in the world.

Now this swindle ought to be well ventilated by the newspapers—not that sound business men will ever be swindled by it, but the unsuspecting multitude, who yearn to grow suddenly rich, will assuredly have their slender purses drained by it.