

PRICE ONE SHILLING

THE CELEBRATED  
JUMPING FROG.



BY MARK TWAIN.

LONDON:  
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS

# The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

## Introduction

### In A Nutshell

Written in 1865, this short story by [Mark Twain](#) was an overnight success and reprinted all over the country. In fact, this is the piece of writing that launched Mark Twain into fame ([read more](#)). "**The Celebrated Jumping Frog**" focuses on a narrator from the East suffering through a Western man's tall tale about a jumping frog. The story was made into an opera and performed at [Indiana University](#) in 1950. Today, the city of [Angel's Camp](#), California, the setting for this short story, calls itself the "Home of the Jumping Frog."

### Why Should I Care?

First things first, read this story out loud – we bet you won't be able to keep a straight face. Here's a good line. Try this one out:

*He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too.*

How can we *not* care about a frog that jumps really high except when he is force-fed lead shot? But really, this tale proves to us the power of storytelling, and that just about anything can be fascinating, if it is told well (and with an accent).

When [Mark Twain](#) headed out to Nevada in 1861, hoping to strike it rich in the silver boom, he began writing for a newspaper called the *Territorial Enterprise*. There, he and his buddies would *invent* news sometimes (for kicks) and would try to make the most ridiculous situations seem like the real deal to readers. They would have contests to see who could create the most absurd yet believable stories ([source](#)). Basically, they were like the writers of *The Onion*, inventing facts and threading them with currents of truth. Sounds like fun, huh?

Well, Mr. Twain was really good at it, as you can see from "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." He has an ability to make the laugh-o-meter explode.

# Summary

## **How It All Goes Down**

A man from the East comes to a western mining town. At the request of a friend, the narrator speaks with Simon Wheeler in order to ask after a man named Leonidas W. Smiley. Instead of giving the narrator the information that he asks for, Wheeler launches into a tall tale about a man named Jim Smiley.

The story goes something like this: Jim Smiley was a man who would bet on anything. He turned a frog into a pet and bet a stranger that his frog, Dan'l Webster, could jump higher than any other frog. While Smiley wasn't looking, the stranger filled Dan'l Webster with quail shot, and Smiley lost the bet. Before he could figure out what happened, the stranger disappeared with the \$40 he won by cheating.

Sick of the long-winded tale about Jim Smiley and his frog, the narrator tries to escape from Wheeler before he launches into another story. The narrator realizes that his friend probably intended for him to suffer through Wheeler's tedious tale.

**The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" Summary**

- The narrator of the story is asked by a friend to call on old Simon Wheeler and ask about his friend's friend, Leonidas W. Smiley. The narrator now suspects that his friend never knew anybody named Leonidas W. Smiley, and that this was the pretext to get Wheeler to tell him about another guy named Jim Smiley. It turns out that Wheeler is a boring man who talks ad nauseam.
- The narrator begins to narrate the story of his meeting with Wheeler.
- The narrator finds Simon Wheeler taking a nap in a bar at a mining town called [Angel's Camp](#). Wheeler is pudgy and bald and looks simple and gentle. So far, so good.
- The narrator tells Wheeler he's trying to find out some information about the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley who was once a resident at Angel's Camp.
- Simon Wheeler backs the narrator into a corner and traps him there. Throughout his tale, the narrator says, Simon maintained the utmost gravity, as if his story was the most important thing. Yet, the narrator says, it was an absurd story.
- Wheeler admits that he doesn't know a Leonidas Smiley, but one time there was a "feller" named Jim Smiley in '49 or maybe it was '50.
- Here begins Wheeler's story within the narrator's story.
- Jim Smiley is the sort of man who will bet on anything. If he suggests a bet and the person doesn't want to take it, he offers to bet on the other side. He just wants to bet,

that's all. But he's lucky and almost always wins the bet. He bets on dog fights or horse races or even on the minister, Parson Walker. One time, Parson Walker's wife was really sick, and Smiley bet that she wouldn't get well. Clearly the guy doesn't have the best social graces.

- Smiley had a mare that the boys liked to call the "fifteen-minute nag." She seemed really old and slow, and she had asthma. She'd get a head start, then amble along until the end of the race, when she'd suddenly start bolting ahead like crazy, wheezing, until she would win, but barely.
- He also had a small "bull pup" named Andrew Jackson that didn't look like it could do anything, but as soon as somebody bet on him, he'd manage to beat any better-looking dog in a fight. He had a trick of catching the other dog's back leg in his mouth with a tight grip until the fight was over, and he'd won. This worked until Andrew Jackson ended up in a fight with a dog that didn't have back legs. Not knowing what to do, he gave Smiley a look like his heart was broken, then crawled away and died.
- (It was too bad, Wheeler comments. A dog like that probably had some "genius" in him – he hadn't had opportunities in life, and here he managed to come out on top. He must've had talent.)
- So one day, Smiley catches a frog and takes it home, saying he plans to educate the animal. For then next three months, he does nothing but sit in his backyard and "teach" that frog to jump. He gets the frog to jump so well

that it looks like a doughnut whirling in the air – then the frog comes down "flat-footed" like a cat. Smiley teaches the frog to catch flies, to the point that the frog just needs to be able to see the fly and it's his.

- The frog's name? Dan'l Webster. The frog is "modest and straight-forward" despite his many gifts. When he's on level ground, he can jump higher than any frog you could ever see – that is his specialty, it's important to understand that.
- Smiley keeps Dan'l Webster in a box and every once in a while, he fetches the frog down for a bet.
- One day, a stranger in the camp asks what's in the box. Smiley grins and says it might be a parrot or a canary but actually, it's just a frog.
- The stranger eyes him and asks what the frog is good for.
- Smiley says he's good for one thing: he can outjump any frog in Calaveras County.
- That so, says the stranger. He looks at the frog, then says he doesn't see anything about the frog that makes him so special.
- Well, maybe you understand frogs and maybe you don't, says Smiley. But I'll bet forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras County.
- So the man thinks about it, then says that if he had a frog, he'd bet against Smiley.
- Smiley offers to go get him a frog. He gives the other man the box and goes to get a frog.

- The stranger sits there with the box and waits. Soon, he gets Dan'l out, opens the frog's mouth, and begins to fill him full of quail shot. Then he sets him on the floor. Smiley comes back from the swamp with a frog and gives him to the stranger.
- They set the frogs side by side, and Smiley says, "One two three jump!"
- The stranger's frog jumps. Dan'l tries to heave upwards but can't budge.
- Smiley is surprised, and a little "disgusted," but he gives the stranger his money.
- The stranger starts to leave and, just to rub it in, he repeats what he said earlier – that he doesn't see anything special about Dan'l that should distinguish him from any other frog.
- Smiley scratches his head and stares down at Dan'l. Finally, he wonders aloud what the matter is. He picks Dan'l up and exclaims that he weights five pounds! He turns Dan'l upside down, and Dan'l belches out the quail shot.
- Smiley gets mad as hell. He runs out to catch the stranger, but the stranger has already gotten away.
- Here Wheeler's story ends.
- Wheeler hears his name called from the front yard and goes to see what's up. He tells the narrator to sit and wait, he'll only be gone a moment.



- The narrator is pretty certain that he's not going to find out anything about the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, so he starts to leave.
- At the door, he meets Wheeler, who starts back up with his story, telling the narrator about Smiley's yellow one-eyed cow that didn't have a tail and—
- The narrator interrupts, saying, oh-so-good-naturedly, that he basically doesn't give a hoot about Jim Smiley or his cow.
- He says goodbye to Simon Wheeler and leaves.

# Themes

## **Theme of Cunning and Cleverness**

Though Jim Smiley appears to be extraordinarily lucky, it is partly through his cunning and cleverness that he is able to win bets. He is finally outsmarted by a stranger, who beats him through cheating. Nonetheless, the story poses a moral distinction between honest and dishonest cleverness. It also shows that you don't necessarily have to be educated and well spoken to be clever, nor is a good education a defense against getting fooled.

## **Questions About Cunning and Cleverness**

1. How does Smiley's cunning in choosing animals that don't look like they could compete compare to the cunning of the stranger in filling the frog with quail shot? Is there an ethical distinction between the two?
2. Who is more clever: the narrator or Simon Wheeler?

## **Chew on This**

Try on an opinion or two, start a debate, or play the devil's advocate.

Although Jim Smiley fools others with his animals, he is not lying to them or cheating them. Thus, he is clever but not deceitful.

Even though Simon Wheeler is uneducated and apparently

unsuccessful, he fools the slick "feller" from the East by making him listen to his absurd tales – the narrator is actually the biggest sucker in the story.

## **Theme of Competition**

Jim Smiley is an incorrigible gambler. Though he may like the money he wins, it is also clear that he just enjoys the thrill of competition. He frequently bets on the underdog or bets on really awkward and tactless things (such as whether the parson's wife will recover from her illness or not). He also cultivates animals – a horse, a dog, then a frog – that he can use in his various competitions.

## **Questions About Competition**

1. Is Jim Smiley's gambling method fair or unfair to his opponents?
2. Is there any kind of implied code in the story about how gamblers are supposed to deal with one another?
3. Why do you think Smiley is so trusting of the stranger, considering the general shadiness of his pastime?
4. Why is it more tempting to root for Smiley than for the stranger, even though the stranger is the underdog?

## **Chew on This**

Try on an opinion or two, start a debate, or play the devil's

advocate.

Although gambling is usually seen as an unwholesome pastime, Smiley adheres to a code of honor that elevates him above others in the story, including the narrator.

Although this story is full of themes about the differences between the West and the East, and about education, the main lesson is about the rules of fair play.

### **Theme of Lies and Deceit**

Smiley himself tends to be fairly honest, though it might be possible to argue that his animals allow him to practice deception, since each in turn looks like nothing special or even like it could never win. But that is not the same kind of deceit that the stranger uses when he fills Dan'l Webster with quail shot in order to win his bet. Smiley is righteously indignant, though he fails to capture the stranger and get his money back.

### **Questions About Lies and Deceit**

1. Is the narrator's attempt to sneak out of the bar to avoid Simon Wheeler a form of deceit, or is he just trying to keep from hurting Wheeler's feelings?
2. What kind of people does the story treat as more trustworthy: people who travel around the country or people who stay in one place?

### **Chew on This**

Try on an opinion or two, start a debate, or play the devil's advocate.

Though Jim Smiley is the protagonist and we like him, he is no different than the stranger who filled Dan'l Webster with quail shot. Like the stranger, Smiley deliberately deceives people in order to win at gambling.

Though Jim Smiley "deceives" people by betting on his animals that don't look like they can ever win, his deception is innocent in comparison to the stranger's. All gambling is an attempt to deceive, so Smiley's opponents should know what they are getting into.

### **Theme of Contrasting Regions**

Though the eastern and western United States aren't specifically contrasted in this short story, we do see a contrast between the educated, refined narrator from the East (who also happens to be "green") and the uneducated but slick characters who populate Angel's mining camp in the West. The characters in the West love a good tall tale, while the narrator appears to find it pointless and tedious, but maybe that's because he doesn't get it.

## **Questions About Contrasting Regions**

1. Compare and contrast the narrator (who is from the East) with the other characters – Simon Wheeler and Jim Smiley. What are the similarities and differences, and what do they have to do with regional distinctions?
2. Does the use of Andrew Jackson and Dan'l Webster as nicknames suggest a commentary upon the two regions and their characteristics? Why or why not?
3. Are the regional differences in the story presented as a caricature, or are they realistic?

## **Chew on This**

Try on an opinion or two, start a debate, or play the devil's advocate.

Although the narrator is more educated and apparently has more advantages than Simon Wheeler, the lesson of the tall tale shows us that even people who have been highly trained can be defeated when removed from their proper environment.

Although the story seems to poke fun at easterners, it actually makes no judgment on the question of East vs. West, as we can see from the fact that we are meant to root for the frog named after Daniel Webster, a famous senator from New England.

# Quotes

Find the perfect quote to float your boat. Shmoop breaks down key quotations from The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.

## **Cunning and Cleverness Quotes**

**How we cite our quotes: Citations follow this format: (Paragraph)**

### **Quote #1**

I have a lurking suspicion that Leonidas W. Smiley is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous Jim Smiley, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded. (Para 1)

The narrator realizes that his friend might have played a big joke on him. But it's something of a mystery why his friend would want to bore him with Wheeler's stories. Does the friend think that maybe the narrator, Mr. Fancy Eastern Narrator, has something to learn from Wheeler? Or is the friend just a jerk, which might cause us to wonder: why are they friends in the first place?

## Quote #2

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was any thing ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse. To me, the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling, was exquisitely absurd. (para 2).

Wheeler is surprisingly aggressive about holding his audience captive. He even goes so far as to "blockade" the narrator with his chair, which sounds like a military tactic. Though the narrator doesn't yet realize it, Wheeler is about to embark on a long yarn. His earnest expression belies his underlying cunning and cleverness, his ability to hold the narrator's attention throughout his absurd tale.



### **Quote #3**

"He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was his fault, for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take bolt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out." (para 6)

Smiley cultivates pets who, like him, love the thrill of beating the competition. His dog, Andrew Jackson, would fool people into thinking he wasn't going to win – until there was actual money on the table, and then he'd pull out his hind-legs trick and beat the other dog. Although Andrew is definitely a one-trick wonder, there's a certainly nobility in his cleverness and stubborn determination and refusal to give up until all hope is lost.

### **Quote #4**

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized

his mouth open and took a tea- spoon and filled him full of quail shot filled him pretty near up to his chin and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

"Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his fore- paws just even with Dan'l, and I'll give the word." Then he says, "One two three jump!" and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan'l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders so like a Frenchman, but it wan's no use he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course. (para. 17-18)

The stranger cheats and wins the bet. Smiley, ironically, is clueless – mostly because, although he fools others with his animals, he doesn't cheat. He's clever, but he isn't a liar. In a way, he's actually kind of innocent. The reason that he didn't suspect the stranger of trickery beforehand is that he has an

expectation that other people have a core decency that won't allow them to break the rules entirely.

#### **Quote #5**

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond Jim Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and so I started away. (para. 19-22)

The narrator realizes he's been tricked, just like Smiley. Although the narrator seems to have good manners and talks well, he's kind of sneaky and tactless when he tries to escape from the bar without Wheeler noticing him.

### **Competition Quotes**

**How we cite our quotes: Citations follow this format: (Paragraph)**

#### **Quote #1**

"...but any way, he was the curiosiest man about always betting on any thing that turned up you ever see, if he could get any body to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't, he'd change sides. [. . .] Why, it never made no difference to him he would bet on any thing the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn's going to save her;

but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better thank the Lord for his inftnit mercy and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Providence, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, "Well, I'll risk two- and-a-half that she don't, any way." (para 4)

Jim Smiley's main characteristic is his love of or addiction for betting. He likes the competition, even though he's good-natured about it. His honesty shows that even pastimes as shady as gambling have codes of honor attached to them. Unfortunately, he can also be quite tactless, like when he bets that the parson's wife will stay sick.

### **Quote #2**

Thish-yer Smiley had a mare the boys called her the fifteen- minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag-end of the race she'd get excited and desperate- like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around

limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down. (Para 5)

For Smiley, part of the fun in the competition is being able to trick others into believing that he's a fool to enter into the bet that he makes. He does this with his mare and, later, with his dog Andrew Jackson.

### **Quote #3**

"And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you'd think he wan's worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as money was up on him, he was a different dog; his underjaw'd begin to stick out like the fo'castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bully-rag him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson which was the name of the pup Andrew Jackson would never let on but what he was satisfied, and hadn't expected nothing else and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time,

till the money was all up; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest by the j'int of his hind leg and freeze on it not chew, you understand, but only jest grip and hang on till they thronged up the sponge, if it was a year." (para 6)

Smiley cultivates pets who, like him, love the thrill of beating the competition. His dog, Andrew Jackson, would fool people into thinking he wasn't going to win – until there was actual money on the table, and then he'd pull out his trick and beat the other dog. Andrew Jackson might not be "well-educated" because he can only do one thing, but he does that thing really, really well. At least until he meets a dog with no hind legs.

#### **Quote #4**

Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tom- cats, and all of them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut see him turn one

summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most any thing and I believe him. (para. 7)

Smiley begins to "educate" a frog in order to create his most competitive animal yet. "Dan'l Webster" is a fitting name, because the real Daniel Webster – a senator and presidential candidate – was an extraordinary educated man who was noted for his skills as a narrator.

#### **Quote #5**

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, "H'm so 'tis. Well, what's he good for?"

"Well," Smiley says, easy and careless, "He's good enough for one thing, I should judge he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county."

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no

p'int's about that frog that's any better'n any other frog." (para. 11-13)

Jim Smiley begins the competition that will be his undoing, though he doesn't yet know it. At this point, there is still no suggestion that the stranger might be a dishonest man. He's quite willing to play into Smiley's game by underestimating Dan'l's jumping abilities.

#### **Quote #6**

"Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his fore- paws just even with Dan'l, and I'll give the word." Then he says, "One two three jump!" and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan'l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders so like a Frenchman, but it wan's no use he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course. (para. 18)

Through cheating, the stranger wins the bet against the unsuspecting Smiley. For a gambler, Smiley seems pretty naïve and trusting. Then again, he's probably not a traveler



like the stranger is, so he doesn't necessarily know how things work in other parts of the country.

## **Lies and Deceit Quotes**

### **Quote #1**

Thish-yer Smiley had a mare the boys called her the fifteen- minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag-end of the race she'd get excited and desperate- like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down. (Para 5)

Part of the fun in the competition, perhaps, is Smiley's ability to fool others into believing that he's a fool to engage

in the bet that he makes. The animals he chooses to bet on don't ever look like much, but they usually pull through in the end. How does Smiley manage to find such extraordinary animals? Maybe this is part of the "tall tale" element of the story.

## **Quote #2**

"And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you'd think he was worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as money was up on him, he was a different dog; his underjaw'd begin to stick out like the fore-castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces." (para 6)

Andrew Jackson is the perfect dog for gambling: it's almost as if he's trained to know when money is on the table (and, in fact, he probably has been trained to do that). He also looks lazy and untrustworthy, when in fact he's a born fighter. Is this a form of deception on Smiley's part? Consider it this way: is there any kind of gambling that doesn't involve some difference between appearance and reality? They always tell you about all those people who win the lottery – but have you ever actually met a big lottery winner? Well, maybe you have, but we certainly haven't.

### Quote #3

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a tea-spoon and filled him full of quail shot filled him pretty near up to his chin and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

"Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his fore-paws just even with Dan'l, and I'll give the word." Then he says, "One two three jump!" and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan'l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders so like a Frenchman, but it wan's no use he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course. (para. 17-18)

No doubt about it: the stranger is a cheater and a liar. Just at the point when Smiley usually thinks he has the stranger fooled into underestimating his frog, the stranger plays a

much more deceptive trick by rigging the competition. The gambling may be silly and even destructive, but at least it's fair. Have you no honor, stranger?

#### **Quote #4**

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.] And turning to me as he moved away, he said: "Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy I an't going to be gone a second."

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond Jim Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and so I started away. (para. 21-22)

We don't know if the narrator is getting up to leave because he realizes his friend has fooled him or because he's just really bored. Maybe a bit of both. But while we're on the subject of deception, what's with our proper, gentlemanly narrator trying to slink out of the bar without being noticed. Wouldn't it be more polite to tell Wheeler he's taking off and maybe even thank him for the stories? We have to consider the possibility that the narrator is a trickster, too, albeit a cowardly one.

## **Contrasting Regions Quotes**

### **Quote #1**

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day. (Para 2)

The educated, well-healed easterner describes the simple, rustic westerner in our first subtle contrast between American regions. By taking note of Wheeler's "winning gentleness," is the narrator being a generous guy, or is he just being condescending?

### **Quote #2**

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness

and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was any thing ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse. To me, the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling, was exquisitely absurd. (para 2).

The narrator tries to demonstrate his superiority to Simon Wheeler through his description of the man. Though the narrator doesn't yet realize it, Wheeler is about to embark on a long yarn. His earnest expression belies his underlying cunning and cleverness, his ability to keep the narrator captive throughout his absurd tale. The joke, in other words, will be on the sophisticated easterner.

### **Quote #3**

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no p'int about that frog that's any better'n any other frog." (para. 13)

Though this quote doesn't specifically contrast the West with the East, the stranger is articulating the truth of democracy –

one frog is just as good as another. Western America is just as good as the East.

#### **Quote #4**

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.] And turning to me as he moved away, he said: "Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy I an't going to be gone a second." But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond Jim Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and so I started away. (para. 21-22)

Why does the narrator try to sneak out of the bar? In these kinds of situations, we're used to think of the sophisticated easterner as having all the knowledge and power in comparison to the provincial rube (Wheeler). But, actually, the narrator, who was recently "blockaded" into a corner, is pretty powerless. He realizes that now might be his only chance for escape. He can pretend to be all casual and proper about it, but he's really just desperate to get away from Wheeler.

# **The Characters**

## **Meet the Cast**

### **Jim Smiley**

#### **Character Analysis**

If you want to be fancy about it, you might say Jim Smiley is a man addicted to gambling. Or maybe he just likes to compete. Either way, he'll bet on just about anything, including the long shot and the underdog. And he seems to have a lot of luck. Usually, he wins. But more importantly, he has a knack for finding and cultivating animals that appear to be losers or nothing special but, in fact, have the gumption they need to win, often at the last minute.

Still, despite his proclivities towards fooling others, Smiley is a trusting ol' guy. This is because, though he fools others, he doesn't cheat them. He just takes advantage of the tendency for other people to underestimate things based on appearances. He leads people on by pretending to be indifferent about the bet, but he never deceives them outright. When he loses the bet on the frog, it's easy to feel sorry for him, because he's not a sore loser. When he finds out he's been cheated, his anger is completely understandable. When Simon Wheeler starts telling the story of the cow, we know there must be a whole boatload more stories about Smiley and his animals. Like the narrator, we're glad we don't have to hear them.



## **Jim Smiley Timeline and Summary**

- Smiley bets on everything, including whether the parson's wife will get well after being sick.
- He has an old mare that doesn't look like much but always manages to win on the home stretch of a race.
- He has a lazy dog he names Andrew Jackson. The dog wins fights by grabbing onto the other dog's back leg and holding on until the other dog quits. One day, he fights a dog that has no back legs. When he realizes he's lost, Andrew Jackson limps off and dies.
- Smiley catches a frog and starts to educate it. For three months, he does nothing but train it. When he knows he has a frog that can beat any other frog, he starts betting. He names the frog Dan'l Webster.
- Smiley bets a stranger that his frog can beat any other frog. The stranger takes the challenge, so Smiley goes off and catches a frog in the marsh for the stranger.
- When Dan'l Webster loses the jumping contest, Smiley is puzzled until he picks Dan'l up and the frog burps up some quail shot. Then he realizes he's been cheated.
- Smiley runs after the stranger but fails to catch him.
- Apparently, Smiley also had a yellow, one-eyed cow without a tail – but we never get to hear about that cow because the story ends.

## **The Stranger**

### **Character Analysis**

Though we know very little about the stranger, we do know that he isn't impressed by Dan'l Webster and keeps insisting that he looks like an ordinary frog to him. We also know that he really wants that forty bucks, so he cheats by filling Dan'l with quail shot so the frog can't jump. (When this story was written, forty bucks was a lot of money.) He also insists on rubbing it in that Dan'l isn't any better than other frogs, even though he knows it hasn't been a fair match. Lastly, we know that the stranger is that he isn't a local. Otherwise, Smiley would probably have known him, and he also wouldn't be able to get away from the camp after having cheated Smiley. We have to assume he was just passing through the camp, perhaps hoping he could turn a quick buck.

### **The Stranger Timeline and Summary**

- The stranger asks Smiley what he keeps in that box. Smiley tells him it's a frog.
- The stranger asks what the frog is good for, Smiley replies that it can outjump any frog in Calaveras County.
- The stranger says this frog doesn't look any better than another frog, and that he'd accept Smiley's bet if he had a frog. So Smiley goes off and gets him a frog, leaving Dan'l with the stranger.
- The stranger looks at Dan'l Webster for a minute, then fills him up with quail shot.

- Smiley and the stranger set the frogs beside each other and heave them off, but Dan'l Webster goes nowhere.
- The stranger collects his forty bucks from Smiley. As he leaves, he says he still doesn't see anything special about Dan'l Webster.

## **Simon Wheeler**

### **Character Analysis**

Though Simon Wheeler is bald and lazy, and seems simple, he may be cleverer than he looks. He's certainly very aggressive in getting the narrator to listen to him. He uses tactics that sound like military maneuvers, such as "blockading" the narrator with a chair so that he can't leave. But then there's the question of why he's so desperate to have someone listen to him. It has to get pretty lonely out there at the mining camp. Maybe he just wants to talk and doesn't have any shame about it. Whatever the reason is, he throws the narrator completely off guard. Oh, and he also talks real funny and ungrammatical-like.

### **Simon Wheeler Timeline and Summary**

- Wheeler is dozing at the tavern when the narrator arrives. He's described as pudgy and bald-headed, with an expression of simplicity and winning gentleness.
- When the narrator asks about the Reverend Leonidas W. Smiley, Wheeler backs the narrator into a corner and

launches into a monologue—not about the good Reverend but about Jim Smiley, a man who loved to gamble.

- Wheeler is interrupted and called away to the door. He tells the narrator to wait, and when he returns, he starts telling the narrator about Smiley's one-eyed yellow cow that lacked a tail. He doesn't get to finish his tall tale because the narrator rushes out so that he doesn't have to hear any more.

## **The Narrator**

### **Character Analysis**

The narrator is an educated man from the East who is traveling west. Along the way, he does a friend a favor by going to Angel's mining camp to ask about the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley. Instead of finding the information he is looking for, he is forced to endure Wheeler's long-winded tall tale about Jim Smiley, a man who loved gambling and who always won, at least until the day he was cheated. Though the narrator is good-natured about it, he escapes as soon as he can, thinking to himself that there wasn't much point listening to such a tedious story that has nothing to do with the Rev. Smiley. In fact, at the beginning of the story we learn that the narrator is suspicious of his friend. He thinks maybe his friend was playing a trick on him so that he would have to listen to Wheeler's endless stories. This, of course, raises some questions about our dear narrator's judgment. If he doesn't trust his friend, why are they friends? Is it just a good-natured trick,

like a prank? Also, the narrator doesn't seem to have a lot of patience or good manners – when Wheeler starts on his last story, the narrator gets frustrated and rushes out, rather than finding a way to exit politely.

### **The Narrator Timeline and Summary**

- The narrator tells us how he was asked by his friend to talk to a guy named Simon Wheeler about another guy named Leonidas Smiley. Having done so, he's now suspicious that the whole thing was a trick to get him to listen to Wheeler's boring stories.
- He starts his narration.
- The narrator enters a saloon in Angel's mining camp, looking for Simon Wheeler.
- He asks Simon Wheeler about the Rev. Leonidas Smiley and ends up listening to a long tale about Jim Smiley.
- When Wheeler is interrupted and the story ends, the narrator starts to sneak away.
- He meets Wheeler at the door, who starts into another yarn, even more unbelievable than the last. The narrator bursts out saying, essentially, that he couldn't care less about Smiley's cow. Then he wishes Wheeler good day and leaves.

## **Dan'l Webster**

### **Character Analysis**

Dan'l Webster is the frog that Smiley educates to jump higher, faster, and farther than any other frog. He beats all the competition until the day that the stranger fills him with quail shot, immobilizing him. Smiley picks him Dan'l, and he weighs about five pounds. Then he burps out some of the quail shot, which clues Smiley in to what just happened.

If you lived in the 19th century and read the name "Dan'l Webster," you would obviously think of the famous senator and Secretary of State, [Daniel Webster](#), a lawyer and orator who believed strongly in the cause of American nationalism. Though he tried running for the president of the United States, he lost – and tried again later in his life. As Secretary of State, he advocated for a strict enforcement of the [Fugitive Slave Act](#) in order to preserve the union. Though Webster's political history is interesting and can be linked thematically to the frog Dan'l Webster's short stint as a competitor, it isn't possible to draw exact parallels between the frog and the man.

### **Dan'l Webster Timeline and Summary**

- Smiley catches a frog, names it Dan'l Webster and spends three months training him.
- Dan'l learns to jump high and land like a cat.
- Smiley enters Dan'l into a contest, betting against a stranger that Dan'l can outjump any frog. Smiley leaves

Dan'l alone with the stranger, and the stranger fills him with quail shot.

- When the contest begins, Dan'l is unable to move.
- Smiley picks Dan'l up and he weighs about five pounds.
- Dan'l burps out some quail shot.

## **Andrew Jackson**

### **Character Analysis**

Andrew Jackson was the name of the dog that Jim Smiley had. To anyone but Smiley, it looked like Andrew wasn't worth much. However, it turned out he always won dog fights. Andrew Jackson won all his dog fights except for one. His technique was to grab onto the other dog's hind leg and then just hold on until the other dog gave up. He had persistence. But when he ended up fighting a dog that had no hind legs due to an accident, and he didn't know what to do, so he gave up. When the fight was over, he limped off and died.

His name, of course, reminds us of the [seventh American president](#) of the same name. Before becoming president, Jackson was a lawyer who practiced in the frontier (the "West"), a gambler, and an advocate of democracy for all the states. He had the reputation for being a scrappy populist, the kind of politician who fights for "the little guy."

# Analysis

## Literary Devices

### Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory

The names for the dog and the "educated" frog hint at some possible political undertones. The dog, who didn't look like much but was feisty when it came to fighting, was named for Andrew Jackson, a westerner and the [seventh president](#) of the United States. He was a [man of the people](#) and believed in democracy for all.

[Daniel Webster](#) was an attorney who became one of the leading American statesmen, serving as a senator and Secretary of State. He ran unsuccessfully for president three times and was known for being a very good narrator. In this short story, a common frog with no name beats the educated frog (Dan'l Webster). The moral of the tale could be that the uneducated, common frog was only able to beat the educated frog through cheating. Alternatively, given Webster's politics, it might be possible read more deeply into this and suggest that the tale is subversively arguing for equality for all Americans.

### [Setting](#)

**Where It All Goes Down**

**Angel's Camp, California, mid-19th century**



[Angel's Camp](#) is a gold mining community in the mid-19th century that the narrator claims to have visited to find Simon Wheeler. Like any mining town in the West, it was populated primarily by men, many of them looking for their fortune. As something of a frontier town, it would probably seem to be full of loud, uncouth, and uneducated people compared to the more genteel East.

### [Narrator Point of View](#)

**Who is the narrator, can she or he read minds, and, more importantly, can we trust her or him?**

#### **First Person**

Through a frame narrative, the narrator (clearly an educated man from the East) presents the story of Jim Smiley, told in Simon Wheeler's uneducated dialect. This is the main device that Twain uses to present the contrast between East and West: educated vs. uneducated, refined vs. coarse.

### [Genre](#)

#### **Anecdote, Tall Tale**

The frame story (the story of how the narrator ended up talking to Simon Wheeler) doesn't really have any point to it. It's just an anecdote, like some funny story you might tell your friends over lunch, but which doesn't really have a point to it. As for Wheeler's story about Smiley, it's a classic tall tale, with absurdity of characters (especially the animals) playing the major comic role.

Since tall tales traditionally have been more appreciated in the West, the setting is appropriate.

### Tone

**Take a story's temperature by studying its tone. Is it hopeful? Cynical? Snarky? Playful?**

**Disparaging, disbelieving**

Though the content suggests the opposite of the tone, the attitude of the narrator toward the subject matter is one of disbelief that his time has been wasted in such a way. He's annoyed that he has had to listen to such a stupid tale (about Dan'l Webster) from a man who seems to take it so seriously. His effort to reproduce Wheeler's ungrammatical dialect feels slightly mocking.

### Writing Style

**Clever and Colloquial**

This story is told with a frame narrative. The narrator uses educated diction, and explains how absurd Simon Wheeler is. Simon Wheeler narrates the inside story, and he uses an uneducated vernacular to tell his tall tales about Smiley and Dan'l Webster.

### What's Up With the Title?

The story was also published as "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" and "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog." All three are typical "tall tale" titles, suggesting nothing more than a myth about some amazing frog. The three titles fail to hint at the

political undertones in the story, which can be found in the name of the feisty dog Andrew Jackson and the amazing frog named Dan'l Webster, who was cheated from winning by a wily stranger who fills him with quail shot so that he can't move.

### What's Up With the Ending?

Though the narrator stops Wheeler from continuing his tall tale at the very end of the story, and assumes that his quest was fruitless, it's possible that he's just been had, as he suggests in the introduction. Perhaps his friend never intended for the narrator to learn about the Reverend Leonidas W. Smiley but, instead, to realize that as rusty and rough as these westerners are, they know and appreciate street smarts – and sometimes street smarts are more important than a fine education.

### Plot Analysis

**Most good stories start with a fundamental list of ingredients: the initial situation, conflict, complication, climax, suspense, denouement, and conclusion. Great writers sometimes shake up the recipe and add some spice.**

#### **Initial Situation**

**The narrator enters the tavern in Angel's mining camp.**

A friend has asked the narrator to find Simon Wheeler and to ask him about the Reverend Leonidas W. Smiley. Simon Wheeler doesn't remember a Reverend Smiley but he does start to tell a tale about Jim Smiley, a man who loved to make bets.

## **Conflict**

### **Smiley makes bets with an old horse and an old dog.**

We learn from the start that Smiley loves to gamble, but more important perhaps, he likes to bet on animals that don't seem like they have a good chance of winning. He has an old asthmatic mare that doesn't look like it can win horse races but always manages to come out on top in the last few seconds of the race. He also has a dog named Andrew Jackson that doesn't look like he can win a fight – and in fact loses fights until there is money on the table.

## **Complication**

### **Smiley starts to educate a frog so that it can beat other frogs at jumping.**

One day, Smiley starts educating a frog that he names Dan'l Webster. For three months, he does nothing but teach this frog how to jump higher and faster than any other frog. Then he puts the frog on the market, so to speak, and starts making bets.

## **Climax**

### **A stranger fills Smiley's frog with quail shot and the frog loses.**

One day, Smiley bets a stranger forty bucks that his frog can beat any other frog. The stranger says he doesn't see anything special about Dan'l Webster. The bet is on but while Smiley goes to get the stranger a frog, the stranger fills Dan'l with quail shot. When the two frogs try to jump, Dan'l can't even move. The stranger takes the money and leaves.

## **Suspense**

**Smiley goes after the stranger but the stranger has already skipped town.**

When Smiley discovers what the cheater has done, that is, when Dan'l Webster burps out quail shot, he starts out after him—but he's too late. The stranger has disappeared with Smiley's money.

## **Denouement**

**Wheeler is interrupted from his story-telling.**

When Wheeler is interrupted from finishing the story, he tells the narrator to wait. When he comes back, he tries to continue his tall tale but the narrator interrupts and says, not quite good-naturedly, that he needs to go.

## **Conclusion**

**The narrator leaves the saloon.**

The narrator leaves, thinking his quest was fruitless.

# Three Act Plot Analysis

**For a three-act plot analysis, put on your screenwriter's hat. Moviemakers know the formula well: at the end of Act One, the main character is drawn in completely to a conflict. During Act Two, she is farthest away from her goals. At the end of Act Three, the story is resolved.**

## **Act I**

The narrator enters a saloon and asks about the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley. Instead, old Simon Wheeler corners him with a tall tale about a man named Jim Smiley, who loved to gamble.

## **Act II**

Simon Wheeler tells us about Smiley's old mare, who never looked like she could win a race but always gathered enough stamina towards the end to beat her competition. Then he tells us about Smiley's old dog, Andrew Jackson, who also didn't look like much and wouldn't win unless there was money on the table. Then he'd beat the other dog easily. Then Wheeler tells us about Smiley's frog, Dan'l Webster, and how Smiley trained that frog for three months to jump faster and higher than any other frog you ever met.

## **Act III**

One day, Smiley bets a stranger that his frog Dan'l can beat any

other frog. The man agrees to the bet, muttering that there doesn't seem like anything special about Smiley's frog. While Smiley is out catching another frog, the stranger fills Dan'l with quail shot. Smiley loses the competition. He doesn't realize he's been cheated until the man has left and he picks Dan'l up. Wheeler is interrupted telling his story and walks away. When he returns, the narrator has had enough of the storytelling and escapes.

### Trivia

#### **Brain Snacks: Tasty Tidbits of Knowledge**

When [Mark Twain](#) first wrote "The Celebrated Jumping Frog," his life resembled the narrator's, which means the story could be autobiographical. Before he had fame and fortune as an author, Twain was interested in prospecting for gold and silver.

The short story was made into an opera. In the opera version, the stranger is chased by the townspeople, who catch him and relieve him of his "earnings." Then they celebrate the frog, Dan'l Webster, as the ongoing champion jumping frog.

### Steamiest Rating

This story is not about sex at all, not unless men betting each other over frogs and swindling each other in their bets is about sex.

### Allusion

When authors refer to other great works, people, and events, it's

usually not accidental. Put on your super-sleuth hat and figure out why.

### **Historical References**

Andrew Jackson, seventh president of the United States and the [first true populist](#) (non-aristocrat) to have that job (para. 6) Daniel Webster, a senator and Secretary of State, known for his extraordinary speaking skills (para.7-20)



# **The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County**

In compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler, and inquired after my friend's friend, Leonidas W. Smiley, as requested to do, and I hereunto append the result. I have a lurking suspicion that Leonidas W. Smiley is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous Jim Smiley, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded.

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day. I told him a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named Leonidas W. Smiley Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley a young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that, if Mr. Wheeler could tell me any thing

about this Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was any thing ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse. To me, the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling, was exquisitely absurd. As I said before, I asked him to tell me what he knew of Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and he replied as follows. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once:

There was a feller here once by the name of Jim Smiley, in the winter of '49 or may be it was the spring of '50 I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume wasn't finished when he first came to the camp; but any way, he was the curiosest man about always betting on any thing that turned up you ever see, if he could get any body to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't,

he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit him any way just so's he got a bet, he was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solittry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and - take any side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse-race, you'd find him flush, or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dog-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken-fight, he'd bet on it; why, if there was two birds setting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first; or if there was a camp-meeting, he would be there reg'lar, to bet on Parson Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter about here, and so he was, too, and a good man. If he even seen a straddle-bug start to go anywheres, he would bet you how long it would take him to get wherever he was going to, and if you took him up, he would foller that straddle-bug to Mexico but what he would find out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road. Lots of the boys here has seen that Smiley, and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference to him he would bet on any thing the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn's going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better thank the Lord for his inftnit mercy and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Providence, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, "Well, I'll risk two- and-a-half that she don't, any way."

Thish-yer Smiley had a mare the boys called her the fifteen-minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag-end of the race she'd get excited and desperate- like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down.

And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you'd think he wan's worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as money was up on him, he was a different dog; his underjaw'd begin to stick out like the fo'castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bully- rag him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson which was the name of the pup Andrew Jackson would never let on but what he was satisfied, and hadn't expected nothing else and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog

jest by the j'int of his hind leg and freeze on it not chew, you understand, but only jest grip and hang on till they thronged up the sponge, if it was a year. Smiley always come out winner on that pup, till he harnessed a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off by a circular saw, and when the thing had gone along far enough, and the money was all up, and he come to make a snatch for his pet bolt, he saw in a minute how he'd been imposed on, and how the other dog had him in the door, so to speak, and he 'peered surprised, and then he looked sorter discouraged-like, and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out bad. He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was his fault, for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take bolt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out.

Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tom-cats, and all of them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he

52

cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most any thing and I believe him.

Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog and sing out, "Flies, Dan'l, flies!" and quicker'n you could wink, he'd spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightforward as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had traveled and been everywheres, all said he laid over any frog that ever they see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller a stranger in the camp, he was come across him with his box, and says:

“What might it be that you’ve got in the box?”

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, “It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, may be, but it an’t it’s only just a frog.” And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, “H’m so ’tis. Well, what’s he good for?”

“Well,” Smiley says, easy and careless, “He’s good enough for one thing, I should judge he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county.”

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, “Well, I don’t see no p’int about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

“May be you don’t,” Smiley says. “May be you understand frogs, and may be you don’t understand ’em; may be you’ve had experience, and may be you an’t only a amature, as it were.

Anyways, I’ve got my opinion, and I’ll risk forty dollars that he

can outjump any frog in Calaveras county.”

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, “Well, I’m only a stranger here, and I an’t got no frog; but if I had a frog, I’d bet you.”

And then Smiley says, “That’s all right that’s all right if you’ll hold my box a minute, I’ll go and get you a frog.” And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley’s, and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a tea- spoon and filled him full of quail shot filled him pretty near up to his chin and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

“Now, if you’re ready, set him alongside of Dan’l, with his fore-paws just even with Dan’l, and I’ll give the word.” Then he says, “One two three jump!” and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan’l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders so like a Frenchman, but it wan’s no use he couldn’t budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn’t no more stir than if he was anchored out.



Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders this way at Dan'l, and says again, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no p'int about that frog that's any better'n any other frog."

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan'l a long time, and at last he says, "I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw'd off for I wonder if there an't something the matter with him he 'pears to look mighty baggy, somehow." And he ketchd Dan'l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, "Why, blame my cats, if he don't weigh five pound!" and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketchd him. And-

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.] And turning to me as he moved away, he said: "Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy I an't going to be gone a second."

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond Jim Smiley would be likely to

56

afford me much information concerning the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he button-holed me and recommenced:

“Well, thish-yer Smiley had a yellor one-eyed cow that didn’t have no tail, only jest a short stump like a bannanner, and ”

“Oh! hang Smiley and his afflicted cow!” I muttered, good-naturedly, and bidding the old gentleman good-day, I departed.