

The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUEST OF A FRIEND OF MINE,
I CALLED ON GARRULOUS OLD SIMON WHEELER, AND INQUIRED
AFTER THE REV. LEONIDAS W. SMILEY.



I FOUND SIMON WHEELER DOZING COMFORTABLY BY THE BAR-ROOM STOVE OF THE DILAPIDATED TAVERN IN THE ANCIENT MINING CAMP OF ANGEL'S. HE ROUSED UP AND GAVE ME A GOOD DAY. I TOLD HIM A FRIEND OF MINE HAD COMMISSIONED ME TO MAKE SOME INQUIRIES ABOUT A COMPANION OF HIS BOYHOOD NAMED LEONIDAS W. SMILEY- A YOUNG MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, WHO HE HAD HEARD WAS A RESIDENT OF ANGEL'S CAMP.

SIMON WHEELER BACKED ME INTO A CORNER AND BLOCKADED ME THERE WITH HIS CHAIR, AND THEN SAT ME DOWN AND REELED OFF THE FOLLOWING NARRATIVE :



THERE WAS A FELLER HERE ONCE BY THE NAME OF JIM SMILEY, IN THE WINTER OF '49...



"...OR MAYBE IT WAS THE SPRING OF '50 - I DON'T RECALL EXACTLY, BUT ANY WAY, HE WAS THE CURIOUSEST MAN ABOUT ALWAYS BETTING ON ANYTHING 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."



"JUST SO HE GOT A BET, HE WAS SATISFIED."



"BUT STILL, HE WAS UNCOMMON LUCKY; HE MOST ALWAYS COME OUT A WINNER."

"THERE COULDN'T BE NO SOLIT'RY THING MENTIONED BUT THAT FELLER'D OFFER TO BET ON IT."

"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 CAT FIGHT, HE'D BET ON IT."



"IF THERE WAS A CHICKEN FIGHT, HE'D BET ON IT."



"WHY, IF THERE WAS TWO BIRDS SETTIN' ON A FENCE HE WOULD BET YOU WHICH ONE WOULD FLY FIRST."



"PARSON WALKER'S WIFE LAY SICK ONCE, AND IT SEEMED AS IF THEY WAREN'T GOING TO SAVE HER; BUT ONE MORNING HE COME IN, AND SMILEY ASKED HOW SHE WAS, AND HE SAID SHE WAS CONSIDERABLE BETTER AND WITH THE BLESSING OF PROVIDENCE SHE'D GET WELL YET; AND SMILEY, BEFORE HE THOUGHT SAYS.."

WELL, I'LL RISK TWO-AND-A-HALF SHE DON'T, ANYWAY.



"THISH-YER SMILEY HAD A MARE- THE BOYS CALLED HER THE FIFTEEN-MINUTE NAG, BUT THAT WAS ONLY IN FUN, 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 THREE HUNDRED YARDS START, AND THEN PASS HER UNDERWAY; BUT ALWAYS AT THE FAG-END OF THE RACE SHE'D GET EXCITED, AND COME CAVORTING UP, 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."

"AND HE HAD A LITTLE BULL PUP, THAT TO LOOK AT HIM YOU'D THINK HE WAN'T WORTH A CENT, BUT TO SET AROUND AND LOOK ORNERY."



"BUT AS SOON AS MONEY WAS UP ON HIM, HE WAS A DIFFERENT DOG; HIS TEETH WOULD UNCOVER AND SHINE SAVAGE."



THE CELEBRATED JUMPING FROG

"AND A DOG MIGHT TACKLE 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 ON THE OTHER SIDE ALL THE TIME, TILL THE MONEY WAS ALL UP; AND THEN ALL OF THE SUDDEN HE WOULD GRAB THAT OTHER DOG BY THE JINT OF HIS HIND LEG AND JEST HANG ON TILL THEY THREW UP THE SPONGE, IF IT WAS A YEAR."



"SMILEY ALWAYS COME OUT A WINNER ON THAT PUP, TILL HE HARNESSSED 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 FAR ENOUGH AND THE MONEY WAS ALL UP, AND HE COME TO MAKE A SNATCH FOR HIS PET HOLT, HE SAW IN A MINUTE HOW HE'D BEEN IMPOSED ON, AND HE DIDN'T TRY NO MORE TO WIN THE FIGHT, AND SO HE GOT SHUCKED OUT BAD."

"HE GAVE SMILEY A LOOK, AS MUCH TO SAY HIS HEART WAS BROKE, AND IT WAS HIS FAULT FOR PUTTING UP A DOG THAT HADN'T NO LEGS FOR HIM TO TAKE HOLT 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 THAT ANDREW JACKSON. 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 THEM KIND OF THINGS, 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 HE DID LEARN HIM, TOO, HE'D GIVE HIM A LITTLE PUNCH BEHIND, AND THE NEXT MINUTE YOU'D SEE HIM WHIRLING IN THE AIR AND COME DOWN FLAT-FOOTED LIKE A CAT. DAN'L WEBSTER WAS THE NAME OF THE FROG, AND WHEN IT COME TO JUMPING ON A LEVEL, HE COULD GET OVER MORE GROUND AT ONE STRADDLE THAN ANY ANIMAL OF HIS BREED YOU EVER SEE."



"SMILEY WAS MONSTROUS PROUD OF HIS FROG, AS WELL HE MIGHT BE, FOR FELLERS THAT HAD TRAVELED AND BEEN EVERYWHERES, ALL SAID HE LAID OVER ANY FROG THEY EVER SEE."