

In this highly significant humorous experiment, the author incorporates the traditional form of the tall tale into a story of his own creation. His literary greatness, in part, emanates from a perpetual malicious shrewdness that he frequently chooses to cloak under an assumed simplicity. First and foremost, he embellishes the anecdote with a frame, in which he presents the narrator, Mark Twain, who in turn explains his encounter with Simon Wheeler in the mining settlement at Angel's Camp. In fact, however, his intention was to mock politicians and lawmakers as a species—an activity in which he gleefully engaged throughout his literary career. From the beginning it is made clear that there is no Leonidas W Smiley, especially no Reverend Leonidas W Smiley, and that his existence is mere pretense in order to hear Simon Wheeler elucidate on the past experiences of Jim Smiley. Simon Wheeler's calculated ramblings admirably provide a platform for Twain's subtle and not-so-subtle humor.