

Mark Twain. Autograph letter signed to Jim Gillis on the jumping frog. Elmira, New York, January 26, 1870. FACSIMILE.

Elmira, N. Y., Jan. 26,/70.

Dear Jim—

I remember that old night just as well! And somewhere among my relics I have your remembrancer stored away. It makes my heart ache yet to call to mind some of those days. Still, it shouldn't—for right in the depths of their poverty & their pocket-hunting vagabondage lay the germ of my coming good-fortune. You remember the one gleam of jollity that shot across our dismal sojourn in the rain & mud of Angel's Camp—I mean that day we sat around the tavern stove & heard that chap tell about the frog & how they filled him with shot. And you remember how we quoted from the yarn & laughed over it, out there on the hillside while you & dear old Stoker panned & washed. I jotted the story down in my note-book that day, & would have been glad to get ten or fifteen dollars for it—I was just that blind. But then we were so hard up. I published that story, & it became widely known in America, India, China, England,—& the reputation it made for me has paid me thousands & thousands of dollars since. Four or five months ago I bought into that Express (have ordered it sent to you as long as you live—& if the bookkeeper bill sends you any bills, you let me hear of it) & went heavily in debt—never could have dared to do that, Jim, if we hadn't heard the Jumping Frog story that day.

And wouldn't I love to take old Stoker by the hand, & wouldn't I love to see him in his great specialty, his wonderful rendition of "Rinaldo" in the "Burning Shame!" Where is Dick, & what is he doing? Give him my fervent love & warm old remembrances.

A week from to-day I shall be married—to a girl even better than Mahala,⁶ & lovelier than the peerless "Chapparal Quails."⁷ You can't come so far, Jim, but still I cordially invite you to come, anyhow—& I invite Dick, too. And if you two boys were to land here on that pleasant occasion, we would make you right royally welcome.

The young lady is Miss Olivia L. Langdon—(for you would naturally like to know her name.)

Remember me to the boys—& recollect, Jim, that whenever you or Dick shall chance to stumble into Buffalo, we shall always have a knife & fork for you, & an honest welcome.

Truly Your Friend

Samuel L. Clemens.

P. S. California plums are good, Jim—particularly when they are stewed.

Do they continue to name all the young Injuns after me—when you pay them for the compliment?