

A QUEER WOMAN.

FOR THIRTY YEARS DISGUISED AS A MAN—
SHE PERFORMS THE MOST BRAVE AND
DASHING ACTS AS A STAGE-DRIVER.

The Providence Press, with the inquiry, "Can any of our readers supply the missing link as to her identity?" reprints this story, told by a Watonville (Cal.) correspondent of the San Francisco Call: "There is hardly a city or hamlet of the Pacific coast that includes among its citizens a few of the gold-hunters of the early days, where at least one person cannot be found who will remember Charley Parkhurst. For in the early days the gold-hunters were, by rapidly succeeding gold discoveries, drawn back to San Francisco as a headquarters, and again distributed from it to the most recently found diggings, in those same early days Charley Parkhurst was a stage-driver on the more important routes lading out from the city. As was in his day

ONE OF THE MOST DEXTEROUS and celebrated of the famous California drivers, ranking with Foss, Hank, Monk and George Gordon, and it was an hour to be striven for to occupy the spare end of the driver's seat when the fearless Charley Parkhurst held the reins of a four or six-in-hand. California coaching had, and has even yet, one exciting adjunct that was wanting in all preceding coaching. It was when the organized bands of highwaymen waylaid the coaches, leaped to the leaders' heads and over leveled shot guns, issued the grim command made so often that it has crystalized into the felonious formula of "throw down the box." Drivers of a phlegmatic temperament became accustomed to these interruptions, expertly reckoned up the killing capacity of the gun-barrels leveled at them, accepted the inevitable, threw down the treasure box and drove on. Charley Parkhurst was

HIGH STRUNG,

and this was one requirement of the driver of the early days he never could master. He drove for awhile between Stockton and Mariposa, and was once stopped, and had to cut away the treasure-box to get his coach and passengers clear. But he did it even under the "drop" of the robbers' fire-arms, with an ill grace, and he told the highwaymen that he would "break even with them." He was as good as his word, for being subsequently stopped on a return trip from Mariposa to Stockton, he watched his opportunity, and contemporaneously turned his wild mustangs and his wicked revolver loose, and brought every thing through safe. That his shooting was to the mark was subsequently ascertained by the confession of "Sugarfoot," a notorious highwayman, who mortally wounded, found his way to a miner's cabin in the hills, and *in articulo mortis* told how he had been shot by Charley Parkhurst, the famous driver, in a desperate attempt, with others, to stop the stage.

CHARLEY PARKHURST

also afterward drove on the great stage route from Oakland to San Jose, and later and for a long time, he was "the boss of the road" between San Juan and Santa Cruz, when San Francisco was reached by way of San Juan. But Parkhurst was of both an energetic and thrifty nature, and when rapid improvements in the means of locomotion relegated coaches farther out toward the frontiers, and made the driving of them less profitable, it was not sufficient for him that he was acknowledged as one of three or four crack whips of the coast. He resolutely abandoned driving and went to farming. For fifteen years he prosecuted this calling, varying it in the winter time by working in the woods, where he was known as one of the most skillful and powerful of choppers and lumbermen, and where his services were very highest wages. Although, in his stage-coaching days, he was

HAIL FELLOW WELL MET

with migratory miners, and during the succeeding years of his life as farmer and lumberman he was social and generous with his fellows, yet never intemperate, immoral or reckless, and the sure result was that his years of labor had been rewarded with a competency of several thousands of dollars. For several years past he had been so severely afflicted with rheumatism as not only to be unable to do physical labor, but the malady had even resulted in partial shriveling and distortion of some of his limbs. He was also attacked by a cancer on his tongue. As the combined diseases became more aggressive the genial Charley Parkhurst became not morose, but less and less communicative, till of late he has conversed with no one except on the ordinary topics of the day. Last Sunday, in a little cabin on the Moss Rancho, about six miles from Watonville, Charley Parkhurst, the famous coachman, the fearless fighter, the industrious farmer, and expert woodman.

DIED

of the cancer on his tongue. He knew that death was approaching, but he did not relax the reticence of his later years other than to express a few wishes as to certain things to be done at his death. Then, when the hands of the kind friends who had ministered to his dying wants came to lay out the dead body of the adventurous Argonaut, a discovery was made that was literally astounding. Charley Parkhurst was a woman. The discoveries of the successful concealment for protracted periods of the female sex under the disguise of the masculine are not unfrequent, but the case of Charley Parkhurst may fairly claim to rank as by all odds the most astonishing of them all. That a young woman should assume the dangers of the voyage of 1846 to the then almost mythical California—dangers over which hardly pioneers still grow boastful—has in it

SUFFICIENT OF THE WONDERFUL.

That she should achieve distinction in an occupation above all professions calling for the best physical qualities of nerve, coolness and endurance, and that she should add to them the almost romantic personal bravery that enables one to fight one's way through the ambush of an enemy, seems almost fabulous, and that for thirty years she should be in constant and intimate association with men and women, and that her true sex should never have been suspected, and that she should finally go knowing

ly down to her death, without disclosing by word or deed who she was, or why she had assumed man's dress and responsibilities, are things that a reader might be justified in doubting, if the proof of their exact truth was not abundant and conclusive. On the great register of Santa Cruz county, for the year 1867, appears this entry: "Parkhurst, Charles Durkee. 55 New Hampshire, farmer, Soquel," where he then lived. It is said by several who knew her intimately, that she came from Providence, R. I."
