

## THIRTY YEARS IN DISGUISE.

**A Noted Old Californian Stage-Driver Discovered, After Death, to Be a Woman.**

A letter from Watsonville, Cal., to the San Francisco *Call*, says: There is hardly a city or town 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, and in those same early days Charley Parkhurst was a stage-driver on the more important routes leading out from the city. He was in his day one of the most dexterous and famous of the California drivers, ranking with Foss, Hank Monk, and George Gordon, and it was an honor 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 was crystalized into the felonious formula of "Throw down the box." Drivers of a phlegmatic temperament become accustomed to these interruptions, expertly wrecken up the killing capacity of the gun-barrels leveled at them, accept the inevitable, throw down the treasure-box and drive on. Charley Parkhurst was high-strung, and this was one requirement of the driver of the early days he could never master. He drove for a while between Stockton and Mariposa, and once was 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' firearms, with all ill-grace, and he defiantly 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 everything 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 told him how he had been shot by Charley Parkhurst, the famous driver, in a desperate attempt, with others, to stop his 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 a thrifty nature, and when rapid improvements in the means of locomotion relegated coaches further 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 the 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 eagerly sought for, and always commanded the highest wages. Although, in his stage-coaching days, he was hail fellow well met with the migratory miners, and during the succeeding years of his life as farmer and lumberman he was social and generous with his fellows, he was 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 ranch, about six miles from Watsonville, Charley Parkhurst, the famous coachman, the fearless fighter, the industrious farmer and expert woodsman, 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 infrequent, and the case of Charley Parkhurst may fairly claim to rank as by all odds the most astonishing of all of them. That a young woman should assume man's attire and, friendless and alone, defy the dangers of the voyage of 1849, to the then almost mythical California—dangers over which hardy 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, courage, 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 even suspected, and that she should finally go knowingly 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 so abundant and conclusive. It is said by several who knew her intimately that she came from Providence, R. I.