

The Well-Remembered Man Who Proved to Have Been a Woman.

Charley Parkhurst, says the Providence *Journal*, lived in Providence for a good many years, and was exceedingly popular with his associates, and with the people for whom he worked. He was considered one of the best drivers in the city, and his services were sought by the best people. Quite a number of wealthy families always depended upon having him for a driver if they ordered a stable team. His early history is a little obscure. He told one of his associates that he came from New Hampshire, but he did not tell the name of the town. He told others that he came from the poorhouse in Worcester, from which he had run away. The truth is quite likely to be that he came from some part of New Hampshire to Worcester, and fell into the hands of the officers of the poor while there. The story goes that while in the poorhouse he discovered the great truth that boys have a great advantage over girls in the battle of life, and he decided to become a boy. He borrowed a suit of boys' clothes and eloped with them from the poorhouse. In the character of a boy he went to work in Ebenezer Balch's stable, at Worcester, and remained there until Mr. Balch moved to Providence. Charley had proved himself faithful and efficient, and Mr. Balch brought him to the What Cheer stables, then in the rear of the Franklin House. Charley soon became an expert whip. His judgment as to what could and what could not be done with a wagon was always sound, and his pleasant manners won him friends everywhere. After working for Mr. Balch a number of years, Parkhurst went to Georgia and drove a stage for a time. He did not like Georgia, however, and one day he reappeared among his old friends in Providence. He was at once engaged by William Hayden, and worked for him for a number of years. He then hired himself to Charles H. Child, whose stable was where now Campbell's is. He drove the best team in the stable. The horses were gray, exactly matched, and it was quite a sight to see Charley guide through a crowd. He always took care of this team himself. He was fond of a six-in-hand, and called it nothing but fun to handle four spirited horses. He never was known to have more than he could do with his team but once. He went with six horses and twenty-five couples to a dance at Pawtucket one dreadful cold night. Coming home, the air was so cold and the horses were so frantic that Charley's hands became numb, and he got Liberty Childs to drive the leaders, while he took charge of the other four horses.

Now that it is known that Charley was a woman, there are plenty of people to say they always thought he was. No doubt they thought he was not quite like other men; indeed, it was generally said among his acquaintances that he was a hermaphrodite. His hands were small and smooth, and, so far from being proud of the fact, it disgusted him, and he wore gloves summer and winter. He was thought to be putting on style, but, as he always dressed well, the gloves were looked upon only as a part of his high-toned ideas. He was beardless, and his voice was a little thin. His shape was more womanly than manly, but all this was accounted for by the mysterious word generally pronounced "mophadite." By way of setting his feminine characteristics, Charley weighed 175 pounds, could handle almost any one that ever took hold of him, smoked with the placidity of an oriental, would take one or two glasses of whisky punch without winking, never shrank from any topic of conversation, and, when occasions seemed to demand it, slept with another driver with the utmost *sang froid*. His mates used to try to get him drunk once in a while in order to see if he would not betray himself in some way, but Charley kept his wits about him, and, after one or two glasses, began to "pass." In vain did his comrades urge a few more drinks. Charley was not dry, and when he was, he would not drink.

He had in the stable a room which he furnished quite nicely, and where he could generally be found when not on duty. About 1849, James Burch and Frank Stevens went to California and started a stage line. After a year or two they sent for Charley to come and drive for them. He had saved \$700 or \$800, the gold fever was pretty strong at the time, and about 1851 he decided to go. He drove for Burch & Stevens awhile, and then went upon the great stage route across the continent. His career in California has already been given.

His old friends here had manifested the greatest interest in his success on the Pacific coast, and one of them summed the matter up very concisely. He said: "Well, there wan't no reason why Charley should not get on well. He understood his business; he was pleasant and stiddy and sober, and with them any feller can do well."

The only people who have any occasion to be disturbed by the career of Charley Parkhurst are the gentlemen who have so much to say about "women's sphere" and the "weaker vessel." It is beyond question that one of the soberest, pleasantest, most expert drivers in this city, and one of the most celebrated of the world-famed California stage drivers, was a woman. And it is not true that what woman has done woman can do? But there is one drawback which must be admitted. Charley died of cancer of the tongue. She could act and talk like a man, but when it came to imitating a man's reticence, nature herself revolted; and the life-long effort to keep from speaking, except when she had something to say, resulted at last in death from cancer of the tongue. Perhaps the "opponents" are right, after all.