MRS. HARDING'S SIGN.

IN THE doorway of their cabin in the far West, Susan Harding stood and gazed out on the smiling scenes around her.

The afternoon's sun showered its golden light over field and forest, and turned the river which floated so quietly by, into a mirror that shone like polished steel. But the woman standing there gave no thought of the beauties which surrounded her.

Shading her eyes with her hand, she gazed long and earnestly away to the westward, as though she was expecting the coming of some one from that direction. Long and steadily she looked, but the coming of no human being rewarded her gaze. A look of disappointment mingled with anxiety, and she said aloud to herself as she turned away from the door, "I can't see why William doesn't return. He said he would be gone no longer than noon at the most. I am afraid that some harm has come to him."

"I shouldn't wonder if there had," said a voice from within the cabin.—
"The redskins are on the war-path, you know. I told William that he had better stay at home to day. I wouldn't wonder a mite if we had trouble with them before he got back,"

"You are always talking of evil, mother. Why is it that you will always be a bird of ill-omen? The redskins have never as yet done us any harm, and I trust that they may not."

"But they have other people, if they ain't us, Susan," said the old lady, in a half offended tone, "You ain't forgot how they murdered the Smith family and then burned their cabin to the ground. They said that they had two or three signs of danger, but they only laughed at them. If they had given them heed it may be that they would be alive now.

"You are always talking of signs, mother. Why will you do so? You know there is nothing in them. It makes me nervous to hear you talk of them."

"But there is more in signs than you think, Susan. I don't believe that anybody ever died yet without some sign being given them. Sometimes it comes in one way, and sometimes in another."

"Don't think of such things any more, mother, you make me nervous, although I don't believe in them. But I do wish William would come. Now that puts me in mind that I have his frock to mend."

Saying this, the young wife stepped across the room, and reached up to take down the garment where it hung upon a peg on the wall. As she attempted to do so, three drops of bright crimson blood fell and rested upon her arm.

She turned as pale as death at the sight, and a cry of half terror, half surprise fell from her lips.

"What is it, Susan ?" demanded the old lady, her husband's mother.

The young wife at first could not find words to answer; but she extended her arm, with the bright red drops upon it, toward the questioner.

"Good heaven!" cried the old lady.-

"I know not," answered Susan. "It fell from something upon my arm." "Did it come from the frock?" asked

the old lady, with a blanched face. "It seemed to. I had just laid my

"It seemed to. I had just laid my hand upon it."

"It is a death sign," cried the old lady shrilly. "The redskins have either killed William, or we are going to be murdered here before he comes back."

As pale as though the life blood was flowing from her, the young wife sank into a seat.

"Do you think so, mother?" she gasped, forgetting for the moment her recently expressed disbelief in such matters.

"Yes," she answered, solemnly. "I am sure that is a warning to us. There is trouble in store, and I am sure we shall see it before long. What else can the sign mean? For sign I am sure it is:"

The young wife made no answer, but she rose from her seat and took a step towards the spot where the garment hung. But she did not reach it. As she stepped forward she gave a glance out through the open door, and there she saw that which at once arrested her attention.

The forms of four savages, in Indian file, were gliding towards the cabin.—Another glance showed her that they were fully armed, and as hideous as war paint and feathers could make them.

For a moment she stood as motionless as though turned to stone. Could it be that the death sign was so soon to be made a verity? It certainly looked like it.

Ofttimes the savages had visited their cabin and departed without doing them harm. But she had never seen them come in the guise they now wore.

Surely it must be that they meant them harm. Perhaps her husband was

indeed slain, and now they were coming to accomplish their destruction

also.

By a violent effort she burst the spell that was upon her, and springing forward, she closed the door of the cabin and threw across it the stout oaken bar, which served to hold it still firmer in its

"What is it, Susan ?" cried the old lady, startled from her seat.

"The savages, mother," she answered

"What, so soon? I knew that sign was not meant for nothing. What shall we do?"

"Keep them out of the cabin if we can. We will not die so long as there is a chance left for us to make good our defense."

There was the light of a heroine in her eyes now, and a look of determination upon her face. The spell which the omen had cast upon her was gone.— If the worst was to come, she would sell her life as dearly as possible.

"Oh, William, why did you leave us "" groaned the mother. "If you were only here with your good rifle we should be safe."

A moment more and the sound of the savages' feet without fell upon their ears. Whether their errand was of friendship or of hate would soon be determined.

A little later they tried the door, which shook, but stirred not from its place.

"You cannot," answered Susan, in as firm a tone as she could assume. "Some other time when the white hunter is at home, we shall be glad to see you."

"White woman, open door, or Injin break down and take her scalp," exclaimed the voice from without.

To this she returned no answer.

Again was the demand made for their admittance, but a profound silence on the part of the women was their only

Again and again was the door shaken, with all their strength, but to no purpose. Bravely it withstood them.

That it might continue to do so until her husband's return was the prayer of the imperiled wife.

But then if the omen was true, and her husband had fallen? Then, sooner

or later the savages must triumph.
With all their strength the Indians threw themselves against the door. Still it did not give away.

Then they attacked it with their tomahawks. Blow after blow rained upon it in quick succession. They were attempting to cut a hole through its centre large enough for them to creep through.

Unceasingly they worked, and at last the trembling women within saw the edge of their tomahawks. A little longer, and the aperture would be large enough to give them admittance.

Grasping her husband's axe, Susan Harding stood ready for the final conflict. One of the savages thrust a hand in to pull way a portion of the wood.— In an instant her weapon descended, and the hand of the savage dropped to the floor. A howl of pain and rage followed from without, and the success of her blow gave her new courage.

Undismayed by the accident which had befallen their companion, the other savages worked on. At last the hole was large enough to admit of the body of a man passing through.

Not benefitting by the fate which had befallen their companion, a savage thrust his head in through the opening.

In an instant the axe descended, and the skull of the savage was clove in twain, while the blood and brains bespattered the floor.

"Courage!" cried old Mrs. Harding. "May Heaven help you, Susan, to triumph yet."

Hardly had the words left her lips when the ringing report of a rifle sounded in their ears, followed by a triumphant shout, which told them that the son and husband had returned.

The dead savage lay with his head through the door until William Harding removed it, so that he might gain an entrance himself, as he did a minute later when the redskins were all dead or put to flight.

The joy of the meeting we will leave to the reader to imagine.

A little later Susan told him of the sign which his mother had declared to be an omen of evil. With a smile the settler removed the garment from the wall, and thrust his hand into one of the pockets.

This morning I killed a squirrel, which I meant for the cat. Look at this pocket. I placed it in here, and the cloth is soaked with blood.

Old Mrs. Harding was silenced, although it must be confessed that her faith in signs was by no means diminished.

Who becomes every day more sagacious in observing his own faults, and the perfections of another, without envying him, or despairing of himself, is ready to mount the ladder on which angels ascend or descend.

MISS WILSON'S LEG.

TWENTY-SEVEN years ago Miss Wilson of Pineville, North Carolina, lost her right leg. She was then young and pretty, and had she merely mislaid her leg every chivalrous Carolinian in the county would have joined in the search for it. Unfortunately, her loss was an irrevokable one. Having unintentionally inserted her leg under the wheel of a heavily loaded wagon, she found that the once shapely limb was so completely ruined that she consented to have it cut off and thrown away. Its place was in time supplied with a cork leg, and Miss Wilson sorrowfully resigned herself to limping through a loveless life to a solitary grave.

There never has been any active demand for women with wooden legs. A man with a wooden leg suffers a certain amount of inconvenience, but he loses nothing in character or popularity, whereas, a wooden-legged woman is, whether justly or unjustly, under a social ban. In fact, for a woman to lose a leg is ordinarily to lose all hope of marriage. A man who is about to marry cannot be blamed for preferring a whole wife to one partially made of cork-especially as the former costs no more than the latter. A superficial thinker might, perhaps, fancy that a husband whose wife had but one original leg would save fifty per cent. in the price of striped stockings and kid shoes; but a little reflection will show that a cork leg requires just as much clothing as the usual style of leg, and hence is not an economical contrivance. Of course it is mean and selfish in a man to permit the presence or absence of a mere trifle of leg to affect his feelings toward an estimable woman; but human nature is weak, and he would be a bold man who could calmly look forward to marrying a woman who might some morning interrupt him while shaving by asking, "James, would you mind handing me my leg? I think you'll find it behind

the rocking chair." It is alleged by Miss Wilson's neighbors that as she grew older she grew hard and cynical. This was, perhaps, to have been expected. She saw herself ignored by all marrying men, while girls with half her beauty, and whose sole superiority consisted in a larger number of legs, captured husbands without any difficulty. Gradually she became embittered against her bipedal fellow creatures, and the local Baptist minister was probably right when he characterized her as a hard-hearted, worldly woman. One day, however, Miss Wilson attended a camp-meeting, and was softened by the eloquence of the preacher and the shouts of the worshipers and soon after Pineville was surprised and pleased by the announcement that on next Sunday Sister Wilson would be baptized.

Now the public performance of the rite of baptism by Rev. Mr. Waters, of the Pineville Eleventh-Day Baptist church always drew a large audience. That powerful and agile preacher was admitted to be without a rival as a rapid and effective baptizer. On one occasion when a Presbyterian minister preaching that St. John the Baptist had once baptized a multitude of persons at the rate of two men and a half per minute, and that hence he could not have immersed them, Mr. Waters publicly baptized twenty-five persons in eight minutes thus beating St. John's best time by two full minutes, and completely overthrowing the Presbyterian argument. With all his unequaled rapidity of execution, he never was careless or inconsiderate. There was a rival Baptist minister in the next county who would sometimes become carried away by his emotions, and would sing an entire verse of a long metre hymn while holding a convert under water; and, although a stalwart teamster who was thus treated once fell from grace, and upsetting his minister in the water, held him under until he was nearly drowned, the reverend enthusiast was not cured of his careless habit. When, therefore, Miss Wilson consented to be baptized by the Pineville minister, she knew that she would be treated in a considerate and skillful manner; and the public knew

that the spectacle would be well worth witnessing. It is very easy to say, now that the affair is over, that Miss Wilson ought to have left her cork leg at home. In that case she would have been compelled either to limp to the water on erutches or to be carried thither by self-sacrificing deacons. Moreover, her appearance in public without her customary leg would have detracted from the solemnity of the scene. When, in addition to these facts, we remember that she was a woman residing in a country town, to which champagne baskets rarely penetrated, and was hence presumably ignorant of the scientific fact that cork is light and buoyant, her neglect to remove her cork leg prior to baptism seems entirely excusable.

So long as the water was only two feet deep Miss Wilson, who weighed fully

two hundred pounds, managed to wade toward the minister, but so soon as the latter took her hand and led her into deeper water the cork asserted its buoyancy and Miss Wilson was suddenly reversed. The minister, with much difficulty, placed her on her feet again, and rather surlily requesting her not to do that again, began to make a brief and formal address. Before he had spoken ten words Miss Wilson, with a wild shrick, fell backward, and her cork leg shot swiftly upon the surface. Perhaps this is the point where a vell should be dropped. To finish the narrative in as few words as possible, it may be said that after half a dozen futile efforts the attempt to baptize Miss Wilson was abandoned. With all his skill and strength, the minister could not counteract the efforts of the cork leg, and could not keep the convert right side up long enough to baptize her. She bore it with patience until the minister called for a fifty-six pound weight, with a view to ballasting her, when she indignantly scrambled ashore, hastened home and subsequently joined the Presbyterians.

We thus learn that there are times when cork legs conflict with the most important duties. The leg-makers should take a hint from this suggestive incident, and devise a light metallic leg wherewith to supply the Baptist market.

A Man who was too Sharp.

OLD JACOB J. was a shrewd merchant in Burlington, N. J., and, like all shrewd men, was often a little too smart for himself.

An old Quaker lady of Bristol, Penn., just over the river, bought some goods at Jacob's store, when he was absent, and in crossing the river on her way home, she met him aboard the boat, and, as was usual with him upon such occasions, he immediately pitched into her bundle of goods and untied it to see what she had been buying.

"Oh, now," says he, "how much a yard did you give for that, and that?" taking up the several pieces of goods.—She told him the price, without, however, saying where she had purchased them.

"Oh, now," says he again, "I could have sold you those goods for so much a yard," mentioning a price a great deal lower than she had paid. "You know," says he, "I can undersell everybody in the place;" and so he went on criticising and undervaluing the goods till the boat reached Bristol, when he was invited to go to the old lady's store, and when there the goods were spread out on the counter, and Jacob was asked to examine the goods again, and say, in the presence of witnesses, the price he would have sold them at per yard, the old lady, meanwhile, taking a memorandum. She then went to the desk and made out a bill of the difference between what she had paid and the price he told her; then coming up to him, she

"Now, Jacob, thee is sure thee could have sold those good at the price thee mentioned?"

"Oh, now, yes," says he.

"Well, then, thy young man must have made a mistake; for I bought the goods from thy store, and of course, under the circumstances, thee can have no objection to refund me the difference."

Jacob, being thus cornered, could of course under the circumstances, have no objection. It is to be presumed that thereafter Jacob's first inquiry must have been, "Oh, now, where did you get such and such goods?" instead of "Oh, now, how much did you pay?"

Curious Detection of a Thief. The wife of a well-known citizen re-

siding on Broad Street, Philadelphia, entered her sleeping apartment late, one night recently, after having returned from an evening social, and was somewhat annoyed at smelling whiskey .-Knowing that liquor was not used in the house, she became frightened, and thought perhaps some intoxicated person had entered the premises during her absence. She called her husband and another gentleman who were in the parlor, and when they arrived an investigation of the room began. The husband crawled under the bed, and while groping about his head came in contact with something projecting from the under part of the mattress. The latternamed article was removed, and, snugly secreted between the slats and ticking was found a rough-looking man. When discovered he sprang up, struck one of the gentlemen a stinging blow on the forehead, drew a revolver, rushed down the front stairway, out of the door and was lost in the dark. It was very evident that the intruder was a thief, who knowing the lady had valuable jewels in her possession, had secreted himself with a view of robbing her when she retired for the night. Now comes the important part the whiskey detective acted. The fellow, whoever he was, had carried a bottle or flask in his pocket, and the cork had fallen out, thus causing the liquor to run out on the carpet and warn the lady.

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more efficacious in restoring a healthy action of the liver.

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