

## **The Clouded Ruins of Cardigan**

Every dog has his day. It is the usual thing for him to have it while his bark and bite are still in good working order and he is able to wag his tail and go after the things which, in the words of David Harum, help him forget that he is a dog.

With Cardigan it's different – Cardigan, the stag hound of General Custer of Indian battle fame. True, he had quite a day as a living dog, but he is having a greater one posthumously, and he is serving a good turn to the poor, down-trodden historian, showing through the friends of his life time and through those who tried to keep his memory green after his demise that it is sometimes a mighty hard thing to arrive at the facts that lie back of a dispute when the facts that lie back of a dispute when the facts are many years old.

Cardigan has taken his place in the controversial hall of fame alongside the Mona Lisa, the runestone, the Kohinoor, the “golden plates” of Joseph Smith and the lost sister of the Pleiades. For the moment it looks as if the story of his wanderings after the battle of the Little Big Horn, and of the fate of his corpus delicti, would forever be shrouded in doubt.

Cardigan was taken to Madison barracks, New York, passed away there, and was given a military funeral and burial. That's one story, and it's stoutly maintained by reputable witnesses. Cardigan was present to a Minneapolis preacher, died here, was mounted taxidermically and occupied a place for a time in the museum of the animal biology building at the University of Minnesota. That's another version, and it is just as stoutly maintained by credible witnesses.

What's the poor historian to do in such a case? He'll be damned if he does and be damned if he doesn't. If he wants to play safe, he'll recite all versions impartially. If he is venturesome and thick-skinned, he'll draw conclusions based on what he deems to be the preponderance of the evidence. He knows that he takes the hazard of being confounded some day by new evidence which may be documentary, signed, sealed and duly attested.

In which of the seven cities, dear reader, was Homer born? Who, dear reader, penned the plays of Shakespeare, and where, dear reader, did Cardigan die, and where his sepulture – if any? Who will bring forth the dusty carcass from its hiding place – if any? And who, once it is brought forth, can say finally and indisputably:

“Behold the stuffed ruins of what was once the great Cardigan!”