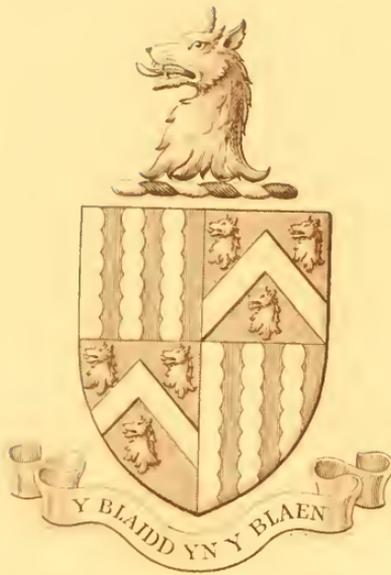


STAGE-COACH AND MAIL IN DAYS OF YORE



CHARLES G. HARPER



John Geoffrey Nelson Cowles



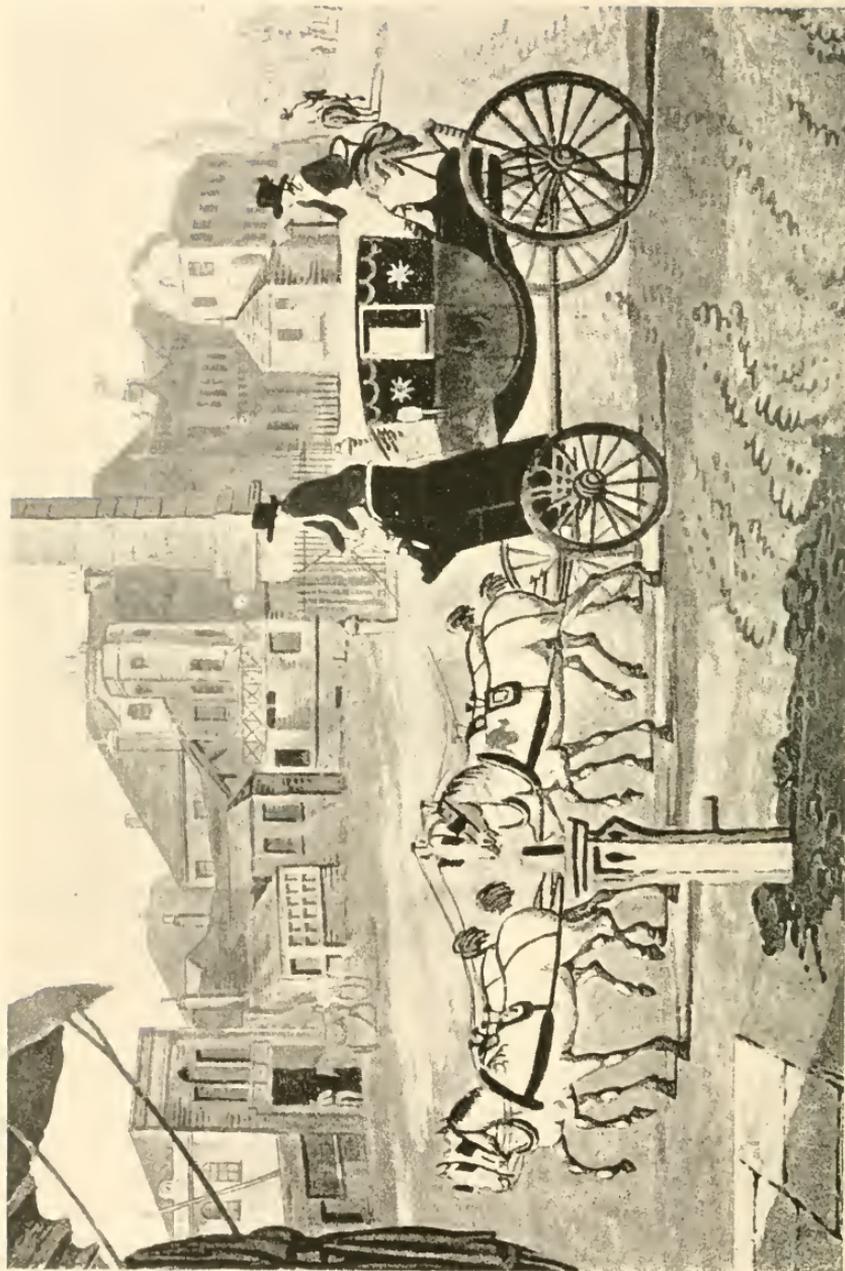
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MAIL-COACH PASSING ST. GEORGE'S CIRCUS, SOUTHWARK, 1797.

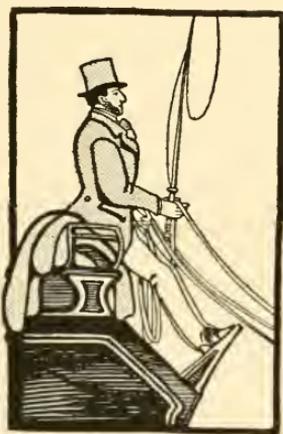
After Dalgety

STAGE-COACH AND MAIL IN DAYS OF YORE

*A PICTURESQUE HISTORY
OF THE COACHING AGE*

VOL. II

By CHARLES G. HARPER



*Illustrated from Old-Time Prints
and Pictures*

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CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. THE LATER MAILS | I |
| II. DOWN THE ROAD IN DAYS OF YORE. I.—A Journey from Newcastle-on-Tyne to London in 1772 | 48 |
| III. DOWN THE ROAD IN DAYS OF YORE. II.—From London to Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1830 | 66 |
| IV. ACCIDENTS | 96 |
| V. A GREAT CARRYING FIRM: THE STORY OF PICKFORD AND CO. | 123 |
| VI. ROBBERY AND ADVENTURE | 144 |
| VII. SNOW AND FLOODS | 159 |
| VIII. THE GOLDEN AGE, 1824—1848 | 173 |
| IX. COACH-PROPRIETORS | 194 |
| X. COACH-PROPRIETORS (<i>continued</i>) | 226 |
| XI. THE AMATEURS | 239 |
| XII. END OF THE COACHING AGE | 260 |
| XIII. WHAT BECAME OF THE COACHMEN | 292 |
| XIV. THE OLD ENGLAND OF COACHING DAYS | 322 |



SEPARATE PLATES

| | PAGE |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. MAIL-COACH PASSING ST. GEORGE'S CIRCUS, SOUTHWARK, 1797. (<i>After Dalgety</i>) | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| 2. THE WORCESTER MAIL, 1805. (<i>After J. A. Atkinson</i>) | 7 |
| 3. THE MAIL. (<i>After J. L. Agasse, 1842</i>) | 13 |
| 4. THE BRISTOL MAIL AT HYDE PARK CORNER, 1838. (<i>After J. Doyle</i>) | 19 |
| 5. THE YARMOUTH MAIL AT THE "COACH AND HORSES," ILFORD. (<i>After J. Pollard</i>) | 25 |
| 6. THE "QUICKSILVER" DEVONPORT MAIL, PASSING KEW BRIDGE. (<i>After J. Pollard</i>) | 29 |
| 7. THE "QUICKSILVER" DEVONPORT MAIL, ARRIVING AT TEMPLE BAR. (<i>After C. B. Newhouse</i>) | 37 |
| 8. THE "QUICKSILVER" DEVONPORT MAIL, PASSING WINDSOR CASTLE. (<i>After Charles Hunt, 1840</i>) | 41 |
| 9. MAIL-COACH BUILT BY WAUDE, 1830. (<i>Now in possession of Messrs. Holland & Holland</i>) | 45 |
| 10. THE "QUEEN'S HOTEL" AND GENERAL POST OFFICE. (<i>After T. Allow</i>) | 69 |
| 11. THE TURNPIKE GATE. (<i>From a contemporary Lithograph</i>) | 77 |
| 12. A MIDNIGHT DISASTER ON A CROSS ROAD: FIVE MILES TO THE NEAREST VILLAGE. (<i>After C. B. Newhouse</i>) | 99 |

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| 13. THE "BEAUFORT" BRIGHTON COACH. (<i>After W. J. Shayer</i>) | 103 |
| 14. A QUEER PIECE OF GROUND IN A FOG: "IF WE GET OVER THE RAILS, WE SHALL BE IN AN UGLY FIX." (<i>After C. B. Newhouse</i>) | 111 |
| 15. ROAD VERSUS RAIL. (<i>After C. Cooper Henderson, 1845</i>) | 117 |
| 16. JOSEPH BAXENDALE. (<i>From the Portrait by E. H. Pickersgill, R.A.</i>) | 131 |
| 17. PICKFORD AND CO'S ROYAL FLY-VAN, ABOUT 1820. (<i>From a contemporary Painting</i>) | 139 |
| 18. THE LIONESS ATTACKING THE EXETER MAIL, OCTOBER 20TH, 1816. (<i>After A. Sauerweid</i>) | 153 |
| 19. WINTER: GOING NORTH. (<i>After H. Alken</i>) | 163 |
| 20. MAIL-COACH IN A SNOW-DRIFT. (<i>After J. Pollard</i>) | 167 |
| 21. MAIL-COACH IN A FLOOD. (<i>After J. Pollard</i>) | 171 |
| 22. LATE FOR THE MAIL. (<i>After C. Cooper Henderson, 1848</i>) | 183 |
| 23. THE SHORT STAGE. (<i>After J. Pollard</i>) | 191 |
| 24. WILLIAM CHAPLIN. (<i>From the Painting by Frederick Newham</i>) | 197 |
| 25. THE CANTERBURY AND DOVER COACH, 1830. (<i>After G. S. Tregarar</i>) | 201 |
| 26. JAMES NUNN, HORSE-BUYER AND VETERINARY SURGEON TO WILLIAM CHAPLIN. (<i>After J. F. Herring</i>) | 205 |
| 27. WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CHAPLIN | 211 |
| 28. THE "BEDFORD TIMES," ONE OF THE LAST COACHES TO RUN, LEAVING THE "SWAN HOTEL," BEDFORD. | 219 |
| 29. FOUR-IN-HAND. (<i>After G. H. Laporte</i>) | 243 |
| 30. SIR ST. VINCENT COTTON | 249 |
| 31. THE CONSEQUENCE OF BEING DROVE BY A GENTLEMAN. (<i>After H. Alken</i>) | 255 |
| 32. GOLDSWORTHY GURNEY'S LONDON AND BATH STEAM-CARRIAGE, 1833. (<i>After G. Morton</i>) | 265 |
| 33. THE LAST JOURNEY DOWN THE ROAD. (<i>After J. L. Agasse</i>) | 275 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xi

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| 34. THE CHESHAM COACH, 1796. (<i>From the Painting by Cordery</i>). | 283 |
| 35. THE LAST OF THE "MANCHESTER DEFIANCE." (<i>From a Lithograph</i>). | 287 |
| 36. THE COACHMAN, 1832. (<i>After H. Alken</i>). | 293 |
| 37. THE DRIVER, 1852. (<i>After H. Alken</i>). | 297 |
| 38. THE GUARD, 1832. (<i>After H. Alken</i>). | 303 |
| 39. THE GUARD, 1852. (<i>After H. Alken</i>). | 309 |
| 40. "ALL RIGHT!"—THE BATH MAIL TAKING UP THE MAIL-BAGS. (<i>From a contemporary Lithograph</i>). | 341 |

ILLUSTRATIONS IN TEXT

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Vignette (<i>Title-page</i>) | ix |
| List of Illustrations | ix |
| Stage-coach and Mail in Days of Yore | 1 |
| Mail-coach Halfpenny issued by William Waterhouse | 196 |
| Benjamin Worthy Horne. | 221 |
| "A View of the Telegraph": Dick Vaughan, of the Cambridge "Telegraph." (<i>From an Etching by Robert Dighton, 1809</i>). | 301 |
| A Stage-coachman's Epitaph at Haddiscoe | 316 |

STAGE
COACH
AND
MAIL



IN
DAYS
OF
YORE

CHAPTER I

THE LATER MAILS

THE Bristol Mail opened the mail-coach era by going at eight miles an hour, but that was an altogether exceptional speed, and the average mail-coach journeys were not performed at a rate of more than seven miles an hour until long after the nineteenth century had dawned. In 1812, when Colonel Hawker travelled to Glasgow, it took the mail 57 hours' continuous unrelaxing effort to cover the 404 miles—three nights and two days' discomfort. By 1836 the distance had been reduced by eight miles, and the time to 42 hours. By 1838 it was 41 hours 17 minutes. Nowadays it can be done by quickest train in exactly eight hours; the railway mileage $401\frac{1}{2}$ miles. In 1812 it cost an inside passenger all the way to Glasgow, for fare alone, exclusive of tips to coachmen and guards, and the necessary expenditure for food and drink all those weary

hours, no less than £10 8s.; about $6\frac{1}{3}d.$ a mile. To-day, £2 18s. franks you through, first-class; or 33s. third—itsself infinitely more luxurious than even the consecrated inside of a mail-coach.

The mails starting from London were perfection in coaches, harness and horses; but as the distance from the Metropolis increased so did the mails become more and more shabby. Hawker, travelling north, found them slow and slovenly, the harness generally second-hand, one horse in plated, another in brass harness; and when they *did* have new (which, he tells us, was very seldom) it was put on like a labourer's leather breeches, and worn till it rotted, without ever being cleaned.

Of course, very few people ever did, or could have had the endurance to, travel all that distance straight away, and so travel was further complicated, delayed, and rendered more costly by the halts necessary to recruit jaded nature.

Hawker evidently did it in four stages: to Ferrybridge, 179 miles, where he rested the first night and picked up the next mail the following; thence the 65 miles onward to Greta Bridge; on again, 59 miles, to Carlisle; and thence, finally, to Glasgow in another 101 miles. In his diary he gives "a table to show for how much a gentleman and his servant (the former inside, with 14 lb. of luggage; the latter outside, with 7 lb.) may go from London to Glasgow."

| | £ | s. | d. | £ | s. | d. |
|--|-----|----|----|----|----|----|
| <i>Self.</i> | | | | | | |
| Inside, to Ferrybridge | 4 | 16 | 0 | | | |
| " " Greta Bridge | 1 | 12 | 6 | | | |
| " " Carlisle | 1 | 9 | 6 | | | |
| " " Glasgow | 2 | 10 | 0 | | | |
| | | | | 10 | 8 | 0 |
| <i>Servant.</i> | | | | | | |
| Outside, to Ferrybridge | 2 | 10 | 0 | | | |
| " " Greta Bridge | 1 | 2 | 0 | | | |
| " " Carlisle | 1 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| " " Glasgow | 1 | 13 | 0 | | | |
| | | | | 6 | 5 | 0 |
| <i>Tips.</i> | | | | | | |
| Inside, 6 long-stage coachmen @ 2s. | 0 | 12 | 0 | | | |
| " 12 short-stage coachmen @ 1s. | 0 | 12 | 0 | | | |
| " 7 guards @ 2s. each | 0 | 14 | 0 | | | |
| Outside, for man, @ half price above | 0 | 19 | 0 | | | |
| | | | | 2 | 17 | 0 |
| Total | £19 | 10 | 0 | | | |

Such were the costs and charges of a gentleman travelling to pay a country visit in 1812, exclusive of hotel bills for self and servant on the way.

The great factor in the acceleration of the mails was the improvement in the roads, a work carried out by the Turnpike Trusts in fear of the Post Office, whose surveyors had the power, under ancient Acts, of indicting roads in bad condition. Great bitterness was stirred up over this matter. The growing commercial and industrial towns—Glasgow prominent among them—naturally desired direct mail-services, and the Post Office, using their needs as means for obtaining, not only roads kept in good condition, but sometimes entirely new roads and short cuts, declined to start such services until such routes were provided. It was not within the power of the Department to compel new

roads, but only to see that the old ones were maintained; but in the case of Glasgow, to whose merchants a direct service meant much, the Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, and individual persons contributed large sums for the improvement of the existing road between that city and Carlisle, and a Turnpike Trust was formed for one especial section, where the road was entirely reconstructed. These districts were wholly outside Glasgow's sphere of responsibilities, but all this money was expended for the purpose of obtaining a direct mail through Carlisle, instead of the old indirect one through Edinburgh; and when obtained, of retaining it in face of the continued threats of the Post Office to take it off unless the road was still further improved. It certainly does not seem to have been a remarkably good road, even after these improvements, for Colonel Hawker, travelling it in 1812, describes it as being mended with large soft quarry-stones, at first like brickbats and afterwards like sand.

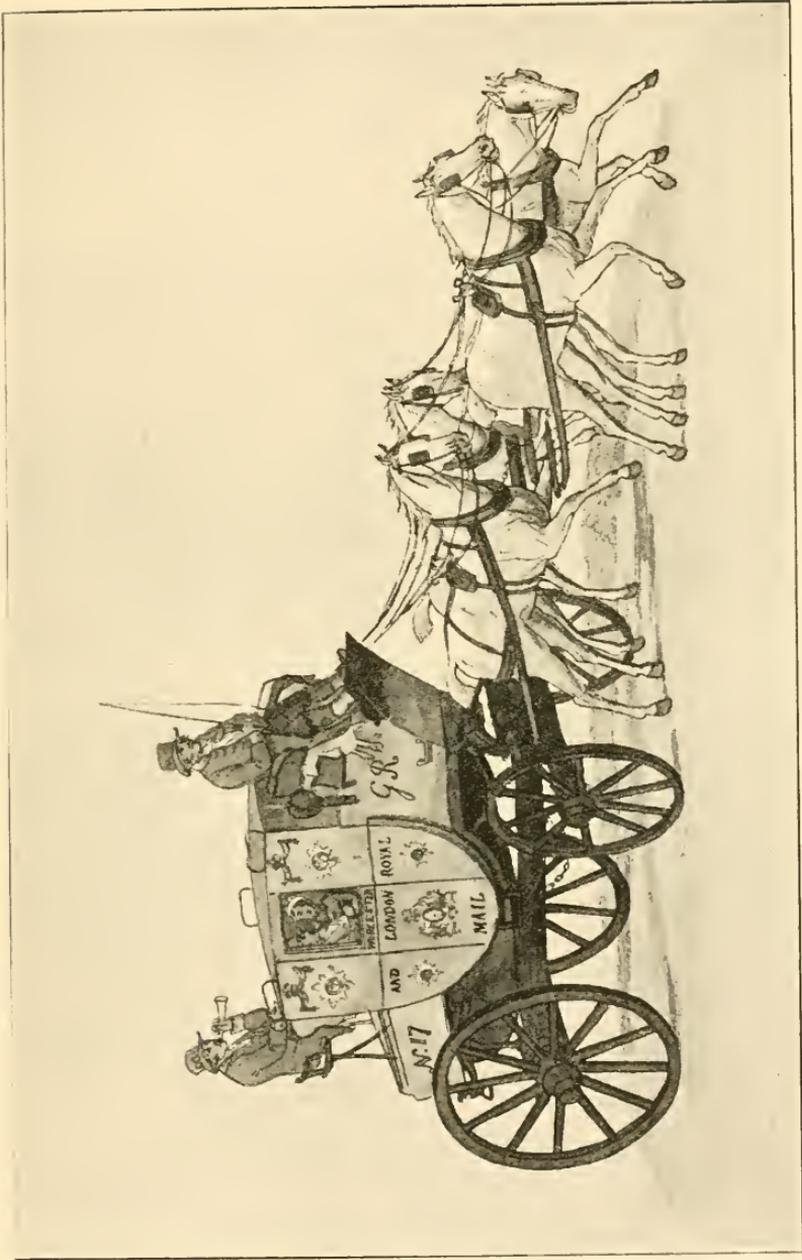
But the subscribers who had expended so much were naturally indignant. They pointed out that the district was a wild and difficult one and the Trust poor, in consequence of the sparse traffic. The stage-coaches, they said, had in some instances been withdrawn because they could not hold their own against the competition of the mail, and the Trust lost the tolls in consequence; while the mail, going toll-free and wearing the road down, contributed nothing to

the upkeep. They urged that the mail should at least pay toll, and in this they were supported by every other Turnpike Trust.

The exemption of mail-coaches from payment of tolls, a relief provided for by the Act of 25th George III., was really a continuation of the old policy by which the postboys of an earlier age, riding horseback and carrying the mailbags athwart the saddle, had always passed toll-free. Even the light mail-cart partook of this advantage, to which there could then have been no real objection. It had been no great matter, one way or the other, with the Turnpike Trusts, for the posts were then infrequent and the revenue to be obtained quite a negligible quantity; but the appearance of mail-coaches in considerable numbers, running constantly and carrying passengers, and yet contributing nothing towards the upkeep of the roads, soon became a very real grievance to those Trusts situated on the route of the mails, but in outlying parts of the kingdom, little travelled, and where towns were lacking and villages poor, few, and far between. Little wonder, then, that the various Turnpike Trusts in 1810 approached Parliament for a redress of these disabilities. They pointed out that not only was there a greater wear and tear of the roads now the mail-coaches were running, but that travellers, relying on the fancied security of the mails, had deserted the stages, which in many cases had been wholly run off the road. Pennant, writing in 1792, tells how two

stages plying through the county of Flint, and yielding £10 in tolls yearly, had been unable to compete with the mail, and were thus withdrawn, to the consequent loss of the Trust concerned. It was calculated, so early as 1791, by one amateur actuary, that the total annual loss through mail exemptions was £90,000; but another put it at only £50,000 in 1810.

The case of the remote country trusts was certainly a hard one. Like all turnpikes, they were worked under Acts of Parliament, which prescribed the amounts of tolls to be levied, and they were, further, authorised to raise money for the improvement of the roads on the security of the income arising from these taxes upon locomotion. The security of money sunk in these quasi-Government enterprises had always been considered so good that Turnpike Trust bonds and mortgages were a very favourite form of investment; but when Parliament turned a deaf ear to the bitter cry of the remote Trusts, the position of those interested in the securities began to be reconsidered. The woes of these undertakings were further added to by the action of the Post Office, which, zealous for its new mail-services, sent out emissaries to report upon the condition of the roads. The reports of these officials bore severely against the very Trusts most hardly hit by the mail-exemption, and the roads under their control were frequently indicted for being out of repair, with the result that heavy fines were inflicted. It had been suggested that as the Post Office on



THE WORCESTER MAIL, 1803.

After J. A. Atkinson.

one hand required better roads, and on the other deprived the rural Trusts of a great part of their income, the Government should at least pay off the debts of the various turnpikes. But nothing was done; the mails continued to go free, and in the end the iniquity was perpetrated of suffering the local Turnpike Acts to lapse and the roads to be dispiked before the Trusts had paid off their loans. The greater number of Trust "securities" therefore became worthless, and the investors in them ruined.

Mail-coaches continued to go toll-free to the very last in England, although from 1798 they had paid toll in Ireland. In Scotland, too, the Trusts were treated with tardy justice, and in 1813 an Act was passed repealing the exemption in that kingdom. But what the Post Office relinquished with one hand it took back with the other, clapping on a halfpenny additional postage for each Scotch letter. It was like the children's game of "tit-for-tat." But it did not end here. The Trusts raised their tolls against the mail-coaches, and smiled superior. It was then the Department's call, and it responded by immediately taking off a number of the mails. That ended the game in favour of St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Although Parliament never repealed the exemption for the whole of the United Kingdom, it caused an estimate to be prepared of the annual cost of paying tolls, should it ever be in a mind to grant the Trusts that relief. It thus appeared,

from the return made in 1812, that the cost for Scotland would have been £11,229 16s. 8d.; for England, £33,536 2s. 3d.; and for Wales, £5224 3s. 10d.: total, £49,990 2s. 9d. per annum.

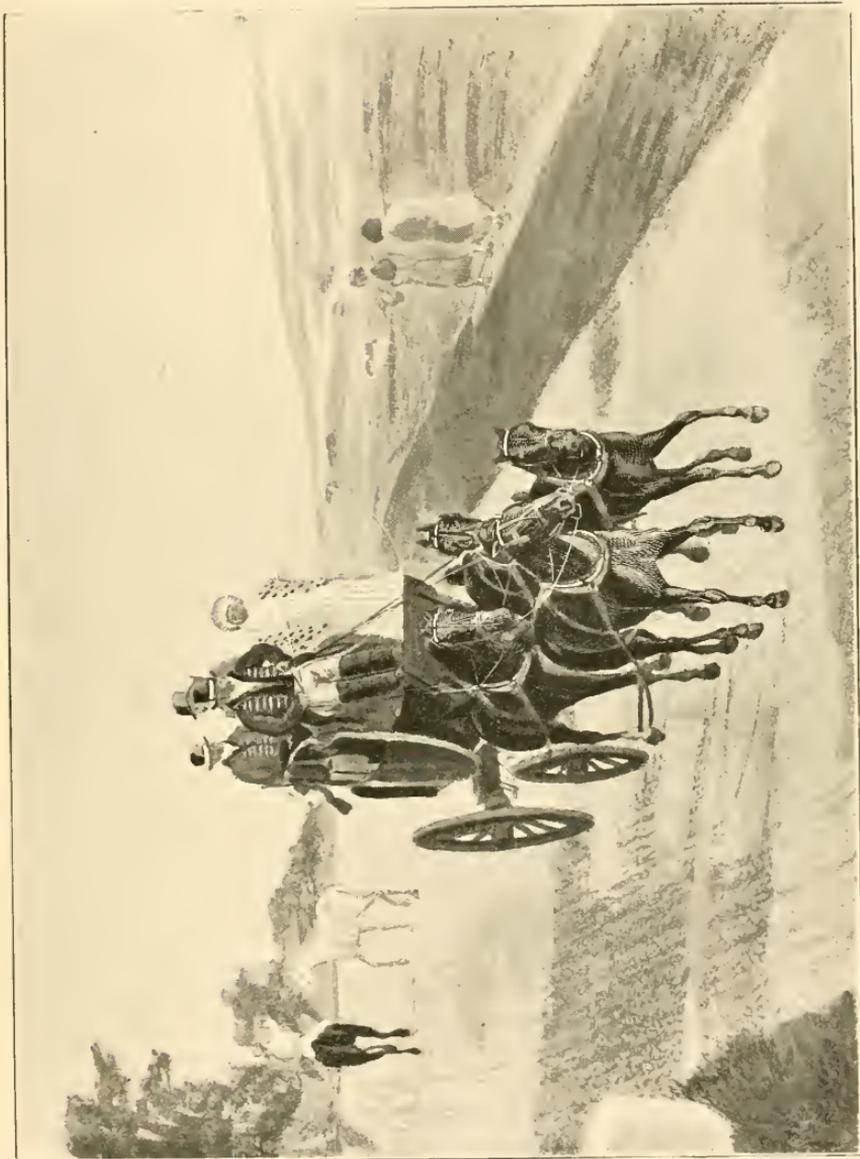
The mails, travelling as they did throughout the night, were subject to many dangers. They were brilliantly lighted, generally with four, and often with five, lamps, and cast a very dazzling illumination upon the highway. It is true that no certainty exists as to the number of lamps mail-coaches carried, and that old prints often show only two; so that the practice in this important matter probably varied on different routes and at various times. But the crack mails at the last certainly carried five lamps—one on either side of the fore upper quarter, one on either side of the fore boot, and another under the footboard, casting a light upon the horses' backs and harness. These radiant swiftesses, hurtling along the roads at a pace considerably over ten miles an hour, were highly dangerous to other users of the roads, who were half-blinded by the glare, and, alarmed by the heart-shaking thunder of their approach and fearful of being run down, generally drove into the ditches as the least of two evils. The mails were then, as electric trams and high-powered motor-cars are now, the tyrants of the road.

But they were not only dangerous to others. Circumstances that ought never to have been permitted sometimes rendered them perilous to all they carried. The possibilities of that time

in wrong-doing are shown in the practice of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn (who assuredly was not the only one) being allowed to send his refractory carriage-horses to the mails, to be steadied. On such occasions the passengers from Oswestry found themselves in for a wild start and a rough stage, and Sir Watkin had the steam taken out of his high-mettled horses at an imminent risk to the lives and limbs of the lieges.

From 1825, when the era of the fast day-coaches began, the mails gradually lost the proud pre-eminence they had kept for more than forty years. Even though they had been accelerated from time to time as roads improved, they went no quicker than the new-comers, and very often not so quick, from point to point. They suffered the disabilities of travelling by night, when careful coachmen dared not let their horses out to their best speed, and of being subject to the delays of Post Office business; and so, although they might, and did, make wonderful speed between stages, the showing on the whole journey could not compare with the times of the fast day-coaches, which halted only for changing horses and for meals, and, enjoying the perfection of quick-changing, often got away in fifty seconds from every halt. Going at more seasonable hours, the day-coaches now began to seriously compete with the mails, whose old-time supporters, although still sensible of the dignity of travelling by mail, were equally alive to the comfort and convenience of going by daylight. Modern writers, enlarging

upon the times of our ancestors, lay great stress upon the endurance our hearty grandfathers "cheerfully" displayed, and show us great, bluff, burly, red-checked men, who enjoyed this long night-travelling. But that is an absurdity. They did *not* enjoy it; they were not all bluff and burly; and that they welcomed the change that gave them swift travelling by day instead of night is obvious from the instant success of the fast day-coaches, and from the later business-history of the mails. Mail-contractors, who in the prosperous days of no competition were screwed down by the Post Office to incredible mileage figures, began to grumble; but for long they grumbled in vain. Even in 1834 the Post Office continued to pay only 2*d.* a mile on 42 mails, 1½*d.* a mile on 34, and only one received as much as 4*d.* The Liverpool and Manchester carried the mailbags for nothing, and three actually paid the Post Office for the privilege. At this time the old rule forbidding more than three outside passengers on the mails was relaxed. This indulgence began in Scotland, where the contractors, in consideration of the sparseness of the population and the scarcity of chance passengers on the way, were allowed a fourth outside passenger; and eventually many of the mails, like the stages, carried from eight to twelve outsides. This, however, did not suffice, for those passengers did not often present themselves; and at last the contractors really did not care to obtain the Post Office business, finding it pay better to devote their



After J. L. Agasse, 1824.

THE MAIL.

attention to fast day-coaches on their own account.

Thus the Post Office found itself in a novel and unwonted position. Coach-proprietors and contractors, instead of anxiously endeavouring to obtain the mail-contracts, held aloof, and the Post Office surveyors, when renewals were necessary, found *they* had to make the advances and do the courting. Then the tables were turned with a vengeance! For Benjamin Horne's "Foreign Mail," carrying what were called the "black bags" (*i.e.* black tarpaulin to protect the mail from sea-water) between London and Dover, 1s. 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ *d.* per double mile was paid; 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ *d.* for the Carmarthen and Pembroke; and 8*d.*, and then 9*d.*, for the Norwich Mail, by Newmarket, strongly opposed as it was by the Norwich "Telegraph," and therefore loading badly on that lonely road. For the Chester, originally contracted for at 1s. a mile, then down to 3*d.*, and in 1826 up to 4*d.*, 6*d.* was paid, on account of passengers going by the direct Holyhead Mail, and the Holyhead itself was raised to the same figure when fast day-stages had begun to run from Shrewsbury.

A Committee of the House of Commons had sat upon this question before these prices were given, and much evidence was taken; but these revised tariffs did by no means end the matter. Substantial contractors would in many instances have nothing to do with the Post Office, and the Department could not run the risk of employing

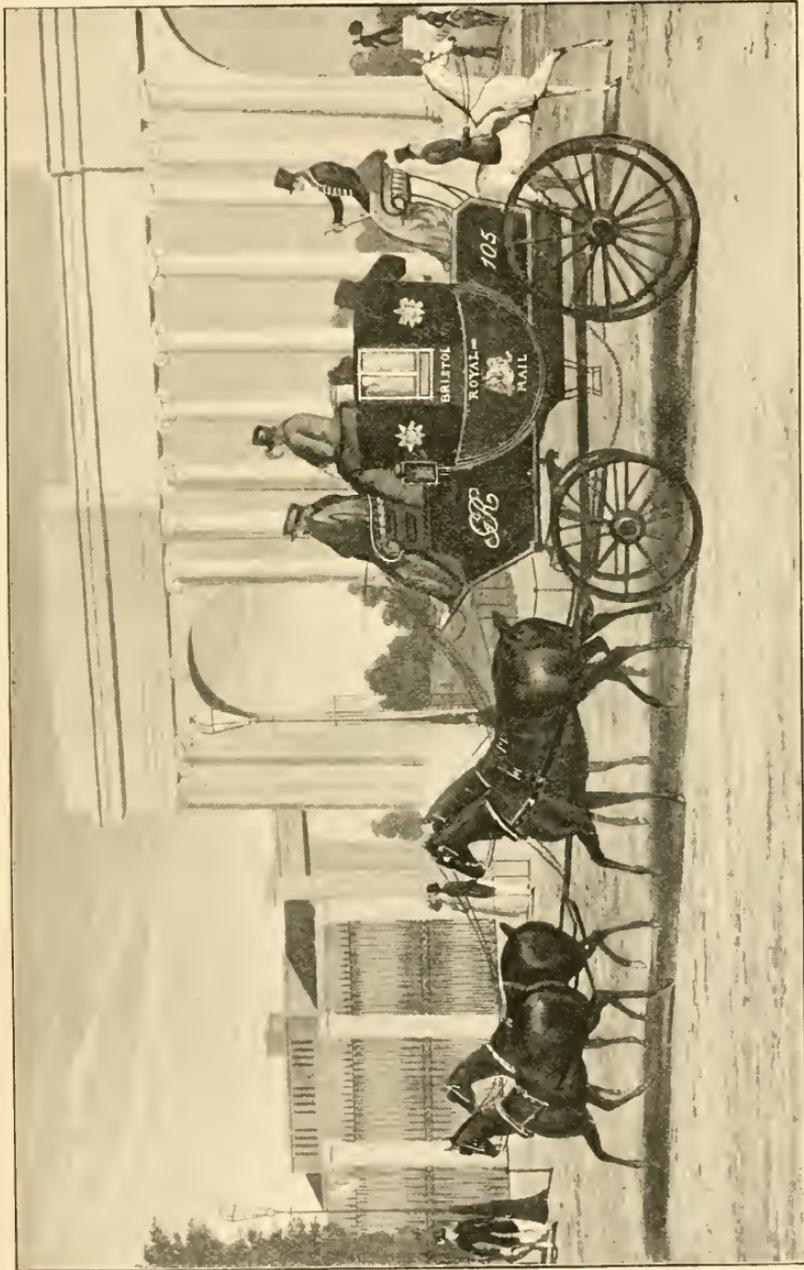
irresponsible men who could not be held to their undertakings. In some few instances ordinary night-stages were given the business, and it was seriously proposed to employ the guards of existing stage-coaches to take charge of the bags, but this was never carried out. In the midst of all these worries, when it seemed as though the despatch of the mails must needs, in the altered conditions of the time, be eventually changed from night to day, railways came to relieve official anxieties, which existed not only on account of the increasing cost, but also on the score of the continually growing bulk of mail-matter, piled up to mountainous heights on the roof, instead of, as originally, being easily stowed away in the depths of the hind boot. It was considered a great advantage of the mail-coaches built by Waude in these last days that they were not only built with a low centre of gravity, but that, with a dropped hind axle, they made a deeper and more capacious boot possible, in which were stowed the more valuable portions of the mail. Had railways not at the very cynthia of the moment come to supply a "felt want," certainly the mails must on many roads have been carried by mail-vans devoted exclusively to the service. But in 1830 the Liverpool and Manchester Railway carried mailbags, and in anticipation of the opening throughout of the London and Birmingham, the first long route, in September 1838, an Act of Parliament was passed on August 14th in that year, authorising the

conveyance of mails by railways. We must not, however, suppose that such instant advantage was always taken of new methods. That would not be according to the traditions of the Post Office. Accordingly, we find that, although what is now the London and South-Western Railway was opened between Nine Elms and Portsmouth in May 1840, it was not until 1842 that the Portsmouth Mail went by rail. For two years it continued to perform the 73 miles 3 furlongs in 9 hours 10 minutes, when it might have gone by train in 6 hours 10 minutes less.

With these changes, London lost an annual spectacle of considerable interest. From 1791 the procession of the mail-coaches on the King's birthday had been the grand show occasion of the Post Office year. No efforts and no expense were spared by the loyal contractors (loyal in spite of the oftentimes arbitrary dealings of the Post Office with them) to grace the day; and Vidler and Parratt, who for many years had the monopoly of supplying the coaches, equalled them in the zeal displayed. The coaches were drawn up at twelve, noon, to the whole number of twenty-seven, at the factory on Millbank, beautiful in new paint and new gilding; the Bristol Mail, as the senior, leading, the others in the like order of their establishment. On this occasion the Post Office provided each guard with a new gold-laced hat and scarlet coat, and the mail-contractors who horsed the coaches, not to be outdone, found scarlet coats for their coachmen, in addition to providing new

harness. The coachmen and guards, unwilling to be beaten in this loyal competition, provided themselves with huge nosegays, as big as cauliflowers. When, as in the reign of William IV., the King's birthday fell in a pleasant time of the year, the procession of the mails was a beautiful and popular sight, attracting not only the general public, but the very numerous sporting folks, who welcomed the opportunity of seeing at their best, and all together, the one hundred and two noble horses that drew the mails from the Metropolis to all parts of the kingdom. Everything, indeed, was very special to the occasion. Each coach was provided with a gorgeous hammer-cloth, a species of upholstery certainly not in use on ordinary journeys. No one was allowed on the roof, but the coachman and guard had the privilege of two tickets each for friends for the inside. Great, as may be supposed, was the competition for these. For the contractors themselves there was the cold collation provided by Vidler and Parratt at Millbank, at three o'clock, when the procession was over.

The route varied somewhat with the circumstances of the time, always including the residence of the Postmaster-General for the time being. Punctually at noon it started off, headed by a horseman, and with another horseman between each coach. Nearing St. James's Palace, it was generally reduced to a snail's pace, for the crowd always assembled densely there, on the chance of seeing the King; and the authorities of that



After J. Doyle.

THE BRISTOL MAIL AT HYDE PARK CORNER, 1838.

period were not clever at clearing a route. Imagine now the front of Carlton House Palace, or St. James's, and the Londoners of that age assembled in their thousands. The procession with difficulty approaches, and halts. Two barrels of porter—Barelay & Perkins' best—are in position in front of the Royal residence, and to each coachman and guard is handed a capacious pewter pot—it is a sight to make a Good Templar weep. The King and Queen and the Royal family now appear at an open window, the King removing his hat and bowing, to a storm of applause—as though he had done something really clever or wonderful. Now the coachman of the Bristol Mail uncovers, and holding high the shining pewter, exclaims: “We drink to the health of His Gracious Majesty: God bless him!” and suiting the action to the words, dips his nose into the pot, which in an incredibly short time is completely inverted and emptied. Fifty-three other voices simultaneously repeat the same words, and fifty-three pint pots are in like manner drained in the twinkling of an eye. The King and his family now retire, and the procession prepares to move on; but the mob, moved by loyalty and the sight of the beer-barrels, grows clamorous: “King, King! Queen, Queen!” cry a thousand voices; while a thousand more yell, “Beer, beer!” When at length the King does return, to bow once more, he gazes upon two thousand people struggling for two half-empty barrels, which in the scuffle

have upset, and speedily become empty. Meanwhile the coaches have moved off, to complete their tour to the General Post Office, and thence back to Millbank.

These processions, from some cause or another not now easily to be discovered, were omitted in 1829 and 1830. May 17th, 1838, when twenty-five mails paraded, was the last occasion; for already the railway was threatening the road, and when Queen Victoria's birthday recurred the ranks of the mails were sadly broken.

This memorable year, 1837, then, was the last unbroken year of the mail-coaches starting from London. Since September 23rd, 1829, when the old General Post Office in Lombard Street was deserted for the great building in St. Martin's-le-Grand, they had come and gone. The first ever to enter its gates, as the result of keen competition, had been the up Holyhead Mail of that date; the last was the Dover Mail, in 1844.

The mail-coaches loaded up about half-past seven at their respective inns, and then assembled at the Post Office Yard to receive the bags. All, that is to say, except seven West of England mails—the Bath, Bristol, Devonport, Exeter, Gloucester, Southampton and Stroud—whose coaches started from Piccadilly, the bags being conveyed to them at that point by mail-cart. There were thus twenty-one coaches starting nightly from the General Post Office precisely at 8 o'clock. Here is a list of the mails setting out every night throughout the year:—

A LIST OF MAIL-COACHES STARTING NIGHTLY FROM LONDON IN 1837.

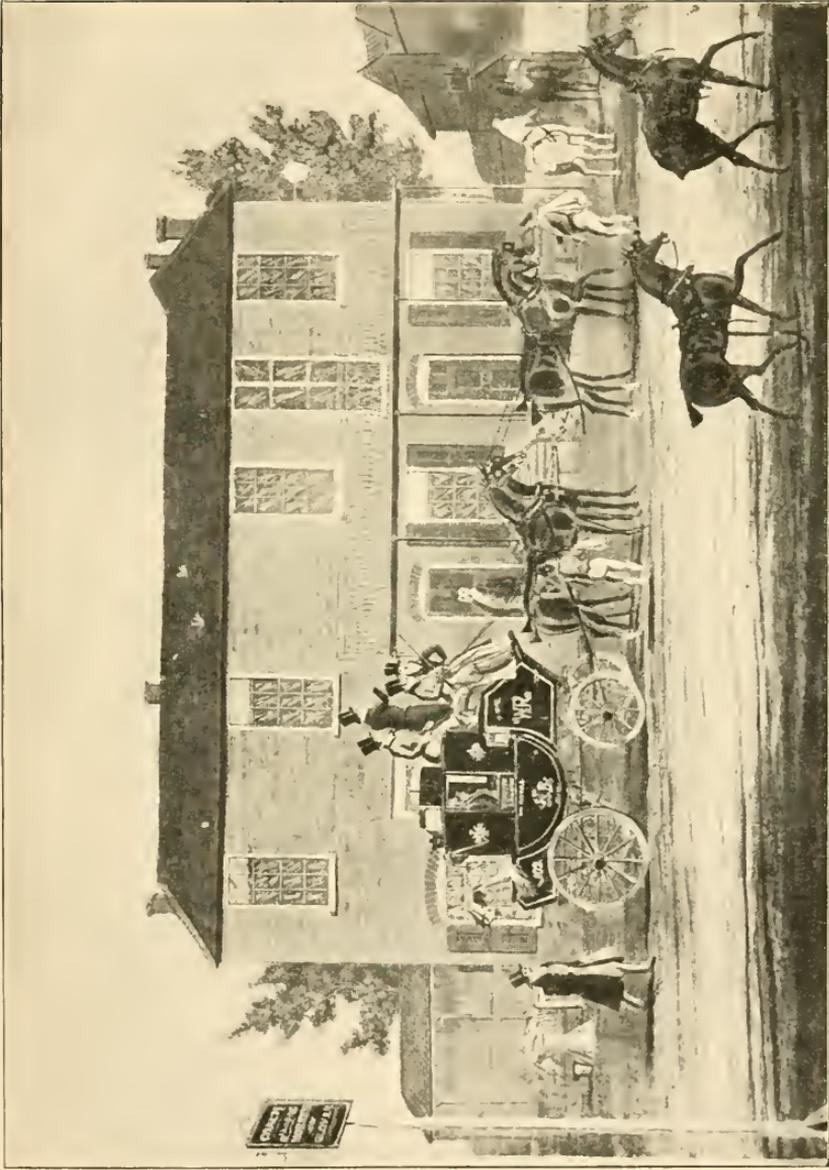
| Mails. | Miles. | Inn whence starting. | Time. | Average speed per hour, stops included. |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|-------|---|
| | | | H. M. | M. P. |
| Bristol | 122 | Swan with Two Necks | 11 45 | 10 3 |
| Devonport ("Quicksilver") | 216 | Spread Eagle, Gracechurch Street | 21 14 | 10 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Birmingham | 119 | King's Arms, Holborn Bridge | 11 56 | 9 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| Bath | 109 | Swan with Two Necks | 11 0 | 9 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| Manchester | 187 | " " | 19 0 | 9 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ |
| Halifax | 196 | " " | 20 5 | 9 6 |
| Liverpool | 203 | " " | 20 50 | 9 6 |
| Holyhead | 261 | " " | 26 55 | 9 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ |
| Norwich, by Ipswich | 113 | " " | 11 38 | 9 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ |
| Exeter | 173 | " " | 18 12 | 9 4 |
| Hull (New Holland Ferry) | 172 | Spread Eagle, Gracechurch Street | 18 12 | 9 4 |
| Leeds | 197 | Bull and Mouth | 20 52 | 9 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Glasgow | 396 | " " | 42 0 | 9 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Southampton | 80 | Swan with Two Necks | 8 30 | 9 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Edinburgh | 399 | Bull and Mouth | 42 23 | 9 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Chester | 190 | Golden Cross | 20 16 | 9 3 |
| Gloucester and Carmarthen | 224 | " " | 21 0 | 9 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ |
| Worcester | 115 | Bull and Mouth | 12 20 | 9 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| Yarmouth | 124 | White Horse, Fetter Lane | 13 30 | 9 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Louth | 148 | Bell and Crown, Holborn. | 15 56 | 9 0 |
| Norwich, by Newmarket | 118 | Belle Sauvage | 13 5 | 9 0 |
| Stroud | 105 | Swan with Two Necks | 11 47 | 9 0 |
| Wells | 133 | Bell and Crown | 14 43 | 9 0 |
| Falmouth | 271 | Bull and Mouth | 31 55 | 8 4 |
| Dover | 73 | Golden Cross | 8 57 | 8 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Hastings | 67 | Bolt-in-Tun, Fleet Street. | 8 15 | 8 0 |
| Portsmouth | 73 | White Horse | 9 10 | 7 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Brighton | 55 | Blossoms Inn | 7 20 | 7 4 |

With the exception of the Brighton, Portsmouth, Dover and Hastings, they were all splendidly-appointed four-horse coaches; but those four places being only at short distances, speed was unnecessary, and they were only provided with pair-horse mails. Had a speed similar to that maintained on most other mails been kept up, letters and passengers would have reached the coast in the middle of the night.

The so-called "Yarmouth Mail" was, we are told by those who travelled on it, an ordinary stage-coach, carrying the usual four inside and twelve outside, chartered by the Post Office to carry the mail-bags; but the old print, engraved here, does not bear out that contention.

The *arrival* of the mails in London was an early morning affair. First of all came the Leeds, at five minutes past four, followed at an interval of over an hour—5.15—by the Glasgow, and then, at 5.39, by the Edinburgh. All arrived by 7 o'clock.

There was then, as now, no Sunday delivery of letters in London, and Saturday nights were, by consequence, saturnalias for the up-mails. Although the clock might have been set with accuracy by their passing at any other time, their coming into London on Sundays was a happy-go-lucky, chance affair. The coachmen would arrange to meet on the Saturday nights at such junctions of the different routes as Andover, Hounslow, Puckeridge, and Hockliffe, and so in company have what they very descriptively termed a "roaring time."



THE YARMOUTH MAIL, AT THE "COACH AND HORSES," ILFORD. *After J. Pollard.*

In 1836 the fastest mail ran on a provincial route. This was the short 28-miles service between Liverpool and Preston, maintained at 10 miles 5 furlongs an hour. The slowest was the 19-miles Canterbury and Deal, at 6 miles an hour, including stops for changing. The average speed of all the mails was as low as 8 miles 7 furlongs an hour.

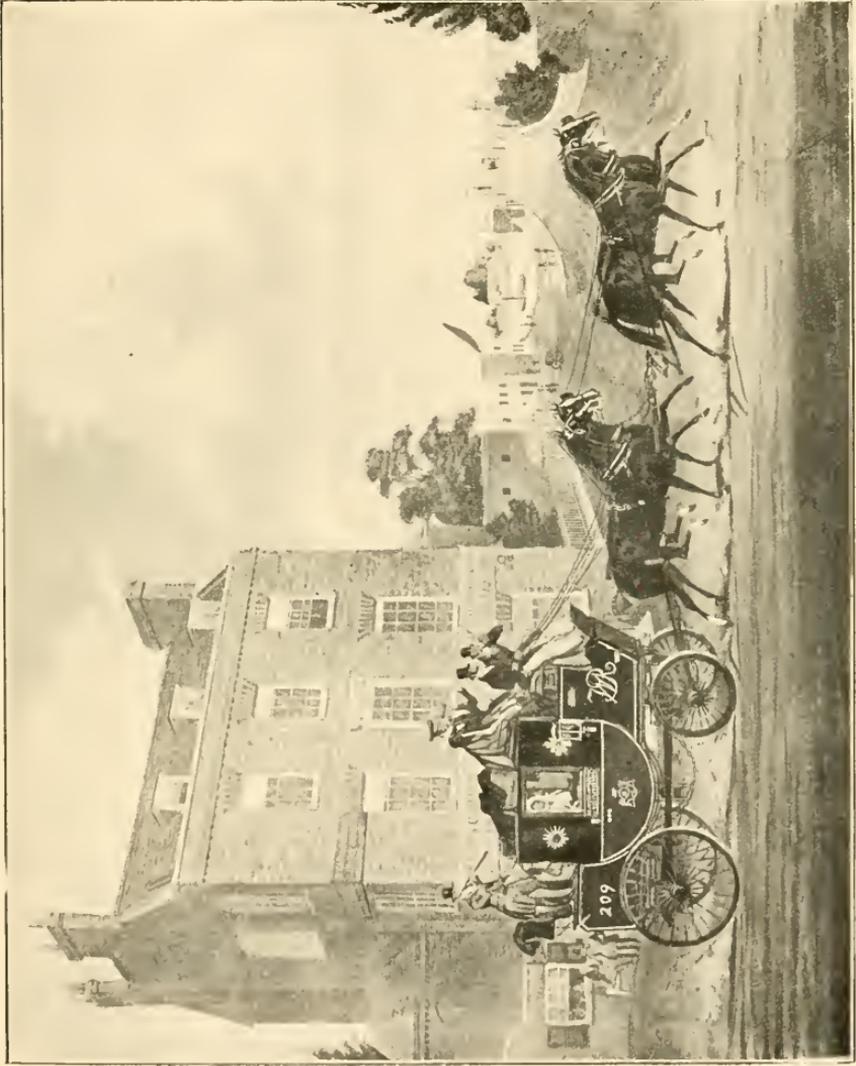
In 1838 there were 59 four-horse mails in England and Wales, 16 in Scotland, and 29 in Ireland, in addition to a total number of 70 pair-horse: some 180 mails in all. It was in this year that—the novelty of railways creating a desire for fast travelling—the Post Office yielded to the cry for speed, and, abandoning the usual conservative attitude, went too far in the other direction, overstepping the bounds of common safety. For some time the mails between Glasgow and Carlisle, and Carlisle and Edinburgh were run to clear 11 miles an hour, which meant an average pace of 13 miles an hour. These were popularly called the “calico mails,” because of their lightness. The time allowed between Carlisle and Glasgow, 96 miles, was 8 hours 32 minutes, and it was a sight to see it come down Stanwix Brow on a summer evening. It met, however, with so many accidents that cautious folk always avoided it, preferring the orthodox 10 miles an hour—especially by lamplight in the rugged Cheviots. Even at that pace there had been more than enough risk, as these incidents from

Post Office records of three years earlier clearly show :—

1835.

- | | | |
|----------|-----|---|
| February | 5. | Edinburgh and Aberdeen Mail overturned. |
| „ | 9. | Devonport Mail overturned. |
| „ | 10. | Scarborough and York Mail overturned. |
| „ | 16. | Belfast and Enniskillen Mail overturned. |
| „ | „ | Dublin and Derry Mail overturned. |
| „ | 17. | Scarborough and Hull Mail overturned. |
| „ | „ | York and Doncaster Mail overturned. |
| „ | 20. | Thirty-five mail-horses burnt alive at Reading. |
| „ | 24. | Louth Mail overturned. |
| „ | 25. | Gloucester Mail overturned. |

No place was better served by the Post Office than Exeter in the last years of the road, and few so well. Before 1837 it had no fewer than three mails, and in that year a fourth was added. All four started simultaneously from the General Post Office, and reached the Queen City of the West within a few hours of one another every day. On its own merits, Exeter did not deserve or need all these travelling and postal facilities, and it was only because it stood at the converging-point of many routes that it obtained them. Only one mail, indeed, was dedicated especially to Exeter, and that was the last-established, the “New Exeter,” put on the road in 1837. The others continued to Devonport or to Falmouth, then a port, a mail-packet and naval station of great prominence, where the West Indian mails landed, and whence they were shipped. To the mail-coaches making for Devonport and Falmouth, Exeter was, therefore, only an incident.



THE "QUICKSILVER" DEVONPORT MAIL, PASSING KEW BRIDGE. After J. Follard.

The "Old Exeter" Mail, continued on to Falmouth, kept consistently to the main Exeter Road, through Salisbury, Dorchester and Bridport. Before 1837 it had performed the journey to Exeter in 20 hours and to Falmouth in $31\frac{3}{4}$ hours, but was then accelerated one hour as between London and Exeter, and although slightly decelerated onwards, the gain on the whole distance was 49 minutes.

Five minutes in advance of this ran the "Quicksilver" Devonport Mail, as far as Salisbury, where, until 1837, it branched off, going by Shaftesbury, Sherborne and Yeovil, a route $5\frac{3}{4}$ miles shorter than the other. It was $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours quicker than the "Old Exeter" as far as that city. Here is the time-table of the "Quicksilver" at that period, to Exeter:—

LEAVING GENERAL POST OFFICE AT 8 P.M.

| Miles. | Places. | Due. |
|--------|-----------------------|------------|
| 12 | Hounslow | 9.12 p.m. |
| 19 | Staines | 9.56 " |
| 29 | Bagshot | 11.0 " |
| 67 | Andover | 2.42 a.m. |
| 84 | Salisbury | 4.27 " |
| 105 | Shaftesbury | 6.41 " |
| 126 | Yeovil | 8.56 " |
| 135 | Crewkerne | 10.12 " |
| 143 | Chard | 11.0 " |
| 156 | Honiton | 12.31 p.m. |
| 173 | Exeter | 2.14 " |

Thus 18 hours 14 minutes were allowed for the 173 miles. In 1837 the "Quicksilver" was put on the "upper road" by Amesbury and Ilminster, and her pace again accelerated; this time by

1 hour 38 minutes to Exeter and 4 hours 39 minutes to Falmouth. This then became the fastest long-distance mail in the kingdom, maintaining a speed, including stops, of nearly $10\frac{1}{4}$ miles an hour between London and Devonport. It should be remembered, when considering the subject of speed, that the mails had not only to change horses and stay for supper and breakfast, like the stage-coaches, but also had to call at the post offices to deliver and collect the mail-bags, and all time so expended had to be made up. The "Quicksilver" must needs have gone some stages at 12 miles an hour.

Time also had to be kept in all kinds of weather, and the guard—who was the servant of the Post Office, and not, as the coachman was, of the mail-contractors—was bound to see that time was kept, and had power, whenever it was being lost, to order out post-horses at the expense of the contractors. Six, and sometimes eight, horses were often thus attached to the mails. The route of the "Quicksilver" from 1837 was according to the following time-bill:—

LEAVING GENERAL POST OFFICE AT 8 P.M.

| Miles. | Places. | Due. | Miles. | Places. | Due. |
|--------|--------------|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|
| 12 | Hounslow . | 9.8 p.m. | 97 | Chicklade . | 5.15 a.m. |
| 19 | Staines. . | 9.48 " | 125 | Hechester . | 7.50 " |
| 29 | Bagshot . | 10.47 " | 137 | Ilminster . | 8.58 " |
| 67 | Andover . | 2.20 a.m. | 154 | Honiton . | 11.0 " |
| 80 | Amesbury . | 3.39 " | 170 | Exeter . | 12.34 p.m. |
| 90 | Deptford Inn | 4.34 " | Time : 16 hours 34 minutes. | | |

The complete official time-bill for the whole distance is appended:—

TIME-BILL, LONDON, EXETER AND DEVONPORT ("QUICKSILVER")
MAIL, 1837.

| Contractors' Names. | Number of Passengers. | | Stages. | | Time Allowed. | | Despatched from the General Post Office, the of 1837, at 8 p.m. Coach No. (With timepiece sent out safe, No. to Arrived at the Gloucester Coffee-House at Hounslow. Staines. Bagshot. Arrived 10.47 p.m. Hartford Bridge. Basingstoke. Overton. Whitchurch. Arrived 1.41 a.m. Andover. Arrived 2.20 a.m. Amesbury. Arrived 3.39 a.m. Deptford Inn. Arrived 4.34 a.m. Wiley. Chicklade. Arrived 5.15 a.m. (Bags dropped for Hindon, 1 Mere. [mile distant.] Wincenton. Ilchester. Cart Gate. Arrived 8.14 a.m. Water Gore, 6 miles from South Petherton. Bags dropped for that place. Ilminster. Arrived 8.58 a.m. Breakfast 25 minutes. Dep. 9.23. Yarcombe, Heathfield Arms. Arrived 10.9 a.m. Honiton. Arrived 11 a.m. Exeter. Arrived 12.34 p.m. Ten minutes allowed. Chudleigh. Ashburton. Arrived 2.41 p.m. Ivybridge. Bags dropped at Ridgway for Plympton, 3 furlongs distant. Plymouth. Arrived at the Post Office, Devonport, the of 1837, at 5.14 p.m. by timepiece. At by clock. Coach No. (Delivered timepiece arr. safe, No. to |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------|--|----------------|---------------|--|---|
| | In. | Out. | M. F. | H. M. | | | |
| Chaplin . | | | { 12 2 7 1 9 7 9 1 } | { 2 47 | | | |
| Company . | | | { 10 1 8 0 3 5 } | { 2 54 | | | |
| Broad . . | | | { 6 7 13 7 } | { 0 39 1 19 | | | |
| Ward . . | | | { 9 5 | { 0 55 | | | |
| Davis . . | | | { 0 5 6 5 } | { 0 41 | | | |
| Whitmarsh | | | { 6 6 7 0 13 4 4 1 } | { 2 59 | | | |
| Jeffery . | | | { 2 6 5 1 } | { 0 44 | | | |
| Soaring . | | | { 8 1 | { 0 25 0 46 | | | |
| Wheaton . | | | { 8 7 16 4 } | { 0 51 1 34 | | | |
| Cockram . | | | { 0 10 10 3 9 3 13 2 6 6 } | { 0 10 1 57 | | | |
| Elliott . . | | | { 4 0 1 7 } | { 2 33 | | | |
| | | | 216 1 | 21 14 | | | |

The time of working each stage is to be reckoned from the coach's arrival, and as any lost time is to be recovered in the course of the stage, it is the coachman's duty to be as expeditious as possible, and to report the horse-keepers if they are not always ready when the coach arrives, and active in getting it off. The guard is to give his best assistance in changing, whenever his official duties do not prevent it.

By command of the Postmaster-General.

GEORGE LOUIS, *Surveyor and Superintendent.*

The "New Exeter" Mail went at the moderate inclusive speed of 9 miles an hour, and reached Exeter, where it stopped altogether, 1 hour 38 minutes later than the "Quicksilver." The fourth of this company went a circuitous route down the Bath Road to Bath, Bridgewater, and Taunton, and did not get into Exeter until 3.57 p.m. Halting ten minutes, it went on to Devonport, and stopped there at 10.5 that night.

The tabulated form given on opposite page will clearly show how the West of England mails went in 1837.

The starting of the "Quicksilver" and the other West-country mails was a recognised London sight. That of the "Telegraph" would have been also, only it left Piccadilly at 5.30 in the morning, when no one was about besides the unhappy passengers, except the stable-helpers. Chaplin, who horsed the "Quicksilver" and other Western mails from town, did not start them from the General Post Office, but from the Gloucester Coffee-House, Piccadilly. The mail-bags were brought from St. Martin's-le-Grand in a mail-cart, and the City passengers in an omnibus. The mails set out from Piccadilly at 8.30 p.m.

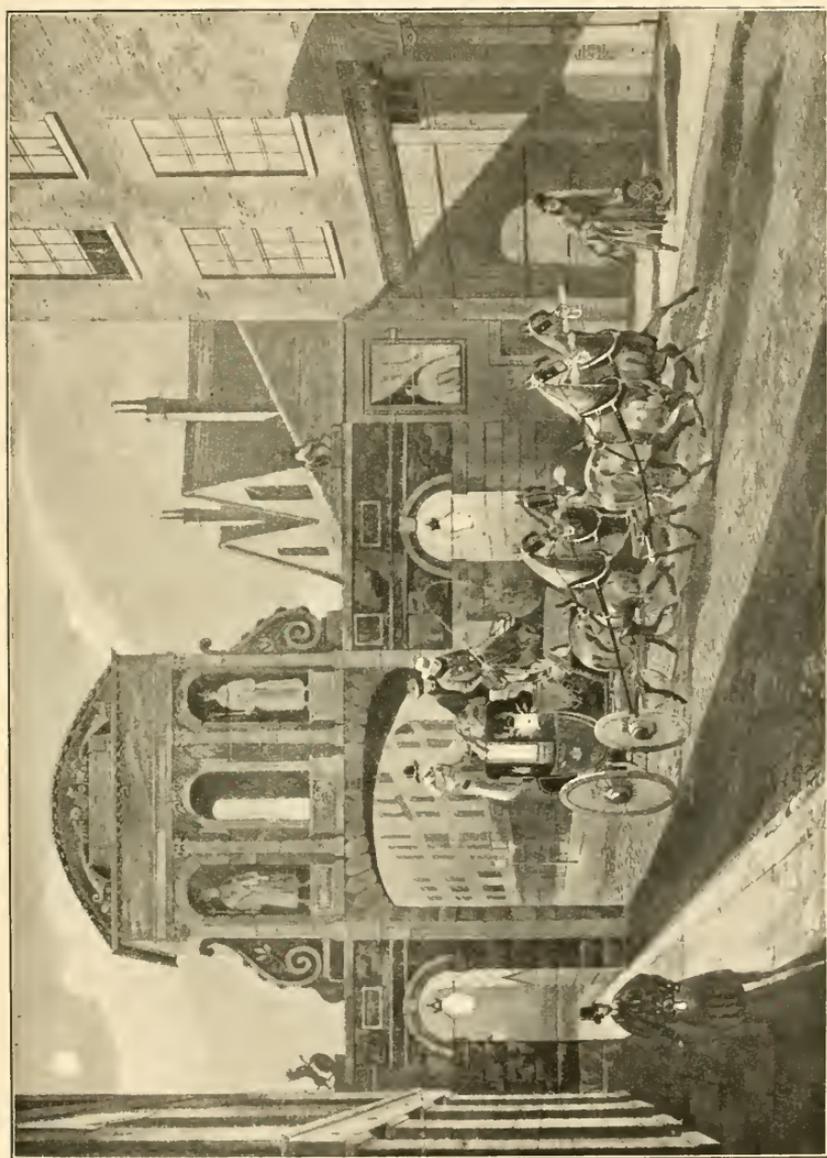
It was at Andover that the "Quicksilver," from 1837, leaving its contemporary mails, climbed up past Abbot's Ann to Park House and the bleak Wiltshire downs, along a lonely road, and finally came, up hill, out of Amesbury to the most exposed part of Salisbury Plain, at

THE WEST OF ENGLAND MAILS, 1837.

| Miles. | Places. | Old Exeter Mail, continued to Falmouth. | Devonport ("Quicksilver") Mail, continued to Falmouth. | New Exeter Mail. | Devonport Mail, by Bath and Taunton. |
|--------|--|---|--|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | General Post Office, London . . . dep. | 8.0 p.m. | 8.0 p.m. | 8.0 p.m. | 8.0 p.m. |
| 12 | Hounslow . . . arr. | | | | 9.12 " |
| 19 | Staines | | | 9.56 " | |
| 23 | Slough | | | | |
| 29 | Maidenhead . . . | | | | 10.40 " |
| 58 | Newbury | | | | 1.53 a.m. |
| 77 | Marlborough . . . | | | | 3.43 " |
| 91 | Devizes | | | | 5.6 " |
| 109 | Bath | | | | 7.0 " |
| 149 | Bridgewater . . . | | | | 11.30 " |
| 160 | Taunton | | | | 12.35 p.m. |
| 180 | Cullumpton . . . | | | | 2.42 " |
| 29 | Bagshot | | 10.47 p.m. | | |
| 67 | Andover | | 2.20 a.m. | 2.42 a.m. | |
| 84 | Salisbury | 4.52 a.m. | | 4.27 " | |
| 124½ | Dorchester | 8.57 " | | 8.53 " | |
| 126 | Yeovil | | | | |
| 137 | Bridport | 10.5 " | | 11.0 " | |
| 143 | Chard | | | | |
| 80 | Amesbury | | 3.39 " | | |
| 125 | Ilchester | | 7.50 " | | |
| | Honiton | | 11.0 " | 12.31 p.m. | |
| | EXETER {arr. | 2.59 p.m. | 12.34 p.m. | 2.12 " | 3.57 " |
| | {dep. | 3.9 " | 12.44 " | | 4.7 " |
| 210 | Newton Abbot arr. | | | | 6.33 " |
| 218 | Totnes | | | | 7.25 " |
| 190 | Ashburton | | 2.41 " | | |
| 214 | Plymouth | | 5.5 " | | |
| | DEVONPORT {arr. | | 5.14 " | | 10.5 " |
| | {dep. | | 5.41 " | | |
| 234 | Liskeard | | 7.55 " | | |
| 246 | Lostwithiel . . . | | 9.12 " | | |
| 252 | St. Austell | | 10.20 " | | |
| 266 | Truro | | 11.55 " | | |
| 271 | FALMOUTH | 3.55 a.m. | 1.5 a.m. | | |
| | | 31 h. 55 m. | 29 h. 5 m. | 18 h. 12 m. | 26 h. 5 m. |

Stonehenge, in the early hours of the morning. The "Quicksilver" was a favourite subject with the artists of that day, who were never weary of pictorially representing it. They have shown it passing Kew Bridge, and the old "Star and Garter," on the outward journey, in daylight—presumably the longest day in the year, because it did not reach that point until 9 p.m. Two of them have, separately and individually, shown us the famous attack by the lioness in 1816; and two others have pictured it on the up journey, passing Windsor Castle, and entering the City at Temple Bar; but no one has ever represented the "Quicksilver" passing beneath that gaunt and storm-beaten relic of a prehistoric age, Stonehenge. One of them, however, did a somewhat remarkable thing. The picture of the "Quicksilver" passing within sight of Windsor was executed and published in 1840, two years after the gallant old mail had been taken off that portion of the road, to be conveyed by railway. Perhaps the print was, so to speak, a post-mortem one, intended to keep the memory of the old days fresh in the recollection of travellers by the mail.

The London and Southampton Railway was opened to Woking May 23rd, 1838, and to Winchfield September 24th following, and by so much the travels of the "Quicksilver" and the other West-country coaches were shortened. For some months they all resorted to that station, and then to Basingstoke, when the line was opened so far.



THE "QUICKSILVER" DEVONPORT MALL, ARRIVING AT TEMPLE BAR, 1834.

After C. B. Neelhouse.

June 10th, 1839. This shortening of the coach route was accompanied by the following advertisement in the *Times* during October 1838, the forerunner of many others:—

“Bagshot, Surrey—49 Horses and harness. To Coach Proprietors, Mail Contractors, Post Masters, and Others.—To be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Robinson, on the premises, ‘King’s Arms’ Inn, Bagshot, on Friday, November 2, 1838, at twelve o’clock precisely, by order of Mr. Scarborough, in consequence of the coaches going per Railway.

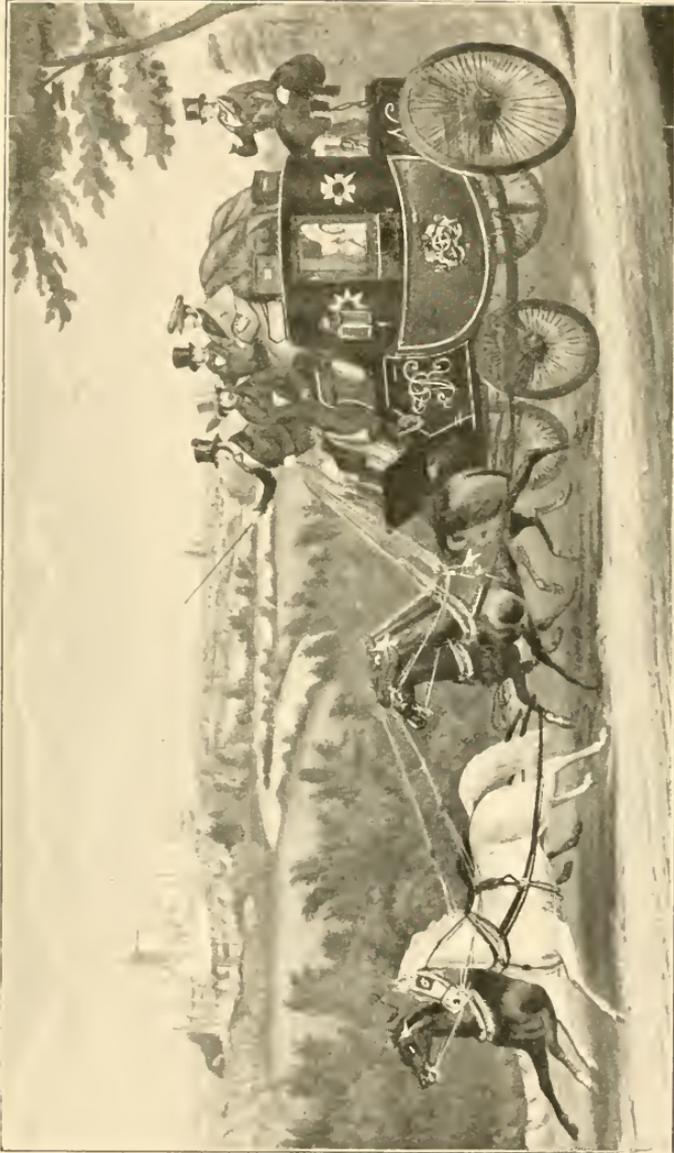
“About Forty superior, good-sized, strengthly, short-legged, quick-actioned, fresh horses, and six sets of four-horse harness, which have been working the Exeter ‘Telegraph,’ Southampton and Gosport Fast Coaches, and one stage of the Devonport Mail. The above genuine Stock merits the particular Attention of all Persons requiring known good Horses, which are for unreserved sale, entirely on Account of the Coaches being removed from the Road to the Railway.”

In Thomas Sopwith’s diary we find this significant passage: “On the 11th May, 1840, the coaches discontinued running between York and London, although the railways were circuitous.” Thus the glories of the Great North Road began to fade, but it was not until 1842 that the Edinburgh Mail was taken off the road between London, York, and Newcastle. July 5th, 1847, witnessed the last journey of the mail on that

storied road, in the departure of the coach from Newcastle-on-Tyne for Edinburgh. The next day the North British Railway was opened.

The local Derby and Manchester Mail was one of the last to go. It went off in October 1858. But away up in the far north of Scotland, where Nature at her wildest, and civilisation and population at their sparsest, placed physical and financial obstacles before the railway engineers, it was not until August 1st, 1874, that the mail-coach era closed, in the last journey of the mail-coach between Wick and Thurso. That same day the Highland Railway was opened, and in the whole length and breadth of England and Scotland mail-coaches had ceased to exist.

The mail-coaches in their prime were noble vehicles. Disdaining any display of gilt lettering or varied colour commonly to be seen on the competitive stage-coaches, they were yet remarkably striking. The lower part of the body has been variously described as chocolate, maroon, and scarlet. Maroon certainly was the colour of the later mails, and "chocolate" is obviously an error on the part of some writer whose colour-sense was not particularly exact; but we can only reconcile the "scarlet" and "maroon" by supposing that the earlier colouring was in fact the more vivid of the two. The fore and hind boots were black, together with the upper quarters of the body, and were saved from being too sombre by the Royal cipher in gold on the fore boot, the number of the mail on the hind, and, emblazoned on the



THE "QUICKSILVER" DEVONPORT MAIL, PASSING WINDSOR CASTLE.

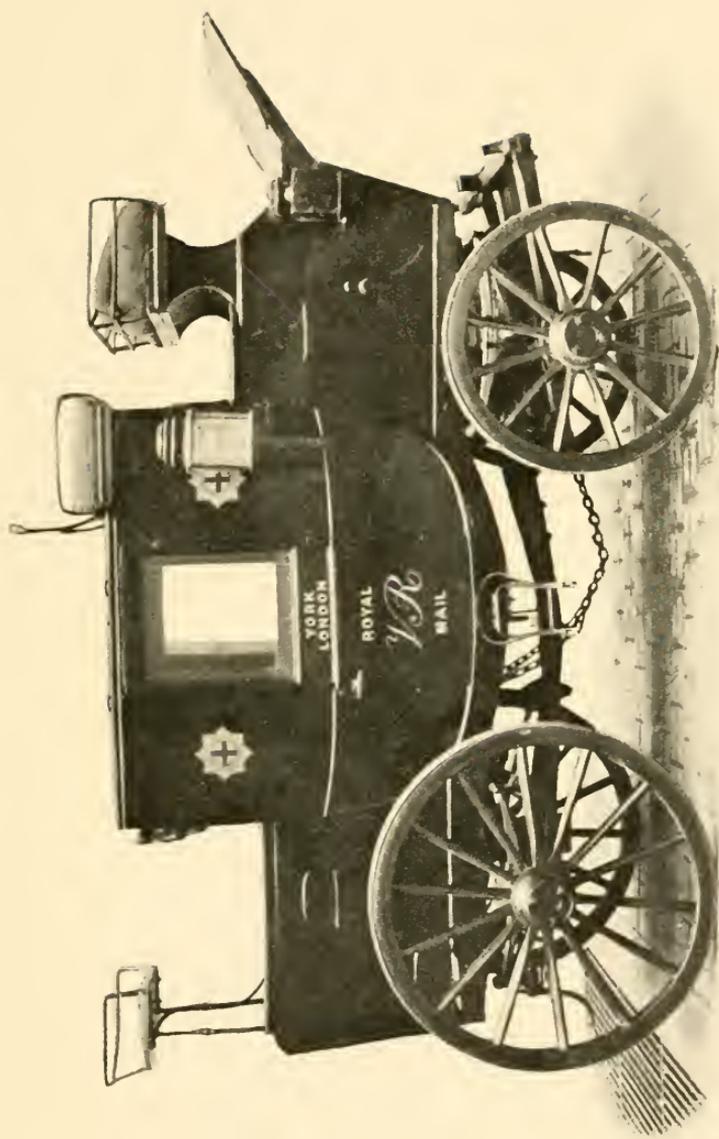
After Charles Hunt, 1840.

upper quarters, four devices eloquent of the majesty of the united kingdoms and their knightly orders. There shone the cross of St. George, with its encircling garter and the proud motto, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*"; the Scotch thistle, with the warning "*Nemo me impune lacessit*"; the shamrock and an attendant star, with the *Quis separabit?* query (not yet resolved); and three Royal crowns, with the legend of the Bath, "*Tria juncta in uno.*" The Royal arms were emblazoned on the door-panels, and old prints show that occasionally the four under quarters had devices somewhat similar to those above. The name of each particular mail appeared in unobtrusive gold letters. The under-carriage and wheels were scarlet, or "Post Office red," and the harness, with the exception of the Royal cypher and the coach-bars on the blinkers, was perfectly plain.

One at least of the mail-coaches still survives. This is a London and York mail, built by Waude, of the Old Kent Road, in 1830, and now a relic of the days of yore treasured by Messrs. Holland & Holland, of Oxford Street. Since being run off the road as a mail, it has had a curiously varied history. In 1875 and the following season, when the coaching revival was in full vigour, it appeared on the Dorking Road, and so won the affections of Captain "Billy" Cooper, whose hobby that route then was, that he had an exact copy built. In the summer of 1877 it was running between Stratford-on-Avon

and Leamington. In 1879 Mr. Charles A. R. Hoare, the banker, had it at Tunbridge Wells, and also ordered a copy. Since then the old mail-coach has been in retirement, emerging now and again as the "Old Times" coach, to emphasise the trophies of improvement and progress in the Lord Mayor's Shows of 1896, 1899 and 1901, in the wake of electric and petrol motor-cars, driven and occupied by coachmen and passengers dressed to resemble our ancestors of a hundred years ago.

The coach is substantially and in general lines as built in 1830. The wheels have been renewed, the hind boot has a door inserted at the back, and the interior has been relined; but otherwise it is the coach that ran when William IV. was king. It is a characteristic Waude coach, low-hung, and built with straight sides, instead of the bowed-out type common to the products of Vidler's factory. It wears, in consequence, a more elegant appearance than most coaches of that time; but it must be confessed that what it gained in the eyes of passers-by it must have lost in the estimation of the insides, for the interior is not a little cramped by those straight sides. The guard's seat on the "dickey"—or what in earlier times was more generally known as the "backgammon-board"—remains, but his sheepskin or tiger-skin covering, to protect his legs from the cold, is gone. The trapdoor into the hind boot can be seen. Through this the mails were thrust, and the guard sat throughout



MAIL-COACH BUILT BY WAUDE, 1830.
Now in possession of Messrs. Holland & Holland.

the journey with his feet on it. Immediately in front of him were the spare bars, while above, in the still-remaining case, reposed the indispensable blunderbuss. The original lamps, in their reversible cases, remain. There were four of them—one on either fore quarter, and one on either side of the fore boot, while a smaller one hung from beneath the footboard, just above the wheelers. The guard had a small hand-lamp of his own to aid him in sorting his small parcels. The door-panels have apparently been repainted since the old days, for, although they still keep the maroon colour characteristic of the mail-coaches, the Royal arms are gone, and in their stead appears the script monogram, in gold, "V.R."

CHAPTER II

DOWN THE ROAD IN DAYS OF YORE

I.—A JOURNEY FROM NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE TO LONDON IN 1772

IN 1773, the Reverend James Murray, Minister of the High Bridge Meeting House at Newcastle, published a little book which he was pleased to call *The Travels of the Imagination; or, a True Journey from Newcastle to London*, purporting to be an account of an actual trip taken in 1772. I do not know how his congregation received this performance, but the inspiration of it was very evidently drawn from Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, then in the heyday of its success and singularly provocative of imitations—all of them extraordinarily thin and poor. Sentimental travellers, without a scintilla of the wit that jewelled Sterne's pages, gushed and reflected in a variety of travels, and became a public nuisance. Surely no one then read their mawkish products, any more than they do now.

Murray's book was, then, obviously, to any one who now dips into it, as trite and jejune as the rest of them; but it has now, unlike its fellows, an interesting aspect, for the reason that he gives

details of road-travelling life which, once commonplace enough, afford to ourselves not a little entertainment. Equally entertaining, too, and full of unconscious humour, are those would-be eloquent rhapsodies of his which could only then have rendered him an unmitigated bore. It should be noted here that although his picture of road-life is in general reliable enough, we must by no means take him at his word when he says he journeyed all the way from Newcastle to London. We cannot believe in a traveller making that claim who devotes many pages to the first fifteen miles between Newcastle and Durham, and yet between Durham and Grantham, a distance of a hundred and fifty miles, not only finds nothing of interest, but fails to tell us whether he went by the Boroughbridge or the York route, and mentions nothing of the coach halting for the night between the beginning of the journey at Newcastle, and the first specified night's halt at Grantham, a hundred and sixty-five miles away. Those were the times when the coaches inned every night, and not until the "Wonder" London and Shrewsbury Coach was started, in 1825, did any coach ever succeed in doing much more than a hundred miles a day. So much in adverse criticism. But while a very casual glance is sufficient to expose his pretensions of having made the entire journey in this manner, it is equally evident that he knew portions of the road, and that he was conversant with the manners and customs that then obtained along it—as no one

then could help being. The fare between Newcastle and London, the lengthy halts on the way, and the manner in which the passengers often passed the long evenings at the towns where they rested for the night—witnessing any theatrical performance that offered—are extremely interesting, as also is the curious sidelight thrown upon the fact that actors—technically, in the eyes of the law, “rogues and vagabonds”—were then actually so regarded. How poorly considered the theatrical profession then was, is, of course, well known; but it is curious thus to come upon a reference to the fact that London theatres then had long summer vacations, in which the actors and actresses must starve if they could not manage to pick up a meagre livelihood by barn-storming in the country; as here we see them doing.

So much by way of preface. Now let us see what our author has to say.

To begin with, he, like many another before and since, found it disagreeable to be wakened in the morning. When a person is enjoying sweet repose in his bed, to be suddenly awakened by the rude, blustering voice of a vociferous ostler was distinctly annoying. More annoying still, however, to lose the coach; and so there was no help for it, provided the stage was to be caught. The morning was very fine when the passengers, thus untimely roused, entered the coach. Nature smiled around them, who only yawned in her face in return. Pity, thought our author, that they were

not to ride on horseback: they could then enjoy the pleasures of the morning, snuff the perfumes of the fields, hear the music of the grove and the concert of the wood.

These reflections were cut short by the crossing of the Tyne by ferry. The bridge had fallen on November 17th, 1771, and the temporary ferry established from the Swirl, Sandgate, to the south shore was the source of much inconvenience and delay. The coach was put across on a raft or barge, but in directing operations to that end, the ferryman was not to be hurried. One had to wait the pleasure of that arbitrary little Bashaw, who would not move beyond the rule of his own authority, or mitigate the sentence of those who were condemned to travel in a stage-coach within a ferry-boat.

Our author, as he hated every idea of slavery and oppression, was not a little offended at the expressions of authority used on this occasion by the august legislator of the ferry. The passengers were now in the barge, and obliged to sit quiet until this tyrant gave orders for departure. The vehicle for carrying coach and passengers across the river was the most tiresome and heavy that ever was invented. Four rowers in a small boat dragged the ponderous ferry across the river, very slowly and with great exertions, and almost an hour was consumed in thus breasting the yellow current of the broad and swiftly-running Tyne. Meanwhile, there was plenty of time to reflect on what might happen on the passage, and abundant

opportunity for putting up a few ejaculations to Heaven to preserve them all from the dangers of ferryboats and tyrants.

But the voyage at last came to an end. So soon as they were landed on the south side of the river Tyne, they were saluted by a blackbird, who welcomed them to the county of Durham. It seemed to take pleasure in seeing them fairly out of the domains of Charon, and whistled cheerfully on their arrival. "Nature," said Mr. James Murray to himself, "is the mistress of real pleasure: this same blackbird cannot suffer us to pass by without contributing to our happiness. Liberty (he continued) seems to be the first principle of music. Slaves can never sing from the heart."

No: they sing, like everyone else, from the throat.

But these observations carried them beyond Gateshead and to the ascent of the Fell, along whose steep sides the pleasures of the morning increased upon them. The whins and briars sent forth a fragrance exceedingly delightful, and on every side of the coach peerless drops of dew hung dangling upon the blossoms of the thorns, adding to the perfume. Aurora now began to streak the western sky—something wrong with the solar system that morning, for the sun commonly rises in the east—and the spangled heavens announced the advent of the King of Day. Sol at last appeared, and spread his healthful beams over the hills and valleys, and the wild beasts now

retired to their dens, and those timorous animals that go abroad in the night to seek their food were also withdrawn to the thickets. The hares, as an exception—and yet this was not the lunatic month of March—were skipping across the lawns, tasting the dewy glade for their morning's repast. The skylark was skylarking—or, rather, was already mounted on high, serenading his dame with mirthful glee and pleasure. (Here follow two pages of moral reflections on skylarks and fashionable debauchees, with conclusions in favour of the larks, and severe condemnation of “libidinous children of licentiousness,” who are bidden “go to the lark, ye slaves of pollution, and be wise. *He* does not stroll through the grove or thicket to search for some new amour, but keeps strictly to the ties of conjugal affection, and cherishes the partner of his natural concerns.”)

In the midst of these idyllic contemplations, a grave and solemn scene opened to the view. Hazlett, who had robbed the mail in 1770, hung on a gibbet at the left hand. “Unfortunate and infatuated Hazlett! Hadst thou robbed the nation of millions, instead of robbing the mail and pilfering a few shillings from a testy old maid, thou hadst not been hanging, a spectacle to passers-by and a prey to crows. Thy ease was pitiable—but there was no mercy: thou wast poor, and thy sin unpardonable. Hadst thou robbed to support the Crown, and murdered for the Monarchy, thou might'st have been yet alive.”

The place where Hazlett hung, the writer

considered to be the finest place in the world for a ghost-walk. "At the foot of a wild romantic mountain, near the side of a small lake, are his remains; his shadow appears in the water and suggests the idea of two malefactors. The imagination may easily conjure up his ghost. Many spirits have been seen in wilds not so fit for the purpose. This robber is perhaps the genius of the Fell, and walks in the gloomy shades of night by the side of this little lake. This (he adds—it must have been a truly comforting thought to the other passengers) is all supposition." The dreary place was one well calculated for raising gloomy ideas, tending to craze the imagination.

After this, it was a relief to reach Durham, a very picturesquely situated city with a grand cathedral and bishop's palace. The pleasant banks on the west side of the river Wear were adorned with stately trees, mingled with shrubs of various kinds, which brought to one's mind the romantic ideas of ancient story, when swains and nymphs sang their loves amongst trees by the side of some enchanted river. The abbey and the castle called to mind those enchanted places where knights-errant were confined for many years, until delivered by some friend who knew how to dissolve the chains and charm the necromancy.

Durham, he thought, would be a very fine place, were it not for the swarms of clergy in it, who devoured every extensive living without being of any real service to the public. The

common people in Durham were very ignorant and great profaners of the Sabbath Day, and, indeed, over almost the whole of England the greatest ignorance and vice were under the noses of the bishops. He would not pretend to give a reason for this, but the fact was apparent.

Durham was a very healthful place—the soil dry, the air wholesome; but the Cathedral dignitaries performed worship rather as a grievous task than as a matter of choice, a thing not infrequently to be observed in our own days. The woman who showed the shrine of St. Cuthbert did not understand Mr. Murray when he referred to the Resurrection, a fact that gave him a good opportunity to enlarge upon the practically heathenish state of Durham's ecclesiastical surroundings.

All this sightseeing, and these reflections and observations at Durham (and a good many more from which the reader shall be spared) were rendered possible by a lengthy halt made by the coach in that city. Thus there was ample time for seeing the cathedral—"very noble and delightful to the eyes of those who had a taste for antiquity or Gothic magnificence," he says.

After they were wearied with sauntering in this old Gothic abbey, they went down to the river side. There the person who was fond of rural pleasures might riot at large. Comparisons drawn on the spot between the choristers of the grove, who sang from the heart, and the minor canons and prebendaries of the cathedral, who

wearily performed their duties for a living, were, naturally, greatly to the disadvantage of the dignified clergy.

Strolling through the suburb of Old Elvet, the company at last returned to the inn—the “New Inn” it was called. The landlord of this hostelry was a jolly, honest man; his house spacious, and fit even to serve the Bishop. All things were cheap, good, and clean at this inn. If a person came in well pleased, he would find nothing to offend him, provided he did not create some offence to himself—which sounds just a little confused.

While our itinerant chronicler was noting down all these things, orders were given for departure, and so he had hurriedly to conclude.

And now, turning from wayside reflections, we get a description of the passengers. The coach, when it left Newcastle, was full. Four ladies, a gentleman of the sword and our humble servant made up its principal contents. They sat in silence for some time, until they were jolted into good humour by the motion of the vehicle, which opened their several social faculties. One of their female companions, who was a North Briton, a jolly, middle-aged matron with abundance of good sense and humour, entertained the company for a quarter of an hour with the history of her travels. She had made the tour of Europe, and had visited the most remarkable places in Christendom, in the quality of a dutiful wife, attending her valetudinary husband, travelling

for the recovery of his health. Her easy, unaffected manner in telling a story made her exceedingly good company, and none had the least inclination to interrupt her until she was pleased to cease. She knew how to time her discourse, and never, like the generality of her sex, degenerated into tediousness and insipidity.

At every stage she was a conformist to all the measures of the company, and went into every social proposal that was made.

Another companion was a widow lady of Newcastle, quite as agreeable as the former. She understood how to make them laugh. Unfortunately, she only went one stage, and they then lost the pleasure of her company.

The third passenger was a Newcastle lady, well known in the literary world for her useful performances for the benefit of youth. This female triumvirate would have been much upon a par had they all been travellers, for their gifts of conversation were much alike; but the lady who had taken the tour of Europe possessed in that the advantage of circumstances.

The fourth lady was the Scottish lady's servant. As she said nothing the whole way (remarks Mr. Murray), I shall say nothing of her.

The fifth person was an officer in the army, who appeared very drowsy in the morning, and came forth of his chamber with every appearance of reluctance. His hair was dishevelled and quite out of queue, and he seemed to be as ready for a sleep as if he had not been to

bed. He was, for a time, as dumb as a Quaker when not moved by the spirit, and by continuing in silence, at last fell asleep until they had completed nearly half the first stage. During this time, Mr. Murray sarcastically observes, he said no ill.

They finished their first stage without exchanging many words with this son of Mars, except some of those flimsy compliments gentlemen of the sword pay frequently to the ladies. After a dish of warm tea the tissues of his tongue were loosed, and he began to let his companions know that he was an officer in the army, and a man of some consequence. He seemed to be very fond of war, and spoke in high terms upon the usefulness of a standing army. When he had exhausted his whole fund of military arguments in favour of slavery and oppression, Mr. Murray observed to him that a standing army had a bad appearance in a free country, and put it in the power of the Crown to enslave the nation—with the like arguments, continued for an unconscionable space.

It is not at all surprising that the soldier resented this. The spirit of Mars began to work within him, and he threatened that if he were near a Justice of the Peace he would have this argumentative person fined for hindering him from getting recruits, adding that he once had a man fined for persuading others not to enlist in his Majesty's service.

To this Mr. Murray rejoined that the officer

certainly had a right to say all the fine things he could to recommend the service of his master, but, having done that, he had no more to do; and that any man had also a right to tell his friends, whom he saw ready to be seduced into bondage, that they were born free, and ought to take care how they gave up their liberty—together with remarks derogatory of the justice of courts martial.

Our author did not, however, find this military hero a bloodthirsty man, for, by his own confession, he and a brother officer had a few months before surrendered their purses to a highwayman between London and Highgate for fear of bloodshed. This showed that some officers were abundantly peaceable in time of danger, and discovered no inclination for taking people's lives. This gentleman of sword and pistol, in particular, had a great many solid reasons why men should not adventure their lives for a little money. He said there was no courage in fighting a highwayman, and no honour to be had in the victory over one; that soldiers should preserve their lives for the service of the country in case of war, and not run the risk of losing them by foolish adventure.

These reasons did not altogether satisfy the ladies, for one of them observed that robbers were at war alike with laws and governments, and that the King's servants were hired to keep the peace and to defend the King's subjects from violence; that officers in the army were as much obliged by their office and character to fight robbers as they

were bound to fight the French, or any other enemy; and that footpads were invaders of the people's rights and properties, and ought to be resisted by men whose profession it was to fight, and who were well paid for so doing. It was for money all the officers in the army served the King and fought his battles, and why should they not as well fight for money in a stage-coach as in a castle or a field? She insisted that only one of them could have been killed by the highwayman, or perhaps but wounded, and there were several chances that he might have missed them both. But, supposing the worst—that one had been shot—it was only the chance of war, and the other might have secured the robber, which would have been of more service to the country than the life of the officer. In short, she observed, it had the appearance more of cowardice than disregard for money, for two officers to surrender their purses to a single highwayman, who had nothing but one pistol.

The lady's reflections were severely felt by the young swordsman, and produced a solemn silence in the coach for a quarter of an hour, during which time some fell asleep, and so continued until coming to the next inn, where the horses were changed. There two or three glasses of port restored the officer's courage, and he determined, in case of an attack, to defend every one from the assaults of all highwaymen whatsoever. To show the courage that sometimes animated him, he told the story of how he had

dealt with a starving mob in Dumfries. The hungry people of that town, not disposed to perish while food was abundant, and corn held by the farmers and corn-factors for higher prices, assembled to protest against such methods; and the magistrates, who thought the people had a right to starve, sent for the military to oblige them to famish discreetly or else be shot. Our hero had command of the party, where, according to his own testimony, he performed wonders. The poor people were shot like woodcocks, and those who could get away with safety were glad to return home to wrestle with hunger until Heaven should think fit to provide for them.

The officer was very liberal in abusing those whom he called "the mob," and said they were ignorant, obstinate and wicked, and added that he thought it no crime to destroy hundreds of them.

The lady who had already given him a lecture then began to put him in mind of the footpad whom he and his brother officer had suffered to escape with their purses, and asked him how he would quell a number of highwaymen. Taken off his guard at the mention of footpads, he stared out of the window with a sort of wildness, as if one had been at the coach door.

Nothing was seen worthy of note until the coach came to Grantham, which place they reached about seven in the evening. The first things, remarks Mr. Murray—with all the air of a profound and interesting discovery—that travellers saw in approaching large towns

were, generally speaking, the church steeples. Ordinarily higher than the rest of the buildings, they were—remarkable to relate—on that account the more conspicuous. The steeple of Grantham was pretty high, and saluted one's eyes at a good distance before the town was approached. It seemed to be of the pyramidal kind.

Grantham was a pleasant place, although the houses were indifferently built. On reaching it, they wandered through the town before returning to the inn for supper, when the captain took care to say some civil things to the landlady's sister, who was a very handsome young woman. It was, however, easy to perceive that she was acquainted with these civilities, and could distinguish between truth and falsehood. She made the captain keep his distance in such a manner as put an entire end to his compliments. The fineness of her person and the beauty of her complexion were joined with a modest severity that protected her from the rudeness and insults which gentlemen think themselves entitled to use towards a chambermaid, the character she acted in.

After supper was done, the coach-party were informed that some of Mr. Garrick's servants were that night to exhibit in an old thatched house in a corner of the town. They had come abroad into the country during the summer vacation, to see if they could find anything to keep their grinders going until the opening of Drury Lane Theatre. They were that night to play the *West Indian* and the *Jubilee*.

The whole of the passengers went to see the performance. The actors played their parts very indifferently, but, after all, not so badly but that one could, with some trouble, manage to perceive as much meaning in their actions as to be able to distinguish between an honest man and a rogue. Our ingenious and imaginative Mr. Murray thought it must be dangerous for an actor to play the rogue often, for fear of his performance becoming something more than an imitation. But after all, he says, with the fine intolerant scorn of the old-time dissenting minister, the generality of players had little morality to lose.

It was a very poor theatre—being, indeed, not a theatre at all, and little better than a barn. The audience, however, was good, and well dressed, and the ladies handsome. The performance was over by eleven o'clock, and the company dismissed. Mr. Murray concludes his account of the evening's entertainment by very sourly observing that their time and that of the rest of the audience might have been better employed than in seeing a few stupid rogues endeavouring to imitate what some of them really were.

The coach left Grantham at two o'clock the next morning; much too early, considering the short rest the night's gaiety had left them. But there was no choice—they were under authority, and had to obey. That person would be a fool who, having paid £3 8s. 6d. for a seat in a stage-

coach from Newcastle to London, should consent to lose it by not rising betimes. The worst of it was, that here one had to take care of one's self, because no one would wait upon him or return him his money. Observe the passengers, therefore, all, in the coach by 2 a.m. The company being seated, the driver went off as fast as if he would have driven them to Stamford in the twinkling of an eye. So early was the hour that we are not surprised to be told that the author fell asleep by the time they were clear of the town, and doubtless the others did the same. It may be remarked here that a very excellent proof of this being a fictitious journey is found in there being no mention of the passengers being turned out of the coach to walk up the steep Spitalgate Hill—a thing always necessary at that period of coaching history.

The remainder of this not-inaptly named *Travels of the Imagination* is made up chiefly of a long disquisition upon sleep—itsself highly soporific—which only gives place to remarks upon the journey when the coach arrives on Highgate Hill. Coming over that eminence, they had a peep at London.

“It must be a wonderful holy place,” he suggests to the other passengers, “there are so many church steeples to be seen.”

The others, who must have known better, said nothing.

“Are we there?” he asked when they had reached Islington.

“No, not there yet.”

“Is it a large place: four times as large, for instance, as Newcastle?”

“Ten times as large.”

“Where are the town walls?”

“There are no walls.”

At last they reached Holborn, and the end of the journey, where the company dispersed and our chronicler went to bed.

CHAPTER III

DOWN THE ROAD IN DAYS OF YORE

II.—FROM LONDON TO NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE IN 1830

WE also will make a tour down the road. It shall not be, in the strictly accurate sense of the word, a "journey," for we shall travel continuously by night as well as day—a thing quite unknown when that word was first brought into use, and unknown to coaching until about 1780, when coaches first began to go both day and night, instead of ining at sundown at some convenient hostelry on the road.

It matters little what road we take, but as Mr. Murray came to town from Newcastle, we may as well pay a return visit along that same highway—the Great North Road. He does not explain how he came through Highgate, but for our part, the first sixty miles or so go along the Old North Road, and we do not touch Highgate at all.

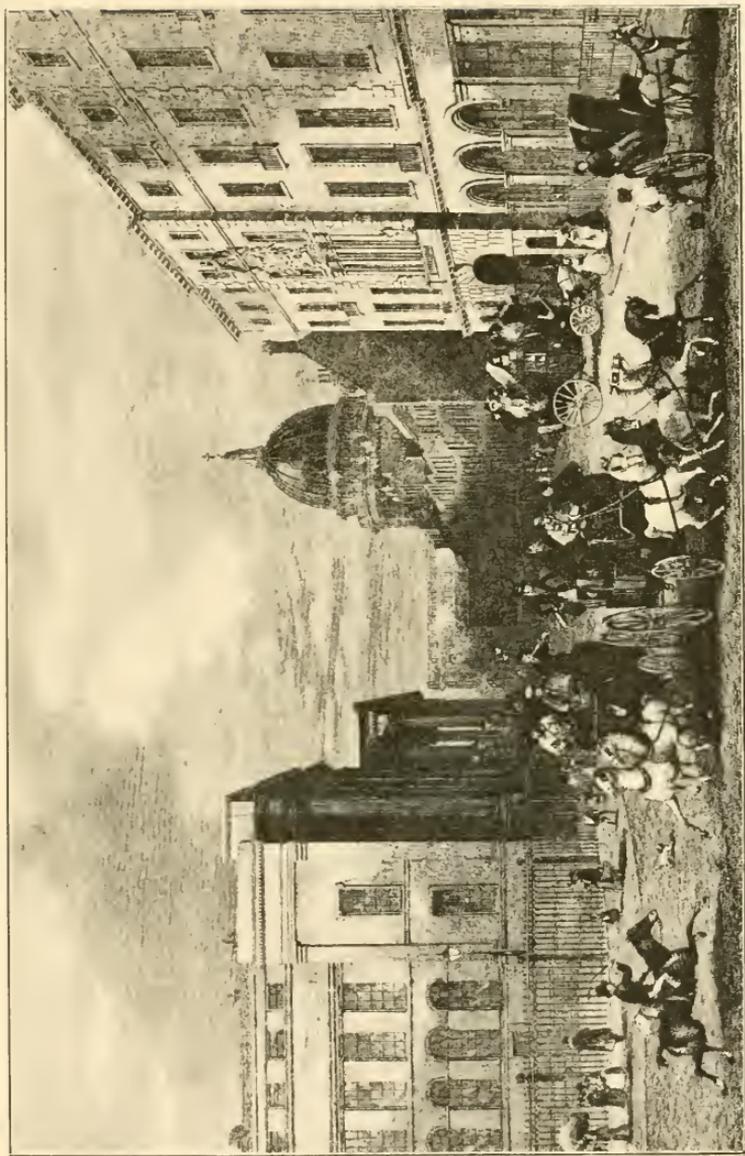
Now, since we are setting out merely for the purpose of seeing something of what life is like on a great highway, there is no need to mortify the flesh by arising early in the blushing hours of dawn, to the tune of the watchman's cry of

“five o’clock and a fine morning!” and so we will e’en, like Christians and Britons able to call their souls their own, go by the afternoon coach. Let the “Lord Nelson” in this year 1830 go if it will from the “Saracen’s Head,” Snow Hill, at half-past six in the morning. For ourselves, we will wait until a quarter to three in the afternoon, and take the “Lord Wellington” from the “Bull and Mouth.” We can do no better, for the “Lord Wellington” goes the 274 miles in 30 hours, which a simple calculation resolves into 9 miles an hour, including stops. The fare to Newcastle is £5 15s. inside, or about 5*d.* a mile. Outside, it is £3 10s., or a fraction over 3*d.* a mile. As our trip is taken in summer-time, we will go outside; and so, although a good deal of the journey will have to be through the night, we, at least, shall not have the disadvantage of being stewed during the daytime in the intolerable atmosphere of the inside of a stage-coach on a July day. Why, indeed, coach-proprietors do not themselves observe that in summer-time the outside is the most desirable place, and charge accordingly, is not easily understood; nor, indeed, to be understood at all. That clever fellow De Quincey notices this, and points out that, although the roof is generally regarded by passengers and everyone else connected with coaching as the attic, and the inside as the drawing-room, only to be tenanted by gentlefolk, the inside is really the coal-cellar in disguise.

We recollect, being old travellers, that the fares to Newcastle used to be much cheaper. Time was when they were only four guineas inside and £2 10s. outside, but prices went up during the late wars with France, and they have stayed up ever since. The travelling, however, is better by some five hours than it was fifteen years ago.

Here we are at the "Bull and Mouth," in St. Martin's-le-Grand, now newly rebuilt by Sherman, and named the "Queen's." It is a handsome building of red brick, with Portland stone dressings, but the old stables are still to be seen at the side, in Bull-and-Mouth Street. A strong and penetrating aroma of horses and straw pervades the neighbourhood.

Wonderful building, the new General Post Office, opened last year, nearly opposite. They say the Government has got something very like a white elephant in that vast pile. A great deal too big for present needs, or, indeed, for any possible extension of Post Office business. Here's the "Lord Wellington." What's that the yard-porter says?—He says "they don't call it nothin' but the 'Vellington' now."—Smart turn-out, is it not, with its yellow wheels and body to match? You can tell Sherman's coaches anywhere by that colouring. What a d—d nuisance those boys are, pestering one to buy things one doesn't want! No; be off with you, we don't want any braces or pocket looking-glasses, nor the "Life and Portrait of His Late



THE "QUEEN'S HOTEL" AND GENERAL POST OFFICE.

After T. Allon.

Majesty," nor any "Sure Cure for Fleas"—use it on yourselves, you dirty-looking devils!

Thank goodness! we're off, and the sooner we're out of this traffic and off the stones at Kingsland Turnpike the better. These paved streets are so noisy, one can scarcely hear oneself talk, and the rattling sends a jar up one's spine. How London grows! we shall soon see the houses stretching past Kingsland and swallowing up the country lanes of Dalston and Stoke Newington.

Hal-lo! That was a near shave. Confound those brewers' drays; Shoreditch is always full of 'em; might have sent us slap over. Why don't you keep your eyes open, fool?

The drayman offers to fight us all, one after the other, with one hand tied behind his back, for sixpence a head, money down; but though we have some of "the Fancy" aboard, the "Wellington" can't stop for a mill in the middle of Shoreditch High Street.

Now at last we're fairly in the country. If you look back you'll be able to see St. Paul's. This is Stamford Hill, where the rich City indigo and East and West India merchants live. Warm men, all of them. There, ahead of us, on the right, goes the river Lea: as pretty fishing there as you'd find even in the famous trout streams of Hampshire. What a quaint, quiet rural place this is at Tottenham! And Edmonton, with its tea-gardens; why, London might be fifty miles away!

Here we are, already at Waltham Cross, and

at our first change. This is something like travelling! We change horses at the "Falcon" in little more than two minutes, and so are off again, on the ten-mile stage to Ware, through the long narrow street of Cheshunt, past the New River at Broxbourne, and along the broad thoroughfare of Hoddesdon. At Ware we change teams at the "Saracen's Head," and four fine strong-limbed chestnuts are put in, to take us the rather hilly stage on to Buntingford. At this sleepy little town they take care to give us as strong a team as you will find in any coach on any road, for the way rises steadily for some miles over Royston Downs. A good thing for the horses that the stage on to Royston town is not more than seven miles. "I believe you, sir," says the coachman; "vy, I've heerd my father say, vot driv' over this 'ere road thirty year ago, that he vore out many a good 'orse on this stage; an' 'e vere a careful man too, as you might say, and turned out every blessed one, *h*inside or *h*out, to valk up-hill for two mile, wet or fine; strike me blue if he didn't."

"They talk of lowering the road through the top of Reed Hill, don't they, coachman?"

"Oh! yes; they torks, and that's about all they does do. Lot o' good torking does my 'orses. Vot *I* wants to know is, v'y does we pay the turnpikes?"

We change at the "Red Lion," Royston, and then come on to the galloping ground that brings us smartly, along a level road, to Arrington Bridge, the spelling of whose name is a matter of divergent

opinions among the compilers of road-books. But whether called Arrington or Harrington, it is a pretty, retired spot, with a handsome inn and an equally handsome row of houses opposite.

“Will you please to alight?” asks the stately landlady of the “Hardwicke Arms” inn and posting-house, with perhaps a little too much air of condescension towards us, as coach-passengers. We of the stage-coaches—nay, even those of the mails—occupy only a second place in the consideration of mine host and hostess of this, one of the finest inns on the road. Their posting business brings them some very free-handed customers, and their position, hard by my lord of Hardwicke’s grand seat of Wimpole, spoils them for mere ordinary everyday folks.

However, it is now more than half-past seven o’clock, and we have had no bite nor sup since two. Therefore we alight at the landlady’s bidding and hasten into the inn, to make as good a supper as possible in the twenty minutes allowed.

Half a crown each, in all conscience, for two cups of tea, and some bread and butter, cold ham and eggs! We climb up to our places, dissatisfied. Soon the quiet spot falls away behind, as our horses get into their stride; and as we leave, so does a yellow po’shay dash up, and convert the apparently sleepy knot of smocked post-boys and shirt-sleeved ostlers, who have been lounging about the stable entrance, into a very alert and wide-awake throng.

Caxton, a busy thoroughfare village, where the

great "George" inn does a very large business, is passed, and soon, along this flattest of flat roads, that grim relic, Caxton Gibbet, rises dark and forbidding against the translucent evening sky. Does the troubled ghost of young Gatward, gibbeted here eighty years ago for robbing the mail on this lonely spot, ever revisit the scene, we wonder?

The wise, inscrutable stars hang trembling in the sky, and the sickle moon is shining softly, as, having passed Papworth St. Everard, we drop gently down through Godmanchester and draw up in front of the "George" at Huntingdon, $58\frac{1}{2}$ miles from London, at ten o'clock.

We take the opportunity afforded by the change of filling our pocket-flasks with some rich brown brandy of the right sort, and invest in some of those very special veal-and-ham sandwiches for which good Mrs. Ekin has been famous these years past. Our coachman "leaves us here," and we tip him eightpence apiece when he comes round to inform us of the fact.

The new coachman, after some little conversation with the outgoing incumbent of the bench, in which we catch the remark made to the newcomer that some articles or some persons are "a pretty fair lot, taking 'em all round"—a criticism that evidently sizes us up for the benefit of his *confrère*—climbs into his seat, and giving us all a comprehensive and impartial glance, settles himself down comfortably. "All right, Tom?" he asks the guard over his shoulder,

“Yes,” answers that functionary. “Then give ’em their heads, Bill,” he says to the ostler; and away we go into the moonlit night at a steady pace.

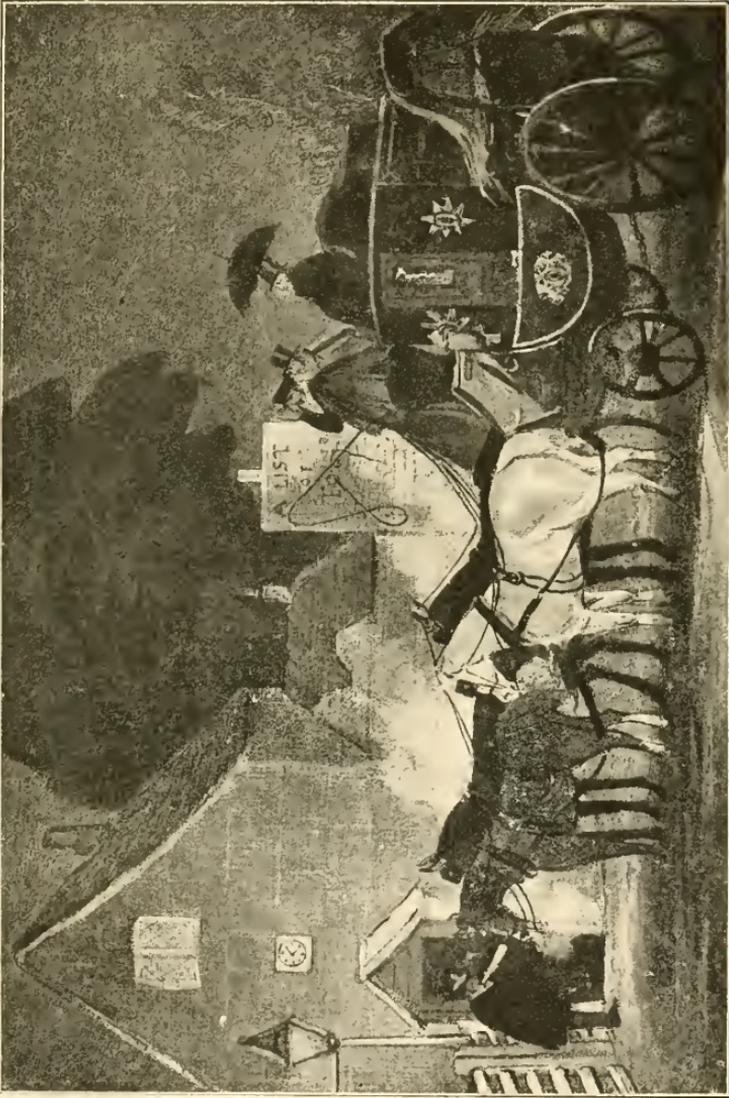
The box-seat passenger, who very successfully kept the original coachman in conversation nearly all the way from London to Huntingdon, does not seem to quite hit it off with our new whip, who is inclined to be huffish, or, at the least of it, given to silence and keeping his own counsel. “Have a weed, coachman?” he asks, after some ineffectual attempts to get more than a grunt out of him. “Don’t mind if I do,” is the ungracious reply, and he takes the proffered cigar and—puts it into some pocket somewhere beneath the voluminous capes of his greatcoat. After this, silence reigns supreme. For ourselves, we have chatted throughout the day, and now begin to feel—not sleepy, but meditative.

The moon now rides in unsullied glory through the azure sky. We top Alconbury Hill at a few minutes to twelve, and come to the junction of the Old North and the Great North Roads. Everything stands out as clearly as if it were daylight, but with a certain ghost-like and uncanny effect. “The obelisk,” as the coachmen have learned to call the great milestone at the junction of the roads (it is really a square pedestal) looks particularly spectral, but is not the airy nothing it seems—as the coachman on the Edinburgh Mail discovered, a little while ago. The guard tells us all about it. The usual

thing. Too much to drink at the hospitable bar of the "George," at Huntingdon, and a doubt as to which of the two milestones he saw, on coming up the road, was the real one. The guard and all the outsides were in similar case—it was Christmas, and men made merry—and so there was nothing for it but to try their quality. Unfortunately, he drove into the real stone, and not its spectral duplicate, conjured up by the effects of strong liquors. We see the broken railings and the dismounted stone ball that once capped the thing as we pass. The local surgeon mended the resultant broken limbs at the "Wheatsheaf," whose lighted windows fall into our wake as we commence the descent of Stonegate Hill.

Stilton. By this time we are too drowsy to note whether we changed at the "Bell" or at its rival, directly opposite, the "Angel." At any rate, nobody asks us if we would not like a nice real Stilton cheese to take with us, as they usually do: it is midnight.

We now pass Norman Cross, and come in another eight miles to Wansford turnpike, where the gate is closed and the pikeman gone to bed. "Blow up for the gate," said the coachman, when we were drawing near, to the guard, who blew his horn accordingly; but it does not seem to have disturbed the dreams of the janitor. "Gate, gate!" cry the guard and coachman in stentorian chorus. The guard himself descends, and blows a furious series of blasts in the doorway, while the coachman lashes the casement windows.



From a contemporary lithograph.

THE TURNPIKE GATE.

At last a shuffling and fumbling are heard within, and the door is opened. The pikeman has not been to bed after all; he was, and is, only drunk, and had fallen into a sottish sleep. He now opens the gate, in the midst of much disinterested advice from both our officials—the guard advising him to stick to Old Tom and leave brandy alone, and the coachman pointing out that the Mail will be down presently and that he had better leave the gate open if he does not wish to present the Postmaster-General with forty shillings, that being the penalty to which a pike-keeper is liable who does not leave a clear passage for His Majesty's Mails.

We now cross Wansford Bridge, a very long and narrow stone structure over the river Nene. Having done so, slowly and with caution, we know no more: sleep descends insensibly upon us.

. . . Immeasurable æons of time pass by. We are floating with rhythmic wings in the pure ether of some unterrestrial paradise. Our gross earthly integument (twelve stone and a few extra pounds avoirdupois of flesh and blood and bone) has fallen away. We want nothing to eat, for ever and ever, and have left everything gross and unspiritual far, far below us, and . . . a fearful crash! Convulsively, instinctively, our arms are thrown out, and we awake, tenaciously grasping one another. What is this that has brought us down to earth again and made us unwillingly assume once more that corporeal

hundredweight, or thereabouts, we had left so gladly behind? Are we overturned?

No; it was nothing: nothing, that is to say, but the hunchbacked bridge over the river Welland, that leads from Stamford Baron into Stamford Town. It is only the customary bump and lurch, the guard informs us. May all architects of hunchback bridges be converted from straight-backed human beings into bowed and crooked likenesses of their own abominable creations! We will keep awake, lest another such rude awaking await us.

With this intent we gaze, wide-eyed, upon Stamford Town, its noble buildings wrapped round in midnight quiet, the moon shining here full upon the mullioned stone windows of some ancient mansion, there casting impenetrable black shadows, making dark mysteries of grand architectural doorways decorated with curious scutcheons and overhung with heavy pediments, like beetling eyebrows. Grand churches whose spires soar away, away far into the sky, astonish our newly-awakened vision as the coachman carefully guides the coach through the narrow and crooked streets, in which the shadows from cornices and roof-tops lie so black and sharp that none but he who has driven here before could surely bring this coach safely through. Once or twice we have quailed as he has driven straight at some solid wall, and have breathed again when it has proved to be only some oblique monstrous silhouetted image cast athwart the

way. Fear only leaves us when we are clear of the town and once more on the unobstructed road; then only is there leisure for the mind to dwell upon the beauties of that glorious old stone-built town. We are thus ruminating when, between Great Casterton and Stretton, where we enter Rutlandshire, the glaring lamps of a swiftly approaching coach lurch forward out of the long perspective of road, and, with a clatter of harness and a sharp crunching of wheels, fall away, as in a vision. The guard, answering some one's question, says it is the Leeds "Rockingham," due in London at something after ten in the morning.

The determination to keep awake was heroic, but without avail. Even the screaming and grumbling of the skid and the straining of the wheels down Spitalgate Hill into Grantham did not suffice to quite waken us. But what that noise and the jarring of the wheels failed to do, the stoppage at the "George" at Grantham and the sudden quiet *do* succeed in. Our friend the moon has by now sunk to rest, and a pallid dawn has come; someone remarks that it is past three o'clock in the morning, and someone else is wakened and hauled forth from amid the snoring insides, whose snores become gasps and gulps, and then resolve themselves into the yawns and peevish exclamations of tired men. The person thus awakened proves to be a passenger who had booked to Colsterworth, which is a little village we have now left eight miles behind us. He had been

asleep, and as Colsterworth is not one of our stopping or changing places, the guard forgot all about him until the change at Grantham. The passenger and the guard are now waging a furious war of words on the resounding pavements of the sleeping town. It seems that the unfortunate inside, besides being himself carried so far beyond his destination, has a heavy portmanteau in the like predicament. If he had been a little bigger and the guard a little smaller, his fury would perhaps make him fall upon that official and personally chastise him. As it is, he resorts to abuse. Windows of surrounding houses now begin to be thrown up, and nightcapped heads to inquire "what the d——l 's the matter, and if it can't be settled somewhere else or at some more convenient season?" The guard says "This 'ere gent wot's abusing of me like a blooming pickpocket goes to sleep and gets kerried past where he wants to get out, and when I pulls him out, 'stead of taking 'im him on to Newark or York, 'e ——" "Shut up," exclaims a fierce voice from above: "can't a man get a wink of sleep for you fellows?"

So, the change being put to, the altercation is concluded in undertones, and we roll off; the irate passenger to bed at the "George," vowing he will get a legal remedy against the proprietors of the "Wellington" for the unheard-of outrage.

At Newark, a hundred and twenty-five miles of our journey performed, it is broad daylight as the coach rolls, making the echoes resound, into the great market-square. Clock-faces—a little

blanched and debauched-looking to our fancy—proclaim the hour to be 5.30 a.m. The change is waiting for us in front of the “Saracen’s Head,” and so is our new coachman. The old one leaves us, but before doing so “kicks us”—as the expressive phraseology of the road has it—for the usual fees. He has been, so far as we remember him, a dour, silent, unsociable man, but we think that, perhaps, as we have been asleep during the best part of his reign on the box-seat, any qualities he may possess have not had their due opportunity, and so he gets two shillings from ourselves. A passenger behind us gives him a shilling, which he promptly spits on and turns, “for luck” as he says, and “in ’opes it’ll grow.” The passenger who gave it him says, thereupon—in a broad Scots accent—that he is “an impudent fellow, and desairves to get nothing at all;” to which the jarvey rejoins that he has in his time brought many a Scotchman from Scotland, but, “this is the fust time, blow me, that *hever* I see one agoin’ back!”—which is a very dark and mysterious saying. What did he mean?

Our new coachman is a complete change from our late Jehu. He is a spruce, cheerful fellow, neat and well brushed, youthful and prepossessing. “Good morning, gentlemen,” he says cheerily: “another fine day.” We had not noticed it. All we had observed was of each other, and that as every other looked pale, wearied and heavy-eyed, so we rightly judged must be our own condition.

“Chk!” says our youthful charioteer to his

horses, and away they bound. Newark market-square glides by, and we are crossing the Trent, over a long bridge. "Newark Castle, gentlemen," says our coachman, jerking his whip to the left hand; and there we see, rising from the banks of the broad river, the crumbling, time-stained towers of a ruined mediæval fortress. Much he has to say of it, for he is intelligent beyond the ordinary run. A good and graceful whip, too—one of the new school: much persuasion and little punishment for the horses, who certainly seem to put forward their best paces at his merest suggestion. It is a good, flat, and fairly straight road, this ten-mile stage to Scarthing Moor. We cross the Trent again, then a low-lying tract of water-meadows, where the night mists still cling in ghost-like wisps to the grass, and then several small villages. "This"—says our coachman, pointing to a church beside the road, and down the street of one of these little villages—"this is where Oliver Cromwell came from."

"What is the name of it?" we ask, knowing that, whatever its name, the Protector came from quite a different place.

"Cromwell," he says.

So this was probably the original seat of that family many centuries before Oliver came into the world, which has since then been so greatly exercised about him.

"Blow up for the change," says the coachman to the guard, as, having passed through Carlton-on-Trent, Sutton-on-Trent, and round the

awkward bend of the road at Weston, we approach Searthing Moor and the "Black Bull." "They're a sleepy lot at the 'Bull,'" he says, in explanation. The guard produces the "yard of tin" from the horn-basket, and sounds a melodious tantara: quite unnecessarily, after all, it seems, for, quite a distance off, the ostler, dressed after his kind in trousers and shirt only, with braces dangling about him, is seen standing in the road, with the change ready and waiting.

"Got up before you found yourself, this morning?" asks the coachman.

The ostler says he don't take no sauce from no boys what ain't been breeched above a twelve-month.

"All right, Sam," replies the coachman; "your 'art's all right, if you *have* got a 'ed full of wool. Shouldn't wonder if you don't make up for this mistake of yourn by sleepin' it out for a month of Sundays after this. If so be you do, jest hang the keys of the stable outside, and when we come down agen, Jim and me 'll put 'em in ourselves, won't we, Jim?"

Jim says they will, and will petition Guv'ment to pension him off, and retire him to the "R'yal 'Orsepital for Towheads."

Evidently some ancient feud between the ostler and the coach is in progress, and still far from being settled. The ostler sulkily watches us out of sight, as we make our next stage to Retford. The clocks in the market-place of that busy little town mark half-past seven, and the

“White Hart,” where we drop a passenger for the Gainsborough coach and another for Chesterfield, and take up another for York, is a busy scene. Appetising aromas of early breakfasts being prepared put a keener edge upon our already sharpened appetites, and we all devoutly wish we were at Doncaster, where *our* breakfast awaits the coming of the coach. Across Barnby Moor, past the great “Bell” inn, we take our way, and come to one more change, at the “Crown,” Bawtry; then hie away for Doncaster, which we reach, past Rossington Bridge and the famous St. Leger course, at half-past nine o’clock.

“Twenty minutes for breakfast, gentlemen,” announces the coachman as we pull up in front of the “New Angel” inn; while the guard, who has come with us all the way from London, now announces that he goes no farther. We give him half a crown, and hasten, as well as stiffened limbs allow, down the ladder placed for us outsiders to alight by, to the breakfast-room.

We catch a glimpse of ourselves in a mirror as we enter. Heavens! is it possible an all-night journey can make so great a difference in a man’s personal appearance? While here is a lady who has been an inside passenger all the way from town, and yet looks as fresh and blooming as though she had but just dressed for a walk. How do they manage it, those delicate creatures?

Our friend, who says he is starving, refuses to discuss this question. He remarks, with eye wildly roving o’er the well-laden table-cloth,

that something to eat and drink is more to the point. We cannot gainsay the contention, and do not attempt it, but sink into a chair.

“Coffee, sir; tea, sir; ’ot roll; ’am and heggs. Yorkshire brawn, tongue,” suggests the waiter, swiftly.

We select something and fall-to. After all, it is worth while to take a long coach journey, even if it be only for the appetite it gives one. Here we are, all of us, eating and drinking as though we had taken no meals for a week past. Yes, another cup of coffee, please, and I’ll thank you to pass the——

“Time’s up, gents; coach just agoin’ to start!”

“Oh! here, I say, you know. We’ve only just sat down.”

“Ain’t got more’n ’nother couple o’ minutes,” says the new guard; and so, appetite not fully satisfied, we all troop out and resume our places.

Our coach goes the hilly route, by Ferrybridge and Tadcaster, to York. We change on the short stage out of Doncaster, at Robin Hood’s Well, where the rival inns, the “New” and the “Robin Hood,” occupy opposite sides of the road; and again at Ferrybridge, at the “Swan,” where our smart coachman resigns his seat to an enormously fat man, weighing nearly, if not quite, twenty stone. He is so unwieldy that quite a number of the “Swan” postboys gather round him, and by dint of much sustained effort, do at last succeed in pulling and pushing him into his place, resembling in so doing the Liliputians

manipulating Gulliver; the coachman himself, breathing like a grampus, encouraging them by calling out, "That's it, lads; another heave like t'last does it. All together again, and I'll mak' it a gallon!"

Across the river Aire to Brotherton, and thence through Sherburn to Tadcaster, where, having changed at the "White Horse," we come along a level stage into York; the new guard, who rejoices in the possession of a key-bugle and a good ear for music, signalling our entrance by playing, in excellent style, "The Days when we went Gipsying, a Long Time Ago."

The coach dines at York. The "Black Swan," to which we come, is a house historic in the annals of coaching, for it was from its door that the original York and London stage set forth; but it is a very plain and heavy building. Half an hour is allowed for dining, and, unlike the majority of houses down the road, the table-cloth and the knives and forks and glasses are *not* the only things in readiness.

"What have you got, waiter?"

"Hot roast beef, sir, just coming in; very prime."

"Haven't you any cold chicken for a lady here?"

"Yessir; cold chicken on the table, sir; in front of you, sir."

"You call *that* chicken, waiter! why, it's only a skeleton. Take it away and give it to the dog in the yard."

“Very sorry, sir; ‘Royal Sovereigns’ very hungry to-day; very good appetites they had, sir; wonder they left even the bones.”

“You’re laughing at me, you rascal; bring another chicken!”

“No more chickens, sir; roast lamb, would the lady like? hot or cold; green peas, new potatoes?” . . .

“Your apple tart, sir. Ale, sir. Claret, ma’am.” . . .

Dinner disposed of, the coach is ready, but one of our passengers is missing. Has any one seen him? He went off, it seems, to see the cathedral, instead of having dinner. Fortunately for himself he comes hurrying up just as we are starting, and the guard hauls him up to his outside place by main force.

“Tip us a tune,” says the coachman to the guard, who, rendered sentimental by the steak and the bottle of stout he had for dinner in the bar, in company with the buxom barmaid, responds with “Believe me, if all those Endearing Young Charms,” as we pass the frowning portal of Bootham Bar and bump along the very rough street of Clifton, York’s modern suburb.

This is a thirteen-and-a-half mile stage from York to Easingwold; but although long, it is an easy one for the horses, if the coachman does not demand pace of them, on account of the dead level of the road. He very wisely lets them take their own speed, only now and then shaking the reins when they seem inclined to slacken from their

steady trot. It is a lonely stretch of country, treeless, flat, melancholy; and the appearance of Easingwold is welcomed. At the "Rose and Crown" the new team is put in, and off we go again, the ten miles to Thirsk. At Northallerton the horses are changed for a fresh team at the "Golden Lion," and the fat coachman, assisted down with almost as much trouble as he was hoisted up, resigns the ribbons into the hands of another.

The usual knot of sightseers of the little town are gathered about the inn to witness the one event of the day, the arrival of the London coach. Among them one perceives the coachman out of a place; a beggar out at elbows; three recruits with ribbons in their hats, not quite recovered from last night's drink, and stupidly wondering how the ribbons got there; the "coachman wot is to take the next stage"; several errand boys wasting their masters' time; and a horsey youth with small fortune but large expectations, who is the idler of the place—the local man about town. There is absolutely nothing else for the inhabitants of Northallerton to do for amusement but to watch the coaches, the post-chaises and the chariots as they pass along the one long and empty street.

Our box-seat passenger leaves us here. Although he has, all the way down, shown himself anxious to be intimate with the successive coachmen, and has paid pretty heavily for the privilege of occupying that seat of honour, it has been of

no sporting advantage to him, for he is only a Cockney tradesman, who has never even driven a trap, let alone four-in-hand. So when each whip in turn asked him the questions, conventional among whips, "whether he had his driving-gloves on, and would like to take the ribbons for the next few miles," he evaded the offer by "not being in form," or not knowing the road, or something else equally annoying to the coachman, who, in not having an amateur of driving on the box, thereby missed the canonical tip of anything from seven shillings to half a sovereign which the handling of the reins for twenty miles or so was worth to the ordinary sportsman.

Our new coachman, on our starting from Northallerton, keeps the seat beside him vacant. He says he has a passenger for it down the road. Tom Layfield, for that is the name of our present charioteer, works the "Wellington" up and down between this and Newcastle on alternate days, Ralph Soulsby being the coachman on the other. Tom Layfield is a very prim-looking, tall and spare man, tutor in coachmanship to many gentlemen on these last fifty-five miles; and it does not surprise some of us when, passing Great Smeaton, we are hailed by a very "down the road" looking young man, whose hat is cocked at a knowing angle, and whose entire get-up, from the gigantic mother-o'-pearl buttons on his light overcoat to the big scarf-pin in the semblance of a galloping coach and horses, proclaims "amateur coachman."

It is the young squire of Hornby Grange, on the right hand, we are told, who is anxious to graduate in coaching honours, and to be mentioned in the pages of the *Sporting Magazine* by Nimrod, in company with Sir St. Vincent Cotton, the Brackenburys, and other distinguished ornaments of the bench.

“’Afternoon, squire,” says Layfield, as that young sportsman swings into the seat beside him; and they talk guardedly about anything and everything but coaches, until Layfield asks—as though it had just occurred to him—if he would not like to “put ’em along” for a few miles. He accepts, and is just about to take the reins over when the voice of a hitherto silent gentleman is heard from behind.

“I earnestly protest, coachman,” he says, “against your giving the reins into the hands of that young gentleman, and endangering our lives. I appeal to the other passengers to support me,” he continues, glancing round. “We read in the papers every day of the many serious, and some fatal, accidents caused by control of the horses being given to unqualified persons. If you are well advised, young gentleman, you will relinquish the reins into their proper keeping; and you, coachman, ought to know, and do know, that you would be liable to a fine of any amount from £5 to £10, at the discretion of a magistrate, for allowing an unauthorised person to drive.”

The coachman takes back the reins, and sulkily says he didn’t know he had an informer up; to

which the gentleman rejoins by saying that, so long as the coachman drives and performs the duty for which he is paid by his proprietors, he himself is not concerned to teach him proper respect; but he cannot refrain from pointing out, to the coachman in especial, and to the passengers generally, that it would have been the policy of an informer to allow the illegal act to be committed and then to lay an information. He was really protecting the coachman as well as the passengers, because it was well known that the road swarmed with informers, and continued infractions of the law could not always hope to go unpunished.

Every one murmurs approval, except the coachman and his friend, and the guard. The guard, as an official, is silent; the amateur coachman has a hot flush upon his face. The coachman, however, clearly sees himself to be in the wrong, and awkwardly apologises. Still, we all feel somewhat constrained, and, passing Croft Spa and coming to Darlington, experience an ungrateful relief when the champion of our necks and limbs leaves us there.

He is no sooner gone than tongues are wagging about him. "Who is he? What is he? Do you know him?"

"Talks like a Haet o' Parlymint," says the coachman to his friend.

"And a very good reason, too," says a man with knowledge: "he is a Justice of the Peace and Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates at

Stockton, which holds a higher jurisdiction than your bench, coachman. I think you've had a very narrow escape of parting with £10 and costs."

The guard has a few parcels to take out of the boot at the "King's Head," and a few new ones to put in, and then we're off for Rushyford Bridge, where the coach takes tea, and where we leave the amateur coachee at the "Wheatsheaf."

Durham and the coal country open out on leaving secluded Rushyford. Durham Cathedral, although itself standing on a height, has the appearance of being in a profound hollow as the coach, with the skid on, slowly creaks and groans down the long hill into the city. Changing at the "Three 'Tuns," the new team toils painfully up the atrociously steep streets to Framwellgate Bridge, where the river Wear and the stern grandeur of the Norman Cathedral, with the bold rocks and soft woods around it, blend under the westering sun-rays of a July evening into a lovely mellowed picture.

Chester-le-Street and Gateshead are ill exchanges for the picturesqueness of Durham, but they serve to bring us nearer our journey's end, and, truth to tell, we are very weary; so that, coming down the breakneck streets of Gateshead in the gathering darkness to the coaly Tyne and dear dirty Newcastle, with the hum of its great population and the hooting of its steamers in our ears, we are filled with a great content. "Give 'em a tune," says the coachman; and, the

guard sounding a fanfare, we are quickly over the old town bridge, along the Side, and at the Turf Hotel, Collingwood Street. It is nearly ten o'clock. The journey is done.

Let us tot up the expenses per head:—

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|----|----|----|
| One outside place | 3 | 10 | 0 |
| Supper at Arrington Bridge | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Brandy and sandwiches at Huntingdon | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Coachman, Huntingdon | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| ,, Newark | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Breakfast, Doncaster | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Guard, Doncaster | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Coachman, Ferrybridge | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Dinner, York | 0 | 3 | 6 |
| Coachman, Northallerton | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Tea, Rushyford Bridge | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Coachman, Newcastle | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Guard, Newcastle | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Total | £4 | 17 | 3 |

CHAPTER IV

ACCIDENTS

ONE of the greatest objections urged by the coaching interest against railways was their danger, and the certain loss of life on them in case of accident. It was unfortunate that the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway was the occasion of a fatal mischance that lent emphasis to the dolorous prophecies of coach-proprietors and the road interests in general; for on that day (September 15th, 1830) Mr. Huskisson, a prominent man in the politics of that time, met his death by being run over by the first train. It seems to ourselves incredible, but it was the fact, that there were those who ascribed this fatality to the wrath of God against mechanical methods of travelling. Then first arose that favourite saying among coachmen, "In a coach accident, there you are; in a railway accident, where are you?" The impression thus intended to be conveyed was that a coaching disaster was a very trifling affair compared with a railway accident. But was it? Let us see.

The Rev. William Milton, who in 1810 published a work on coach-building, lamented the great number of accidents in his time, and said

that not a tenth part of them was ever recorded in the newspapers. He darkly added that the coach-proprietors could probably explain the reason. However that may be, the following pages contain a selection of the most tragical happenings in this sort, culled from the newspapers of the past. It does by no means pretend to completeness; for to essay a task of that kind would be to embark upon a very extensive work, as well as a very severe indictment of the coaching age. Moreover, it may shrewdly be suspected that many drowsy folk fell off the box-seats in the darkness, and quietly and unostentatiously broke their necks, without the least notice being publicly taken. Mere upsets and injuries to passengers and coachmen are not instanced here. Only a selection from the fatal accidents has been made.

1807.—Brighton and Portsmouth coach upset; coachman killed.

1810.—Rival Brighton and Worthing coaches racing; one upset; coachman killed.

1819.—“Coburg” (Brighton coach) upset at Cuckfield, on the up journey. The horses were fresh, and, dashing away, came into collision with a waggon. All the eleven outsides were injured. A Mr. Blake died next day at the “King’s Head,” Cuckfield, where the injured had been taken.

1826. *April*.—The Leeds and Wakefield “True Blue,” going down Belle Hill with horses galloping, on the wrong side of the road, came into collision with a coal-cart. The coachman’s

skull was fractured, and he died instantly. One outside passenger's leg had to be amputated, and he died the next day. The recovery of another passenger was regarded as doubtful.

One of the more serious among coach accidents was that which befell the London and Dorking stage, in April 1826. It was one of those coaches that did not carry a guard. It left the "Elephant and Castle" at nine o'clock in the morning, full inside and out, and arrived safely at Ewell, where Joseph Walker, who was both coachman and proprietor, alighted for the purpose of getting a parcel from the hind boot. He gave the reins to a boy who sat on the box, and all would have been well had it not been for the thoughtless act of the boy himself, who cracked the whip, and set the horses off at full speed. They dashed down the awkwardly curving road by the church and into a line of wooden pailings, which were torn down for a length of twelve yards. Coming then to some immovable obstacle, the coach was violently upset, and the whole of the passengers hurled from the roof. All were seriously injured, and one was killed. This unfortunate person was a woman, who fell upon some spiked iron railings, "which," says the contemporary account, "entered her breast and neck. She was dreadfully mutilated, none of her features being distinguishable. She lingered until the following day, when she expired in the greatest agony." The gravestone of this unfortunate person is still to be seen in the leafy churchyard of Ewell, inscribed



A MIDNIGHT DISASTER ON A CROSS ROAD : FIVE MILES TO THE NEAREST VILLAGE.

After C. B. Neuhorise.

to the memory of "Catherine, wife of James Bailey, who, in consequence of the overturning of the Dorking Coach, April 1826, met with her death in the 22nd year of her age."

1827. *December*.—The up Salisbury coach was driven, in the fog prevailing at the time, into a pond called the "King's Water," at East Bedfont, on Hounslow Heath. An outside passenger, a Mr. Lockhart Wainwright, of the Light Dragoons, was killed on the spot, by falling in the water. The pond was only two feet deep, but it had a further depth of two feet of mud, and it was thought that the unfortunate passenger was smothered in it. The four women inside the coach had a narrow escape of being drowned, but were rescued, and the coach righted, by a crowd of about a hundred persons, chiefly soldiers from the neighbouring barracks, who had assembled.

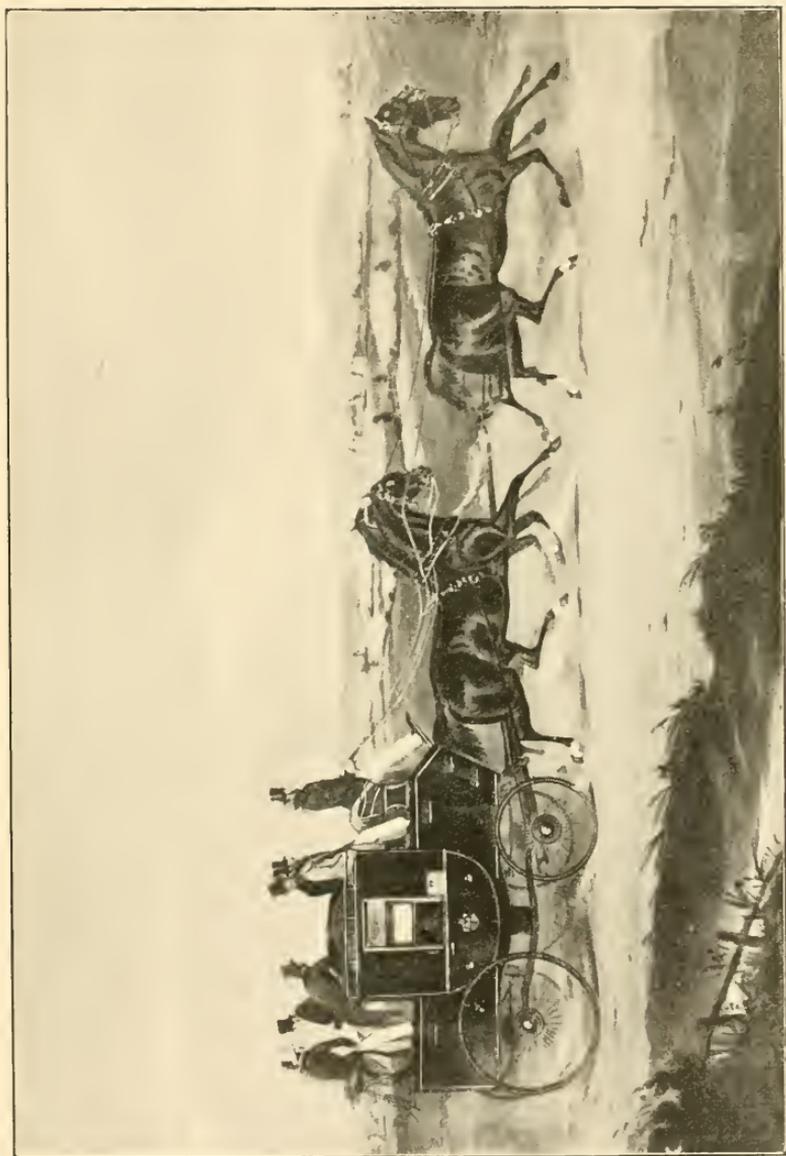
1832. *February 19th*.—Mr. Fleet, coachman and part-proprietor of the Brighton and Tunbridge Wells coach, killed by the overturn of his conveyance.

1832. *October 30th*.—Brighton Mail upset at Reigate. Coachman killed on the spot. The three outsides suffered fractured ribs and minor injuries.

In 1833 the Marquis of Worcester, a shining light of the road in those days, began that connection with the Brighton Road which afterwards produced the "Duke of Beaufort" coach, made famous by the coloured prints after Lambert and Shayer. He was passionately fond of driving,

and was so very often allowed by the complaisant professional coachmen to "take the ribbons" that he at last fell into the habit of taking them almost as a matter of right. Of course, the jarveys who had relinquished the reins to him were always well remembered for their so doing; but there were those to whom money was not everything, and in whose minds the sporting instinct was less developed than a wholesome and ever-present fear of the penalties to which coachmen were liable if they permitted other persons to drive. There could have been no objection on the score of coachmanship, for the Marquis was an able whip; but the fact remained that he could not get the reins when he wanted them, and so in revenge set up two coaches on the Brighton Road, in alliance with a Jew named Israel Alexander. A paltry fellow, this Marquis, afterwards seventh Duke of Beaufort, to enter into competition with professional coachmen in order to satisfy a childish spite; not, at any rate, the high-souled sportsman that toadies would have one believe.

The coaches put on the road by this alliance were the "Wonder" and the "Quicksilver," both with intent to run Goodman, the proprietor of the "Times" coaches, off the route. The coachmen who tooled these new conveyances were, of course, always to give up the reins when my lord thought proper to drive, and so the revenge was complete. But the "Quicksilver," a fast coach timed to do the 52 miles in $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours, had not been long on the road before it met with



After W. J. Sawyer.

THE "BEAUFORT" BRIGHTON COACH.

a very serious accident, being overturned when leaving Brighton on the evening of July 15th. A booking-clerk, one John Snow, the son of a coachman, and himself a sucking Jehu, was driving, and upset the coach by the New Steyne, with the result that the passengers were thrown into the gardens of the Steyne, or hung upon the spikes of the railings in very painful and ridiculous postures. Goodman had the satisfaction of presently learning that the bad-blooded sportsman and his partner lost some very heavy sums in compensation awards.

The "Quicksilver" was thereupon repainted and renamed, and, under the alias of the "Criterion," resumed its journeys. But ill-fortune clung to that coach, for on June 7th, 1834, as it was leaving London, it came into collision with a brewer's dray opposite St. Saviour's Church, Southwark. A little way on, down the Borough High Street, the coachman was obliged to suddenly pull up the horses to avoid running over a gentleman on horseback, whose horse had bolted into the middle of the road. The sudden strain on the pole, already, it seems, splintered in the affair with the dray, broke it off. It fell, and became entangled with the legs of the wheelers, who became so restive and infuriated that attempts were made to put on the skid; but before that could be done the coach overturned. Sir William Cosway, who was one of the outsides, and was at that moment attempting to climb down, was pitched off so violently that his skull was

fractured, so that he died in less than two hours afterwards. A Mr. Todhunter "sustained" (as the reporters have it) a broken thigh.

1834.—The London and Halifax Mail came into collision with a bridge, five miles from Sheffield. The coachman, Thomas Roberts, was killed.

The Wolverhampton and Worcester coach, in avoiding a cart coming down a hill near Stourbridge, was upset, and a passenger killed.

October.—A wheel came off one of Wheatley's Greenwich coaches at London Bridge, and one gentleman was killed.

1835. *August.*—The Liverpool "Albion" fell over on entering Whitechurch, through a worn-out linchpin. A lady inside passenger was disfigured for life.

June.—The Nottingham "Rapid" upset, three miles from Northampton, through the breaking of an axle. A girl's leg crushed, and afterwards amputated.

November.—The Newcastle and Carlisle Mail upset, two miles from Hexham. Aiken, the coachman, killed.

December 25th.—The down Exeter Mail upset on Christmas night, on nearing Andover, through running against a bank in the prevailing fog. Austin, the coachman, killed.

1836. *June.*—The up Louth Mail nearly upset by stones maliciously placed in the road by some unknown person, near Linger House bar. Rhodes, the guard, was thrown off and seriously injured.

In September, 1836, a shocking accident befel the down Manchester "Peveril of the Peak," five miles from Bedford. The coach turned over, and a gentleman named O'Brien was killed on the spot. The coachman lay two hours under the coach, and died from his injuries.

The next disaster on our list was caused by a drunken coachman's dazed state of mind. Early on a Sunday morning in June, 1837, the Lincoln and London Mails met and came into collision at Lower Codicote, near Biggleswade. The driver of the up mail, Thomas Crouch, was in a state of partial intoxication at the time, and owing to a curve in the road, and the wandering state of his faculties, he did not observe the approach of the other mail. The result was that, although the coachman of the other made room for him to pass, the two coaches came into violent collision. The coach driven by Crouch was turned completely round, ran twenty or thirty yards in a direction opposite to that it was originally taking, and finally settled in a leaning posture in the ditch. Crouch was so injured that he died a few hours afterwards. The passengers were not much hurt, but two horses were killed.

On September 8th, a coachman named Burnett was killed at Speenhamland, on the Bath Road. He was driving one of the New Company's London and Bristol stages, and alighted at the "Hare and Hounds," very foolishly leaving the horses unattended, with the reins on their backs. He had been a coachman for twenty years, but

experience had not been sufficient to prevent him thus breaking one of the first rules of the profession. He had no sooner entered the inn than the rival Old Company's coach came down the road. Whether the other coachman gave the horses a touch with his whip as he passed, or if they started on their own accord, is not known, but they did start, and Burnett, rushing out to stop them, was thrown down and trampled on so that he died.

Of another kind was the fatal accident that closed the year on the Glasgow Road. On the night of December 18th, the up Glasgow Mail ran over a man, supposed to have been a drunken carter, who was lying in the middle of the highway.

1837. *August*.—The up Glasgow Mail, the up Edinburgh Mail, the Edinburgh and Dumfries, and the Edinburgh and Portpatrick Mails all upset the same night, at different places.

1838. *August*.—The London to Lincoln Express met a waggon at night, at Mere Hall, six miles from Lincoln. The coachman called to the waggoner to make room, and a young man who, it is supposed, was asleep on the top, started up, and rolled off. The waggon-wheels went over and killed him.

September.—The Edinburgh and Perth "Coburg" was the subject of a singular accident. Passengers and luggage were being received at Newhall's Pier, South Queensferry, when the leader suddenly turned round, and before the coachman and guard, who were stowing luggage,

could render assistance, coach and horses disappeared over the quay-wall. Some of the outsiders saved their lives by throwing themselves on the pier, but the four insides were less fortunate. Two of them thrust their heads through the windows, and so kept above the sea-water; the other two—a Miss Luff and her servant—were drowned. One outside, who had been flung far out into the sea, could fortunately swim, and so came ashore safe, but exhausted. Nine years later, February 16th, 1847, a similar accident happened to the Torrington and Bideford omnibus, when the horses took fright and plunged with the vehicle into the river from Bideford Quay. Of the twelve passengers, ten were drowned.

October.—The “Light Salisbury,” having met the train at Winchfield Station, proceeded to Hurstbourne Hill, between Basingstoke and Andover, where the bit of one of the horses caught in the pole and the coach was immediately overturned. One passenger died the same afternoon, and another was taken to his house at Andover without the slightest hope of recovery. A young woman’s leg was broken, and two other passengers’ limbs were smashed.

The railway journals, which had even thus early sprung into flourishing existence, did not fail to notice the increasing number of coaching accidents, the *Railway Times* with great gusto reporting twenty in a few weeks. The prevalence of these disasters was a cynical commentary upon the “Patent Safety” coaches running on every

road, warranted never to overturn and doing so with wonderful regularity, and on those coaching prints noticed by Charles Dickens—"coloured prints of coaches starting, arriving, changing horses; coaches in the sunshine, coaches in the wind, coaches in the mist and rain, coaches in all circumstances compatible with their triumph and victory; but never in the act of breaking down, or overturning."

The last years of coaching were, in fact, even more fruitful in accidents than the old days. Especially pathetic were the circumstances attendant upon the disaster that overtook the "Lark" Leicester and Nottingham Stage on May 23rd, 1840. The coach was on its last journey when it occurred, for the morrow was to witness the opening of the railway between those places. Like most of these last trips, the occasion was marked by much circumstance. Crowds assembled to witness the old order of things visibly pass away, and Frisby, the coachman, had dolefully tied black ribbons round his whipstock, to mark the solemnity of the event. Unfortunately, that badge of mourning proved in a little while to be only too appropriate, for the well-loaded coach had only gone about a mile and a half beyond Loughborough when Frisby, who had been driving recklessly all the way, and had several times been remonstrated with, overturned it at Coates' Mill. A Mr. Pearson and another were killed. Pearson, who had especially come to take part in this last drive, was connected with the "Times" London and Nottingham coach. He had been seated beside



A QUEER PIECE OF GROUND IN A FOG : " IF WE GET OVER THE RAILS, WE SHALL BE IN A UGLY FIX. "
After C. B. Nechouse.

Frisby, and had several times warned him, without avail. His thighs were broken, and he received a severe concussion of the brain, from which he died at midnight. Frisby himself was crippled for life.

The pitcher goes oft to the well, but at last it is broken; and so likewise the coachmen who, winter and summer, storm or shine, had driven for almost a generation over the same well-known routes, at length met their death on them in some unforeseen manner. A striking instance of this was the sad end of William Upfold—"unlucky Upfold"—who was coachman of the "Times" Brighton and Southampton Stage, a coach which ran by way of Worthing and Chichester. He was a steady and reliable man, fifty-four years of age, and had been a coachman for thirty-five years, when fatal mischance slew him on a February night, 1840. A singularly long series of more or less serious accidents had constantly attended him from 1831. In that year his leg was broken in an upset, and he had only just recovered and resumed his place when the coach was overturned again, this time through the breaking of an axle. The injuries he received kept him a long time idle. Again, in January 1832, at Bosham, the furies were eager for his destruction. He got off at the wayside inn, and left the reins in the hands of a passenger, who very foolishly alighted also, a minute or so later. When Upfold saw him enter the inn he hastily left it; but the horses had already started.

In trying to stop them he was kicked on the leg, and fell under the wheels, which passed over him and broke the other leg.

Poor Upfold recovered at last, and might have looked forward to immunity from any more accidents; but Fate had not yet done with him. When nearing Salvington Corner, one night in February 1840, he was observed by Pascoe, a coachman who was with him, to pull the wrong rein in turning one of the awkward angles that mark this stretch of road.

“Upfold, what are you at with the horses?” he asked.

“I have pulled the wrong rein,” said Upfold.

“Then mind and pull the right one this time,” rejoined Pascoe; but scarcely had he said it when the coach toppled over. Nearly every one was hurt, but Upfold was killed. His pulling the wrong rein was inexplicable. The unfortunate man knew the road intimately, and the witnesses declared he was absolutely sober; and so the country-folk, who knew his history and how often accidents had come his way, were reduced to the fatalistic remark that “it had to be.”

1841. *November 8th.*—Rival coaches leaving Skipton started racing on the Colne and Burnley road. The horses of one grew unmanageable and ran away. The passengers, alarmed, began to jump off, and a Manchester man, name unknown, who had been sitting beside the coachman, laid hold of the reins to help the coachman pull the horses in. In doing so, he pulled their heads to

one side, and they dashed with appalling force into a blank wall. He was killed on the spot. All the passengers who had jumped off were more or less seriously injured ; but a woman and a boy, who had remained quietly in their seats on the roof, were unhurt.

1842. *January 17th.*—The “Nettle,” Welshpool and Liverpool coach, overturned by a stone near Newtown. Mr. Jones, of Gorward, Denbighshire, a Dissenting minister, going to live at Kerry, Montgomeryshire, was thrown off the roof. He died two days later of his injuries, in great agony.

December 28th.—The Mail, coming south from Caithness-shire, broke an axle at Latheronwheel Bridge, and Donald Ross, the coachman, was dashed from his box over the bridge into the rocky burn, thirty feet below, and killed. The guard had a narrow escape. Fortunately, there were no passengers.

1843. *February 18th.*—The Cheltenham and Aberystwith Mail left the “Green Dragon,” at Hereford, on its way, and proceeded as usual to St. Owen’s turnpike-gate. The gate was open, as a matter of course, for the Mail, but the boisterous wind blowing at the time sent it swinging back across the road as the Mail passed. It hit the near wheeler a violent blow and broke the trace and the reins. Then rebounding, it struck the body of the coach with such force that Eyles, the coachman, was thrown off the box and killed. The horses, thoroughly terrified, then ran away, and,

meeting some donkey-carts on the road, ran into them, injuring some old women driving from market. One of them subsequently died from her hurts.

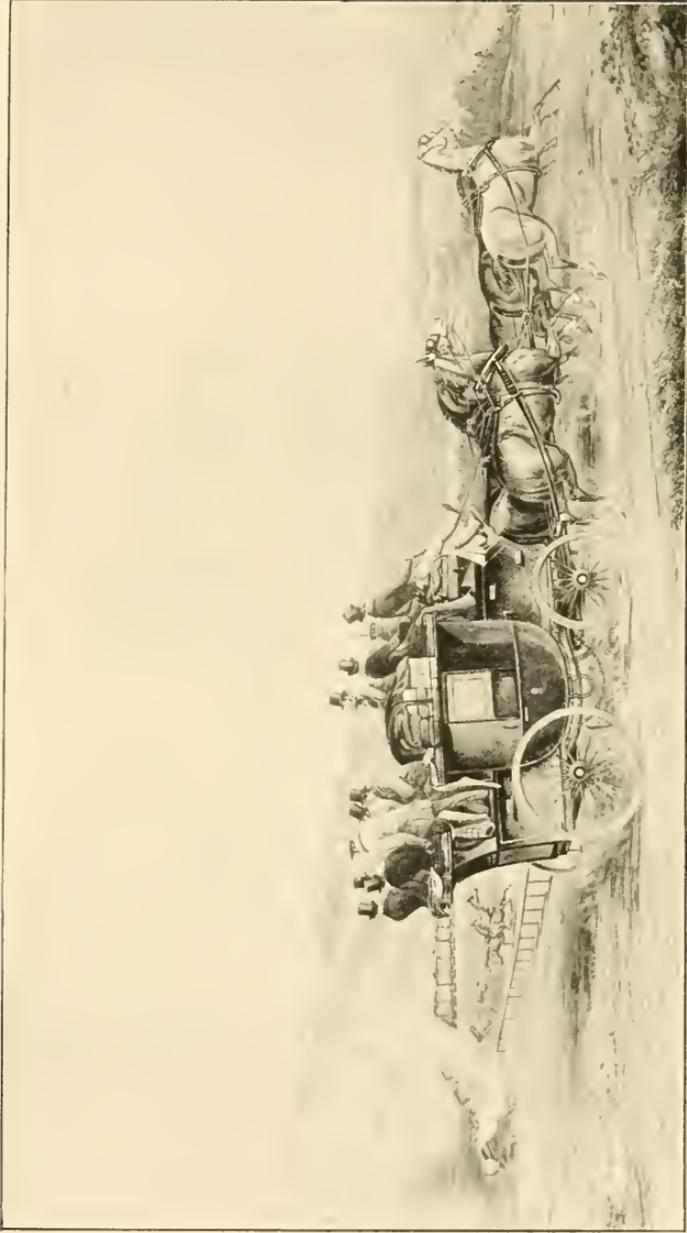
March 22nd.—The Norwich Day Coach upset at Brentwood. The coachman, James Draing, who was also proprietor, was killed.

April 21st.—The Southampton and Exeter Mail upset in the New Forest, two miles from Stony Cross, by the horses, frightened at an overturned waggon, running the coach up a bank. Cherry, the coachman, met a dreadful death, his head being literally split in two. A subscription of £350 was raised for his widow and six children.

May 1st.—The “Red Rover,” Ironbridge and Wolverhampton coach, upset half a mile from Madeley. One passenger, name unknown, killed. He was described as “a very stout gentleman, apparently about sixty years of age, dressed in an invisible green coat and great-coat of the same colour.”

June 26th.—William Cooke, guard of the Worcester coach, fell off his seat and was killed.

September 16th.—The Ludlow and Bewdley “Red Rover” overturned by the breaking of the front axle. The coach was going slowly down-hill at the time, and the wheel had the slipper on. It was a heavily-loaded coach, and all the outsides were violently thrown. A Mr. Thomas, a native of Ludlow, fifty-seven years of age, retired from business, was so seriously injured that he died



ROAD VERSUS RAIL.

After C. Cooper Henderson 1845.

next day. At the inquest a deodand of £30 was placed on the coach.

From this time forward the records of coaching accidents grow fewer, and occur at longer intervals; but only because coaches themselves were being swiftly replaced by the railways, which had by now come largely into their kingdom. Railway accidents took their place, and the coaching artists began to paint, and the printsellers to publish, pictures like that of "Road *versus* Rail" engraved here, showing a very smart and well-appointed coach bowling safely along the road, while a railway accident in progress in the middle distance attracts the elegant and rather smug attention of coachman and passengers.

Every one now forgot the numerous casualties of the old order of things—save, indeed, the bereaved and the maimed, suffering from the happenings of pure mischance, or from the drunken or sporting folly of the coachmen.

But to the very last, in those outlying districts to which the rail came late, and where the coaches continued to ply regularly until the 'fifties, the tragical possibilities of the road were insistent, confounding the thorough-going sentimentalists to whom the old times were everything that was good, and the new, by consequence, altogether bad. Listen to the moving tale of the Cheltenham and Aberystwith down mail on a wild night "about" 1852, according to the vague recollection for dates of Moses James Nobbs.

Although torrents of rain had been falling

and the night was pitch dark, all went well with the mail until nearing the Lugg Bridge, near Hereford, where the little river Lugg, rushing furiously in spate to join the Wye, had undermined the masonry. No sooner did the horses place their weight upon it than the arch gave way, and the coachman, Couldery the guard, and the one passenger, were precipitated into the torrent and swept away for more than a mile down stream. It was midnight when the accident happened, and until daybreak the three, at separate points, clung to rocks and branches, from which they were then rescued by search-parties. The coachman and guard recovered from the exposure, but the passenger died.

Charles Ward, that fine old coachman, who kept on the road in Cornwall for many years after coaching had ceased over the rest of England, tells amusingly of the happening that befell the cross-country Bath and Devonport Mail, in some year unspecified. It might have been a most serious accident, but fortunately ended happily. The coach was due to arrive at Devonport at eleven o'clock at night. On this particular occasion all the outside passengers, except a Mrs. Cox, an "immense woman," who kept a fish-stall in Devonport Market, had been set down at Yealmpton, where the coachman and guard usually had their last drain. They went, as usual, into the inn, and very considerably sent out to Mrs. Cox a glass of "something warm," it being a very cold night. The servant-

girl who took out that cheering glass was not able to reach up to the roof, and so the ostler, who was holding the horses' heads, very imprudently left them, to do the polite, when the animals, hearing some one getting on the coach, and thinking (for coach-horses did actually do something like it) that it was the coachman, started off, and trotted at their ordinary speed the whole seven miles to the door of the "King's Arms" at Plymouth, where they were in the habit of stopping to discharge some of the coach-freight. On their way they had to cross the Laira Bridge and through the toll-bar, and did so, keeping clear of everything on the road in as workmanlike a manner as though the skilfullest of whips was directing their course. Mrs. Cox, however, was terrified. Afraid to scream lest she should startle the horses, she had to content herself with gesticulating and trying to attract the attention of the people met or passed on the road. When the horses drew up in an orderly fashion at the "King's Arms," and the ostlers came bustling out to attend to their duties, they were astonished to see no one but the affrighted Mrs. Cox on the outside, and two inside passengers, who had been in total ignorance of what was happening. The coachman and guard, in a very alarmed state, soon came up in a post-chaise. It took many quarterns of gin to steady the nerves of the proprietress of the fish-stall, and the incident became the chief landmark of her career.

We will conclude this chapter of accidents on this lighter and less sombre note, and tell how humour sometimes remained in the foreground even if the possibilities of tragedy lurked threatening in the rear. The tale used often to be told on the Exeter Road how, on one occasion, when Davis was driving the up "Quicksilver" Mail between Bagshot and Staines on a dark night, he ran into some obstruction, and the coach was upset into the adjoining field, fortunately a wet meadow. The "insides" were asleep at the time, and they naturally awoke in the wildest alarm. One, who did not grasp the situation, called out, "Coachman, coachman, where are we?" "By God, sir," replied Davis, "I don't know, for I was never here before in all my life!" Happily, nobody and nothing was hurt, and in twenty minutes the coach was away, making up for lost time.

CHAPTER V

A GREAT CARRYING FIRM: THE STORY OF PICKFORD AND CO.

To the incurious public, who are as familiar with the name of "Pickford's" as with that of their favourite morning newspaper, and to whom the sight of one of Pickford's vans is a mere commonplace of daily life, this great carrying firm is just a part of our modern commercial system. To suggest to that favourite abstraction—the "average man"—so commonly cited, that Pickford's is a firm whose origin is to be traced back two hundred and fifty or three hundred years would be a rash thing. He would tell you that this is a firm of railway carriers, and that, as railways are not yet a hundred years old, Pickford's certainly cannot be two centuries older.

Thus do later changes overlie and conceal earlier methods of business.

Our average citizen would be wrong in two things: in his premisses, that the firm is wholly one of railway carriers; and in his conclusions, that it came into existence with railways themselves. The origin of Pickford's is, indeed, lost in the mists that gather round the social and commercial life of the early seventeenth century; for

the beginnings of the business go back to that time when the original firm of packhorse carriers was established, to whose trade the Pickfords succeeded, by purchase or otherwise, about 1730. Traditions only survive of those long-absorbed carriers, whose packhorse trains originally plied on the hilly tracks between Derby and Manchester "about two hundred and fifty or three hundred years ago," as we vaguely learn. No documentary or other evidence exists on which to found an account of them. What would we not give to be able to recover from the romantic past the story of those old-time carriers, contemporary with the famous Hobson himself, beyond comparison the most celebrated of all these old men of the road !

But all records have been destroyed. When the several changes were made that from time to time altered the constitution of the business, the papers and documents relating to past transactions were cast aside as waste-paper, and there was none among the people of those times who thought it worth while, for the interest and instruction of posterity, to set down what he knew of the current history of the concern. That this should have been the case is no matter for surprise. The past or the future interests many to whom the present is only something from which to escape, as commonplace and dull. That man who is not glad, when the business day is done, to leave for home and straightway dismiss all thoughts of his business from his mind is rare indeed ; and still

more rare he who finds interest, beyond mere money-getting, in the daily commerce by which he lives and prospers.

About 1770 Matthew Pickford, the representative, in the second or third generation, of that family in this olden firm, is found established in Manchester, a town then making rapid industrial progress, and affording great scope for the carrying trade, already, for some years past, conducted by waggons; but we do not obtain any details of his business until November 16th, 1776, when he issued the following advertisement, afterwards inserted in *Prescott's Manchester Journal* for Saturday, January 4th, 1777:—

“THIS is to acquaint all Gentlemen,
Tradesmen, and Others, that Mat.
Pickford's Flying Waggons to
London in Four Days and a Half

Set out from the Swan and Saracen's Head, in Market Street Lane, Manchester, every Wednesday, at Six o'clock in the Evening, and arrive at the Swan Inn, Lad Lane, London, the Tuesday noon following; also set out every Saturday at the same Hour, and arrive there on Friday noon following. Set out from London every Wednesday and Saturday, and arrive at Manchester every Tuesday and Friday; which carry goods and passengers to and from Manchester, Stockport, Macclesfield, Leek, Blackburn, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Ashton-under-Line, and places adjacent.

“ N.B.—M. Pickford will not be accountable for any Money, Plate, Watches, Jewels, Writings, Glass, China, etc., unless entered as such, and paid for accordingly.

“ Constant attention at the above Inns in London and Manchester, to take in Goods, etc.”

It will be noticed that these “ four days and a half ” trips, although performed by “ Flying Waggon,” and presumably much swifter than some earlier ones of which we have no record, were only four and a half days in a very special sense, and by the exercise of some peculiar method of reckoning whose secret has not descended to us. It might seem, to the person of ordinary intelligence, that these were really itineraries of rather more than five days and a half; but the Sunday was doubtless a day of rest for the waggons, as for most others in those times.

In 1780, according to the evidence afforded by an old billhead, still preserved, Matthew Pickford was carrying on business in conjunction with Thomas, his brother, and in this partnership they continued to trade for many years.

Meanwhile, the manufacturing industries of Lancashire and the north-west had grown enormously, and canals were already being dug to aid the transport of goods. We have no means of knowing in how far the Pickfords took advantage of the early canals in the Midlands, but that they availed themselves very greatly of

the opportunities afforded by them of extending their business seems unlikely, in view of the position in 1817, when they admitted Joseph Baxendale as a partner into the concern.

Joseph Baxendale was thirty-two years of age when he became partner in the firm of Pickford & Co. He was born in 1785, the son of Josiah Baxendale, of Lancaster, and had already seen something of business as partner in the concern of Swainson & Co., calico-printers at Preston, whose firm he left to seek those wider activities for which his active mind longed. For there was something adventurous in his blood, which would by no means permit him merely to take the sedentary part of a capitalist in any enterprise in whose fortunes he might acquire a share. An opportunity thoroughly suited to his temperament was this which offered, of becoming a partner in the already old-established firm of Pickford's. We have now no means of knowing precisely on what terms he joined the two brothers, but whatever the pecuniary consideration may have been, enough survives to tell us that his youthful activities and his keen business intelligence were prominent in what he brought into the firm. For many years Matthew and Thomas had borne the whole conduct of the business, and it was now desirable, both by reason of their advancing years and the natural growth of the commercial activities of the country, that they should have, allied with them, one who, alike by inclination and urged by business interests, would scour the country,

supervising and organising, as they no longer found it possible to do.

Baxendale found plenty of work of this nature awaiting him. The staff of horses which the Pickfords had found sufficient for their needs in bygone years had been little, if at all, increased, although a period of great trade-expansion had set in; and a total lack of efficient supervision over agents and carmen had resulted in the carrying business being dilatory and untrustworthy. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that rival firms had begun to threaten the very existence of Pickford's, declining under the nerveless rule, by which the needs of the time were not understood.

It was soon impressed upon the new partner's active and penetrating intelligence that the requirements of the time, and still more the requirements of the succeeding years, imperatively demanded a thorough reorganisation — more thorough, perhaps, than the old partners were altogether ready to concede. He soon acquired entire control, and the Pickfords, unable or unwilling to meet new times with new methods, left their already historic business and its destinies in his hands.

He speedily altered the aspect of affairs. Soon he had close upon a thousand horses, all his own, on the great roads between London and the north-west; while advertisements were issued, announcing "Caravans on Springs and Guarded, carrying Goods only, every afternoon at 6 o'clock," from

London and Manchester, taking only 36 hours to perform the 186 miles.

To this, then, the "caravan" had come at last. Travellers from the Far East had originally brought the word to England. They had seen the Persian *kārwāns* toiling under those torrid skies—covered waggons in whose shady interiors the poor folks travelled; and when the first stage-waggons were established in England, they were often known by an English version of that name. Some of the caravans of the late seventeenth century were, however, by no means the rough-and-ready affairs generally supposed, if we may judge from the description of one offered for sale in the *London Gazette* of May 6th, 1689. This, according to the vendors, was:—

"A Fair easie going Caravan, with a very handsom Roof Brass Work, good Seats. Glasses on the sides to draw up; that will carry 18 Persons, with great Conveniency for Carriage of Goods, so well built that it is fit for Carriage of all manner of Goods—to be sold."

But there was one more change before the caravan in 1817. Already the popular voice, unwilling to enunciate three syllables when one could be made to serve, had clipped the name to "van," and as vans all covered vehicles of the kind have been known ever since.

At the time when Baxendale appeared upon the scene the headquarters of the business were still at Manchester, and the London establishments had been for many years past at the

“Castle,” Wood Street, and the “White Bear,” Basinghall Street. To the first house, then a galleried inn of the ancient type, at the corner of Wood Street and what is now Gresham Street, but was then Lad Lane, the London and Manchester waggons and caravans resorted; and to and from the “White Bear” went the Leicester and Nottingham traffic.

Coming with a fresh mind to the carrying problems that confronted the firm, the new partner decided that London, and not Manchester, ought to be its central point, and so soon as he obtained control he accordingly removed the head offices to the Metropolis. Canal-traffic, too, engaged his earnest attention, and the scope of the firm’s activities were extended enormously in that direction. The Regent’s Canal was opened in 1820, and when that opening took place the newly built wharves of Pickford & Co. were ready, beside the City Basin. To and from that point came and went the water-borne trade, in the fly-boats of the firm, simultaneously with the fly-vans on the roads.

These developments brought other changes, and in 1826 the existing headquarter offices of Pickford & Co. were built in Gresham Street, adjoining the “Castle” Inn.

It will be interesting to see what was the cost of carriage of goods at this period. It was the carriers’ Golden Age, when, for distances of a little over a hundred miles from London—as, for example, Leicester and Birmingham—the



JOSEPH BAXENDALE.

From the portrait by E. H. Pickersgill, R.A.

carriage of goods by waggon or caravan could be charged at 5s. per cwt., or £5 per ton; when by coach the rates for small parcels were 1*d.* a pound; and even by canal—that last effort in cheap transport before railways—the charges were 2*s.* 9*d.* per cwt., or £2 15*s.* per ton.

He who reorganised the old business of Pickford's demands extended notice in these pages. A portrait of him, a three-quarter length, painted by Pickersgill, R.A., about 1847, has the illusion common to all three-quarter-length portraits of giving an appearance of great stature. Mr. Baxendale was a man of broad shoulder, and not above the middle height. While in many respects a good portrait of him, it is said by those who knew him best to fail in not giving expression to the native kindliness and humour that underlaid his keen business instincts. "Cheerful and witty in conversation," says one who knew him well, "he ever had a word of encouragement for the youngsters, and was universally beloved by those whom he employed."

To those who served him to the best of their ability he was a never-failing friend, and, at a time when business firms did not usually trouble themselves about the comfort of their servants, took pains to secure their well-being. In the galleries of the old "Castle" Inn he constructed a coffee- and club-room for his carmen, and provided similar conveniences at his other establishments. The old inn has long been demolished, but the headquarters of the firm still remains next

door, and adjoins the modern Railway Goods Receiving Office of the "Swan with Two Necks," built on the site of the old coaching establishment of Chaplin's.

Never was such a man for improving maxims as Joseph Baxendale. He was a great admirer of *Poor Richard's Almanack* and its racy maxims, written by Daniel Webster, and carefully caused a broadsheet containing a selection of them to be printed. He also tried his own hand at composing pithy sentences on the virtues of punctuality and method, and caused leaflets of these, together with *Poor Richard's* homely literature, to be circulated and posted in all conspicuous places in the establishments of Pickford & Co. in London and the provinces, and on the roads and canals where his vans travelled or his fly-boats voyaged. Here is one of his compositions in this way:—

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| TIME LOST |
| CANNOT |
| BE |
| REGAINED |

THE
IMPORTANCE
OF
PUNCTUALITY

| |
|---------|
| NEVER |
| DESPAIR |
| — |
| NOTHING |
| WITHOUT |
| LABOUR |

METHOD is the very Hinge of Business; and there is no Method without Punctuality. Punctuality is important, because it subserves the Peace and good Temper of a Family: The want of it not only infringes on necessary Duty, but sometimes excludes this Duty. The Calmness of Mind which it produces, is another Advantage

of Punctuality: A disorderly man is always in a hurry; he has no time to speak to you, because he is going elsewhere; and when he gets there, he is too late for his business; or he must hurry away to another before he can finish it. Punctuality gives weight to Character. "Such a man has made an Appointment:—then I know he will keep it." And this generates punctuality in you; for, like other Virtues, it propagates itself. Servants and Children must be punctual, where their Leader is so. Appointments, indeed, become Debts. I owe you Punctuality, if I have made an Appointment with you: and have no right to throw away your time, if I do my own.

Of course, this good advice and insistence upon its being followed would have been of little avail had the author of it not been continually alert to see that his instructions took root. *He*, at any rate, practised what he preached, and rose early, was diligent all day, and went late to bed. As a business man whose business was conducted over a large stretch of country—extending chiefly in a diagonal line two hundred miles long, between London and Liverpool—he knew that only by personal supervision and by great and unwearied exertions in travelling could his subordinates be kept in a state of efficiency; and he accordingly was always travelling. By post-chaise or by private carriage he flew, day and night, along the great roads between London and Holyhead, and London, Derby, Manchester and Liverpool;

appearing, suddenly and unexpectedly, at some great town-warehouse of the firm, or some wayside office or place of call, and often springing, as it were, out of the void, to encourage some diligent servant, or (it is to be feared) more often to reprimand a lazy and inefficient one. None could predicate his movements or where he might be at any given time; save indeed those with whom he had made appointments, and they knew, after only a short acquaintance, that the sun was scarce more likely to rise and set according to the calendar than Joseph Baxendale was to redeem his promise of any such assignation.

Forsaking for awhile the roads and his establishments along them, he would next appear on the canals on whose sullen waters his fly-boats flew, and pay flying visits of inspection to the many wharves along their course. These water expeditions were made in a vessel especially constructed—a “canal-yacht” called the *Lark*, whether significantly named in allusion to the early-rising habits of its owner we do not know. It was this boat, according to the still surviving tradition, he lent to the Earl of Derby on an occasion when Lady Derby was in London, too ill to travel by road to Knowsley, where, according to the doctor’s advice, she should be removed. In it she travelled all the way down to Lancashire, along the canals.

Another surviving tradition, and one that speaks well for the quality of the horses that drew the fly-boats—and perhaps even better for the

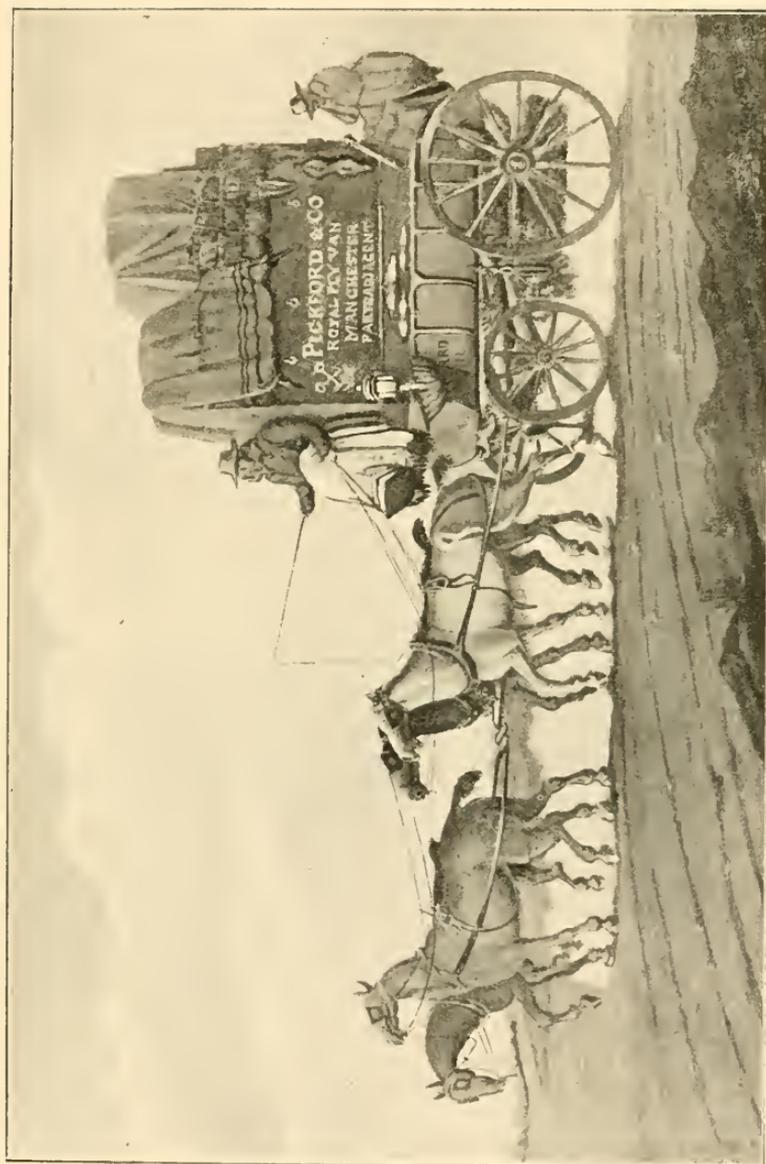
keenness of the sporting instincts of the official concerned—tells how Mr. Baxendale, on coming to Braunston, a Northamptonshire village on the Grand Junction Canal, discovered that the man who should have been in charge of his wharf there had gone hunting, mounted on one of the firm's towing-path steeds. Records of that time do not tell us of that sportsman's return, or of the reception that met him.

It was perhaps a consequence of the strenuous rule then obtaining that, at a time when the great roads to the north were blocked by the historic snowstorm of Christmas 1836, when the stage-coaches and the mails were buried in the drifts, Pickford's Manchester Flying Van was first through. We may suppose that the horses were better specimens than those pictured here, from an old painting, which represents the fly-van team as a very sorry one indeed, comparing badly with the sturdy animals who are seen drawing the van in the first picture.

It would be a mistake to think that Baxendale's ways with his staff were merely those of the strict disciplinarian, only anxious to obtain the utmost from them. His kindness was perhaps his strongest point, and Pickford's under his rule began the practice of recognising the loyalty and hard work of their servants by pensioning them on their retirement—a policy that still does honour to the firm.

Under this vigorous sway Pickford's grew and prospered, and by the time when railways first

loomed threatening upon the horizon of the carriers' and coachmen's outlook, commanded the bulk of the goods traffic between London and the Midlands, alike by road and canal. That was a period above all others when a clear head was requisite. It appeared to many to be a choice between giving up business or fighting the encroachments of steam. To the few, of whom Baxendale was one, the issues were more varied and hopeful. He foresaw that railways must succeed, and that, since to fight them would be hopeless, the best thing to do would be to work with them as far as possible. The business need not be injured; indeed, he saw that it must needs share in whatever prosperity attended the railways. Only methods must be changed. But to reorganise a vast business only just, after thirteen years of unwearied effort, re-established on new and improved lines, must have seemed a hard necessity. However, when the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, the second line in the country, was about to be opened, in 1830, he perceived that although the road traffic must cease between the two terminal points of a railway, yet there must be some agency prepared to collect goods, and deliver them to or convey them from the railway stations. He saw, too, an inevitable increase in the volume of traffic, and very prudently resolved to obtain a share of it by throwing in his lot with the railway people, who were themselves not so assured of instant success as to repel so unexpected an offer, and welcomed the



PICKFORD AND CO.'S ROYAL FLY-VAN, ABOUT 1820. From a contemporary painting.

proposed alliance. The same attitude was adopted towards the Grand Junction Railway and the London and Birmingham. In this far-seeing policy Baxendale was at one with William Chaplin, who at an early period in the history of railway enterprise had called upon him and asked him what his views were on this vital question. Chaplin withdrew his coaches when the London and Birmingham Railway was opened, and Pickford's fly-vans and fly-boats ceased to run. In return for these really valuable services, Pickford's, and Chaplin and his coaching ally, Horne, who had been equally complaisant, acquired shares in the town and country carrying agencies for what in 1845 became an amalgamation of railway interests under the style and title of the "London and North-Western Railway." Unused as these new railway people were to the business of handling goods, they were glad enough that Mr. Baxendale should organise that class of traffic for them, and, as we have already said, really welcomed the aid thus somewhat unexpectedly forthcoming, although outwardly adopting a self-sufficient and omnipotent attitude. He became organising goods-manager, and contributed the services of his staff to the work, but resigned when everything had been duly set going to devote himself to his own business. He it was who drew up the documents still used in the goods departments of railways to this day, in all essentials unaltered.

Meanwhile his anticipations were justified by the course of events. Railways did but alter the

methods of the carrying trade. They not only did not destroy it, but, in the altered shape it took, increased it fifty-fold. No fewer than twenty-one district managers became necessary to the conduct of the business, which at length gave employment to between three and four thousand people.

The central figure of this successful reorganisation became, like William Chaplin, a power in the railway world. He was for some years Chairman of the South-Eastern Railway, and in that capacity strongly urged the purchase of Folkestone Harbour, an undertaking then in the market. His co-directors did not at the time agree with the proposal, but eventually came round to his way of thinking, and brought up the subject again. Meanwhile he had privately purchased the harbour. The high sense of duty that characterised him led to his considering that, as Chairman of the Railway Company, and as therefore trustee of the interests of the proprietors, he could not retain the property, and he accordingly transferred it at the price he had given. He was at the same time a director of the Great Northern Railway of France, but was in 1848, in consequence of a severe illness, obliged to resign some of these activities, together with the detailed management of Pickford's, which he then left in the hands of his three sons, but never gave up control of the business. He had in the meantime purchased an estate at Woodside Park, Whetstone, where he resided. He died there, March 24th, 1872, in his eighty-seventh year.

The portrait of him, as he was in the full vigour of his manhood, hangs amid the old-time relics still cherished in the Gresham Street offices—among the muskets and the blunderbusses carried by the guards of his fly-vans in the old days of the road.

CHAPTER VI

ROBBERY AND ADVENTURE

THE whole art and mystery of coach-robbing began to be studied at a very early date. In the *London Gazette* during 1684 we find the following extremely explicit advertisement:—

“A GENTLEMAN (passing with others in the Northampton Stage Coach on Wednesday the 14th instant, by Harding Common about two miles from Market-street) was set upon by four Theeves, plain in habit but well-horsed, and there (amongst other things) robbed of a Watch; the description of it thus, The Maker's Name was engraven on the Back plate in French, *Gulimus Petit à Londres*; it was of a large round Figure, flat, Gold Enamelled without, with variety of Flowers of different colours, and within a Landskip, and by a fall the Enamel was a little cracked; It had also a black Seale-Skin plain Cafe lined with Green Velvet. If any will produce it, and give notice to Mr. Samuel Gibs, Sadler near the George Inn Northampton, or to Mr. Crofs in Wood Street, London, he shall have a Guinea reward.”

It is to be feared that the gentleman who thus mourned his watch never regained it.

From this time forward, until well into the nineteenth century, highwaymen and the

highway-robbery of postboys, stage-coaches, post-chaises, and all sorts and conditions of wayfarers became commonplaces of travel. Dick Turpin's name has acquired an undue prominence, on account of Harrison Ainsworth elevating him upon a pedestal, as the hero of a romance, but his was really neither a prominent nor an heroic figure. Innumerable other practitioners surpassed him. Claude Du Vall, who robbed and danced on Hounslow Heath; Abershaw, the terror of the Surrey Commons; Captain Hind, soldier and gentleman, warring with authority; Boulter, whose depredations were conducted all over the kingdom; the "Golden Farmer" on the Exeter Road, outside Bagshot: all these and very many more were infinitely superior to Turpin, and, as they phrased it, "spoke to" the coaches with great success during their brief but crowded career. Nowadays, we hear much of overcrowded professions; but those of the Army, the Church, and the Law are by no means so crowded as were the ranks of the liberal profession of highway robbery in the brave nights of crape mask and horse-pistols at the cross-roads on the blasted heaths which then encompassed the Metropolis; lonesome places of dreadful possibilities, which could not have been more conveniently placed for the purpose of these night-hawks had they been expressly designed for them.

Travellers, who looked upon being robbed once upon a journey as the inevitable thing, very soon discovered this overcrowded state of affairs,

and resented it. Once upon a time, after the gentry who plied their occupation on Hounslow Heath and Finchley or Putney Commons had taken toll of purse and pocket, travellers had gone their way chuckling at the store of notes and gold still safe in their boots and the lining of their coats; but when every reckless blade and every discharged footman or disbanded soldier took to the road, the polite highwayman of the recognised robbing-places had no sooner been left behind with a "good-night to you"—mutual good wishes and a hearty *au revoir!* from Du Vall or one of his brethren—than the territory of an unsuspected set of ruffians was entered; rough-and-ready customers, who were not content until they had got the passengers' boots off, or had ripped up the linings of coats and waistcoats, and then, having taken the last stiver, bade those unhappy passengers, with a curse, begone. There was an even deeper depth of misery—when, thus shorn and stripped, they encountered a yet more rascally, more provincial and hungrier crew, who in their exasperation at getting nothing, would sometimes resort to personal violence, to vent their disappointment and ill-humour.

At this overcrowded period, when the ordinary course of business failed, the highwaymen were even known to practise upon one another, like the Stock Exchange brokers of to-day, who, when the public hold aloof, sharpen their wits and fill their pockets by professional dealings.

In 1758 the monotony of highway robbery

was broken by a burglary at the "Bull and Mouth" coach-office, at 3 o'clock one morning, when 47 parcels, chiefly containing plate and watches, were stolen. The booty was valued at £500. The thieves carried the parcels away in a cart, and left behind them a lighted candle, which would have burned the place down had it not been discovered in time by a coachman.

This was followed in May 1766 by an incident standing out in highly humorous relief. The *Public Advertiser* in that month announced:—"A few nights ago, among the passengers that were going in the stage from Bath to London, were two supposed females that had taken outside places. As they were climbing to their seats it was observed that one of them had men's shoes and stockings on, and upon further search, Breeches were discovered also: this consequently alarming the company, the person thus disguised was taken into custody and locked up for the night. The next day he was brought before a magistrate, and upon a strict examination into matters, it appeared that he was a respectable tradesman who, having cash and bills to a large amount on him, thus disguised himself to escape the too urgent notice of the 'Travelling Collectors.'"

Turnpike Trusts at this time encouraged Sabbatarian feeling by charging double on Sundays; but "knowing" travellers sometimes travelled on that day, and submitted to that imposition as the cheaper of two evils. The one

they thus escaped was the imminent risk of being molested by highwaymen and stripped of all their valuables; for those gay "Collectors," as they delighted to style themselves, did not attend to business on the Sabbath. We are not, from this, to suppose that the highwaymen were at church, or at home, reading improving literature. Not at all: they did not expect wayfarers, and so took the day off. The Sunday Trading Act for many years forbidding Lord's Day employment, prevented coaches running then, and so helped to give the hard-worked nocturnal gentlemen of the road their needed weekly rest, and ensured them from missing very much. Yet anxious travellers did sometimes go on Sundays, and risk an information. When at last the mail-coaches were started, to go seven times a week, and the Post Office itself set the example of Sunday travel, away went the highwayman's week-ends and the travellers' respite from wayside "Stand and deliver!" The stages then plied on Sundays also.

As for the mails, they were immune from attack. The Post Office early issued a warning against sending gold by them; but it did so, not from fear of the highwaymen, but "from the prejudice it does the coin by the friction." Highwaymen were, in fact, little feared either by the Department or by the mail-passengers, for not only did the guard's embattled condition secure them from attack, but the Post Office introduced enactments dealing very severely with highway robbery applied to the mail-coaches. The standing

reward offered the liege-subjects of the king for arresting an ordinary highwayman was raised to £200 in the case of an attack on the mail, further augmented by another £100 if within five miles of London. Mail-coaches, by consequence, were left severely alone by the Turpins, Aber-shaws, and others of their kind; and it has been said that a mail-coach, unlike the old postboys carrying the mail-bags, was never attacked.

Although this is very likely true, it must not be supposed that the mails were never robbed. The distinction drawn is clear. Violence was not shown, but robberies were frequent, often on a sensational scale. One February night in 1810, some unknown persons wrenched off the lock of the hind-boot on one of the mails and made away with no fewer than sixteen North-Country bags. Where was the guard? Probably kissing the pretty barmaid. Again, on November 9th, in that same year, nine bags were stolen from a mail at Bedford; and so frequent grew robberies of all sorts that in January 1813 the Superintendent of Mails was constrained to issue a warning notice to his officials:—"The guards are desired by Mr. Hasker to be particularly attentive to their mail-box. Depredations are committed every night on some stage-coaches by stealing parcels. I shall relate a few, which I trust will make you circumspect. The Bristol mail-coach has been robbed within a week of the bankers' parcel, value £1000 or upwards. The Bristol mail-coach was robbed of money the 3rd instant to a large

amount. The 'Expedition' coach has been twice robbed in the last week—the last time of all the parcels out of the seats. The 'Telegraph' was robbed last Monday night between the Saracen's Head, Aldgate, and Whitechapel Church, of all the parcels out of the dicky. It was broken open while the guard was on it, standing up blowing his horn. The York mail was robbed of parcels out of the seats to a large amount."

Many of these robberies cited by Hasker were, it will be noticed, from stage-coaches. Despite this warning note, small thefts continued. Then, in 1822, came the classic instance—the robbery from the Ipswich Mail, when notes worth £31,198 mysteriously disappeared. A month later the bulk of them, to the value of £28,000, was returned, only a few, worth £3000, having been successfully negotiated. On the night of June 6th, 1826, seven bags were taken from the Dover Mail between Chatham and Rainham; and in the following year a new sensation was provided by the Warwick Mail being robbed of £20,000.

But the closing great robbery of the coaching age was that of £5000 in notes from the "Potter" (Manchester and Stafford) coach, October 1839. The notes, in a parcel addressed to a bank at Hanley, were extracted from the hind-boot when the coach was near Congleton.

Adventures, says the proverb, are to the adventurous; but in coaching times they befell those who desired a quiet life, equally with the seekers after sensation and experience.

Fortunately for the peace of mind of our grandfathers, the startling adventure that befell the up Exeter Mail at Winterslow Hut, on the night of October 20th, 1816, was unique. The coach had left Salisbury in the usual way, and had proceeded several miles, when what was thought to be a large calf was seen trotting beside the horses in the darkness. When the lonely inn of Winterslow Hut was reached, the team had become extremely nervous, and could scarcely be kept under control. At the moment when the coachman pulled up, one of the horses was seized by the supposed calf, and the others of the terrified team began to kick and plunge violently. The guard very promptly drew his blunderbuss, and was about to shoot this mysterious assailant, when several men, accompanied by a large mastiff, came on the scene; and it appeared that this ferocious "calf" was really a lioness, escaped from a travelling menagerie, and these men come in pursuit. The dog was holloed on to the attack, and the lioness thereupon left the horse, and, seizing him, tore the wretched animal to pieces.

At length she was secured by a rope, and taken off in captivity. The leading horse was fearfully mangled, but survived, and was exhibited for a time, with great financial success, by the showman whose lioness had wrought the mischief. When the interest had subsided, "Pomegranate"—for that was the name of the horse—was sold. He had been foaled in 1809, and was a thoroughbred, with rather too much spirit for his owner,

who had sold him out of his stable for his bad temper. The severe work in coaches of that period soon took the unruly nature out of such animals, and no complaint was made of him in his long after-career on the Brighton and Petworth stage-coach.

This exciting episode was, of course, the wonder of that age, and two coaching artists made capital out of it, in the shape of very effective plates. James Pollard was the author of one; the other was by one Sauerweid, whose name is not familiar in work of this kind.

Dark nights in wild country were fruitful in strange experiences, aided, doubtless, by the potency of the parting glass as well as by the blackness of the night and the ruggedness of the way. The adventures of Jack Creery and Joe Lord, coachman and guard of the pair-horse Lancaster and Kirkby Stephen Mail, one snowy night, form a case in point. They had the coach to themselves, for it was not good travelling weather. Creery, we are told, "felt sleepy"—a pretty way of saying he was intoxicated—and so the guard took the reins. In driving, this worthy, whose condition seems to have been only a shade better than that of his companion, wandered in the snow into a by-lane between Kirkby Stephen and Kirkby Lonsdale, and so lost his way. After floundering about for some time, he aroused Creery, and their united efforts, after alighting many times to read the signposts, brought them in the middle of the night to a



After A. Sturtevid.

THE LIONESS ATTACKING THE EXETER MAIL, OCTOBER 20TH, 1816

village, where they were found by the aroused villagers loudly knocking at the church door, under the impression that it was a public-house. That snowstorm must have been a particularly blinding one, or the brandy at their last house of call unusually strong.

Not often was coaching history marked by such a gruesome incident as that which befell a coach on the Norwich Road. At Ingatestone a lady, who was the only inside passenger, was discovered to have died. Her son, travelling outside, was informed, but after some hesitation it was decided that the coach should proceed to its destination at Colechester. At Chelmsford, however, two ladies presented themselves as would-be passengers. Inside seats only were available, all the outsides being occupied. They were informed of the circumstances, and that they could therefore not be booked; but were so anxious to go by the coach that they overcame their natural scruples, and rode with the dead woman to the journey's end.

Of winter travelling we have already heard something, and shall hear more. How it struck one contemporary with those times we may learn from a reminiscient old traveller, who, having had much experience of old coaching methods, preferred the railway age—at least in winter. Thus he recalls some of his experiences:—

“For a day and night journey the agony was, on two occasions, so intense that, although then in my youth, and hardy enough, I was obliged to

get off the coach and sleep a night on the road ; by which I don't mean under the hedge, but in one of those fine old (and highly expensive) inns that then were to be found at more or less regular intervals along the great highways. Posting, generally with four horses—a highly extravagant way of travelling, but one in great favour with those who could afford it—maintained correspondingly high charges at all these houses of entertainment. It was all very well to rhapsodise over the climbing roses, the fragrant honeysuckle and the odorous jessamine that wreathed the portals of the wayside inn in summer, or to become eloquent over the roaring fire, at whose ruddy blaze you toasted your feet in winter, but you had to pay—and to pay pretty heavily—for these luxuries. I will suppose that the traveller stopped for dinner, which, if left to the landlady, generally consisted of eels, or other fresh-water fish, dressed in a variety of ways, roast fowl, lamb or mutton cutlets, bread, cheese, and celery, for which a charge of six or seven shillings was made. If the meal took place after dark, there was an additional item of two shillings or half a crown for wax lights. Then, 'for the good of the house' and your own certain discomfort, there was a bottle of fine crusted port (probably two days in bottle) seven shillings ; or a bottle of fiery sherry, just drawn from the wood, six shillings. To all these charges must be added the waiter's fee of one shilling or eighteenpence a head. 'Sleeping on the road' absolved you from some of these costs,

but it was expensive in its own way. It involved tea or supper, chambermaid and boots, as well as bed and breakfast. Breakfast, with ham and eggs, three shillings; tea, with a few slices of thin bread-and-butter, eighteenpence or two shillings; a soda and brandy, eighteenpence.

“Once, in the depth of winter, I left Bramham Park, the seat of George Lane-Fox, on the Great North Road, to proceed to London, with a journey before me of 190 miles. I was well wrapped up, with enough straw round my feet to conceal a covey of partridges; still, after going about 37 miles, I felt myself so benumbed that I began to think whether it would be wise to go on, or get off and sacrifice my fare to London. Upon reaching Bawtry I felt more comfortable, the guard at Doncaster having lent me a tarpaulin lined with sheepskin; so I resolutely determined to brave the pitiless storm of snow, now whitening the ground.

“‘Half an hour for supper,’ exclaimed the waiter, as we pulled up at the ‘Crown.’ Down I got, entered the room, where there was a bright fire blazing, devoured some cold beef, drank a glass of hot brandy-and-water, and bravely went forth to face the elements. By this time the snow had increased, the wind had got up, and my heart failed. Back I rushed to the bar, ordered a bed, and remained there for the night, finishing my journey the following day.

“Again, in coming from Bath by a night-coach, I was so saturated with wet and shivering

with cold that I got out at Reading, rushed to the 'Bear,' and slept there the night."

Such was the best travelling that money could buy in the days before England was—according to the coachmen—made a gridiron by the railways.

CHAPTER VII

S N O W A N D F L O O D S

SEVERE weather, in the shape of frosts, thunderstorms, or hurricanes, was powerless to stop the coach-service, but exceptionally heavy snowfalls occasionally did succeed in doing so for very brief intervals; and floods, although they never were or could be so general as to wholly suspend coaching, often brought individual coaches to grief.

In the severe winter of 1798-9, when snow fell heavily and continuously at the end of January and during the first week of February, several mails, missing on February 1st, were still to seek on April 27th, and St. Martin's-le-Grand mourned them as wholly lost. By May Day, however, they did succeed in running again!

Very few details survive of that exceptional season, or of that other, in 1806, when Nevill, a guard on the Bristol Mail, was frozen to death; but the records of the great snowstorm that began on the Christmas night of 1836 are very full.

Christmas Day, 1836, fell on a Sunday, and it is worth notice, as a singular coincidence in this country of only occasional heavy snowfalls, that the Christmas night of 1886, also a Sunday night, exactly half a century later, was marked by that

well-remembered snowstorm which disorganised the railway service quite as effectually as that of 1836 did the coaches, and broke down and destroyed nearly every telegraph-post and wire in the land.

The famous snowstorm of 1836 affected all parts of the country, and only on two mail routes were communications kept open. Fourteen mail-coaches were abandoned on the various roads, and for periods ranging from two to ten days the travels of others ceased. The snowstorm itself continued for nearly a week. The two routes remaining unconquered during this extraordinary time were those to Portsmouth and Poole, but precisely why or how they were thus distinguished is not made clear. There is no doubt that the coachmen and guards on the Portsmouth and Poole Mails were strenuous men, but that quality was common to many of those engaged upon the mails. Nor can we find any favouring circumstance of physical geography to account for this unusual good fortune. On the contrary, those roads are in places exceptionally bleak and exposed to high winds; and the strong wind that on this occasion bared the heights and buried the hollows twenty and thirty feet deep in snow-wreaths was an especial feature of the visitation. Fortunately for all upon the roads—for those who laboured along them, and for those who were brought to a standstill in the drifts—the cold was not remarkably severe.

But never before, within living recollection,

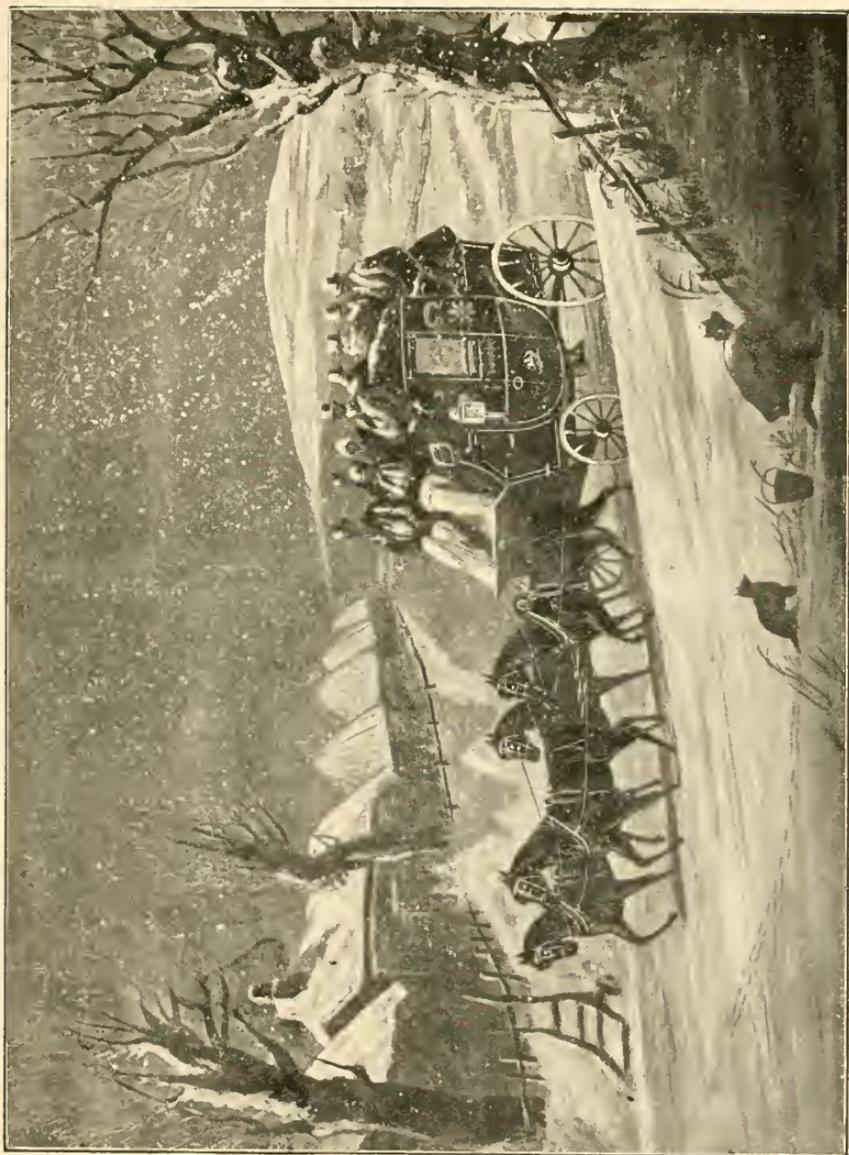
had the London mails been stopped for a whole night within a few miles from London, and never before had the intercourse between the South Coast and the Metropolis been interrupted for two whole days. On Chatham Lines the snow lay from thirty to forty feet deep, and everywhere, except on the hilltops, it was higher than the roofs of the coaches. Nay, according to a contemporary newspaper account, "The snow has drifted to such an extent between Leicester and Northampton as to occasion considerable difficulty and danger. In some parts of the road passages have been cut where the snow had drifted to the depth of thirty, forty, and in some places fifty feet."

The great difficulty with which the coaches had on this occasion to contend was not merely the getting along the roads, but, as with these extraordinary depths of snow the natural features of the country were mostly obscured, of keeping on or anywhere near the road. Hedgerows were blotted out of existence: many trees had fallen under their snowy burdens, and it was not unusual, when at last the snowed-up mails were recovered, to find them strayed far from their course, and in the middle of pastures and ploughlands.

Snowstorms produced curious travelling experiences. It was this great occasion that effectually blocked all the up night coaches for two days at Dunchurch, on the Holyhead Road, and so succeeded in bringing together a party

not unlike those weatherbound travellers who in Dickens' Christmas stories gather round the hearth, and, comforting themselves with many jorums of punch, tell dramatic stories. One party crowded the "Dun Cow," another the "Green Man." Among the coaches were the Manchester "Beehive" and the "Red Rover." The first morning of their enforced leisure they—coachmen, guards and passengers—made up a poaching party, with two guns among sixteen of them. Jack Goodwin, guard of the "Beehive," was the only fortunate sportsman, and shot a hare. In the evening a dancing party was held at the "Dun Cow" at the suggestion of the landlord, who invited some friends, and the next morning Goodwin turned wandering minstrel, taking with him a chosen few to help in chorus. Wandering along the Rugby Road, they were entertained at the farmhouses with elderberry wine and pork pies. Another pleasant evening, and they were off the next morning for London.

Floods were infinitely more dangerous than snowstorms, and the Great North Road, between Newark-on-Trent and Scarthing Moor, was particularly subject to them, the Trent often, and on the very slightest provocation of rain, flooding many miles of surrounding country. It was here, and on these occasions, that the outsides had the better bargain of the two classes of travelling, for they kept their seats without fear of being drowned, while the insides went in constant terror of a watery death, and often only escaped it by the



WINTER: GOING NORTH.

After H. Alcoa.

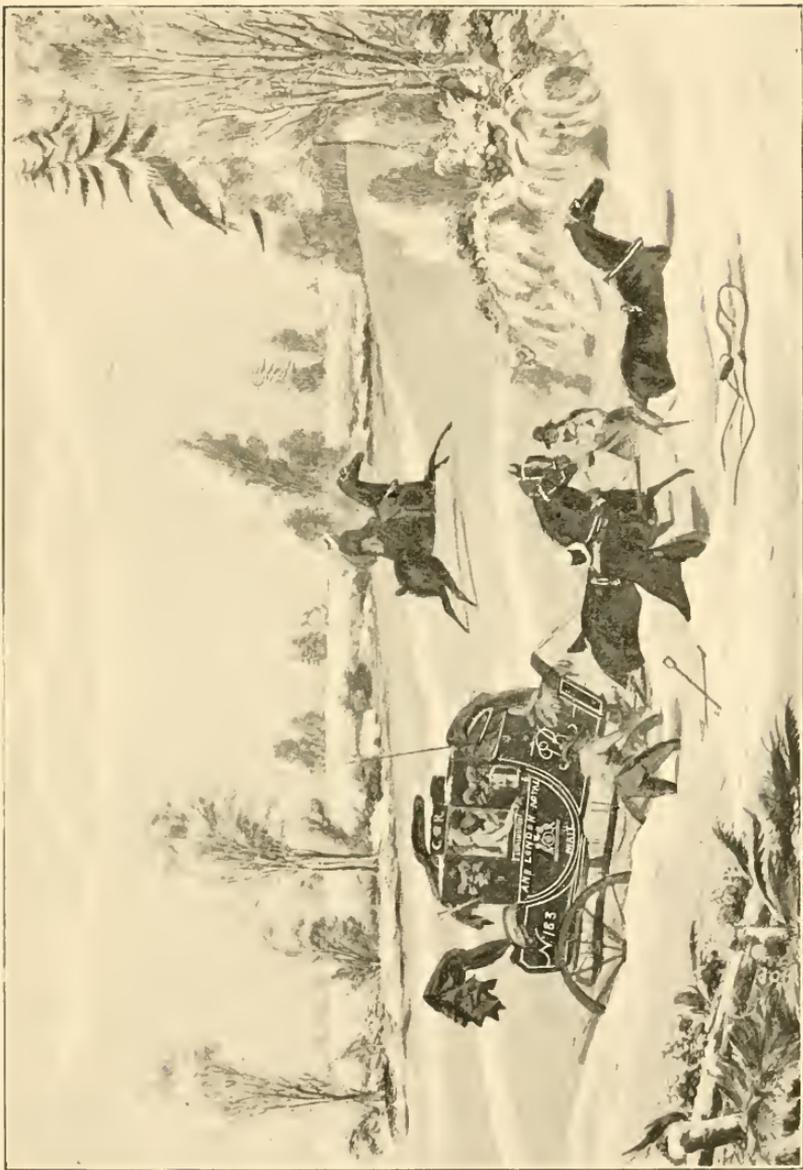
pitiful expedient of standing on their seats and so—keeping the doubled-up attitude this necessity and the lowness of the roof imperatively demanded—remaining until the levels were passed and the dry uplands reached again.

In August 1829, when extraordinary floods devastated a great part of Scotland, a stirring episode occurred in connection with them and the mail-coach running through Banff. The tradition that his Majesty's mails were to be stopped for nobody and hindered by nothing on the road was a very fine and fearless one, but it was occasionally pushed to absurd lengths, and hideous dangers provoked without reasonable cause. This episode of the Banff and Inverness Mail is a case in point. The mail of the preceding day had found it impracticable to go by its usual route, and so took another course, by the Bridge of Alva. It was therefore supposed that the mail following would adopt the same plan; but what was the astonishment of the good folk of Banff when they perceived the coach arrive, within a few minutes of its usual time, at the farther end of the bridge that crosses the River Doern. The people, watching the eddying floods from the safe vantage-point of their windows, strongly dissuaded the guard and coachman from attempting to pass, the danger being so great; but, scouting the idea of perils to be encountered in the very streets of the town, those foolhardy persons drove straight along the bridge and into a street that had been converted by the bursting of the river-bank into the semblance of

a mountain torrent. When the furious current caught the coach, it was instantly dashed against the corner of Gillan's Inn, and the four animals swept off their legs. They rose again, plunging and struggling for their lives, and a boat was pushed off, with men eager to free the poor animals from their harness, to enable them to swim away; but it was not possible to save more than one. The other three were drowned.

By this time the coach, with coachman and guard, had been flung upon the pavement, where the depth of water was less; and there the guard was seen, clinging to the top, and the coachman hanging by his hands from a lamp-post, regretting too late the official ardour and slavery to tradition that had wrought such havoc. When, for humanity's sake, as well as to secure the mail-bags, a boat came and rescued them, they were not suffered to depart without much Aberdonian plain-speaking on the folly that had nearly cost them their lives and endangered the correspondence of the good folks of the ancient burgh of Banff.

There were no passengers on this occasion, but we are not to suppose that, had there been any, they would have received much consideration. The mail would probably have been driven on, just the same. The official attitude of mind towards them may be judged from the wintry horrors encountered by the Edinburgh to Glasgow Mail in March 1827. It became embedded in the snow near Kirkliston, and the guard, riding one



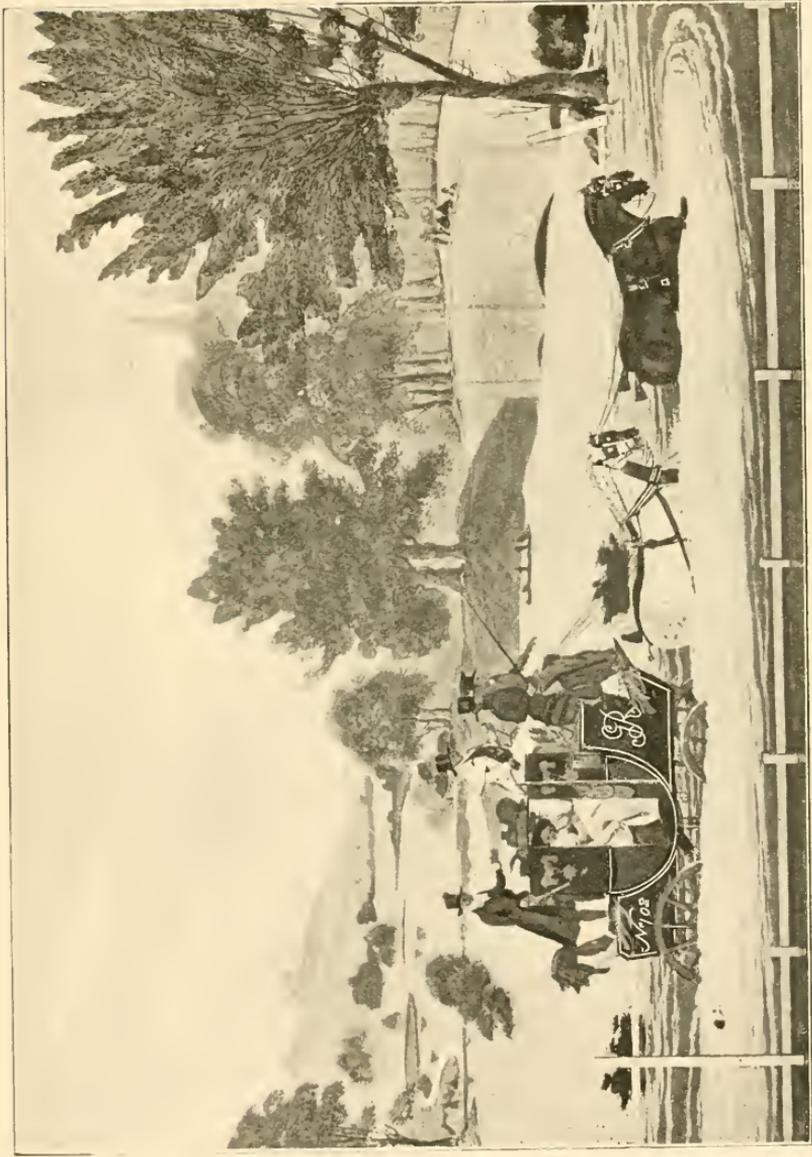
After J. Pollard.

MAIL-COACH IN A SNOW-DRIFT.

horse and leading another loaded with the bags, set off for Glasgow; while the coachman, with the other horses, set off in the opposite direction to secure a fresh team, pursued by the entreaties of the four terrified passengers, beseeching him to use all diligence and return soon. There, on a lonely road, immovably stuck in huge snowdrifts, they remained throughout a bitter night, made additionally miserable by one of the windows being broken. It was not until nine o'clock the next morning that the coachman returned, with another man, but only two horses. Having loaded them with some luggage and parcels, he was, with a joke upon his lips, leaving the passengers to shift for themselves, but was compelled to take one who had fallen ill. The remaining three extricated themselves as best they could.

On September 11th, 1829, a month later than the watery adventures at Banff, the Birmingham and Liverpool Mail had an unfortunate experience at Smallwood Bridge, near Church Lawton, a point where the road is crossed by an affluent of the River Weaver. Unknown to those on the mail, the flooded stream had burst the arch of the bridge, and when the coach came to the spot, along a road almost axle-deep in water, it fell into the hole and was violently overturned. Of the three inside passengers, only one escaped. He was an agile young man, who broke the window and so extricated himself. The horses were drowned, but the coachman was fortunate enough to be washed against a tree-stump as the river

hurried him along at six miles an hour. The force of this happy meeting nearly stunned him, but he held on, and eventually found his way ashore. The guard was saved in a similar manner. Accidents almost forming parallels with this were of frequent occurrence, and a seasoned traveller exclaimed: "Give me a collision, a broken axle and an overturn, a runaway team, a drunken coachman, snowstorms, howling tempests; but Heaven preserve us from floods!"



MAIL-COACH IN A FLOOD.

After J. Pollard.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLDEN AGE, 1824—1848

IT was “golden” chiefly from the sportsman’s point of view, and in the opinions of those who found a keen delight in the perfection of coach-building and harness-making, in the smartness of the beautiful horses, and in the speed attained. From the sordid view-point of the profit-and-loss account, although this was the age in which Chaplin and a few others made their great fortunes, it was a time when the high speed and other refinements of travelling made the path of the coach-proprietor a thorny and uneasy one, often barren of aught but honour. “You are ‘in it,’ I see,” said a proprietor who himself had been severely bitten in this way, and had left the business, to a coachman who, like many of his fellows, had long cherished an ambition to become a coach-master, and had just acquired a share: “you are ‘in it.’ Take care how you get out of it.” One of the prominent men in it—Cooper, who ran a good line of coaches on the Bath Road—found himself at last in the Bankruptcy Court, and many smaller men appeared in the same place. The greatest increase of cost was in the item of horses. In earlier

times the stock had lasted for years, despite the long stages and harder pulling; but in this period of good roads and short stages, when, all things being equal, a team should have lasted longer, the great coach-proprietors found it necessary to renew their stock every three years. Chaplin's method of doing this was to replace one-third of his horses every year.

It is not to be supposed that the horses thus disposed of were always broken down or worn out by their three years of strenuous exertion in the fast coaches. They had only lost those agile qualities necessary for that use, and, finding purchasers among farmers and country tradesmen who had no occasion to gallop at eleven miles an hour, lived very comfortably, grew sleek and fat, and must often, from roadside paddocks, have beheld their successors slaving away in the fast coaches; finding much satisfaction in their own altered circumstances. Coachmen at this time usually drove between thirty and forty miles out, and then took the up coach back, perhaps more than half a day later. With such an arrangement the horses had the same driver, and it was generally found that they worked much better in such cases. The coachman's responsibility for their condition was also undivided, and the proprietor was easily able to weed out from his coachmen those who lingered at the changes and made up the lost time on the road, to the distress of their teams. It was Chaplin who made it known, by all the vigorous language at his

command, that any one of his coachmen found in the possession of one of those instruments of torture, resembling a cat-o'-nine-tails, for punishing horses, and known as a "short Tommy" would be instantly dismissed. Chaplin's direct influence and interests may be said to have described a radius of from forty to fifty miles from London, and within that circle the "short Tommy" was therefore but seldom seen. One historic occasion there was, however, when such an object did most dramatically present itself before Chaplin, who chanced to be at a wayside inn when one of his coaches pulled up to change. On the roof was a warder with two convicts. As the coachman, with much deliberation, lowered himself from his box to the ground, the "short Tommy" he had been sitting on fell in front of the windows, and as it lay there attracted the eagle eye of that great coach-proprietor, who, sternly bent upon executing justice upon the offender, strode forth. The coachman, dismayed, saw his employer and the forbidden instrument at once, in one comprehensive, understanding gaze; but he was a resourceful man, and handed it to the warder, telling him, with a portentous wink and a warning jerk of the head, that he had dropped something. That worthy, entering into the spirit of the deception, accepted the pretended cat-o'-nine-tails, and the coachman breathed freely again.

The days of ten- or eleven mile- stages, just at this time faded away, gave a horse one stretch

of so many miles a day; but in the fast coaches of the newer age they ran, as we have seen, out and home, six or seven miles each way. It was to the very last a disputed point whether it was better for a horse to do his ten or eleven miles and have done with it for the day, or to do his two shifts of six or seven. Many coachmen who could not depend upon their horse-keepers objected to two sweats a day; but this division of work was a decided advantage to the horses, if well tended, and in such cases they had the advantage of sleeping at home every night. The number of horses kept for one of the fast coaches of this Augustan age would have astonished the pioneers of coaching; one horse for every mile travelled was the establishment kept up. Slow coaches could do with fewer.

The average price paid for a coach-horse at this period was £30, but some were acquired for a mere trifle, owing to their being vicious or unmanageable in private hands. The private owner's dilemma was the coach-proprietor's opportunity. It mattered little to him what defects of temper a horse possessed so long as he was sound in wind and limb. For the rest, a little discipline, harnessed with three others, all subject to the rule of those very able disciplinarians, the coachmen, quickly sufficed to bring such an animal to reason. There were thus some very queer animals drawing the coaches in these last years.

Some were purchased with a doubtful title.

In such a case, to prevent his being recognised and claimed, the horse would be worked on the night mail.

The coachman's ideal was a team matching in colour, but few proprietors ever aimed at such perfection. The cost was great, and nothing, save the gratification of the eye, was gained.

With these business details the travelling public had no concern, and it was only the box-seat passengers who learnt the history of some of these cheap acquisitions from private stables. The box-seat passenger was generally a sporting character, aspiring to that companionship with the coachman from his love of horses and driving, but it naturally often happened that some stolid person, whose only desire was to be carried safely and who took no interest in driving, found himself perched on that place of honour. When such an one became the unwilling confidant of the coachman he was apt to hear some nerve-shaking things. "See that 'ere near wheeler?" said one Jehu. "Run away vith a old gennelman last veek, he did; broke his neck; friends just goin' to shoot 'im; guv'nor gave couple o' suvrings for 'im, and 'ere 'e is. 'Ope we shan't be upset!" The nervous passenger effected an exchange for an inside place with a sporting passenger at the next stage—which was precisely the result anticipated by the coachman.

At this time, when the fast day-coaches were in every respect as well appointed as a gentleman's private drag, it was the keenest ambition

of every dashing young traveller to occupy this box-seat—an ambition generally satisfied by putting in an early appearance at the starting-point and tipping the head yard-porter, who thereupon placed a rug or some stable-cloths on it. These tips were not, as generally supposed, the coachman's perquisite. His turn came later on, down the road.

The yard-porter was a much more important official than the present generation might suppose, and in busy yards, such as those of the "Bull and Mouth" or the "Swan with Two Necks," his weekly income from tips probably amounted to £5, or more. Nor was he merely the man with a pail of water, a broom and a pitchfork conjured up mentally by the sound of his title; his was an important department, and himself the ruler of many subordinates, whose duties ranged from grooming and bedding-down the horses and cleaning the stables to washing the coaches and cleaning and polishing the harness and metal-work.

At this period the public found themselves swiftly flying where they had formerly slowly and laboriously crawled, and generally compared ancient travelling with modern, greatly to the advantage of modern times. But if the coach-proprietors who were at such pains to compete with one another in establishing these swift and well-appointed coaches were of opinion that in so doing they were earning the admiration of the entire travelling public, they were very soon

undeceived, and those weaker brethren who could not command the influence and the capital by which only could a fast coach be appointed and established, found that, after all, there was no immediate prospect of their being run off the road, and that a considerable section of the public actually preferred to travel in slow coaches, and would by no means consent to be whirled through the country at eleven miles an hour, with only hurried intervals for meals. "The art of travelling," said an anonymous writer in 1827, "has undergone great alterations in the course of the last thirty years; these are not altogether improvements." One of these changes for the worse, in the opinion of this unknown scribe, was that in the thunder of ten miles an hour there was no opportunity for conversation. That must be a powerful tongue, he thought, which could make itself heard amid the reverberations of such incessant and intemperate whirlings. He could not help looking back with some regret to the good old times when five or six miles an hour was the utmost speed. *Then* there was something sober and sedate in the fit-out and the set-out. All the faces in the inner-yard were so grave and full of importance, and there was some seriousness in taking leave. (Good reason, too, for such gravity and seriousness, think we of later ages.) How scrupulous and polite were the inside passengers, in making mutual accommodation of legs and arms, band-boxes, sandwich-baskets and umbrellas! Then, too, says this delightful snob, there was some

difference between the inside and the outside passengers: the gentlefolks within were not confounded with the people on the outside. Distinctions were then better observed, and preserved. Older stage-coach conversation, he continued, was apt to be conducted with caution, for a false opening might make an ill companion on a long journey. So approaches were made skilfully, and with deliberation. A man was thought excessively forward and talkative if he had got into politics before he had well cleared the outskirts of London, and the first half-hour was generally occupied with the light skirmishings of talk, with reconnoitrings of one's opposite neighbour's countenance, and a variety of all-round questions and answers put and returned merely to ascertain how far the passengers were to be companions. These had to be framed with the utmost discretion. With what vivacity and air of pleasant expectation would one then ask an agreeable-looking person, "Are you going all the way to Toppington?" or, on the other hand, if the inside had its full complement of six, how carefully, and with what a discreetly modulated voice, in order to avoid all suspicion of wishing a speedy riddance, one would ask the same question of an unduly stout person, who occupied much more than his or her share of room.

The best conversational opening was considered to be, "Well, we are now off the stones. What a beautiful morning! How charming the outskirts of town! Pray, does not that house belong to —?"

Going up-hill one walked, to ease the horses, insides and outsides then equal; the insides, greatly condescending, holding converse with the occupants of the roof, always, however, with the strict understanding—no less strict if not mentioned—that this gracious act must not be taken advantage of by those outsiders claiming acquaintance when the coach stopped at the inns, where this all-important difference in caste was recognised by distinct eating apartments being provided.

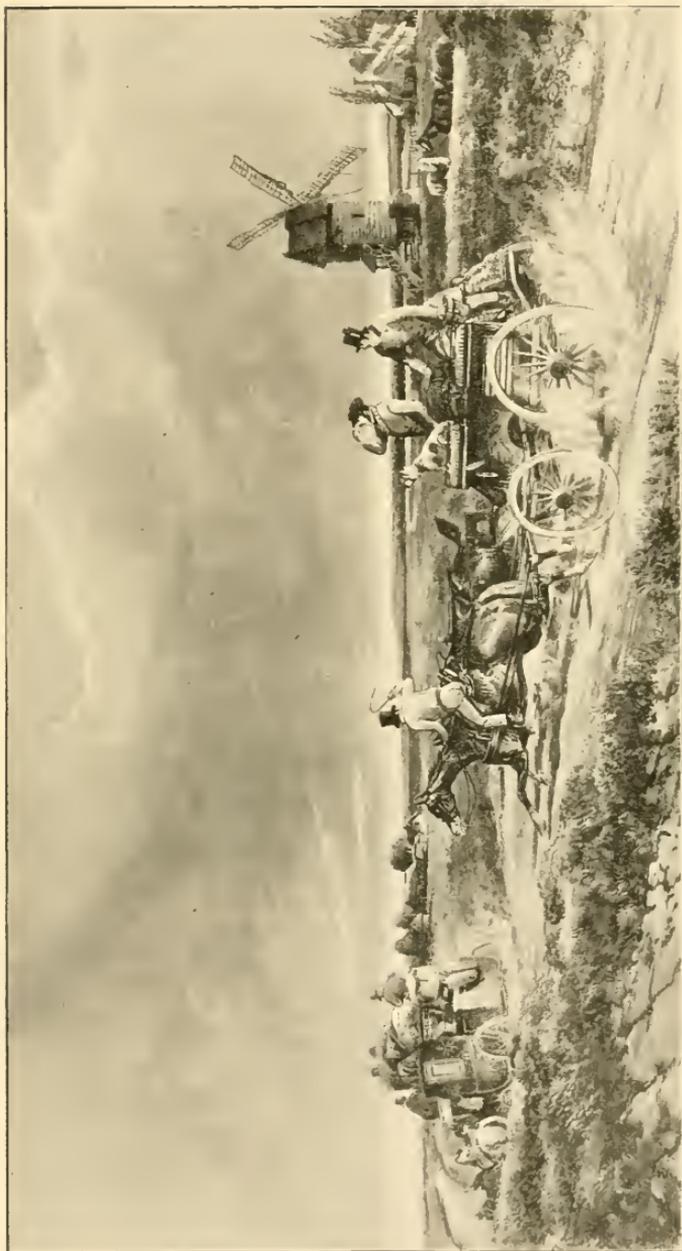
Those were the good old days, according to this critic, when these customs were strictly observed, and when there was not only time to eat, but almost to digest at coach-dinners and breakfasts; when, too, there were generally a few minutes to spare while the horses were being got ready, so that the passengers could wander round the town and copy any curious epitaphs for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, or do a little shopping.

Coachmen were of somewhat similar opinions. "Lord! sir," said Hine, coach-proprietor and coachman on the Brighton Road, in 1831, who was, much against his will, obliged to accelerate his coaches in order to keep pace with newcomers, but did not relish the necessity, "we don't travel half so comfortably now as we used to do. It is all hurry and bustle nowadays, sir—no time even for a pipe and glass of grog." Not comfortable for the coachmen, who sadly missed their wayside, and often wholly unauthorised, halts.

Cobbett, surly though his nature was, could

not withhold admiration when noticing these latter-day coaches. "Next to a fox-hunt," he says, "the finest sight in England is a stage-coach just ready to start. A great sheep- or cattle-fair is a beautiful sight; but in a stage-coach you see more of what man is capable of performing. The vehicle itself; the harness, all so complete and so neatly arranged, so strong, and clean, and good; the beautiful horses, impatient to be off; the inside full, and the outside covered, in every part, with men, women, and children, boxes, bags, bundles; the coachman, taking his reins in one hand and his whip in the other, gives a signal with his foot, and away they go, at the rate of seven miles an hour—the population and the property of a hamlet. One of these coaches coming in, after a long journey, is a sight not less interesting. The horses are now all sweat and foam, the reek from their bodies ascending like a cloud. The whole equipage is covered, perhaps, with dust and dirt. But still, on it comes, as steady as the hand of the clock. As a proof of the perfection to which this mode of travelling has been brought, there is one coach which goes between Exeter and London, whose proprietors agree to forfeit eightpence for every minute the coach is behind its time at any of its stages; and this coach, I believe, travels eight miles an hour, and that, too, upon a very hilly, and at some seasons a very deep, road."

Yes, but had Cobbett written in still later years, he would have found the "Quicksilver"



After C. Cooper Henderson, 1848.

LATE FOR THE MAIL.

attaining, between the stages, a speed of nearly 12 miles an hour, and an average speed, including stops, of 11 miles, while a quite ordinary performance with the Shrewsbury "Wonder" was 158 miles in 14 hours 45 minutes, including stops on the way totalling 80 minutes. This gives a net average speed of a little over $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour. The Manchester "Telegraph" and other flyers made equally good performances. The "Tantivy," one of the most famous of coaches, did not equal these feats.

The "Tantivy," London and Birmingham coach, was started in 1832. It left the "Blossoms" inn, Lawrence Lane, at 7 a.m., and was in Birmingham by 7 p.m. The distance, by the route followed, through Maidenhead, Henley, Oxford, Woodstock, Shipston-on-Stour, and Stratford-on-Avon, was 125 miles, and, deducting one hour for changing and refreshing, the speed was only slightly over 11 miles an hour. This coach derived its name from the old word "Tantivy"—an imitative sound as old as the seventeenth century, and often used in the literature of that time, supposed to reproduce the note of the huntsman's horn, and conjuring up ideas of speed. For Cracknell, the most famous of the coachmen of the "Tantivy," who once drove the 125 miles at one sitting, and generally drove it between London and Oxford, the "Tantivy Trot," quoted elsewhere in these pages, was written. Harry Salisbury drove between Oxford and Birmingham. Among its other coachmen was

Jerry Howse. Costar and Waddell, of Oxford, horsed the "Tantivy" between Woodstock and London, and Gardner, of Stratford-on-Avon, part-horsed it onwards, not wholly to the satisfaction of Salisbury, who used to declare that the team out of his yard was worth about £25 the lot, and that they had once belonged to Shakespeare.

Competition in speed led naturally to rivalry in the building, upholstery, and general appointments of the coaches. Sherman's Manchester "Estafette" was a splendid turn-out, holding its own against many rivals in the last years of the coaching age. Inside was a time-table elegantly engraved on ivory, showing all towns, distances and intermediate times, illuminated at night by a reflector lamp. It was at this time seriously proposed to light the coaches with gas, with the double object of securing better lighting and effecting a saving on the very heavy bills for oil consumed on the night coaches. The idea was generally abandoned when it was found that the gas tanks would be very heavy and that they would take up all the room in one of the boots, generally reserved for luggage. Coachmen and guards, too, professed anxiety lest they, sitting directly over the fore and hind boots, should be blown up. But, before the project was finally abandoned, it was fully proved that it was practicable, and in January 1827 the Glasgow and Paisley coaches were lit with gas, much to the amazement of the country folk. "Guid Lord, Sandy," said an old woman to her

husband, "they've laid gas-pipes all the way frae Glasgae Cross to Paisley!" But they had done nothing of the sort; the gas was carried, as already indicated, in a reservoir stowed away in the front boot.

Competition having already raged around the question of speed, and having introduced unwonted luxuries in travelling, turned next to the more deadly form of rate-cutting. In 1834 the coach-proprietors on three great routes were engaged in this game of Beggarmy-neighbour. In that year the fares to Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester fell to less than half their former price, and it was possible to travel to Birmingham for 20s. inside and 10s. out, or to Liverpool or Manchester for 40s. inside or 20s. out. They had little chance of being raised again, for, by the time the weaker men had been crushed out of existence, the railways were threatening the whole industry of coaching.

But reducing the fares by one-half was not always the last word in these bitter contests. There was a period on the Brighton Road when one might have been carried those 52 miles in 6 hours for 5s., with a free lunch and wine at the end of the journey and your money returned if the coach did not keep its time. The "Golden Age," indeed!

At this period, when the long-distance coaching business was so severely cut up, those proprietors who served the districts surrounding London did exceedingly well. Coaching annals are almost silent

on the subject of these suburban coaches, for, being drawn by only two horses, they were regarded by the four-in-hand artists with contempt. It has thus, in the absence of available information, often puzzled inquiring minds in the present generation to understand how the heavy passenger traffic was conducted between London and the outlying towns and villages within a radius of twenty miles. Those districts were served by these "short stages," as they were called—coaches drawn by two horses, and making two or more journeys each way daily. There was an incredibly large number of these useful vehicles, which were in relation to the mails and fast long-distance coaches what the suburban trains are to the expresses in our own day. The ordinary coach-proprietors had rarely anything to do with these conveyances, which came to and set out from a number of obscure inns and coach-offices in all parts of the City and the West End.

One of these short stages is mentioned in *David Copperfield*, where David's page-boy, stealing Dora's watch and selling it, purchases a second-hand flute and expends the balance of his ill-gotten gains in incessantly travelling up and down the road between London and Uxbridge. Evidently a lover of the road, this larcenous page-boy. Most boys in buttons (and certainly the typical page-boy of the typical faree) would have expended the plunder in pastry or tobacco. This particular specimen, the diligent Dickens-reader will remember, was taken to Bow Street on the

completion of his fifteenth journey, when four shillings and sixpence and the second-hand flute—which he couldn't play—were found upon him. If we were contemplating an examination-paper on *David Copperfield*, with special reference to prices and social life early in the nineteenth century, we might put the following poser:—“State the average price obtainable on the average lady's gold watch, and, deducting the purchase price of a second-hand flute, deduce from the resulting sum, and from the facts of the boy having made the journey fifteen times and still being in possession of four-and-sixpence, the cost of a single outside journey between London and Uxbridge.”

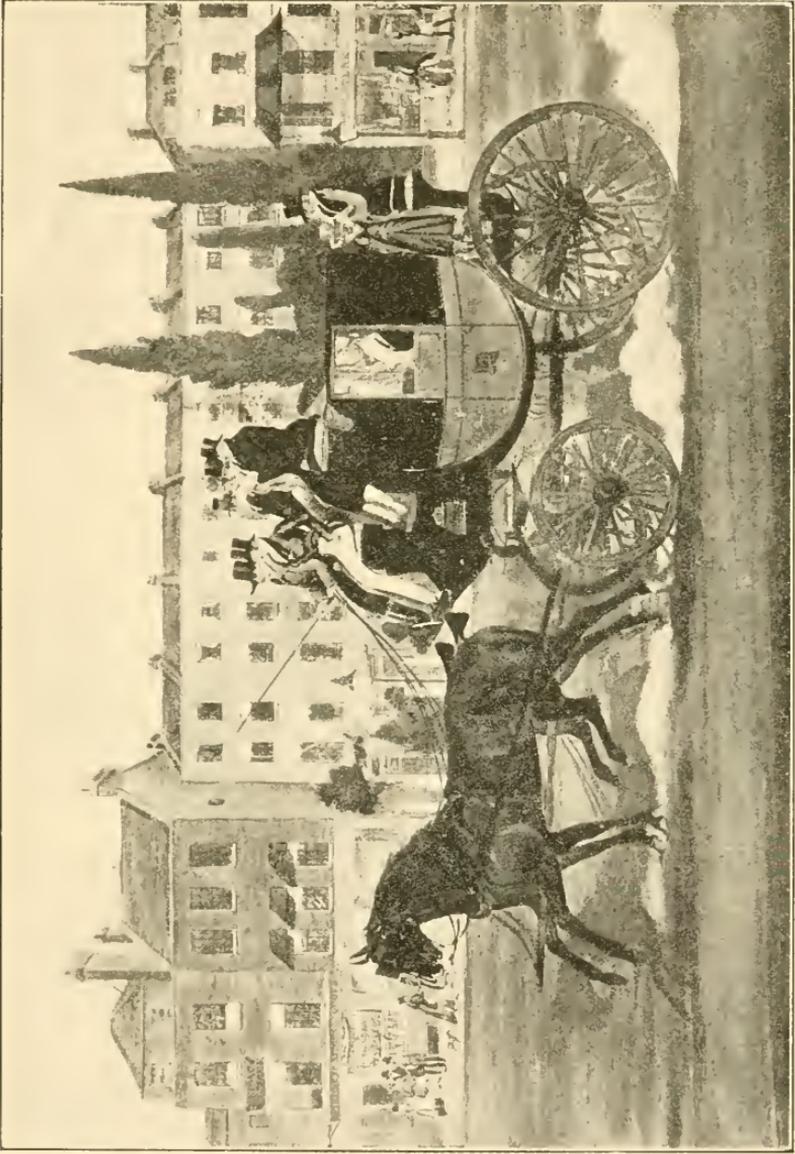
The fare was, as a matter of fact, half a crown. There were no fewer than seven short stages between London and Uxbridge daily, each making two journeys. What of those London inns whence they started? Where are they now? Echo does not answer “where?” as she is commonly said to do, because it is not in the nature of echoes to repeat the first word of a sentence. No; echo merely reverberates “now?” with a questioning inflection.

The “Goose and Gridiron,” whose proper name was originally the “Swan and Harp,” in St. Paul's Churchyard, was one of these starting-points. From the same inn went the Richmond and many other suburban stages. That old inn was demolished about 1888. The “Boar and Castle and Oxford Hotel,” No. 6, Oxford Street, was another

house of call for the Uxbridge stages. It vanished long ago, and those who seek it will only find on its site the Oxford Music Hall and Restaurant—bearing a different number, for the street was re-numbered in 1881. The “Boar and Castle” was a large, plain, stucco-fronted house, with its name writ large across the front in raised letters.

As for the “Old Bell,” another of these starting-points of the Uxbridge coaches, it was pulled down in 1897. It stood on the site of Gamage’s, in Holborn, opposite Fetter Lane. Of another Uxbridge house, the “Bull,” a few doors away, the sign, the figure of a ferocious black bull, very properly chained and fastened by a secure girth, still exists on the frontage, but “Black Bull Chambers,” a set of grimy modern “model” dwellings, now occupy the coach-yard. The “Bell and Crown,” afterwards “Ridler’s,” next Furnival’s Inn, has been swept away to help make room for an extension of the Prudential Assurance Offices, and the “New Inn,” 52, Old Bailey, has given place to warehouses and the premises of a firm of wholesale newsagents. Away westward, the Uxbridge and other short stages called at the “Green Man and Still,” at the corner of Argyll Street, Oxford Circus, and at the “Gloucester Warehouse,” near Park Lane. The last-named was rebuilt forty years ago, but the “Green Man and Still” was only demolished in February 1901.

The time taken over the eighteen miles between the City and Uxbridge was three hours. To Richmond in 1821, when short stages ran



THE SHORT STAGE.

After J. Pollard.

frequently from five different inns, the time was an hour and a half. As many as fourteen coaches ran to that town in 1838, most of them making six journeys a day. Shillibeer and his omnibuses, introduced in 1829, had by that time rendered the exclusive short-stages old-fashioned, and they were gradually replaced by the more commodious and popular vehicles, whose occupants were in turn looked down upon by the short-stage passengers, just as *they* had been despised by the four-horse coaches.

CHAPTER IX

COACH-PROPRIETORS

NONE among the servants of the public earned their living more hardily, or took greater risks in the ordinary way of business, than the coach proprietors. It was a business in which the few—the very few—became rich, and the majority lived a strenuous life, with empty pockets at the end of it. It was very truly said of them, as a class, that they lived hard, worked hard, swore hard, and died hard. To this was sometimes added that they held hard, by which you are to understand that what money they *did* succeed in getting they grasped tightly. This last was, however, by no means a characteristic of the majority, who very often dissipated what they had made by successful ventures on one road by disastrous competition on another. There was never a more speculative business than that of a coach proprietor, and never one so cursed with insane competition. Why embittered rivalries of this kind should have been more common on the road than in any other line is only to be explained by the hypothesis that a certain element of sporting emulation entered into it; and a kind of foolish pride that impelled a man to put and keep a line

of coaches on a road to "nurse" a rival, not always with the hope of earning a profit for himself, but with the idea of cutting up another man's ground.

The most outstanding figure among coach-proprietors was that of William Chaplin. He towered above all his contemporaries in the magnitude of his business, and was, when railways came to destroy it, first among those few who saw the folly of opposing steam, and were both acute enough and sufficiently fortunate to reap an additional advantage from the new order of things, instead of being ruined by it, as many less fortunate and less far-seeing men were.

William James Chaplin—to give him his full baptismal name—was born at Rochester in 1787, the son of William Chaplin, at that time a coachman and proprietor in a small way of business on the Dover Road. Shortly after that date it would appear that the elder Chaplin extended his operations, and became a coach-master on a considerable scale on some of the main roads leading out of London. However that may have been, certain it is that his son was a practical coachman, and thoroughly versed in every detail of driving and stabling, as well as buying horses. To this intimate acquaintance with the conduct of a coach and of a coaching business, as greatly as to his own native shrewdness, he owed the extraordinary success that attended him. His centre of operations was at the "Swan with Two Necks," in Lad Lane, where he succeeded William

Waterhouse, who had been established there as a mail-contractor since 1792. He it was who, perhaps in imitation of the Mail-coach Halfpenny dedicated to Palmer, issued the curious copper token pictured here. It is quite in accord with the general fragmentary character of the records of these not so remote times that nothing survives by which we may state the year when Chaplin succeeded Waterhouse at the "Swan with Two Necks," but it was probably about 1825. In addition to this yard, he acquired in the course



MAIL-COACH HALFPENNY ISSUED BY WILLIAM WATERHOUSE.

of time those of the "White Horse," Fetter Lane, and the "Spread Eagle" and "Cross Keys," Gracechurch Street, together with the "Spread Eagle" West End office, in Regent's Circus, with the proprietorship of several hotels. Unlike most coach-proprietors, who restricted their operations to one or two roads, Chaplin's coaches went in all directions, and he owned large stables at Purley on the Brighton Road, at Hounslow on the Western roads, and at Whetstone on the great road to the north. The "Swan with Two



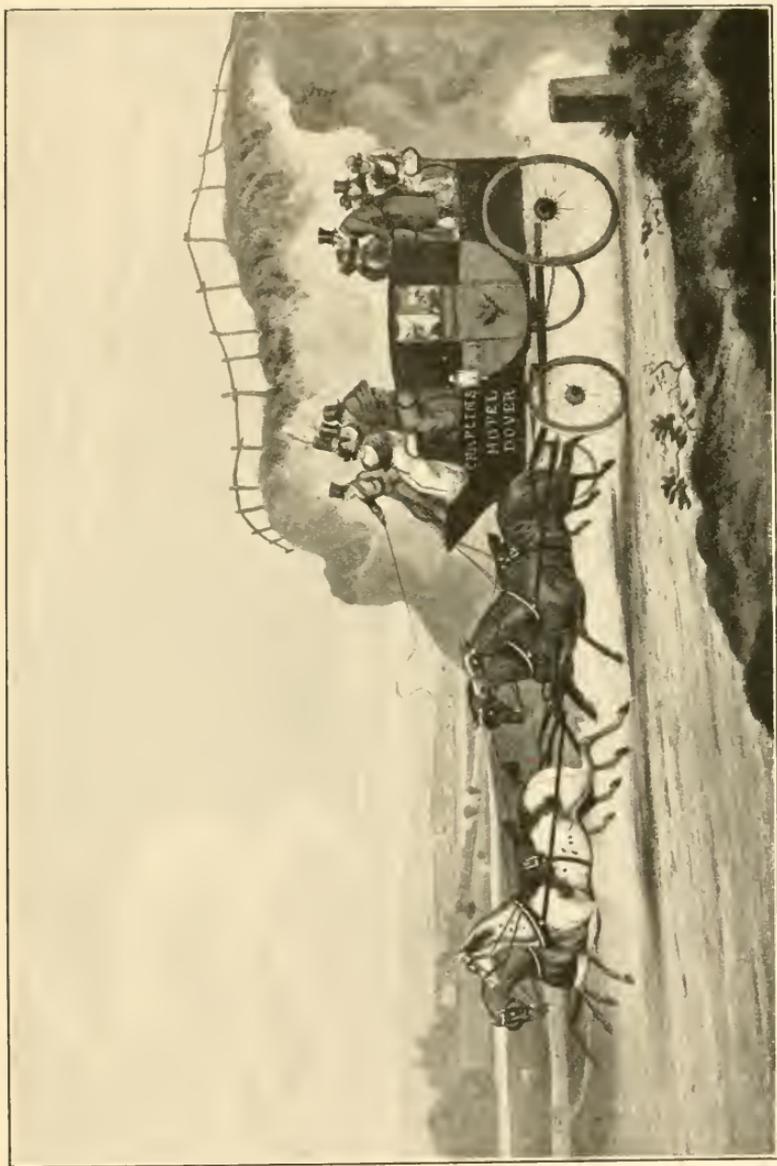
WILLIAM CHAPLIN

From the painting by Frederick Scenham.

Necks," was, when he acquired it, a yard extremely awkward of approach, being situated in a narrow lane, and inside a low-browed entrance that taxed the ingenuity of the coachmen to pass without accident. Once inside, you were in one of those old courtyards without which no old coaching inn was complete. Three tiers of galleries ran round three sides of the enclosed square, which, from the creepers that were trailed round the old carved wooden posts or depended from the balusters, and from the flower-boxes that decorated the windows, was a very rustic-looking place. Chaplin had not long settled himself here before he constructed underground stables beneath this yard, where some two hundred horses were stalled; but the place remained, otherwise unaltered, until about 1856, when all the buildings were demolished, and he set himself to raise on their site the huge pile of buildings that now fronts partly on to Gresham Street and partly to Aldermanbury. It was one of his last works, and was, of course, undertaken long after the coaching age had become a thing of the past, being, indeed, intended for the headquarters of the carrying business that had in the meantime come into existence. It is of somewhat curious interest to note that, although the great gloomy pile of unadorned brick bears not the slightest resemblance to the ancient coaching inn, yet a courtyard survives, and railway vans manœuvre where of old the mails arrived or set forth.

In 1838, when his coaching business had reached its full height, Chaplin owned or part-owned no fewer than 68 coaches, with 1,800 horses. Twenty-seven mails left London every night, and of these he horsed fourteen on the first stages out of and into town. The annual returns from his business were then put at half a million sterling.

At this critical period he resided at an hotel he owned and managed in the Adelphi, where he worked literally day and night, supervising the general affairs of his vast business, and yet finding time for correcting details. Those coachmen who thought themselves secure from observation in the midst of all these extensive operations wofully deceived themselves. They had to reckon with one to whom every detail was familiar—who had driven coaches himself, and was thoroughly informed in the opportunities that existed in the stables and on the road for cheating an employer. He knew the measure of every corn-box, and was cognisant of the “shouldering” of fares and “swallowing” of passengers that continually went on. For the guards thus to pocket the short fares, not entering them on the way-bill, afterwards sharing them with the coachman, was a practice that went back to the very early days of coaching, and not only lasted as long as coaching itself, but survived in a somewhat altered form on omnibuses until the introduction, in recent years, of tickets and the bell-punch. It would have been impossible for coach-proprietors to end



After G. S. Treguar.

THE CANTERBURY AND DOVER COACH, 1830.

this practice without raising the wages of their servants, and thus they were obliged, so long as the coachmen and the guards performed their "shouldering" and "swallowing" discreetly, to allow it to continue. The practice was, indeed, a very lucrative one to those chartered speculators, who made a great deal more out of it than they would in the substitution of higher wages and a better code of morals. Like the omnibus-proprietors until recently, coach-masters were content so long as their takings reached a certain average sum, and it was only when they fell below that figure, or when a fare was "shouldered" or a passenger "swallowed" before their very eyes, that trouble began. Chaplin could thus afford to give the toast, as often he did give it, at festive gatherings of coachmen and guards, "Success to 'shouldering,' but" (with a peculiar emphasis) "do it well!"—or, in plainer speech, "don't get found out!"

Stories with Chaplin for a central figure were, of course, plentiful down the road. Stable-folk told how one of their kind, who had been requisitioning the contents of the corn-bin to an extravagant extent, going to it with sack and lantern one night when all was still, lifting the lid, found Chaplin himself snugly waiting within, who promptly arose in his wrath, and, to the accompaniment of a picturesquely lurid eloquence of which he was an undoubted master, dismissed him instantaneously. The fame of that exploit must have saved Chaplin much in forage.

Although in his after-career as Member of Parliament he was a silent representative, he could be eloquent in various ways. He had, as already hinted, the direct and forcible method in perfection, and yet could suit his style to all requirements. Coachmen, indeed, found him much more dangerous in his suave and polite moments, and much preferred to be sworn at and violently attacked, for his polite speeches generally had a sting in their tail, and earned him, among the brethren of the road, the descriptive, if also disrespectful, nickname of "Billy Bite-'em-Sly."

The portrait of him shows a physiognomy altogether unexpected, after hearing these tales. One perceives rather a delicate and refined face than that mentally pictured, and it is only in the piercing eyes that his energy and determination are clearly seen.

Chaplin's coaches were easily to be distinguished along the roads, not only by the device of the "Swan with Two Necks" painted on them, or later, in addition, by those of a "Spread Eagle," "Cross Keys," or a "White Horse," as those inns came under his control, but by their colours, which were red and black—black upper-quarters and fore and hind boots, and red under-parts and wheels.

His coaching business gave employment to two thousand people, and included a horse-buying and veterinary department, under the control of James Nunn, who was accustomed to procure the greater



JAMES NUNN, HORSE-BUYER AND VETERINARY SURGEON TO WILLIAM CHAPLIN.

After J. F. Herring.

number of the coach-horses from Horncastle Fair. J. F. Herring has left an excellent equestrian portrait of this indispensable personage.

Chaplin horsed the quickest mails out of London: the Devonport, the New Holyhead, the Bristol, and five other West-country mails starting from Piccadilly. Passengers who had booked from his City offices were carried to this point by omnibuses he established, and the mails were conveyed, with the guards, in two-wheeled mail-carts from the General Post Office. In the great number of coaches he ran there were, of course, included some of the very best. His were those famous coaches, the Manchester "Defiance," a rival of Sherman's even more famed Manchester "Telegraph," the Birmingham "Greyhound," the Cambridge "Telegraph," Liverpool "Red Rover," Bristol "Emerald," Cheltenham "Magnet," and many others doing their ten miles and more an hour. He also had half-shares in the brilliant "Tantivy," London and Birmingham, the "Stamford Regent," the Southampton "Comet," and others.

The signs of the times, so patent to outsiders from 1830 and onwards, but generally hid from the vision of those most interested, were not unheeded by this remarkably shrewd business man, who, like his contemporary, Joseph Baxendale, had the power of seeing things and the possible future trend of affairs from an impersonal and unprejudiced point of view. He, above all other coach-proprietors, was deeply interested in

the continuance of the old order of things, and it would not have been remarkable had he brought himself to the illogical conclusion that, because he was so interested, the old order must, could, should and would be maintained. Many other coach-proprietors *did* arrive at such a conclusion, not, of course, by process of reasoning, but by force of being habitually engaged in a business that prejudiced their minds against steam and machinery. Their first instincts of scorn for anything that should presume to replace the horse effectually blinded them to the reality of the coming change.

Chaplin early decided that coaches must go, and that the proper policy was to make allies of the railways in early days, while they were not so sure of their own success, and would be substantially grateful for any helping hand. He and Benjamin Worthy Horne agreed with the London and Birmingham to be their very good friends in this matter, and not only withdrew all competitive coaches as the line advanced towards completion, but aided the railway in those months when a gap in the line between Denbigh Hall and Rugby cut the train journey in two. Between those two points their coaches filled the unwontedly humble position of feeders and go-betweens to the railway. The price of this amiable attitude was a share with Pickford & Co. in the goods and parcel cartage agency for the line, to the exclusion of all others. This monopoly, as Chaplin had foreseen, was an initially valuable one, and certain to constantly increase, side by side with the growing trade and

mileage of the railway itself. He sold most of his coaches—who were those rash persons, greatly daring, who bought coaches in those last days?—and realised everything except what was considered necessary to start the new firm of Chaplin & Horne, carriers, and to carry on the branch coach-services on routes not yet affected by the rail. Having thus converted his fortune into hard cash and deposited it for the time being in the bank, the next consideration was what to do with it. All the preconceived ideas of investment were being uprooted, and railways, which offered many chances to the capitalist, were not in those times bracketed with Government securities as safe. Even supposing railways in general offered inducements, those were the days when they were not merely unproved, but when few had advanced beyond the point of obtaining their Parliamentary powers. They were, in fact, little but projects on paper. With these problems to consider, Chaplin did a singular thing. Leaving his fortune on deposit, he went away and utterly secluded himself in Switzerland for six weeks, to debate within himself this turning-point in a career. He was now fifty-one years of age, and might well have been content with what he had accumulated, and with the prospects of the new firm. With the advantages he had already secured he could have enjoyed a leisured life; but he took the decision to embark a large portion of his cash in the London and Southampton Railway, then under construction and very much under a cloud

of depreciation. He aimed at becoming a director on that line, and had that desire speedily gratified, being further appointed Deputy Chairman in 1839. By 1843 he had succeeded to the chair, and, with one interval, remained Chairman of what became the London and South-Western Railway until 1858, when ill-health compelled his resignation. He had the satisfaction of seeing his belief in the future of that railway assured. He was also a director of the Paris and Rouen, the Rouen and Havre, and the Rhenish Railways; Sheriff of London, 1845-6; a Member of Parliament for Salisbury, 1847-57; in politics an advanced Liberal. He died at his residence, 2, Hyde Park Gardens, on April 24th, 1859, in his seventy-second year, leaving property to the value of over half a million sterling, including a quarter share in the firm of Chaplin & Horne. William Augustus Chaplin, the eldest among his eight sons and six daughters, succeeded him in the conduct of that business, and died, also in his seventy-second year, at Melton Mowbray, October 9th, 1896.

Benjamin Worthy Horne, whose chief place of business was the "Golden Cross," Charing Cross, succeeded his father, William Horne, in 1828. William Horne, who was born in 1783, was originally a painter, but followed that trade only a few years after his apprenticeship had expired. He had at an early age married Mary Worthy, daughter of Benjamin Worthy, a wealthy wheelwright in Old Street, and in 1804 his eldest son, Benjamin Worthy Horne, was born. This



WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CHAPLIN.

marriage bringing him the command of some capital, he entered into partnership with one Roberts, a coach-proprietor established at the "White Horse," Fetter Lane. But the partnership was dissolved at the expiration of twelve months, when Horne, making a bold stroke, purchased the "Golden Cross" of John Cross, who, having acquired a large fortune after many years in business there, was now retiring from it and entering upon a series of rash speculations which eventually ruined him and brought Thomas Cross, his son, down to poverty from the assured position of heir to that fortune, and thence to the dramatic reverse of soliciting employment as a coachman in the very yard his father once had owned.

Established thus at the "Golden Cross," William Horne further developed the very fine coaching business he had acquired, and added to it the yards at the "Cross Keys," Wood Street, and the "George and Blue Boar," Holborn, together with an office at 41, Regent Circus. He soon had seven hundred horses in work, and was in the full tide of life and energy when he died in 1828, at the early age of forty-five. "His last journey," says the obituary notice of him, "was but a short distance—St. Margaret's churchyard, Westminster; and, as a man of talent, his remains were placed within a few feet of some of the greatest men of their age."

Benjamin Worthy Horne was thus only twenty-four years of age when the management

of this business fell to him. He soon had need of all those fierce energies that were his, for, in addition to a watchful eye upon the doings of his rivals, he had the stress and turmoil of the rebuilding of the "Golden Cross" to contend with. To him, indeed, fell the singular experience of having that central place of business rebuilt twice in three years, and the second occasion on another site. When it was first rebuilt, in 1830, Trafalgar Square was not in existence, and the inn was re-erected on the old spot at the rear of Charles I.'s statue, exactly where the south-eastern one of Landseer's four lions, guarding the Nelson Column, now looks across towards the Grand Hotel.

But no sooner was the place rebuilt than the Metropolitan improvements in the meanwhile decided upon brought about the clearance of the site, and the present "Golden Cross" arose some distance away. At this time fifty-six coaches left that place daily, many of them bitterly competitive with those of other proprietors. Equally with his father, Benjamin Horne was an extremely keen business man, and eager to cut into any paying route. He had stables at Barnet and Finchley, to enable him to compete advantageously on the northern and north-western roads with Sherman, of the "Bull and Mouth," and with others on those routes. As early as 1823, when the "Tally-Ho!" fast coach between London and Birmingham was first put on the road by Mrs. Ann Mountain, of the "Saracen's Head," Snow

Hill, to do the 109 miles in 11 hours, the success of her enterprise had roused the jealousy of William Horne, who speedily started the "Independent Tally-Ho!"—setting out an hour and a quarter earlier, in order to intercept the bookings of the original conveyance. Numerous other "Tally-Ho's!" were then established, and the racing between them on the London and Birmingham road grew fast and furious, much to the advantage of the slower coaches, whose bookings were wonderfully increased by timid passengers refusing to go any longer by these breakneck rivals.

Benjamin Worthy Horne had at one time seven mails: the old Chester and Holyhead; the Cambridge Auxiliary; the Gloucester and Cheltenham; the Dover Foreign Mail; the Norwich, through Newmarket; the Milford Haven; and the Worcester and Oxford; in addition to the Hastings, a two-horsed affair, afterwards transferred to the "Bolt-in-Tun" office in Fleet Street.

Urged on, perhaps, by the partial success of the competitive "Tally-Ho!" he started in 1834, in alliance with Robert Nelson of the "Belle Sauvage" and Jobson of the "Talbot" at Shrewsbury, the "Nimrod" London and Shrewsbury coach, to compete with that pioneer of long-distance day coaches the "Wonder," a highly successful venture established so early as 1825, by Sherman of the "Bull and Mouth," and Taylor of the "Lion" at Shrewsbury. The bitterness and bad blood thus stirred up were almost

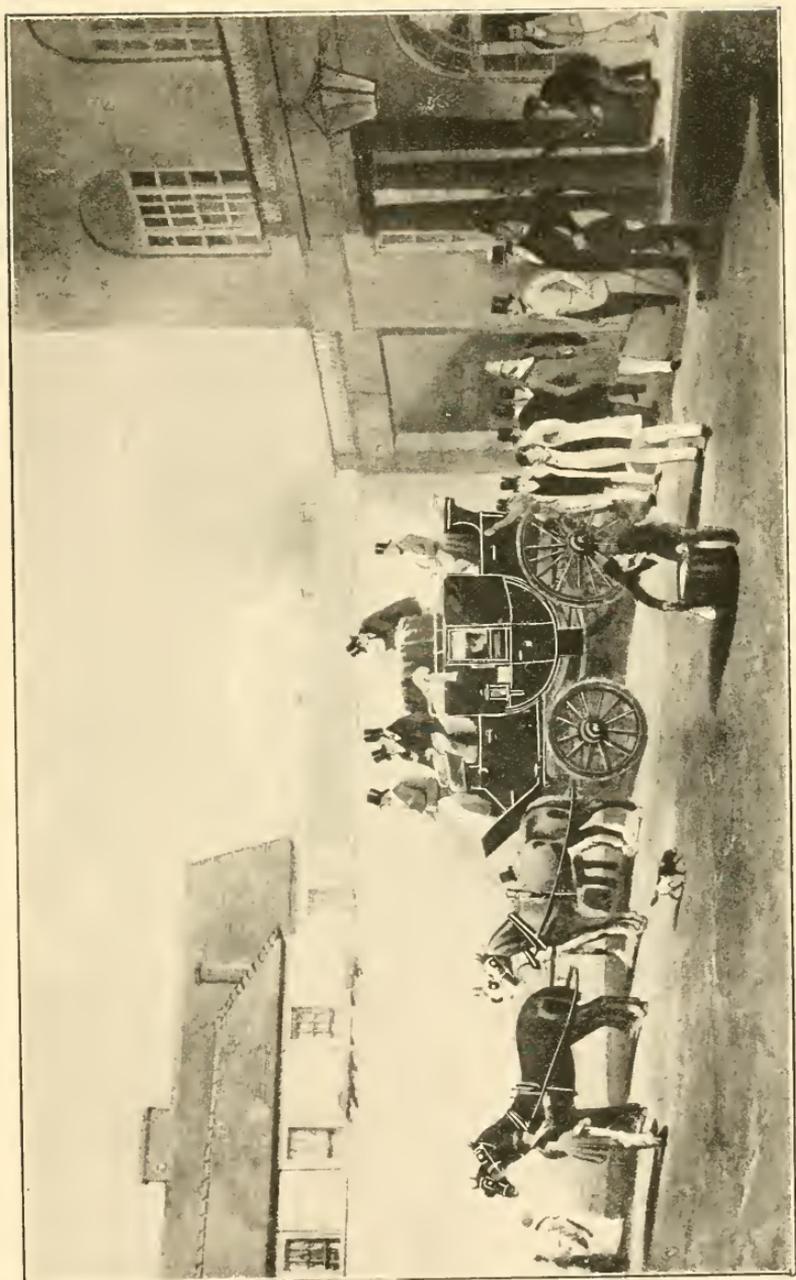
incredible. It is not to be supposed that men so spirited as Sherman and Isaac Taylor were content to idly see this late-comer enter the field their own enterprise had opened, and be allowed to cut up their profits; and so the following season witnessed the appearance of the "Stag," own sister to the "Wonder," and by the same proprietors, timed to run a little in advance of the "Nimrod," while the "Wonder" went slightly in the rear. Thus the hated rival was pretty well "nursed" all the way, and did not often succeed in securing a well-filled way-bill. The pace while this insane competition lasted was terrific, and the coachman of the "Nimrod" on the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury stage was thrown off and killed. The coaches were originally fast, being timed at $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour; but in the furious racing that took place, day after day, the whole three often arrived together at the journey's end, two hours before time. One shrinks from computing the pace an analysis of these figures would disclose. The fares by the "Wonder" and "Stag" were in the meanwhile reduced by one-third; and, partly in consequence of this "alarming sacrifice," and a great deal more, we may suppose, in consequence of travelers being afraid to travel by these reckless competitors, £1500 were lost by Sherman and his allies in twelve months. But at the end of that time they had the satisfaction of seeing the "Nimrod" withdrawn, when the fares were raised to their old level.

We are not told how much Horne and his friends lost in this onslaught upon Sherman's preserves, but it must have been a very considerable sum. Horne ran in opposition to many proprietors, and was powerful enough to wear down any competitors except the three or four men whose businesses ranked with his own for size. Those proprietors who agreed to work with rather than against him, were therefore the better advised. When putting a new coach on a route, his practice was to offer a share in the business to others accustomed to work along it. If they refused, and elected to oppose him, he became dangerous. He never allowed competition; and as he had the longer purse, generally beat his rivals. A strictly businesslike proprietor would accordingly always welcome Horne as a partner; but it generally happened that men who had for years past run coaches on certain roads fell unconsciously into the habit of thinking and acting as though they held a prescriptive right to the whole of the traffic along them, and not only refused to ally themselves with any one providing additional coaches, but endeavoured to shut him out altogether. Thus Horne, although ready to work with any proprietor, was in bitter opposition on many roads.

His was the Liverpool "Umpire," a day coach; and his, too, the "Bedford Times," so far as horsing it out of London was concerned. It was started about 1836, by Whitbread, the brewer, as a hobby, and ran from the "George

and Blue Boar." It is singular that it made the third Bedford coach running daily from that inn: Horne seems to have considered that Bedford could not have too many coaches. The others were the "Telegraph," twice a day—8 a.m. and 2.45 p.m.—and the "Royal Telegraph" at 9 a.m. The "Times" started at 3 p.m., and went at $10\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour, including stops. This was a very smart and exclusive coach, built on the lines of the private drag, and ran to that monumental Bedford hotel, the "Swan." The "Bedford Times" was further remarkable as one of the last-surviving of the coaches. It was not run off the road until 1848.

Horne prided himself on his drastic ways, and was fond of recounting his master-strokes in crushing out rivals. The particular coup on which he loved to dwell was that of driving up to an inn belonging to a middle-ground partner of one of his enemies, and buying up all the horses overnight, so that in the morning, when his own coach bowled by, the rival concern was brought to an ignominious standstill. This story, if true, reflected no credit on either himself or the other party to the transaction, who certainly was liable to an action for breach of contract. There is, however, no doubt at all that Horne was the man to have gone to the extravagant length of indemnifying the vendor—perhaps better described as his accomplice—against any action-at-law. He simply would not brook business rivalry.



THE "BEDFORD TIMES," ONE OF THE LAST COACHES TO RUN, LEAVING THE "SWAN HOTEL," BEDFORD.

He was a tall, lathy, irritable man, of eager face, quick, nervous speech, and rapid walk, with something of a military air in his alert, upright figure. The very antithesis of Chaplin, who was of short stature and possessed of a nature that nothing could ruffle, Horne must always expend



BENJAMIN WORTHY HORNE.

his energies on the minor details of his extensive business, and himself do work that would have been better delegated to subordinates. In the end this wore him out, and brought him to a comparatively early death. Up early, no day was long enough for him, and he economised time by taking no regular meal until evening. He

was generally to be seen eating his lunch out of a paper bag as he swung furiously along the streets. "There's Horne," said one of those many who did not love him, "with the devil at his elbow, as usual!"

It was, perhaps, well for him that Chaplin, calm and level-headed, came and entered into discussion on the railway question at that critical time when the fortunes of coach-proprietors were to be saved or lost by a simple declaration of policy. The time was 1837, the occasion the approaching opening of the first section of the London and Birmingham Railway. Should they hold out against the new order of things, as Sherman was bent upon doing, or should they enter into that alliance with the railway for which the railway people themselves were diplomatically angling? Chaplin thought they should, and proposed an amalgamation of their two interests. Horne was not so sure of railway success, and might have continued on his own way, but Chaplin, who was an old friend, urged his own views. "We shall lose £10,000 apiece if we don't work with them," he said, "and you won't like that, Benny, my boy." Eventually Horne agreed, and the firm of Chaplin & Horne was founded.

Dark rumours were current at the time that to this newly constituted firm a sum of several thousands of pounds was paid by the London and Birmingham directors as the price of their friendship; but, however that may be, the allied coach-

proprietors agreed to withdraw their coaches from the Birmingham Road, and to throw the weight of their interest and influence on the side of the railway. In return, they were given the contract for the parcel agency of the line. Chaplin had perceived, as Baxendale had already done in the case of the goods traffic, that this agency would be very valuable, and to his far-seeing counsel Horne owed much.

Henry Horne, one of Benjamin Worthy Horne's nine brothers, became a partner with him in 1836, and was a member of this firm of Chaplin & Horne for many years. He survived his brother, and was at the head of affairs when the London and North-Western Railway took over the parcel business and the London receiving offices in 1874. Henry was the kindest-hearted of men, and old coaching-men down on their luck always found him a sure draw for a loan or a gift. Wise by dint of long experience, he laid down a golden rule that it was cheaper in the end to give £50 than to lend £100.

When the fierce old fighting days of the road were ended and the business of Chaplin & Horne was set afoot, the restless energies of Benjamin Worthy Horne found an outlet in the management of the goods business in connection with the railway, and he was constantly in and out at Euston and Camden. In those early days the London and North-Western Railway headquarters staff was managed on somewhat lax and primitive lines, and if a departmental manager thought he

wanted a little holiday, he took it, without a word to any one. To a strict and keen business man like Horne these proceedings seemed particularly strange, and were often, doubtless, the source of much annoyance and waste of time. He had the unchallenged run of the offices, and was so used to finding the various managers away, on some pretext or another, that he would humorously assume their absence on all occasions. With his abrupt manner, he would burst boisterously into a room, and exclaim—

Ah! Manager Number One out—
Gone fishing, no doubt!

At the next office, whether the manager happened to be in or not, he would enter with the same assumption of his absence, and say—

Manager Number Two
Nothing to do—
Of course, gone fishing also!

To his especial aversion David Stevenson, the goods manager, whom he considered to have usurped many of his firm's rights and privileges, he would enter tragically with—

Aha! Manager Stevenson—
Gone about his private theatricals!

and fix the enraged Stevenson with the haughty stare common to the transpontine drama of the time. The sting of it lay in the fact that Stevenson belonged to an amateur dramatic society.

The goods department at Camden was taken

over by the London and North-Western Railway in Benjamin Worthy Horne's time, long before the general parcels and receiving-office branch was absorbed. The decision to terminate the contract was a source of much annoyance to him, on account of the reason given, which was that the business was not efficiently conducted. Although he was a man who in general had a horror of going to law, this stigma upon his business methods so stung him that he brought an action against the railway company for breach of contract, in order to vindicate his position. This was going to law for an idea, and as the company had a perfect right to terminate the contract, the action of course failed; but it was made abundantly evident that the business was efficiently carried on, and that the railway was only proposing to take it over because the time was ripe for such a development. His heavy costs, amounting to £1200, were afterwards very handsomely refunded to Mr. Horne by the railway.

It remains to say that although there was no keener or more ruthless man of business than Benjamin Worthy Horne, he was privately a considerate and kindly man, helpful and charitable to those less successful than himself.

He had a pretty estate at Highlands, Mereworth, and a town residence at 33, Russell Square. He died at the latter place, April 14th, 1870, aged sixty-six, leaving property valued at £250,000.

CHAPTER X

COACH-PROPRIETORS (*continued*)

EDWARD SHERMAN, who ranked next to Chaplin as the largest coach-proprietor in London, was in many respects unlike his brethren in the trade. He established himself at the "Bull and Mouth," St. Martin's-le-Grand, in 1823, in succession to Willans, and came direct from the Stock Exchange, where he had been a broker in alliance with Lewis Levy, a noted figure in those days of Turnpike Trusts. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to add that Levy was a Jew. He was referred to by Lord Ravensworth in the course of a discussion in the House of Lords on Metropolitan Toll-gates in 1857 as "a gentleman of the Hebrew persuasion." Persuasion, indeed! As well might you describe a born Englishman or Frenchman as born into those nationalities by personal choice and election. Levy was, of course, a Jew by birth, and had no choice in the matter. He was a farmer of turnpike-tolls to the extent of half a million sterling per annum, and a very wealthy man. Levy put Sherman into the coaching business, and he immediately began to make things extremely uncomfortable for the older proprietors, who had up to that time been content with going at eight or nine miles an hour.

When Colonel Hawker took coach from the "Bull and Mouth" in 1812, he found "the ruffians" there "a dissatisfied, grumbling set of fellows, and their turns-out of horses and harness beggarly." Such was the place under Willans' rule, but Sherman altered all that. He was anything but a horsy man, and it is therefore remarkable that he should have built up the very extensive business that the "Bull and Mouth" Yard did almost immediately become. He was the pioneer of fast long-distance day coaches, and was the proprietor, at the London end, of the "Shrewsbury Wonder," which, like all his coaches at that time, was a light yellow and black affair. How long he continued subservient to Levy may be a matter for conjecture, but when he rebuilt the "Bull and Mouth" Hotel, in 1830, he did so from the money of one of the three old and wealthy ladies whom he married in succession. The "Wonder" ran 158 miles in the day, as against the 122 miles to Bristol; but was shortly afterwards eclipsed by the Exeter "Telegraph," put on the road in 1826 in rivalry with Chaplin's "Quicksilver" Devonport Mail, by Mrs. Ann Nelson, of the "Bull," Whitechapel. In this Sherman had only a small share. Entirely his own venture was that supreme achievement, the "Manchester Telegraph" day coach, started in 1833 and running 186 miles in 18 hours, technically in the day by dint of starting at 5 o'clock in the morning and reaching Manchester at 11 p.m. The journey was at last shortened by one hour,

when the pace, allowing twenty minutes for dinner at Derby, and stops for changing, worked out at just under twelve miles an hour. The Manchester "Telegraph" day coach must by no means be confounded with the old night coach of that name, which in 1821 started from the "Castle and Falcon" at 2.30 p.m., and arrived at the "Moseley Arms," Manchester, at 8 o'clock the next evening—29½ hours, not much more than six miles an hour.

The "Telegraph" day coach was built by Waude, and was able to safely perform its astonishingly quick journeys over what is in some places an extremely hilly road by the introduction of the flat springs that, from first being used on this coach, were known as "telegraph springs," a name they retain to this day. They set the fashion of low-hung coaches, which, in the lowering of the centre of gravity, retained their equilibrium at high rates of speed and when going round abrupt curves. Accidents, very numerous in those years, would have been even more frequent had it not been for this change.

The heated rivalry between Sherman's "Manchester Telegraph" and Chaplin's "Manchester Defiance"—continued for some years—was but one phase of a keen competition that raged all round the coaching world for the possession of the Manchester traffic. The "Swan with Two Necks" "Defiance" may be traced back to 1821, and even before that date, if necessary. In that year there was not a coach that went the distance in less than 27 hours, and in this first flight the

“Defiance” was included. It set out at 2.30 p.m., and was at the “Bridgewater Arms,” Manchester, at 5.30 the next afternoon. By 1823 it was accelerated by two and a half hours; in 1826 it had become the “Royal Defiance,” in 24 hours. In succeeding years it continued to go at 6.30 and 6.45 p.m., and when the “Telegraph” was started the pace was screwed up to the same as that of the new-comer. An evening rival was the fast “Peveril of the Peak,” running from the “Blossoms” inn, Lawrence Lane, Cheapside; while Robert Nelson, of the “Belle Sauvage,” also had a fast night coach, the Manchester “Red Rover,” at 7 p.m., a very lurid affair on which the guards wore red hats as well as red coats, and the horses red harness and collars as far as he horsed the coach out of London. This did not long remain in his hands. Sherman afterwards obtained it; but Nelson, burning with professional zeal and no little personal pique, immediately put an entirely new coach on the same route to Cottonopolis. The announcement of the “Beehive,” as it was called, is distinctly worth quoting, for it shows at once the keen rivalry between proprietors at this period and the excellent appointments of the later coaches:—

“NEW COACH FROM THE ‘BEEHIVE’ COACH
OFFICE

“Merchants, buyers, and the public in general, visiting London and Manchester, are respectfully

informed that a new coach, called the 'Beehive,' built expressly, and fitted up with superior accommodation for comfort and safety to any coach in Europe, will leave 'La Belle Sauvage,' Ludgate Hill, London, at eight every morning, and arrive in Manchester the following morning, in time for the coaches leaving for Carlisle, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Passengers travelling to the north will reach Carlisle the following morning, being only one night on the road. The above coach will leave the 'Beehive' Coach Office, Market Street, near the Exchange, Manchester, every evening at seven, and arrive in London the following afternoon at three. All small parcels sent by this conveyance will be delivered to the farthest part of London within two hours after the arrival of the coach. In order to insure safety and punctuality, with respectability, no large packages will be taken, or fish of any description carried by this conveyance. The inside of the coach is fitted up with spring cushions and a reading-lamp, lighted with wax, for the accommodation of those who wish to amuse themselves on the road. The inside backs and seats are also fitted up with hair cushions, rendering them more comfortable to passengers than anything hitherto brought out in the annals of coaching, and, to prevent frequent disputes respecting seats, every seat is numbered. Persons booking themselves at either of the above places will receive a card, with a number upon it, thereby doing away with the disagreeables that occur

daily in the old style. The route is through Stockport, Macclesfield, Congleton, Newcastle, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Coventry, Dunchurch, Towcester, Stony Stratford, Brickhill, Dunstable, and St. Albans, being the most level line of country, avoiding the danger of the steep hills through Derbyshire.

“Performed by the public’s obedient servants,

“ROBERT NELSON, London ;

“F. CLARE, Stony Stratford ;

“ROBERT HADLEY & Co., Manchester.”

Sherman’s rebuilt “Bull and Mouth” inn, or “Queen’s Hotel,” to give it its later name, long remained a feature of St. Martin’s-le-Grand, many years after the last coach had been withdrawn ; and the old stables in Bull and Mouth Street, which had not been included in the rebuilding of 1830, remained, a grim and grimy landmark, put to use, as usually the case with the old coach offices, as a receiving office for the Goods Department of one of the great railways. In later years the “Queen’s Hotel” became the property of that very thick-and-thin supporter of and believer in the Tichborne Claimant, Mr. Quartermaine East ; but the growth of Post Office business made the site an exceedingly desirable one for an extension, and in 1887 the house was closed and demolished, and in the fulness of time the gigantic block of buildings officially known as “G.P.O. North” arose. Not only were the sites of hotel and stables thus occupied,

but even Bull and Mouth Street was stopped up and built over. The still-existing Angel Street, close by, between "G.P.O. North" and "G.P.O. West," marks where another coaching inn, the "Angel," once stood.

Robert Nelson, who entered so keenly into rivalry with Sherman over the Manchester business, was one of the three sons of Mrs. Ann Nelson, of the "Bull Inn," Whitechapel. Not the Bull "Hotel," for Mrs. Nelson most resolutely set her face against that new-fangled word; and as an "inn" the house was known to the very last. An excellent inn it was—one of the very best. It did not seem strange then, as undoubtedly it would now be, for so high-class a house to be situated in this quarter of London. Whitechapel of that time was vastly different from the disreputable place it is to-day; but the prime reason of so fine an inn as the "Bull" being situated here was that this was the starting-point of many routes into the eastern counties, and, just as railway hotels form a usual adjunct of railway termini, so did Mrs. Nelson possess an excellent hotel business in addition to the important and highly successful coaches that set out from her yard and stables.

The "Bull," Whitechapel, was sometimes—and with equal, if not better, exactness—known as the "Bull," Aldgate, for it was numbered 25 in Aldgate High Street. The relentless hand of "improvement" swept it away in 1868, but until that year it presented the picture of a typical old

English hostelry, and its coffee-room, resplendent with old polished mahogany fittings, its tables laid with silver, and the walls adorned with numerous specimens of those old coaching prints that are now so rare and prized so greatly by collectors, it wore no uncertain air of that solid and restful comfort the newer and bustling hotels of to-day, furnished and appointed with a distracting showiness, are incapable of giving. Everything at the "Bull" was solid and substantial, from the great heavy mahogany chairs that required the strength of a strong man to move, to the rich old English fare, and the full-bodied port its guests were sure of obtaining.

A peculiar feature of this fine establishment of Mrs. Nelson's was the room especially reserved for her coachmen and guards, where those worthies supped and dined off the best the house could provide, at something less than cost price. Mention has often been made of the exclusiveness of the commercial-rooms of old, but none of those strictly reserved haunts were so unapproachable as this coachmen's room at the "Bull." There they and the guards dined with as much circumstance as the coffee-room guests, drank wine with the appreciation of connoisseurs, and tipped the waiter as freely as any travellers down the road. A round dozen daily gathered round the table of this sanctum, joined sometimes by well-known amateurs of the road like Sir Henry Peyton and the Honourable Thomas Kenyon, but only as distinguished and quite exceptional guests. Once,

indeed, Charles Dickens sat at this table. Perhaps he was contemplating a sequence of stories with some such title as "The Coachmen's Room"; but if so, he never fulfilled the intention. The chairman on this occasion, after sundry flattering remarks, as a tribute to the novelist's power of describing a coach journey, said, "Mr. Dickens, sir, we knows you knows wot's wot, but can you, sir, 'andle a vip?" There was no mock modesty about Dickens. He acknowledged that he *could* describe a journey down the road (doubtless, if we have a correct mental image of the man, he acknowledged that little matter with a truculent suggestion in his manner that he would like to see the man who could do it as well), but he regretted that in the management of the "vip" he was not an expert.

Unlike commercial dinners, "shop" was not taboo round this hospitable mahogany, but formed the staple of the conversation. Indeed, these worthies could talk little else, and with the exception of sometimes shrewd and humorous sidelights on the towns and villages they passed on their daily drives, and criticisms of the local magnates whose parks and mansions they pointed out to the passengers on the way, were silent on all subjects save wheels, horses, and harness.

The etiquette of this room was strict. The oldest coachman presided—never a guard, for they always ranked as juniors—and at the proper moment gave the loyal toast of the King or Queen. An exception to this rule of seniority was when

Mrs. Nelson's second son, Robert, who drove her Exeter "Defiance," was present, as occasionally he was. Following the practice of the House of Commons, whose members are never, within the House, referred to by their own names, but always as the representatives of their several constituencies, Mrs. Nelson's coachmen and guards here assembled were addressed as "Manchester," "Oxford," "Ipswich," "Devonport," and so forth.

When Mrs. Nelson retired from the active management of the business, her eldest son, John, became the moving spirit. It was in his time that railways came in and coaching went out, but he was equal to the occasion, and started a very successful line of omnibuses, the "Wellington," plying between Stratford, Whitechapel, the Bank, Oxford Street, Royal Oak, and Westbourne Grove. He died, a very wealthy man, in June, 1868, aged seventy-four.

Thomas Fagg, of the "Bell and Crown," Holborn—an inn better known to later generations of Londoners as "Ridler's Hotel"—was a small proprietor, but he had in addition a very lucrative business as a coach-maker at Hartley Row, near Basingstoke. The "Louth" and "Lynn" mails, however, were partly his, and *Cary's Itinerary* for 1821 gives a list of twenty-six stage-coaches going from his door to all parts of the country. As "Ridler's" the house was a very select "family hotel," but in this it only carried on the traditions of Fagg's time, when he had some most distinguished guests. Standing

midway between the West End and the City, the "Bell and Crown" thus possessed certain advantages, and received much patronage both from commercial magnates and Society people. Among his patrons he numbered the "Iron Duke," for whom he had an almost religious reverence, and indeed proposed to change the name of his house to the "Wellington," in honour of him; only reconsidering the project when the Duke told him—as he commonly did the many extravagant hero-worshippers whose attentions were a daily nuisance—not to be "a d——d fool." Fagg, however, was no fool, but a very shrewd person indeed. A coachman, applying to him for a place on one of his coaches, was put through a strict examination as to his qualifications, when it appeared that he was (according to his own account) not only a first-rate and steady "artist," but had never capsized a coach in the whole course of his career—"he didn't know what a hupset meant."

"Oh! go away," retorted the justly incensed Fagg; "you are no man for me. *My* coaches are always upsetting, and with *your* want of experience, how the devil should you know how to get one on her legs again?"

Mrs. Mountain also had her own coach-factory. She was no less energetic than that very lively and masterful person, Mrs. Ann Nelson, but in a smaller way of business. Sarah Ann Mountain's house was that "Saracen's Head," Snow Hill, immortalised by Dickens in *Nicholas Nickleby*. She had succeeded to the business in 1818, on the

death of her husband, and instead of giving up, decided to carry on, aided by Peter, her son. Thirty coaches left her inn daily, among them the first of the Birmingham "Tally-Ho's," a fast day coach, established in 1823, and historically interesting as the prime cause of the furious racing that characterised the St. Albans and Coventry route to Birmingham from this date until 1838. Mrs. Mountain's coach-factory was at the rear of her premises on Snow Hill. There she built the conveyances used by herself and partners, charging them at the rather high rate of $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ a mile for their use.

A number of smaller proprietors accounted, between them, for many other coaches. Robert Gray, once established at the "Belle Sauvage," left that place in 1807 and settled at the "Bolt-in-Tun," a house still standing in Fleet Street, and now known as the "Bolt-in-Tun" London and North-Western Railway Receiving Office. He sent out twenty-five coaches daily, almost exclusively down the southern and western roads, among them the Portsmouth and the Hastings mails, the latter a pair-horse concern.

William Gilbert, of the "Blossoms" inn, Laurence Lane, Cheapside, had also a pair-horse mail—the "Brighton"—the "Tantivy," Birmingham coach, and a fast night coach to Manchester, the "Peveril of the Peak." Seventeen other coaches left his yard.

Joseph Hearn, proprietor of the "King's Arms," Snow Hill, was monarch among the slow-coaches, of which he had twenty-two. Among

them were the Bicester "Regulator," the Boston "Perseverance," and the Leicester and Market Harborough "Convenience"—names that do not spell speed. Even his Aylesbury "Despatch" was a slow affair, reaching that town in six hours, at the rate of six and a half miles an hour.

Many great coach-proprietors were established in the chief provincial towns. Bretherton, of Liverpool, described by Chaplin as "an exceedingly opulent man," Wetherald, at Manchester, Teather, of Carlisle, Waddell, at Birmingham, are names that stand forth prominently. The cross-country rivalry between these men was quite as bitter as that which raged among the Londoners, and, although with the lapse of time the exact explanation of the following extraordinary epitaph on a coach-proprietor of Bolton, Lancashire, cannot be given, it is doubtless to be found in one of these business feuds:—

"Sacred to the Memory of Frederic Webb, Coach Proprietor, of the firm of Webb, Houlden, & Co., of Bolton, who departed this life the 9th December, 1825, aged 23 years. Not being able to combat the malevolence of his enemies, who sought his destruction, he was taken prematurely from an affectionate loving wife and infant child, to deplore the loss of a good husband, whose worth was unknown, and who died *an honest man*."

The inference intended to be drawn was obviously that the others were not honest men; but, honest or not, they are all gone to their account, and the world has forgotten them and their contentions. Only the stray historian of these things comes upon their infrequent footmarks, and wonders greatly at their elemental ferocity.

CHAPTER XI

THE AMATEURS

Those men ascend to lofty state,
And Phœbus' self do emulate,
Who drive the dusty roads along
Amid the plaudits of the throng.
When round the whirling wheels do go,
They all the joys of gods do know.
See the Olympian dust arise
That gives them kindred with the skies!

HORACE, Book I., Ode I.

TIRUS Horace sings, in his Ode to Mæcenas; and the driving ambition observed by that old heathen, still to be noticed in these days, was a very marked feature of the road at any time between 1800 and 1848, when the railways had succeeded in disestablishing almost every coach, and the opportunities of the gentleman coachman were gone.

The amateur coachman was a creation of the nineteenth century. He was, for two very good reasons, unknown before that time. The first was that coachmanship had not yet become an art, and, still in the hands of mere drivers whose only recommendations were an ability to endure long hours on the box and a brutal efficiency in punishing the horses, had no chance of developing those refinements that characterised the Augustan age of coaching; the second reason was that the

box-seat, although perhaps already beginning to be regarded as a place of distinction, was much more certainly a very painful eminence. It rested directly upon the front axle, and, being wholly innocent of springs, received and transmitted to the frame of any one who occupied it every shock the wheels encountered on the rough roads of that time.

Springs under the driving-box were unknown until about 1805, when they were introduced by John Warde, of Squerryes, the old Kentish squire who is generally known as the "Father of Fox-hunting." He was the first amateur coachman, and in pursuing that hobby found the driving-seats of the old coaches anything but comfortable. In resisting his arguments in favour of the introduction of springs, the coach-proprietors declared to a man that the coachmen would always be falling asleep if they were provided with comfortable seats.

John Warde's driving exploits were chiefly carried out on the Oxford, Gloucester, and Birmingham roads. For years before coachmanship became a fashionable accomplishment, he had been accustomed to take the professional coachman's place on the "old Gloucester" stage, "six inside and sixteen out, with two tons of luggage"; or, relieving Jack Bailey and other incumbents of the bench on the old Birmingham and Shrewsbury "Prince of Wales," would drive the whole distance between London and Birmingham. He once drove this coach from London to Oxford against the

“Worcester Old Fly” for a wager, and won it, although his coach went the Benson road, four miles longer than the route his opponent had to travel.

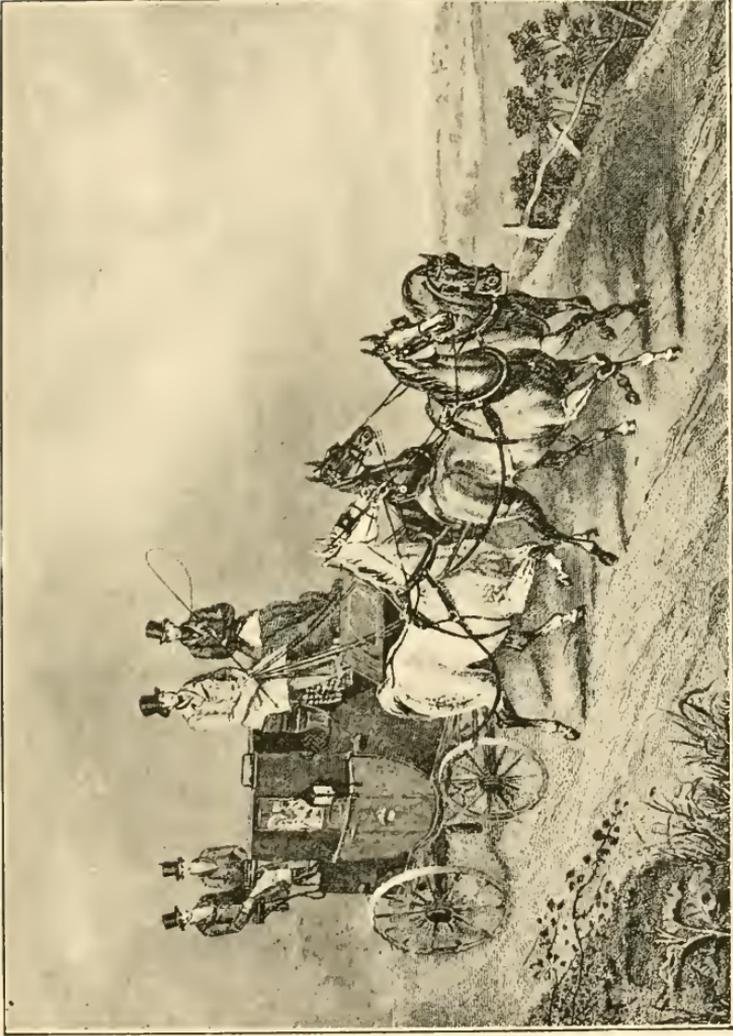
Warde’s driving was by no means in the later style, and he probably would have been very much out of his element with the smart galloping teams of the Golden Age. He was, however, of those who were fit to be trusted with a heavy load behind weak horses and on bad roads. There was a peculiarity about him as regarded the driving of his own horses which the history of the road, it was said, could not parallel. Let the journey be in length what it might, he never took the horses out of his private coach, giving them only now and then a little hay and a mouthful of water at a roadside public-house. When he resided in Northamptonshire, sixty-three miles from London, the journey was always accomplished by his team “at a pull,” as he called it. The pace, as may be supposed, was not quick. John Warde was one of the founders of the B.D.C., or Benson Driving Club, in 1807.

Amateur coaching, as a fashionable amusement, took its rise on the Brighton Road. Looked upon with contempt by stalwart and bluff Warde and his kind, it nevertheless grew and flourished in the hands of the Barrymores and their contemporaries, Sir John Lade and Colonel Mellish; and in the early years of the nineteenth century the education of no gay young blood was complete until he had acquired the art of driving

four-in-hand, in addition to the already fashionable and highly dashing sport of driving the light whiskies, the high-perched curricles, and the toppling tilburies that then gave a fearful joy to the newly-fledged whip. There was not too much physical exertion, endurance, or skill required on the road to Brighton, which was only fifty-two miles in length, and already possessed a better surface than most roads out of London; and, moreover, it was a road peopled from beginning to end with fashionables, before whom the gentleman-coachman could display his prowess. It was then pretty generally recognised that coach-driving was a poor sport if the ease and grace of the performer could not be displayed before a large and fashionable audience. That, it will be conceded, was not altogether a worthy attitude.

Many of these brilliant amateurs of the road ran an essentially identical career of viciousness and mad extravagance; and not a few of them wasted themselves and their substance in the very shady pursuits that then characterised the "man about town." Those who are curious about such things may find them fully set forth in Pierce Egan's *Life in London* and its grim sequel, the *Finish*. The endings of the Toms and Jerrys of that Corinthian age were generally sordid and pitiful.

The truth is that the sporting world was then, as it always has been and always will be, thronged with the toadies who were ever ready to fool a moneyed youngster to the top of his bent. He



After G. H. Laporte.

FOUR-IN-HAND.

must vie with the richer and the more experienced, though he ruin himself in the doing of it, and bring his ancestral acres to the hammer, in the manner of a Mytton or a Mellish. The only satisfaction these reckless sportsmen obtained, beyond the immediate gratification of their tastes, was the eulogy of the sporting scribes, who discussed their style upon the box-seat with as much gravity as would befit some question of empire. Excepting "Nimrod" and "Viator Junior," whose essays on sport in general, and coaching in particular, were sound and honest criticism, these writers were venal and beneath contempt.

A "real gentleman," according to the ideas of these parasites, was one who flung away his money broadcast in tips. Many foolish fellows, foolish in thinking the good opinions of these gentry worth having, spent their substance in this way. Of this kind was the amateur whip described by a writer in the *Sporting Magazine* in 1831. This aspirant for the goodwill of the stable-helpers and their sort sat beside the professional coachman on the Poole Mail starting from Piccadilly, and when the reins were handed to him proclaimed his gentility by the distribution of shillings among the horsekeepers. First "Nasty Bob," the ostler, got a shilling for talking about the leaders' "haction"; then "Greedy Dick," the boots, had one also for handing him the "vip"; and then came "Sneaking Will," the cad and coach-caller, to say something civil to

the "gemman"; and even the neighbouring waterman was seduced from his hackney-coaches to try the persuasive powers of his eloquence. Four shillings and sixpence this "real gentleman" distributed at Hatchett's door, and left the capital with the best wishes of the donees for his safe return. His generosity was not allowed a long respite, for at "that vile hole Brentford," a slowly manœuvring waggoner blocked the way; and finding that he could by no other means be induced to allow the mail to pass, our amateur descended from the box, and, slyly placing a shilling in the waggoner's hands, said in a loud voice, "I don't stand any nonsense, you know, so now take your waggon out of the way. This forcible and intelligible appeal, so properly accompanied, was perfectly irresistible: the waggon was drawn to the roadside, and the mail proceeded.

Very few of these amateurs have been considered worthy of biographical treatment, but among them Sir St. Vincent Cotton is one. Let us just see what the outline of his life was:—"Cotton, Sir St. Vincent, 6th Baronet, son of Admiral Sir Charles Cotton. Born at Madingley Hall, Cambs., October 6th, 1801; succeeded, February 24th, 1812; educated at Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford. Cornet 10th Light Dragoons, May 13th, 1827; Lieutenant, December 13th, 1827, to November 19th, 1830, when placed on half-pay. Distinguished himself in the hunting, skating, racing, and pugilistic world. Played in

Marylebone Cricket Matches, 1830-35. A great player at hazard. Dissipated all his property. Drove the 'Age' coach from Brighton to London and back for some years from 1836. Died at 5, Hyde Park Terrace, January 25th, 1863."

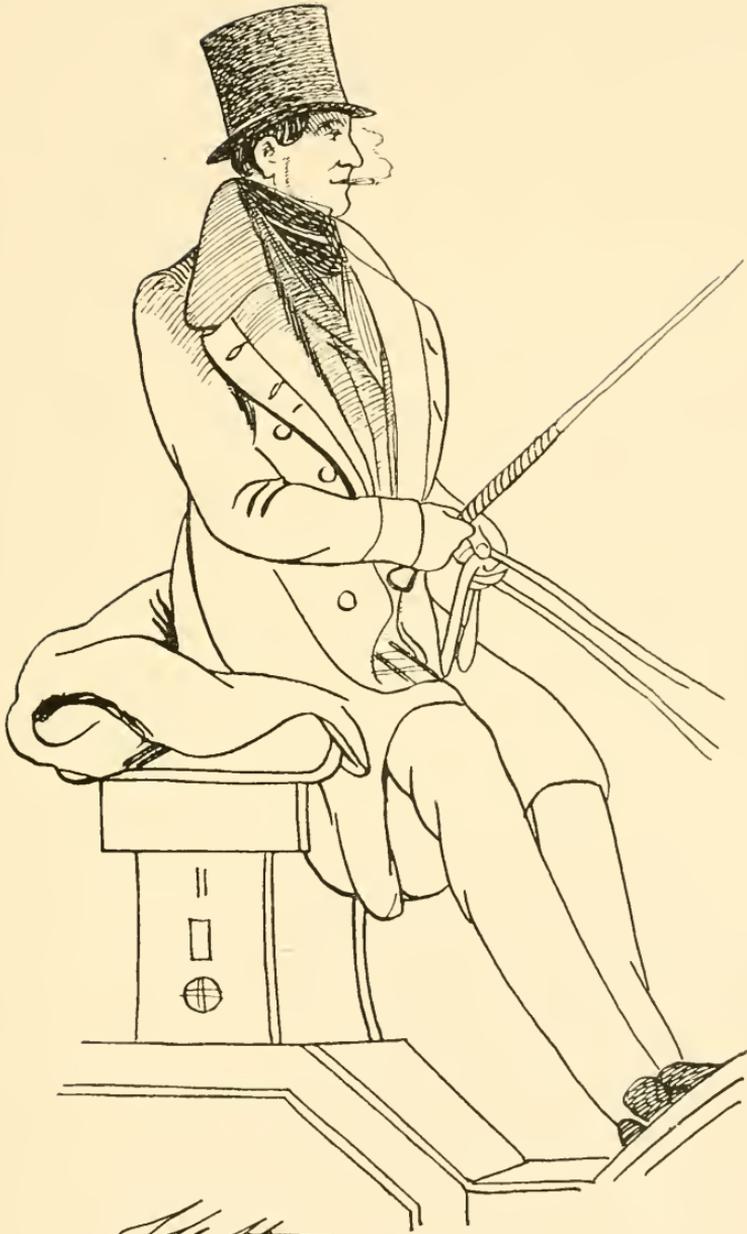
It is possible to largely supplement this skeleton biography from the *Sporting Magazine* and other sources. "The Cottons of Madingley and Landwade," said that classic authority, "are no 'soft goods' of recent manufacture, but have held high rank among the gentry of Cambridgeshire since the reign of Edward I. Sir John Cotton, the first baronet of the family, was advanced to that honour in 1641, by Charles I., to whose cause he was firmly attached. Sir St. Vincent used to ride in the first flight with the crack men of Leicestershire, mounted on his favourite mare, 'Lark.' The honourable baronet has, however, left both the Army and the Chase to devote himself exclusively to the public service on the 'Road,' where he performs the duties of a coachman very much to his own pleasure, and the great satisfaction of all His Majesty's lieges who travel by the Brighton 'Age'; and we are of opinion that an English baronet is much better employed in driving a coach than in endeavouring—like a certain mole-eyed wiseacre of the West, who also displays the Red Hand on his scutcheon—to saw off the branch that he is sitting on.

"We believe that the late Mr. H. Stevenson, who drove the 'Age' a few years ago, was one of the first gentleman-whips who took a *bob* and

returned a *bow*—*i.e.*, if you popped a shilling into his hand at the end of a stage, he ducked his head and said, ‘Thank you.’ The example thus set has been followed by the Baronet, who receives a ‘hog’ as courteously as his predecessor. When a noble Marquis, now in the enjoyment of an hereditary dukedom, drove the ‘Criterion,’ and afterwards the ‘Wonder,’ also on the Brighton Road, he did not take ‘civility money,’ we believe, but did the thing for pure love.

“By different means men strive for fame,
 And seek to gain a sporting name.
 Some like to ride a steeple-chase;
 Others at Melton go the pace,
 Where honour chief on him awaits
 Who best takes brooks, and rails, and gates,
 Or tops the lofty ‘bullfinch’ best,
 Where man and horse may build a nest;
 Who crams at everything his steed—
 And clears it too—and keeps the lead.
 Some on the ‘Turf’ their pleasure take,
 Where knowing ‘Legs’ oft bite ‘the Cake’;
 Others the ‘Road’ prefer; and drest
 Like ‘reg’lar’ coachmen in their best,
 Handle the ribbons and the whip,
 And answer ‘All right!’ with ‘yah hip!’
 At steady pace off go the tits,
 Elate the Sporting Dragsman sits;
 No peer nor plebeian in the land
 With greater skill drives four-in-hand.”

Cotton, known to the plebeian professionals of the Brighton Road as “the Baronet,” and to his familiars as “Vinny,” was so hard hit by his disastrous gambling that he owned and drove the Brighton “Age” for a living. Let us do him the



J. Cotton

SIR ST. VINCENT COTTON

justice to add that he did not attempt to disguise the fact, and that he took his misfortunes bravely, like a sportsman. Reduced, as a consequence of his own folly, from an income of £5000 a year to nothing, "I drive for a livelihood," he said to a friend: "Jones, Worcester, and Stevenson have their liveried servants behind, who pack the baggage and take all short fares and pocket all the fees. That's all very well for them. I do all myself, and the more civil I am (particularly to the old ladies) the larger fees I get." He, indeed, made £300 a year out of this coach, and got his sport for nothing.

The "Jones" of whom he spoke was Charles Tyrwhitt Jones, of whom, being just an amateur with no eccentricities, we know little. Of Harry Stevenson, one of the most distinguished and accomplished among amateurs of the road, we know a good deal, although even of his short life full particulars have never been secured. He made his first appearance on the Brighton Road in August 1827, as part-proprietor of the "Coronet," and even then his name seems to have been one to conjure with, for it was for painting it on a coach of which he was not one of the licensees that Cripps was fined in November of that year. Stevenson was then but little more than twenty-three years of age. He had gone from Eton to Cambridge, and during his exceptionally short career was always known by the fraternity of the road as "the Cambridge graduate." Although so little is known of him, sufficient has

come down to us to place him on a higher pedestal than that of the majority of the gentlemen amateurs. He was not only a supreme artist with the ribbons, "whose passion for the *bench*," as "Nimrod" says, "exceeded all other worldly ambitions," but he was also a supremely good fellow, in a broader and better significance of that misused term than generally implied. That he was one of the spendthrifts who had run through their money before taking to the road as a professional would appear to be a baseless statement, invented perhaps to account for that higher form of sportsmanship which entirely transcended that of the general ruck of "sportsmen," by inducing him to drive his coach, as an ordinary professional would, day by day, instead of when fine weather and the inclination of the moment served. A good professional he made, for he did by no means forget his birth and education when on the box, and was singularly refined and courteous. His second, and famous, coach was the "Age," put on the Brighton Road in 1828. This celebrated coach eclipsed all the others of that time, from the mere point of view of elegance and comfort. On a road like that to Brighton there was not, of course, the chance to rival such flyers as the Devonport "Quicksilver" and other long-distance cracks; but in every circumstance of its equipment it was pre-eminent. It was not for nothing that Stevenson loved the road. His ambition was to be first on it, and he succeeded. The "Age" was built and finished, horsed and found in every way

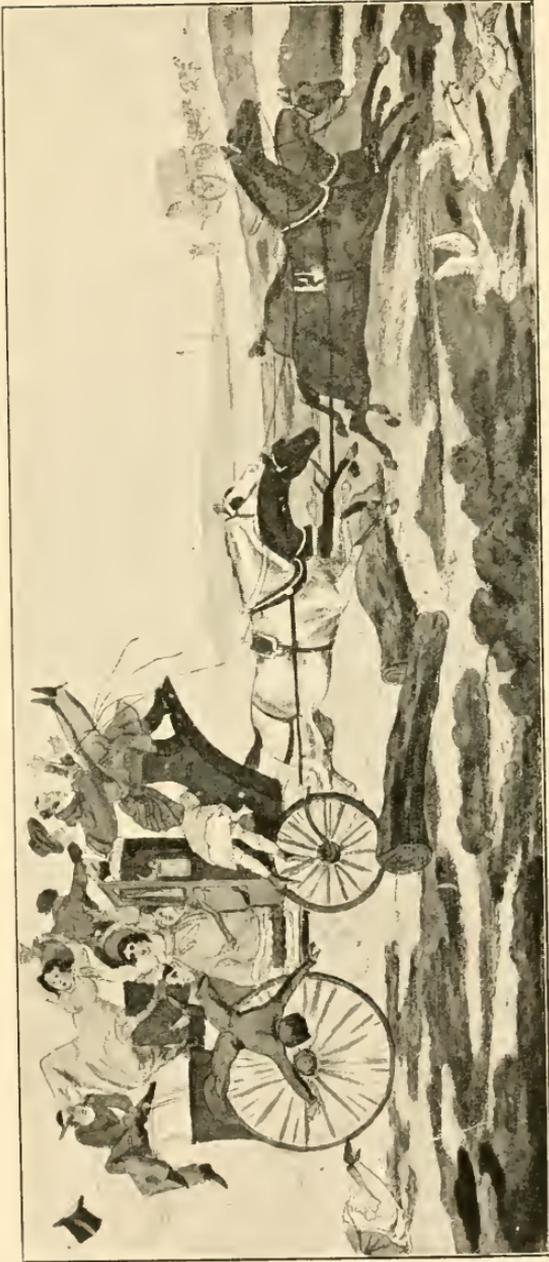
without regard to cost. In a time when brass-mounted harness was your only wear, his was silver-plated. The horse-cloths, too, exhibited this unusual elegance, for they were edged with deep silver lace and gold thread, and embroidered in each corner with a royal crown and a sprig of laurel in coloured silks and silver. These cloths were, many years afterwards, presented to the Brighton Museum by Mr. Thomas Ward Capps, a later proprietor of the "Age," and they are still to be seen there.

This was not by any means the sum of Stevenson's improvements. The usual guard he replaced by a liveried servant, whom he caused to attend upon the passengers, when the coach changed horses, with silver sandwich-box and offers of sherry of a kind that appealed even to the jaded palates of connoisseurs. Stevenson was as excellent a whip as he was a good-hearted gentleman. "I am not aware," wrote "Viator Junior," "if, to quote a vulgar saying, he was 'born with a silver spoon in his mouth,' but I certainly think he must have been brought into the world with a whip and reins in his hand, for in point of ease and elegance of execution as a light coachman he beats nineteen out of twenty of the regular working dragsmen into fits, and as an amateur is only to be approached by two or three of the chosen few."

Of course, coaching on these luxurious terms resulted in a staggering loss, and could not long have continued, but even those short possibilities

were ended by the early death of Stevenson. The cause of the attack of brain-fever that ended his career early in 1830 is imperfectly known, and is merely said to have been "an accident." The last scene was pathetic beyond the ordinary. Exhausted at the end of delirium, the bandages that had held his arms were removed, when, feebly raising himself up in bed and assuming as well as he was able his old habitual attitude upon the box, he exclaimed, as if with the reins in his hand, and to his favourite servant, who usually stood at his leaders' heads, "Let them go, George; I've got 'em!" and so sank down, dying, upon his pillow, in the happy delusion of being once more upon the road.

Mr. Harry Foker and others of the "young Oxonians" or "young Cantabs" with more taste for driving four-in-hand than knowledge of that very difficult art, were frequent aspirants for the ribbons, and as they were generally flush of money and free with it, they often tasted the delights of tooling a coach along the highway. Professional coachmen on the Oxford and Cambridge roads reaped a bounteous crop of half-guineas by resigning the reins into these hands, but equally plentiful was the harvest of bruises and shocks gathered by the passengers as a result of their reckless or unskilled driving. These chartered libertines of the road are mentioned with horror by travellers in the first half of the nineteenth century, who have pictured for us four horses galloping at the incredible speed of



After H. Alben.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF BEING DROVE BY A GENTLEMAN.

twenty miles an hour, and the coaches rocking violently, while the "outsides" hold on like firemen, behind some uncertificated young cub from Oxford or Cambridge, or, anticipating the final cataclysm, drop off behind or dive into the hedges.

Even more than the passengers, coach-proprietors dreaded amateur coachmen, and very properly dismissed those professionals whom they caught allowing the reins out of their charge. They had cause for this dread, for not only was the act of allowing amateurs to drive itself an illegal one, entailing penalties, but it often resulted in accidents, bringing in their train very heavy compensation claims. Juries invariably satisfied themselves as to whether a professional or an amateur was driving at the time when an accident occurred, and assessed damages accordingly.

Sir St. Vincent Cotton was the cause of a serious accident that happened to the "Star of Cambridge." Springing the horses over a favourable stretch of galloping-ground, he went at such a reckless pace that Jo Walton, the professional coachman, seized hold of the reins. In doing so the coach was overturned, and the passengers severely injured. A jockey named Calloway had his leg broken, and, with others, brought an action for damages. The affair cost Robert Nelson and his partners nearly two thousand pounds.

A good amateur coachman was, as a general

rule, like an accomplished violinist, only to be produced by long training. Caught young and properly schooled, he might become an elegant as well as a thorough whip; but the late-comer rarely attained both grace and complete mastery. "He who would master this most fascinating science of coachmanship," says Dashwood, in the *New Sporting Magazine*, "must begin early, under good tuition. He must work constantly on all kinds of coaches, and, thereby accustoming himself to every description of team to be met with, no matter how difficult or unpleasant, will ere long acquire a practical knowledge on that all-important point, the art of putting horses well together." He then proceeds to sigh for one hour of "old Bill Williams," of the "Oxford Defiance," who, as a schoolmaster of gentlemen-aspirants to coaching honours was, in his time, unequalled. He was supposed to have turned out more efficient coachmen than all the rest of his brethren put together. "Never by any chance—confound him!—would he allow an error or ungraceful act to escape unnoticed, and I have often got off his box so annoyed at his merciless reproofs and lectures that I vowed no power on earth should make me touch another rein for him. The first morning, in particular, that I was with him I shall never forget. In spite of all my remonstrances, nothing would satisfy him but I must take the reins from the door of the very office, at the 'Belle Sauvage,' he himself getting up behind, in order, as he said, not to 'fluster

the young 'un.' By great good luck we got pretty well into the street, and, without anything worth telling, for some way past Temple Bar; but, as my evil star would have it, the narrow part of the Strand was uncommonly full, and having rather an awkward team, and being moreover in a pretty particular stew, we had more than one squeak at sundry posts, drays, etc., etc. Still, not a word was uttered by the artist, though by this time he had scrambled in front, till, after a devil of a mistake in turning into the Haymarket, he touched my arm very civilly, with a 'Pull up, if you please, sir, by that empty coal-cart.' I did so—at least, as well as I could—and found, to my utter horror, that it was for the purpose of his requesting the grinning blackamoors that belonged to it *to lend him some six or seven of their sacks, to take the drag home;* 'for,' said he, 'I am sure the gentleman won't take it up to the Gloucester Coffee House *a coach.*' "

CHAPTER XII

END OF THE COACHING AGE

“This is the patent age of inventions.”—BYRON.

IN 1789, Dr. Erasmus Darwin, of Shrewsbury, in writing his poem, the *Loves of the Plants*, penned a most remarkably accurate prophecy, comparable with Mother Shipton's earlier “carriages without horses shall go.” He wrote:—

Soon shall thy arm, unconquered steam, afar
Drag the slow barge, or urge the rapid car ;
Or on wide waving wings expanded bear
The flying chariot through the realms of air.
Fair crews, triumphant, smiling from above,
Shall wave their fluttering kerchiefs as they move ;
Or warrior bands alarm the gaping crowd,
And armies shrink beneath the rushing cloud.

The first part of this prophecy was fulfilled in the period between 1823 and 1833, when steam-carriages—the motor-cars of that age—had a brief popularity.

Before railways successfully assailed the coaches, horsed vehicles had faced the inventions of a number of ingenious persons who wrestled with that problem of steam traction on common roads which had attracted Murdock in 1781. Trevithick took it up in 1800, and others followed ; but it was not until 1823 that the subject began greatly

to interest engineers. At that period, however, Hancock, Ogle, Church, Gurney, Summers, Squire, Maceroni, Hills and Scott-Russell plunged into that troubled sea of invention. Chief among these, from the standpoint of results achieved, were Mr. (afterwards Sir) Goldsworthy Gurney, Walter Hancock, and Colonel Maceroni. Gurney as early as 1827 had patented and tried a steam-carriage on the road. The boiler, it was explained for the benefit of nervous people, was perfectly safe. Even if it were to burst, being "constructed on philosophical principles," no one could be hurt. On July 28th, 1829, he ran one of his inventions on the Bath Road. This was what he termed a "steam-tractor," used as an engine to draw an ordinary barouche. Unfortunately for Gurney, he and his party reached Melksham on the annual fair-day, and a hostile crowd of rustics not only surrounded the steam-carriage, shouting "Down with machinery!" but stoned the engine, the carriage, and Gurney and his friends, with such effect that the machinery was disabled and several of the party very seriously injured.

But he evidently travelled the kingdom pretty extensively with his machines, for he agreed with one Mr. Hanning to grant him the right of working them on a royalty on the West of England roads, and entered into similar arrangements on the routes between London, Manchester, and Liverpool, London and Brighton, London and Southampton, and London, Birmingham, and Holyhead. Their price was agreed upon—to be

hired at 6*d.* a mile, or to be sold by Gurney at £1000 each. During four months at the beginning of 1831, Sir Charles Dance, who had bought some of the carriages, established a steam service on the road between Cheltenham and Gloucester. Three double journeys a day were made, 396 regular trips in all, covering 3644 miles, and conveying 2666 passengers, who paid £202 4*s.* 6*d.* in fares. The enterprise was just beginning to show a profit when the local Trusts secured an Act under which they raised the tolls against steam-carriages to a prohibitive height, and even went so far as to obstruct the roads with loose gravel and stones, with the result that the axle of one machine was broken.

In June 1831 the "philosophical" boiler of one of Gurney's steam-carriages, warranted not to burst disastrously, exploded at Glasgow, and seriously injured two boys. Tom Hood wrote:—

Instead of *journeys*, people now
 May go upon a *Gurney*,
 With steam to do the horses' work
 By power of attorney ;
 Tho' with a load it may explode,
 And you may all be undone ;
 And find you're going up to Heaven,
 Instead of up to London.

Yet a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which had been appointed to consider the question of steam-carriages, reported, four months later, that such carriages could be propelled at an average rate of ten miles an hour; that they

would become a cheaper and speedier mode of conveyance than carriages drawn by horses, and that they were perfectly safe (!).

Between 1832 and 1838 there were no fewer than seven important Steam-Carriage Companies in existence, and probably, had it not been for the hostility of Turnpike Trusts all over the country, the roads would have been peopled with mechanically-propelled vehicles. But tolls were raised to such a height against the new-fangled inventions that it became commercially impossible to run them. Between Liverpool and Prescott the 4s. toll for a coach became £2 8s. for a steam-carriage; between Ashburton and Totnes the 3s. impost became £2.

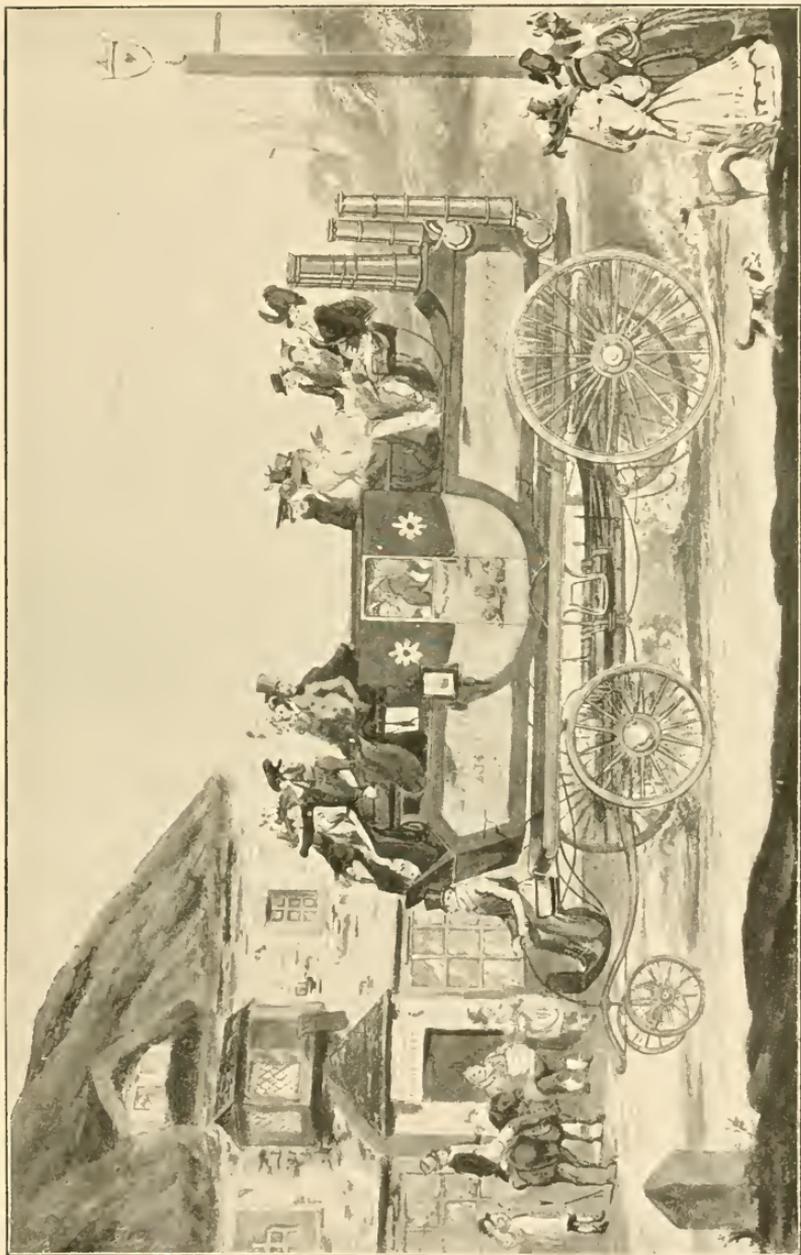
Evidently, from a coloured print published in 1833, Goldsworthy Gurney projected a London and Bath service, but the turnpike authorities crushed that also. An inscription under the original print obligingly tells us all about this type of Gurney's carriages:—

“The Guide or Engineer is seated in front, having a lever rod from the two guide-wheels, to turn and direct the Carriage, and another at his right hand, connecting with the main Steam Pipe, by which he regulates the motion of the Vehicle—the hind part of the Coach contains the machinery for producing the Steam, on a novel and secure principle, which is conveyed by Pipes to the Cylinders beneath, and by its action on the hind wheels sets the Carriage in motion. The Tank, which contains about 60 Gallons of water, is

placed under the body of the Coach, and is its full length and breadth. The Chimneys are fixed on the top of the hind boot, and, as Coke is used for fuel, there will be no smoke, while any hot or rarified air produced will be dispelled by the action of the Vehicle. At different stations on a journey, the Coach receives fresh supplies of fuel and water. The full length of the Carriage is from 15 to 20 feet, and its weight about 2 tons. The rate of travelling is intended to be from 8 to 10 miles per hour. The present Steam Carriage carries 6 inside and 12 outside Passengers. The front Boot contains the Luggage. It has been constructed by Mr. Goldsworthy Gurney, the Inventor and Patentee."

Gurney was held, by a Parliamentary Committee, to be "foremost for practical utility"; but that statement was owing, there is little doubt, to the influence of his many friends in Parliament. Hancock's steam-carriages were at least as efficient—but then he had no such influential supporters. Gurney claimed to have lost £36,000 directly in his experiments, and a much larger sum indirectly, through the excessive tolls imposed, and brought his grievances before Parliament. A Committee recommended a grant of £16,000 to him, as the first to successfully apply steam-carriages to use on public roads.

In 1824 Walter Hancock was experimenting on similar lines, but it was not until 1828 that a proposal was made to run a service of steam-carriages between London and Brighton, and not



GOLDSWORTHY GURNEY'S LONDON AND BATH STEAM-CARRIAGE, 1833.

After G. Morton.

until November 1832 that his "Infant" actually made the attempt. It had already, at the beginning of 1831, plied for public service as an omnibus between Stratford and London, and now was to essay those 52 miles between London and the sea.

It performed the double journey, but, owing to lack of fuel on the way, not in anything like record time, although it is said in places to have attained a speed of 13 miles an hour.

In 1833 Hancock started a steam omnibus between Paddington and the City, and by 1836 had three. Between them, they conveyed no fewer than 12,761 passengers. They were named the "Era," "Autopsy," and "Automaton." Why the middle one should have been named in a manner so suggestive of accidents and post-mortem examinations is not clear. But indeed, the names of old-time and modern motor-cars and their inventors, strange to say, generally have been, and are now, sometimes singularly unfortunate. Thus, in 1824, a Scotch inventor of Leith produced a steam-carriage. His name was Burstall! Among recent motor-cars are the "Mors" and the "Hurtu."

In October 1833 Hancock ran the "Autopsy" to Brighton in $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours (including three hours in stops on the way), and later had successful trips to Marlborough and back and Birmingham and back. These performances were considered so promising that a "London and Birmingham Steam-Coach Company" was formed, and

more steam-coaches ordered to be built. Fares between London and Birmingham were not to exceed £1 each, inside, and 10s. out. Hancock, a thorough believer in his invention and its capacity for solving the road-problems of the time, offered to carry the mails at 20 miles an hour; but the Post Office declined. Railways had, in fact, just succeeded in attracting attention, and were so strongly supported by capitalists that steam-carriages suffered neglect, and their inventors were utterly discouraged. Bright hopes and prospects gradually faded away, and by 1838 the railways held the field, undisputed.

Railways themselves were at first ridiculed, and suffered from the necessity of obtaining Parliamentary sanction at a period when the landowning interests and public opinion were decidedly hostile. Even when their construction was authorised, every one ridiculed the railways, and called those people fools who had invested their money in them. To be a railway shareholder was at that time, to the majority of people, proof positive of insanity, while engineers and directors were regarded as curious compounds of fools and rogues. Any time between 1833 and 1837, the coachmen on the Great North Road would point out to their box-seat passengers the works of the London and Birmingham in progress beside that highway, and distinctly visible all the way between Potter's Bar and Hatfield and at various other points. "Going to run us off the road, *they say*," a coachman would remark,

jerking his elbow and nodding his head towards the place where hundreds of navvies were delving in a cutting or tipping an embankment. Then, squirting a stream of saliva from between his front teeth, in the practised manner assiduously cultivated by admiring amateurs, he would lapse into a contemplative silence, quite undisturbed by any suspicion that the railway really would run the coaches off. The passengers by coach were nearly all of the same mind. Some thought the railways would be useful in carrying goods, but declined to believe that they or any one else would ever travel by them; and a large proportion of the railway directors and proprietors shared the same opinion, being quite convinced that railways would convey heavy articles and general merchandise, and that coaches would continue to run as of old. Lovers of the road, coachmen and passengers alike, called the engines "tea-kettles," protested that coaching had nothing to fear, and wished their heads might never ache until railroads came into fashion. They declared they would never—no, *never*—go by the railroad; but at length, when some urgent occasion arose, demanding speed, they trusted their precious persons in a railway train, and, to their surprise, found it "not so bad after all." The next occasion, such a person going to town would shrink as he encountered the "Swallow" coach, by which he had always travelled, and would feel guilty as he shook his head to the coachman's "Coming by me this morning, sir?" Why?

Because he had made up his mind to go by train, and so save something in time and pocket. This time our traveller rather liked it; and thus the "Swallow," and many another coach not already withdrawn, was doomed.

Let us follow the career of such a coach, to its last days.

Deprived of its best passengers, the exchequer of our typical "Swallow" began to decline. The stalwarts, whose love for the road was superior to economy of time and money, were faithful, but they were not numerous enough, and did not travel sufficiently often, for the old style of that fast post-coach to be maintained, so it was reduced from four horses to three. In coaching parlance, it ran "pickaxe," or "unicorn." No connoisseur in coaching matters would condescend to travel as a regular thing by a three-horse coach, and so those supporters were alienated, and, against their will, driven to the railway; and the "Swallow," badly winged, carried only frightened old women who looked upon steam-engines as wild beasts. As they died away, no one took their places, and the old concern became a pair-horse coach. The coachman had seen the change coming, and declared he would never be brought so low as to drive two horses. He had said the same thing when it was proposed to have three. "Drive unicorn!" he had said: "never!" But he did, and he drove pair-horse as well, when the time came. It was better to do so than to lose his place and face starvation.

By this time the iron had entered the soul of our poor old friend, and had rusted there. He who had been so smart and gay, with song and joke and always good-humoured, suffered, like the coach, a strange and pitiful metamorphosis. The stringency of the times had thinned the establishment, and in the absence of ostlers and stablemen he put in the horses himself, badly groomed, and the harness dirty. No one washed or cleaned the coach, and it ran with the mud and dirt of many journeys encrusted on its sides. His coat grew seedy, his gloves soiled. Instead of the silver-mounted whip he had wielded for years, he used one of common make. The old one, he said, had gone to be repaired, but somehow or another the job was never completed. At any rate, no one ever saw the old whip again. At the same time his smart white hat disappeared and was replaced by a black one: observant people, however, perceived that it was the identical hat, disguised by process of dyeing. He could sink no deeper, you think. But he could, and did. Even the short journey to which the old "Swallow" had in course of time been reduced by railway extensions came at last to an end; and then he drove the "Railway Bus" to and from the station, with one horse. His temper, once so high-mettled, had by now grown uncertain. He was like an April day—stormy, dull, gloomy, and with fitful gleams of sunshine, all in turn. No one knew quite how to take him, and every one at last left him very much to himself. He was never a favourite with the

“commercial gentlemen,” who were now his most frequent passengers, for he had always in the old days looked down upon any one under the rank of a county gentleman, and could by no means rid himself of that ancient attitude of mind. Indeed, he lived in the past, and when he could be induced to talk at all, would generally be reminiscient of better days. Commencing with the unvaried formula, “I’ve seen the time when. . . .” he would then proceed to draw comparisons, much to the disadvantage of present time and present company. He was then absurdly surprised when acquaintance, tired of these tactless speeches, avoided him. Not so quick in his movements as of yore, and always impatient of dictation, he resented the bluff impatience of a “commercial” one morning, and when that “ambassador of commerce” desired him to “look alive there, now, with those boxes,” flung the boxes themselves on the ground, and told that astonished traveller to “go and be damned!” Unfortunately, although the traveller would have overlooked the insolence, he could not afford to disregard the loss of his samples, which happened to be china, and were all smashed. He reported the occurrence to the hotel-proprietor, who, being a compassionate man, explained, as he instantly dismissed the offender, that he was very sorry, but he could not afford to keep so violent a man in his employ.

After this dramatic incident the ex-coachman hung about the station, and obtained a few, a very few, odd jobs as porter, until one day a gentleman

alighting from a train saw him. With surprise and sorrow in his eyes he recognised the once smart coachman, who, years before, had tutored him in driving. "Good God!" he exclaimed: "is it you?" The old man burst into tears.

He ended more happily than, but for this chance, would have been the case, for the Squire took him into his service, and there he remained until he followed his generation to the Beyond.

The opening of the London and Birmingham Railway in September 1838 did not suddenly bring the Coaching Age to a close. Many routes remained for years afterwards practically unassailed, and even on the road to Birmingham some coach-proprietors struggled with great spirit against the direct competition of the railway. At the close of 1838 a newspaper is found saying: "A few months ago no fewer than twenty-two coaches left Birmingham daily for London. Since the opening of the railway that number has been reduced to four, and it is expected that these will be discontinued, although the fares by coach are only 20s. inside and 10s. outside, whilst the fares for corresponding places on the railroad are 30s. and 20s."

Prominent among those men who declined to give up without a struggle was Sherman, of the "Bull and Mouth," whose coaches had run to Birmingham, Manchester, and other places on the north-western road. For two years he maintained the unequal contest, and only relinquished it when he had lost seven thousand pounds and

found his coaches running empty. Before finally beaten, he had even gone the length of re-establishing some coaches originally withdrawn in 1836, on the opening of the Grand Junction Railway. The reasons for this were many. The train-service in those early days was very poor, and engine-power insufficient, so that heavy loads, rain-showers that made the rails slippery, and the innumerable minor accidents always happening to the engines themselves, made travelling by railway not only uncertain, but, in not a few instances, even slower than by coach. Railway officials, too, were insolent to an incredible degree. Only when one has read the "Letters to the Editor" in contemporary journals can we have any idea of that insolence. The public complained that, having run the coaches off and secured a monopoly, the officials, finding themselves masters of the situation, behaved accordingly like masters, and not like the servants of the public they really were, or should have been. Newspaper comments dotted the i's and crossed the t's, and generally emphasised and embroidered these grievances. It is not, then, to be wondered at that a regret for "the good old times" found expression, or that coaches reappeared for a while. Many coach-proprietors were deceived by this partly indignant, partly sentimental attitude, and when they had committed themselves to a revival did not find the support which, from the newspaper outcry, they might reasonably have expected. Thus early do



THE LAST JOURNEY DOWN THE ROAD,

After J. H. Agassiz.

we find that gigantic evil of modern times—irresponsible and misleading newspaper talk—directly to blame for losses and disappointments to those foolish enough to pay heed to it.

Sherman's country partners were not so rash or so obstinate as he, and some of the coaches he personally would have continued had been withdrawn early in the railway advance. Among those was the Manchester "Red Rover"; but when the popular indignation against railway delays and official insolence was thus exploited by the newspapers, Sherman was enabled to again secure the co-operation of his allies, and to put that coach on the road once more. The decision to do so was announced in a striking handbill:—

"THE RED ROVER RE-ESTABLISHED
throughout to Manchester.

Bull and Mouth Inn and Queen's Hotel.

It is with much satisfaction that the Proprietors of the RED ROVER Coach are enabled to announce its

RE-ESTABLISHMENT

as a direct conveyance THROUGHOUT, BETWEEN LONDON AND MANCHESTER, and that the arrangements will be the same as those which before obtained for it such entire and general approval. In this effort the Proprietors anxiously hope that the public will recognise and appreciate the desire to supply an accommodation which will require

and deserve the patronage and support of the large and busy community on that line of road.

The RED ROVER will start every evening, at a quarter before seven, by way of

| | | |
|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| Coventry, | Stafford, | Macclesfield, |
| Birmingham, | Newcastle-under- | and |
| Walsall, | Lyme, | Stockport, |
| | Congleton, | |

and perform the journey *in the time which before gave such general satisfaction.*

It will also start from the ‘Moseley Arms’ Hotel, Manchester, for London, every evening, at nine o’clock.

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| EDWARD SHERMAN, | } Joint |
| JOHN WETHERALD & Co., | |

London, October 28th, 1837.”

It was a gallant effort, but failed. Manchester men had grumbled at railway delays, but they were not sentimentalists, and when the London and Birmingham Railway was opened throughout, and an uninterrupted run through to Manchester was possible, they forsook the road, and the “Red Rover” roved no more.

But still, sentiment gushed freely over the coaches in every channel of the periodical press, except, of course, in those railway journals that even thus early had come into existence. Poetry, of sorts, was lavished on the coachmen by the bucketful, and they were made to consider themselves martyrs in a lost cause. They felt them-

selves greatly honoured by all these attentions, and now began to perceive that they were really very fine fellows indeed. It was a proud position they now occupied in the public eye, but it had its own peculiar drawbacks. Amid all this adulation they could not but see that they were like the gladiators of ancient times, going forth to glory, it is true, but to simultaneous extinction; and as all the plaudits of the multitude must have seemed to them a hollow mockery, so did this latter hero-worship appear cheap and unsubstantial to the coachmen. Some of them assumed a pensive air, which did by no means sit well upon their burly forms and purple countenances, and was often, to their disgust, mistaken for indigestion.

Here, from among a wealth of verse, is a typical ballad of the time, among the best of its kind; but even so, perhaps not altogether one that Tennyson would have been proud to father:—

THE DIRGE OF THE DRAGSMEN

Farewell to the Coach-box, farewell to the Vip!
By Fate most unkindly we're coteh'd on the hip;
Brother Dragsmen, come join in a general chorus,
For there's nothing at present but ruin before us.

Once who were so gay as we trumps of the team?
Now our glory hath vanish'd away, like a dream;
Doom'd to suffer adversity's punishing lash,
For the villainous Railroads have settled our hash.

Patricians no more of our craft will be backers,
And our elegant cattle must go to the knackers;
Guards, porters, and stablemen now on a level,
And all the road innkeepers book'd for the devil.

We four-in-hand worthies, however deserving,
 Will have nothing in hand to prevent us from starving,
 Compell'd by hard treatment our colours to strike,
 We may shortly turn Chartists and handle the pike.

Our beavers broad-brimm'd, and our togs out and out,
 Must, the needful to raise, be soon shov'd up the spout ;
 Our fine, portly forms will be meagre as spectres,—
 So much for these steam and these railroad projectors.

By Heavens! 'tis a cruel affair, and the nation
 In justice are bound to afford compensation ;
 And, as on the shelf we must shortly be laid,
 To found an asylum for Dragsmen decay'd.

There, taking our pint in all brotherly love,
 We may chaff at the swells and the prads as we druv,
 While spectators, admiring, exclaim'd with a shout,
 " We're bless'd if that 'ere ain't a spiey turn-out ! "

And how, as we tied round our necks the silk fogle,
 The rosy-cheek'd barmaids would tip us the ogle ;
 And when all was ready the ribbons to seize,
 How slyly the darlings would give us a squeeze.

A plague upon Railways! the system be blowed!
 Grim engineers now are the lords of the road ;
 And passengers now are conveyed to their goal,
 Not by steaming of cattle, but steaming of coal.

'Tis a black, burning shame! Must our glory be crush'd,
 And the guard's lively bugle to silence be hush'd ?
 Oh! 'tis fit that our wrongs we should freely declare,
 For we always look'd out for the thing that was *fare*.

Let mourning as gloomy as midnight be spread
 O'er the *Swan with Two Necks* and the *Sarucei's Head* ;
 Let the *Black Bull*, in Holborn, be cow'd, and the knell
 Of glory departed be heard from the *Bell*.

The *Blossoms* must speedily fade from the bough,
 And cross'd are the hopes of the *Golden Cross* now ;
 The *White Horse* must founder, the *Mountain* fall down,
 The *Gloster* be clos'd, and the *Bear* be done *Brown*

The *Eclipse* is eclips'd, and the *Sovereign* is dead,
 And the *Red Rover* now never roves from its shed ;
 The *Times* are disjointed, the *Blucher* at peace,
 And the *Telegraph* shortly from working must cease.

The *Victory* now must submit to defeat,
 And the *Wellington* own he is cruelly beat ;
 The sport is all up with the fam'd *Tally-Ho*,
 And the old *Regulator* no longer will go.

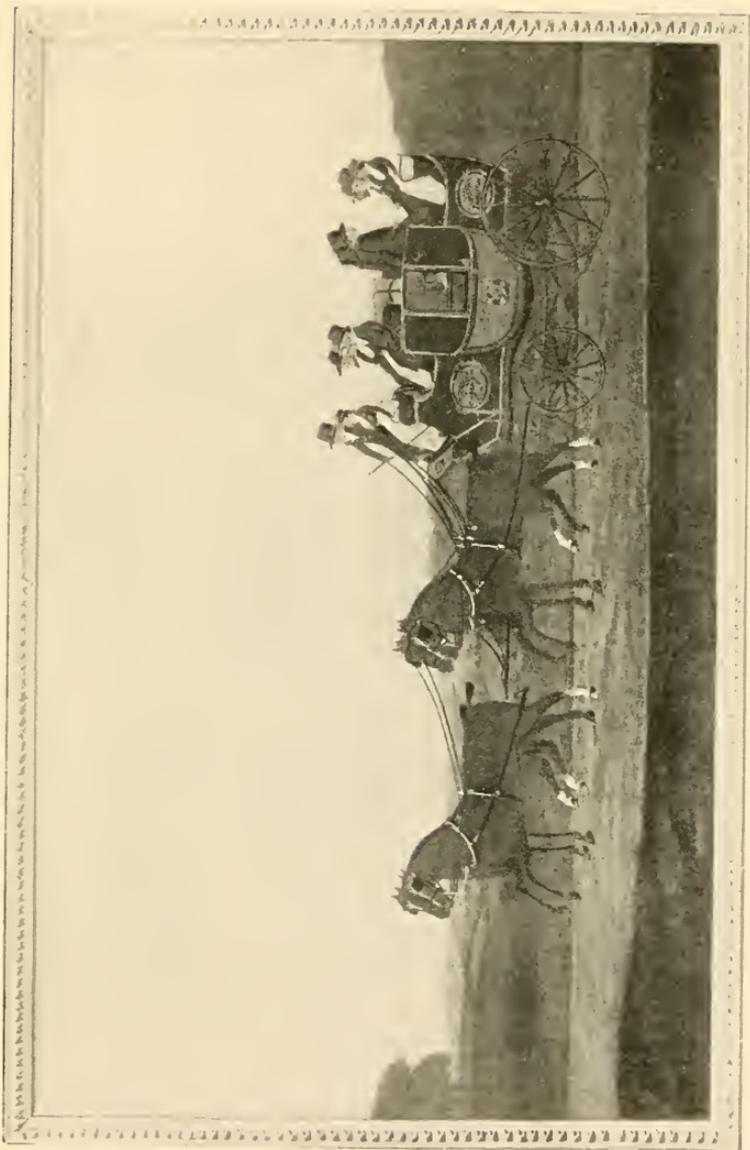
Oh ! had I, dear brethren, the muse of a Byron,
 I'd write down the system of trav'ling on iron ;
 For flying like lightning but poorly atones
 For crushing the carcase or breaking the bones.

So, farewell to the Coach-box, farewell to the Vip !
 By Fate most unkind we are catch'd on the hip ;
 Then join, brother Dragsmen, in sorrowful chorus,
 For at present there's nothing but ruin before us.

On a few out-of-the-way routes, originally not worth the while of railway companies to exploit, coaching did, however, survive an incredible time. Cordery in 1796 painted the even then old-established Chesham coach, and coaches continued to run into Buckinghamshire until quite recent times. Aylesbury, Chesham, Amersham, and Wendover only obtained direct railway accommodation when the Metropolitan Railway, under the lead of Sir Edward Watkin, extended into the country past Harrow and Rickmansworth, reaching Aylesbury in 1892. The Amersham and Wendover coach—really better described as a three-horsed

'bus—went to London daily until 1890, returning from the “Old Bell,” Holborn, at five o'clock in the evening. It was the sole survivor of the host of coaches that left London fifty years earlier.

But two generations have passed away since coaches began to disappear and to become historic, and the “elderly man,” with his enviable memories of a long journey in mid-spring or autumn on the outside of a stage-coach, written about by George Eliot, is no longer to be found, reminiscent of the times that were. Nay, the locomotive steam-engine itself is doomed, in turn, to be replaced by self-moving electric motor carriages, and we shall live to drop a salt tear upon an express locomotive retired from active service, or to sigh at sight of a solitary Metropolitan Railway engine placed in a museum of things that were. The days of the prophets were not ended with the Biblical prognosticators, with Nixon, red-faced or otherwise, or with Mother Shipton, or even with Erasmus Darwin, who, although he could foresee steam and the balloon, could not envisage electricity. They included George Eliot, also, among the prophets, shadowing forth, in a most remarkable way, the Central London Railway and other tube lines of our own time, in this extraordinary passage: “Posterity may be shot, like a bullet, through a tube, by atmospheric pressure . . . but the slow, old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other is the better thing to have in the memory. The tube journey can never lend



THE CHESHAM COACH, 1796.

From the painting by Cortery.

much to picture and narrative; it is as barren as an exclamatory 'O!' " How true! The scenery on what the vulgar call the "Tuppenny Tube" is distinctly uninteresting.

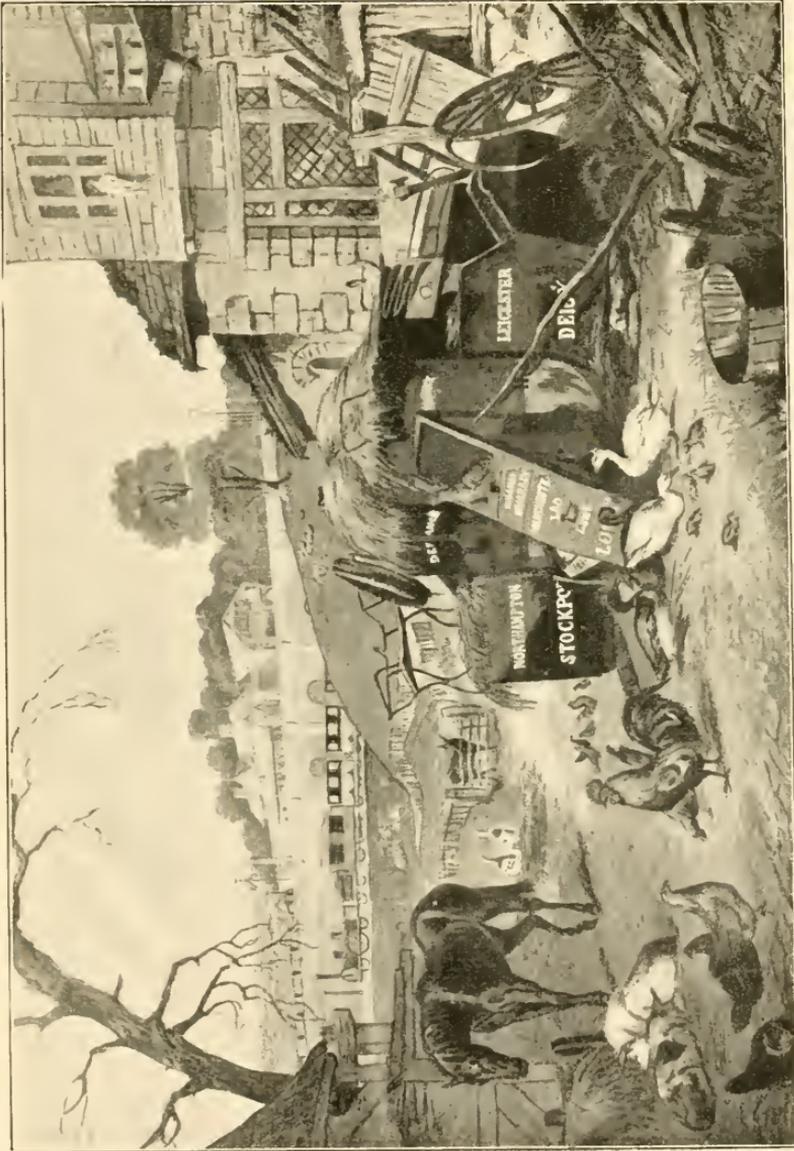
But Marian Evans had, you see, her limitations as a diviner of things to be. Electricity was not within her ken; she did not suspect the steam-carriages of her youth would be reincarnated as modern motor-cars. Yet, all the time, they were simply laid by, and Gurney, Hancock, and their fellows are justified in this our day. Everything recurs, essentially the same as before, with a complete revolution of the wheel of time, and thus the Road has become itself again.

Will a time come when the day of the motor-car will be looked back upon with that air of regretful sentiment with which the vanished Coaching Age is regarded? The rhythmic footfall of the horses and the rattle of the bars, the tootling of the "yard of tin" and the cheerful circumstance that attends the progress of a well-appointed coach, are things which have been, and may still be, experienced in our time by those who journey down the roads affected by the summer coaches, to Brighton, St. Albans, and Virginia Water; but as the Coaching Age itself has passed away, these are only sentimental revivals. The horseless carriages are upon us, and "going strong," alike in speed and scent. The odour of the imperfectly-combusted petrol desecrates the airs of the country-side. Already the length and breadth of the land have been explored by them,

on roads good, bad and indifferent, hilly or flat; and the characteristic rattle of their machinery and the hoarse trumpeting of their cyclorns are becoming familiar even to the rustics of Devon and Somerset.

Let it not be supposed, however, that skill in driving is not so necessary now as in the days of the spanking teams of coach-horses. The careful coachman of old saved his horses over the road for the long climbs and rugged places; he "sprung" them perhaps on the level, and gave them a "towelling" as a persuader to greater efforts through snow-drifts, winds or floods; and the driver of a motor-car does many of these things to his machinery, not indeed with the aid of a whip, but through the agency of levers, taps and brakes. You can overdrive and exhaust a motor just as easily as you can a horse, while it wants feeding just as well. "A just man is merciful to his beast," and a cautious man is careful of his car, not only because if he was not he would perhaps be left with half a ton of inert machinery upon the road, but because he is just as fond of his automobile as many another of his steeds of flesh and blood.

But to most people who have only seen motor-cars, and have neither driven them nor ridden in one, this will not readily be understood; while the veteran who remembers the sights and sounds of the coaching days does not hear the clatter of the new occupants of the road with pleasurable feelings. To him there is no music in the



From a lithograph.

THE LAST OF THE "MANCHESTER DEFIANCE."

“Gurr-r-r-*umph!* bang, gr-rrr!” of a Daimler, changing speeds in going uphill, nor any charm in the rattle of a Benz; the “ft-ft-ft” of a motor-tricycle, or the banshee-like minor-key wail, “wow-wow-wow,” of an electric cab on wood pavement. How very odd if there were!

Does it never occur to thinking men that the “blessings” of invention and the age of mechanical and other improvements have been too loudly and consistently praised? We need not be thought fanatically opposed to change if we deny the reality of some of those blessings. Let it be granted that they are ultimately in favour of the community and for the eventual improvement of the race; but if you view him unconventionally, does not the inventor, with his ingenious devices to overturn the practice and habits of generations past, seem sometimes rather a curse than a benefactor to mankind? While with one hand he simplifies and cheapens something (whether it be in travel or in anything else does not particularly matter for argument’s sake), with the other he sets a more strenuous pace to life. In the long ago he invented printing; and the Devil, seeing prophetically ahead, looked on with approval, because he foresaw the halfpenny evening papers. He introduced gas, replaced horses by steam-engines, and away went the leisured pace of that generation; and then, when a newer one was born to take steam as a matter of course, brought electricity to bear upon lighting and tractive problems. Always he sets you a quicker pace when

you would be going quietly or resting by the way. One generation of him takes away the traffic of the roads; another filches that of the railways and puts the traffic on the road again in an altered form. There is no finality about the inventor, who ought, for the peace of the age, first to be gently dissuaded, then admonished, and, in the last resort, severely dealt with. Our ancestors had a "quick way" with such, and discouraged invention by putting inventors to death as wizards. A drastic method, but they saved themselves much worry and trouble thereby. The inventor is not usually entitled to any consideration on the score of working for the benefit of humanity. So little does he do so that he takes infinite care to patent and to provisionally protect even his immature devices. He works, in short, to build his own fortune.

Apply these feelings to the case of the coachmen who were born in an age that knew nothing of steam. Every stand-by was rooted up in the coming of railways, and the steam-engine was just as strange a monster to them as the electric dynamo is to many of ourselves. Often they could not transfer their allegiance to the railway, even though they starved. It was not always stubbornness or pride that held them aloof, but a certain and easily-understood lack of adaptability that forbade one who had held the reins to handle the starting-lever of the locomotive. More guards than coachmen transferred themselves from the road to the rail, because the duties were not so

diverse ; but, although there were coachmen who took positions on railways, no one has ever heard of one who became an engine-driver.

But coachmen and guards and the passengers they drove are all passed away, and the world rolls on as though they had never existed. The coaches, like the old Manchester "Defiance," shown in the picture, rotting away in the deserted inn-yard, were left to decay in unconsidered places or were reduced to firewood ; unlike many of the old "Bull and Mouth" mails, which, after lying there for some time idle, were bought and shipped to Spain, running for many years on Peninsula roads, from Malaga in the south to Vittoria and Salamanca in the north, and by a singular fate visiting in their old age those blood-red fields of victory whose fame they had once spread from London all over triumphant England.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT BECAME OF THE COACHMEN

“Steam, James Watt, and George Stephenson have a great deal to answer for. They will ruin the breed of horses, as they have already ruined the innkeepers and the coachmen, many of whom have already been obliged to seek relief at the poor-house, or have died in penury and want.”—*The Times*, 1839.

“WHERE,” asked Thackeray in *Vanity Fair*, “where is the road now, and its merry incidents of life? Is there no Chelsea or Greenwich for the honest, pimple-nosed coachmen?” No, there was not. The action of Parliament in sanctioning so many railways in so short a space of time, without making any legislative restriction or provision in favour of the coachmen whose careers were ruined by railways, seems strange to the present generation, but in no single instance were they considered. The greatest and swiftest revolution ever brought about in the methods and habits of travelling took place in the short period of time between 1837, when the effect of railways first began to be felt, and 1848, when most of the great main lines were opened. Eleven years is no great space in which to effect so sweeping a change, and it is not surprising that ruin and misery were wrought by it, not among coachmen alone, but dealt out impartially to every one of the many



THE COACHMAN, 1832.

After H. Alken.

people and interests whose prosperity was bound up with the continuance of the old order of things. Coachmen were by no means the greatest sufferers: others felt the blow as severely, but in this chapter we have no concern with the great army of inn-keepers, ostlers, post-boys and stable-helpers who so suddenly found their occupation taken away and no new means of livelihood provided.

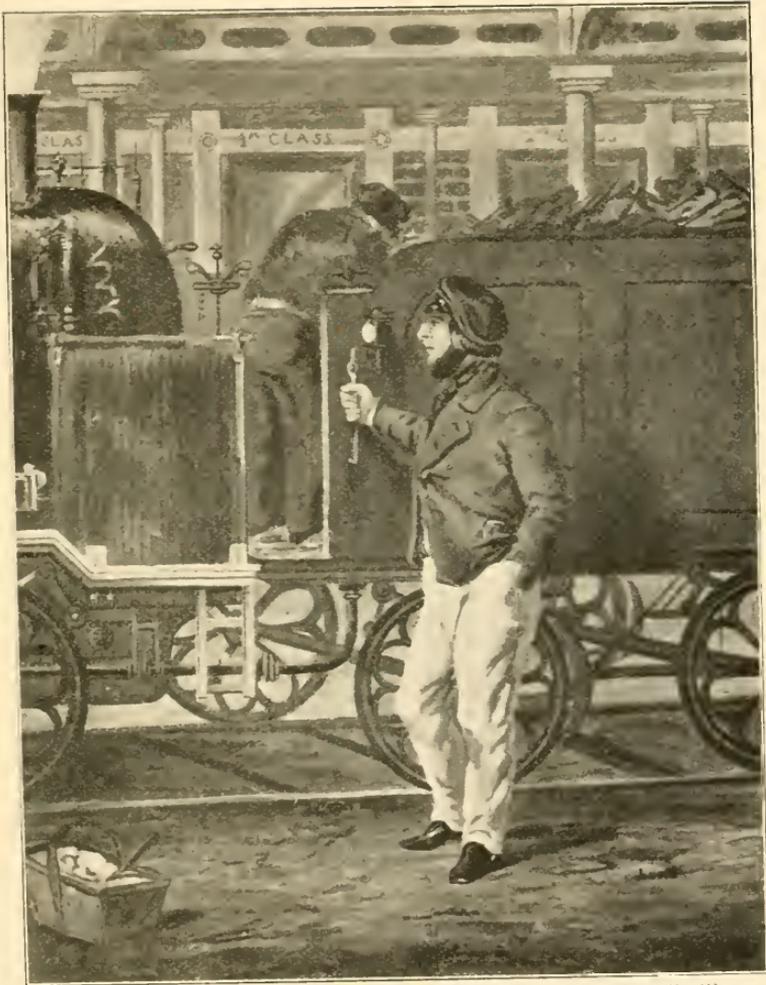
What became of the coachmen? In the vast majority of cases we do not, and cannot, know; for if one thing be more certain than another, it is that we are better informed in classic and mediæval lore than in the story of our forbears of two or three generations ago, and that most of the papers and documents necessary to a full and particular history of coaching have been destroyed.

Many among those not born in the age of coaches have marvelled at what they consider the wealth of reminiscences about the old coachmen. The truth is that there exists no such wealth. There were certainly no fewer than three thousand coachmen throughout the country in the days just before railways. What do we know of them? Very little. Even their names have been forgotten, except in some (comparatively few) special cases. No one can give us a complete list of the coachmen of the Edinburgh Mail, of the Exeter "Telegraph," or Devonport "Quicksilver," or of any of the crack day coaches. Nearly complete in some cases, but never quite, because the reminiscient travellers by famous mail or stage

have never troubled to detail such things; caring only to narrate the peculiarly bad or good coachmanship, as the case might be, or the eccentricities in manner or dress, of the men who drove them. The merely efficient coachman, with no salient characteristics to be described enthusiastically or spitefully caricatured, stood little chance of notice in print. He drove until the natural end of his career came, or until it was cut short by the railway; and in either case ended obscurely.

On the other hand, the noted masters of the art of driving a coach, who taught the young bloods that accomplishment, or who were excellent companions with joke and song to while the hours away, have found abundant notice; and they are the chronicles of these men that make that apparent wealth of reminiscence.

The coachmen ended, as may be supposed, very variously. A generation ago, many of the city and suburban omnibuses were driven by gloomy, purple-faced men, confirmed misanthropes, who viewed the world with jaundiced eyes, and, living in vivid recollection of the past, despised themselves, their omnibuses, and the people they drove. These were the old coachmen. The Richmond Conveyance Company, whose omnibuses in the 'sixties conveyed many Londoners between the "Goose and Gridiron," St. Paul's Churchyard, and that famous riverside town, employed a number of old-time coachmen, who wore tall hats with a gold band, and were never tired of telling their box-seat passengers about the



THE DRIVER 1852.

After H. Alken.

open-handedness of the passengers of old, and incidentally that travellers by 'bus were "not worth a d——n"; not, perhaps, a tactful or ingratiating manner, but "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh."

When the London and South-Western Railway was opened to Richmond, in 1843, the first station-master was a former coachman and coach-proprietor, and a very notable one: no less a man, indeed, than Thomas Cooper, who had in his time run a service of coaches between London, Bath and Bristol, and had been landlord of that very fine old inn, the "Castle," at Marlborough, now and for many years past a part of Marlborough College. Cooper's varied enterprises on the Bath Road at last led him direct into the Bankruptcy Court. When he emerged from the official whitewashing process, Chaplin had acquired his line of coaches, and to that highly successful man he became a local manager. It was Chaplin who obtained him the position of station-master, as doubtless he had, in his influential position of director and chairman of the L. & S.W.R., already found many posts on that line for coachmen, guards, and others.

Jo Walton, the famous whip of the "Star of Cambridge," became a messenger at Foster's Bank in that town, after the railway had run him off. At an earlier date Dick Vaughan, of the Cambridge "Telegraph," had been killed by being thrown out of a gig; but of him we know little. Of Thomas Cross, who was intimately

connected with Cambridge, we know a good deal. He drove the Lynn "Union" for many years. Born in 1791, he died in 1877, in his eighty-sixth year. His occupancy of the box-seat lasted from 1821 to 1847, when his coaching career was brought to a close by the opening of the length of railway between Cambridge, Ely, and King's Lynn. His was a remarkable history. His father, John Cross, from being a highly prosperous coach-proprietor, with large estates and considerable social standing in the district between Petersfield and Portsmouth, was gradually brought low by misfortune and reckless speculations. John Cross, with the wealth and status of a country squire, had given his son Thomas an excellent education, and had destined him for the Navy; but serious attacks of epilepsy, and the results of an accident caused from falling in one of these fits on a number of wine-bottles, cut his career in the Service short. He was a midshipman when these distressing circumstances entirely altered his future. He then started farming, but misfortune dogged his steps. As owners of horses, himself and his father fared no better, for the terrible disease of glanders broke out and quickly carried off 120 animals. Eventually ruin faced the family, and Thomas Cross at last was reduced to seeking employment as a whip in the very yard once owned by his father. At the age of thirty, then, married and with a family of his own to support, we perceive him pretty thoroughly graduated in the school of

life, and already familiar with the worst blows that adversity could give. In the beginning of his coaching career he drove the "Union" between London and Cambridge, but at different periods had the middle and the lower ground.

He was not altogether a genial coachman, and held little intercourse with his brethren of the bench, to whom he considered himself, as indeed he was, superior. It was not, however, a judicious attitude to adopt, and those who drove the "Star" and "Telegraph" Cambridge coaches—Jo Walton, James Reynolds, and others—retorted by describing him



"A VIEW OF THE TELEGRAPH":
DICK VAUGHAN OF THE CAMBRIDGE
"TELEGRAPH."

From an etching by Robert Dighton, 1809.

as an indifferent whip. Perhaps, in fact, he was, but the "Lynn Union" was never a dashing coach, and gave no opportunity of displaying the skill demanded on others.

Tommy Cross was never so pleased as when he could pick up a box-seat passenger well grounded in the classics, or interested in poetry—for poetry first, and the classics afterwards, engaged his thoughts. He drove four-in-hand all day, and when his day's work was done retired to some solitary chamber and mounted Pegasus, who carried him on the wings of the wind to the un-earthly regions where dwell the spirits of Homer and Virgil. In short, he seems altogether to have lived a fine confused unpractical life, reflected to some degree in his book, *The Autobiography of a Stage-Coachman*, an interesting but formless work, so lacking in arrangement that it is difficult from its pages to gain any very clear view of his career, and actually impossible from it to discover what was the name of the Lynn coach he drove and so constantly mentions. That it was the "Union" only independent inquiries disclose. The name "Union" must in later years have taken an equivocal and prophetic meaning to poor Thomas, for, like many another coachman, he saw with apprehension railways building all over the country and running the coaches off successive roads. He knew his own turn must come, and was early seized with fears for the future. In 1843 he published, at Cambridge, in pamphlet form, some verses in imitation of Gray's *Elegy in a Country*



THE GUARD, 1832.

After H. Alken.

Churchyard. He called it *The Lament and Anticipation of a Stage-Coachman.* It was, indeed, a very doleful production, describing what was already happening on other roads and was presently to befall on this. It is not proposed to quote the sixteen pages of this poetical effort. Let two verses suffice to show at once how, if his Muse did limp unmistakably, she was not wholly destitute of descriptive force:—

The smiling chambermaid, she too forlorn,
 The boots' gruff voice, the waiter's busy zest,
 The ostler's whistle, or the guard's loud horn,
 No more shall call them from their place of rest.

Then comes the final catastrophe:—

The next we heard, some new-invented plan
 Had in a Union lodged our ancient friend.
 Come here and see, for thou shalt see the man
 Poom'd by the railroad to so sad an end.

The end was not yet, but the Lynn "Union" was off the road in 1847, and Cross could not obtain any form of employment on the railway. He had already, in 1846, petitioned Parliament, but without avail; and now entered upon those unhappy years in which he eked out a precarious existence on the occasional aid given him by such men as Henry Villebois, the good-hearted Norfolk sporting squire, and others who had often been passengers on the box-seat of the "Union." In those years he published several pieces in verse, generally cast in the ambitious epic form. Unfortunately, he was not the poet he thought himself, and they are rather turgid and bombastic

specimens of blank verse. He planned and wrote a *History of Coaching*, but in the bankruptcy of his printers the manuscript disappeared, and so what might have proved a really valuable work was lost. At last, in 1865, he found a home in Huggens' College, a charitable institution at Northfleet, founded and endowed some twenty years earlier by a wealthy City merchant for gentlemen reduced to poor circumstances. This testimony to his social superiority above other coachmen seems to have cheered and invigorated him amazingly, for he was a collegian at Huggens' beneficent institution for twelve years, and lived to be nearly eighty-six years of age.

Less fortunate was Jack Peer, or Peers, of the Southampton "Telegraph," famous in his day, but reduced to driving an omnibus, and thence, being morose and quarrelsome in that position, by degrees to the workhouse. His unhappy situation became known to a gentleman who had often travelled by him in brighter times: a handsome subscription was raised, and he was at least enabled to end his days in quiet retirement.

A great many ex-coachmen became innkeepers and publicans. Among these was Ambrose Pickett, of the Brighton "Union" and "Item," who anticipated the end of Brighton coaching in 1841, by becoming landlord of an inn in North Street, with the very appropriate sign of the "Coach and Horses."

A much more famous coachman than he—Sam Hayward, of the Shrewsbury "Wonder"—followed

Mr. Weller's example, and married a widow, landlady of the "Raven and Bell," on Wyle Cop; but he did not long survive the extinction of "the Road," and the widow soon found herself again in that situation. John Jobson, who for many years drove the "Prince of Wales"—the "Old Prince," as it was familiarly called—a London, Oxford and Birmingham coach, continued on to Shrewsbury and Holyhead—became a coach-proprietor, established at the "Talbot," Shrewsbury, and a thorn in the side of Isaac Taylor, of the neighbouring "Lion." Coaching came to an end at Shrewsbury in 1842, and the name of Jobson was heard no more.

Many coachmen were killed off the box in the exercise of their profession, as, in the chapter on accidents, has already been shown. A considerable number, secure in the affection of the wealthy amateurs, many of whom they had taught the art of driving, entered the service of those noblemen and gentlemen, in some horsy or stable capacity. The eighth Duke of Beaufort, one of the Sir Watkin Williams Wynns, and others, thus found employment for these refugees of the road, and continually aided many more; but something in the long overlordship they had exercised over four horses, and a good deal more perhaps in that hero-worship down the road, of which Washington Irving writes, had spoiled them. Their lives would not run sweetly in fresh grooves. They could not, or would not, take to new employments, and even, subsisting upon

charity, were often absurdly haughty, insolent, and insufferable. Like horses, good living, coupled with little exercise, rendered them unmanageable, and they not infrequently quarrelled with the hand that fed them. "What do *you* know about throat-lashings and head-terrets?" contemptuously asked Harry Simpson, ex-coachman of the Devonport "Quicksilver," of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, who, before him, had been holding forth to some of his guests upon the respective merits of those harnessing methods in the old coaching days. "Nothing practically," answered the good-humoured baronet; "my ideas are only ideas. But you know all about the subject: let us have the benefit of a professional view."

At this time Harry Simpson—"Little Harry," as he was called, undersized and "looking like a tomtit on a round of beef when on the driving-box"—was stud-groom to that Welsh landowner, who, from compassion, had taken him into his employ when coaching failed. "Little Harry," domineering and wilful as he was, remained in his service for thirty years, and died in 1886.

Some of the undoubted veterans of the old order lived to patriarchal ages, and when they died their obituary notices confounded many a writer who had lightly declared, years before, that the last of the coachmen was dead.

Matthew Marsh, who for many years drove the Maidstone "Times," had been a private soldier in the 14th Foot, and fought and was wounded at Waterloo. He was generally averse



THE GUARD, 1852.

After H. Alken.

from mentioning that fact, but one day, hearing from his box a dispute about the battlefield in which both disputants were in error, he corrected them, simply adding, "I happened to be there." He died in 1887, aged ninety-four years, aided in his declining days by the Earl of Albemarle, who had fought in the same campaign.

William Clements, of Canterbury, who had driven the "Tally-Ho" and "Eagle" coaches between Canterbury and London before the nineteenth century had grown out of its teens, died in 1891, aged ninety-one. He was "the last of the coachmen," yet, two years later, in the early part of 1893, we find the death recorded of Philip (commonly called "Tim") Carter, aged eighty-eight. He it was who drove the "Red Rover" on June 19th, 1831, from the "Elephant and Castle" to Brighton in 4 hours 21 minutes—a pace then greatly in excess of anything before accomplished on that road. The occasion was the opening of William IV.'s first Parliament, and the haste was for the double purpose of speedily carrying the King's Speech to Brighton and of advertising the "Red Rover" itself, then a newly-established coach. He did not run light, as many of the record-making coaches used, but carried fourteen passengers on that trip.

A year after Carter's death Harry Ward passed away, August 4th, 1894, aged eighty-one. He was one of a family of ten, and the last, except his elder brother Charles, of whom mention will presently be made. Their father had himself

been a coachman on the Exeter Road, and lived at Overton at the time Charles was born. He afterwards became landlord of the "White Hart," Hartford Bridge, on the same great highway, eighteen miles nearer London. Harry Ward's career is partly told on page 247, Vol. I. In after years he drove coaches started in the revival on the Brighton Road and elsewhere.

"Last," it was again said, of the coachmen who drove the famous coaches up to the time when railways ran them off the road, was Charles S. Ward, elder brother of the above. He was born in 1810, and died in his eighty-ninth year, December 9th, 1899. His was an interesting career. Son of one who had been a small proprietor as well as coachman, and thus familiar from his birth with horses, he was driving the Ipswich and Norwich Mail as far as Colchester at the early age of seventeen, and was thus probably the youngest coachman ever entrusted with the conduct of a mail on any road. But he drove it for nearly five years without an accident, and was then promoted to the Devonport "Quicksilver," at that time the fastest out of London, nightly driving the 29 miles to Bagshot, and then back, in the small hours of the morning, with the up-coach. After nearly seven years of this night-work, trying and monotonous even in summer, but extremely hazardous in winter, he sought a change, and applied to Chaplin, who was the proprietor of the "Quicksilver," for day-work. The very fact

of his being so sure and safe a coachman on the night mail operated at first against his being transferred to a coach not calling in so great a degree for those qualities, but in 1838 he obtained the offer of the Brighton Day Mail, which Chaplin was about to start, together with the chance of horsing it a stage. Like many coachmen, ambitious of becoming a proprietor, Ward closed with this offer, but the Day Mail did not load well, and he soon gave up his share. He might have known that Chaplin, so keen a business man, was not precisely the person to offer any one else a share worth retaining.

Ward then left Chaplin, and went over to the Exeter "Telegraph," the fast day coach run by Mrs. Ann Nelson, in opposition to Chaplin's "Quicksilver Mail." Mrs. Nelson was glad to get so steady a whip as Ward, who for three years from this time drove the "Telegraph" daily between Exeter and Ilminster, a double journey of 66 miles. In 1841 the Bristol and Exeter Railway, a continuation of the Great Western, was opened as far as Bridgewater, and, by consequence, the "Telegraph" was withdrawn by Mrs. Nelson and her co-partners. Ward, however, held on, and, with the coachman on the other side of his stage and the two guards, extended the journey at one end as the railway cut it short at the other. From 1841 to April 30th, 1844, the "Telegraph" therefore ran the 95 miles between Bridgewater and Devonport, taking up the railway passengers at

the former place. On May 1st, 1844, the railway was opened to Exeter, and the journey of the poor old "Telegraph" was cut down to 50 miles. But those were spirited times, and even then, driven thus into the West, there were competing coaches. A "Nonpareil" Bristol and Devonport coach had been running daily at the same hours as the "Telegraph," but was taken off, and a "Tally-Ho" put on the shorter Exeter and Devonport trip. *Then* the racing became furious. Up out of Exeter, on to the breezy heights of Haldon, and by the skirts of Dartmoor the two coaches sped—the "Telegraph," as Ward tells us in his reminiscences, always leading. Several times they did the 50 miles in 3 hours 20 minutes, and for months together never exceeded 4 hours!

That mad pace could not last; and so, as neither could run the other off the road, they agreed to keep it amicably for so long as the railway, pushing irresistibly onward, would suffer them to exist. On May 1st, 1848, the South Devon Railway was opened to Plymouth, and it seemed as though coaching in the West of England was quite killed; but a number of Cornish gentlemen approaching Ward with the proposal that he should start a fast coach into Cornwall, and promising to support it, he put a "Tally-Ho" on the road between Plymouth, Truro and Falmouth, a distance of 62 miles. He was so fortunate as to be offered the contract for carrying the mail between those

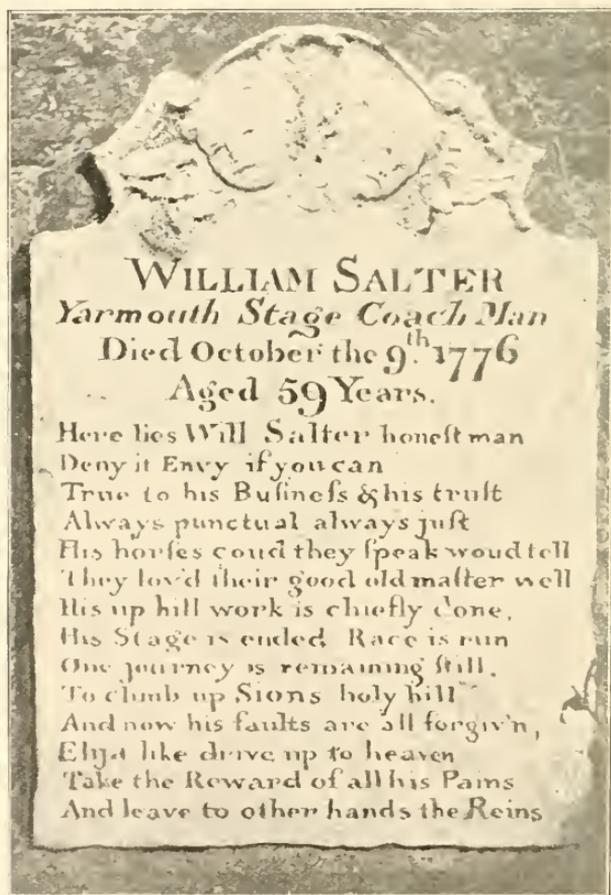
places, and the "Tally-Ho" was converted into a mail, and ran for a number of years until the railway was opened to Truro, in May 1859. Then, and then only, did Ward's career as a coachman end, for although for some years, being proprietor, he had seldom driven, he had not hitherto deserted the box-seat, despite the calls upon his time of the horse-mart and driving-school business he had meanwhile established at Plymouth.

Charles Ward, more fortunate, more business-like and far-seeing than the majority of his fellows, ended as the prosperous proprietor of livery stables in the Brompton Road, in whose yard he might be seen on sunny days during his last years sitting on a bench against the warm brick wall, and dozing the afternoons away.

Even as this page is written, in January 1903, another old coachman—again "the last"!—has died. This was Sampson Brewer, who, living in his later years at Cedar Cottage, Vancouver, declared himself to be the last survivor of the old coaching days. Born in 1809, he was, therefore, ninety-four years of age at his death. He said he drove on its final journey "the last regularly-running mail in England": that between Plymouth and Falmouth, by way of Liskeard and St. Austell. He must thus have been in the employ of Charles Ward.

Two, at least, of the coachmen committed suicide. One of these was Dick Vickers, who had driven the Holyhead Mail. In an evil hour he

resigned the ribbons to indulge a fancy he had nursed of becoming a farmer. But farming was beyond him: he lost all his money at it, and hanged himself in one of his own barns at Tynant,



A STAGE COACHMAN'S EPITAPH AT HADDISCOE.

near Corwen. Charles Holmes, for more than twenty years coachman and part-proprietor of the "Old Blenheim" London, Oxford and Woodstock coach, and the recipient in 1835 of a handsome

present of silver plate, subscribed for by Sir Henry Peyton and many other gentlemen, committed suicide by throwing himself off a steamer into the Thames.

The question, "What became of the coachmen?" is partly answered in the subjoined collection of epitaphs and eulogies got together from far and near. First comes the early and curious one at Haddiscoe, near Lowestoft, to William Salter, said to have lost his life by falling from his coach at the foot of the hill near the churchyard, shown on the page opposite.

To this succeeds the highly interesting example in Over Wallop churchyard, Hampshire, to Skinner, the coachman of the Auxiliary Mail, upset at Middle Wallop, on the Exeter Road, by one of the wheels coming off. Skinner was killed on the spot, and the passengers injured. The inscription runs:—

Sacred
to the Memory of
HENRY SKINNER, a Coachman,
who was killed near this place
July 13th, 1814,
Aged 35 years.

With passengers of every age
With care I drove from Stage to Stage,
Till Death's sad Hearse pass'd by unseen,
And stopt the course of my machine.

Then comes a Latin passage:—

Dum socios summa per vicos arte veheram
Mors nigra præterit—
Machina cassa mea est.

It may be translated :—

While I was conveying various passengers with the greatest skill, Black Death intervened—

My machine is broken.

An epitaph is (or was, for most of the stones in late years have been cleared away) in Winchester Cathedral yard to the last coachman of the Winchester and Southampton stage, but no record of it has been found.

Far away, in South Shropshire, on the north side of St. Lawrence's churchyard, Ludlow, lies John Abingdon, who died in 1817, and who, according to his epitaph, "for forty years drove the Ludlow coach to London; a trusty servant, a careful driver, and an honest man."

His labour done, no more to town

His onward course he bends;

His team's unshut, his whip's laid up,

And here his journey ends.

Death locked his wheels and gave him rest,

And never more to move,

Till Christ shall call him with the blest

To heavenly realms above.

In the same district, in the pretty churchyard of Stanton Lacy, may be found a stone to the the memory of John Wilkes, of the Worcester and Ludlow Mail, killed in 1803 by its overturning in a flood. Some poetic friend inscribed this tribute :—

Alas! poor Wilkes, swift down the winding hill

The horses plunged into the fatal rill.

The quiv'ring bridge broke down beneath the weight,

And Wilkes was flung into the foaming spate.

On his prone form the coach then t . . . (? toppled) o'er,
And he was crushed beneath, to rise no more.
No more to rise? No, no! Though here his work be ended,
To Heav'n we hope his spirit hath ascended.
Although on Earth his final drive be drove,
He's entered on a longer Stage above,
Where, now his mortal days are past and gone—
He drives with Phœbus' self the chariot of the Sun.

Then there is the epitaph on the driver of the coach that ran between Aylesbury and London, written by the Rev. H. Bullen, vicar of Dunton, in whose churchyard he is laid:—

Parker, farewell! thy journey now is ended,
Death has the whip-hand, and with dust thou'rt blended;
Thy way-bill is examined, and I trust
Thy last account may prove exact and just.
May He who drives the chariot of the day,
Where life is light, whose Word's the living way;
Where travellers, like yourself, of every age
And every clime, have taken their last stage—
The God of mercy and the God of love
"Show you the road" to Paradise above.

The old whips had a whimsical way with them, and sometimes not a little pathetic as well. The road was not only the profession whence they drew their living, but it was their passion—their whole life. Thus, when a noted chaise-driver at Lichfield, one Jack Lewton, died in 1796, he was, at his last request, carried from the "Bald Buck" in that city by six chaise-drivers in scarlet jackets and buckskin breeches—the pall supported by six ostlers from the different inns. The funeral took place on August 22nd, in St. Michael's churchyard, as near the turnpike road as possible; so

that he might, as he said, enjoy the satisfaction of hearing his brother whips pass and repass.

Similar directions are said to have been left by Luke Kent, reputed to have been the first guard ever appointed to a mail-coach. The story goes that he was buried at Farlington, near Portsmouth, on the Chichester Road, and left an annual bequest to his successors on the Chichester coach, on condition that they should always sound their horns when passing the place of his interment. Diligent inquiry, however, does not disclose the fact of any one of that name lying at Farlington; but a Francis Faulkner, who died at Petersfield, May 18th, 1870, aged eighty-four years, lies in a vault in Farlington churchyard. He was a guard on the "Rocket" London and Portsmouth coach, and local gossip still tells that he left a request (perhaps also a bequest) that if ever stage-coaches should pass his vault, their horns should be sounded. Certainly, a few years ago, when a coach was run from Brighton to Portsmouth, its horn was always sounded on passing the churchyard.

A conclusion shall be made with the eulogy of Robert Pointer, coachman on the Lewes stage, which he is said to have driven thirty years without an accident. It does not appear what relation he was to the one-time famous "Bob Pointer," of the Oxford Road, and in 1834 on the Brighton "Quicksilver"—a favourite coaching tutor. *That* Bob Pointer, according to the Duke of Beaufort, could always be depended on to

start sober, but the horses had to be changed on the way anywhere but at public-houses, if it was desired that he should end his journey in the same condition:—

Those who excel, whatever line 'tis in,
 Deserve applause, and ought applause to win.
 Pointer in coachmanship superior shone;
 His whip his sceptre, and his box his throne.
 Not skilled alone the fiery steeds to guide,
 For them in sickness and in health provide,
 He, by a thousand nice *minutiae*, knew
 To win the restive, and the fierce subdue,
 As man and master, punctual and approved:
 By those who knew him best, the best beloved.
 Many's the time and oft, o'er Ashdown's plain,
 'Mid show'rs of driving snow and pelting rain;
 When hurricanes bow'd down the lofty grove,
 When all was slough beneath and storms above;
 And oft, when glowing skies cheer'd all the scene
 And threw o'er Sussex plains a joy serene;
 When now the anecdote, and now the song
 Beguil'd the moments as we roll'd along;
 Snug at his elbow have I mark'd his skill
 To rein the courser and to guide the wheel;
 And had he Phaëton's proud task begun,
 To drive the rapid chariot of the sun,
 Safe through its course the flaming car had run.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OLD ENGLAND OF COACHING DAYS

THIS is the time, now that we have passed the threshold of a new era, when old landmarks are disappearing everywhere around us as we gaze, and the Old England that we have known is being dispossessed and disestablished by a new and strange, an inhospitable and alien England of foreign plutocrats—this is the psychological moment for a brief review of what this England of ours was like in the old days of stage-coach and mail.

If we could recapture those times we should find them spacious days, of much fresh air, illimitable horizons, a great deal of solid, unostentatious comfort for the stay-at-homes, and also of much discomfort for the traveller; but although no sensible person, fully informed of the conditions of life in the long ago, would wish he had been born into those times, yet among their disadvantages and the discomforts incidental to travel scarce more than two generations ago, there were to be found, as a matter of course, not a few things which would be looked upon with rapture by the modern sentimentalist. That was the era when the Suburb was unknown anywhere

else than around London, and even London's suburbs were sparse, scattered, sporadic, and separated by great distances from one another. Taking coach from the City, where the merchants and the shopkeepers commonly lived over their business premises, you came presently, north, south, east, or west, through suburban Stamford Hill, Sydenham, Clapton, or Kensington, to rural Edmonton, Croydon, Romford, or Chiswick, and so presently to the Unknown. *That* was, of itself, a charm in the old order of things—a charm lost long since in these crowded times, when constant and intimate travel have made us familiar with distant towns, and by consequence incurious and incapable of surprises. Everything is known, if not at the first hand of personal observation, at least by proxy of our reading in guide-book history, or by the debilitating photograph, which leaves nothing to the imagination, and renders us travelled in the uttermost nooks and corners of the land, even though we be bedridden, or thoroughgoing *habitués* of the armchair and the fireside. The picture-postcard—the lowest common denominator of the photograph—has come to give the last touch of satiety, the final revulsion of repletion. The Land's End has long since been exploited, John o' Groat's is merely at the end of a cycle ride, the "bottomless" caverns of the Peak have been plumbed, every unscalable mountain climbed. "*Conna!*" we exclaim when we are told any fact. No surprises are left.

We may never before have journeyed to Edinburgh, but photographs have rendered us so long familiar with its castle and rock that we cannot recollect a time when we were not familiar with the physical geography of the "modern Athens," and we seem to have been born with a knowledge of the geographical peculiarities of every other place. We are, therefore, naturally bored and unresponsive in situations where our grandfathers were surprised and delighted; but although possessed thereby with a profound dissatisfaction with ourselves, we cannot hope to win back to the unsophisticated joys of old time.

Would that it could be done! The wish is everywhere evident, but only Lethean waters could sweep away the useless lumber of mental baggage that destroys imagination and blunts the senses. The many efforts made to bring back the "properties"—to speak in the theatrical sense—of old time are pitiful or ridiculous, as your humour wills it. These are the days when things quaint and old-fashioned are revived for sake of their quaintness, sometimes in spite of their inconvenience and unsuitability; when ingle-nooks and open hearths with fire-dogs are built into modern houses for effect, although slow-combustion stoves are infinitely more comfortable and less wasteful of fuel. Our forbears, who did not know slow-combustion stoves, were not the creatures of sentiment that we are, and would soon have abolished open hearths for the

close stoves had they been given the chance, just as they would have exchanged the fallow dip for electric lighting had the opportunity offered. We do not know the feelings with which the first gentlemen to use carpets abolished the old rush-strewn halls and the manners and customs contemporary with them; but if their sense of smell was as acute as our own, they must have noticed with great relief the absence of the dirt and festering bones that found a hiding-place beneath those rushes. All the marvellous changes in habits of living—the cheapening of food, the conversion of the luxuries of a former age into the ordinary requirements of this, and even the alterations in the face of the country and the houses of towns and villages—are due to those increased facilities of intercourse which, owing to the gradual improvement in roads, the coaches and waggons of yore were first able to give. When public vehicles began to ply into the country, this England of ours was not only a land of wide unenclosed heaths and commons, but the people of one county—nay, even the inhabitants of towns and villages—were markedly different in thought and prejudices, in speech and clothing, from those of others; while local style in building, and the various building materials obtained locally, gave each successive place that appearance of something new and strange which the traveller does not always meet with nowadays in far distant lands. As the drainage of lakes and fens, the filling up of the valleys and the reduction of the hills,

have quite revolutionised the physical geography of wide areas, often changing the natural history of the districts affected, so has cheap, constant and quick travelling and conveyance of materials helped to reduce places and people to one dead level. Romance flies abashed from the level, monotonous road, where, years before, in some darkling hollow between the hills, ringed in by dense woodlands, it lurked in company with the highwayman. We do not desire the return of those gentry, but what would literature have done without them? Highway and turnpike improvements long ago sliced off the most aspiring hill-tops, and, carrying the roads through cuttings, used the material thus cut away for the purpose of filling up the gullies and deep depressions. Where the early coaches toiled, often axle-deep, through the watersplashes formed by the little rills and streams that ran athwart the way, later generations have built bridges, or have done things infinitely worse; so that a watersplash has become a rare and curious object, noteworthy in a day's journey. Only recently, on the Dover Road, near Faversham, has such a watersplash—one of the most picturesque in the country—been abolished. Ospringe was a little Kentish Venice, with a clear-running shallow stream occupying the whole of the roadway, with raised footpaths for pedestrians at either side, and ancient gabled cottages looking down upon the pretty scene. Alas! the sparkling stream now goes under the road, in a pipe.

In the old days, no traveller going north along

the Great North Road left Alconbury without first seeing that the priming of his pistols was in order, while the passengers by mail or stage secretly put their watches and jewellery between their skin and their underclothing, or deposited their purses in their boots, before the coach topped Alconbury Hill. For at "Aukenbury," as Ogilby in his old road-maps styles it, you were on the threshold of a robbing-place only less famous than Gad's Hill, near Rochester, or those other notorious dark or daylight lurks (for day or night mattered little in those times), Hounslow Heath and Finchley Common. The name of this ill-reputed place was "Stonegate Hole." It is marked distinctly on the maps of Ogilby and his successors, between the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth milestones from London, by the Old North Road, measured from Shoreditch, and passing through Ware, Royston, and Caxton.

Passing Papworth Everard, you came in those days, on the left hand, just before reaching the fifty-sixth milestone, to "Beggar's Bush," where you probably saw the tramps, vagrants and foot-pads of that age skulking, on the chance of robbing some traveller unable to take care of himself. Here, in sight of these wretches, you ostentatiously toyed with your pistol holsters, or loosened your sword in its scabbard, and so passed on scathless. On leaving Alconbury, however, the horseman generally preferred company, because the highway-men of Stonegate Hole were well armed, and, by consequence, courageous.

What, exactly, was Stonegate, or Stangate, Hole? It was the deep and solitary hollow that then existed at the foot of the northward slope of Alconbury Hill, known now as Stangate Hill. The name derived from this road being a part of the old Roman "Ermine Street," formerly a stone-paved way, and the "Hole" was formed by a rise that immediately succeeded the descent. Quite shut in by dense woods, it was an ideal spot for highway robbery. When, in the later coaching era, the road was lowered through the crest of the hill, and the earth was used to raise it in the hollow, Stonegate Hole disappeared. Bones were found during the progress of the works, supposed relics of unfortunate travellers who had met their death at the hands of the highwaymen. A more or less true story was long told of an ostler of the "Wheatsheaf," the inn that once stood on the hill-top. He, it seems, used to help in putting in the coach-horses when the teams were changed, and would then take a short cut across the fields, and be ready for the coach when it came down the road. The coachman, guard, and passengers, who did not know that the shining pistol-barrel he levelled at them was really a tin candlestick, were duly impressed by it, and yielded their valuables accordingly.

A tale used to be told of one of the old "London riders," or "bagmen," who lay at the "Wheatsheaf" overnight and set forth the next morning. His saddle-bags were full, and so weighted with samples of his wares that he could

scarcely sit his horse, and had to be helped into the saddle by an ostler. Once up, his eyes only with difficulty peered over this mountainous weight, but in this manner he set forth. He had not gone far before he thought he had lost his way, when fortunately he perceived another horseman, and hailed him. The stranger took no notice; and so our traveller ranged up alongside him with the question. Instead of replying, the stranger thrust his hand into his breast-pocket and withdrew what the traveller imagined to be a pistol. Recollections of the evil repute of the place suddenly rushed into the traveller's mind, and, putting spurs to his horse, he dashed away from the supposed highwayman, and did not draw rein until in the neighbourhood of Huntingdon.

There he met a party of horsemen, who determined to hunt the highwayman down, and so, with the traveller, hurried on to Stonegate. "There he is!" cried the traveller, as they came in view of a peaceful-looking equestrian, ambling gently along.

"You are mistaken, sir," said one of the party: "that is our Mayor, the Mayor of Huntingdon."

But the bagman asserted he was right, and so, to end the dispute, the whole party rode up, and one wished "Mr. Mayor" good morning. It was indeed that worthy man, and although he again, instead of making answer, drew something from his pocket, it produced no alarm among his fellow-burgesses, for *they* at least knew him for a very deaf man, and had often seen him reach for that

ear-trumpet which he now drew forth, clapped to his ear, and asked them what it was they said.

Swift, who, travelling between London, Chester, Holyhead and Dublin, remarked upon the many nations and strange peoples he passed on the way, serves to emphasise these notes upon the fading individuality of places and people. The dialect of "Zummerzet" has not wholly decayed, but it has become so modified that when old references to its Bœotian nature are found, the reader who knows modern Somerset, and does not consider these changes, concludes that its grotesque speech was greatly exaggerated; just as he cannot be made to implicitly believe the remarkable and oft-repeated story told by William Hutton of the visit of himself and a friend to Bosworth in 1770, when the people set the dogs at them, for the only reason that they were strangers; or that other tale of the savagery of the Lancashire and Yorkshire villagers, who, when a person unknown to them appeared, conversed as follows:—

"Dost knaw 'im?"

"Naya."

"Is't a straunger?"

"Ay, for sewer."

"Then pause 'im; 'eave a stone at 'un; fettle 'im."

No inoffensive stranger in country districts is likely to meet with that reception nowadays. The stranger in those times was regarded, as he generally is in savage countries, as necessarily an enemy; but travel has changed all that, and it has

been reserved for the London "hooligan," who has been taught better, to perpetrate, in the very centre of civilisation, the barbarous methods of the uninstructed peasantry of generations ago.

Stories like these are only incredible when the circumstances of the age are unknown. In times when a stranger might easily enough prove to be a highwayman, or at the very least some Government emissary intent upon collecting hearth-money, window-tax, or one of the very many duties then levied upon necessities of life, a strange face might be that of an enemy, and at any rate was unlikely to be that of a friend. Sightseers were unknown. No one stirred from home if he could find an excuse for staying by his own fireside. "What do you want here?" asked the Welsh peasants of the earliest tourists; and declined to believe them when they said they journeyed to view the Welsh mountains. "For Christianity's sake, help a poor man!" implored an early traveller in Scotland, fainting by the way. The door was slammed in his face. "Surely you are Christians?" exclaimed the unhappy man. "There are no Christians here," replied the half-savage Scot: "we are all Grants and Frasers." That last is, perhaps, rather a savagely humorous than a true story, but the mere existence of it is significant. More authentic—nay, well established—is the statement that even so late as 1749, in Glasgow, two people of the same name would commonly be distinguished by some physical peculiarity; or else, if one was

travelled and the other not, the one who had been to the capital would be "London John," or James, according to what his Christian name might be.

A course of reading in the "travels" of the authors and diarists who ambled about England, on horseback or otherwise, in the old days, sufficiently demonstrates the aloofness and isolation, and the essential differences that divided the country districts. When the Dukes of Somerset resided at Petworth, in Sussex, the roads were so bad that it was next to impossible to get there, and when once there it was equally difficult to get away. Petworth is only forty-nine miles from London, but the Duke of Somerset maintained a house at Godalming, sixteen miles along the road, where he could halt on the way and pass the night. His steward generally advised the servants some time before his Grace started, so that they might be on the road "to point out the holes." When the Emperor Charles VI. visited Petworth, his carriage was attended by a strong escort of Sussex peasants, to save it from falling over. In spite of their efforts, it was several times overturned, and that was a very sore and bruised Emperor who supped that night with the Duke. Similar adventures befel Prince George of Denmark, husband of Queen Anne, visiting Petworth from Windsor. He went in some state, with a number of carriages. "The length of way was only forty miles, but fourteen hours were consumed in traversing it; while almost every mile was signalled by the overturn of a carriage, or its

temporary swamping in the mire. Even the royal chariot would have fared no better than the rest, had it not been for the relays of peasants who poised and kept it erect by strength of arm, and shouldered it forward the last nine miles, in which tedious operation six good hours were consumed."

The travellers of that era, knowing how strange the country must be to most people, gravely and at length described places that in these intimate times an author would feel himself constrained to apologise for mentioning, except in a personal and impressionistic way; and they not only so describe them, but there is every reason to believe their writings were read with interest. More interesting than their dry bones of topographical history are the accounts they give of manners, customs, and thoughts common to the time when travellers were few and little understood. When, in 1700, the Reverend Mr. Brome, rector of the pleasant Kentish village of Cheriton, determined to make the explorations of England that took him, in all, three years, he was obliged, as a matter of course, to wait until the spring was well advanced and the roads had again become passable. Setting forth at last, one mild May day, his friends and parishioners accompanied him a few miles, and then, with the fervent "God be with you's" that were the parting salutations of the time, instead of the lukewarm "Good-bye's" of to-day, turned back home-along, and expected to hear of him no more. But he *did* return, as his very dull and jejune

book, chiefly of stodgy historical and topographical information, published in 1726, sufficiently informs us.

“Weeping Cross” is the name of a spot just outside Salisbury, supposed to have taken its name from being the spot where friends and relatives took leave of travellers, with little prospect in their minds of seeing them again. There is another “Weeping Cross” on the London side of Shrewsbury, near Emstrey Bank, about a mile from the town and overlooking the descending road, whence the progress of the travellers could be followed until distance at last hid them from view. There are, doubtless, other places so named throughout the country. The oft-repeated legendary statement that travellers usually made their wills before setting out is thus seen to be reasonable enough, but it is specifically supported by the author of *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland*, who, writing about 1730, says: “The Highlands are but little known, even to the inhabitants of the low country of Scotland, for they have ever dreaded the difficulties and dangers of travelling among the mountains; and when some extraordinary occasion has obliged any one of them to such a progress, he has, generally speaking, made his testament before he set out, as though he were entering upon a long and dangerous sea-voyage, wherein it was very doubtful if he should ever return.”

When Mrs. Calderwood, of Polton and Coltness, made a journey from Scotland into England in

1756, she wrote a diary, a very much more entertaining and instructive affair than the Reverend Mr. Brome's book—which, indeed, could have been compiled from other works without the necessity of travelling, and, but for a few fleeting glimpses of original observation, actually gives that impression. Mrs. Calderwood tells us that at Durham she went to see the Cathedral, where the woman who conducted her round the building did not understand her Scottish ways (nor indeed did Mrs. Calderwood comprehend everything English). "I suppose, by my questions, the woman took me for a heathen, as I found she did not know of any other mode of worship but her own; so, that she might not think the Bishop's chair defiled by my sitting down in it, I told her I was a Christian, though the way of worship in my country differed from hers." Mrs. Calderwood, quite obviously, had never heard of St. Cuthbert and his antipathy to women, so respected at Durham that woman-kind were not admitted within certain boundaries in his Cathedral church; nor was she familiar with hassocks, for she narrates how the woman "stared when I asked what the things were that they kneeled upon, as they appeared to me to be so many Cheshire cheeses."

The modern tourist along our roads finds a deadly sameness overspreading all parts of the country. The same cheap little suburban houses of stereotyped fashion, built to let at from £25 to £30 a year, that sprawl in mile upon mile on the outer ring of London, are to be found—nay, are

insistently to the foreground—wherever he goes. They form the approach to, the outpost of, every town, large or small, he enters, and are built in the same way, and of the same materials, whether he travels farther north, south, east, or west. It was not so, need it be said, in the old times. Then the coach passenger with an eye for the beautiful and the unusual had that sense abundantly gratified along almost every mile of his course, for when men did not build on contract, and when the contractor, had he existed, would not have been able to work outside his own district, there was individuality in building design. We all know the truth of the adage that “variety is charming,” and of variety the travellers had their fill. And not only was there variety in design, but an endless change of materials gratified the eyes of those who cared for these things. London, with its dingy brick, was succeeded, as one penetrated westwards, by the weather-boarded cottages of Brentford and Hounslow, by the timber framing and brick nogging of the next districts, by the chalk and flint of Hampshire and Wilts; and at last, when one had come to the stone country, by the yellow ferruginous sandstone of Ham Hill, that characterises the houses and cottages between Shaftesbury, Crewkerne and Chard. Coming into Devon, the yellow stone was replaced by the rich red sandstone, or the equally red “cob” of that western land; and a final change was found when, the Tamar passed and Plymouth left

behind, the massive granite churches, houses and cottages astonished the new-comer to those parts. No one could build with other than local materials in those days. The material might be, like the granite, stubborn and difficult, and expensive to work, but it would have been still more expensive to bring other materials to the spot, and so the local men worked on their local stone, and in course of time acquired that peculiar mastery of it and that way of expressing themselves which originated that "local style" whose secret is so ardently sought by modern architectural students. You cannot transplant the old style of a locality. Like the wilding plucked from its native hedgerow, it dies, or is cultivated into something other than its original old sweet self and becomes artificial. Cynic circumstance has so decreed it that, while these ancient local growths have in modern times been copied in London and the great towns, the rural neighbourhoods have been cursed with an ambition to copy London, while everywhere cheap red brick is ousting the native stone, flint, or wood.

When the fashionables travelled down by coach to Bath, one might safely have offered a prize for every brick house to be found there, for Bath was, and is, built of the local oolite known as "Bath stone." The prize would never have been claimed; but something like a modern miracle is now happening, for even at Bath red brick has underbid the native stone and gained an entrance.

Nothing escapes the modern desecrating touch. "Auld Reekie" itself—Edinburgh, that last stronghold of the Has Been—is not the same "beloved town" that Sir Walter Scott knew. The French Renaissance character of its grandiose new buildings does not alone tend to change it into something alien to sentiment and ancient recollection; but that which our ancestors would have thought a mere impossibility, that which themselves would, and ourselves should, stigmatise as a crime committed against History and the Picturesque, has almost come to pass. In short, the deep ravine where the Nor' Loch stagnated of old, where the Waverley Station is now placed, has been deprived of something of its apparent depth, and the Castle Rock of a corresponding height, by the towering proportions of the vast buildings that fill up the valley and desecrate the site of the northern capital.

Sturdy survivals of olden days are the local delicacies that first obtained a wider fame from that time when they were set before the coach passengers at the country inns where the coach dined, or had tea, or supped, and were so greatly appreciated that supplies were carried away for the benefit of distant friends. Some, however, of these delicacies have disappeared. No longer does Grantham produce the cakes mentioned by Thoresby in 1683. Grantham, he says, was "famous in his esteem for Bishop Fox's benefactions, but it is chiefly noted of travellers for a peculiar sort of thin cake, called 'Grantham

Whetstones.'” What precisely were the cakes known by this unpromising name we cannot say, for the making of them is a thing of the past.

Stilton cheese, never made at Stilton, obtained its name exactly in the manner already described. It was a cheese made at Wymondham, in Leicestershire, but its merits were first discovered by the coach-parties who dined at the “Bell” at Stilton, whose landlord obtained his supply from Wymondham, and drove a roaring trade in old cheeses sold to the coaches to take away. “Stilton” cheese is now only a conventional name, like that of “Axminster” carpets, made nowadays at Kidderminster.

To bring home with him bags and boxes of local delicacies was to the old coach-traveller as much an earnest of his travels as the bringing back of a storied alpenstock is to the tourist in Switzerland. The Londoner, returning home from Edinburgh, could come back laden with a number of things which, easily obtainable now, were then the spoils only of travel. From Scotch short-bread the list would range to Doncaster butter-scotch, York hams, Grantham gingerbread, and Stilton cheeses. On other roads he might secure the cloying Banbury cake, still extant, and as sickly-sweet and lavish of currants as of yore; the famous Shrewsbury cakes, manufactured by the immortal Pailin, who left his recipe behind him, so that the cakes of Shrewsbury still continue in the land; Bath buns, phenomenally adhesive

and sprinkled with those fragments of loaf sugar without which the exterior of no Bath bun is complete; the cheese of Cheddar; the toffee of Everton; pork pies from Melton Mowbray; or a barrel of real natives from Whitstable. All or any of these, I say, he might carry home with him, while few places were so unimportant in this particular way that he could not ring the changes on gastronomic rarities as he went.

All these things were the products of that old English tradition of good cheer and hospitality which lasted even some little way into the railway age. Journeys were cold, but hearts were warm, and the more rigorous your travelling the better your welcome. It would seem, and actually be, absurd to surround a modern arrival by railway with the circumstance that greeted the advent of the coach. In the bygone times the guest had no sooner alighted at his inn and proceeded to his room than a knock came at his door, and lo! on a tray a glass of the choicest port or cordial the house contained. To this day the courteous old custom survives at the "Three Tuns," in Durham, whose traditional glass of cherry brandy is famous the whole length of the great road to the north.

For the little folks who travelled by coach, either with their own people or, like Tom Brown, in charge of the guard, warm motherly hearts beat in the bosoms of the stately landladies of the age, all courteous punctilio to their grown-up guests, but sympathy itself to the wearied youngsters. Such was Mrs. Botham, of the "Pelican," at



"ALL RIGHT!" THE BATH MAIL TAKING UP THE MAIL-BAGS.

From the contemporary lithograph.

Speenhamland, on the Bath Road—that “Pelican” of whose “enormous bill” some waggish poet had sung at an early period. Mrs. Botham, an awesome figure—like Mrs. Ann Nelson, of the “Bull,” Whitechapel, dressed in black satin—unbent to the youngsters, for whom, indeed, she had always ready a packet of brandy-snaps.

The earlier travellers were even more welcomed, not by the innkeepers alone, whose welcome was not altogether altruistic, but by the country folk in general.

The annual reappearance of the early stage-coaches was a much greater event to the villagers and townfolk of the more remote shires than we moderns might suppose, or feel inclined to believe, without inquiry. But we must consider the winter isolation of such places in those remote times, and then some faint glimmering sense of their aloofness from the world will give us an understanding of the relief with which they again saw real strangers from the outer world. In the long winter months, when days were short and roads only to be travelled by the most daring horsemen, spurred to the rash deed only by the most urgent necessity, the passing stranger was rare, and excited remark, and the company in the inn parlour or by the ingle-nook discussed him, both because of his rarity and by reason of their own raw material for the making of conversation being run very low indeed. We should be more thankful than we generally are that our lot was not cast in a seventeenth-century village, for winter in such

surroundings was dulness incarnate. Because they could not obtain fodder to keep the sheep and cattle in good condition through the winter, the farmers and graziers of that time killed them before that season set in, and the villagers lived upon salted meat. Every house had its salt-beef tub and its bacon-crutch under the kitchen ceiling, well stocked with hams and sides ; but vegetables were so scarce as to be practically unobtainable.

Every household brewed its own beer and kept a stock of cider, and most housewives were cunning in the preparation of metheglin, a sickly-sweet and heavy drink that revolts the modern palate, but was then greatly appreciated. Evenings were not long, even though it grew dark before four o'clock, for folks went to bed by seven or eight. There was little inducement to sit up late, because only the feeblest illumination was possible to any but the very rich, and the yeomen, the farmers and the cottagers had to rest content with the dim sputtering glimmer of the tallow dips that every eight or ten minutes required the attentions of the snuffers. "When the night cometh," we read in the Bible, "no man can work"; but that is a statement which, literally true at the time when the Bible was done into English, can now only be read and understood figuratively. No one could work by the artificial illumination then possible.

Conceive, then, the joy with which returning spring was greeted—spring, that brought back light and fresh food and intercourse with the

world outside the rural parish. Mankind had travelled far from those prehistoric times of annual terror, when the ignorant savage saw the sun's light going out with the coming of winter, and so, with abject fear, passed the darkling months until the vernal solstice brought him hope again. No one in the Old England of two hundred and fifty years ago trembled lest the sun should not return at his appointed time; but when the sap rose and the birds began to sing again, and warmth and light had begun to replace the fogs and mists of winter, the hearts of all rejoiced.

May Day was then the great merrymaking festival, but the first coach that ventured along the roads, now beginning to set after the winter's rains, had a welcome of its own. At Sutton-on-Trent, on the Great North Road, the springtide custom of welcoming the early coaches was royally observed, and kept up for many years. No coach, during a whole week of jollity, was suffered to proceed through that jovial village without it halted and ate and drank as only Englishmen could then drink and eat. Guards, coachmen and passengers were freely feasted, willy-nilly. Young and old plied them with the good things, spread out upon a tray covered with a beautiful damask napkin, and heaped with plum-cakes, tartlets, gingerbread, and exquisite home-made bread and biscuits; while ale, currant and gooseberry wines, cherry brandy, and occasionally spirits, were eagerly pressed upon the strangers. Half a dozen damsels, all enchanting

young people, neatly clad, rather shy, but courteously importunate, plied the passengers.

Thoresby records a similar custom at Grantham, near by, on one of his journeys. Under date of May 4th, 1714, he says: "We dined at Grantham, and had the usual solemnity, being the first passage of the coach this season; the coachman and horses decked with ribbons and flowers, and the town music and young people in couples before us." The "town music" was what we should nowadays call the Town Band.

When such courtesies obtained along the roads the coachmen and guards would have been churlish not to have, in some prominently visible manner, done honour to the season. And, indeed, May Day and springtime decorations were features on most coaches. The coachman's whipstock was ornamented with gay ribbons and bunches of flowers, while the coachman himself wore a floral nosegay that rivalled a prize cabbage in size. The guard was no less remarkable a figure, and his horn was wreathed with the most lively display of blossoms. Festoons of flowers and sprays of evergreens so draped and covered the coach that the insides, peering out upon the festivities, very closely resembled those antic figures, the "Jacks-in-the-Green," that used on May Day to prance and make merry from the midst of an embowering canopy of foliage, even so late as thirty years ago, in London streets. The horses, too, bore their part. Their new harness and saddle-cloths, the rosettes and wreaths of laurel on their heads, smartened

them up so that even the animals themselves were conscious of the occasion, and bore themselves with becoming pride.

Those old customs are, as a matter of course, gone. Coaches no longer dash through the old "thoroughfare" villages; and when, with the advent of spring, the motorist appears upon the road, the villagers, rather than welcoming his appearance, curse him for the clouds of dust he leaves behind. Motor-cars, they tell us, are to repeople the old coaching-roads, whose prosperity is, through them, to return, and the picturesque old wayside inns, with their memories of the coaching age, are to once again experience the rush of business. It may be so, but no one will regret the fact more than the lover of Old England, who, in the re-peopling of the roads, sees their modernising inevitable, and the equally inevitable bringing "up to date" of those quaint, quiet, and comfortable hostelries so dear to the genuine tourist. It is true, they do not dine you elaborately—as your extravagant motorist complains—but life is not all chicken and champagne, and it will be a sorry day when the plain man, fleeing the gaudy glories of hotels at fashionable resorts, finds the unsophisticated inns of the countryside remodelled on the same plan. Already the picturesqueness of the old roads is threatened. They are, if you please, too hilly, too narrow, or not straight enough for that new tyrant of the highways, the owner of a high-powered motor-car, and plans have actually been

drawn up by irresponsible busybodies for straight and broad new tracks, or for the remodelling of the old roads on the same principle. Roadside trees and avenues keep the surface damp and muddy after rain, and so, as rubber-tyred cars are apt to skid and side-slip on mud, the same voices call for the abolition of wayside trees. Old England is in a parlous state, when these things can be advocated and no indignant protests rise.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

1610. Patent granted for an Edinburgh and Leith waggon-coach.
1648. Southampton weekly stage casually mentioned.
1657. Stage-coaches introduced: the London and Chester Stage.
1658. First Exeter Stage.
- „ „ York and Edinburgh Stage.
1661. „ Oxford Stage.
- „ Glass windows first used in carriages: the Duke of York's carriage.
1662. Only six stage-coaches said to have been existing.
1665. Norwich Stage first mentioned.
1667. Bath Flying Machine established.
- „ London and Oxford Coach, in 2 days, established.
1669. „ „ „ Flying Coach, in 1 day, established.
1673. Stages to York, Chester, and Exeter advertised.
1679. London and Birmingham Stage, by Banbury, mentioned.
1680. "Glass-coaches" mentioned.
1681. Stage-coaches become general: 119 in existence.
1706. London to York in 4 days.
- 1710 (about). Stage-coaches provided with glazed windows.
1730. "Baskets" or "rumble-tumbles" introduced about this period.
1734. Teams of horses changed every day, instead of coaches going to end of journey with same animals.
- „ Quick service advertised: Edinburgh to London in 9 days.

1739. According to Pennant, gentlemen who were active horsemen still rode, instead of going by coach.
1742. London to Oxford in 2 days.
- , Birmingham, by Oxford, in 3 days.
1751. , Dover in $1\frac{1}{2}$ days.
1753. Outsides carried on Shrewsbury Stage.
1754. London and Manchester Flying Coach in $4\frac{1}{2}$ days.
- .. Springs to coaches first mentioned: the Edinburgh Stage.
- .. London and Edinburgh in 10 days.
1758. London and Liverpool Flying Machine in 3 days.
1760. , Leeds Flying Coach advertised in 3 days: took 4.
1763. London and Edinburgh only once a month, and in 14 days.
1776. First duty on stage-coaches imposed.
1780. Stage-coaches become faster than postboys.
1782. Pennant describes contemporary travelling by light post-coaches as "rapid journeys in easy chaises, fit for the conveyance of the soft inhabitants of Sybaris."
1784. Mail-coach system established.
- 1800 (about). Fore and hind boots, framed to body of coach, become general.
- .. Coaches in general carry outside passengers.
1805. Springs under driving-box introduced.
1819. "Patent Safety" coaches come into frequent use, to reassure travelling public, alarmed by frequent accidents.
1824. Rise of the fast day-coaches: the Golden Age of coaching.
- .. Stockton and Darlington Railway opened: first beginnings of the railway era.
1830. Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened: coaching first seriously threatened.
1838. London and Birmingham Railway opened: first great blow to coaching; coaches taken off Holyhead Road as far as Birmingham.

1839. Eastern Counties Railway opened to Chelmsford.
1840. Great Western Railway opened to Reading.
,, London and Southampton Railway opened to Portsmouth : coaches taken off Portsmouth Road.
1841. Great Western Railway opened to Bath and Bristol : coaches taken off Bath Road.
,, Brighton Railway opened : coaching ends on Brighton Road.
1842. Last London and York Mail-coach.
1844. Great Western Railway opened to Exeter : last coaches taken off Exeter Road.
1845. Railways reach Norwich.
,, Eastern Counties Railway opened to Cambridge.
1846. Edinburgh and Berwick Railway opened.
1847. East Anglian Railway opened to King's Lynn.
1848. "Bedford Times." one of the last long-distance coaches withdrawn.
,, Eastern Counties Railway opened to Colchester.
,, Great Western Railway opened to Plymouth.
1849. Shrewsbury and Birmingham Railway opened.
1850. Chester and Holyhead Railway opened.
1874. Last of the mail-coaches : the Thurso and Wick Mail gives place to the Highland Railway.

INDEX

- Accidents, i. 206, 274, 281, 307, 310 ; ii. 28, 96-122
Allen, Ralph, Post Office reformer, i. 146
Amateur coachmen (for individuals, *see* Coaching Notabilities)
 " " penalty for allowing them to drive, i. 209
 " " rise of, i. 231
 " " incident on the road with, ii. 91-3
 " " originated about 1800. ii. 239
 " " account of the, ii. 239-59
- Balloon coaches, appear about 1785, i. 296
"Basket," the, described, i. 96, 99 ; miseries of travelling in, i. 101, 295
Baxendale, Joseph, ii. 127-43, 207
Besant, designer of mail-coaches, i. 178
Bonnor, Charles, i. 168, 171
"Booking," i. 320-23
 " -clerks, responsibilities of, i. 320
 " " described by Dickens, i. 322, 330
 " -offices, i. 320-23
 " " described by Dickens, i. 122, 330
Boonen, Wm., Queen Elizabeth's coachman, i. 5
Brighton, first coach to, 1756, i. 134 ; first Sunday coach to, 1792, i. 198
Buckingham, Earl of, sets up a carriage, i. 7
Bugles (*see* Key Bugles)
Byers, —, professional informer, i. 214-17
- Canals, ii. 130, 133
"Caravan," origin of word, ii. 128, 129
Carriages, introduction of, i. 2-13 ; become fashionable, i. 11
Carriers, the, i. 65 ; antiquity of, i. 103 ; account of, i. 103-45 ; restrictions on, 1622-29, i. 495 ; forbidden to travel on Sundays, 1627, i. 196
Cary, Robert, rides horseback to Edinburgh, 1603, i. 16
Coach and Harness Makers Company, founded 1677, i. 12
"Coach and six through Act of Parliament," origin of saying, i. 86

Coaches :—

Mail-coaches, general account of, i. 146-80 ; to be exempt from tolls, i. 156 ; Post Office officials resist introduction of, i. 157 ; established 1784, i. 158 ; originally diligences, or light post-coaches, i. 160 ; system extended 1785, i. 163 ; continually breaking down, i. 174 ; new type of, introduced, i. 178 ; Besant's patent coach, i. 178 : Besant's coach condemned by Matthew Boulton 1798, i. 179 ; always four-horsed, i. 180 ; coachmen of, subject to severe penalties for misdemeanours, i. 211 ; used for illegal sale of game, i. 254 ; for smuggling, i. 256 ; outside passengers of, limited to three, i. 258 ; bring early news, i. 260 ; cross-country, shabby, ii. 2 ; increased number of, injure roads, ii. 5 ; stage-coaches unable to compete with, ii. 5 ; exemption of from tolls injurious to Turnpike Trusts, ii. 4-9 ; paid toll in Ireland from 1798 ii. 9 ; exemption repealed as regards Scotland, 1813, ii. 9 ; tyrants of the road, ii. 10 ; exposed to dangers, ii. 10 ; pre-eminence of declines from 1824, on introduction of fast day-coaches, ii. 11 ; additional number of passengers permitted, ii. 12 ; mileage paid to contractors for, ii. 12-15 ; contractors disinclined to do business with Post Office, ii. 15 ; railways begin to supplant, 1830, ii. 16 ; procession of, on King's birthday, ii. 17-22 ; list of, starting from London 1837, ii. 23 ; the fastest, 1836, ii. 27 ; number of, 1838, ii. 27 ; West of England routes cut up by railways, ii. 36-9 ; horses sold off, ii. 39 ; last of the mails, ii. 40 ; described, ii. 40-47 ; Waude's mail-coach, 1830, ii. 43-7 ; go seven days a week, ii. 148 ; freedom of from attack, ii. 148 ; robberies of, frequent, ii. 149 ; attacked by lionsess, ii. 151 ; adventures of, in snow, ii. 152-5, 159-62, 166-9, in floods ii. 162-6, 169 ; West of England, started from Piccadilly, ii. 207.

Mail-coaches :—

Banff and Inverness, ii. 165
 Bath, ii. 22, 23
 Birmingham, ii. 23
 „ and Liverpool, ii. 169
 Brighton, ii. 23, 24, 101
 „ Day, ii. 313
 Bristol, established 1784, i. 158-60 ; ii. 1, 17, 22, 23, 149, 207
 Cambridge Auxiliary, ii. 215
 Canterbury and Deal, ii. 27
 Carlisle and Edinburgh, ii. 27
 „ „ Glasgow, ii. 23, 24, 27, 108
 Carmarthen and Pembroke, ii. 15, 215
 Cheltenham and Aberystwith, i. 264 ; ii. 119

Mail-coaches (*continued*) :—

- Chester, ii. 15, 23, 215
 Derby and Manchester, ii. 40
 Devonport (Quicksilver), i. 246, 264, 303 ; ii. 22, 23, 28, 31-6,
 39, 122, 182, 207, 227, 252, 295, 308, 312
 Dover, ii. 15, 23, 24, 150
 „ Foreign, ii. 215
 Edinburgh, ii. 23, 24, 39, 75, 295
 „ and Glasgow, ii. 166
 Exeter, New, i. 264
 „ ii. 22, 23, 28, 31, 35, 106, 151
 Falmouth, ii. 23, 31, 35
 Glasgow, i. 247 ; ii. 1-3
 Gloucester and Carmarthen, ii. 23
 „ ii. 22, 28, 215
 Halifax, ii. 23, 106
 Hastings, ii. 23, 24, 215, 237
 Holyhead, ii. 15, 23, 207, 315
 Hull, ii. 23
 Ipswich, ii. 150, 312
 Lancaster and Kirkby Stephen, ii. 152
 Leeds, ii. 23, 24
 Liverpool, ii. 23
 „ and Manchester, ii. 12
 „ and Preston, ii. 27
 Louth, ii. 23, 28, 106, 235
 Lynn and Wells, ii. 23, 235
 Manchester, ii. 23
 Norwich, by Newmarket, ii. 15, 23, 215
 Plymouth and Falmouth, ii. 314
 Poole, ii. 160
 Portsmouth, ii. 23, 24, 160
 Southampton, ii. 22, 23
 Stroud, ii. 22, 23
 Wick and Thurso, ii. 40
 Worcester, ii. 23, 215, 318
 Yarmouth, ii. 23, 24
 York, ii. 150.

Stage-coaches, first established 1657, i. 2 ; considered vulgar, i. 25 ; patent for Edinburgh and Leith waggon-coach granted, 1610, i. 56 ; said to have begun about 1640, i. 57 ; John Taylor travels by the Southampton coach, 1648, i. 58-60 ; Chester Stage, first regular stage-coach, established 1657, i. 60 ; Exeter, Okehampton, Plymouth, Newark, Darlington, Ferryhill, York, Durham, Edinburgh and Wakefield stages established 1658, i. 61 ; itinerary varied to suit

prospective travellers, i. 63; Oxford coach, 1661, i. 63; Preston, Lancashire, 1662, i. 63; horses went whole journey, i. 63; changed once a day, i. 63; Norwich coach, 1665, i. 64; lack of full information, about 1660-80, i. 64-74; early stages described by Taylor, the Water Poet, i. 65; described, i. 65-7, 82; first provided with glazed windows, about 1710, i. 67; agonies of travelling in, i. 63, 67, 72; Bath Flying Machine, 1667, i. 68; De Laune's *Present State of London*, 1681, contains first lists of, i. 77-9; general in 1681, i. 77; opposition to, dies down, i. 79; fares moderate, 1684, i. 79; winter still, in 1731, largely a season of no coaches, i. 82; easily outpaced by pedestrians, about 1750, i. 82-85; six horses and a postilion generally used, 1754-1783, i. 85, 86, 90; horses changed oftener than once a day, i. 87; consequent acceleration, i. 88; beginnings of competition and rivalry, i. 89; agreements between proprietors, i. 89; consequent deceleration of coaches, i. 90; Edinburgh stage a "glass machine on steel springs," 1754, i. 89; of 1750, described by Sir Walter Scott, i. 97; outside passengers first provided with seats, about 1800, i. 181; fore and hind boots introduced, about 1800, i. 181; contempt of insides for outsides, i. 181, 210; "Land Frigate," London and Portsmouth, i. 182; springs under driving-boxes introduced about 1805, i. 185; ii. 240; shorter stages adopted, about 1800, i. 186; travel at night, from about 1780, i. 186; ii. 66; speed increased, i. 189; duty levied, 1776, i. 205; duty increased 1783 and 1785, i. 206; accidents increase, i. 206; Gamon's Acts, regulating number of passengers, 1788-90, i. 206-9; severity of Acts of 1806 and 1811, regulating, i. 209-12; the law constantly broken, i. 212; rise and progress of the professional informers, i. 213-18; duties reduced, 1839, i. 218-20; provincial coaches despised, i. 245; first begin to be named, i. 282; opposition and rivalry of, i. 282-8; "machine" becomes a favourite term, about 1754, i. 286; introduction of "diligences," about 1776, i. 287; "diligences," originally fast, become slow, i. 288-92; Shillibeer's Brighton Diligence, i. 290-92; the Post-Coaches and Light Post-Coaches, a fast and exclusive type, i. 292-5; objectionable company in, i. 294; "Accommodation" coaches, slow and capacious, introduced about 1800, i. 295; generally acquire names from about 1780, i. 295; the principles and system of naming described, i. 295-317; the public alarmed by increasing accidents, 1810-20, i. 310; "patent safety," i. 309-16; Waude's coaches, ii. 16; fast day coaches begin, 1824, ii. 173-87; attain speed of eleven and twelve miles an hour, ii. 179, 185; Cobbett on, ii. 182;

gas-lighting of, proposed, ii. 186; Glasgow and Paisley coaches lit by gas 1827, ii. 186; increased comfort and elegance of, ii. 186; "short stages," the, ii. 187-93; threatened by railways, ii. 208; rivalry, 1830-36, ii. 215-17; threatened by steam-carriages, 1824-38, ii. 260-68; run off by railways, ii. 269-74; long survived on branch routes, ii. 281; ended generally 1848, ii. 292.

Stage-coaches (mentioned at length):—

Age, Brighton, ii. 247, 252

Amersham and Wendover stage, ii. 281

Bath Flying Machine, 1667, i. 68

Bedford Times, i. 2

Beehive, Manchester, ii. 162, 229-31

Birmingham Flying Coach, 1742, i. 92

„ Improved Flying Coach, 1758, i. 92

„ and Shrewsbury Long Coach, 1753, in 4 days, i. 95

„ stage, 1697, by Banbury, i. 77; in 2½ days, 1731, i. 80

Chesham stage, ii. 281

Chester stage, 1657, in 4 days, i. 60; in 5 days, i. 62; in 6 days, 1710, i. 73

Coburg, Brighton, ii. 97

„ Edinburgh and Perth, ii. 108

Comet, Brighton, established 1815, i. 305-8, 312

„ Southampton, ii. 207

“Confatharrat,” Norwich, 1695, i. 80, 282

Coronet, Brighton, ii. 251

Criterion, Brighton, ii. 105

Defiance, Exeter, ii. 235

„ Manchester, ii. 207, 228

Derby Dilly, the, i. 239

Duke of Beaufort, Brighton, ii. 101

Edinburgh stage, once a fortnight, 1658, i. 61; in 10 days summer, 12 winter, 1754, i. 89; once a month, in 12 days, 1763, i. 90

Emerald, Bristol, ii. 207

Estafette, Manchester, ii. 186

Everlasting, Wolverhampton and Worcester, i. 238-40

Exeter Fly, in 6 days, 1700, i. 80

„ Flying Stage, 1739, generally 6 days, i. 90

„ Fast Coach, 1752, every Monday, in 3½ days summer, 6 winter, i. 91

Exeter stage, in 4 days, 1658, i. 61; in 8 days summer, 10 winter 1673, i. 74

Expedition, Norwich, ii. 150

Fowler's Shrewsbury stage, 1753, in 3½ days, i. 95

Glasgow and Edinburgh stage, 1678, in 3 days, i. 76; 1743, i. 76

„ „ „ Caravan, 1749, in 2 days, i. 77

Stage-coaches (*continued*) :—

- Glasgow and Edinburgh Fly, 1759, in 1½ days, i. 77
 Gloucester Old Stage, ii. 240
 Greyhound, Birmingham, ii. 207
 Hull and York stage, 1678, i. 74
 Independent Tally-Ho, Birmingham, ii. 215
 Land Frigate, Portsmouth, i. 182
 Lark, Leicester and Nottingham, ii. 110
 Leeds Flying Coach, 1760, in 4 days, i. 93
 Lewes and Brighthelmstone Flying Machine, 1762, i. 283
 „ stage, i. 283
 Liverpool Flying Machine, 1758, in 3 days, i. 93
 Magnet, Cheltenham, ii. 207
 Maidenhead and Marlow Post-Coach, i. 294.
 Manchester Flying Coach, 1754, in 4½ days, i. 92
 Nelson, Newcastle-on-Tyne, i. 67
 Newcastle Flying Coach, 1734, in 9 days, i. 87
 Nimrod, Shrewsbury, ii. 215
 Norwich stage, 1665, i. 64
 Oxford Flying Coach, 1669, in 1 day, i. 69
 „ stage, 1661, in 2 days, i. 63, 68
 Peveril of the Peak, Manchester, ii. 107, 229, 237
 Potter, Manchester and Stafford, ii. 150
 Preston, Lancashire, stage, 1662, i. 63
 Prince of Wales, Birmingham and Shrewsbury, i. 185, 231; ii.
 240, 307
 Quicksilver, Brighton, ii. 102-5
 Red Rover, Brighton, ii. 311
 „ Liverpool, ii. 207
 „ Manchester, ii. 162, 229, 277
 Regent, Stamford, ii. 207
 Rocket, London and Portsmouth, ii. 320
 Rockingham, Leeds, ii. 81
 Safety, Cambridge, i. 241
 Salop Machine, the “original,” 1774, i. 98
 Shrewsbury Caravan, 1750, in 4 days, i. 119
 Sovereign, Patent Safety, Brighton, i. 311
 Stag, Shrewsbury, ii. 216
 Star, Cambridge, i. 241; ii. 257, 299
 Taglioni, Windsor, i. 316
 Tally-Ho, Birmingham, ii. 214, 237
 „ Plymouth and Falmouth, ii. 314
 Tantivy, Birmingham, i. 278, 317; ii. 185, 207, 237
 Telegraph, Cambridge, ii. 207, 299
 „ Exeter, i. 300-303; ii. 34, 39, 227, 295, 313
 „ Manchester, i. 300; ii. 185, 207, 227-9

Stage-coaches (*continued*):—

- Telegraph, Southampton, ii. 306
 - „ Norwich, by Newmarket, ii. 15, 150
 - Times, Bedford, i. 2 : ii. 217
 - „ Brighton and Southampton, ii. 113
 - „ Cambridge, i. 241
 - True Blue, Leeds and Wakefield, ii. 97
 - Umpire, Liverpool, ii. 217
 - Union, King's Lynn, i. 250 ; ii. 300, 302-5
 - Wakefield stage, 1658, in 4 days, i. 61
 - Warwick „ 1694, once a week, in 2 days, i. 80
 - Wellington, Newcastle-on-Tyne, ii. 66-95
 - Wonder, Shrewsbury, ii. 49, 185, 215, 227, 306
 - Worcester Old Fly, ii. 241
 - York stage, 1658, in 4 days, i. 61 ; 1673, i. 74 ; 1706, i. 75
- Coaching Age, began 1657, i. 2, 60 ; end of, ii. 260-91 : long survived
on branch routes, ii. 281 ; ended generally by 1848, ii. 292

Coaching Notabilities :—

- Barrymores, Earls of, ii. 241
 - Cotton, Sir St. Vincent, ii. 246-51, 257
 - Jones, C. Tyrwhitt, ii. 251
 - Kenyon, Hon. Thomas, ii. 233
 - Lade, Sir John, ii. 241
 - Lennox, Lord William, i. 278, 347
 - Mellish, Colonel, ii. 241, 245
 - Mytton, John, ii. 245
 - Peyton, Sir Henry, ii. 233
 - Stevenson, Henry, ii. 247, 251-4
 - Warburton, R. E. E., i. 317-19
 - Warde, John, i. 185, 231, 317 ; ii. 240
 - Worcester, Marquis of (afterwards 7th Duke of Beaufort), ii. 101, 251
- Coachmen, forbidden to allow amateurs to drive, i. 209 ; penalties
on, for misdemeanours, i. 209-11 ; the early, i. 221-30 ; the later,
i. 231-48 ; the “ flash men,” i. 235 ; denounced violently by
Borrow, i. 235-8 ; described, ii. 72-4, 83-7, 91-4 ; ii. 174-7 ;
“ shoulder ” fares and “ swallow ” passengers, ii. 200-203 ; con-
tempt of, for railways, 1833-37, ii. 268 ; lose their occupation,
ii. 278-81 : what became of the, ii. 292-321

Coachmen :—

- Abingdon, John, ii. 318
- Bailey, Jack, i. 231 ; ii. 240
- Brewer, Sampson, ii. 315
- Carter, Philip, ii. 311
- Clements, Wm., ii. 311
- Cracknell, E., i. 318 ; ii. 185

Coachmen (*continued*):—

- Creery, Jack, ii. 152
 Cross, Thomas, i. 238 ; ii. 299-306
 Emmens, Joe, i. 228
 Hayward, Sam, ii. 306
 Holmes, Charles, ii. 316
 Howse, Jerry, ii. 186
 Jobson, John, ii. 307
 Layfield, Tom, ii. 91
 Marsh, Matthew, ii. 308
 Parker, —, ii. 319
 Peers, Jack, ii. 306
 Pickett, A., i. 315 ; ii. 306
 Pointer, Robert, ii. 320
 Salisbury, Harry, ii. 185
 Salter, Wm., ii. 316
 Simpson, Harry, ii. 308
 Thorogood, John, i. 238
 Vaughan, Dick, ii. 299
 Vickers, Dick, ii. 315
 Walton, Jo, i. 241 ; ii. 257, 299
 Ward, Charles, i. 238 ; ii. 120, 311-15
 „ Harry, i. 238, 246 ; ii. 311
 Williams, Bill, ii. 257-9
 Wilson, John, i. 238-40
 „ William, i. 240

Coachmen killed:—

- Aiken, —, ii. 106
 Austin, —, ii. 106
 Burnett, —, ii. 107
 Cherry, —, ii. 116
 Crouch, Thomas, ii. 107
 Draing, James, ii. 115
 Eyles, —, ii. 116
 Fleet, —, ii. 101
 Frisby, —, ii. 110
 Roberts, Thomas, ii. 106
 Skinner, Henry, ii. 317
 Upfold, William, ii. 113
 Vaughan, Dick, ii. 299
 Walker, Joseph, ii. 98
 Wilkes, John, ii. 318

Coach-proprietors, alarmed by establishment of mail coaches, 1784, i. 160 ; provide driving-boxes with springs, 1805, i. 185 ; petition against Bill regulating stage-coaches, 1788, i. 208 ; liabilities of, i. 208-10 ; prosecuted and fined, i. 216 ; relief of, at close of

coaching age, by reduction of duties, i. 218-20; begin to name their coaches, i. 282; indisposed to adopt "safety" coaches, 1805, i. 309; obliged by public opinion to do so, 1819, i. 311-16; hazardous business of, from 1824, ii. 173; cut fares in competition, 1834, ii. 187; bitter rivalry among, i. 283, ii. 215-18; of short stages, ii. 187; business of, described, ii. 194-238; spirited struggle of, against railways, ii. 273-8; misled by irresponsible newspaper talk, ii. 274-7

Coach-proprietors:—

- Alexander, Israel, ii. 102
 Batchelor, James, of Lewes, i. 283-5
 Brawne, S., i. 283
 Bretherton, of Liverpool, ii. 238
 Capps, Thomas Ward, of Brighton, ii. 253
 Carter, of Shrewsbury, i. 109
 Chaplin, William, of the "Swan with Two Necks," Lad Lane, ii. 34, 141, 173-5, 195-210, 212, 228, 238, 312
 Chaplin, William Augustus, ii. 210
 Chaplin & Horne, ii. 209
 Cooper, Thomas, of Thatcham, ii. 173
 Costar & Waddell, of Oxford, ii. 186
 Cripps, William, of Brighton, ii. 251
 Cross, John, of the "Golden Cross," Charing Cross, ii. 300
 Fagg, Thomas, of the "Bell and Crown," Holborn, ii. 235
 Gilbert, William, of the "Blossoms" Inn, Lawrence Lane, ii. 237
 Goodman, S., of Brighton, ii. 102-5
 Grey, Robert, of the "Bolt-in-Tun," Fleet Street, ii. 237
 Hearn, Joseph, of the "King's Arms," Snow Hill, ii. 237
 Hine, —, of Brighton, ii. 181
 Horne, Benjamin Worthy, of the "Golden Cross," Charing Cross, ii. 15, 141, 208, 210-25
 Horne, Henry, ii. 223
 „ William, ii. 210-13, 215
 Jobson, J., of Shrewsbury, ii. 215, 307
 Mountain, Mrs. Sarah Ann, of the "Saracen's Head," Snow Hill, ii. 214, 236
 Nelson, Mrs. Ann, of the "Bull" Inn, Whitechapel, i. 300; ii. 227, 232-5, 236; ii. 313, 343
 Nelson, John, ii. 235
 „ Robert, of the "Belle Sauvage," Ludgate Hill, ii. 215, 229-35
 Roberts, —, of the "White Horse," Fetter Lane, ii. 213
 Rothwell, Nicholas, of Warwick, i. 80-85
 Sherman, Edward, of the "Bull and Mouth," St. Martin's-le-Grand, ii. 186, 207, 215, 216, 217, 226-8, 229, 231, 273-8
 Shillibeer, George, i. 290-92

Coach-proprietors (*continued*) :—

- Taylor, Isaac, of Shrewsbury, ii. 215, 216, 307
 Teather, Edward, of Carlisle, ii. 238
 Tubb, J., i. 283-5
 Waddell, of Birmingham, ii. 238
 Ward, Charles, ii. 313-15
 Waterhouse, William, of the "Swan with Two Necks," Lad Lane, ii. 196
 Webb, Frederic, of Bolton, ii. 238
 Wetherald, J. & Co., of Manchester, ii. 238, 278
 Whitchurch, Best & Wilkins, of Brighton, i. 312-15
 Willans, Wm., of the "Bull and Mouth," St. Martin's-le-Grand, ii. 227
 Worcester, Marquis of (afterwards 7th Duke of Beaufort), ii. 101
- Coach travelling, on the roof, described by Moritz, 1782, i. 99-102; by mail, 1798, described by Boulton, i. 179; passengers booked in advance, i. 321; miseries of early morning, i. 325-32; about 1750, described in *Roderick Random*, i. 333; courtesies to ladies, 1714, i. 335; romance of, i. 336; severe test of a gentleman, i. 337; humours of coach-dinners, i. 337-47; coach-breakfasts, i. 347-51; social gulf between inside and outside passengers, i. 351; described by De Quincey, i. 351-3; humour in, i. 353; adventures described, i. 355; savage idea of humour, i. 356-8; practical joking, i. 357; outside the most desirable place in summer, ii. 67; in 1772, ii. 48-65; in 1830, ii. 66-95; miseries of, in winter, ii. 155-8, 169
- "Comet" coaches, begin about 1811, i. 304-8
- Commercial travellers, known successively as "riders," "bagmen," "travellers," "commercial gentlemen," "ambassadors of commerce," and "representatives," i. 56; come into existence about 1730, i. 118; adventure of a, ii. 328
- "Common stage-waggons," a term specified by General Turupike Act of 1766, i. 204
- Cornets-à-piston, popular with guards, i. 280
- Cresset, John, denounces stage-coaches, 1662, i. 26, 70-74
- Darwin, Dr. Erasmus, prophesies railways and balloons, ii. 260, 282
- "Derby Dilly," the, i. 289
- Dickens, Charles, on coach booking-offices, i. 322; on miseries of early morning travelling, i. 325-32; on coaching prints, ii. 110; Christmas stories, ii. 162; at the "Bull," Whitechapel, ii. 234
- Diligences, a species of Light Post-Coach, i. 169, 287-92; originally fast, and carried three inside passengers only, i. 287; became slow, i. 288-90; Shillibeer's Brighton Diligence, i. 290-92
- "Double Horse," the, i. 53

- Eliot, George, foreshadows tube railways, ii. 282-5
- Elizabeth, Queen, suffers from riding in carriage, i. 5 ; prefers riding horseback, i. 5
- Fares, by stage-coach, a shilling for every five miles, 1684, i. 79 ; London and Bath, £1 5s., 1667, i. 69 ; Bath Flying Machine, 3*d.* a mile, 1667, i. 69 ; London and Oxford, 12s., 1669, i. 71 ; 10s., 1671, i. 71 ; Liverpool Flying Machine, about 2½*d.* a mile, 1758, i. 93 ; reduced in competition on Brighton Road, 1762, i. 284 ; in competition with railways, 1838, ii. 273 ; Shrewsbury and London Long Coach, 18s., 1753, i. 95 ; Shrewsbury and London Caravan, 15s., 1750, i. 119 ; Shrewsbury and London Stage, inside, £1 1s., 1753, i. 119 ; Shrewsbury and London Machine, inside, 30s., 1764, i. 120 ; Newcastle and London, 1772, ii. 63 ; 1830, ii. 67, 95 ; reduced all round, 1834, ii. 187
- Fares, Short stages, ii. 189
 „ Waggon, from ½*d.* to 1*d.* a mile, i. 69, 139 ; ½*d.* a mile, or 1s. a day, i. 120, 131
- Floods, ii. 165-70.
- Fly Boats, i. 140 ; ii. 130
 „ Vans, London and Falmouth, 1820, i. 136-9
- “Flying Coach,” the first, 1669, i. 69
- “Flying Machines,” the first, 1667, i. 68 ; described, i. 68-93, 283-5
- Flying Stage-waggon, London and Shrewsbury, in 5 days, 1750, i. 118
- Gamon, Sir Richard, legislates on coaching, i. 206-8
- Gay, John, the Poet, his *Journey to Exeter*, 1715, i. 28-33
- Goods, carriage of, by pack-horses, i. 106-111 ; ii. 124 ; by sledges, called “Truckamucks,” i. 107 ; pack-horses partly replaced by waggons about 1730, i. 117 ; cost of carriage, 1750, i. 135 ; by road and canal, about 1830, i. 140 ; carrying firms, ii. 123-43, 207-10.
- Guards, generally, “shoulder” fares and “swallow” passengers, ii. 200-203.
- Guards of mails, not to fire off blunderbusses unnecessarily, i. 209 ; servants of General Post Office, i. 249 ; gross excesses of early, i. 250-52 ; Post Office responsible for excesses, i. 251 ; how armed and equipped, i. 251-60 ; extravagant behaviour restricted, i. 252 ; appointments eagerly sought, i. 252 ; salary small, 10s. 6*d.* weekly, i. 253 ; “tips” render appointments valuable, i. 253 ; illegal purveyors of game, i. 254 ; trusted and confidential messengers, i. 255 ; as smugglers, i. 256 ; bravery of, and devotion to duty, i. 256 ; number of, i. 256 ; responsibilities of, i. 258 ; purveyors of news, i. 259 ; their duties, i. 261 ; instructions to, i. 262 ; prosperity of, i. 262 ; position poor on cross-country mails,

- i. 263 ; salaries raised, 1842, i. 263 ; forbidden to play key-bugle, i. 280 ; devoted to duty, ii. 160 ; rashness of, ii. 165
- Guards of mails :—
- Couldery, —, i. 265 ; ii. 120
- Kent, Luke, ii. 319
- Murrell, "Cocky," i. 271
- Nobbs, Moses J., i. 264-71 : ii. 119
- Guards of stage-coaches, i. 272-81 ; stages not always provided with, i. 272 ; versatile accomplishments of, i. 273 ; annual festivities of, i. 275-8 ; snowbound at Dunchurch, ii. 162
- Guards of stage-coaches :—
- Faulkner, Francis, ii. 320
- Goodwin, Jack, ii. 162
- Hadley, Robert, i. 274, 276
- Lord, Joe, ii. 152
- Russell, Thomas, i. 281
- Young, George, i. 273
- Guide-posts obligatory, 1690, i. 112
- Gurney, Sir Goldsworthy, inventor of steam-carriages, ii. 261-5, 285
- Hackney coaches, denounced by Taylor, i. 9 ; established 1605, i. 9-13
- "Hammercloth," derivation of the term, i. 68, 97
- Hancock, Walter, inventor of steam-carriages, ii. 261, 264-8, 285
- Hazlett, Robert, highwayman, ii. 53
- Highwaymen, the, i. 85, 116, 120-23, 157, 186, 332-5 ; ii. 53, 59-61, 144-50, 326, 327-9.
- Hobson, Thomas, the Cambridge carrier, i. 65, 103-5, 205 ; ii. 124
- Hoby, Sir Thos., sets up a carriage, 1566, i. 4
- Horsemen, the, i. 14-56
- Horses, generally six to a coach until about 1783-90, i. 85, 86, 90 ; usually same horses from beginning to end of journey until 1734, i. 63, 87 ; the "Double Horse," i. 53 ; "parliamentary horse," i. 218 ; fast coaches wear horses out quickly, 1824, ii. 173 ; average price paid for, 1824, ii. 176 ; system of working improved, 1824, ii. 176 ; bad-tempered, bought cheap, ii. 177
- Informers, i. 213-18
- Inns (mentioned at length) :—
- Bell and Crown, Holborn, ii. 235
- Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, i. 323, 324 ; ii. 229, 237
- Blossoms, Lawrence Lane, ii. 185, 229, 237
- Boar and Castle, Oxford Street, ii. 189
- Bolt-in-Tun, Fleet Street, ii. 215, 237
- Bull, Whitechapel, i. 324 ; ii. 227, 232-5, 343
- Bull and Mouth, St. Martin's-le-Grand, i. 323, 324 ; ii. 67, 68, 147, 178, 214, 215, 226, 231, 273, 277

Inns (*continued*):—

- Four Crosses, Willoughby, i. 46
- George, Huntingdon, ii. 74
- Golden Cross, Charing Cross, i. 322, 323, 324, 329; ii. 210, 213, 214
- Goose and Gridiron, St. Paul's Churchyard, ii. 189, 296
- Green Man and Still, Oxford Street, ii. 190
- Hardwicke Arms, Arrington Bridge, ii. 73
- King's Arms, Snow Hill, ii. 237
- Lion, Shrewsbury, ii. 215
- Old Bell, Holborn, ii. 190, 282
- Pelican, Speenhamland, ii. 340, 343
- Saracen's Head, Snow Hill, i. 324; ii. 67, 214, 236
- Swan with Two Necks, Lud Lane, i. 323, 324; ii. 178, 195-9, 204, 228
- Talbot, Shrewsbury, ii. 215
- Three Tuns, Durham, ii. 340
- Wheatsheaf, Rushyford Bridge, ii. 94
- Winterslow Hut, ii. 151

"Journey," original meaning of word, i. 107

Key-bugles, popular with guards, i. 279-81

Legislation, i. 194-220

Long coaches (an intermediate class of vehicle, between stage-coaches and waggons), i. 95, 119, 210, 286

Long Coach, Birmingham and Shrewsbury, 1753, 3½ days to London, i. 119

"Machines" introduced 1667, i. 68; the term in general use about 1740, i. 69, 120, 282; a favourite term, i. 286

Mail-coaches—*see* "Coaches: Mail-coaches"

Mary, Queen, her State Coach, 1553, i. 3

Matthews' Patent Safety Coach, i. 312

Milton, Rev. W., inventor of Patent Safety Coach, 1805, i. 309; ii. 96

Motor-cars, early (1823-38), ii. 260-68; modern, ii. 285-9, 347

Northumberland, Earl of, sets up a carriage, 1619, i. 8

Nunn, James, buyer of horses for Chaplin, ii. 204-7

Old-time travellers:—

Brome, Rev. —, tour of, 1700, ii. 333

Calderwood, Mrs., of Polton and Coltness, 1756, ii. 334

Cary, Robert, rides from London to Edinburgh, 1603, i. 16

Charles VI., Emperor, visits Petworth, ii. 332

Clarendon, Henry, Earl of, travels from Chester to Holyhead, 1685, i. 21

Cobbett, Richard, rides horseback, i. 55; on coaches, ii. 181

Old-time travellers (*continued*):—

- Denmark, Prince George of, visits Petworth, ii. 332
- De Quincey, Thomas, on contempt of inside passengers for outsides, i. 210, 351-3 : prefers outside of coaches, ii. 67
- Dugdale, Sir William, mentions Birmingham coach of 1697, i. 77
- Fiennes, Celia, in Lancashire, 1691, surprised at finding sign-posts, i. 115
- Gay, John (the poet) *A Journey to Exeter*, 1715, i. 28-33
- Hawker, Col., on travelling in 1812, i. 245 ; on cost of journey, London to Glasgow, 1812, ii. 1-3, 4 ; on " Bull and Mouth " inn, 1812, ii. 227
- Johnson, Dr., i. 52-3
- Macready, William C. (the actor), on incredibly slow journey, Liverpool to London, 1811, i. 294
- Moritz, Rev. C. H., on miseries of outside passengers, 1782, i. 98-102
- Murray, Rev. James, describes a journey from Newcastle-on-Tyne to London, 1772, ii. 48-65
- Parker, Edward, on miseries of coach journey from Preston, Lancashire, 1662, i. 25-63
- Pepys, Samuel, often loses the road, i. 112
- Somerset, Dukes of, and Petworth, ii. 332
- Sopwith, Thomas, on discontinuance of York Mail, ii. 39
- Sorbière, Samuel de, on waggoners, 1663, i. 127
- Swift, Jonathan, Dean, his couplets for inn signs on Penmaenmawr, i. 21 ; on horseback journey, Chester to London, 1710, i. 33, 73 ; on journey London to Holyhead and Dublin, 1726, i. 33 ; diary of journey, London to Holyhead, 1727, i. 34-47 ; epigram at Willoughby, i. 46 ; travels by stage-waggon, i. 132 ; on travelling, ii. 330
- Taylor, John (the " Water Poet "), travels to Southampton, 1648, i. 58-60.
- Thoresby, Ralph, travels by York stage to London, 1683, i. 27, 73 ; finds the Hull to York stage discontinued for winter season, 1678, i. 74 ; going horseback, often misses his way, i. 112 ; describes custom of treating lady passengers in coaches, 1714, i. 335 ; on spring festivities, 1714, ii. 346
- Wesley, John, generally travelled horseback, i. 47 ; describes his adventures, i. 47-52 ; finds unpleasant company in a coach, i. 293
- Omnibuses, displace " short stages," ii. 193 ; " Wellington," Stratford and Westbourne Grove, ii. 235 ; of Richmond Conveyance Co., ii. 296.
- Outside passengers first heard of, and probable origin of carrying, i. 95 ; miseries of, i. 98-102 ; first provided with seats, i. 181 ; treated with contempt by inside passengers, i. 210, 351-3 ; ii. 181

- Pack-horses, i. 106-9, 111, 118; partly replaced by waggons about 1730, i. 117; pack-horse trains, ii. 124
- Palmer, John, Post Office reformer, account of, i. 148-80 (Appendix, Vol. I., p. 359); proposes a service of mail-coaches, i. 155; plan for, matured 1782, i. 156; establishes first mail-coach, 1784, i. 158; proposes to extend system to France, i. 163; appointed Comptroller-General 1786, i. 164; contentions with Postmasters-General, i. 165-72; his character, i. 166; betrayed by Bonnor, i. 168; dismissed, i. 172; grant to, i. 173; death of, i. 174; ancestry of, Appendix, Vol. I., p. 359; descendants, 359
- “Parliamentary Horse,” the, i. 218
- “Patent Safety” coaches, i. 309-16; ii. 109
- Pepys, Samuel, sets up a carriage, 1668, i. 11; in travelling, often loses the road, i. 112
- “Pickaxe” team, *i.e.* three horses, ii. 270
- Pickford & Co., i. 139; ii. 123-43, 208
- ” Matthew, ii. 125-7
- ” Thomas, ii. 125-7
- Poor people, how they travelled, i. 115, 131-3, 139; find it cheaper to go by rail, i. 144
- Postboys, *i.e.* mail-carriers, i. 146, 152; went toll-free, ii. 5
- Postes, Master of the, i. 14
- Post-horses, State monopoly of, i. 14-23; monopoly abolished, 1780, i. 23; mileage charges for, i. 15; increased, i. 18
- Postmaster-General, office of created, 1657, i. 18
- Postmasters, *i.e.* keepers of post-horses, i. 15-18, 147
- “Post Office of England” created, 1657, i. 17; re-established, 1660, i. 22
- Post Office, General, i. 14-19, 20, 22-4, 46-180; declines Hancock’s offer to convey mails by steam-carriage, ii. 268
- Railways :—
- Mails first carried by, 1830, ii. 16; authorised to convey mails, 1838, ii. 16; run York coaches off road, 1840, ii. 39; run waggons off, ii. 138; threaten coaching, ii. 208; projected railways criticised, 1838, ii. 209; ruin the early steam-carriages, ii. 268; ridiculed, 1837, ii. 268; cut up the coach routes, ii. 270-74; bad service of trains, 1838, ii. 274; insolence of officials, ii. 274-7; public dissatisfaction with, 1838, ii. 274-7; tube railways foreshadowed by George Eliot, ii. 282-5
- Grand Junction, ii. 141, 274
- Highland, ii. 40
- Liverpool and Manchester, ii. 16, 96, 138
- London and Birmingham (now London and North-Western), ii. 141, 208, 222-5, 273, 278

Railways (*continued*):—

London and Manchester, ii. 16, 96, 138

„ „ Southampton (now London and South-Western), ii.
17, 36, 209, 299

Metropolitan extended to Aylesbury 1892, ii. 281

North British, ii. 40

“Ride and Tie,” custom of, i. 54

Rippon, Walter, carriage-maker to Queen Mary, i. 4

Roads, bad state of, 1568, i. 5; dreadful condition in North Wales in eighteenth century, i. 20-22; Exeter Road described in 1752 as “dreadful,” i. 91; first General Highway Act, 1555, i. 106; mere tracks and unenclosed, 1739, i. 111; not safe for solitary travellers, i. 115; gradually improve from 1700, i. 117; growth of heavy traffic cuts them up, i. 123; ignorance of road-surveyors, i. 123; legislation to protect, 1760, i. 123-6; 1622-29, 194-6; 1752, i. 199-202; General Turnpike Act, 1766, i. 202-5; improve generally, ii. 3; shocking state of, between Carlisle and Glasgow, 1812, ii. 4; wear and tear of, by mails, ii. 4-9; and early steam-carriages, ii. 262; vulgarised by modern “improvements,” ii. 326; terrible state of, in Sussex, ii. 332; picturesqueness of, threatened by coming changes, ii. 347

Robberies from coaches, ii. 144-50

“Rumble-tumble,” i. 96, 97, 99; miseries of travelling in the, i. 101, 139

Rutland, Earl of, sets up a carriage, 1555

Shillibeer, George, his “Brighton Diligence,” i. 290-92; his omnibuses, ii. 193

Short stages, the, ii. 188-93

“Short Tommy,” the, ii. 175

“Shouldering,” *i.e.* stealing, fares, ii. 200-203

Sign-posts obligatory, 1690, i. 112

Silver, Anthony, carriage-maker to Queen Mary, i. 3

Smollett, Tobias, i. 108, 110; on travelling in 1748, i. 115-17, 334

Snowstorms, i. 261, 264-9; ii. 137, 157, 159-62, 166-9

Stage-coaches—*see* “Coaches: stage-coaches”

Stage-waggons, established about 1500, i. 2: *see* “Waggons”

Steam-carriages, 1823-38, ii. 217, 260-68

Sunday, a day of rest, i. 29, 90

„ Trading Acts, i. 196-9; ii. 148

“Swallowing,” *i.e.* stealing, fares, ii. 200-203

Talbot, the old English hound, i. 109

“Tantivy,” meaning of the word, ii. 185

“Tantivy Trot,” coaching song, ii. 185

Telegraph coaches established, from about 1781, i. 300-303

- Telegraph springs introduced, ii. 228
 "Tipping," origin and progress of, i. 228-30 ; of mail-guards, i. 253, 262 ; forbidden, i. 263 ; of coachmen, i. 345 ; ii. 1
Tom Brown's Schooldays, i. 347
 "Travel," origin of the word, i. 107
 "Truckamuck," a kind of sledge, i. 107
 Turnpike Acts, growth of, 1700-1770, i. 117 ; penalise narrow and encourage broad wheels, i. 124-6, 202-205 ; General Turnpike Act, 1766, i. 202-205
 Turnpike keepers, i. 24, 208, 212 ; prosecuted by informers, i. 217 ; sleepy, ii. 79
 Turnpike roads, not in favour with waggons, i. 126
 Turnpike tolls, i. 124 ; levied on waggons, i. 200-205 ; doubled on Sundays about 1780, ii. 147 ; heavy discriminatory charges against steam-carriages, ii. 262, 263
 Turnpike Trusts, grievances of, against Post Office, ii. 4-9 ; action of, against steam-carriages, ii. 262, 263

 " Unicorn " team, *i.e.* three horses, ii. 270

 Van, origin of the name, ii. 129
 Van proprietors :—
 Chaplin & Horne, ii. 209, 229
 Pickford & Co., i. 123-43
 Russell & Co., i. 136-9
 Van proprietors prosecuted for technical offences, i. 216
 Vidler & Parratt, mail-coach manufacturers, i. 178 ; ii. 17, 18, 44

 Waggons, i. 103-45 ; established about 1500, i. 103 ; increase in number and weight about 1760, i. 123 ; legislation directed against 1766, i. 124-6, 202-204 ; only disappear so late as 1860, i. 144 ; four-wheeled waggons forbidden 1622, i. 194 ; loads over 20 cwt. forbidden 1622, i. 195 ; restrictions on teams, i. 195-200 ; on loads, i. 200
 Waggons, character of the, i. 126-31 ; forbidden to ride on their waggons, i. 205 ; preyed upon by informers, i. 212-14
 Waude, —, coach-builder, ii. 16, 43-7, 228
 Weller, Tony, as typical coachman, i. 221
 Witherings, Thomas, Master of the Postes, i. 17

 Yard-porters, status of, ii. 178
 York, James, Duke of, sets up a " glass coach," 1661, i. 11, 66

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