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Title: Coaches and Coaching

Author: Leigh Hunt
Illustrator: Paul Hardy

Release date: June 15, 2013 [EBook #42948]

Language: English

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK COACHES AND COACHING ***





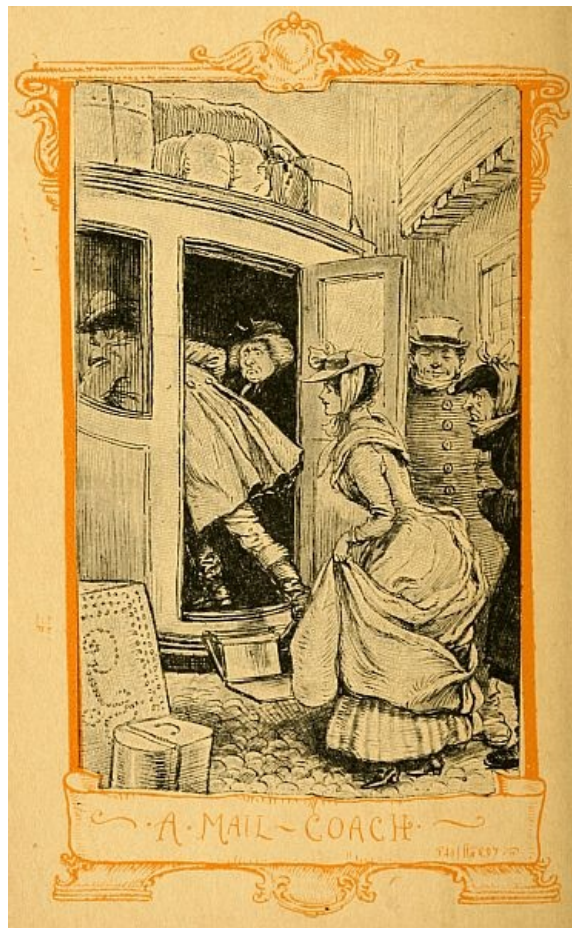
COACHES AND COACHING

BOOK love, my friends, is your pass to the greatest, the purest, and the most perfect pleasure that God has prepared for His creatures. It lasts when all other pleasures fade. It will support you when all other recreations are gone. It will last you until your death. It will make your hours pleasant to you as long as you live.

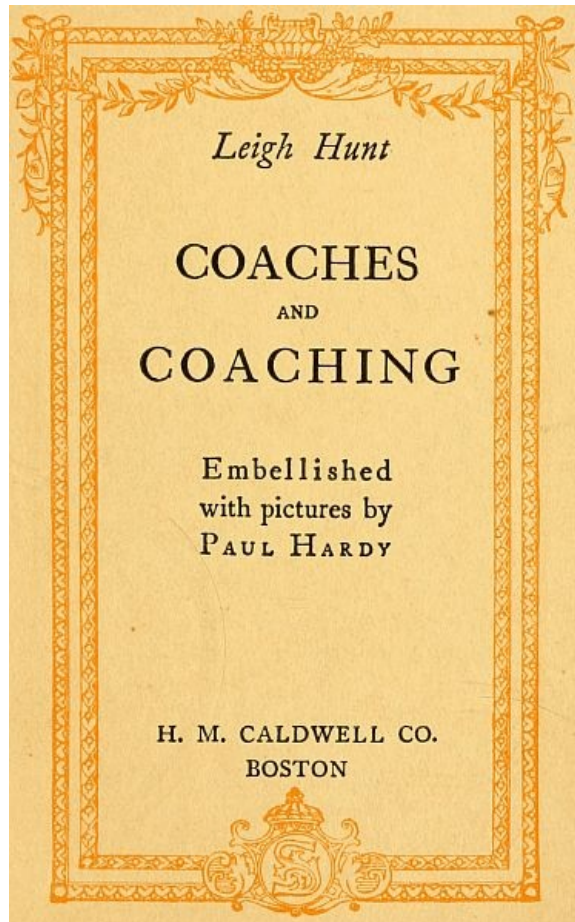
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

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Leigh Hunt

**COACHES
AND COACHING**

Embellished
with pictures by
PAUL HARDY

H. M. CALDWELL CO.
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ACCORDING to the opinion commonly entertained respecting an author's want of riches, it may be allowed us to say that we retain from childhood a considerable notion of "a ride in a coach." Nor do we hesitate to confess, that by coach we especially mean a hired one; from the equivocal dignity of the post-chaise, down to that despised old castaway, the hackney.

It is true that the carriage, as it is indifferently called (as if nothing less genteel could carry any one), is a more decided thing than the chaise; it may be swifter even than the mail, leaves the stage at a still greater distance in every respect, and (forgetting what it may come to itself) darts by the poor old lumbering hackney with immeasurable contempt.

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It rolls with a prouder ease than any other vehicle. It is full of cushions and comfort; elegantly coloured inside and out; rich, yet neat; light and rapid, yet substantial. The horses seem proud to draw it. The fat and fair-wigged coachman "lends his sounding lash," his arm only in action and that but little, his body well set with its own weight.

The footman, in the pride of his nonchalance, holding by the straps behind, and glancing down sideways betwixt his cocked-hat and neckcloth, stands swinging from east to west upon his springy toes.

The horses rush along amidst their glancing harness. Spotted dogs leap about them, barking with a princely superfluity of noise. The hammer-cloth trembles through all its fringe. The paint flashes in the sun.

We, contemptuous of everything less convenient, bow backwards and forwards with a certain indifferent air of gentility, infinitely predominant.

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Suddenly, with a happy mixture of turbulence and truth, the carriage dashes up by the curbstone to the very point desired, and stops with a lordly wilfulness of decision. The coachman looks as if nothing had happened. The footman is down in an instant; the knocker reverberates into the farthest corner of the house; doors, both carriage and house, are open;—we descend, casting a matter-of-course eye at the bystanders; and the moment we touch the pavement, the vehicle, as if conscious of what it has carried, and relieved from the weight of our importance, recovers from its sidelong inclination with a jerk, tossing and panting, as it were, for very breath, like the proud heads of the horses.

All this, it must be owned, is very pretty; but it is also gouty and superfluous. It is too convenient,—too exacting,—too exclusive. We must get too much for it, and lose too much by it. Its plenty, as Ovid says, makes us poor. We neither have it in the republic of letters, nor would desire it in any less jacobinical state. Horses, as many as you please, provided men have enough to eat; hired coaches, a reasonable number:—but health and good-humour at all events.

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Gigs and curricles are things less objectionable, because they cannot be so relied upon as substitutes for exercise. Our taste in them, we must confess, is not genuine. How shall we own it? We like to be driven, instead of drive;—to read or look about us, instead of keeping watch on a horse's head. We have no relish even for vehicles of this description that are not safe. Danger is a good thing for giving a fillip to a man's ideas; but even danger, to us, must come recommended by something useful. We have no ambition to have TANDEM written on our tombstone.

The prettiest of these vehicles is the curricle, which is also the safest. There is something worth looking at in the pair of horses, with that sparkling pole of steel laid across them. It is like a bar of music, comprising their harmonious course.

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But to us, even gigs are but a sort of unsuccessful run at gentility. The driver, to all intents and purposes, had better be on the horse. Horseback is the noblest way of being carried in the world. It is cheaper than any other mode of riding; it is common to all ranks; and it is manly, graceful, and healthy. The handsomest mixture of danger with dignity, in the shape of a carriage, was the tall phaeton with its yellow wings. We remember looking up to it with respect in our childhood, partly for its loftiness, partly for its name, and partly for the show it makes in the prints to novels of that period. The most gallant figure which modern driving ever cut was in the person of a late Duke of Hamilton; of whom we have read or heard somewhere, that he used to dash round the streets of Rome, with his horses panting, and his hounds barking about his phaeton, to the equal fright and admiration of the Masters of the World, who were accustomed to witness nothing higher than a lumbering old coach, or a cardinal on a mule.

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A post-chaise involves the idea of travelling, which in the company of those we love is home in motion. The smooth running along the road, the fresh air, the variety of scene, the leafy roads, the bursting prospects, the clatter through a town, the gaping gaze of a village, the hearty appetite, the leisure (your chaise waiting only upon your own movements), even the little contradictions to home-comfort, and the expedients upon which they set us, all put the animal spirits at work, and throw a novelty over the road of life.

If anything could grind us young again, it would be the wheels of a post-chaise. The only monotonous sight is the perpetual up-and-down movement of the postillion, who, we wish exceedingly, could take a chair. His occasional retreat to the bar which occupies the place of a box, and his affecting to sit upon it, only remind us of its exquisite want of accommodation. But some have given the bar, lately, a surreptitious squeeze in the middle, and flattened it a little into something obliquely resembling an inconvenient seat.

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If we are to believe the merry Columbus of Down-Hall, calashes, now almost obsolete for any purpose, used to be hired for travelling occasions a hundred years back; but he preferred a chariot; and neither was good. Yet see how pleasantly good humour rides over its inconveniences.

Then answer'd 'Squire Morley, "Pray get a calash,
That in summer may burn, and in winter may splash;
I love dirt and dust; and 'tis always my pleasure
To take with me much of the soil that I measure."

But Matthew thought better; for Matthew thought right,
And hired a chariot so trim and so tight,
That extremes both of winter and summer might pass;
For one window was canvas, the other was glass.

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"Draw up," quoth friend Matthew; "Pull down," quoth friend John;
"We shall be both hotter and colder anon."
Thus, talking and scolding, they forward did speed;
And Ralpho paced by under Newman the Swede.

Into an old inn did this equipage roll,
At a town they call Hodson, the sign of the Bull;
Near a nymph with an urn that divides the highway,
And into a puddle throws mother of tea.

"Come here, my sweet landlady, pray how d'ye do?
Where is Cicely so cleanly, and Prudence, and Sue?
And where is the widow that dwelt here below?
And the hostler that sung about eight years ago?"

And where is your sister, so mild and so dear,
Whose voice to her maids like a trumpet was clear?"
"By my troth," she replies, "you grow younger, I think:
And pray, sir, what wine does the gentleman drink?"

"Why now let me die, sir, or live upon trust,
If I know to which question to answer you first:
Why, things, since I saw you, most strangely have varied;
The hostler is hang'd, and the widow is married.

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"And Prue left a child for the parish to nurse,
And Cicely went off with a gentleman's purse;
And as to my sister, so mild and so dear,
She has lain in the churchyard full many a year."

"Well; peace to her ashes! What signifies grief?
She roasted red veal, and she powder'd lean beef:
Full nicely she knew to cook up a fine dish;
For tough were her pullets, and tender her fish."

PRIOR.

This quotation reminds us of a little poem by the same author, entitled the *Secretary*, which, as it is short, and runs upon chaise-wheels, and seems to have slipped the notice it deserves, we will do ourselves the pleasure of adding. It was written when he was Secretary of Embassy at the Hague, where he seems to have edified the Dutch with his insisting upon enjoying himself. The astonishment with which the good Hollander and his wife look up to him as he rides, and the touch of yawning dialect at the end, are extremely pleasant.

"While with labour assiduous due pleasure I mix,
And in one day atone for the business of six,
In a little Dutch chaise on a Saturday night,
On my left hand my Horace, a nymph on my right:
No Memoirs to compose, and no Post-boy to move,
That on Sunday may hinder the softness of love;
For her, neither visits, nor parties at tea,
Nor the long-winded cant of a dull Refugee:
This night and the next shall be hers, shall be mine,—
To good or ill-fortune the third we resign:
Thus scorning the world and superior to fate,
I drive on my car in processional state.
So with Phia through Athens Pisistratus rode;
Men thought her Minerva, and him a new god.
But why should I stories of Athens rehearse,
Where people knew love, and were partial to verse?
Since none can with justice my pleasures oppose,
In Holland half drowned in interest and prose?
By Greece and past ages what need I be tried,
When the Hague and the present are both on my side?
And is it enough for the joys of the day,
To think what Anacreon or Sappho would say?
When good Vandergoes, and his provident *vrouw*,
As they gaze on my triumph, do freely allow,
That, search all the province, you'll find no man *dàr* is
So blest as the *Englischen Heer Secre ar'* is."

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If Prior had been living now he would have found the greatest want of travelling accommodation in a country for whose more serious wants we have to answer, without having her wit to help us to an excuse. There is a story told of an Irish post-chaise, the occupier of which, without quitting it, had to take to his heels. It was going down hill as fast as wind and the impossibility of stopping could make it, when the foot passengers observed a couple of legs underneath, emulating, with all their might, the rapidity of the wheels. The bottom had come out; and the gentleman was obliged to run for his life.

We must relate another anecdote of an Irish post-chaise, merely to show the natural tendencies of the people to be lawless in self-defence. A friend of ours, who was travelling among them, used to have this proposition put to him by the postillion whenever he approached a turnpike—"Plase your honour, will I drive at the pike?" The pike hung loosely across the road. Luckily, the rider happened to be of as lawless a turn for justice as the driver, so the answer was always a cordial one—"Oh yes—drive at the pike." The pike made way accordingly; and in a minute or two the gate people were heard and seen, screaming in vain after the illegal charioteers.

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"Fertur equis auriga, neque audit currus."
VIRGIL.

"The driver's borne beyond their swearing,
And the post-chaise is hard of hearing."

As to following them, nobody in Ireland thinks of moving too much, legal or illegal.

The pleasure to be had in a mail-coach is not so much at one's command as that in a post-chaise. There is generally too little room in it, and too much hurry out of it. The company must not lounge over their breakfast, even if they are all agreed. It is an understood thing that they are to be uncomfortably punctual. They must get in at seven o'clock, though they are all going upon business they do not like or care about, or will have to wait till nine before they can do anything. Some persons know how to manage this haste, and breakfast and dine in the cracking of a whip. They stick with their fork, they joint, they sliver, they bolt. Legs and wings vanish before them like a dragon's before a knight-errant. But if one is not a clergyman or a regular jolly fellow, one has no chance this way. To be diffident or polite is fatal. It is a merit eagerly acknowledged, and as quickly set aside. At last you begin upon a leg, and are called off.

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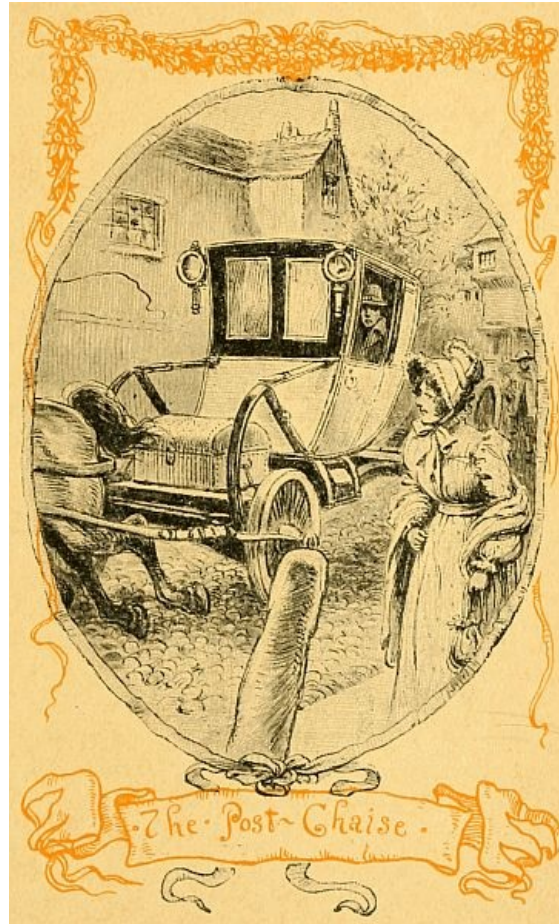
A very troublesome degree of science is necessary for being well settled in the coach. We remember travelling in our youth, upon the north road, with an orthodox elderly gentleman of venerable peruke, who talked much with a grave-looking young man about universities, and won our inexperienced heart with a notion that he was deep in Horace and Virgil. He was deeper in his wig.

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Towards evening, as he seemed restless, we asked with much diffidence whether a change, even for the worse, might not relieve him; for we were riding backwards, and thought that all

elderly people disliked that way. He insinuated the very objection; so we recoiled from asking him again.

In a minute or two, however, he insisted that we were uneasy ourselves, and that he must relieve us for our own sake. We protested as filially as possible against this; but at last, out of mere shame of disputing the point with so benevolent an elder, we changed seats with him.



After an interval of bland meditation, we found the evening sun full in our face. His new comfort set him dozing; and every now and then he jerked his wig in our eyes, till we had the pleasure of seeing him take out a nightcap and look very ghastly. The same person, and his serious young companion, tricked us out of a good bed we happened to get at the inn.

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The greatest peculiarity attending a mail-coach arises from its travelling at night. The gradual decline of talk, the incipient snore, the rustling and shifting of legs and nightcaps, the cessation of other noises on the road—the sound of the wind or rain, of the moist circuit of the wheels, and of the time-beating tread of the horses—all dispose the traveller, who cannot sleep, to a double sense of the little that is left him to observe.

The coach stops, the door opens, a rush of cold air announces the demands and merits of the guard, who is taking his leave, and is anxious to remember us. The door is clapped to again; the sound of everything outside becomes dim; and voices are heard knocking up the people of the inn, and answered by issuing yawns and excuses. Wooden shoes clog heavily about. The horses' mouths are heard, swilling the water out of tubs. All is still again, and some one in the coach takes a long breath. The driver mounts, and we resume our way.

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It happens that we can sleep anywhere except in a mail-coach; so that we hate to see a prudent, warm, old fellow, who has been eating our fowls and intercepting our toast, put on his night-cap in order to settle himself till morning. We rejoice in the digs that his neighbour's elbow gives him, and hail the long-legged traveller that sits opposite.

A passenger of our wakeful description must try to content himself with listening to the sounds above mentioned; or thinking of his friends; or turning verses, as Sir Richard Blackmore did, "to the rumbling of his coach's wheels."

The stage-coach is a great and unpretending accommodation. It is a cheap substitute, notwithstanding all its eighteen-penny and two-and-sixpenny temptations, for keeping a carriage or a horse; and we really think, in spite of its gossiping, is no mean help to village liberality; for its passengers are so mixed, so often varied, so little yet so much together, so compelled to accommodate, so willing to pass a short time pleasantly, and so liable to the criticism of strangers, that it is hard if they do not get a habit of speaking, or even thinking more kindly of one another than if they mingled less often, or under other circumstances.

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The old and infirm are treated with reverence; the ailing sympathised with; the healthy congratulated; the rich not distinguished; the poor well met; the young, with their faces conscious of ride, patronised, and allowed to be extra.

Even the fiery, nay the fat, learn to bear with each other; and if some high-thoughted persons will talk now and then of their great acquaintances, or their preference of a carriage, there is an instinct which tells the rest that they would not make such appeals to their good opinion if they valued it so little as might be supposed. Stoppings and dust are not pleasant, but the latter may be had on grander occasions; and if anyone is so unlucky as never to keep another stopping himself, he must be content with the superiority of his virtue.

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The mail or stage-coachman, upon the whole, is no inhuman mass of great-coat, gruffness, civility, and old boots. The latter is the politer, from the smaller range of acquaintance, and his necessity for preserving them.

His face is red, and his voice rough, by the same process of drink and catarrh. He has a silver watch with a steel-chain, and plenty of loose silver in his pocket, mixed with half-pence. He serves the houses he goes by for a clock. He takes a glass at every alehouse; for thirst, when it is dry, and for warmth when it is wet.

He likes to show the judicious reach of his whip, by twiggling a dog or a goose on the road, or children that get in the way. His tenderness to descending old ladies is particular. He touches his hat to Mr. Smith. He gives "the young woman" a ride, and lends her his box-coat in the rain. His liberality in imparting his knowledge to any one that has the good fortune to ride on the box with him is a happy mixture of deference, conscious possession, and familiarity. His information chiefly lies in the occupancy of houses on the road, prize-fighters, Bow Street runners, and accidents.

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He concludes that you know Dick Sams, or Old Joey, and proceeds to relate some of the stories that relish his pot and tobacco in the evening. If any of the four-in-hand gentry go by, he shakes his head, and thinks they might find something better to do. His contempt for them is founded on modesty.

He tells you that his off-hand horse is as pretty a goer as ever was, but that Kitty—"Yeah, now there, Kitty, can't you be still? Kitty's a devil, sir, for all you wouldn't think it." He knows that the boys on the road admire him, and gives the horses an indifferent lash with his whip as they go by. If you wish to know what rain and dust can do, you should look at his old hat. There is an indescribably placid and paternal look in the position of his corduroy knees and old top-boots on the foot-board, with their pointed toes and never-cleaned soles. His *beau-idéal* of appearance is a frock-coat, with mother-o'-pearl buttons, a striped yellow waistcoat, and a flower in his mouth.

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"But all our praises why for Charles and Robert?
Rise, honest Mews, and sing the classic Bobart."

Is the quadrijugal virtue of that learned person still extant? That Olympic and Baccalaureated charioteer?—That best educated and most erudite of coachmen, of whom Dominie Sampson is alone worthy to speak? That singular punning and driving commentary on the *Sunt quos curriculo collegisse*? In short, the worthy and agreeable Mr. Bobart, Bachelor of Arts, who drove the Oxford stage some years ago, capped verses and the front of his hat with equal dexterity, and read Horace over his brandy-and-water of an evening.

We had once the pleasure of being beaten by him in that capital art, he having brought up against us an unusual number of those cross-armed letters, as puzzling to verse-cappers as iron-cats unto cavalry, ycleped X's; which said warfare he was pleased to call to mind in after times, unto divers of our comrades.

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The modest and natural greatness with which he used to say "Yait" to his horses, and then turn round with his rosy gills, and an eye like a fish, and give out the required verse, can never pass away from us, as long as verses or horses run.

Of the hackney-coach we cannot make as short work as many persons like to make of it in reality. Perhaps it is partly a sense of the contempt it undergoes, which induces us to endeavour to make the best of it. But it has its merits, as we shall show presently. In the account of its demerits we have been anticipated by a new, and we are sorry to say a very good, poetess, of the name of Lucy V— L—, who has favoured us with a sight of a manuscript poem, in which they are related with great nicety and sensitiveness.

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Reader. What, sir, sorry to say that a lady is a good poetess?

Indicator. Only inasmuch, madam, as the lady gives such authority to the anti-social view of this subject, and will not agree with us as to the beatitude of the hackney-coach.—But hold:—upon turning to the manuscript again, we find that the objections are put into the mouth of a dandy courtier. This makes a great difference. The hackney resumes all which it had lost in the good graces of the fair authoress. The only wonder is, how the courtier could talk so well. Here is the passage:—

"Eban, untempted by the Pastry-cooks
(Of Pastry he got store within the Palace),
With hasty steps, wrapp'd cloak, and solemn looks,
Incognito upon his errand sallies;
His smelling-bottle ready for the alleys;
He pass'd the Hurdy-gurdies with disdain,
Vowing he'd have them sent on board the galleys:

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Just as he made his vow, it 'gan to rain,
Therefore he call'd a coach, and bade it drive amain.

'I'll pull the string,' said he, and further said,
'Polluted Jarvey! Ah, thou filthy hack!
Whose strings of life are all dried up and dead,
Whose linsey-wolsey lining hangs all slack,
Whose rug is straw, whose wholeness is a crack;
And evermore thy steps go clatter-clitter;
Whose glass once up can never be got back,
Who prov'st, with jolting arguments and bitter,
That 'tis of vile no-use to travel in a litter.

'Thou inconvenience! thou hungry crop
For all corn! thou snail creeper to and fro,
Who while thou goest ever seem'st to stop,
And fiddle-faddle standest while you go;
I' the morning, freighted with a weight of woe,
Unto some Lazar-house thou journiest,
And in the evening tak'st a double row
Of dowdies, for some dance or party drest,
Besides the goods meanwhile thou movest east and west.

'By thy ungallant bearing and sad mien,
An inch appears the utmost thou couldst budge;
Yet at the slightest nod, or hint, or sign,
Round to the curb-stone patient dost thou trudge,
School'd in a beckon, learned in a nudge;
A dull-eyed Argus watching for a fare;
Quiet and plodding, thou dost bear no grudge
To whisking Tilburies or Phaetons rare,
Curricles, or Mail-coaches, swift beyond compare.'

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Philosophising thus, he pull'd the check,
And bade the coachman wheel to such a street;
Who turning much his body, more his neck,
Louted full low, and hoarsely did him greet."

The tact here is so nice of the infirmities which are but too likely to beset our poor old friend, that we should only spoil it to say more. To pass then to the merits.

One of the greatest helps to a sense or merit in other things is a consciousness of one's own wants. Do you despise a hackney-coach? Get tired; get old; get young again. Lay down your carriage, or make it less uneasily too easy. Have to stand up half-an-hour, out of a storm, under a gateway. Be ill, and wish to visit a friend who is worse. Fall in love, and want to sit next your mistress. Or if all this will not do, fall in a cellar.

Ben Jonson, in a fit of indignation at the niggardliness of James the First, exclaimed, "He despises me, I suppose, because I live in an alley:—tell him his soul lives in an alley." We think we see a hackney-coach moving out of its ordinary patience, and hear it say, "You there, who sit looking so scornfully at me out of your carriage, are yourself the thing you take me for. Your understanding is a hackney-coach. It is lumbering, rickety, and at a stand. When it moves it is drawn by things like itself. It is at once the most stationary and the most servile of commonplaces. And when a good thing is put into it, it does not know it."

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But it is difficult to imagine a hackney-coach under so irritable an aspect. Hogarth has drawn a set of hats or wigs with countenances of their own. We have noticed the same thing in the faces of houses; and it sometimes gets in one's way in a landscape-painting, with the outlines of the rocks and trees.

A friend tells us that the hackney-coach has its countenance, with gesticulation besides: and now he has pointed it out, we can easily fancy it. Some of them look chucked under the chin, some nodding, some coming at you sideways. We shall never find it easy, however, to fancy the irritable aspect above-mentioned.

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A hackney-coach always appeared to us the most quiescent of movables. Its horses and it, slumbering on a stand, are an emblem of all patience in creation, animate and inanimate.

The submission with which the coach takes every variety of the weather, dust, rain, and wind, never moving but when some eddying blast makes its old body shiver, is only surpassed by the vital patience of the horses.

Can anything better illustrate the poet's line about

"—Years that bring the philosophic mind,"

than the still-hung head, the dim indifferent eye, the dragged and blunt-cornered mouth, and the gaunt imbecility of body dropping its weight on three tired legs in order to give repose to the

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lame one? When it has blinkers on, they seem to be shutting up its eyes for death, like the windows of a house. Fatigue and the habit of suffering have become as natural to the creature as the bit to its mouth.

Once in half-an-hour it moves the position of its leg, or shakes its drooping ears. The whip makes it go, more from habit than from pain. Its coat has become almost callous to minor stings. The blind and staggering fly in autumn might come to die against its cheek.

Of a pair of hackney-coach horses, one so much resembles the other that it seems unnecessary for them to compare notes. They have that within them which is beyond the comparative. They no longer bend their heads towards each other as they go. They stand together as if unconscious of one another's company. But they are not.

An old horse misses his companion, like an old man. The presence of an associate, who has gone through pain and suffering with us, need not say anything. It is talk, and memory, and everything. Something of this it may be to our old friends in harness. What are they thinking of while they stand motionless in the rain? Do they remember? Do they dream? Do they still, unperplexed as their old blood is by too many foods, receive a pleasure from the elements; a dull refreshment from the air and sun? Have they yet a palate for the hay which they pull so feebly? or for the rarer grain which induces them to perform their only voluntary gesture of any vivacity, and toss up the bags that are fastened on their mouths, to get at its shallow feast?

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If the old horse were gifted with memory (and who shall say he is not, in one thing as well as another?), it might be at once the most melancholy and pleasantest faculty he has; for the commonest hack has probably been a hunter or racer; has had his days of lustre and enjoyment; has darted along the course, and scoured the pasture; has carried his master proudly, or his lady gently; has pranced, has galloped, has neighed aloud, has dared, has forded, has spurned at mastery, has graced it and made it proud, has rejoiced the eye, has been crowded to as an actor, has been all instinct with life and quickness, has had his very fear admired as courage, and been sat upon by valour as its chosen seat.

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"His ears up-prick'd; his braided hanging mane
Upon his compass'd crest now stands on end;
His nostrils drink the air; and forth again,
As from a furnace, vapours doth he send;
His eye, which scornfully glistens like fire,
Shows his hot courage and his high desire.

Sometimes he trots as if he told the steps,
With gentle majesty, and modest pride;
Anon he rears upright, curvets and leaps,
As who would say, lo! thus my strength is tried,
And thus I do to captivate the eye
Of the fair breeder that is standing by.

What reckoneth he his rider's angry stir,
His flattering holla, or his *Stand, I say?*
What cares he now for curb, or pricking spur?
For rich caparisons, or trappings gay?
He sees his love, and nothing else he sees,
For nothing else with his proud sight agrees.

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Look, when a painter would surpass the life,
In limning out a well-proportion'd steed,
His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
As if the dead the living should exceed;
So did this horse excel a common one,
In shape, in courage, colour, pace, and bone.

Round-hoof'd, short-jointed, fetlock shag and long,
Broad breast, full eyes, small head, and nostril wide;
High crest, short ears, straight legs, and passing strong;
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide;
Look, what a horse should have, he did not lack,
Save a proud rider on so proud a back."

Alas! his only riders now are the rain and a sordid harness. The least utterance of the wretchedest voice makes him stop and become a fixture. His loves were in existence at the time the old sign, fifty miles hence, was painted. His nostrils drink nothing but what they cannot help—the water out of an old tub. Not all the hounds in the world could make his ears attain any eminence. His mane is scratchy and lax. The same great poet who wrote the triumphal verses for him and his loves, has written their living epitaph:—

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"The poor jades
Lob down their heads, dropping the hide and hips,
The gum down roping from their pale dead eyes;
And in their pale dull mouths the gimmal bit

There is a song called the "High-mettled Racer," describing the progress of a favourite horse's life, from its time of vigour and glory, down to its furnishing food for the dogs. It is not as good as Shakespeare; but it will do to those who are half as kind as he.

We defy anybody to read that song, or be in the habit of singing it or hearing it sung, and treat horses as they are sometimes treated. So much good may an author do, who is in earnest, and does not go in a pedantic way to work.

We will not say that Plutarch's good-natured observation about taking care of one's old horse did more for that class of retired servants than all the graver lessons of philosophy. For it is philosophy which first sets people thinking; and then some of them put it in a more popular shape. But we will venture to say that Plutarch's observation saved many a steed of antiquity a superfluous thump; and in this respect the author of the "High-mettled Racer" (Mr. Dibdin we believe, no mean man in his way) may stand by the side of the old illustrious biographer.

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Next to ancient causes, to the inevitable progress of events, and to the practical part of Christianity (which persons, the most accused of irreligion, have preserved like a glorious infant, through ages of blood and fire) the kindness of modern philosophy is more immediately owing to the great national writers of Europe, in whose schools we have all been children:—to Voltaire in France, and Shakespeare in England. Shakespeare, in his time, obliquely pleaded the cause of the Jew, and got him set on a common level with humanity. The Jew has since been not only allowed to be human, but some have undertaken to show him as the "best good Christian though he knows it not."

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We shall not dispute the title with him, nor with the other worshippers of Mammon, who force him to the same shrine. We allow, as things go in that quarter, that the Jew is as great a Christian as his neighbour, and his neighbour as great a Jew as he. There is neither love nor money lost between them.

But, at all events, the Jew is a man; and with Shakespeare's assistance the time has arrived when we can afford to acknowledge the horse for a fellow-creature, and treat him as one. We may say for him, upon the same grounds and to the same purpose, as Shakespeare said for the Israelite, "Hath not a horse organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is?" Oh—but some are always at hand to cry out—it would be effeminate to think too much of these things!—Alas! we have no notion of asking the gentlemen to think too much of anything. If they will think at all, it will be a great gain.

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As to effeminacy (if we must use that ungallant and partial word, for want of a better) it is cruelty that is effeminate. It is selfishness that is effeminate. Anything is effeminate which would get an excitement, or save a proper and manly trouble, at the undue expense of another. How does the case stand then between those who ill-treat their horses and those who spare them?



To return to the coach. Imagine a fine coach and pair, which are standing at the door of a house, in all the pride of their strength and beauty, converted into what they may both become, a hackney, and its old shamblers. Such is one of the meditations of the philosophic eighteen-penny rider. A hackney-coach has often the arms of nobility on it. As we are going to get into it we catch a glimpse of the faded lustre of an earl's or marquis's coronet, and think how many light and proud hearts have ascended those now rickety steps.

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In this coach perhaps an elderly lady once rode to her wedding, a blooming and blushing girl. Her mother and sister were on each side of her; the bridegroom opposite in a blossom-coloured coat. They talk of everything in the world of which they are not thinking. The sister was never prouder of her. The mother with difficulty represses her own pride and tears. The bride, thinking he is looking at her, casts down her eyes, pensive in her joy.

The bridegroom is at once the proudest, and the humblest, and the happiest man in the world. For our parts, we sit in a corner, and are in love with the sister. We dream she is going to speak to us in answer to some indifferent question, when a hoarse voice comes in at the front window and says, "Whereabouts, sir?"

And grief has consecrated thee, thou reverend dilapidation, as well as joy! Thou hast carried unwilling as well as willing hearts; hearts that have thought the slowest of thy paces too fast; faces that have sat back in a corner of thee, to hide their tears from the very thought of being seen.

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In thee the destitute have been taken to the poor-house, and the wounded and sick to the hospital; and many an arm has been round many an insensible waist. Into thee the friend or the lover has hurried, in a passion of tears, to lament his loss.

In thee he has hastened to condole the dying or the wretched. In thee the father, or mother, or the older kinswoman, more patient in her years, has taken the little child to the grave, the human jewel that must be parted with.

But joy appears in thee again, like the look-in of the sunshine. If the lover has gone in thee unwillingly, he has also gone willingly. How many friends hast thou not carried to merry-meetings! How many young parties to the play! How many children, whose faces thou hast turned in an instant from the extremity of lachrymose weariness to that of staring delight.

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Thou hast contained as many different passions in thee as a human heart; and for the sake of the human heart, old body, thou art venerable. Thou shalt be as respectable as a reduced old gentleman, whose very slovenliness is pathetic. Thou shalt be made gay, as he is over a younger and richer table, and thou shalt be still more touching for the gaiety.

We wish the hackney-coachman were as interesting a machine as either his coach or horses; but it must be owned, that of all the driving species he is the least agreeable specimen. This is partly to be attributed to the life which has most probably put him into his situation; partly to his want of outside passengers to cultivate his gentility; and partly to the disputable nature of his fare, which always leads him to be lying and cheating. The waterman of the stand, who beats him in sordidness of appearance, is more respectable. He is less of a vagabond, and cannot cheat you.

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Nor is the hackney-coachman only disagreeable in himself, but, like Falstaff reversed, the cause of disagreeableness in others; for he sets people upon disputing with him in pettiness and ill-temper. He induces the mercenary to be violent, and the violent to seem mercenary. A man whom you took for a pleasant, laughing fellow, shall all of a sudden put on an irritable look of calculation, and vow that he will be charged with a constable rather than pay the sixpence.

Even fair woman shall waive her all-conquering softness, and sound a shrill trumpet in reprobation of the extortionate charioteer, whom, if she were a man, she says, she would expose. Being a woman, then, let her not expose herself. Oh, but it is intolerable to be so imposed upon! Let the lady, then, get a pocket-book, if she must, with the hackney-coach fares in it; or a pain in the legs, rather than the temper; or, above all, let her get wiser, and have an understanding that can dispense with the good opinion of the hackney-coachman. Does she think that her rosy lips were made to grow pale about two-and-sixpence; or that the expression of them will ever be like her cousin Fanny's if she goes on?

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The stage-coachman likes the boys on the road, because he knows they admire him. The hackney-coachman knows that they cannot admire him, and that they can get up behind his coach, which makes him very savage.

The cry of "Cut behind!" from the malicious urchins on the pavement wounds at once his self-love and his interest. He would not mind overloading his master's horses for another sixpence, but to do it for nothing is what shocks his humanity. He hates the boy for imposing upon him, and the boys for reminding him that he has been imposed upon; and he would willingly twinge the cheeks of all nine. The cut of his whip over the coach is malignant.

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He has a constant eye to the road behind him. He has also an eye to what may be left in the coach. He will undertake to search the straw for you, and miss the half-crown on purpose. He speculates on what he may get above his fare, according to your manners or company; and knows how much to ask for driving faster or slower than usual.

He does not like wet weather so much as people suppose; for he says it rots both his horses and harness, and he takes parties out of town when the weather is fine, which produces good

payments in a lump.

Lovers, late supper-eaters, and girls going home from boarding-school, are his best pay. He has a rascally air of remonstrance when you dispute half the overcharge, and according to the temper he is in, begs you to consider his bread, hopes you will not make such a fuss about a trifle; or tells you, you may take his number or sit in the coach all night. [51]

A great number of ridiculous adventures must have taken place in which hackney-coaches were concerned. The story of the celebrated harlequin Lunn, who secretly pitched himself out of one into a tavern window, and when the coachman was about to submit to the loss of his fare, astonished him by calling out again from the inside, is too well known for repetition.

There is one of Swift, not perhaps so common. He was going, one dark evening, to dine with some great man, and was accompanied by some other clergymen, to whom he gave their cue. They were all in their canonicals. When they arrive at the house, the coachman opens the door, and lets down the steps. Down steps the Dean, very reverend in his black robes; after him comes another personage, equally black and dignified; then another; then a fourth. The coachman, who recollects taking up no greater number, is about to put up the steps, when another clergyman descends. After giving way to this other, he proceeds with great confidence to toss them up, when lo! another comes. Well, there cannot, he thinks, be more than six. He is mistaken. Down comes a seventh, then an eighth; then a ninth; all with decent intervals; the coach, in the meantime, rocking as if it were giving birth to so many demons. The coachman can conclude no less. He cries out, "The devil! the devil!" and is preparing to run away, when they all burst into laughter. They had gone round as they descended, and got in at the other door. [52]

We remember in our boyhood an edifying comment on the proverb of "all is not gold that glistens." The spectacle made such an impression upon us, that we recollect the very spot, which was at the corner of a road in the way from Westminster to Kennington, near a stonemason's. It was a severe winter, and we were out on a holiday, thinking, perhaps, of the gallant hardships to which the ancient soldiers accustomed themselves, when we suddenly beheld a group of hackney-coachmen, not, as Spenser says of his witch, [53]

"Busy, as *seemed*, about some wicked gin,"

but pledging each other in what appeared to us to be little glasses of cold water. What temperance, thought we! What extraordinary and noble content! What more than Roman simplicity! Here are a set of poor Englishmen, of the homeliest order, in the very depth of winter, quenching their patient and honourable thirst with modicums of cold water! O true virtue and courage! O sight worthy of the Timoleons and Epaminondases! We know not how long we remained in this error; but the first time we recognised the white devil for what it was—the first time we saw through the crystal purity of its appearance—was a great blow to us.

We did not then know what the drinkers went through; and this reminds us that we have omitted one great redemption of the hackney-coachman's character—his being at the mercy of all chances and weathers. [54]

Other drivers have their settled hours and pay. He only is at the mercy of every call and every casualty; he only is dragged, without notice, like the damned in Milton, into the extremities of wet and cold, from his alehouse fire to the freezing rain; he only must go anywhere, at what hour and to whatever place you choose, his old rheumatic limbs shaking under his weight of rags, and the snow and sleet beating into his puckered face, through streets which the wind scours like a channel.

NIGHT WATCHMEN

 [55]

THE readers of these our lucubrations need not be informed that we keep no carriage. The consequence is, that being visitors of the theatre, and having some inconsiderate friends who grow pleasanter and pleasanter till one in the morning, we are great walkers home by night; and this has made us great acquaintances of watchmen, moonlight, *mud*-light, and other accompaniments of that interesting hour. Luckily we are fond of a walk by night. It does not always do us good; but that is not the fault of the hour, but our own, who ought to be stouter; and therefore we extract what good we can out of our necessity, with becoming temper. It is a remarkable thing in nature, and one of the good-naturedest things we know of her, that the mere fact of looking about us, and being conscious of what is going on, is its own reward, if we do but notice it in good-humour. Nature is a great painter (and art and society are among her works), to whose minutest touches the mere fact of becoming alive is to enrich the stock of our enjoyments. [56]

We confess there are points liable to cavil in a walk home by night in February. Old umbrellas have their weak sides; and the quantity of mud and rain may surmount the picturesque. Mistaking a soft piece of mud for hard, and so filling your shoe with it, especially at setting out, must be acknowledged to be "aggravating." But then you ought to have boots. There are sights, indeed, in the streets of London, which can be rendered pleasant by no philosophy; things too grave to be talked about in our present paper; but we must premise, that our walk leads us out of town, and through streets and suburbs of by no means the worst description. Even there we may be grieved if we will. The farther the walk into the country, the more tiresome we may choose to [57]

find it; and when we take it purely to oblige others, we must allow, as in the case of a friend of ours, that generosity itself on two sick legs may find limits to the notion of virtue being its own reward, and reasonably "curse those comfortable people" who, by the lights in their windows, are getting into their warm beds, and saying to one another, "Bad thing to be out of doors to-night."

Supposing, then, that we are in a reasonable state of health and comfort in other respects, we say that a walk home at night has its merits, if you choose to meet with them. The worst part of it is the setting out; the closing of the door upon the kind faces that part with you. But their words and looks, on the other hand, may set you well off. We have known a word last us all the way home, and a look make a dream of it. To a lover, for instance, no walk can be bad. He sees but one face in the rain and darkness; the same that he saw by the light in the warm room. This ever accompanies him, looking in his eyes; and if the most pitiable and spoilt face in the world should come between them, startling him with the saddest mockery of love, he would treat it kindly for her sake. But this is a begging of the question. A lover does not walk. He is sensible neither to the pleasures nor pains of walking. He treads on air; and in the thick of all that seems inclement has an avenue of light and velvet spread for him, like a sovereign prince.

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To resume, then, like men of this world. The advantage of a late hour is, that everything is silent and the people fast in their beds. This gives the whole world a tranquil appearance. Inanimate objects are no calmer than passions and cares now seem to be, all laid asleep. The human being is motionless as the house or the tree; sorrow is suspended; and you endeavour to think that love only is awake. Let not readers of true delicacy be alarmed, for we mean to touch profanely upon nothing that ought to be sacred; and as we are for thinking the best on these occasions, it is of the best love we think; love of no heartless order, and such only as ought to be awake with the stars.

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As to cares and curtain-lectures, and such-like abuses of the tranquillity of night, we call to mind, for their sakes, all the sayings of the poets and others about "balmy sleep," and the soothing of hurt minds, and the weariness of sorrow, which drops into forgetfulness. The great majority are certainly "fast as a church" by the time we speak of; and for the rest, we are among the workers who have been sleepless for their advantage; so we take out our licence to forget them for the time being. The only thing that shall remind us of them is the red lamp, shining afar over the apothecary's door; which, while it does so, reminds us also that there is help for them to be had. I see him now, the pale blinker suppressing the conscious injustice of his anger at being roused by the apprentice, and fumbling himself out of the house, in hoarseness and great-coat, resolved to make the sweetness of the Christmas bill indemnify him for the bitterness of the moment.

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But we shall be getting too much into the interior of the houses. By this time the hackney-coaches have all left the stands—a good symptom of their having got their day's money. Crickets are heard, here and there, amidst the embers of some kitchen. A dog follows us. Will nothing make him "go along"? We dodge him in vain; we run; we stand and "hish!" at him, accompanying the prohibition with dehortatory gestures, and an imaginary picking up of a stone. We turn again, and there he is vexing our skirts. He even forces us into an angry doubt whether he will not

starve, if we do not let him go home with us. Now if we could but lame him without being cruel; or if we were only an overseer, or a beadle, or a dealer in dog-skin; or a political economist, to think dogs unnecessary. Oh! come, he has turned a corner, he has gone: we think we see him trotting off at a distance, thin and muddy, and our heart misgives us. But it was not our fault; we were not "hishing" at the time. His departure was lucky, for he had got our enjoyments into a dilemma; our "article" would not have known what to do with him. These are the perplexities to which your sympathisers are liable. We resume our way, independent and alone; for we have no companion this time, except our never-to-be-forgotten and ethereal companion, the reader. A real arm within another's puts us out of the pale of walking that is to be made good. It is good already. A fellow-pedestrian is company—is the party you have left; you talk and laugh, and there is no longer anything to be contended with. But alone, and in bad weather, and with a long way to go, here is something for the temper and spirits to grapple with and turn to account; and accordingly we are booted and buttoned up, an umbrella over our heads, the rain pelting upon it, and the lamp-light shining in the gutters; "mudshine," as an artist of our acquaintance used to call it, with a gusto of reprobation. Now, walk cannot well be worse; and yet it shall be nothing if you meet it heartily. There is a pleasure in overcoming obstacles; mere action is something; imagination is more; and the spinning of the blood, and vivacity of the mental endeavour, act well upon one another, and gradually put you in a state of robust consciousness and triumph. Every time you set down your leg you have a respect for it. The umbrella is held in the hand like a roaring trophy.

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We are now reaching the country: the fog and rain are over; and we meet our old friends the watchmen, staid, heavy, indifferent, more coat than man, pondering, yet not pondering, old but not reverend, immensely useless. No; useless they are not; for the inmates of the houses think them otherwise, and in that imagination they do good. We do not pity the watchmen as we used. Old age often cares little for regular sleep. They could not be sleeping perhaps if they were in their beds; and certainly they would not be earning. What sleep they get is perhaps sweeter in the watch-box,—a forbidden sweet; and they have a sense of importance, and a claim on the persons in-doors, which, together with the amplitude of their coating, and the possession of the box itself, make them feel themselves, not without reason, to be "somebody." They are peculiar and official. Tomkins is a cobbler as well as they; but then he is no watchman. He cannot speak to "things of night;" nor bid "any man stand in the king's name." He does not get fees and gratitude from the old, the infirm, and the drunken; nor "let gentlemen go;" nor is he "a parish-man." The churchwardens don't speak to him. If he put himself ever so much in the way of "the great plumber," he would not say, "How do you find yourself, Tomkins?"—"An ancient and quiet watchman." Such he was in the time of Shakespeare, and such he is now. Ancient, because he cannot help it; and quiet, because he will not help it, if possible; his object being to procure quiet on all sides, his own included. For this reason he does not make too much noise in crying the hour, nor is offensively particular in his articulation. No man shall sleep the worse for him, out of a horrid sense of the word "three." The sound shall be three, four, or one, as suits their mutual convenience.

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Yet characters are to be found even among watchmen. They are not all mere coat, and lump, and indifference. By-the-way, what do they think of in general? How do they vary the monotony of their ruminations from one to two, and from two to three, and so on? Are they comparing themselves with the unofficial cobbler; thinking of what they shall have for dinner to-morrow; or what they were about six years ago; or that their lot is the hardest in the world, as insipid old people are apt to think, for the pleasure of grumbling; or that it has some advantages nevertheless, besides fees; and that if they are not in bed, their wife is?

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Of characters, or rather varieties among watchmen, we remember several. One was a Dandy Watchman, who used to ply at the top of Oxford Street, next the park. We called him the dandy, on account of his utterance. He had a mincing way with it, pronouncing the *a* in the word "past" as it is in *hat*, making a little preparatory hem before he spoke, and then bringing out his "past ten" in a style of genteel indifference; as if, upon the whole, he was of that opinion.

Another was the Metallic Watchman, who paced the same street towards Hanover Square, and had a clang in his voice like a trumpet. He was a voice and nothing else; but any difference is something in a watchman.

A third, who cried the hour in Bedford Square, was remarkable in his calling for being abrupt and loud. There was a fashion among his tribe just come up at that time, of omitting the words "past" and "o'clock," and crying only the number of the hour. I know not whether a recollection I have of his performance one night is entire matter of fact, or whether any subsequent fancies of what might have taken place are mixed up with it; but my impression is, that as I was turning the corner into the square with a friend, and was in the midst of a discussion in which numbers were concerned, we were suddenly startled, as if in solution of it, by a brief and tremendous outcry of —ONE. This paragraph ought to have been at the bottom of the page, and the word printed abruptly round the corner.

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A fourth watchman was a very singular phenomenon, a *Reading* Watchman. He had a book, which he read by the light of his lantern; and instead of a pleasant, gave you a very uncomfortable idea of him. It seemed cruel to pitch amidst so many discomforts and privations one who had imagination enough to wish to be relieved from them. Nothing but a sluggish vacuity befits a watchman.

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But the oddest of all was the *Sliding* Watchman. Think of walking up a street in the depth of a

frosty winter, with long ice in the gutters, and sleet over head, and then figure to yourself a sort of bale of a man in white coming sliding towards you with a lantern in one hand, and an umbrella over his head. It was the oddest mixture of luxury and hardship, of juvenility and old age! But this looked agreeable. Animal spirits carry everything before them; and our invincible friend seemed a watchman for Rabelais. Time was run at and butted by him like a goat. The slide seemed to bear him half through the night at once; he slipped from out of his box and his commonplaces at one rush of a merry thought, and seemed to say "Everything's in imagination—here goes the whole weight of my office."

But we approach our home. How still the trees! How deliciously asleep the country! How beautifully grim and nocturnal this wooded avenue of ascent against the cold white sky! The watchmen and patrols, which the careful citizens have planted in abundance within a mile of their doors, salute us with their "Good mornings"—not so welcome as we pretend; for we ought not to be out so late; and it is one of the assumptions of these fatherly old fellows to remind us of it. Some fowls, who have made a strange roost in a tree, flutter as we pass them—another pull up the hill, unyielding; a few strides on a level; and *there* is the light in the window, the eye of the warm soul of the house—one's home. How particular, and yet how universal, is that word; and how surely does it deposit every one for himself in his own nest!

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