

ment in our roads other carriers have proportionately mended their speed, the post is as slow as ever. It is likewise very unsafe, as frequent robberies of it testify; and to avoid a loss of this nature, people generally cut bank bills in two and send them by different posts. The mails are generally entrusted to some idle boy, without character, mounted on a worn-out hack, and who, so far from being able to defend himself or escape from a robber, is much more likely to be in league with him."

Palmer proposed that, as far as possible, the mail-bags should be sent by the passenger coaches, accompanied by well-armed and trustworthy guards, and the mails, which hitherto had left London at all hours of the night should be so timed as to depart from and arrive in London at an hour convenient to the public, so that the letters might be delivered all together.

The scheme was vehemently opposed and denounced as "impracticable and dangerous to commerce and the revenue; that "it would fling the commercial correspondence of the country into the utmost confusion," and that the postal system as it then existed was "almost as perfect as it can be, without exhausting the revenue arising therefrom."

Mr. Pitt, however, determined that, in spite of all opposition, the plan should be tried. In the first year of the new system the net revenue of the post-office rose to £250,000. Thirty years later it had attained to £1,500,000.

In 1836, the number of four-horse mail coaches which ran in England was fifty-four, in addition to forty-nine of two horses. In Scotland, the number of four-horse coaches was ten, and in Ireland thirty.

Famous among the coaches was the "Age," which ran to Brighton, with a baronet for a driver. There was also the "Beaufort," driven by the Marquis of Worcester, while the Brighton day mail was driven

by the Hon. Fred. Jerningham, son of Lord Stafford.

The mail-guard (the prototype of the modern railway "conductor" of America; in England he still retains the old name, "guard") was a position in point of fact superior to that of the driver. He was always clothed in the royal livery as the badge of his office, and his duties were both important and onerous, and sometimes hazardous.

"The mail-coach it was," says De Quincey, "that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of the apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo."

The news of any great victory was proclaimed throughout the journey by the mail coach, dressed in laurels and flowers, oak leaves and ribbons. Miss Martineau relates that the trial of Queen Caroline, "all along the line of mails crowds stood waiting in the burning sunshine for news of the trial, which was shouted out to them as the coach passed."

One of the gayest and liveliest of sights was the annual procession of mail coaches on the King's birthday. The horses with new harness, and the postmen and post-boys in scarlet coats and jackets, with much blowing of bugles and cracking of whips, while the bells of the neighbouring churches rang out a merry peal.

A most serious drawback to the extension of postal facilities was the exceedingly high rates charged for the conveyance of letters. A letter weighing less than an ounce with one enclosure, if for delivery thirty miles out of London, cost threepence; if eighty miles out, fourpence, and so on. As showing how the charge according to enclosure operated, a letter with three single enclosures, from London to Edinburgh, was charged 3s. 4 1-2d. One result was the enormous extent of illicit transportation of letters.