

"Hark ! 'tis the twanging horn ! . . .
 He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
 With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen looks ;
 News from all nations lumbering at his back.
 True to his charge, the close-pack'd load behind,
 Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
 Is to conduct it to the destined inn ;
 And, having dropp'd the expected bag, pass on.
 He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
 Cold and yet cheerful : messenger of grief
 Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some ;
 To him indifferent whether grief or joy."

These post-boys were a source of great trouble and vexation to the authorities of the post-office throughout the whole course of their connection with that department. A surveyor who held office about the commencement of the eighteenth century, complaining bitterly of the tardiness of the post, says, "that the gentry do give much money to the riders, whereby they be very subject to get in liquor, which stops the mails."

Doubtless the temptation of the ale house, the low rate of wages paid by the contractors, combined with the frequent bad roads and bad weather, explain the vexatious delays which induced letter-writers to inscribe on their missives, "Be this letter delivered with great haste—haste—haste ! Post haste ! Ride, villain, ride—for thy life—for thy life—for thy life !"

Dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements of the post was not, however, wholly due to the untrustworthy character of the post-boys. Many irregularities reflect discreditably on the post-office officials. In 1635 a bi-weekly mail between London and Edinburgh was established, the journey being limited to three days. In 1715 six days were required to perform the same journey, which rate of speed continued for forty years. This retrogression indicates a sad lack of vigor in the post-office management. It is worthy of note that Scotland, in the year 1715, could not boast of a single horse post, all the mails being conveyed by foot posts. During the year referred to the first horse post was established between Edinburgh and Stirling.

About the middle of the seventeenth century, stage coaches came into use in England. For some time after their introduction they were monopolized chiefly by people of fashion, but they gradually became the established public conveyance of the country. Prior to this the only vehicle accessible to travellers of ordinary means was the carrier's stage-waggon, which, owing to its lumbering build and the deplorable state of the roads, made only from ten to fifteen miles during a long summer's day. The interior of this waggon exhibited none of the refinements of the modern means of travel, its only furniture being a quantity of straw littered on the floor, on which the passengers could sit or lie during the weary hours of their journey.

Unlike travelling in the present day, when one may go a hundred miles in a railway carriage without speaking to a fellow-passenger, the journey in the old-fashioned waggon brought all the travellers too close and too long together to admit of individual isolation ; for they might be associated for days together as companions, had to have their refreshment