

turn with delight to Dickens' picture of Tom Pinch's ride to London, or Irving's description of his journey on Christmas Eve. And then what grotesque romance surrounds the idea of the Coachman! Our experience of human nature tells us, that in too many cases he must have been a drunken and insolent vagabond, but we never allow our ideal to be desecrated by the intrusion of any such gross considerations. We prefer the broadly truthful delineation of this extinct race given us by Irving. 'He has commonly a broad, full face, curiously mottled with red, as if the blood had been forced by hard feeding into every vessel of the skin; he is swelled into jolly dimensions by frequent potations of malt liquors, and his bulk is still further increased by a multiplicity of coats, in which he is buried like a cauliflower, the upper one reaching to his heels. . . . He enjoys great consequence and consideration along the road; has frequent conferences with the village housewives, who look upon him as a man of great trust and dependence; and he seems to have a good understanding with every bright-eyed country lass. . . . When off the box his hands are thrust in the pockets of his greatcoat, and he rolls about the inn-yard with an air of the most absolute lordliness.' As we read this, a vision of the immortal Weller Senior rises before our eyes, and we recognise how admirably Irving has hit off the broad characteristics of that class of which Dickens' creation, in spite of its caricature, must for ever remain the most finished type. The humour with which the sayings and doings of the three youngsters, whom the coach is taking home for the Christmas holidays, are recorded, is of that tender sort which provokes tears as readily as laughter. The little rascals, with their unbounded delight at the prospect of the unlimited joys of a six weeks' holiday, with their eagerness to greet their old pony Bantam, who was 'according to their talk pos-

sessed of more virtues than any steed since the days of Bucephalus,' appeal irresistibly to our feelings, reminding us of the time when we 'had neither known care nor sorrow, and a holiday was the summit of earthly felicity.' The charming picture of the meeting of the youngsters with the old family servants, accompanied by Carlo the pointer and the redoubtable Bantam, is inimitable. 'Off they set at last; one on the pony with the dog bounding and barking before him, and the others holding John's hands; both talking at once, and overpowering him by questions about home and with school anecdotes.' The country inn, where the traveller meets with Frank Bracebridge, is admirably sketched. The obliteration of these old coaching houses has been a necessary, but somewhat melancholy, accompaniment of modern progress. No one who has travelled much in England can fail to have come across numerous examples of these old inns, 'whose glory has departed, and whose place knows them no more.' I remember a striking instance in the Feathers' Inn on the Cambridge road, a few miles out of Ware in Hertfordshire, which possessed, — and indeed still possesses although mouldering into decay, — stabling for fifty horses, but which, instead of resounding with the bustle of travel, is now deserted, save by the casual ploughman calling in for a pint of beer. It is well for these old houses that they live in the pages of more than one great writer, so that, although deserted and abandoned to decay, they will for long retain their glory as the most perfect embodiments of comfort and cheery hospitality.

The thoroughness with which Irving enters into the spirit of an English Christmas is exemplified by the manner in which he brings his traveller to Bracebridge Hall. When we first meet him in the stage-coach he has no fixed destination, but he comes across an old travelling acquaintance, who, with impulsive good-fellowship,