

clear air two shots in rapid succession, horribly distinct, and followed by a vague sound that might have been a shout or cry.

The two girls started and gazed into each other's faces. Then each began to reason away the fear she read in the other's eyes.

"It was only someone firing off his gun before he went home," said Dickie.

"They don't do that now; but there could not

be anything wrong, they are all so accustomed to guns," said Betty. But there rose before her Roger's face of despair, and his words, "I am madly jealous!" and the sunset clouds glowed and burned against the pale blue sky, and reflected themselves in a pool at her feet, till to her dazzled eyes the whole world seemed blood-red. Why, why had Fred said Roger was shooting like a demon to-day?

END OF CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

ABOUT 'BUSES.

BY F. M. HOLMES.



AS it a trick? Was it a little dodge on the part of the lady to escape another fare? The conductor seemed to think so, and spoke strongly.

Now, when passengers pass certain points travelling in a 'bus, of course extra prices are charged; and the lady in question quietly passed the point up to which she had paid, and when, some little distance on, her attention was drawn to this fact by the conductor, she seemed

quite innocent of the matter. Thus she had a longer ride for her penny than she had paid for—presumably on the way she wanted to go!

From the conductor's manner and language we imagined he was used to this trick—if such it was in this case. But it is to be feared that some conductors themselves sin in a similar manner by—keeping back, shall we call it?—some of the money they take in fares. It may be urged that they and the drivers have to fee the horse-keepers at the yards whence the 'buses start, and that this curious development of the tipping system may be held to justify the peculations—at least, to some extent. But that the system is thoroughly wrong we suppose none would deny. However, if the conductor taxes his fares, he apparently objects very much to his fares—in human form—taxing him.

Another trick we have seen practised on a conductor was the stopping of the 'bus by a roguish street-boy. The conductor was busy on the top collecting his fares, when up on the foot-board jumps the mischievous little urchin, sounds the gong, and pulls up the unsuspecting driver. The 'bus stops. What is it? Street-boy pulls again, and on rumbles the vehicle. Down comes Mr. Conductor, and on this occasion leaps from his 'bus, and, chasing the boy, inflicts condign punishment; then has to tear along the crowded street to catch his carriage.

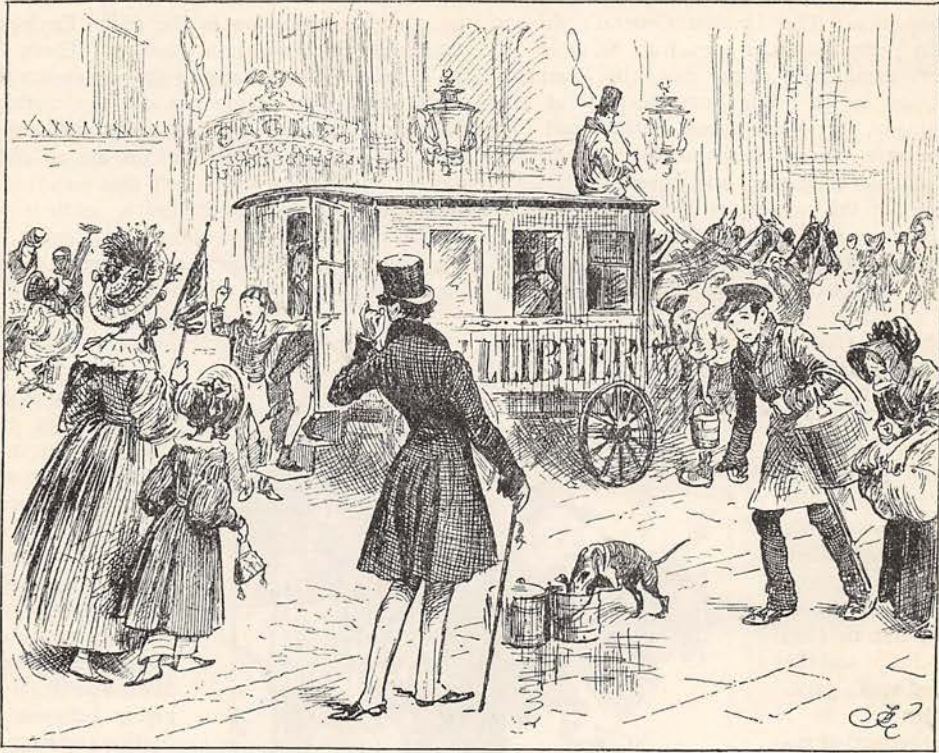
'Buses were once called "Shillibeers": for the simple reason, we suppose, that they were started in London by an enterprising individual of that name. He was an undertaker in the City Road. We do not know what gave him the idea. Perhaps he copied it from France; perhaps he originated it. In any case, the date of the running of the first 'bus was the 4th of July, 1829. Quite a "glorious fourth," indeed, for the numbers who now make use of this cheap and convenient means of conveyance. Yet of the number who do so, how many know of Shillibeer?

That first 'bus was a large three-horse affair, and plied, not "up and down the City Road," as the song says, but from Paddington to the City. It provided for twenty-two passengers inside, but it was not until 1849 that a seat was added on the roof.

The 'bus is significant of the growth of great cities. Its popularity is characteristic of changes in the habits of their citizens. When persons lived at their places of business they did not require the morning 'bus. But when they radiated from the centre to the suburbs, when Clapham, Islington, Canonbury, and Paddington rose into great and increasing request as residential localities for men whose business led them to the City, then was required the useful 'bus.

Charles Dickens makes but few references to the conveyance destined to become such a feature in metropolitan life. But one of his "Sketches by Boz" is devoted to the subject, and another tells of "The last Cab-driver and the first Omnibus Cad." Cad here is not, we believe, intended as a term of opprobrium, but as short for conductor, as cadging or touting for passengers. The particular "Cad" mentioned was a certain Mr. Barker—an "assistant waterman to the hackney coach stand," who perceived the injury that eventually would be inflicted on coach and cab stands by the new system, and, like a shrewd man, made terms with the enemy, and got an engagement on an omnibus. This appears to have been the "Royal William," running from Lisson Grove to the City. But though the new system has grown far more than the real or supposititious Mr. Barker, or possibly Dickens himself, surmised, yet there are cabs enough still left in London!

From Dickens, too, we gain an idea of the speedy



THE FIRST 'BUS.

increase in the number of 'buses. He speaks of their "rapid increase in the Paddington Road." This supports references from other sources, that the demand for them grew, and they multiplied accordingly. We find it said that about 1844 there were some 1,400 omnibuses, and 200 on various ways to Paddington. And when, in 1855, the association now known as the London General Omnibus Company was started, there were numerous proprietors of 'buses in existence, of which several were bought up, though some few of the others remain even until this day. That so many should have been in existence within about twenty-five years of that first 'bus of the enterprising Shillibeer shows how popular the vehicles had become.

There were several Frenchmen connected with that scheme of the London General, but they gradually left the concern. Two of the directors, however, now reside in Paris. The scheme was started "under French laws," but in 1859 was altered as at present. Some improvements it may be said to have effected, but it was the Road Car Company, started in 1880, which made the most change. They introduced the garden seats on the top of the vehicle, and, better still—especially for ladies—the staircase-way leading to the dizzy heights above. Previously men had to clamber up almost as they could.

Yet a third company has recently appeared, "The London Omnibus Carriage Company," which places the wheels under the 'bus, an arrangement that per-

mits the body of the vehicle to be wider. Certainly this company's 'buses are handsome, light, and airy. To some of these carriages inner wheels have been ingeniously fitted, so that should the outer wheel come to grief no disaster need be feared. An enthusiastic conductor was one evening at great pains to explain this to me. What would our friend Shillibeer think of 'bus enterprise in London now?

And though the fares are very low, yet the profits are good, since the London General Omnibus Company pay a ten per cent. dividend, and the Road Car Company four and a half per cent. for 1889. We suspect the cheapness, however, in many cases really yields a better return, because with the ever-popular penny for a fare, many persons ride for short distances and the passengers are constantly changing. Thus along a penny distance three or four passengers may occupy the same seat, and the lucky company receive fourpence, whereas, had the "five sous" been the rule, the seat might have been vacant the whole way. They do not seem to have learned this in Paris even yet. It is one of the things they do *not* do better in France, even if they did give us the idea of the omnibus.

That name "omnibus" is, of course, a Latin word, signifying "for all." It exactly describes a vehicle which is not a private carriage, but literally "for all" who pay their fare.

And now about wages. From the report of the last Road Car Company's meeting, we find that, according

to the chairman, the company gives better wages, while its men's hours are not longer than those of other similar companies. The London General's drivers get 6s. a day; the Road Car men, from 6s. to 6s. 6d. The former's conductors, 4s. per day; the Road Car conductors, 4s. to 5s. The horse-keepers of the former company, 3s.; while those of the Road Car Company receive 3s. 5d. Perhaps the latter do not levy black-mail on conductors and drivers. Certainly the tickets which the conductors give to the passengers indicate there is a check on the receipts.

Food for the horses, however, is quite as great, if not a greater, charge than wages. From the London General's accounts for the latter half of 1889, it seems that the average charge for food for each stud—*i.e.*, we understand, eleven horses belonging to each 'bus in work—was only £130 for the six months. This was much less than in 1888, when the cost was £145, and in 1886, when the cost was £134; but in 1889 maize was cheap, and the price of food-stuffs generally was low.

A similar reduction appears in the Road Car Company's accounts. The cost of feeding per horse, per week, was 9s. 10d. in the latter six months of 1889, while in the year preceding it was 10s. 5d. How closely expenses follow on income is seen in the fact that the average earnings of each car were £16 18s. 1d., and the expenses £16 4s. 1d., giving a weekly profit of

14s. per car; while in the same time of 1888 the average profit was but 6s. 9d. per car; and this, though the average earnings were £17 1s. 4d., for the expenses were £16 14s. 7d. The difference of profit appears to be almost entirely due to the reduced cost of food. Small as this profit seems to be, yet there must be a good many penny passengers to make up a total of £17 in receipts.

But there are lower fares still! There are one-horse vehicles plying for short distances for one halfpenny. How can they pay? Well, they have no conductor, and, as we have just said, but one horse. Such a 'bus plies regularly up and down Tottenham Court Road, and passengers, for instance, by trams which end at Euston Road, find it, no doubt, a convenience for conveyance to and from Oxford Street. It was a shrewd idea for the London General to cut in here and reap something from the competing tram-traffic.

But to whom are the fares paid? To no one. There is a box which the driver's eye can see through an opening or window in the roof. Each passenger rattles his halfpenny into this box. There seems to be a code of honour among the passengers that each shall pay. If a person has not the nimble brown halfpenny, he must seek change from his fellows or from the driver. These vehicles are so convenient, and we imagine answer so well, that we should not be surprised at the great multiplication of their number.

The railway companies are now running 'buses for the convenience of their passengers, though those conveyances compete with the cabbies rather than with other omnibuses.

On giving notice, paterfamilias, who may have to convoy a large family, with baggage galore, to the seaside, can have for a fixed charge a well-appointed vehicle at his door, ready to transport the whole in comfort to the station. And, as we are speaking of the various kinds, there are the large three-horse 'buses of the Metropolitan Railway plying between Portland Station and Regent Street. The drivers of these important-looking carriages are favoured above their professional brethren by having a curious umbrella fixed over their heads. As the ponderous machine rolls along, the umbrella seems to shake as though it would fall, but it never does overwhelm the Jehu it is placed to protect.

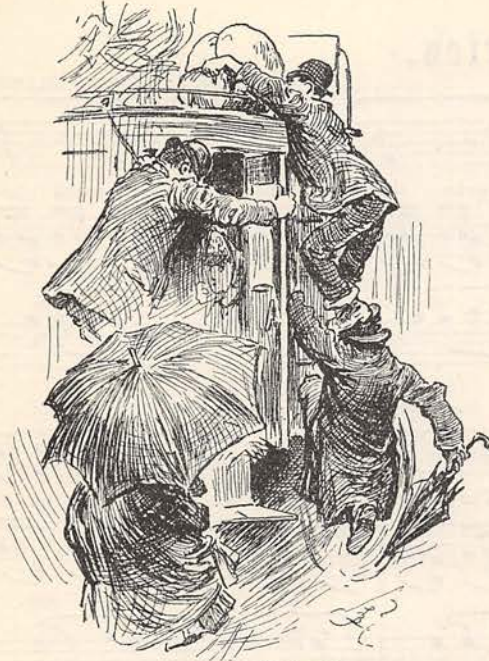
Then there are the "Pirate" 'buses. Of these

beware. They fly no black flag with skull and cross-bones; their designs are not murderous, but mercenary. They appear like other 'buses, and quite innocent and useful. But the luckless passenger may find he has to pay sixpence instead of a penny, or at least double fares. This may not be ruinous, but it is annoying. It causeth the man to mutter, and the woman to speak out a bit of her mind. It breaketh the cheeriness of the jolting journey; you feel you have been "done" or "had," deprived of your money unjustly, and no one likes that.

There is no help for it. No law, of course, prevails, fixing the rate of fares, and these private speculators running their vehicles along well-known routes can legally charge as they choose. We have seen a story somewhere that Mr. Gladstone was thus taken in once by a pirate 'bus, and the ex-Premier revenged himself by warning all unsuspecting passengers about to enter



THE RAILWAY 'BUS.



THE LUBBERS' LADDER.

of the true state of the case. Whether true or not, it shows how the pirate may be punished in a very practical way. But as prevention is certainly better than punishment in this case, the unaccustomed passenger should see that the name of some well-known company or proprietor is on the 'bus, or inspect the table of fares on entering the vehicle. This last resource, however, is an awkward one, as it is unpleasant to have to stop the 'bus and leave amidst the abuse of the conductor, who will probably demand his fare all the same. What is required for the public protection is that the table of fares be posted in a conspicuous position *outside* the vehicle, near the entrance.

On the difficult question of the men's hours we shall say but little. They are too long. At a meeting held not so very long since, it was stated that the men worked from fourteen to eighteen hours per day. From investigations we have ourselves made this seems about correct, though we should have said seventeen hours.

Times for meals, too, are said to be irregular and inadequate. This grievance, again, can be remedied by shorter shifts of hours. It will, perhaps, surprise some people to learn how many men are engaged in the 'bus and tram traffic of London. Mr. T. Sutherst, at the meeting referred to, said there were five omnibus and twelve tramway companies in London, and some 10,000 men were altogether engaged; the capital employed was about four million pounds, while the profits were some £250,000 a year. An enormous development this—including the trams—of the venture of the enterprising Shillibeer in 1829. The men engaged would, with their families, make quite a respectable-sized town. Yet so vast is London, that their numbers are but as the proverbial drop in the bucket to the myriads of the mighty City.

The use of 'buses seems to be increasing. The traffic receipts of the London General amounted to £12,578 os. 4d. in a week in March, 1890, notwithstanding the lowness of fares; while in the corresponding week of the preceding year they were £11,805 6s. 9d. The Road Car Company's receipts for the same week were £3,520 os. 2d., and in the preceding year £2,402 9s. 1d., showing in both cases a substantial increase. In fact, London is so large, and the advantage of cheap conveyance so great, that these vehicles meet an immense public want, and meet it, too, in a fairly satisfactory manner.

In the rural districts, 'buses connecting with railways are sometimes dignified by the name of "coach." Some are, indeed, different from the London 'bus, in that much of the space at the top is fairly level for luggage, while there is but a second seat behind the driver, capable of accommodating four or five persons.

We remember a ride on one, when piled with luggage and persons somewhat mixed on the top; the two horses were thought unequal to the task of dragging it up certain hills, and finally a fiery steed, used to shunting on the railway, was attached in front, and a porter sitting jolting astride, the 'bus made a start; but, alas! now and again the fastenings gave way, and on went the gaunt, bony beast with his jolting rider, leaving us behind. It was a sight, no doubt, to make the Jehus of the City shout with laughter, but all the same that 'bus sometimes required the most careful driving—and got it. When returning, it was again very crowded. It was well there were no lynx-eyed City police on the watch, or some passengers might have been left behind.



THE SIRENS' STAIRCASE.