

had plenty. As soon as I stole it I was sorry, and when I turned round to go towards you, I meant to give it back to you."

But the lines of her mouth relaxed not a bit. She finished answering the questions that were put to her, and left the witness-box without putting in the usual feminine plea for leniency to the offender.

"Why didn't you ask the magistrate not to be hard on him?" asked one of the women she passed, as she left the room.

"Because he deserves all he gets," she replied, without a touch of sympathy in her tones.

"Four months!" thundered his Worship three minutes later, after the prisoner had attempted to give a garbled account of how he came to take the purse. Not one person in the court-room but thought the sentence

rather severe for so small a crime, but it is more than probable that when his Worship pronounced it the thought of the pawn-ticket that the purse contained rankled in his mind, and made him wish that he might send the culprit up for years instead of months. And Alice Moreton, remembering that she went supperless to bed while the thief was well fed and cared for, thought the sentence all too just.

It was something over a year ago that the court-room scene was enacted. The man did his four months in prison, and returned to his out-o'-work comrades. Alice Moreton is stenographer and typewriter still, and a boarder at one of the Homes for Working Girls. The purse, with its silver initials, hangs in a pawnshop window, an unredeemed pledge—a reminder of one of life's mockeries.



THE ROMANCE OF ROAD-MAKING.

BY HENRY FRITH, AUTHOR OF "RAILWAY ROMANCES," "THE ROMANCE OF ENGINEERING," ETC. ETC.



FROM the Carthaginians and the Romans we have learned the art of road-making, but around those early scientifically constructed highways but little of romance is gathered. When the paved road was

worn out or sunken, when highways ran as paths over the hills, when fosse-ways and hollow-ways were traversed by pilgrims and mule-trains, or haunted by footpads and outlaws, the romance of the road may be said to have begun.

It may surprise many to learn that road-making is a comparatively lately accepted occupation. Smeaton, the engineer, was looked down upon for attempting to engineer the highways; and until the middle of the last century Scotland was barren of roads.

Going back a little, we may trace the gradual development of road-making from the time when the Strand and Temple Lane were

"much choked by bushes," so that tolls were raised to keep the way clear.

In 1736 it was a two-hours' journey from the City of London to Kensington, and the complaints respecting the state of the roads were loud and frequent. The Turnpike Act was passed in 1755, but the roads then called "turnpikes" did not appreciably improve. Although the people grumbled at the condition of the highways, they resented the imposts for their repair and maintenance. Toll-gates were demolished; and when the bar was replaced, "Rebecca and her daughters" arose, and swept the gates, bars, and cottages



"BLIND JACK."

of the toll-collectors away. Moreover, in the romance of the road we read how many curious objections there were to the improvement of the highways. The City trader objected because country produce would enter into competition with him. The saddler would be ruined if riding were replaced by coach-travelling; spurriers would be "in the Bench" for the same reason; Thames watermen would suffer if roads were made fit to drive upon; and horses would deteriorate!

But the roads slowly improved; communications were opened up, and road-making received a tremendous impulse from Telford, Metcalf, and the celebrated General Wade, who, in his Scottish campaigns, had seen the necessity for good roads in the North.

As the couplet runs—

"Had you seen these roads before they were made,
You'd lift up your hands and bless General Wade!"

Roads were so narrow that in hundreds of instances the waggons would block the way; and in cases in which two rival teams of pack-animals encountered each other there were disputes, and at times pitched battles, between the teamsters for the sound places. Drivers of the waggons, too, objected to the gentry driving about; they considered that the grand people "ought to stay at home, and not interfere with the carriers."

From a perusal of these facts—incidents of almost daily occurrence less than two hundred years ago—it will be perceived that road-making as we regard it now was not undertaken by anyone of influence. As time went on, coaches began to run as public vehicles; but to Thomas Telford and a few others the true engineering of roads is due. Smeaton, as we said, was looked down upon for attempting

to engineer the highway; but perhaps the most remarkable of all our early road engineers—in his way—was John Metcalf, whose history is as curious as any romance, and the incidents of whose career will repay perusal.

Metcalf was born in 1717, and as soon as possible was sent to school, where, when he was still very young, he unfortunately was attacked by small-pox, which rendered him entirely blind. This was a terrible infliction; nevertheless,

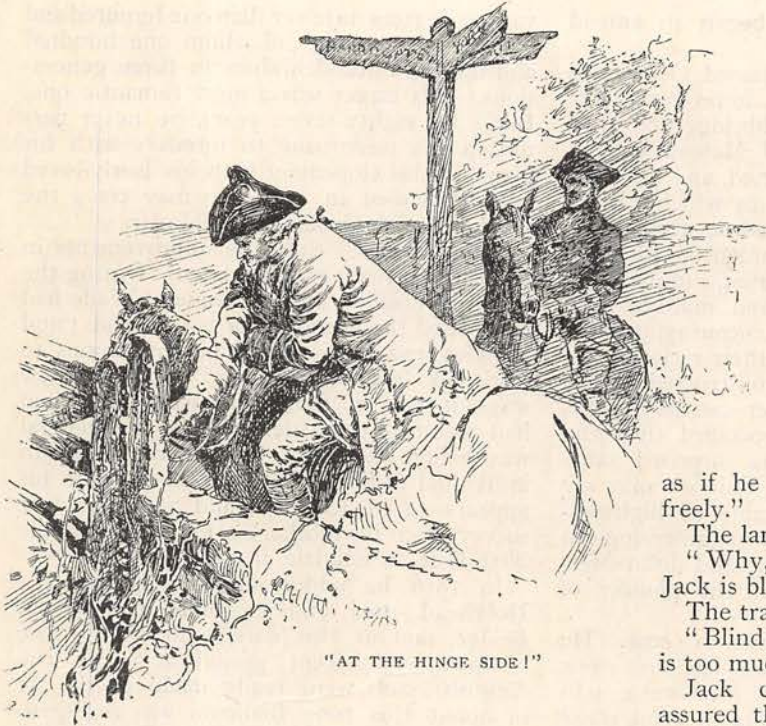
though he could no longer study, he found ample field for his energies in play and in riding. He was proficient in practical joking, in swimming, and in hunting. He was known as "the blind huntsman," or "Blind Jack of Knaresborough"; and in some way he managed to become acquainted with the Yorkshire roads and paths, and able to traverse them unerringly. This study of highways was eventually most useful to him; and about 1740 he seems to have known the direction and condition of numerous roads and paths. This curious faculty was on several occasions

turned to account, but in no instance more completely than in the circumstances detailed in the following anecdote; though, as he was in demand as a fiddler at parties, his exploits were frequent in his progress from place to place, unattended and in darkness.

One afternoon he was lounging about the stables of a certain hostel in the city of York, when he overheard a traveller inquiring for a guide to Harrogate. Metcalf and the landlord were great friends, and the latter unhesitatingly recommended "Jack," whose infirmity he, of course, carefully concealed. The arrangements were made; Jack consented and mounted, riding in advance of the traveller through the bar-gate, and so on to the



"THE STRANGER RODE BESIDE HIS GUIDE."



"AT THE HINGE SIDE!"

Harrogate road and across the moor. As the darkness grew, the stranger rode beside his guide, and made many inquiries respecting features of the landscape, houses, and estates, which Jack, still riding with confidence, answered readily, and no idea of his infirmity seems to have entered the mind of the traveller.

Thus the pair proceeded, and Jack was never at fault, taking turnings calmly, and nursing only one fear—Would he be able to strike the gate leading into the Knaresborough road? Had he been alone, he would have searched for it, but much searching was then almost impossible. Fortunately, there was another gate in the park wall which bounded one side of the "road," opposite to the Knaresborough-gate turning. Jack skirted the wall, hoping to descry the gate, but he was uneasy. Fortunately, the wind blew over the park gate from the east, and the sudden puff gave "Blind Jack" his cue; he turned to the opposite side and tried to open the gate—but at the hinge-side!

The traveller noticed this, and came to Jack's assistance, but the guide laid the blame on his restive horse, and soon

led the way again along the old clattering causeways, or hollow-ways, and paths, in and out, until a remark by his companion, skilfully elicited, told him that Harrogate lights were twinkling ahead.

When the traveller had dismounted at his inn, Blind Jack led his steed to the stables, and the gentleman made some remark to the host concerning his guide. He mentioned the incident of the gate, and the queer look in the man's eyes—

as if he had "been drinking too freely."

The landlord smiled.

"Why, sir, don't you know that Jack is blind?" he asked.

The traveller was incredulous.

"Blind!" he exclaimed. "This is too much! Call him in."

Jack came in, and personally assured the guest that his sight was wanting.

"If I had been aware of that, I would not have trusted myself with you for a hundred pounds," said the bewildered traveller.

"But I would not have lost my way, sir, for a thousand," was the blind man's reply.

Nor was this the only exploit of the road-maker. He at one time walked from London to Harrogate as quickly as his patron, Colonel Liddell, travelled in his carriage or coach: a striking commentary upon the condition of



"JACK LED HIS STEED TO THE STABLES."

the roads, which Metcalf began to amend in 1765.

At that time a person named Ostler had taken the contract for the improvement of the road between Boroughbridge and Harrogate, and to him applied Metcalf, carrier, fiddler, ex-soldier, now married, and a father. An agreement was come to by which "Blind Jack" bound himself to construct three miles of highway. He soon commenced his task. He procured the necessary men, and informed them where they would find material; he kept them steadily at work, encouraging them by his presence, conveying their rations himself to the sheds he had constructed by the wayside. A trusty overseer carried out his plans, and so within the specified time the roads were finished, to the surprised satisfaction of the contractor. This we may say was one of the first attempts at highway-making by calculation or engineering in England by an Englishman; and John Metcalf is rightly regarded as the pioneer of road-engineering.

But greater triumphs were to come. He found that to properly complete his work a bridge must be built; but how was a man who had hardly seen a bridge to erect one? Nevertheless, the road-maker sent in his name, his suggestions were accepted, Metcalf attended to answer the questions of the commissioners; and so lucid were his replies and so accurate his deductions, that he was entrusted with the contract, and, notwithstanding all opposition, succeeded in completing it satisfactorily.

In after years he performed an original feat which, like other first successes, has been attributed to George Stephenson. Metcalf in his road-making came upon a piece of marshy swampy ground, over which the chief contractor declared it was impossible to carry the highway, and a *détour* of some three-quarters of a mile appeared absolutely necessary. But Metcalf declared that it was quite feasible to take the road across, and he was promised the same pay as for the longer route if he succeeded in his undertaking. By throwing down heather, and hurdles, and gravel, he made a foundation so that he was enabled to build his road, and make the way as firm as Stephenson, many years subsequently, made the railway across Chat Moss on the same principle. Metcalf again asserted his talent in the construction of the Wakefield road, which he carried over marshes of considerable extent and depth, thus fairly earning the title of an engineer of original genius.

Metcalf continued his last profession till he was seventy years of age, and then he retired. He died in 1810, aged ninety-two, leaving in

various degrees no fewer than one hundred and fourteen descendants, of whom one hundred and ten were grandchildren in three generations. His career was a most romantic one. Blind for eighty-seven years, he never permitted his misfortune to interfere with his plans; in his elopement with his dearly-loved wife, who died in 1778, we may trace the incidents of the ballad of Lochinvar.

From Metcalf's time the improvements in the English roads may be dated. During the Scottish rebellion in 1715, General Wade had recognised the necessity for better roads; and the Government set him and his troops to work to 'evel, bridge, and construct new ways, in lieu of the tracks which till then had assumed the title. While the general was being blessed or banned, according to individual feeling, Thomas Telford made his appearance in England, and took his first survey, from his mother's arms, of his humble birthplace, in Eskdale, in 1757.

In 1816 he undertook to construct the Holyhead road and to build the Menai Bridge, and at this date assures us of the comparatively recent period at which the English roads were really made good. At or about this time Bianconi was trying to run his cars in Ireland, and to open up the traffic of "the most distressful country that ever has been seen."

Telford found plenty of occupation in making the still excellent Holyhead road, formerly a track rugged and uneven, blocked by boulders or by snow, and intersected by a troublesome and dangerous tidal ferry, thence continued along high places, unprotected, dark, and steep in its gradients. In those early nineteenth century days the coaches were armed, the guard tried to act up to his profession, and the highwaymen revelled on the Heath as boldly as the witches of Shakespeare. Carriers drove a dozen horses, and the cross-roads were the central news-points for the exchange of intelligence. The journey from London to Holyhead occupied four days, and the channel passage to Dunleary or Howth was an unknown quantity in time in those days of sailing "packets," dirty, inconvenient, and at the mercy of the winds as the vessels were.

Yet, strange to say, the very excellence of the highways now intersecting Great Britain in all directions caused a decadence in the coachmen of those days. The roads were too good! The skill of the stage-coachman of Mr. Weller's time was not required. We may remember the anecdote related of the electors who were so dexterously overturned by Mr. Weller, senior, on a certain "nasty bit of road."

To Telford and Macadam the modern "metallic" road is due. Macadam's process consisted in the employment of pieces of granite of a certain weight and size on the highway. By these means the stones were fitted more closely together when pressed down, and the heavy roller consolidated them. Stone-breaking in those days—forty years ago—was a roadside employment; now it is a punishment, almost!

So the romance connected with the highway gradually faded. The highwaymen, the stage-coach, the post-chaise, the turnpike, and the many incidents connected with the early roads, have disappeared. Road-making is now a most unromantic occupation; but in the country, in Dorset, Somerset, and Devon, in Yorkshire, and other counties, are old paths which remind us of the old tales and romances of the early days of road-making. Has not the Devonshire lane been compared by Mr. Marriott to marriage? and in a magazine dedicated to the family circle a few verses

may be permitted; thus: Marriage is much like a Devonshire lane, because—

"In the first place it's long, and when you are in it
It holds you as fast as a cage does a linnet.
However unpleasant this road may be found,
Drive forward you must; there is no turning round.

But though it is long, it is not very wide,
As two are the most that together can ride;
And e'en then it's a chance that they get in a pother,
And jostle, and cross, and run foul of each other.

Oft Poverty meets them with mendicant looks;
And Care passes by them with dirt-laden crooks;
Or Strife's grazing wheels try between them to pass,
Or Stubbornness blocks up the way on an ass!

But still the high banks within which we are pent
With blossoms and berries are richly besprent;
And the conjugal fence which forbids us to roam
Looks lovely when deck'd with the comforts of home.

Then long let the journey be, narrow the way;
I'll rejoice that I've never a turnpike to pay!
Whate'er others say, I will never complain,
Though Marriage be just like a Devonshire lane!"



By L. T. MEADE Author of "The Medicine Lady," etc. etc.

CHAPTER XL.—THE DIAMOND STAR.



DAY before the wedding arrived at last. The weather was particularly fine. This special spring was long remembered as coming after a severe and dreary winter. The sun shone brightly, the flowers bloomed, Nature was at her sweetest and best.

She held much promise in her hands, and day after day she showered fresh blessings on the happy earth.

On the morning of the day before the wedding, Patty went early to see her friend. She found Margot in the small drawing-room of the little Kensington house, surrounded by wedding presents of all sorts.

"I really don't know what to do with them," she exclaimed, as Patty came in. "They make an awful litter all over the place, and I'm perfectly sick of writing to thank people for them."

"You are very ungrateful," said Patty, who had had very few wedding presents on her own account.

"No, I'm not," replied Margot, "or, at