

I sank down upon the oaken seat now, and, fending the letter as if it were a treasure of gold, I buried my face in my hands, and the tears of weakness and of gladness trickled upon my fingers. Long had my secret lain like a heavy burden upon my mind. But now the burden was lifted suddenly from me, and the joy was a joy hardly to be borne. Nor was there ever one so gentle to another in trouble as Israel Wolf to me in that hour.

"Master Hugh," said he, laying his hand upon my arm to comfort me, "if it be indeed as thou sayest, then is this a great day for thee. God witness that midnight shall not be struck twice and find us in the King's house. My time is spent now, and to delay here longer would be to imperil thee; but to-morrow at this hour you shall hear me in the garden; and if I am the bearer of ill news then, why say that another and not old Israel

comes to thee! Meanwhile, should Will Monk trouble thee, here is that which may hold him to obedience. He means ill to thee, and there is that abroad which may make thee the night of thy greatest danger. I say no more—watch him well, and do not forget that a man heavy in sleep is death's neighbour. Count me friend always, for the words which thou hast spoken to him with the devil's face."

He drew his cloak the closer about his bright eyes, and, snatching up the lantern, he passed into the dark of the garden. Long I listened to the fall of his foot upon the gravel walk; and only when a great stillness fell upon the house, did a moonbeam show me what it was he had left behind him upon the table.

But when the ray fell there, I saw a dagger, such as the French use, and all the hilt of it was sparkling with shining gems.

*(To be continued.)*

ROUND THE ROYAL MEWS.



It can hardly be said that, from the outside, the appearance of the Royal Mews is peculiarly interesting. A long, dark-coloured wall, surmounted by a row of funereal-looking urns, runs from Buckingham Pal-

ace to the house of the Crown equerry, and behind it the great courtyard with its stables and

coach-houses lies hid. Above the wall the roof of the riding school is all that can be seen by the pedestrian, until he comes to the great iron gates, where the red tunic of the perambulating sentry lends a much-needed splash of colour to the scene. Through the bars he has a glimpse of the great archway which leads into the interior, with possibly a knot of the royal grooms in their smart liveries standing beneath it. Nothing more, however, for on his left watches a porter in the gatehouse to check his further inquisitiveness. But, after he has shown his necessary permit to this functionary and signed his name as a guarantee of good faith, he may pass within and, with a groom for his guide, go the rounds.

The Royal Mews was built in the year 1824,

at the time when George IV., with John Nash for his architect, was arranging for the rebuilding of the "Queen's House," as Buckingham Palace was then generally called. In

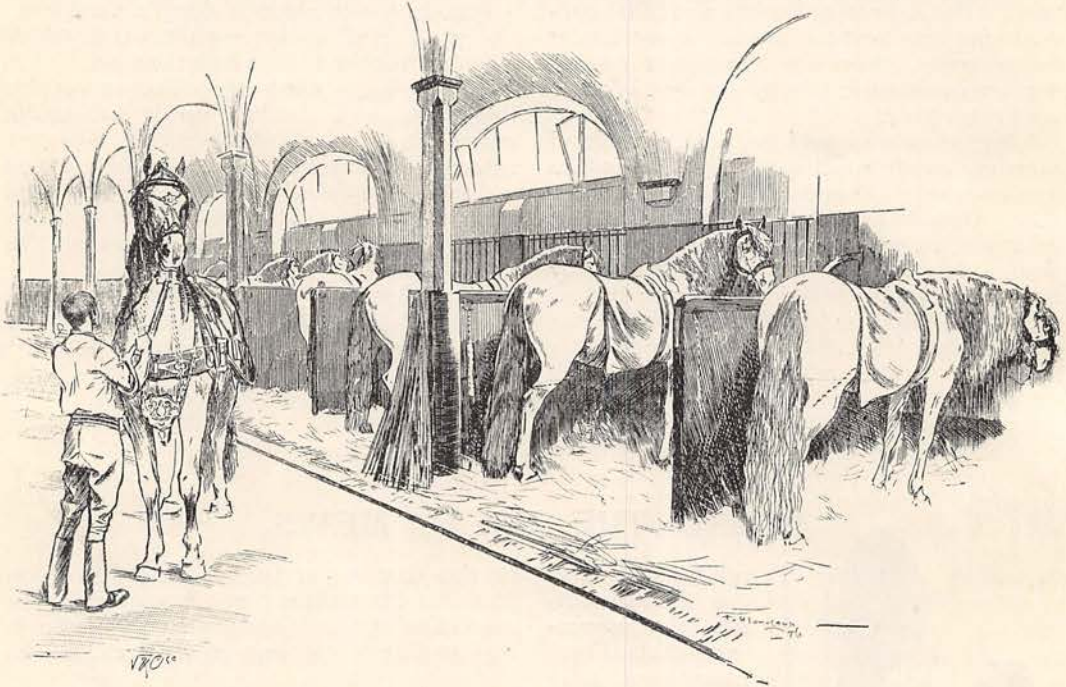


THE ENTRANCE.

1846, when the Palace was enlarged to its present size, the Mews was also partially rebuilt, but the ground plan remained the same. To hide it from the windows of the Palace, trees and shrubs were planted and a large artificial mound raised, on the side of which a summer-house was erected. To enter the

Mews the visitor must pass under a heavy Doric archway surmounted by a clock-tower, which is of some interest as the clock which it contains is by Vulliamy and is faced by stone dials which are over six feet in diameter. The courtyard in which he now finds

straw forms a neat border to the straw beds, and everything is scrupulously neat and tidy, as is the case all through the royal stables. Coming to the second side of the square, we find two stables running at right angles to the wall of the building. They are fitted in



THE QUEEN'S EIGHT CREAMS IN THE STABLE.

himself is square, and of such considerable size that it affords an excellent ground for quietly training pairs and fours which have not previously been driven together. On three of its sides are stables, and on the fourth is a long row of coach-houses, which contain the state and semi-state coaches. The carriages, to the number of between seventy and eighty, for the use of the Court are not kept in this courtyard but in a long array of coach-houses at its back.

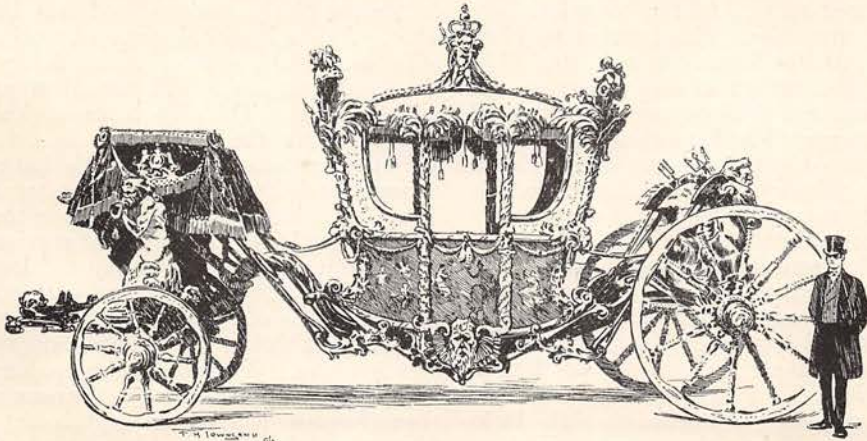
The first stables that are entered lie on the left of the great archway. They are two in number and of six stalls apiece. They are not, of course, built with the latest improvements as to flooring, mangers, and hayracks, but they are lofty, and allow plenty of air to circulate through them—a matter of the first importance if horses are to be kept healthy. Bay is the predominant colour, and there are several well-bred animals amongst the twelve. They are principally hacks used by the equerries and royal attendants when escorting the Queen. Above each stall is painted the name of the horse that stands there. Plaited

the same simple and old-fashioned manner as the first, but are larger, each containing twelve stalls. The horses are for the most part bays, and amongst their number are several which have, in former times, been regularly ridden by the Princesses Victoria and Maud. The daughters of the Prince have not ridden in London for some time, although they take horse exercise at Sandringham and elsewhere in the country. Some two years ago the late Prince Henry of Battenberg and Princess Beatrice rode together in the Park, but that Princess was the last of the ladies of the Royal Family that have availed themselves of these riding horses. In the second stable stands a tall bay charger "Swordsman," the favourite horse of the late Prince Henry and one he often used at reviews and military functions. He is a quiet, well-tempered animal, but with plenty of good looks and a fine action. Next to him stands "Sultan," a horse which has frequently carried the Duke of Connaught. Sprinkled throughout these two stables are several well-bred animals of considerable value.

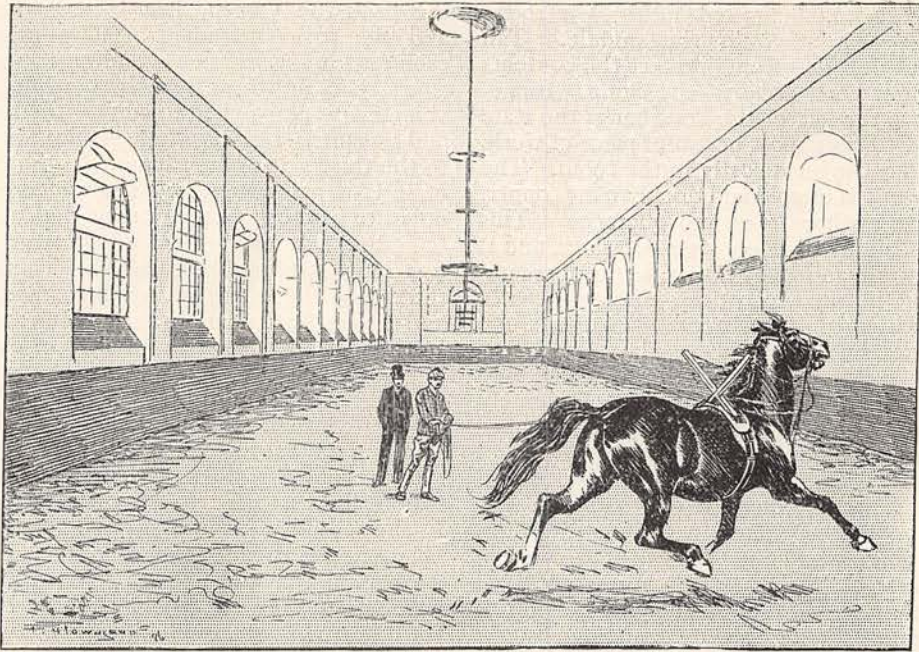
We now come to the first of the harness rooms. It is a long and rather low room, heated by a stove in the middle. Tall cabinets with glass fronts protect the contents from their chief enemy—the damp. Immediately to the left of the door hangs the state harness. It is a most beautiful piece of work, and by far the most costly in the room. The metal work is of gold laid thickly over copper, and the leather is of red morocco. This harness is only used on state occasions, and is shown to advantage by the well-known cream-coloured horses which draw the state coach. It was last used at the wedding of the Duke of York and the Princess May. It is exceedingly heavy, and each horse when fully caparisoned carries a burden of considerably over a hundredweight. Opposite to it hangs the harness used by the Prince of Wales on semi-state occasions. The Prince has his own horses at Marlborough House and at Sandringham, but at such functions as drawing-rooms and levées he uses a semi-state carriage and a pair of black Flemish horses provided from the Royal Mews. The metal portion of this harness is of brass, and the richly-wrought arms are well shown off by the patent leather foundation into which they are fastened. Besides these two sets, there is in this room a quantity of beautiful harness for teams of two, four, or six horses. It is set aside for the use of Princes of the blood on semi-state occasions and for royal visitors. Conspicuous amongst it is a set of four-horse harness, which was carried by the four bays which drew the Shahzada to the Guildhall banquet last year.

On leaving this room we come to two stables, each containing twelve stalls, which are in all points exactly similar to those already described. Here stand the horses which are used for ordinary carriage work,

such as meeting the royal train and conveying back the Queen, her ladies-in-waiting, and the royal attendants. Two carriages, each drawn by four horses, always meet the royal train on these occasions, while other vehicles are despatched to convey the luggage and servants. Leaving these stables, we come to the third side of the square. In the middle of it is a gateway, which is situated exactly opposite to the great archway at the entrance. On either side of this second gateway stand two long stables, each capable of containing thirty-two horses. They are broad and high, and the ventilation and drainage are excellent. In the first of these are a number of carriage horses, which are, like those already mentioned, used for ordinary carriage work. Several of them are remarkably fine animals, standing fully seventeen hands high. In this stable there are no less than five matched "fours," accustomed to be driven together. In the second stable are the most celebrated horses in the Royal Mews. To the left of the door stand the eight cream-coloured horses, which draw the state coach. George III. and the kings that followed him invariably preferred white, but at the accession of the Queen a number of cream-coloured horses were presented to her by the King of Hanover. Those now in the royal stables are, of course, descendants of the horses that came over in 1837. They were bred at Hampton Court, and at that palace there is now a number of others of the same breed and colour ready to take the place of any animal that is injured or dies. Beautiful creatures they certainly look with their glossy coats, silken manes, and well-kept tails that sweep the ground. Special grooms are detailed to keep them in the pink of condition, and in this the men seem perfectly successful. These are the horses that carry the state harness of gold and red,



THE OLD STATE CARRIAGE.



THE RIDING SCHOOL IN THE ROYAL MEWS.

to which we have already referred. Opposite to them stand the blacks. They are of Flemish breed, and were imported from Holland. They are taller and appear stronger than the creams, and look just as well cared for in coat and mane and tail. A pair of them is placed at the disposal of the Prince of Wales on semi-state occasions. The remaining horses in the stable are bays. They are also fine animals, and two of them stand fully eighteen hands high. They are used by the Queen for semi-state functions.

Close to these large stables is a second and smaller harness room. All the horse furniture is kept in rare order. The rows of polished steel bits with the brass crests at the sides, the spurs and saddles of the equerries and royal grooms, and the long row of harness of various patterns all look as clean and bright as if just turned out of the workshop. Here is hung the ordinary four-horse harness which is carried by the teams that meet the Queen's train. Further on we see the "Council" harness. Its beautifully-executed brass-work, set off by red rosettes, gives a very smart effect. It is used when the Queen opens Parliament, and from this derives its name. At the end of the room are the saddles for the equerries. They are of a military cut, with cruppers, and are studded with little brass crowns. Nearer the door again is a quantity of harness for teams of four or six

horses. These sets were frequently in use during the visit of the Shahzada for the benefit of that prince and his suite.

There now remains the fourth side of the square, which is devoted to the state and semi-state carriages. The semi-state carriages, eleven in number, are chiefly of modern make. They are hung by straps on C springs, and yield to the slightest motion. On the hammer-cloths are blazoned the royal arms, and the arms also appear painted on the panels. The interior is lined with blue watered silk. The state carriages are two in number. One is comparatively modern, and was built in 1847. It is a beautiful piece of work. The sides are inlaid with a quiet design, and the royal arms are inlaid, instead of painted, on the doors. The rich hammer-cloths are blazoned with the royal arms in gold lace. Like the semi-state carriages, it is hung on C springs and lined with blue watered silk. The Queen has used it recently, on the marriage of the Duke of York, and previously to that at the opening of the Imperial Institute. The old state coach is an extraordinary vehicle. It is of immense size, being some fourteen feet high, eight feet wide, and twenty-four feet long. When the horses are harnessed to it, the team and the coach measure no less than sixty-four feet. Its weight is just under four tons, and it cost £7,661 16s. 5d. It was designed by Sir W. Chambers in 1762, and

the large panels at the back and sides were painted with emblematic figures by Cipriani. The frame itself is of oak, as are the four huge figures of Tritons blowing horns, two in front and two behind. Despite the lapse of time and the assaults of the London fogs, the frame is as good to-day as it was a hundred and thirty years ago. The gold on the hammercloths is faded, and the gilt has worn away in some places, but this could quickly be renewed should the old coach ever be wanted to appear in public again. George III. frequently used it, as did his successors, and the Queen rode in it at her Coronation. On the death of the Prince Consort, however, her Majesty abandoned the lumbering old coach with its memories, and has ever since used the smaller and less pretentious state coach that we have already described. It is certainly a relic of times gone by, for in its huge size and florid ornamentation one would expect to see the chariot of the fairy prince in a Christmas pantomime rather than the state carriage of modern England.

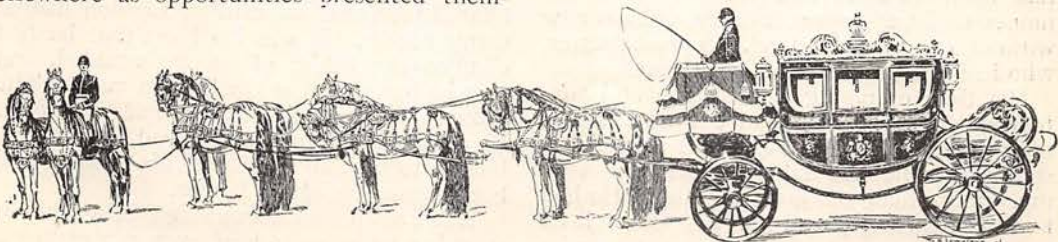
At the end of the Mews nearest to Buckingham Palace is the Riding School. It is a large building, over ninety feet long and about forty wide. The floor is thickly covered with tan. Hurdles and bars are provided to teach jumping to young horses or young riders. It is here that many members of the Royal Family learnt to ride. At the further end is a window looking into the Riding School, and in the room behind it the Queen has often sat watching the first equestrian performances of children or grandchildren. It is some years now since the Riding School has been used by anyone but grooms training the young horses. Two other buildings are included in the Royal Mews. One on the left of the entrance gates is the house of the Crown Equerry; the second on the right is the office of the Master of the Horse. Sir Henry Ewart, the Crown Equerry, has done much to improve the Royal Mews. During his reign of office, old and useless animals have been gradually weeded out, and better stock introduced. The size of the breeding establishment at Hampton Court has been reduced, and carefully-selected horses secured elsewhere as opportunities presented them-

selves. His right-hand man is Mr. Nicholas, the superintendent. To his care and good management is due the excellent working order in which the Royal Mews is at present to be found.

Some eighty men are employed in the stables, and there is plenty of work for them. There are over one hundred and twenty horses to be fed, groomed, and exercised every day, while during the season many of the eighty carriages are in constant use. The cleaning of the semi-state harness with its intricate brass-work is by no means an easy affair. A long wait in the rain during a Court ball or some such function means many an hour of steady rubbing and polishing on the next day. The servants are treated well as regards their pay, and when invalided through age or accident they are allowed a pension. The younger grooms live outside the mews, but some fifteen or twenty men live above the stables, where excellent accommodation is provided. These are, of course, the older servants, for the rooms are granted according to the seniority of the applicant. From six-thirty the work begins, and from that hour to eight the horses that are not wanted during the day are exercised in Battersea or Hyde Park. In the afternoon a certain number of the grooms are detailed to conduct visitors round the stables. The number of those who apply for cards of admission naturally varies, but in August and September, when the Americans pour into England, the applications have risen to nearly a thousand a week. The subjects of the Republic appear to take a keener interest in anything royal than is manifested by the ordinary Londoner.

The horses in the Royal Mews do not usually follow the Queen to either Osborne or Balmoral. At Osborne the Queen has some fine greys, a colour of which her Majesty is especially fond. At Balmoral horses are used which are better suited to the Scotch hills than those whose knowledge of roads is limited to the London pavements. When, however, the Queen attends some function near London—at Aldershot or, perhaps, Ascot—her carriages are horsed from the Royal Mews.

B. FLETCHER ROBINSON.



THE STATE CARRIAGE AND EIGHT CREAMS.