

those representatives of tangible wealth to so large an amount, on which, for a moment, your gaze was fixed when he eagerly and suspiciously turned them over in his hand. If you have not coveted his riches, you have sighed in your secret soul to be even as he is."

"I am weak, very weak," again sighed the poor humbled man.

"You *are* weak: it is mine to strengthen you," said the voice. "See!" and at these words a curtain seemed to fall before the bodily eyes of the solitary watcher, while a scene uprose before him, revealing craft, chicanery, and every form of guilt intangible by human laws. With that scene were mingled cries and groans of distress; unheeded prayers of the widow and fatherless; curses, both loud and deep, of the ruined and desolate—made desolate by him—him, the man of wealth and power, the man in the dreadnought coat.

The poor clerk started back in wild horror and detestation, while the words trembled on his lips, "Doth not God know? Is there not knowledge in the Most High?"

The scene slowly passed away: the lonely watcher opened his eyes and looked around, but saw nothing beyond the walls of his poor chamber, his trundle-bed, the paper and book before him, and the crooked sixpence shining out from the little heap of copper.

He roused himself with a strong effort, while a fresh cool breeze sweeping through his open casement dallied for a moment with the feeble flame of his expiring candle, then extinguished it, and left him in darkness.

"I must have been dreaming," he muttered, as he closed his window, and groped his way to the side of his bed. But, dreaming or awake, the silvery tones of the phantom voice were yet ringing in his ears.

BIANCONI AND HIS CARS.

IN these days of railroads and electric telegraphs, when we annihilate space and time with a rapidity that would have made even Alladin stand aghast, and with a reality which he of the wonderful lamp never possessed, we are too apt to forget the benefits conferred on society by those who have in other days lightened the weary foot of the traveller, and opened up to the public facilities both for business and pleasure that they would not otherwise have enjoyed. What an improvement the old stage coaches—lumbering though they appear to the rising generation—were on their now almost-forgotten predecessors! Were this the place for it, we could say a great deal in favour of these old stage coaches, as they brought us leisurely through the towns, villages, and homesteads of "merry England," notwithstanding that they were sometimes subjected to the somewhat unseasonable and unpleasant visits of gentlemen of the Jack Sheppard school. How the times are changed since then! Jack and his fraternity have long disappeared, or taken other forms more suitable to the modern fashion in pockets; and even the old romantic valley of Llangollen—sufficiently remote, one would

have thought, from the busy hum of the world—echoes now to the sound of a railway-whistle.

The blessings of the stage coach, or any of its predecessors, were by no means universally enjoyed by the inhabitants of the three kingdoms. In England they were pretty general; but in Scotland and in Ireland, especially in its southern and western districts, they were generally confined to running between the principal towns, and of these only a favoured few. There are few who were daring enough some fifty years ago, or even less, to try the experiment of crossing to the sister country to visit the wild beauties of the Emerald Isle, the far-famed lakes of Killarney, or the grandeur of its western scenery, who do not remember that the country was then almost totally destitute of any well-appointed conveyances. The traveller was left wholly to the tender mercies of the town or village hotel keeper to provide him with means of transit. And this individual, in the plenitude of his power—having, in the first instance, with an unvarying regularity which did not seem to admit of exception, "fleeced" him—handed the unfortunate victim over to have the operation repeated by the driver of the "ould Irish jaunting car;" this last-mentioned conveyance being generally so dilapidated as to be the constant terror of the traveller, and drawn by such a miserable jade of a horse, that at first sight considerable doubts might arise whether it were not a skeleton with an old skin thrown over it to protect it from the weather. But this was before Humane Societies existed.

Such was the condition of travelling in Ireland, more especially in its southern and western districts, up to the year 1815. In that eventful year, when the elder Napoleon, defeated at Waterloo, was sent to his final cage in the Atlantic Ocean, and the nations of Europe once more breathed freely, Mr. Bianconi, an Italian, residing in Ireland, perceiving the great want of communication between the principal inland towns, and also considering, no doubt, that it would be a profitable commercial speculation, determined to supply the desideratum. The time was favourable: farm produce was high—aided by protection and war prices, higher than it has been since; so that farmers could afford to ride if they but had the conveyances. "Up to 1815,"* to use Mr. Bianconi's significant language, "the public accommodation for conveyance of passengers in Ireland was confined to a few mail and day coaches, which ran between the principal towns. A farmer distant twenty or thirty miles from the nearest market town was compelled to spend three days in going, transacting his business, and returning." If such was the state of the farmer who had his horse to ride, what must we think of the commercial traveller, or those who visited the country on pleasure excursions?

Bianconi commenced cautiously. He first started one well-appointed conveyance to run between two towns of some note. This proved a decided success. Encouraged by the favourable issue of his first attempt, he proceeded to enlarge the basis of his operations, and to extend the advan-

* A paper read before the Statistical Department of the British Association in 1843.

tages of regular communication between other towns. Again success was the result of his undertaking. Year after year, as he gained strength and confidence by his continued good fortune, he gradually widened the circle of his operations; and when, in 1843, he read a report of his progress before the Statistical Department of the British Association, he had one hundred and ten vehicles, running from eight to nine miles per hour each day, at the extremely low rate of a penny-farthing a mile, going over three thousand eight hundred miles daily, and calling at one hundred and forty stations. Bianconi's cars were the rage. His success soon called numerous competitors into the field, and a double benefit was thus conferred on the community. His popularity with all classes of the people is confirmed by the somewhat extraordinary fact stated by himself at the meeting before referred to, "that his conveyances had been established for twenty-eight years, running day and night, and that during all that time they never met with any interruption." When we take into account that some of them were running in the most remote, untenanted, and wildest parts of Ireland, at a time when the country was reported to be in a disturbed state, we cannot but think that, had every arrangement of internal policy and economy been as well adapted to the well-being of the Irish, we should have heard fewer of those sad scenes which have left so dark a blot on our sister country. Any one comparing this state of things with the condition in which Bianconi found the country, must admit that it was a wonderful work to be performed by one man.

We have yet, however, to view Bianconi in a still more interesting light than that of a mere supplier of conveyances. He is also an illustrious example of a man who used great moral powers for the accomplishment of his ends. The mere theory of demand and supply will not adequately account for the successes achieved by him over the whole classes of the community, and also, as we shall shortly see, over a class of men who have proved intractable under almost every other system. What, then, was the key-stone of his popularity? Let us hear himself on the first of these elements of success. "And as to its popularity, I never yet attempted to do an act of generosity or common justice, publicly or privately, that I was not repaid ten-fold." Without attempting at all to moralize on this noble and grateful statement, we would commend it to the serious attention of those of our readers who wish to rise in the world as Bianconi did, and also to oppose it to the too common theory that fraud, chicanery, or at least selfishness, is necessary to success in life. Bianconi had struck the right chord, and he felt it responded to by the hearts of a whole people.

But there were other elements, or rather particular developments, of the one first stated, which in no small degree conduced to the success of the undertaking. Much surprise was excited by the high order of men connected with it. As we have seen, such was by no means the case formerly: drivers were even greater pests than their exorbitant masters. Every one who is at all acquainted

with "cabbies," either in the metropolis or elsewhere, knows that not a few of these individuals make it their business to over-reach every one that they can possibly extract an additional shilling from. Such, however, was not the case with Bianconi's drivers; and that too is the more remarkable, since they were taken from a class of Irishmen who are by no means less desirous of pocketing their neighbours' money than their English brethren. Bianconi took a broad and generous view of the case; he considered that Irish society, like a man recovering from fever, required "generous and nutritive diet, in place of medical treatment," and treated those with whom he dealt accordingly. He says, quoting from the same report, "Thus I act with my drivers, who are taken from the lowest grade of the establishment, and who are progressively advanced according to their respective merits, as opportunity offers, and who know that nothing can deprive them of this reward, and a superannuated allowance of their full wages in old age, and under accident, unless arising from their wilful and improper conduct." There can, we think, be no doubt that the most beneficial results would follow to all parties, were the system more generally adopted. Not only would the public be gainers—and great gainers too—but we venture to predict that it would reflect on the proprietors by increasing their profits, and on the men, by raising their self-respect, consequently increasing their respectability, and strengthening the nobler qualities of the heart.

Nor must we omit to mention the important testimony of Bianconi on a subject that has at different times excited a good deal of discussion, both in the Houses of Parliament and elsewhere. We refer to Sunday travelling. This he never permitted his horses or men to do—a most remarkable fact in one who had almost a monopoly of the conveyances of the half of Ireland. For this he assigns two reasons. First, he considered that the Irish were too religious a people to travel on Sunday—a fact in which we very much fear he was mistaken. But his second reason is one much more to the point, "that experience had taught him that he could work a horse eight miles a-day for six days, better than he could six miles for seven days." Such was the man's opinion after twenty-eight years' extensive experience. No doubt in a few years Bianconi's conveyances will be things of yesterday. As the country becomes—as indeed it is fast becoming—intersected with railroads, these, excellent as they were in their day, must give place to what is still more convenient. But the name of Bianconi will long be remembered by a people who do not lightly forget their benefactors; and may we express a hope that it will act as a stimulus to increased exertion on the part of many of the sons of our brave sister country to promote its well-being with the same generous, broad-spirited conduct as did this illustrious foreigner.

Mr. Bianconi, we believe, is now in honourable retirement, reaping the reward of his industry and public spirit, and the name of his son lately appeared in the list of nominations for the office of High Sheriff of Fermanagh.