

The Career of the Carriage.

BY WELLAND WRIGHT.

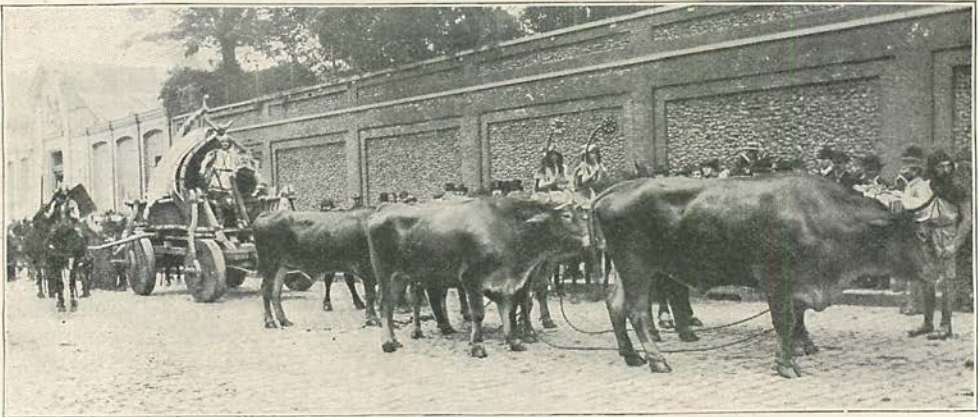
From Photographs by Alexandre, Brussels.



WHEN Cæsar came to Gaul—the story is familiar to every boy and girl who has tackled Latin—he found the Nervii. What he did to them—or, rather, what they did to him—is of no account here; but it is of interest to note the kind of conveyance in use among the Nervii at that far-off time. We may see it in our opening illustration—a rude conveyance, both cumbrous and noisy, and doubtless injurious to both mind and body. Built wholly of wood, with massive wheels firmly

duce some of the more striking features of this unique procession. Many improvements have since been made, but this fact does not detract from the historical and popular value of the present subject.

Carriages, of course, have been known from the earliest times. Sledges were a very primitive mode of conveyance. Pharaoh made Joseph “to ride in the second chariot which he had”; and Jacob and his family were transported to the land of his adoption by waggons. The ancient Egyptian sculptures also show us the war chariots and other conveyances of contem-

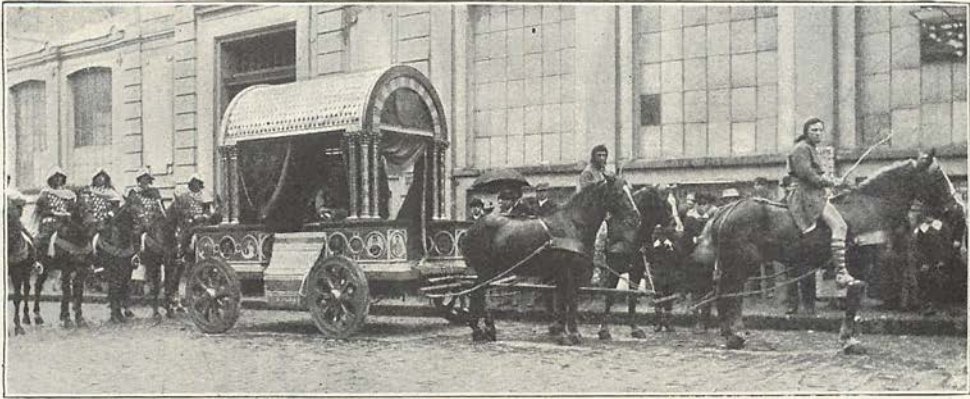


A NERVIAN CHARIOT.

attached to movable axles, it used to lumber on its way behind sturdy oxen, just as it lumbers along in some South American and European States at the present time.

If Cæsar could have turned up a few years ago in Brussels he would have been astounded at the changes which have taken place in methods of transportation since rosy Roman times. For it was in 1885 that a remarkable procession took place in that city, in which all the modes of conveyance from early days to the present were effectively exhibited to the people. It is our privilege to repro-

porary monarchs, but these carriages were clumsy. When the Romans were in their heyday of glory, carriages for private conveyance became exceedingly common amongst the rich, and were not only wonderfully varied in form, but also in lavishness of ornamentation. It was the golden epoch of ancient carriage building. Evidently the Belgians had no Roman chariots to put in their procession, but they had a chariot of the time of Charlemagne, which attracted much attention and proved the costliness with which the conveyances of that regal era were built.



A PRINCE'S CARRIAGE—TIME OF CHARLEMAGNE.

At the top of this page we may notice this carriage with its medallioned sides and beautifully inlaid roof, a prince of Charlemagne sitting inside, with all the costly accoutrements of his position. Compare it with the rude car of the Nervian conqueror, and note the improvement which took place between 57 B.C. and 750 A.D.

Yet there were objections even to this beautiful vehicle. There was little quickness to be achieved in it. Its heavy wheels turned with the axle, and it was almost as difficult to get round a corner with such a carriage as it is at the present day to get round a lawn curve with a garden roller.

should be fitted for their work, and riding in carriages was enervating. This, in turn, became the golden age of horseback riding, when men and women, of all sorts and conditions, rode on horses or mules, and Emperors made their triumphal entries into cities on gaily-caparisoned palfreys. For rough work in war it was naturally necessary for wheels still to find a use, and in our illustration below we find a war chariot of the Crusades surrounded by knights with spears and uniforms. No one at this time if he could help it would have been found sitting in a carriage, and even the litter which figured amongst princely



WAR CHARIOT DURING CRUSADES.

Its heaviness, too, was against its ease and comfort. In short, it was got up mainly for show, and the cavalier who owned one of these expensive ornaments and had to keep engagements usually preferred the more comfortable back of his active charger to a seat inside this questionable piece of luxury.

The advent of the feudal system brought about the general prohibition of carriages. Military service demanded that vassals

effects during the time of Charlemagne had, for the moment, dropped out of view. There is still extant an ordinance of Philip the Fair, issued in 1294, forbidding citizens' wives from using carriages. The state of the roads at the time tended, moreover, to the disuse of wheeled vehicles.

The Middle Ages were a period, as we know, of comparative darkness, but we still possess a few historical facts and vehicular



STANDARD-BEARER OF THE COMMUNES.

relics which tell us how the men and women travelled. It was a period of so-called Communes, when citizens of towns united with citizens of other towns in a defensive confederacy. On this page we reproduce three pictures of men and waggons which appeared in the Brussels procession. The first of these, showing the standard-bearer of the Communes, is introduced mainly to show the common custom of horse and foot travel of the time. The second

waggons were frequently richly decorated. One may note the tool-box hanging beneath—an absolute necessity in all such conveyances



WAR CHARIOT AND LADIES' CARRIAGE OF THE COMMUNES.

on account of the frequent damage by the miserable roads. The waggon was springless, for we have not reached the age of springs.



THE "LONG WAGGON" OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Behind this waggon, with its heavy load and its armed attendants, the reader may notice a long and curiously-decorated covered waggon, the well-known "long waggon" of the fourteenth century, which was very popular amongst travellers of that time. Evidently this carriage belonged to persons of high rank, for long



LITTER OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

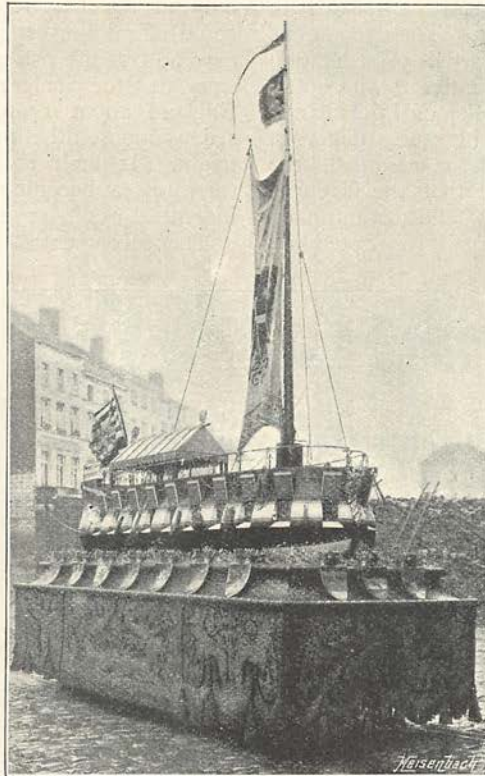
As the procession moves we shall be able to understand the effect upon traffic which the introduction of this blessed invention caused. Meantime the approach of a sumptuous litter shows us that the fifteenth century was not devoid of these fairly-comfortable means of conveyance. The litter, in earlier times, had been looked upon with considerable disaffection because

of its seeming effeminacy, and the introduction of horses to bear the litters was not looked upon with less disfavour. All the same, the ladies used to use the litter and enjoy it. The end of the fifteenth century, for some reason or other, saw the general readoption of the covered carriage by the rich. Frederick III. visited Frankfort in 1475 in a gorgeous-covered carriage; and in 1509 the Electress of Brandenburg attended the tournament of Ruppin in a carriage covered with gilt. Forty carriages met Cardinal Dietrichstein on his entrance into Vienna in 1611, and the wedding carriage of Leopold's first wife, a Spanish

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Princess, cost 38,000 florins. Nothing could more conclusively show that the world had outlived the Middle Ages, and that the era of fashion, pride, comfort, and lavish display had at last begun. It needed but the wealth and luxurious invention of the Bourbon Kings to give the people an ease of motion and a luxury of comfort which had not hitherto been known.

As the carriages pass before us in the Brussels streets we notice many which are but slight variants, however, on those already shown, and our attention is at once taken by the approach of a beautiful barge, with tall mast and outstretched sail, resting on top of a "float," or exhibition car. Such a barge might seem out of place in this procession, but one must not forget the thousands of men, women, and children amongst the "upper ten" who made use of this method of conveyance during the sixteenth century. Old prints and sculptures of Italian days give us delightful glimpses of the Adriatic, with their



BARGE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.



SEDAN CHAIR AND VINAIGRETTE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

exquisite craft, and the history of our own Thames is replete with stirring and racy accounts of transport on these regal vessels. The appointments were in many cases extremely beautiful, and the sails were often of silk and gold.

This century is likewise noteworthy for the general use of the sedan chair, which, it may be said, was first seen in England in 1581. Their use was more general in the eighteenth century, when they were an ordinary means of transportation for gentlemen and ladies in English and French cities. The decorations were very elaborate, and artists of reputation deigned to decorate the interiors with costly painting. When the Duke of Buckingham used a sedan chair in the reign of James I. he was much condemned, the public bitterly objecting that the favourite of the King was using his fellow countrymen to do the work of beasts. In September,

narrowness of the London streets.

Following the sedan chair, in the procession may be seen the so-called vinaigrette of the sixteenth century—a sort of carriage with two wheels, drawn by a man. Already there is a marked improvement in comfort, for in this dainty little carriage we may discover the use of springs. A new epoch in the history of transportation is thus marked. Previously, as an attempt to gain additional comfort, vehicles were slung on straps, but only in the best carriages, whose owners could afford the expense of a novelty. We may add, at the risk of getting ahead of our story, that the vinaigrette was introduced into England about 1760, but the owners of sedans opposed the introduction with all their might. It took some years for the new carriages to become popular, but they were in general use in 1770.

The seventeenth century marked further



RUBENS'S CARRIAGE—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

1634, Sir Sanders Duncombe was granted the privilege for fourteen years to use and let for hire, within London and Westminster, "covered chairs" to interfere with the too frequent use of coaches, which, in themselves, were hindrances to private carts and carriages on account of the



DILIGENCE—TIME OF LOUIS XIII.

improvements, and as an illustration of the quality of carriage used by well-to-do people of that time we reproduce a photograph of the turn-out which once belonged to the great painter Rubens. This vehicle possessed for the Brussels onlookers an interest more than historical. It was certainly sombre in appearance, being covered with a heavy black cloth, yet it was neat and attractive. The carriage was open at the sides. Windows, either movable or immovable, had not yet been thought of, and there was still something left for the carriage inventor to do. Contemporary accounts of travel during this century contain many references to the extreme cold felt by travellers, and the absence of windows had not a little to do

with these results upon the health of the travelling public.

By the time of Louis XIII. travelling had become popular, and the *diligence* had come to stay. It plied for public convenience, and the illustration above gives an excellent idea of an old-time diligence with its crowd of closely packed people and its wicker body. The modern carriage of this sort is built for more convenience, and to carry fewer people, but it has never been a particularly comfortable vehicle. With such a crowd, however, it is no wonder that four, six, and sometimes eight horses were used to lead it up and down the rocky roads of Europe. Below, we may note the *patache*, by which many of the common people travelled during the



PATACHE—REIGN OF LOUIS XIII.



TRAVELLING COACH—REIGN OF LOUIS XIV.

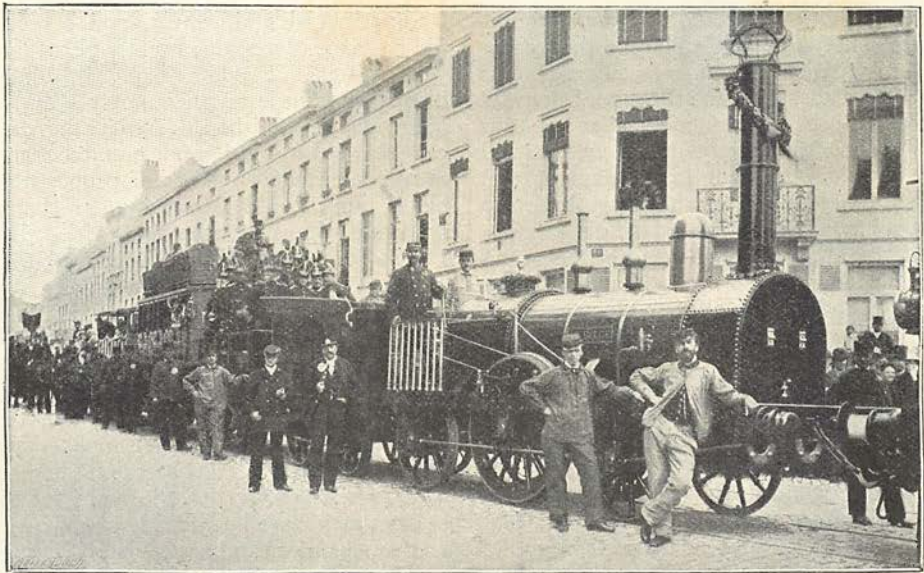
reign of Louis XIII. The body of the carriage rested heavily on the axles—a cause of aching bodies—and travelled at a cheap rate—a cause of full cargoes. To add to the misery, the travellers were huddled together back to back on seats with slight support. The *patache* dates back to the time when mails were first carried by means of horses.

Improvements of inestimable value took place in the reign of Louis XIV. The first coach to which glass was applied is said to have been the King's State carriage in 1620. The travelling coaches, moreover, were often panelled very high to guard against robberies, and this may be one reason why windows did not come in sooner. Our picture at the top of this page will give an

excellent idea of one of the travelling coaches of this period. The coach in which Louis himself entered Paris in 1654 was a very plain affair, but in a remarkably short time the simple waggon-like body of the old-time coach was developed gradually into a beautifully-shaped, carved, and panelled specimen of cabinet work. Hackney coaches were introduced during the King's minority by a man named Sauvage, who resided at the sign of Saint Fiacre in the Rue St. Martin. Hired carriages thus acquired the name of "*fiacre*." In 1682 the first omnibus, thanks to the efforts of Blaise Pascal, started on its travels, and a grand increase in the numbers of public conveyances took place. From the picture below, which shows a "*fliguette*" and the sedan chair, the reader



FLIGUETTE AND SEDAN CHAIR—REIGN OF LOUIS XIV.



THE LOCOMOTIVE OF 1835.

will observe the grace and form given to such conveyances by the æsthetic workmen of Louis' time. The sedan takes us back in spirit to this brilliant era, but the fliguette, with its high-perched seat and its striking wheels, seems to bring us up almost to the present day. It was probably from this model that the modern vehicle used for breaking in horses was obtained.

spectators, as if in panorama, the rapid transition in transportation to Napoleonic and later times. In this period the stage and mail coach attained their greatest development. The cabriolet, or cab, came into being about 1750, until 1,150 of them were plying in Paris in 1813. The hansom was patented in 1834; the noted Collinge axle, by means of which wheels need oiling only



PASSENGER TRAIN OF 1835.

"After me the deluge" once said Louis XIII., and after the exhibits of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. vehicles in the Brussels procession came a perfect deluge of carriages, carts, and coaches, joining the nineteenth century to the seventeenth, and showing the

once in several months, was invented in 1792; and the well-known elliptic springs now used on nearly all carriages were patented by Elliott in 1804. The latter invention was a marked improvement on the springs of earlier times.

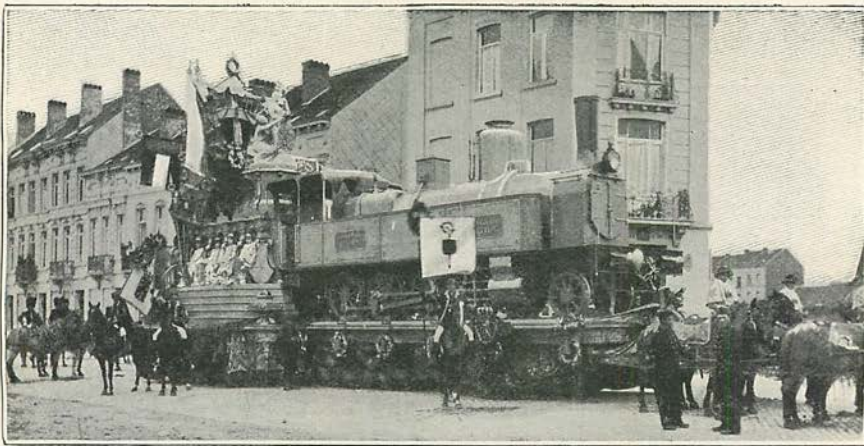
It must be remembered that the improvement has not been due wholly to the coach-builder. Greater care, for instance, is now taken of roads, and the light and graceful vehicle has a better chance for wear and tear. The advent of the railway, moreover, attracted those people who went long distances, and carriage builders had another opportunity to improve upon carriages for short distances.

The day of the Stephensons was the beginning of another epoch in the history of transportation, and the arrival of the locomotive of 1835 at the end of the procession was the signal for great enthusiasm. The other exhibits had been strange and unnatural, but here the spectators were on solid ground. True, the engine was a little out of date, but yet it was an engine, and the half-crowded state of the first and second-class carriages and the densely packed condition of the third lent verisimilitude. It was a happy thought of the organizers of the procession to introduce this locomotive and passenger train as a contrast to the finely-built leviathan of 1885, which at that time showed the latest improvement in Belgian locomotive construction. The monster was mounted on a float drawn by many horses, and in the rear of the cab was an allegorical representation of Progress

made of wood and canvas, and set off by the presence of countless pretty girls.

That was but a few years ago, and the history of transportation is not yet, and will not soon be, finished. To-day the motor-car, the electric cab and omnibus, are in their infancy, and millions of people who in olden times would have mounted chargers, or ridden in ox-carts, now ride wheels. People even talk of welcoming the new century with the flying-machine. When the next procession takes place in Brussels what changes we shall see!

Many people will miss in this article some allusion to steam navigation as being one of the most effective means of modern transportation. Certainly, in any complete history of transportation, great attention should be paid to water travel and the many improvements which have been made in it since the first shrieks of steamboat whistles frightened dwellers along rivers and coasts into an appreciation of the march of modern progress. The managers of the Brussels procession, however, felt that they ought to stop somewhere, else their procession would be endless. Hence they stopped at steam on land, leaving steam on water to take care of itself.



LOCOMOTIVE BUILT IN 1885.