

## How Cab, 'Bus, and Tram-Car Drivers are Tested

IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA.



EVERYONE is probably aware that the driver of a hansom cab, omnibus, or other public vehicle in the London Metropolis has to undergo a searching examination at Scotland Yard to establish his capacity to have charge of that particular vehicle. But few are aware of the nature of the examination which "cabby" is subjected to before he is allowed to handle the "ribbons" in the public service.

Ten years ago it was comparatively easy to secure the coveted license, but to-day things are different; and the man who would drive a hackney carriage in the London streets must have his wits about him to satisfactorily pass the examination which the police authorities now impose. "Those hexams are getting wus and wus," is the remark of the London cabmen to-day. Undoubtedly the tests are more severe than they were say five years ago, yet it cannot be said that the

powers that be throw obstacles in the way of the would-be driver, but rather make sure that he is capable of handling a horse and carriage in busy, crowded thoroughfares.

Before a cab proprietor will let out his vehicles the applicant has first to produce the Government license. To obtain this the would-be "jehu" has to present himself at the "Yard," and for probably a fortnight is kept in a state of nervous excitement. Briefly the *modus operandi* is as follows: The prospective cabman fills up an ordinary form, which has to be accompanied by either two private references or a character from last employer. Next morning he probably receives an unexpected call from Mr. Policeman, whose duty it is to ascertain whether the man actually resides at the address given. The references are then verified, and if satisfactory the applicant is told to present himself at Scotland Yard for the examination.



A CANDIDATE AND EXAMINER ABOUT TO START FROM SCOTLAND YARD FOR A TEST DRIVE IN THE POLICE GIG.  
From a Photo. by George Newnes, Limited.

This, in the cabmen's opinion, is the most trying of the whole of the ordeal, as unless you are a veritable walking encyclopædia of the London streets it is ten to one against your coming through with flying colours. Indeed, many men on the streets to-day have made two, three, four, and even six journeys to the examination-room before the inspector has "ticked" their paper. Taking his seat in the room "cabby" is kept busy for twenty minutes or more answering questions which would puzzle the majority of those who pride themselves on their knowledge of the great Metropolis.

The first question invariably put to the nervous novice is, "Where do you live?" Say the answer is Kennington, he is then probably asked how he would drive a fare from Kennington to Euston, and has to reiterate fully the principal streets he would

to a great extent is a public servant. Say an accident occurred at the Marble Arch, Westminster Bridge, or Sloane Street, he must, by law, convey the sufferer to the nearest hospital.

The failure to answer any question to the satisfaction of the examiner at once disqualifies the applicant. He is sternly told to go home and study his map. Not many weeks ago thirteen applicants presented themselves in the examination-room and only two passed. Out of 1,033 candidates that presented themselves in the course of a twelve-month only 634 passed, and many of these were examined more than once. Indeed, no man faces the inspector until he has spent a good many hours on a map, studying the principal thoroughfares, squares, public buildings, places of amusement, and railway stations. The majority of unsuccessful candidates are



From a Photo. by]

CANDIDATES WAITING TO BE TESTED IN 'BUS-DRIVING.

[George Newnes, Limited.

pass through. The correct route being given, he is next requested to give the route from Euston to, say, Chalk Farm, from Chalk Farm to Dalston Junction, and from the latter place to Paddington Station. He has practically to describe how he would get from well-known points in a four-mile radius.

But this by no means ends the examination; he has to satisfy the inspector on many other points. He is asked where certain squares are, and here many fail. He must also know the principal railway stations, public buildings, and hospitals, as a cabman

youths engaged in the carriers' business. Their acquaintance with the streets is not quite comprehensive enough for the police authorities; curiously enough, they generally fail in the squares and hospitals.

Supposing the applicant has satisfied his examiner as to his knowledge of London, he is by no means a full-fledged cabby. Suddenly he is requested to appear at the Yard to undergo tests in driving. Mounting a light gig, he is told to drive to some spot in the City. Seated at his side is the observant inspector, and woe betide the embryonic



THE OLD-FASHIONED TRIAL 'BUS, WITH CANDIDATE AND EXAMINER, ABOUT TO START FROM SCOTLAND YARD. [George Newnes, Limited.]

cabby if he attempts to pass another vehicle on the wrong side, or does not show judgment in passing in and out between the innumerable carriages passed on the busy streets, or ability to pull up his horse quickly; he is instantly dismissed, and his knowledge of the great City's thoroughfares, however elaborate, counts for nothing.

Out of 526 applicants who satisfactorily passed the "street" examination in 1899, 53 failed in the driving test. Should the driving be satisfactory, cabby is handed his license on payment of the sum of five shillings. There are a few more preliminaries, such as emphatic instructions that anything left in the cab must be delivered within twenty-four hours to the nearest police-station, and that he must also advise the authorities instantly of any change in his address.

Not many weeks ago a 'bus-driver was unceremoniously taken off his 'bus in St.

Martin's Lane for the seemingly trifling offence of not having advised Scotland Yard of his change of residence. It appears he met with an accident a few days before, and in reporting it unwittingly forgot to give his new address. Although the police could find him at the 'bus company they were annoyed because he had broken one of the regulations, and for this little breach of the law the man was suspended for a month. That meant that his license was taken away, and application could not be made again until the month had expired, when so many preliminaries had to be gone through again that nearly six weeks elapsed before he could mount his seat again.

Omnibus-drivers, like cabmen, are compelled to pass an examination in managing a 'bus before they are given a license which makes them eligible for the first vacancy that occurs in any omnibus company's employ. This examination is thoroughly effective, and includes more than the mere art of driving. There are few better drivers than the gunners of the British Army, yet one of these, fresh from the hardest tasks of driving in South Africa, was "plucked" not long since as a candidate for the license to drive a 'bus in London. The fact is that driving through street traffic requires special qualifications, among which a knowledge of the police regulations is one of the essentials.

The candidate, assuming that he has got over such preliminaries as mounting on the right side, proceeds to drive his cumbersome vehicle along the Embankment. The qualities which make the London driver, on the whole, the best in the world are those which

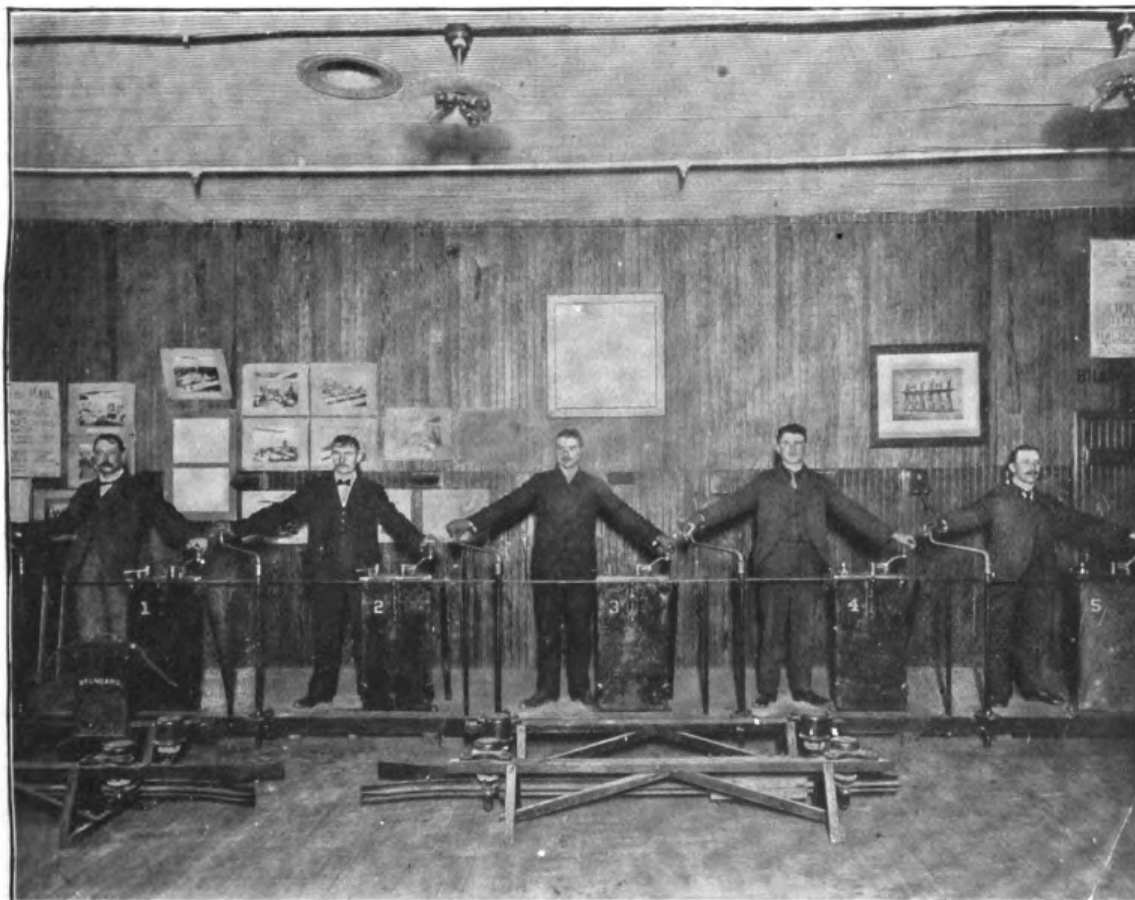
are called forth from moment to moment in overcoming the little difficulties of threading crowded traffic. It is quickness of judgment which makes a good driver — and on the display of this quality depends to a large extent the chances of a candidate's success.

As will be seen from our photograph, an old-fashioned omnibus is used; indeed, it is declared to be the oldest 'bus in London. It was driven by the famous Tilling himself some forty years ago, and is called the "Enterprise."

The examiner, who may be detected in our illustrations, is Sergeant Cole. He is busy on most weekday afternoons testing applicants for drivers' licenses, and in the course of a year nearly 3,000 men pass through his hands. Ask a 'busman what he thinks of him and he will answer, "He's all right, but very strict,"

nearest police-station, to "pass" the authorities. The owner has then to pay £2 for the number-plate and 15s. per annum to the Inland Revenue for wheel duty. An omnibus also has to pay the authorities £2 for its plate and 15s. yearly for wheel duty. Every year a cab has to be done up, and it is ever under the watchful eye of the men in blue. Men are told off specially, easily detected by London drivers by the letters "C. O." on their collars, meaning Carriage Office. The duty of these men is to see that the cab, horses, and harness are in good condition. They also take note of the driver, and if he is not clean or tidy his number is taken and he is told to "spruce himself up a bit." A driver's license costs 5s., and has to be renewed annually, an easy matter provided "cabby" has had no summonses.

Drivers of motor-cabs have also to prove



From a]

LEARNERS ON THE DUMMY CAR PLATFORMS—NEW YORK.

[Photo.

while a cabman will reply, "Why, bless yer, he knows every corner in London." In 1899, 765 'bus applicants were disqualified out of a total of 2,284.

Few persons are aware that before a hansom can be placed on the London streets it has to be taken to Scotland Yard, or the

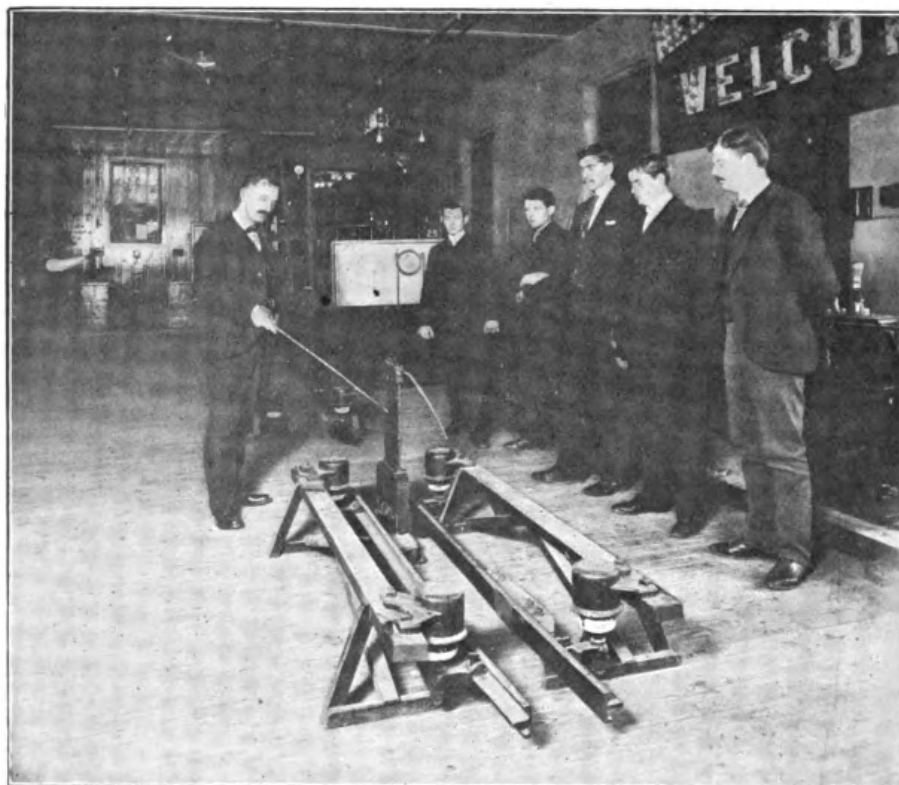
their ability to manage their vehicle before they are granted the coveted number. To drive a motor technical knowledge is desirable. The same may be said of trams, and now that London is soon to be intersected by a network of electric tramways, which will travel much faster than the system

at present in vogue, the drivers will have to exercise particular caution and skill in conducting their vehicles.

In view of this fact it is interesting to study the methods adopted by the tramway authorities of New York to inculcate their motor-men into the work of driving a car. To direct a heavily-laden car through a crowded thoroughfare thronged with an interminable stream of waggons, carts, and innumerable other vehicles, without endangering life or property, necessitates considerable presence of mind, a cool head, and

ridiculed as being a fad, but the utility of the scheme was soon rendered apparent by the superiority of the drivers who graduated from this unique school.

The applicant for the position of a motor-man first undergoes a rigid examination by the doctor, to ascertain whether he is physically adapted to the hard wear and tear of a car-driver's life. If he is proved to be fitted, and has passed the ordeal of testing his eyesight, he passes into the school and his tutelage commences. In the class-room are ranged thirty dummy car platforms,



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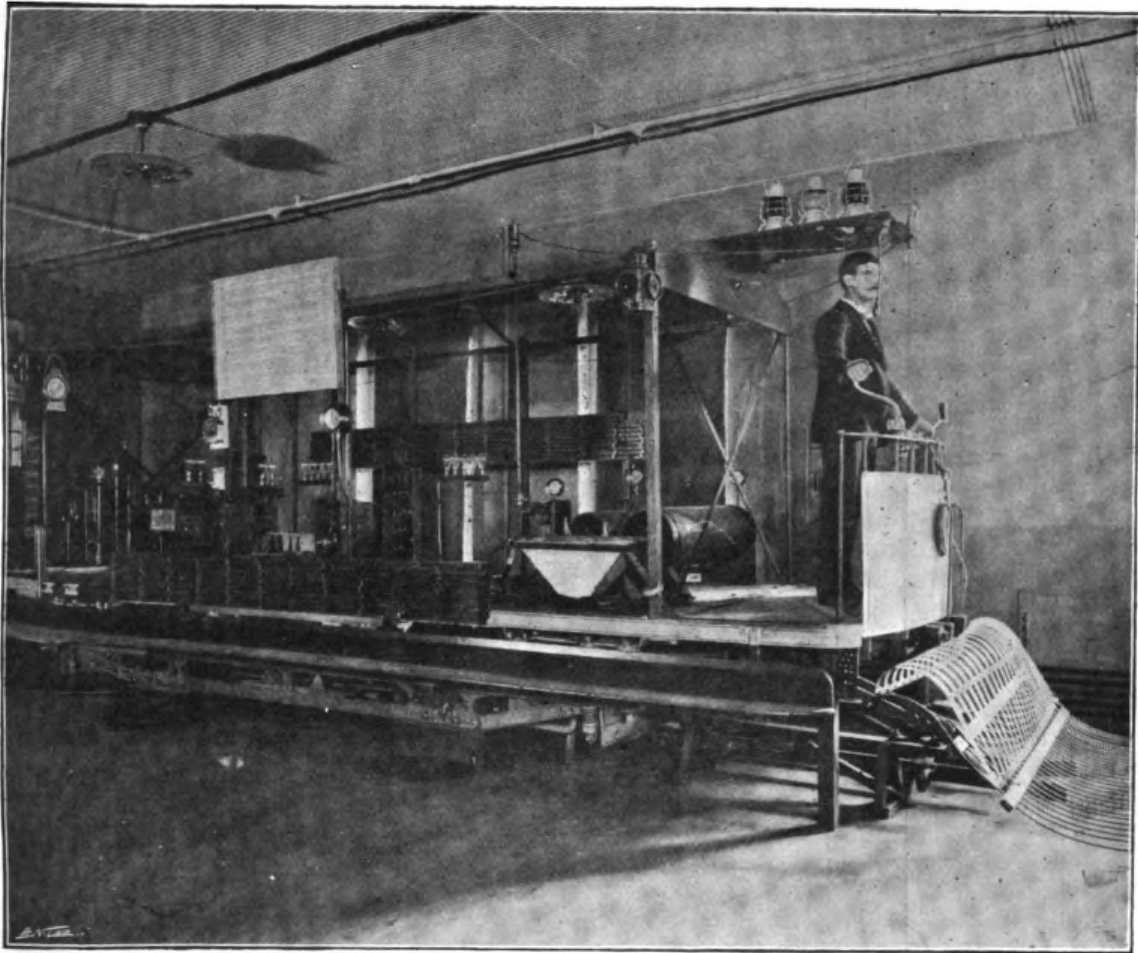
INSTRUCTOR EXPLAINING THE SYSTEM OF FEEDING-RAILS—NEW YORK.

[Photo.

good judgment. Then, again, in view of the intricacy of the mechanism for propelling the cars by electricity and for the skilful application of the brakes at the psychological moment without inconveniencing the passengers a mechanical knowledge is advisable. The car-drivers of the American metropolis are not purely drivers, but also possess a preliminary knowledge of electrical engineering. This state of affairs has been brought about by the foundation of a school in New York for the training of motor-men.

This school was inaugurated at the instigation of President Vreeland, of the Metropolitan Street Railway Company, under the ægis of which all the tramways of New York are maintained. As is invariably the case with such innovations, the idea was highly

each equipped with a controller, a brake, a ground switch, and a fuse-box—in fact, the entire electrical equipment necessary for the driving and controlling of a street car. He is assigned to one of these dummy cars, armed with a book of rules, each of which he must commit to memory as sedulously as he did his arithmetical tables when a schoolboy. The breaking of one of these rules meets with the direst punishment, and may lead to expulsion if committed too frequently. The greatest sin is to forget to remove the handle of the controller whenever leaving the car, even if it be only a momentary absence. “Never leave the car platform for an instant without removing the handle of the controller,” runs the commandment, and woe betide the



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ON THE SKELETON CAR—NEW YORK.

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pupil who disobeys this ordination. The instructor resorts to many artifices to tempt the men to break this rule, and if the pupil should fall into the trap it is immediately recalled to his memory by the stentorian voice of the instructor dinning it into his ears. The wisdom of this course is perfectly obvious. If a driver, when running through the street, were to jump off his car, leaving the controlling handle in position, a passenger could easily set the car in motion and perhaps endanger some thirty or forty lives.

The idea of the dummy car is to teach the pupil how to start the car without throwing the passengers into violent fits; how to apply the brakes slowly and steadily under ordinary circumstances; and how to bring the car to a sudden stoppage when the emergency demands such a drastic action, irrespective of the convenience of the passengers. The tutor conveys these various instructions by signals upon an ordinary car-bell.

Having thoroughly grasped this preliminary and mechanical knowledge the pupil is then initiated somewhat into the mysteries of electricity. He is taught something about

currents, and has the entire mechanism of the appliances necessary for the propulsion of the car clearly and exhaustively explained to him, and is also informed how to act in case of the failure of the action of any part of the installation.

In one of the class-rooms the skeleton of a full-sized car is fitted up. This is complete with the electrical apparatus in every detail. The car is supported upon jacks, so that the wheels spin idly round in the air. This is the most difficult part of the driver's training. Each man is placed on the car in turn, and is explicitly told what to do under various circumstances. For example, while driving, if the car suddenly comes to a stop and refuses to move the motor-man knows that something is amiss. The instructor then switches on the lights in the car to show that the current is flowing properly, and that the location of the accident is upon the car. The driver then proceeds to investigate the cause of the accident. He leaves his driving platform, taking care to remove the controlling handle before so doing, and examines the overhead switches to make certain that the

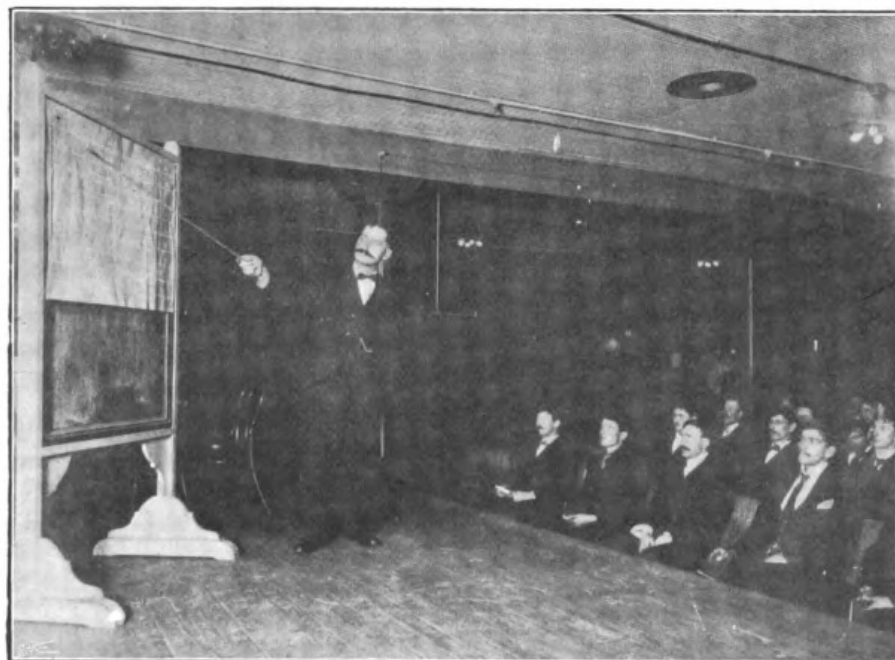
contact is perfect. If this be all right he then examines the fuse-boxes, and so on, until he has ascertained the cause of the breakdown, upon which he immediately sets to work to repair it. This is the most salient advantage of teaching the men a preliminary course of electrical engineering.

If the motor-man were ignorant upon this point he would have to await the arrival of an engineer to repair the damage before proceeding, thus causing a great delay and seriously disorganizing the other car traffic in the street.

During the progress of his inculcation upon the dummy car lectures are delivered to the recruit anent the method of crossing streets and avenues through which other cars are travelling. The instructor, by means of rails laid down upon the floor, explains the

appointed to a car of his own. This road trial is the most crucial test, since the man is left to act upon his own resources, under all trying and different circumstances, and thus either displays his able efficiency or faults. If he does not satisfy the superintending expert under whose guidance these trial trips are made he is sent back to the school for a further term, or if it is concluded that he will never prove an efficient driver he is summarily dismissed, and his ambitions of becoming a street-car driver are abruptly dashed to the ground.

The establishment of such schools as these has proved a veritable boon both to the car companies and the travelling public in the New World. Although we have nothing so elaborate in this country our motor-men are equally efficient as practical drivers. In



From a)

RECRUITS LEARNING THE THEORY OF ELECTRICAL CURRENTS—NEW YORK.

[Photo.]

points of the crossing at which the driver should cut off and switch on his current respectively.

When the motor-man has completed his education in the school and has satisfied the instructor that he is qualified to drive through the public thoroughfares, he is allotted a car and makes several trips under the superintendence of another expert driver. If he displays a cool head and good judgment on these trials and evidences his ability to handle a vehicle in a thoroughfare he is

this country the mechanism of the cars is first explained to them, and they are taken over the lines in the early mornings under the charge of an experienced driver, and in this way are initiated into the mysteries and management of the horseless vehicle. There are also several motor academies in various cities where students are not only taught how to operate the particular machine they have selected for their personal use, but are also given instruction in the operation of all kinds of self-propelled carriages.