

SIR ALGERNON PEYTON'S COACH WHIPS.

BY BASIL TOZER.

With Special Photographs by MESSRS. VARNEY, Buckingham.

HERE'S to the heroes of four-in-hand fame,
Harrison, Peyton, and Ward, sir;
Here's to the dragsmen that after them came,
Ford, and the Lancashire lord, sir.



Oran the first verse of a song, "The Tantivy Trot," popular early in the century; but not until about the year 1850 did Thackeray publish his famous papers, "The Four Georges," the last of which contains a passage of particular interest here. "For," exclaims Thackeray, in his scathing satire on the fourth King George, "where my Prince did actually distinguish himself was in driving. All the young men of that day were fond of the sport. But the fashion of rapid driving deserted England, and, I believe, trotted over to America. Where are the amusements of our youth? I hear of no driving now but amongst obscure ruffians; and no boxing except amongst the lowest rabble. One solitary four-in-hand still drove round the Parks in London last year, but that charioteer must soon disappear. He was very old; he was attired after the fashion of the year 1825. He must drive to the banks of the Styx before long, where the ferry-boat waits to carry him over to the defunct revellers who boxed and gambled, and drank and drove, with him who died George IV." In the Bicester

country, at Swift's House of happy memory, the home of the present Sir Algernon Peyton, may be seen to-day an absolutely unique and most interesting collection—an assortment of coach whips presented from time to time to old Sir Henry Peyton, the "solitary charioteer" referred to by Thackeray in the above passage, the great-uncle of Sir Algernon Peyton of to-day. A more remarkable collection of its sort it would not be possible to find, for no less than eighty-seven coach whips hang round the walls of the little room, eighty-seven whips, each of which

could tell many a tale of the road now, alas! relegated to oblivion, many a story of ancestors gathered to the majority towards the close of the last century.

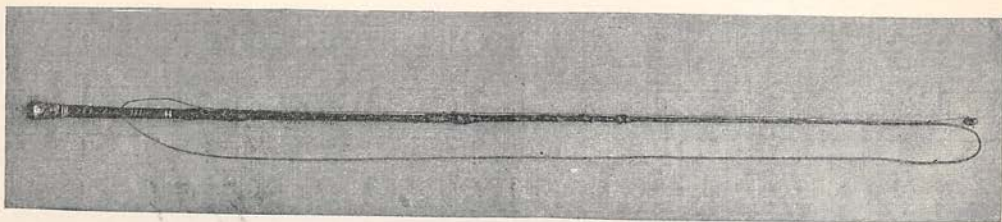
First comes the whip given to Sir Henry by George IV. himself. It bears an inscription characteristic of the donor. As a whip it is perfect in balance, in finish, and in workmanship. As a relic it is unique of its kind, and it has massive gold mounts, an implied delicate compliment on the part of the King, who well knew that Sir Henry had then lately designed thumb ferrules for whips, and was anxious to see them generally adopted. Indeed, King George seems to have had a great admiration for the quiet old charioteer, for he calls him in one of his letters "the finest coachman on the road," as Sir Henry



SIR ALGERNON PEYTON, BART.

undoubtedly was at that period. At first, whips fitted with mounts were treated with general contempt, and, by professional coach-

mischief." Two more whips were given to "the father of coaching," as Sir Henry Peyton was aptly named by the members of



WHIP PRESENTED BY KING GEORGE IV.

men, openly laughed at, much as percussion guns, and then breech-loaders, and then hammerless weapons were each in turn looked upon with suspicion and disfavour when first

introduced, and as coloured forehead-bands for bridles are, rightly enough, looked upon in the hunting-field to-day. When, however, King George had given to Sir Henry Peyton the gold-mounted coach whip which

the Benson, or Bedford, Driving Club. Driving men of to-day, indeed, owe a debt of gratitude to the able old sportsman whose barouche-landau and four bays were known as "Sir Henry's" to everybody in London about the year 1808, and whose drag and team of greys were almost the sole representatives of coaching that survived the introduction of the "steam kettle." In his younger days Sir Henry chanced upon several occasions to be mixed up in "highway scuffles," to use the old-fashioned phrase, and, during the closing years of his life, he loved after dinner to recount some of his own or his acquaintances'



REV. ALGERNON PEYTON.



SIR H. PEYTON, BART.

now hangs in Swift's House, thumb ferrules or "collars" began to grow fashionable, and the fashion of using mounted whips is now, of course, an established custom.

Next we have a whip from the late Earl of Shrewsbury, which, according to a state-

ment contained in an old manuscript, "he gave in order to mark an event which nearly brought both donor and donee to unutterable experiences with highwaymen. One story in particular he related frequently. It seems that early in the present century a rider for

a mercantile house in the City of London was attacked a few miles beyond Winchester by a highwayman, who, taking him by surprise, robbed him of his purse and pocket-book, containing cash and notes to a considerable amount. "Sir," said the rider, with great presence of mind, "I have suffered you to take my property, and you are welcome to it. It is my master's, and the loss of it cannot do him much harm; but, as it will look very

aided by a labourer who came up at the time, he lodged him safely in Winchester Gaol.

The B.D.C. and the Richmond Driving Club were in their prime when the two whips above referred to were presented, and it would be impossible to obliterate from the memory of the contemporaries of coachmen such as Jemmy Macdonald and Lord Chesterfield, of Count D'Orsay and Prince



THE WHIP ROOM AT SWIFT'S HOUSE.

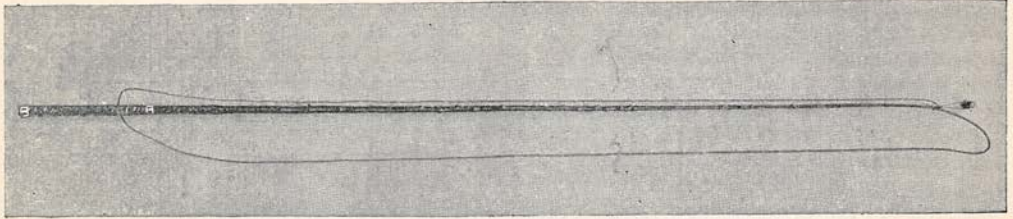
cowardly of me to have been robbed without making any resistance, I should take it kindly of you just to fire a pistol through my coat." "With all my heart," replied the highwayman; "where will you have the ball?" "Here," said the rider, "just by the side of the button." The highwayman was as good as his word, but the moment he fired the rider knocked him off his horse; and, having stunned him with the blow,

Batthyany, of Charley Twyrhitt and George Payne, the familiar figure of Sir Henry seated upon his coach-box and accompanied only by two liveried servants as he proceeded at a slow pace through the squares of Mayfair and Belgravia. Referring to the B.D.C., "Nimrod," in his "Essays on the Road," speaks very highly of Sir Henry, and describes how upon one occasion, in a crowd in London, he saw him "pull back his team,

and as he did so every rein told as true as if it had been single."

Passing several whips of minor interest we come to one presented by the late Viscount Valentia. As a coaching enthusiast Lord

being nearly a century old. If any one whip of this sort is better preserved than the rest, it is the one presented by Mr. Okeover, though the whip soon afterwards added to the collection by Mr. Henry Villebois, and

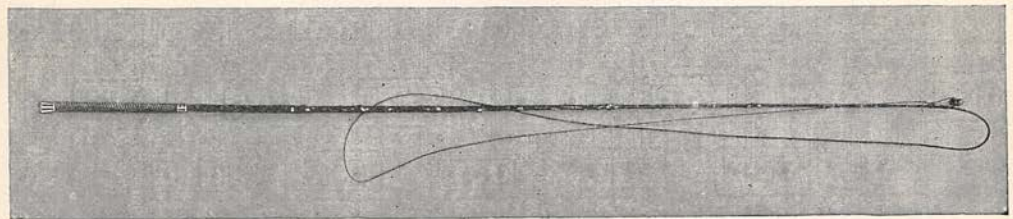


WHIP PRESENTED BY THE LATE VISCOUNT VALENTIA.

Valentia would perhaps have equalled old Sir Henry himself, and evidently the whip, to judge from its worn appearance, was not set aside as a relic and never made use of. One point noticeable about all these coach whips is the splendid way they "handle" or are balanced. Not one has a weighty stock of the sort so often met with in the driving whips of certain modern makers, a fault found chiefly in tandem whips. The whip presented by Captain John Probyn, for instance, is quite perfect in this respect, and, as Sir Algernon Peyton remarked, "You could almost distinguish these old whips from new ones if you handled them in the dark." Also, the sticks are uniformly excellent and were evidently seasoned with great care before being bound up. Most of them are made of holly wood, some of yew, and nearly all are more or less knotty, while several have the well-known "dog's leg" crook. Also, the majority are about the same length as modern coach whips—that is, rather over five feet—and are stained a dark colour. Apparently in our grandfathers'

the one given by the famous old coachman, John Hicks of Hillingdon, are also in splendid condition. Many of the handles are bound round and round with narrow strips of leather or washleather; but it is noticeable that the whips presented to the collection more recently have a wide piece of leather stitched on in the ordinary way.

Presently we come across a whip given by the Duke of Dorset. The title is now extinct, and a wealthy American, upon hearing this, offered a fancy price for the whip, an offer which Sir Algernon wisely declined to accept. It would, indeed, be more than a pity to render so unique and interesting a collection of coaching relics incomplete by removing some of its finest "specimens," as the American called them. The same individual also expressed his willingness to pay a fabulous figure for the privilege of taking home not only the "specimen" given by George IV., but several more "specimens" which he gazed upon with greedy eyes, and he would well-nigh have bartered his birthright for the collection complete.



WHIP PRESENTED BY THE DUKE OF DORSET.

days light-coloured whips "with dark knots all the way up," of which the present Duke of Beaufort speaks so disparagingly, were not common. Some of the sticks have the bark on them and seem none the worse for

Sir Henry Peyton, as well as Major-General Sir Thomas Peyton, Bart., who died in 1888 at the age of seventy, were extremely particular about the make of the whips which they used, and neither was ever known to

handle an indifferent one. For this reason, probably, the late C. S. Lowndes, Esq., had great difficulty in finding one suitable to add to the collection; but after expending much time and trouble he at last satisfied himself, and to-day his valuable gift hangs in the whip room in Swift's House. This house, I may mention, was originally a coaching inn kept by a man named Swift. It was purchased and pulled down, and the present house built by Sir Thomas Mostyn, about the end of the last century. Sir Thomas Mostyn lived there for many years with the Rev. Griff Lloyd, whom Lecch has immortalised, and it was there that Sir Thomas kept the hounds of the Mostyn Hunt, which hunted what is now the Bicester country. From him old Sir Henry Peyton bought the place, and there he died. His son, Sir Henry, also lived and died there—the "young Henry Peyton" referred to in "Nimrod's" capital article in the *Quarterly Review* as being so well to the front during the imaginary run with Squire Osbaldeston's hounds in the Quorn country. That article is generally considered the best that "Nimrod" ever wrote; certainly the descriptions are powerful, and the writer's accuracy of touch more than lifelike. Afterwards the father of the present Sir Algernon Peyton occupied the quaint old house, where

he eventually died. But, to return to the whips, we find one "from Godfrey FitzHugh," another from the late Lord Abingdon, another from W. A. Roberts, Esq., one from Lord Clonmell, and one from Lord Sefton, one from Sir Charles Bamfylde, one from Sir Felix Agar, one from Sir Bellingham Graham, one from Sir John Lade, one from

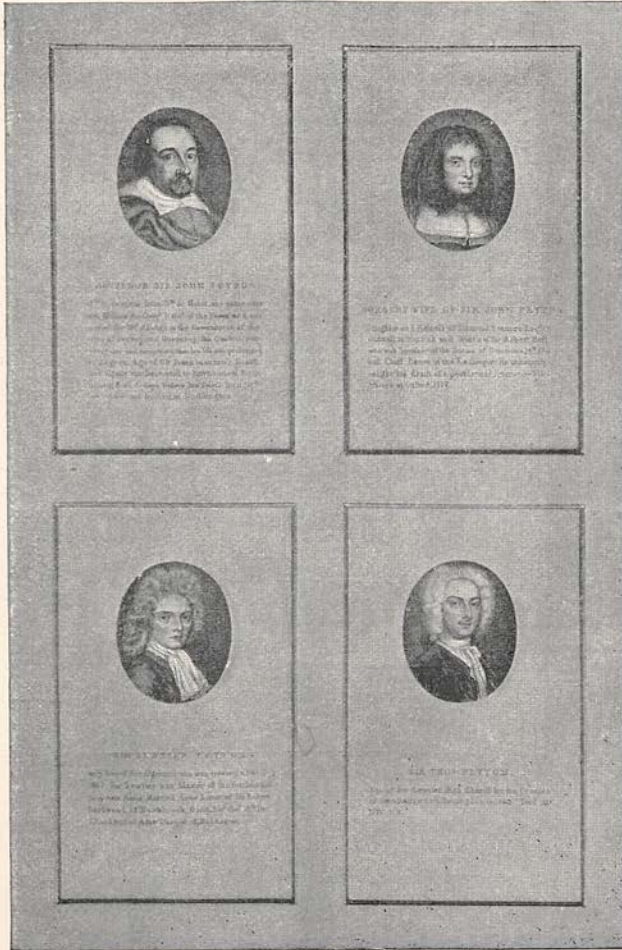
the Honourable Fitzroy Stanhope, two from Mr. Annesley, one from "Tommy Onslow," and so on. Apparently there was hardly a coachman of note early in the century who did not contribute to the Peyton collection. And not only whips are there; rare prints and pictures abound, one of the former showing us Tattersall's as it used to be in its early days. But by far the most interesting among the latter rarities is a set of five Stubbs paintings that Sir Walter Gilbey and others might pine for in vain.

The late Major-General Sir Thomas Peyton, father

of the present Captain Sir Algernon Francis Peyton, late of the 11th Hussars, was the fifth baronet, a son of the late Reverend Algernon Peyton, Rector of Doddington, in Cambridgeshire, who was a second son of the first baronet and long known as the incumbent of the richest living in the United Kingdom, a living worth in those days some £10,000 per annum. The parish contained

Governor Sir J. Peyton.

Dorothy (wife of Sir J. Peyton).



Sir Sewster Peyton.

Sir Thomas Peyton.

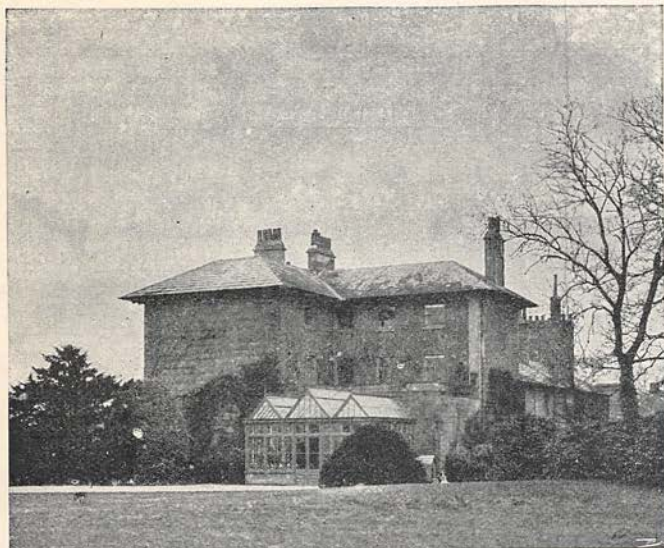
A GROUP OF FAMILY PORTRAITS.

over 38,000 acres, which were subsequently distributed by the Act of 1855 among seven rectories, five of which are still in the gift of

horses in 1879 and 1880, and there are several more cups which he won in races run under the Jockey Club rules. Then, for several years, Captain Peyton took part in all the principal polo matches played at Hurlingham, and twice he was in the winning team of the Open Cup. He is, of course, devoted to hunting. Had it not been for the agricultural depression, he would have taken on the mastership of the Bicester long ago, for his cousin and namesake, the late Sir Algernon Peyton, who died suddenly in 1872, had twice been master of the famous pack, and was anxious that the mastership should remain in the family. As it is, the present baronet often acts as deputy-master. I need hardly add that he is very fond of coaching. For several seasons he drove a coach in London,

upon which occasions he always favoured a team of greys as his ancestors had done before him.

the Peyton family. All the Peyton family, from the time of Sir Sewster Peyton, master of buckhounds to Queen Anne, have been devoted to sport of all kinds, though more especially to coaching and to the chase, and the present Sir Algernon, who, in 1888, married a daughter of James Mason, Esq., of Eynsham Hall, Oxon, certainly maintains the reputation of the family. During his ten years' service in the 11th Hussars he won many steeplechases, as well as hurdle races and flat races. One of the chief trophies in the dining-room at Swift's House is the 11th Hussars' Regimental Challenge Cup, which Sir Algernon won in 1880, 1881, and 1883. It is now his property absolutely, and so is the Cavalry Brigade Cup, Aldershot, won with different



SWIFT'S HOUSE, BICESTER (THE RESIDENCE OF SIR ALGERNON PEYTON, BART).



ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE WHIP ROOM