

THE PHAETON.

THE lofty, light, and elegant vehicle, which took its name from the ambitious charioteer of antiquity, is now almost discarded; and, in its stead, the stage coach form and character is adopted; in which the closest resemblance, in all its accompaniments of guard, coachman, and passengers, is rigidly observed. The close inspector (if indeed any one *can* inspect closely that which moves at the rate of twelve miles an hour) may detect a small coronet and arms upon the well-varnished pannel, and not be led into a mistake similar to the one which we are about to mention.

A female of genteel appearance having failed to secure a place in one of the stages that run between Brentford and London, hailed one of these perfect imitations: it stopped at her bidding; and inquiries being made as to what part of London she

was going, she was very quietly admitted to the inside, of which she was the sole occupant. The vehicle stopped in Piccadilly, at a harness-maker's, where, to her astonishment and confusion, her driver on the box was accosted by the tradesman by the title of "My Lord." Abashed, however, as she was by the discovery, she kept her self-possession, and, on the steps being let down for her to alight, quietly asked what was the fare, and was as quietly told she was very welcome.

Doubtless this afforded the good-natured peer an opportunity of regaling his friends with a rare joke, and the Four-in-hand Club must have allowed that he had topped his part.

That men should wish (however unphilosophical and silly the desire) to be taken for their betters, is not to be wondered at; but that any should be found solicitous to sink in the scale of appearance, and assume the rank of inferiors, may create surprise; except in those who are acquainted with the caprices of wealth, and the ever-veering weather-cock of fashion, turning as it does from one point

to another; and that most frequently in the very opposite direction.

The story of Phaeton applies very justly to the high-mounted of every age, but it may be questioned if any country can show more numerous examples of driving characters than England. The turf and the stable have their students, and divide with our colleges and halls the education of our nobles.

Were it necessary to quote examples in which the fall of Phaeton has been exemplified by our modern charioteers, they would perhaps be too numerous to detail: the danger of driving is sufficiently obvious to justify the shape of Death assumed in the design given in the plate on this subject. But the warning intended by the artist will be to little purpose, while the love of distinction, and of that noble animal the horse, remains.

This folly has, at least in appearance, degraded the gentleman to the groom; but it is not good to play with edged tools: and there have not been

wanting instances in which squandered fortune has placed the gentleman Jehu on the box of a real stage-coach as a dernier resort.

It is not difficult to trace this predilection to its source in childhood. A whip in the hand of a youngster is sufficient to give a bias to his mind; his training for the turf or the course will follow as effect follows cause; the moment he is released from the shackles of restraint, he will commence his career, and the Four-in-hand Club may probably finish what the toy began.

It may be, that this whip and spur speed of our riders and drivers had its origin in Rousseau's notion, that motion accelerated thought: for it is certain that pacing up and down the room has helped many an author to a word or a thought as well as it did the philosopher; when gnawing and twitching his pen, or fidgetting on his seat, has failed.

In this view it would be perverse indeed not to wish success to our phaetons, young or old, in

their pursuit of *thought*. It also may be quite incorrect to suppose that the break-neck speed with which the carriages of our nobles and gentles drive over our pavements, is prompted by any other motive than their owners having the most important matters in hand; which induces them thus to risk their own lives, and the lives of his majesty's subjects. It cannot be believed that all this haste is to purchase a riband or to leave a card. No, it must be to obtain thoughts—a fact indeed which may be fairly inferred by the productions of titled authors and authoresses that have recently appeared in the gallop of verse, or the more modest pace of prose; many of which may justly serve to show that they have not run their course in vain.

Had this motive for driving and motion been suggested to the caricaturist, Gilray, it would have spared him the trouble of satirizing, in a whimsical print, an Honourable, who, he thought, sought only distinction by driving his phaeton in the full-town season through Bond Street, Pall Mall, and St. James's Street: for, while the graphic sati-

rist imagined the honourable personage was merely turning the wheels of his carriage, he might be all the while turning a thought, and therefore not be deserving the sarcastic allusion in the following lines, which were affixed to the print :

What can little T— O— do?

Why, drive a Phaeton and two :

Can little T— O— do no more?

Yes—drive a Phaeton and four.

As well might the lines in “Hints on a Horse-race,” apply to the profound and calculating thinkers on the turf, when proposing or hedging a bet :—

“ In this harlequin jumble,
 Where great men are humble,
 A groom for a duke
 Is easy mistook ;
 But whichever you choose,
 The same are their views :
 To be talked of and praised
 For the steeds they have raised.
 Should the good of the land
 Ever be at a stand,
 They are ready to bet
 On the national debt ;
 But the whip and the spur
 They at all times prefer

To the welfare of nations,
Or the good of relations.

* * * *

For the virtues it breeds,
And the numbers it feeds,
What must not give place
To a drive or a race?"

Far less should the splenetic couplet be relied on, which insinuates that any individual, either of Oxford or Cambridge, in order completely to imitate the coachman's habits, goes such lengths,—

“ That, with the vulgar mania bit,
He'd lose a tooth to learn to spit.”

Such scandalous insinuations can have arisen only from *STABLE TALK*, the title of an intended work, said to be written for the use and amusement of the Fancy, &c.

That difficulty and peril attend the wheels of the ambitious charioteer cannot be denied, and that—

“ Sometimes the taking off a wheel
May stop the driver's maddening reel,
And plunge him, with his youthful breath,
Into the icy arms of Death.

But what then!—the more danger the more honour!

PROTEUS.