

Vanderbilt's Blow at English

Will Revive Coaching Glories, Collect Fares and Smash Records



Alfred G. Vanderbilt

ENGLAND is puzzling over a new problem—it is usually puzzling over some kind of a problem. Why is Alfred G. Vanderbilt, the American society and club man of leisure and millions, to drive a public coach on the Brighton road—a splendid coach, to be sure, but one upon which any person may ride by paying the fare?

Mr. Vanderbilt says he will do it for sport and for English coaching experience. Road coaching is the severest test of an amateur four-in-hand whip, and, at the same time, a most fascinating recreation.

Then, in its accessories, such as a splendid road, rare scenery, quaint old posting inns and the lingering romance of old coaching days, the Brighton route has no superior.

Although he denies any such intention at present, Mr. Vanderbilt will probably not object to clipping a few minutes off the boasted British coaching records. At any rate, he will show the English some American feats of tooling that are expected to open their eyes.

Of far greater importance, however, will be the test of the American road horse before the eyes of the English. As he believes the American trotting horse can go faster and further than those of any other country, he will arrange a fast schedule for his coach—faster, indeed, than has ever been attempted in that country.

the horn and the coach was gone and rattling over the stones of Smithfield.

When the guard had blown himself quite out of breath he put the horn into a little tunnel of a basket fastened to the coachside for the purpose, and, giving himself a plentiful shower of blows on the chest and shoulders, observed it was uncommon cold, after which he demanded of every person separately whether he was going right through, and if not, where he was going.

The weather was intensely and bitterly cold; a great deal of snow fell from time to time, and the wind was intolerably keen. Mr. Squeers got down at almost every stage—to stretch his legs, he said—and as he always came back from such excursions with a very red nose, and composed himself to sleep directly, there is reason to suppose that he derived great benefit from the process.

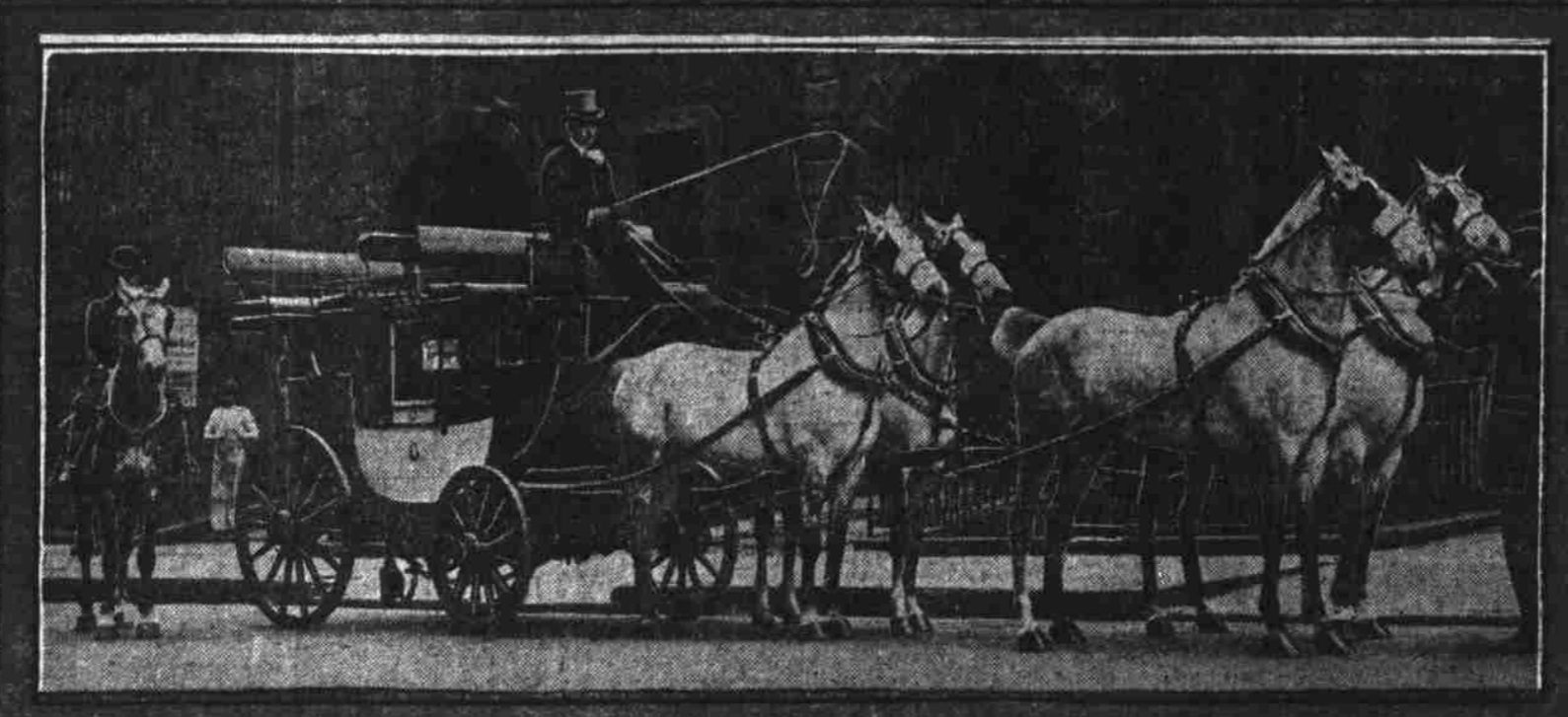
So the day wore on. . . . The night and the snow came on together, and dismal enough they were. There was no sound to be heard but the howling of the wind, for the noise of the wheels and the tread of the horses' feet were rendered inaudible by the thick coating of snow that covered the ground.

The streets of Stamford were deserted as they passed through. . . . Twenty miles further on two of the front outside passengers, wisely availing themselves of their arrival at one of the best inns in England, turned in for the night at the George, at Grantham. The remainder wrapped themselves more closely in their coats and cloaks, and leaving the light and warmth of the town behind them, plowed themselves against the luggage and prepared, with many half-suppressed moans, again to encounter the piercing blast that swept across the open country.

They were little more than a stage out of Grantham when Nicholas, who had been asleep for a short time, was suddenly aroused by a violent jerk which nearly threw him from his seat. Grasping



He is Fond of Taking Out a Party of Friends.



The Team that Won Him Fame in New York.

WHATEVER honors Mr. Vanderbilt wins—he isn't so much concerned with the cash emoluments of the enterprise—will add to the many his country has gathered abroad, since the outfit will be entirely American.

New York-built, the coach Venture, which Mr. Vanderbilt has used several years for the same purpose in this country, has been sent over complete, with liveries, trappings and harness made on this side, and with eighty selected American trotters. The entire outfit was sent to England early last month.

While the usual stage route from London to Brighton is fifty-two miles, the route selected by Mr. Vanderbilt is five miles longer. It begins at the Victoria Hotel, in Northumberland avenue, London, and ends at the Metropole, in Brighton.

In the early days, the Brighton road, dotted by occasional villages, was not the artery of travel that it now is.

Today it is crowded from morning to night with heavy traffic, and sometimes filled with streams of automobiles. All this, it is thought, will make trouble for Mr. Vanderbilt.

It is not likely that any of his coaching parties will encounter experiences like those frequently described by Dickens, such, for instance, as the trip Nicholas Nickleby made to Dotheboys Hall in company with Wackford Squeers:

A minute's bustle, a banging of the coach doors, a swaying of the vehicle to one side, as the heavy coachman and still heavier guard climbed into their seats; a cry of "All right!" a few notes from

the rail, he found that the coach had sunk greatly on one side, though it was still dragged forward by the horses, and, while confused by their plunging and the loud screams of the lady inside, he hesitated for an instant whether to jump off or not, the vehicle turned easily over and relieved him of all further uncertainty by flinging him into the road.

There is little probability of a similar accident to the Venture. The Brighton road is one of the best in England—it has been prominent

in coaching annals for more than a century, and has been the scene of many fast runs.

They, too, there will be no night runs. As now planned, Mr. Vanderbilt's coach will start from the Hotel Victoria at 11.30 o'clock in the morning, and after an hour's stop early in the afternoon to allow time for lunch, will arrive in Brighton about 4.30 o'clock.

This will permit passengers who wish to

return to London the same afternoon to catch the 5 o'clock express. The coach will return the next day.

Ten or twelve shillings will be the fare charged, probably. A veteran professional guard has been engaged, so that Mr. Vanderbilt will have only the driving to occupy his attention.

Of the old-time coachman, Leigh Hunt wrote: "His bean ideal of appearance is a

frock coat with mother-of-pearl buttons, a striped yellow waistcoat and a flower in his mouth." Mr. Vanderbilt, while tooling, usually wears a tan raincoat over an ordinary street suit, with a tan driving apron; a gray high hat with curling rim upon his head and a bunch of white and red carnations in his buttonhole.

A gorgeous creature, however, will be the guard wearing a frock greatcoat of vivid red and a silk-plush hat. Godden, the guard engaged, is an expert at blowing tunes on the coaching horn.

Another purpose, besides enjoyment and experience, animates Mr. Vanderbilt in his invasion of the old country—to demonstrate there the superior speed and stamina of the American harness horse.

Last winter he purchased, especially for the work, eighty fast trotters, which he sent across the sea in one shipment. Late in June, when the coaching season has ended, these horses will be sold at auction at Tattersall's.

While the record of the Brighton road—seven hours and fifty minutes for the round trip—has held since 1888, it was not made on one of the regular passenger runs.

That record was made by Jem Selby, who won \$5000 for his backers on a wager that the round trip could not be made in eight hours.

Still, uniformly fast time was made over the old road in the memorable coaching days, and it is this that Mr. Vanderbilt purposes to eclipse in his regular runs.

In the forties, the widely-famed coach Quicksilver was scheduled to do the journey daily in four hours and forty-five minutes—the fastest time ever attempted for a public coach on the route.

Mr. Vanderbilt has arranged a much faster schedule, considering the longer route he has chosen. There will be nine relay stations, and thirty-six horses will be distributed along the road for changes.

Grays, including two of the noted champion horse-show four, will form the town team in and out of London. Four lively skewbalds will be used on the run into Brighton and on the first stage of the return journey.

Since he took up the sport, six or seven years ago, Mr. Vanderbilt has been a prominent figure in public coaching in this country. During racing seasons he has run the Venture and Viking to Morris Park and Belmont Park, and at other times many persons, with no acquaintance with any members of the Four Hundred, have ridden behind him on coaching trips out of New York.

Many American whips—without full American outfits, however—have driven coaches over English roads. Years ago, Colonel Delancey Kane drove for a season between London and Virginia Water.

Some twenty years ago Colonel William Jay, president of the Coaching Club of New York, advised all who aspired to become expert whips to try a season at road work in England.