

PHILADELPHIA AS IT IS.



THE OMNIBUS DRIVER.

We well remember the first omnibus, the "William Penn," which, in order not to shock us too much, was made as much like a stage coach as might be, without its being actually a stage coach. The door behind; the steps, those great novelties, and the seats running from end to end, were the distinguishing features, for with these exceptions, the body of the vehicle was similar in shape to a Troy coach. We remember the sober brown color it was painted, so fitting to its name, and what a Quaker like carriage it was in comparison to those of the present day. We have not forgotten the "Jim Crow," the second omnibus Philadelphians ever saw, the shape of which differed not much from those we have now, and the name being given in compliment to Rice, then all popular. The "Jim Crow" was a greater object of wonder by far than the "William Penn," for it differed in shape from any thing we had ever seen, and then its side was decorated with paintings representing its namesake in the very act of "wheeling about and turning about." Before this showy carriage, the Wm. Penn had to pale its ineffectual fires, its sober color could not stand comparison with that of the coach named after the lively Ethiopian. The Quaker omnibus fared as badly as the descendants of the founders of the commonwealth, and was forced to lay by its straight-laced formality and assume more fashionable habiliments. It was repainted in gay colors, coming out with new beauties, changing its name and metamorphosing its sex, for it was re-christened the "Cinderella." By this time, Evans & Caldwell had founded their Chestnut street line, and added new omnibusses of superior build and decorations. We recollect, particularly, the "Nonsuch," which, all scarlet and gilding, used to flash off from the Merchants' Coffee House, like a streaming comet.

Then omnibusses began to increase, and new lines were established. The Navy Yard and Kensington were accommodated with regular lines of coaches; the Germantown Railroad depot was the goal of another line; Fairmount soon came in for the favors of the omnibus proprietors—until the whole city became, as now, intersected by routes by which the farthest housekeeper, in the shortest space of

time, may be placed in the heart of the city. It is but fifteen years to run back, and yet what accidents have befallen the proprietors and original founders of the lines? Evans and Caldwell, where are they? Where is the man who established the lines from the Navy Yard to Kensington? Even Kite, the originator of the Sixth street line, is no longer an omnibuster. Generation after generation has succeeded in the management of the lines. Glenat, now the oldest among them, is but a man of the day before yesterday, whilst Peters, Dougherty & Powers, Kerr & Pickup, Snyder & Ovenshine, and the rest, are men of yesterday.

The omnibus driver himself is a modern. He is the result of a new system—an addition to the old mode of hackney coaching; he considers himself something better than the hack driver; he is of another class—he belongs to the aristocracy of Jarveys, and cracks his whip in conscious superiority; he is the man for all weathers, and endures more discomfort than any other person. When it rains, hails, or blows, then is the omnibus harvest, and then must the driver be ready to stop at every corner, to take in a passenger, himself the while a victim to the elements. He is a man with a quick eye, who sees every way at once; he can descry passengers on opposite sides of the street at the same time, and if there were fifty who wished passage he would see them all at once. He has great belief in the expansibility of the omnibus, and, although his coach ought only to hold twelve, he will not hesitate to take sixteen, satisfied that the 'buss will distend its sides for their accommodation. He is attached to his passengers, being bound to them and the door by the strap which passes along the ceiling of the coach, and is fastened to his arm; and he has a particular affection for the sixpences, which tokens he stows away in a little tin box upon his seat. In fact, he is a deserving member of the community, doing much for public accommodation, and perhaps not being bountifully paid, a disadvantage under which he labors in common with the greater part of mankind, who have to work very hard for very little pay.

Sunday Dispatch Jan. 21. 1849.

Reported for the Inquirer.
Sec. II LOCAL ITEMS. 1848.

Improvements.—Among the numerous improvements that have recently taken place in our city in relation to stores, none surpass the five noble structures erected on the south side of Market st., between Fourth and Fifth, by Mr. M. R. Levering, and owned by John Sheaff, of White Marsh, New Jersey. They are five stories in height, and extend all the way back to Commerce street, being 111 feet deep, and each has a front of 22 feet. There is a large double sky-light introduced, so as to admit the light directly from the roof to the first floor—a most decided improvement in the construction of such extensive and lofty stores. A double staircase is erected with a view to afford, in the event of fire, an outlet from, or egress to, the premises, according to circumstances. These are only a portion of the improvements pointed out to us, although we may add (for that fact ought not to be lost sight of) that a fire proof is to be found in each story of the buildings, the cost of which latter will not be less than \$45,000 each, and the rent of any of them not exceeding \$3000 per annum—the lessee being at liberty, if he pleases, to rent each floor, he occupying one of them.

Strange Weather.—Yesterday, the weather was of a most extraordinary character for the season of the year. It was close and sultry, and at times rained. In the evening, there was lightning, an unusual thing for the month of December.

CHESTNUT ST. is the grand promenade, and the southern side of that street at this lovely season is the fashionable one. From four to six o'clock in the afternoon is the period fixed for the exhibition of beautiful faces, elegant dresses and personages who affect the *haut ton*. At that time the lower side of Chestnut St. presents indeed, a glorious picture. Its throng of gayly-dressed humanity gives it the look of a moving panorama, or of some sweet flower-garden in which the many colored ornaments of the field seem to lie intermixed in brilliant and delightful confusion.

The multitude pass up Chestnut St. to Seventh and there pay a pop visit to the Giant and his lady at the Athenæum—not forgetting a word to the handsome lady who attends the door. Thence the crowd usually presses on to the new Gallery of the Art Union below Ninth St. where the polite Actuary, Mr. Doty, all smiles and business, shews off the admirable paintings to the best advantage. Here the beauties of Philadelphia may always be found, about 5 P. M., in rare abundance, arrayed for coquetry and conquest. From the Art Union, the throng proceeds to Eleventh St., where the tide turns and ebbs again to Third. Thus it continues until dark; and thus, every fair-day has the stranger in our city a chance to encounter, with little difficulty, in two or three short hours, all the far-famed beauty and intelligence of Philadelphia. On Sundays, *au contraire*, fashion has made it vulgar to walk Chestnut street at any hour, even to go to church. Walnut street has been selected, strangely enough, for that day, and enjoys the complete-once-a-week monopoly, leaving Chestnut street, on the Sabbath, to the entire possession of what the *élite* are pleased to call the "nobodies" of creation.

So we go. These are the freaks of the day though why one street should be selected upon one day of the week, and another upon the Sabbath—why one particular side should be considered "genteel" and the other "vulgar" as a public walk—why this, that, or the hour should arbitrarily be fixed upon for the popular display—of course we cannot pretend to divine. We give simply the facts, as they exist, for public information, and leave the reader to use his or her eyes to demonstrate our propositions, and arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

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