

of 1745, when the Government was nearly overthrown, mainly because of the bad state of communication between various parts of the country, that England really woke up. The work progressed with a hurry, that may be described as almost feverish, for no less than 452 separate Turnpike Acts were passed by Parliament during the fourteen years between 1760 and 1774. Such an amount of legislation on behalf of communication is only paralleled by the stress of work in Parliament during the early days of railways. These roads, however, useful as they might be for military, mail, and passenger purposes, were of but small advantage for the conveyance of goods, in the quantities that were being demanded by a rapidly increasing trade.

So far as speed in travelling was concerned, improvements began to take place. In the year 1754, Manchester, then almost cut off from civilisation, produced a flying coach, and inaugurated an improved service with London. As

Flying Coach. announced, this flying coach would, "although the statement may appear incredible, arrive in London (barring accidents) in four and a half days after leaving Manchester." In the year 1784 Palmer's mail coaches began to run, and the journey from Edinburgh to London was reduced to two days and three nights. The speed was thought to be excessive, and travellers were seriously warned of the ill effects likely to result from rushing through the air at such a speed for two or three consecutive days.

Arthur Young, in his *Tours*,¹ gives glowing accounts of the roads and their defects. In one place he mentions being more than ordinarily impressed by the bumping caused by ruts, and on getting down to measure the cause of the discomfort, actually found one rut having a depth of no less than four feet.

There was a deep-lying and unsuspected cause for the unsatisfactory state that continued to be the characteristic of English roads.

Reason for Poor State of Roads. The Romans had been great road engineers, but when they left the country, no one took up their rôle in this respect. The roads were bad, not only for want of funds to construct and repair them, or for the wish to have them (indeed, as commerce progressed, there were both the funds and the wish in evidence), but the real obstacle in the way of

¹ *Six Weeks' Tour Through the Southern Counties. A Six Months' Tour Through the North of England.*