

GREAT PAUL—continued from page 24.

The next problem was the transportation of Great Paul from Loughborough to London. It was found to be too big for conveyance by rail, and a special carriage was constructed for it to be brought by road, hauled by a steam traction-engine, with another engine in reserve for difficult stretches of road. Great Paul set out on its journey on Thursday, May 11, 1882. By this time so much had been said and written in the press about the bell that its passage through the various towns and villages was a major event, with crowds thronging the road to see it pass, and walking along with it. The "Bell News" of May 20 has a vivid account of the first few days of the bell's journey: "Arriving as far as Market Harborough on Friday, the daily papers tell us a start was made again at an early hour on Saturday. Oxenden-hill proved a difficult one, the ground being soft and the incline very steep. The wheels of the trolley sank in some inches, and the bell had to be drawn back and a fresh part of the road selected. The van-engine was then sent on the front, and helped by its wire rope to tow the bell to the summit. From this point until Landport everything went well, but here an incline long and steep acted in the opposite way, and the bell trolley pressed hard on the engine, and in a measure overpowered it—although the steam was reversed on the piston—to the extent that the latter part of the descent was made at a pace very much quicker than desirable, although control was never absolutely lost. Onwards the journey was continued, over an undulating district of long, steep hills, with lovely and widespread scenery around, until Brixworth was reached, and the five miles of hills leading to Northampton were commenced upon.

BELL COVERED

The excitement caused by the bell was not so great along Saturday's route as it had been the two days before, for although as many people came out to look at it few followed it, for the reason that it had become necessary to cover the bell with tarpauling. This was in consequence of scribbling of names in pencil and in chalk, or rather of what was much worse—for that useless folly might have been tolerated—the numerous attempts made to scratch names with knives and chisels, and ultimately one man brought a punch and hammer to indent his initials. It was, therefore, all but hidden from view when the great bell approached the suburbs of the populous shoe-manufacturing town, to the disappointment of many hundreds of the inhabitants of Kingsthorpe. But so soon as the borough limits were entered, and a detachment of two serjeants of police and six or eight constables appeared to protect the bell, the tarpaulin was removed, and 'Great Paul' made a triumphal progress, accompanied literally by thousands upon its route. Turning out of the busy High street by Bull-lane, and so by a well selected detour along the mounts and the Cattle Market, excellent and safe progress was made over broad macadamised roads, and

the steep descent over the stone-paved Drapery and Sheep streets was avoided. It was a sight to be remembered, to gaze upon that surging sea of heads that extended as far as the eye could see come forward some hundreds of yards in advance of the bell.

"The railway bridge having been safely passed under, the engines were detached to get water from the river Nene, over which a rather handsome, but low stone bridge of three arches had to be passed. The town surveyor was rather nervous about the condition of the bridge, and wished the bell trolley to be hauled over by the rope; this was tried, but happily failed, for there could be no doubt the bridge was equal to carry five times the weight of the bell and its carriage (22 tons), whilst to have prevented an accident by the use of the rope on the steep descent of the bridge after its summit had been passed would have been very difficult indeed. As it was, the engine was ultimately coupled, and the bell pulled over in excellent style, amidst general plaudits. The bell now went on some short distance beyond the town, and pulled up for the night. No progress was made on Sunday."

A BREAKDOWN

Monday's journey was apparently without incident, but a breakdown occurred on the Tuesday on the road between Fenny Stratford and Brickhill, when the wagon seems to have got stuck in the mud. The "Daily News" reported the following day: "The waggon with its load is still half embedded in the roadway, and attempts were made during yesterday to extricate it by means of jacks. When it is got out of its present position the truck will be moved along the remainder of its journey on iron plates, which have been sent for the purpose. A later telegram says that a distance of 100 yards only represents the progress made yesterday by the truck bearing the bell, the boiler-plates upon which attempts were made to travel proving of little use, the narrow wheels of the truck sinking at once into the clay soil."

It seems that after this the journey was accomplished without major difficulty until the bell arrived at Highgate on Saturday, May 20. The account given in the "Daily News" of the final stage of its journey is worth quoting in extenso: "The usually quiet neighbourhood of Highgate was on Sunday evening the scene of a demonstration such as might have seemed to the old historian who speaks of Britain as 'The ringing Isle' fully to justify his designation. Rarely have the people of London flocked out in greater numbers than they did on Sunday night to see for themselves the monster bell of whose happy birth and adventurous journey they have lately been hearing so much. All day, and more especially in the evening, curious crowds thronged out to see the bell and to touch it, and to discuss its proportions and its composition and its tone—as judged of by a poke with an umbrella or a rap with the knuckles—and when darkness had dispersed, a pertinacious little mob of perhaps three hundred still clung to the railings of the enclosure from which they had been expelled. They had

come to see the bell into London, and so they stuck to their various coigns of vantage in the best of spirits and ready to make very merry over a little scare which everybody experienced as the trolley on which Great Paul was bound seemed to be setting off on its own account on an impromptu mission into the centre of a mason's show-yard. In the twilight of early dawn it was not quite clear how it occurred, but it certainly did occur that just when both engines were detached after a deal of furious puffing and rattling and whirling of wheels, the trolley made an unexpected plunge down the sloping side of the roadway, and for an instant seemed to be bent on capsizing among the monuments. Perhaps the danger was more seeming than real. There was a scuffle among the people and a heavy thud against a propitiously-placed kerbstone, and then came the merry laugh that plainly told that there was nothing much the matter.

"It was about three o'clock, nearly broad daylight, when the bell got fairly under way amid a ringing cheer of the valorous three hundred who marched on all sides of it, and as they tramped down into London found apparently ample reward for their long vigil in the ludicrous apparitions that were descried at the bedroom windows along the route. All along the line people peeped out upon it, but could not be allured to join the procession. The arrival at St. Paul's, however, was later than had been calculated on. The Cathedral is only about five miles and a half from the spot on which the bell had rested on Sunday, and between three and six it was imagined there would be ample time to accomplish the down-hill journey. Unexpected difficulties presented themselves, however. The surveyor of Islington prevented the bell coming down the Liverpool-road, and Upper-street, Islington, had to be substituted. This route presented alternate ascents and declines, and more than once it became necessary to send on an engine ahead and throw it across the road as a stationary engine, by which to haul up some slippery slope with a length of steel rope. However, the last acclivity was successfully scaled, and from Islington-green to the Cathedral progress was rapid, and the attendant crowd ever on the increase. Those who were awaiting the arrival at St. Paul's were made anxious for a time by the rumour that the City police intended to stop the cavalcade at the City boundary, where it did not arrive till close upon eight, the proper limit of time being six in the morning. However, nothing so injudicious was attempted; on the contrary, the police afforded every facility; and at five minutes to eight Mr. Coles, the contractor for the conveyance of the bell, had the satisfaction of bringing up his charge to the very inch assigned for the purpose by Mr. Penrose."

(To be continued)

BELLHANGER AND CHURCH BELL
MAINTENANCE ENGINEER

ARTHUR FIDLER

Bow, Crediton, Devon, EX17 6HN.
Telephone: Bow 379.

TOWER CLOCKS

NEW INSTALLATIONS OF ALL TYPES
REPAIRS AND CONVERSIONS OF
HAND WOUND TO ELECTRIC WINDING

GILLETT & JOHNSTON (CROYDON) LTD.

REDSAN WORKS, 28 SANDERSTEAD
ROAD, SOUTH CROYDON, CR2 0PA
Tel.: 01-686 2694 and 01-688 0851
Cables: "Gillico", Croydon

and at:
67 CHURCH ROAD,
CROYDON, SURREY, CRO 1SH
Tel.: 01-686 5207