

RAILWAYS AND NEWSPAPERS.

THE great associates of Newspaper expansion during the last half century, were, as already said, the Electric Telegraph and the Railway systems, of which neither can well do without the other, so that we might almost fairly regard them twin-born as to time, or even count them and the newspaper together as triplets. After about twenty years of comparatively mild experimenting and slow growth in the use of railways, the public seemed to come rather suddenly to the conclusion that they had a great and profit-making future at hand.

THE RAILWAY MANIA YEAR.—This impression became so deep and general that it reached the crisis, in 1845, of what was with much truth called the railway mania year. It is well known that the first British railway opened was that between Darlington and Stockton in 1825. It was worked partly by horse power and partly by primitive locomotives, which rather crawled than ran, compared with the present engines, and which were yet fast enough to alarm simple-minded folk. The faith in them, however, rose in twenty years thereafter to flood mark, and so controlled the imagination, and in some cases the conscience, that reckless speculations in possible and impossible projects resulted in the notorious mania and its calamities. It may have been that this spirit was excited by the passing of an Act of Parliament the previous year, by which Government was empowered to purchase all the railway lines of the United Kingdom which should be authorised during the following twenty-one years, at a sum equal to twenty-five times the average profits of the previous three years. The prospectuses of the companies advertised during the mania were frequently of such an impracticable character, and the designations of some of their promoters so grandiose, that there was given to the late Professor Ayton a rare opportunity for producing a caricature, which in its way may still be considered a classic. It was first published in *Blackwood's Magazine* under the title of "How we got up the Glen Mutchkin Railway,

and how we got out of it." The story hit the mark, or rather marks, so exactly by the descriptions of such men and their ways, that many of those promoters were enabled by Ayton's "giftie" to see themselves as others saw them. In the autumn of that year the *Herald* published the unprecedented number of twenty-five prospectuses of new companies, almost all of railways, and in November we had a similar number of Parliamentary notices. They were not however all mere *specs*, for some were of the most beneficent kind, such as a prospectus for the supply of water from Loch Katrine, and another from what is now called the Gorbals Gravitation Water Works. The latter scheme was carried successfully through Parliament, and now yields fully 4,000,000 gallons per day to Glasgow and other places. The Loch Katrine scheme was postponed then, but greatly matured and extended by the Act for it, which was carried in 1855, for which Glasgow must be ever thankful to the brave hearts who fought for it against all kinds of opposition. By these sources the Glasgow Corporation supplies about 46 million gallons of the best water daily, and by extensions of Loch Katrine, &c., its two aqueducts and reservoirs, can increase the daily quantity to 110 millions. Many of the prospectuses and notices, but especially the former, were expanded to a most lavish extent, so as more effectually to catch the eye of those who had more money than brains to spend. On an evening in October when we were working to a finish at the advertisements sent in for the following day's *Herald*, a lawyer's clerk rushed in "at railway speed" with a newly hatched prospectus, and met me as I was taking the latest copy to the printers. I told him he was too late; but he knew the master he was serving, and therefore pressed a good "extra" beyond the regular price. I could only tell him that "extras" of any sum would not secure its insertion, as it was only a question of possibility. In view of the boundless promises made in some of the prospectuses, a case which happened in our experience a few

years ago would have been very appropriate in these pre-telegraphing days. One of the telegraph clerks in our London Office, who was fond of an electric chat and jest with his brother wire-operator in our Glasgow office, when transmitting particulars of a company prospectus one night was so struck with its bouncing statements that he interjected immediately after them the remark, "all humbug." As the sense of the words escaped the notice of the Glasgow telegraphist, the compositor, and even the corrector of the press, they were actually printed next morning in the paper as part of the prospectus itself! Both telegraph clerks for some time trembled under the fear that the Post Office authorities would hear of the lark, and make it more of a tragedy than a comedy to them. As many men at all times are liable to indulge in extremes it is not to be wondered at that in such excitement there was a swing from one extreme to its opposite. The collapse came with a reaction more sudden than the rise of the speculative tide, when it was found that the grand promises of 15 per cent. profits and upwards were fruitless. What was a heavy loss to many of the investors was an unusual windfall to the newspapers. This reaction led to an unreasoning distrust, which was carried so far that, for instance, certain creditors of the newly-formed Caledonian Railway Company arrested some of their waggons; while in the financial crash of 1848 one or two even of the locomotives ran with the names of arresting creditors, who were determined to "mak' siccar."

EARLIEST RAILWAYS IN SCOTLAND.—The first railway in Scotland was that between Glasgow and Garnkirk, for which an Act was passed in 1826; it was opened on 27th September, 1831, chiefly for the carriage of minerals. In 1835 the Committee (or Directors) in their report referred to an increased expenditure of £57 6s. 11d. for advertising and printing, and apologetically said—"The reason is that perseverance in frequently advertising the passenger carriages, by newspaper notices and otherwise, is found to promote an increase of trade amply justifying the expense so incurred." This short line which was extended and called the

Glasgow, Garnkirk and Coatbridge Company, was bought up by the Caledonian Company in 1864, and now forms part of the main line east of Glasgow. The Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway, now a chief portion of the North British system, was opened on 18th February, 1842. In 1837 the Act for the Glasgow and Ayrshire line passed; it was one of the earliest Acts to which Queen Victoria gave the Royal Assent after being crowned; this line was opened to Ayr on 12th August, 1840, and to Kilmarnock in 1843. The Glasgow, Paisley and Greenock Railway was opened in 1841, and had an exceptional patronage from a large portion of the public by its 4th class (somewhat like a cattle truck), which ran between Glasgow and Greenock for 6d., so as to compete with the river steamers. They were called "stand-ups," because they had no seats, and this of course caused most of the passengers to stand, lean over the open sides, or sit on the floor when they could. On one occasion a sailor going to Greenock and a weaver to Paisley happened to be together leaning against the open side. Jack was to win'ard, and went on to squirt his tobacco juice "overboard," but it was blown back in spray to the weaver's face and ear. It was too much for long endurance, so that with a scowl he turned to the self-absorbed sailor, and angrily said to him: "Spit in your ain lug, and be hanged to you."

COACH AND RAILWAY TO LONDON.—The Act authorising the Caledonian Railway was passed on 31st July, 1845, and the line was completed and opened between Glasgow and Carlisle on 15th February, 1848, when the through railway connection to and from London and Glasgow was first formed. In 1845, however, the rails from London did not reach north of Lancaster, whence by stage coach passengers, letters, and newspapers were due at Glasgow at 1.5 A.M. This allowed us to publish a second edition of the *Herald* at 2 A.M., with a few short extracts from the London papers of two days earlier. When going from Glasgow southward the coach started at 1.15 A.M., and reached Lancaster for the mail train, leaving for London at 6.55 P.M., and getting to Euston Square

at 5.32 A.M. According to Mr. J. O. Mitchell, of Glasgow (who has contributed to the *Herald* many interesting antiquarian and genealogical papers), the whole journey took, including stoppages, 28 hours and 37 minutes; the fare inside the coaches to Lancaster was £2 10s., and the same thence to London by first class, or a total, including tips and living, of about £5 10s. Now, however, one may, after having his breakfast without hurry, start from Glasgow at 10 A.M., travel the 405 miles to London in less than nine hours, for £2 18s. first class, or £1 13s. third class, and have on board a good luncheon or early dinner comfortably and cheaply. Newspapers are more concerned, however, with the recent excessive competition by the Caledonian Railway Co. and its English ally, on what is called the West Coast Route, and by the North British Co. and its English allies on the East Coast Route. This racing from London to Aberdeen—a distance of 540 miles—which was actually done in less than a minute per mile, a speed, which, if not beyond the limits of life insurance companies, was found profitless to the railway companies, seeing that passengers did not care to be shooting through the air at that rate in order to be delivered in Aberdeen about 4.30 A.M. The competing companies have at length agreed to run so as to reach Aberdeen at the more reasonable hour of 6.25 A.M., thereby enabling newspaper parcels from Glasgow and Edinburgh to be transferred to the Great North of Scotland lines for towns between Aberdeen and the Moray Firth, on to Elgin, and by Deeside to Ballater, &c.

TRAIN SERVICE TO ENGLAND.—At the beginning of the train service between Glasgow and London, the first train left at 11.5 A.M., and was due in London at 4.45 next morning; and now, nearly 48 years later, the earliest train leaves as late as 10 A.M., and is due in London past visiting time, especially in the way of business; while from London there are much earlier trains, one as early as 5.15 A.M., due in Glasgow at 3.40 P.M. Commercial men and others, by leaving Glasgow at 10 A.M., cannot count

on doing their business in Manchester, &c., and returning the same evening; nor can their letters, &c., from the northern and other parts of Scotland, be delivered in London during business hours on the same day, nor in a large portion of England till the day following. As for newspapers—those from Glasgow and Edinburgh reach Wick, (367 miles) near John o' Groats, at 5.25 P.M.,—an hour and twenty minutes before reaching London by *express*, as against slow speed to Wick. Nine years ago the Caledonian Railway started a train from Glasgow at 6 A.M. to overtake the 8.40 train from Carlisle, reaching Manchester and Liverpool about 12.30 P.M., and London at 4.15 P.M., the traffic from which, some of the officials assured me, was very promising. It was, however, discontinued in February, 1885, as it seemed the faith of the management failed because the Post Office did not sufficiently recognise the new service. In Parliament an ex-M.P. decried it by calling it a newspaper train, a very strange description, in view of the fact that in this matter Scotland stands not much better than it stood half a century ago, not merely as regards newspapers, but in respect of letters and travellers as well. If those who suffer were clustered in a city instead of being widely scattered, the permanent P.O. officials would be wakened up, and made to provide a remedy.

NEWSPAPER PARCEL SERVICE.—Although the Scottish railway companies lag behind those in England in running early trains, they are to the front with regard to the carriage of newspaper parcels, by which they have earned liberal results. Up to 1864 there were no labels for prepayment in Scotland, and the smallest parcels were charged not less than 3d. About that time Mr. James Dickie, Traffic Manager of the Glasgow and South Western Railway Company, told me his Company was then printing a new table of rates for such parcels, which rate he indicated; but at my request he sent me a proof before issuing it. The result was that the Company adopted the following modified rates which I then proposed:—Parcels not exceeding 1 lb., ½d.; under 3 lbs., 1d.;

under 7 lbs., 2d.; under 14 lbs., 3d.; under 28 lbs., 5d.; under 56 lbs., 7d.; under 84 lbs., 9d.; and under 112 lbs., 1s.; while over that weight parcels were chargeable at the same scale, plus the rate for 112 lbs.—these rates being applied to the system *without respect to distance*. This new scale, and especially those rates for small parcels, had, as I had anticipated, the effect of ending the plan of clubbing into one parcel the papers for several newsagents in one town for the sake of economy, each one from that time getting his own parcel direct, and the profit to the Railway Company being in this way considerably increased. By the end of 1875 the other Companies adopted the same scale, and at the same time they all agreed to apply these rates irrespective of distance over all the Scottish lines. Since these rates came into force the revenue of one of the Companies alone has mounted from a comparatively small sum to about £7000 per annum from the carriage of newspaper parcels.

There is a contrast to this in the case of English railway rates for these parcels; they charge in the old-fashioned way by distance,—for instance, a 14 lb. parcel going 1 to 30 miles costs 3d.; under 50 miles, 4d.; under 100 miles 6d.; from 101 to 200 miles, 9d.; while a parcel of the same weight (14 lbs.) to or from Carlisle to Aberdeen, 240 miles, the length of the Caledonian Railway, costs only 3d., the rate of the English Companies for 30 miles. There is an illustration of the forbidding nature of the rates in England in the case of several of our *Herald* parcels sent there, the carriage of them by rail being more than the Post Office rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per copy, although for the latter they are delivered to the parties addressed. The fruitful experience of the Scottish Companies, and the longer and more fruitful experience of the Post Office, should be encouragement enough for the English Companies to look at least to their own interests. Our present outlay for parcels over England would probably soon be ten times that of the present were the rates like those in Scotland.

OVERALL RATES FOR NEWSPAPER PARCELS.—This reduction of the railway rates in Scotland was the means of very greatly increasing the number of newsagents throughout the whole country. They were, however, attended by an awkward system which required a joint waybill and prepared label, corresponding in value with the weight of each parcel. The system was very cumbersome, involving not only the expense of printing to the railway companies, but the services of their men at the despatching and receiving stations for tearing off the waybills, checking them with the weights of the parcels when their time was most needed for other purposes and when at the receiving stations the newsagents were eager to have their parcels. At the same time it prevented the newspaper despatch men readjusting their waybill labels to the altered weights caused by altered sizes of paper, or to increased numbers in the event of unexpected news of importance coming in when about to go to press. To meet these serious disadvantages to both parties, I proposed to the railway companies of Scotland an "overall" rate, based upon the average cost of the waybill labels used for the previous three years. After their full consideration of the case, I had the gratification of having all my suggestions adopted and put in force in February, 1879. The results have been to the railways a considerable saving in money and in the time of their men at the stations and audit offices; while, by the increase of newspapers carried, they received from us last year a very large sum more than they got the year before they agreed to the present system. The plan has become a means of promoting the interests of the railway companies and those newspaper publishers whose business is on such a scale as to have it applied; while it enables us to have newsagents in every nook and corner of Scotland more promptly supplied, and to an extent that accords more exactly with the demands of the public. Meanwhile, these three parties in England—Railways, Newspapers, and Public—suffer in comparison.