

**RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVE
MANAGEMENT, IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS**

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Railway Locomotive Management, in a Series of Letters by Veritas Vincit

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VERITAS VINCIT

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LOCOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT,

IN

A SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY VERITAS VINCIT.

[REPRINTED FROM THE "RAILWAY RECORD."]

I do confess it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses.

SHAKESPEARE.



PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, AND SOLD BY
H. WINNALL, HIGH STREET, BIRMINGHAM;
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1847.

PREFACE.

SOME of the earlier Letters of the following series appeared originally in the *Railway Times*, then under the Editorial management of Mr. JOHN ROBERTSON. When that gentleman retired from the Journal in question, and established the *Railway Record*, the Writer commenced, and has continued, to address the public through the latter medium.

The reprinting, in a more convenient form, of these Letters was not undertaken till the Writer could no longer resist the urgent solicitations of numerous persons connected in various capacities with Railway Locomotive Management. He was the less disposed to refuse this flattering request that at the present time there appears to be more need than at any previous period of a fearless exposure of a most dangerous system.

The Letters have been very slightly altered, save in a few verbal corrections, and the omission of some unimportant details. The Writer preferred that they should go forth in a collected form very much as they appeared originally. Most of them were written under the pressure of other business, and this fact will, he hopes, plead his excuse for many imperfections.

In several of the Letters will be found promises to recur in detail to particular topics, which are subsequently not at all, or but slightly, alluded to. The Writer is happy to say that in very many cases the first hint effected the necessary reform, and spared him

the trouble of going into farther particulars. In other cases, the lapse of time, and the restricted space at command in the crowded columns of a weekly newspaper, interfered with the carrying out of his original intentions.

Of course the Writer does not expect that this republication will be palatable to those parties whose conduct it has been his painful duty during the last five or six years to handle with considerable severity. He cannot help it. His duty to the public and to the true interests of Railway Shareholders is paramount; but he begs to state once again, as he has stated several times in the course of the Letters themselves, that it is with the public conduct, *and the public conduct alone*, of the parties referred to, that he has concerned himself or sought to interest his readers. Private scandal he has carefully avoided, although in the case of some of the individuals who figure in the following pages there would have been no difficulty whatever in finding very ample details.

With the Editor's permission, the Letters will be continued, as opportunity may serve, in the columns of the *Railway Record*—a journal which has from its commencement taken a very warm interest in every thing connected with the efficiency of the Railway system and the safety of the public, and which (as the Writer of these Letters has had many opportunities of knowing) has in matters of **LOCOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT** proved for years "a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well."

VERITAS VINCIT.

BIRMINGHAM, AUGUST, 1847.

RAILWAY

LOCOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT.

LETTER I.

Birmingham, December 26, 1842.

I HAVE many particulars to refer to, which have never come before the public, and by your kind and able assistance, I hope I shall be able to produce some good, not only to the proprietors and many of their depressed servants, but what is of infinite importance, to the public safety. You have already done much; much is still to be effected; so that the extraordinary economy, which seems to be the order of the day among the railways, may not be carried into effect by subjecting the labouring servant to hardships and cruelty.

You stated, immediately after the last general meeting of the Midland Counties' Railway, that however much you admired that every system of economy should be carried into effect, you were afraid it would be carried too far. This prediction has now come to pass on the North Midland Railway, to the fullest extent you could imagine. That the Directors and their locomotive superintendent on that line have used their enginemen and firemen in the most unjustifiable manner, no one will attempt to deny; they are not only putting the property of the Company in danger, but having commenced running trains driven by men not only totally unacquainted with the line, but who have never had sufficient experience in the driving of a locomotive engine, they are thereby putting the lives of the passengers in jeopardy.

I shall first point out the cause of the present difference existing betwixt the enginemen and the Directors, and the locomotive superintendent of the line, and leave the matter to the public to judge for themselves which of the parties is in the wrong. I am no engineman myself, but I am of opinion that it is the duty of some one to bring the matter before the public, and particularly under the notice of General Pasley and the Board of Trade, to whom the Government have intrusted to look over the general management of all the railways in the kingdom, to take care that no set of men shall have it in their power to act in a reckless and inconsiderate manner, that the safety of the public

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should be placed in danger. That such a course of management has commenced on the North Midland Railway I shall shortly and clearly prove.

The Directors of the North Midland Railway sometime ago gave the enginemen and firemen to understand (through Mr. Marshall, their locomotive superintendent), that by the end of the year an alteration would take place in their wages; and having learned the nature of the reduction, the men last week sent in a letter to the Directors, stating that they would not submit to any reduction, but that they were perfectly willing to serve the Company to the best of their power at the present rate of wages and number of working days, that is, 7*s.* per day for enginemen, and 4*s.* per day for firemen, running the trains three days, and in the shed one day, overhauling the engines and resting; running in this manner two weeks and piloting one week. This system continued would give these men entire satisfaction; let any person inquire minutely into all the circumstances, and he will find that the men are not unreasonable.

The alterations these men were given to understand by Mr. Marshall are 7*s.* per day for the enginemen, and 3*s.* 9*d.* per day for the firemen, to run the trains every day of the week, except one day for rest, and on that day they are to stop at home and receive no pay; and to do away with the night pilot, and thereby increase the labour of the men.

You will observe the wages of the enginemen are nominally as before, for it appears that even the Directors do not think 7*s.* too much for a steady man to have to run a train 73 miles up and 73 miles down, which makes the man's day's work 146 miles; but this he is to be obliged to do every day in the week, except one day for rest, which he is not to be paid for. On this day's pay, and doing away with the night pilot, hangs the difference betwixt the men and their Directors.

Let us inquire into the policy of retaining the pay of the "rest" day. I shall endeavour to show that it is unjust in point of economy to the interests of the Company, as it is unjust in principle to the enginemen.

If a man runs a train 146 miles per day, exposed to all sorts of weather, out night and day alternately, and all the time his life in danger from unforeseen accidents that are liable to take place under the greatest care, 7*s.* per day are not surely too much; but when the day of rest is taken from him, two days in the fortnight, (and he is obliged to run his turn on the Sundays), it reduces his wages under 6*s.* per day. I maintain that he should not be docked of this rest day's wages, and I also will point out to you clearly, that by paying for the rest day the same as the others the Company would be no losers, but gainers, for on that day the engineman would then have nothing to do but to thoroughly overhaul and examine his engine, and see it repaired by the fitters; but instead of seeing it done himself it must be left to the fitter and the petty-superintendent, or should-be foreman, (but they assume the title of superintendent, and therefore must have it,) and it is just a peradventure if he would condescend to take his hands out of his pocket and examine the engine thoroughly himself, and even although he did, I doubt very much if he would know; but I repeat again, in whose

hands can the repair of the engine be placed to see that the fitter does it properly but the man's who has to risk his life upon it? There can be no fear but he would see that it was put in the most complete state of repair, and perfectly safe for running a train.

It has often been the case—in fact, it is of every day occurrence—that when a fitter has been sent to repair an engine, he has been compelled to apply to an engineman to point out to him what was the matter; and at other times, when the fitter has said he has put the engine in repair, after it has been examined by the engineman it has been found that it was not properly done. It is also an undeniable fact, that among the petty locomotive superintendents, who are as numerous upon the railways as locusts, and are as vain and intelligent as peacocks, nine-tenths of them could not tell what was the matter with an engine unless the engineman informed him. I am of opinion, therefore, that when the engineman is on his rest day he should be required to attend to the repair of his engine, and be paid the same as on other days.

I shall now refer to the night pilot, and you will then be able to judge of the propriety or impropriety of its discontinuance. By a pilot is meant an engine always to be in readiness in case it should be wanted to go out to render assistance, and to shift carriages, waggons, &c., about the station, so that the pilot enginemen cannot be allowed to be absent from the station one minute. The night pilot is often required to assist the mail train out from Derby, and in many instances another engine is required to assist the goods' train out (when it is heavy), which follows the mail train soon after. Then, when the night pilot is discontinued, whom will the duty fall upon? Why, the day pilot engineman, who has been in attendance above fourteen hours, and, perhaps, has been called out and run many miles. These men, after they finish their day's work, go home, not knowing whether they will be called out or not; but with the understanding that if the mail train want assistance they will be called, of course, would retire to rest, and, after the fatigue of the day, they are called upon about two o'clock in the morning in a dozing state, and obliged to go out with the mail train. Again, the goods' train becomes heavy and another engine is required; then this duty falls upon two men who must be even more fatigued than the former; they also have to be called out, and proceed with the goods' train. Thus, there are four men sent out to render assistance (I should rather say to cause mischief, for no one can say that these men are fit persons to be called upon to perform such duty), the first two having been kept running about for fourteen hours, and the latter two having run one hundred and forty-six miles, and, perhaps, on a very stormy and inclement day. Could one advocate such a system, for it is not only one day in a week, but these men are liable to be so called every night during the week, and so on with all the others in their turns? Should sleep overtake the engine pilotman, who takes the lead of the train (and we all know the powerful effect sleep has upon an overworked and fatigued man), the consequences would be of the most serious description, not only in the immense loss of property, but of human life; and this uncalled-for risk for the paltry saving of 42s. per week to an engineman, and 24s. per week to a fireman.

In treating of the reduction of 3*d.* per day upon the firemen, I shall point out to you the most extraordinary and dangerous work they have to perform upon that line. You will be astonished that men can be got to perform it at any price; it is such that no other line has to do to the same extent. When the rails, from the state of weather, are so slippery that the wheels of the engine will not adhere to the rails, the fireman is obliged to go forward and stand upon the buffer bar, and throw sand upon the rails, and it has been known that the fireman has had to perform this most frightful duty for a distance of twenty miles at a time. You and the public may now judge whether strangers, totally unacquainted with the road, are fit and safe persons to drive the trains. Under all these circumstances, I do think 4*s.* per day are quite little enough for the duty of a fireman, for it is a well-known fact that his life has always been in imminent danger, for, in all the fatal break-downs, the firemen have invariably lost their lives; but it appears that the North Midland Directors are quite callous about property and life, for on Saturday last these Directors paid off all the enginemen, and started with the trains on Sunday morning with the new hands, the efficiency of which will appear. The first train from Leeds was sent out on Sunday morning by a new hand, quite unacquainted with the line of road, and who, it is reported, has had very little experience in the driving of a locomotive engine; and this appears to be the fact, for Mr. Marshall thought proper to accompany him. The first ten miles they lost a quarter of an hour, and they did not run a great many more miles till the engine stopped altogether. Neither the new engineman nor Mr. Marshall could understand what was the matter; but a bystander (whether a wag or not I don't know) called out that a broken valve was the cause. The astonished engineman and his master took it for granted it was so, and used the usual means resorted to in all cases of that nature to supply the defect; but, alas! when they tried the engine it was "no go;" the engine would not stir. In this dilemma all was anxiety and confusion throughout the train. One lady, dreadfully alarmed, called out, "Oh, we shall all be blown to pieces!" At last they tried if the engine would back, which she did; and it was so far lucky that they were not a long way from a station, where there is a turn-table, on which they got the engine turned, and came back to the train, and then proceeded on with the engine-tender first (*there is an express bye-law on railways, that if an engineman proceed with his train-tender first, he shall be fined, it is considered so dangerous*); however, they reached their destination two hours and a quarter behind their time! This delay caused the following expense of special trains, which, of course, will fall upon the North Midland Company, which will be pretty expensive for the first day's trial of cheap driving. By the train being behind time, the Sheffield and Rotherham Company were obliged to send one of their engines on specially with the passengers, and when the Leeds train reached Derby, another special train had to be sent on to Rugby, and at Rugby another to go to London. Now, all the extra expense and alarm to the passengers was caused by a paltry saving of a few shillings of wages to the most important and the most useful set of men that are employed upon the railway, and by putting inexperienced men upon the engine; for if an