

**ON THE COMPLETION OF THE RAILWAY
SYSTEM OF THE VALLEY OF THE INDUS.
A LETTER TO HIS GRACE
THE DUKE OF ARGYLL, K. T.; INDIA AND
RUSSIA. THE SCINDE RAILWAY
COMPANY: ITS ORIGIN AND POLICY**

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W. P. ANDREW & HARDY WELLS

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TO
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF ARGYLL, K.T.
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA.

MY LORD DUKE,

The views contained in the following pages are not submitted by me for the first time to the Secretary of State for India in Council. Several of your Grace's predecessors in Office did me the honour of taking into their consideration the subject which I now desire to bring to your notice; namely, the completion of the Railway system of the Valley of the Indus. The arguments which I advanced on former occasions have since been confirmed by the very highest authorities on Indian affairs; and daily events, such as wars and rumours of wars on or beyond the frontier; famine and its attendant evils; the Russian successes in Bokhara—not to dwell with too much emphasis on the immense extension of the Russian railway system, and the persistent presence of Russian influence in Persia and Central Asia,—all

have combined to concentrate public attention upon this subject, the vast political, social, and commercial importance of which it is impossible to overrate.

In order that I may lay a clear and comprehensive view of the facts of the case before your Grace, I will proceed at once to state what has already been done, and what yet remains to be accomplished, to perfect the communications on the North-West frontier of our Indian Empire.

The Scinde Railway, 109 miles in length, connects the seaport of Kurrachee with Kotree, on the Indus, opposite Hyderabad, the ancient capital of Scinde. From Kotree to Mooltan, a distance of about 600 miles by the river route, the traffic is conducted by means of the Indus Steam Flotilla. Mooltan, on the Chenaub, an important civil and military station, and an entrepôt for the trade with Central Asia, is the lower terminus of the Punjaub Railway, which proceeds thence between the Chenaub and Ravee, and the Sutlej to Lahore, the political capital of the Punjaub, and terminates at Umritsur, the sacerdotal capital and one of the great commercial centres of Northern India. The Punjaub Railway, from Mooltan to Umritsur, is 246 miles in length, and, like the Scinde Line, has been for some time in operation. The Delhi Railway, when finished, will be 314 miles in length.

Commencing at Umritsur, it crosses the rivers Beas, Sutlej and Jumna, and has its terminus within the walls of Delhi; forming a junction with the East Indian Railway at Ghazeeabad, opposite the old Imperial City. As your Grace is aware, Lord Lawrence, the late distinguished Viceroy and Governor-General, opened an important section of this railway before leaving India; and, from the satisfactory progress which is being made with the works, there is every prospect of the entire line being opened for traffic in 1870.

The completion of the Delhi Line will place Kurachee, on the Arabian Sea, in steam communication with Calcutta, in the Bay of Bengal, on the opposite side of the Peninsula.

I have said that from Kotree to Mooltan the communication is maintained by means of the Indus Steam Flotilla; but in spite of all the efforts which have been made to render this mode of communication with the upper provinces as perfect as possible, the shallow, shifting, treacherous nature of the river Indus, makes it inefficient, uncertain, unsafe, costly, and—even under the most favourable circumstances—quite inadequate to accommodate with punctuality and despatch the requirements of Government, the necessities of commerce, and the demands of an important Railway system.

It is therefore evident that the Scinde and Punjaub Railways, in the absence of a communicating link between them of a capacity equal to their own, are placed at a serious disadvantage, and, it is to be feared, will remain a burthen to the revenue, until the "missing link" be supplied.

The "missing link" is that line of rail which, running through the Valley of the Indus, will connect Kotree with Mooltan, whence Lahore, and Peshawur, at the Khyber Pass, the gate of Central Asia, will be quickly reached on the north; while by Umritsur, Umballa, Delhi and Allahabad, Calcutta will be equally accessible on the South.

It is to this line from Kotree to Mooltan, 480 miles in length, which would place Kurrachee, the European port of India, and the converging point of the telegraphic systems of Europe and India, in direct railway communication with Lahore, Umritsur, Delhi, and Calcutta, that I would first call your Grace's attention. Nearly every authority of eminence in India has borne official testimony to the importance of this line on political, strategic, and commercial grounds.

The second extension of the railway system of the N. W. frontier, which for many years I have advocated—happily, not altogether in vain—and the early completion of which I would now urge upon the

Government, is that from Lahore to Peshawur, about 290 miles in length. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of this line in a strategic point of view, as it will afford to the great military stations of North Western India the means of speedy access to the frontier at the Khyber Pass; thus materially increasing the security of that portion of the Indian Empire which is most liable to disturbance and aggression.

After the completion of the main line of railway communication from Peshawur and Delhi to Kurrachee, in order to perfect the railway system of the Valley of the Indus, a branch line will be required from Sukkur, viâ Shikarpore and Jacobabad, to Dadur, at the southern entrance to the Bolan Pass, a distance of 160 miles. This branch has been advocated by several distinguished Indian authorities, including Colonel Sir Henry Green, late Political Superintendent on the Scinde frontier.

Having thus briefly placed before your Grace the three extensions which are required to complete the railway system on the N.W. frontier, (from Kotree to Mooltan, from Lahore to Peshawur, and from Sukkur to Dadur,) there remains to notice a line which has been strongly recommended by the local authorities in India, from Hydrabad, via Oomercote, to Deesa, and which would connect the Railway system

of the Indus with Bombay, by means of a junction with the Bombay, Baroda, and Central India Railway; thus affording to Scinde, the Punjaub, and North-Western India the advantage of access to an additional port on the Western Coast.

Of all the proposed extensions which I have thus brought to your Grace's notice, by far the first in importance is the "Missing Link" between Kotree and Mooltan, by which means the great railway arch connecting Calcutta, in the Bay of Bengal, with Kurrachee, on the Arabian Sea—the backbone of the railway system of India—will be completed.

In consequence of the admitted importance of establishing unbroken railway communication between the vast and land-locked territories of the Punjaub and the port of Kurrachee, the Secretary of State for India in Council at my urgent and repeated instance authorized the Scinde Railway Company, in the year 1863, to engage a staff of engineers for the purpose of surveying the country between Kotree and Mooltan, in order that the best route for the proposed railway might be determined.*

* Vide appendix. Letters of Instruction from Chairman, Scinde Railway Company, to Agent and Chief Engineer.