

**THE PROPOSED ENGLAND
AND INDIA RAILWAY: A
LETTER TO THE RIGHT HON.
W.E. GLADSTONE, M. P.**

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The Proposed England and India Railway: A Letter to the Right Hon. W.E. Gladstone, M. P. by
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WILLIAM LOW & GEORGE THOMAS

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AND INDIA RAILWAY: A
LETTER TO THE RIGHT HON.
W.E. GLADSTONE, M. P.**

With the Engineers' Compt.

THE PROPOSED
ENGLAND AND INDIA
RAILWAY.

PREVIOUSLY to submitting this letter, addressed to the Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone, M.P., containing a description of our proposed route to India, we thought it right to strengthen our own judgment by laying the whole scheme before James Brunlees, Esq., C.E., Member of the Council of the Institute of Civil Engineers, who, after a careful examination, forwarded to us his opinion in the following letter :—

" To Messrs. Low and THOMAS.

" 5, Victoria Street, Westminster,

" 21st July, 1871.

" DEAR SIRs,

" I have examined with much interest the plans of your project for establishing through railway communication between this country and India, and I am of opinion that in the main you have selected the route which presents the fewest physical difficulties, and that your estimates of the cost of construction appear to be sufficient. I am not so capable of judging of the merits of your scheme from a political point of view, but the fact of your proposed line being accessible from the Mediterranean at so many points seems to me to give it a preference over any more inland route.

I am, dear Sirs, yours truly,

JAMES BRUNLEES.

The Proposed England and India Railway.

*To the Right Honourable W. E. GLADSTONE,
First Lord of the Treasury.*

SIR,

THE construction of an unbroken line of railway connecting the railway system of England with that of India, and at the same time uniting the principal States of Europe and Asia, is an undertaking of such importance that if carried out it would tend more to the benefit of mankind than any work that has been accomplished for centuries past.

The idea of such a work is by some persons considered Utopian, others however will say, it may be accomplished in the distant future, and whilst few have the remotest idea of what immense benefit such a work would be, fewer still are at all aware how easily this important undertaking can be carried out, at what a comparatively trifling cost, and in what a short space of time.

We believe that the time is not far off, when a passenger may leave England, and travelling with comfort and ease, may arrive in India a few hours after the fifth day of his departure from London, and that this shall not be a monthly, fortnightly, or even weekly occurrence, but twice daily throughout the year.

Provided this work can be done at a reasonable cost, then all will admit that the incalculable benefits it would confer, by

bringing together in close bonds of union so many nations, by developing the commerce of each separately and collectively, and by improving all socially, morally, and politically, cannot even be imagined, much less described.

The political importance and commercial advantages of bringing India into still closer proximity with this country, than even has been done by the opening of that great work—the Suez Canal—must be better known to you than ourselves. Our object as engineers, is to lay before you as briefly and as clearly as we can, the project of a line of railway which we consider should be made, and which England should take an active part in seeing executed, because it would bring India practically within five days' journey of the commercial centres of this country.

In entering upon the subject of a direct, continuous, and unbroken line of railway, between England and India, we do not pretend to assert that the idea of direct railway communication between this country and India is new, for such a scheme has been mooted several times, and portions of the line we are about to lay before you as a whole, have had several projectors.

The portion we particularly lay claim to as being new, is the extension of the line through Dalmatia, and through Turkey in Europe, as well as that portion of the line in Asia Minor, between Constantinople and Tarsus *via* Adalia. In reference to other portions of the line, we have adopted routes partially described and laid down by other projectors. The coast line along the Persian Gulf, and in Persia, also along the coast of Beloochistan, is pointed out by nature, as forming part of the direct railway between Europe and India. Thus with the railways already opened in England, France, Italy, and Austria, we propose to have one united scheme, one continuous railway, one company, with one rolling stock to work through between England and India.

That the English government has not been indifferent to the vast importance of uniting more closely this country with the 175 millions of people in India with whom we are so intimately connected both politically and commercially, is proved

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by the steps that have been taken in past years to ascertain the best means of improving our communication with that country. In the years 1835, 1836, and 1837, General Francis Rawden Chesney was instructed by the government to survey the Euphrates valley, the object being to obtain an overland route between England and India, in contradistinction to the Ocean route *via* the Cape of Good Hope. The cost of this survey, undertaken by order, and paid for by vote of the House of Commons, amounted to upwards of 40,000*l*.

When the work was commenced, it was not expected that anything like so large a sum would have been required, but great and unforeseen difficulties occurred at the outset of the undertaking, such as the conveyance of the hulls of two small steamers, with the boilers and machinery from the Mediterranean Sea to the River Euphrates, and these difficulties were greatly aggravated by the obstacles not anticipated, thrown in the way of the expedition by the vacillating conduct of the Turkish government of that day. All these obstacles and difficulties were, however, overcome by the perseverance and energy of General Chesney and the officers under him, and although the object of that survey has not yet been attained, so far as having steam communication in the Persian Gulf, and on the Euphrates River, yet the fact has been proved that the Euphrates is navigable for small steamers to within 150 miles of the Mediterranean, and anyone who has carefully studied the interesting narrative of that survey by General Chesney, must allow that the money laid out by the Government has been well spent, and bears fruit even at the present day.

At the same time, whilst the River Euphrates has been proved to be navigable for small steamers, we do not think it is navigable for the class of steamers at present necessary for the great stream of traffic between Europe and India, daily increasing with every improvement taking place by the extension of railways both in India and Europe.

Railways have in an especial manner given an impetus to manufactures and commerce generally, besides increasing and developing the internal resources of every country where

they have been formed. Therefore, although the Euphrates River is of itself perfectly incapable of being made the highway for the traffic to and from the East, when a railway shall have been made along that valley, not merely for taking the local traffic, but a line forming a link of a great continuous railway between the nations of Europe and of the East, the stream of traffic will thereby be developed to an extent that may be fairly judged from the existing ruins of the grandeur of former times.

Although the object of General Chesney's survey and the exertions which he has made up to the present time—viz., that of a Steam Navigation route *via* the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, thereby attaining a nearly direct route to India by steam navigation and railway combined—has not yet been attained, we believe the result might have been different had he exerted his energies upon the accomplishment of one continuous line of railway. When, however, the survey was commenced, the power of the locomotive was comparatively unknown, and the extension it has attained not even dreamed of. Even at the present day, with the experience of the past thirty years before us, how few there are who can contemplate the practicability of a direct and continuous line of railway, that shall unite not only the Railway system of England with that of India, but every town of importance in Europe and Asia.

The opening of the Suez Canal, through the perseverance and energy of M. Lesseps, will be of immense benefit to the commerce of England. It has already given a fresh stimulus to our steam shipping, and has given one unbroken line of water communication between England and the East, and with less than one-half the distance of the old route *via* the Cape of Good Hope. We shall be able to show you that the time occupied in the conveyance of mails, passengers, and goods by our proposed line of railway will amount to nearly one-fifth of the time at present actually taken by the improved Red Sea route.

In place of a mixed transit of land and water requiring several changes from locomotive to steam boat and from steam