

**OBSERVATIONS ON STREET
RAILWAYS, ADDRESSED TO THE
RIGHT HON. MILNER GIBSON,
M.P., PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD
OF TRADE, LONDON**

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Observations on Street Railways, Addressed to the Right Hon. Milner Gibson, M.P., President of the Board of Trade, London by George Francis Train

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GEORGE FRANCIS TRAIN

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M.P., PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD
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OBSERVATIONS
ON
STREET RAILWAYS,

BY
GEORGE FRANCIS TRAIN,

ADDRESSED TO THE

RIGHT HON. MILNER GIBSON, M.P.,

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE,

LONDON.

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Lord John Manners said, he did not take the same view as Sir Benjamin Hall did, that it was the duty of that office to interfere in any way with the paving of the streets of London.

Mr. Hawes would take the liberty of asking his lordship, which department of the Government he considered such a subject referred to?

Lord John Manners: As Chief Commissioner of Public Works, he thought his was not the office. The more proper department, this being a commercial matter, he thought would be the Board of Trade.—*Vide Observer, March 14, 1868.* Deputation from the Metropolitan Parishes to Lord John Manners.

Champion
6-17-30

Preface to Second Edition.

BIRKENHEAD will have the credit of introducing the first Street Railway on this side of the Atlantic. My application was made in March, and on the 22nd of May the Commissioners affixed the seal to the contract, as arranged with my solicitors, Messrs. Fletcher and Hull. The Ebbw Vale Company have agreed to deliver the iron in July; Messrs. Crowe and Williams are preparing the timber; Mr. R. Main is at work on the carriages, to be ready in August; Mr. Charles Burn, the contractor, will break ground the moment the material is at hand, under the engineership of Mr. Samuel, of London, and Mr. Palles, of Philadelphia, the resident engineer; and, in September, Mr. R. Peniston, the secretary of the "Birkenhead Street Railway Company, Limited," will issue excursion tickets from Liverpool to Birkenhead Park and back for sixpence.

The adoption of Street Railways in Europe is an important event in the history of this iron age. Great success cannot be earned without great labour. "The three P.'s—Perseverance, Patience, and Pluck"—is the annual toast of a Liverpool broker, at the customary dinner to his clerks. Success in Birkenhead is success

in all the cities in Europe. Experiments are expensive, but this is scarcely an experiment. The system has succeeded in America: why should it fail in England?

The thousand pamphlets sent to the Press, Parliament, and Corporations have awakened sufficient interest throughout the kingdom to justify me in printing this edition of fifteen hundred copies, containing in the Appendix reports of several eminent engineers, and opinions of the Fourth Estate.

The Lithograph of the Railway in operation may tend to remove the impression of the *Irish Times*, of a long line of carriages and a shrieking locomotive whirling through a crowded city; and may also answer the question, "Do you intend a stationary engine at Leece-street, Liverpool, or High Holborn, London; or do you propose to tunnel the hills?" Therefore the picture may explain better than the pamphlet; observation being quicker than reflection; the eyes satisfied, the ears are content.

The Commissioners of Birkenhead are being warmly supported by the people, who are competing to have the line laid before their respective doors. This may suggest to other Corporations that the public will be quick to follow their lead in giving the system a fair trial. Already Liverpool has made a favourable report through her engineer, Mr. Newlands, on my application to construct Street Railways in that borough, and on June 28th I met, by appointment, Messrs. Johnson, Bowring, Ridley, Clint, Kitchen, Crellin and Shuttleworth, the sub-committee, who will report thereon. Messrs. Clark and Heron, of the Manchester

Corporation, were much pleased with my models, and invited me to a trial in that city. Messrs. Moir, Govan, Dughorn, Donaldson and Dick, of the Glasgow Corporation, saw my plans in London, and suggested a trial line to be laid down from the Cross to the Crescent, by Buchanan-street and Sauchiehall-street. Birmingham and Dublin have my formal application before them; and Messrs. Lewin, Carter, Flinch, Forster, and Sutton, of the London and Greenwich-road Trustees, address me through the Clerk of the Trust, Mr. Charles A. Smith, to say that they "felt favourably disposed to the project, and deem the matter of sufficient public interest to justify their recommending that it should be submitted to a special meeting of the trustees to be convened for that purpose."

When I made up my mind last year to succeed in demonstrating the practicability of these railways in English cities, London was the starting point; but a practical member of Parliament having assured me that most of the great undertakings of the day were initiated in the provinces, instancing "steamboats, railways, gas, water-works, telegraphs—even Rowland Hill was a provincial institution," I applied to Birkenhead for permission to show them a pattern card of an invention that can be extended as long as customers may require. "Show its success elsewhere, and then come to London." This I intend to do. The field is wide; the labourers few. By-and-by the rolling of iron, the cutting of timber, the building of carriages, the erection of stables, the equipping of horses, the making of roads, and the consequent employment of engineers, clerks, contractors, mechanics, conductors, navvies, &c., will be practical proof that in introducing Street Railways into the old

world I have given a boon to the people, and a new source of wealth to the kingdom. During the past fifteen years four hundred millions have been invested in the railways of the country. *Five per cent.* invested in the railways of the city during the next five is *twenty millions sterling!*

All agree that it is a good thing. "Surely if it is so simple and so much needed, why was it not introduced before?" Simply because it was so simple and so much needed. Practical Englishmen in America remarked, "what a place England is for City Railways." Practical Americans in England made the same comment—but the idea began and ended with the suggestion. Vested rights—landed interests—parliamentary red-tapeism, were too formidable a battery to attack; hence the idea was paralysed at the start, and as nobody was inclined to go to the expense of introducing it, nothing was done. In the face of the bankers' conservative stock advice, "Don't be so *sanguine*"—the only word in the dictionary that, acted upon, ever accomplished anything—I have run the risk and expense of inserting the wedge in England, and will shortly prove that the new system is as superior to the old as Burgundy is to Beer—Champagne to Water.

Omnibuses were only introduced into Liverpool thirty years ago, and steamboats, railways, electric wires, gasometers, iron bridges, free trade, reform bills, and volunteers (the *national guard* of the land), have all been born during the Queen's lifetime. So, with faith, hope, and energy, and considerable money, I shall establish, what a Cunard captain aptly calls, the rich man's comfort and the poor man's luxury. When Liverpool has a good hotel, a decent

theatre, a respectable ferry boat, and Street Railways, the "Borough" should be promoted to a "City."

If I am properly supported by the corporations, the ladies of Lancashire and Cheshire, at no distant day, (instead of being packed in a sardine box with a sweep, as in the present omnibus system, or stowed away in the steerage of the Mersey ferry boats—there is no cabin!) can step under cover at any part of Birkenhead into a commodious railway carriage—ride to the pier—walk under a glass arcade into the saloon of the new ferry boat—walk again under a glass arcade from the floating stage to the railway carriage on the Liverpool side, and be taken to St. George's Hall, or the Philharmonic, and thus effect an important saving in *umbrellas*!

Street Railways in England will soon become a great fact—Birkenhead opens the ball. Liverpool follows. Then Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Dublin enter the ring; and London cannot well hold back after building the Metropolitan *Subterranean* Railway. A Street Railway can be constructed directly over it in as many months as that will require years. The former costs three thousand per mile, the latter three hundred thousand! In the one you travel in the dark, in the other in broad daylight. The Street Railway accommodates both sexes, while the Metropolitan shuts out one half the population—the ladies! (Who crosses in the Thames tunnel?) The former stops before every man's door, the latter has stations only at intervals. One starts every five minutes, the other every half minute if required. The Metropolitan blocks up the thoroughfare for months, the Street Railway for hours only. Surely