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Editorial

THE BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY COMPANY.

We hereby pledge ourselves, to insert without any charge, in the Northampton Herald, every well-grounded complaint against the Birmingham Railway Company, that comes to us properly authenticated, and temperately expressed. We are led to this determination by the treatment experienced by the Rev. George Phillimore, Vicar of Willen, whose excellent letters appeared in this Journal on Saturday week. Treatment more unjust, or more ungentleman-like, we never remember to have noticed at the hands of a numerous body. But the same little and tyrannical minds that could thus insult and oppress Mr. Phillimore are, we hear, everyday, and every hour of it working similar outrages upon railway travellers. We think it therefore, but a part of our bounden duty, to join in protecting the public, so far as the assistance of this Journal can be made available. In no other way, as it appears to us, save through the Press, can such usage be met and counteracted, until the Session of Parliament arrives, when we hope and *believe* that some Members of the House of Commons will be found both able and willing to secure the community against these railway monopolists. At the same time, we must be permitted to express our extreme astonishment at the conduct of those to whom, whether as Directors, Committee of Management, or as Secretaries, the interests of the Birmingham Railway Company are entrusted. Every person with an establishment of servants, is liable to the pain of finding some among them to be ill tempered, abusive, or dishonest. The chance of this must, of course, increase with the number of persons so engaged, and in the enormous arrangements of the Birmingham Railway Company, events of an unpleasant nature in the case of their servants must-especially at first-be of frequent occurrence. To diminish that frequency, and to obtain by degrees an improved system, must, one should think, be among the primary aims of the Birmingham Company, and no favour (however much immediate money may be sought after) ought to be deemed so valuable as a *proof* of that incivility which so many experience, and so few persons take the trouble of establishing. But what man that is not *himself* so bad as the insolent or the extortionate person he employs, would ever think of screening - still more of justifying -an abusive, or a fraudulent servant? Yet this very thing has been attempted on the complaint of Mr. Phillimore, and by the very Secretary to whom that complaint was addressed! ! Of Mr Phillimore, we may here take occasion to state from positive knowledge, that a more amiable or a more high-minded individual does not exist, as indeed was partly shown by the kind and delicate, but manly manner, in which, at the time here referred to, he stood forth to defend an alarmed and ill-used Lady. And let not the Birmingham

Railway Company suppose that, because their might is great, and their readiness to oppress proportioned to it, they can continue to disgust individuals in this manner with impunity, to their own interests. No doubt they possess a monopoly - a gigantic monopoly—such as they themselves may fondly suppose to be irresistible. But we tell them, that the force of opinion arising out of sympathy, such as the case of Mr. Phillimore, and of others, is every day exciting, is far greater than the Brummagem Bashaws seem to imagine. Those gentlemen greatly deceive themselves if they think that because the parties they have wronged, have been deterred from bringing actions by the cost of such proceedings, that, *therefore*, no justice will be obtained. Indignation against abuse of authority, and a desire to assist individuals treated by the Birmingham Company as Mr. Phillimore has been, will, assuredly, at length produce effect, and ultimately provide a corrective by that same power of Parliament which called the Company at Birmingham itself into being. Nor, let it be said, that we are speaking too strongly of Principals when Subordinates only have been offenders. The entire Company, from foot to front, has been to blame. The behaviour of the Company's servants towards the lady whom Mr. Phillimore found himself compelled in very manliness to assist, as well as afterwards towards Mr. Phillimore himself, whilst affording that assistance, was utterly without excuse. It is, indeed, distressing to think that persons of fine feeling, and gentle habits, should be subject to such treatment. But, bad as that behaviour was, in the case of vulgar policemen, it was as nothing compared with the sanction received in cool blood from their superiors. What, indeed, must those Policemen think, after having through their own error, *stopped, collared, and taken a gentleman, and that gentleman a clergyman, into custody*, to see such an insult publicly termed only an "*annoyance*," by the Company's Secretary, and themselves justified for their most abominable violence and extortion by that Secretary's pretence "that the intermediate coaching was the immediate cause." Those fellows are perfectly well aware that "the intermediate coaching" was as much a part of the Company's business, as the Company's immediate steam carriages, and that it might just as well have been urged in excuse of robbery, as of rudeness. They well know too, that they *ought* to have been, not only reprov'd, but turned out of their places, for the conduct they were guilty of in their assault upon Mr. Phillimore, whilst on the contrary, they find themselves actually upheld in their attack! But the Secretary to the Company had moreover the cool effrontery to tell Mr. Phillimore, that the evil he complained of would altogether cease on the opening of the entire line! Now, this was not the truth, and every day's experience since the 17th of September, as well as before that day, has proved it not to be the truth, nor is it possible to suppose that the Secretary really thought what he thus asserted, without at the same time supposing him altogether unfit for the office he holds. What, we may ask, *was* the evil complained of that was so sure to cease as declared by the Company's Secretary? An extortionate demand for a fare already paid was complained of. That surely may be repeated, aye and will be often, we may be certain, till the company's Secretary learns to think and write otherwise and better of honesty than he has done. Inaccurate booking was complained of. Cannot that be repeated? Rudeness accompanied with much personal violence was complained of. What, we should like to

know, is to prevent *that* from being repeated when the perpetrators find a palliator in the Company's Secretary, instead of meeting with a discharge, or, as the least possible atonement, with a reprimand suited to the offence? But - and here it is that the case becomes so gross and aggravated - a total want of proper feeling, and a most contemptuous refusal of justice on the part of the Directors themselves, as disclosed, first through their ill-mannered Secretary, and afterwards through their obscure underling that was directed to offer Mr. Phillimore a Post-office order for seven shillings, and to refer to that Secretary's previous note as a *satisfaction* - all *this* is an evil complained of, aye, and without we fear being in the slightest degree diminished by the increased power and independence of public opinion, which an opening of the entire line has tended to confer. But, be all this as it may be, one thing is quite clear. It is quite clear that, since the Birmingham Railway Company - unlike other tradesmen - seem to consider themselves as exempt from the duties of correct dealing, and courteous deportment, the public who do not choose to be both defrauded and degraded, must seek protection from a new Law, and, so soon as an opportunity may present itself, from a new Line. Till one of those ends has been obtained, three courses are open to our readers, namely, either to remain quietly, however inconveniently, at home, or to travel by the old peaceable methods of coaching or posting, or to let themselves, without using their canes or their fists, be kicked and cuffed about according to the taste and strength of the Birmingham Company's Policemen, as recently encouraged by their Secretary.