

**COACH AND RAILWAY CONTEMPLATIONS. TO
THE EDITOR OF THE NORTHAMPTON HERALD.**

Sir,-It is but fair to say in the outset of this letter that I have no *facts* to communicate on the above subject. Neither has my servant been handed over to the police, nor my carpet bag been taken on to Euston Square and back again, I myself being obliged to shift for the night in borrowed plumage, or without change of garments at all. I have not been travelling on railways, but only meditating upon them at home. Nevertheless let me hope you will not refuse admission to a few suggestions calculated to "put the saddle on the right Horse" in this great question of iron rule, seeing that *truth* has a better chance of obtaining an hearing just now, when so many varieties of people seem to be actually pinched directly or indirectly, by the clutch of the new *Frankenstein*. It is evident that, for the most part, the ills of the new *constitution* must now be borne with as they best may; but a great point would be gained, if either now, or at any favourable moment, one could but succeed in persuading some few at least to think more calmly and equitably upon the real bearings and merits of the whole question.

Am I, then, a champion of Railways and their unprecedentedly rapid abuses?-Anything but that. Still I must think that there is a good deal to be said against the threats so vigorously held out just now of making them amenable to what would be in truth, neither more nor less than an *ex post facto* decree of parliament. *That* certainly is not the reasonable way of curing the evils complained of, but only the application of a new and greater tyranny to the extinction, by main force, of one already existing. I do not mean to argue, or to say, that parliament has not an equitable right to levy a duty on railways, or anything of that sort, provided that it has not

already guaranteed an immunity to the Proprietors in the acts which conceded to them their gigantic monopoly. But I do say, and think that, as no evils have arisen but what were quite as easily to be foreseen as those which have sprung up at every turn under the *Reform* Bill; and *Railways* were a species of *Reform* carried into effect under an audacious mania; (*mutatis mutandis*)- and as no solitary voice was raised, so far as I can recollect, in either House of Parliament *at the befitting time* against these clearly to-be-foreseen abuses, nor any one petition presented to the legislature, fore-warning them on *general and moral* grounds of the inevitable consequences of the Railway system;- (under such circumstances I do say and think that) Parliament has now no *right* but only power, to interfere with the internal economy of these their own new creations. This point has, in reality, been put to proof already;- why else did that illustrious subaltern of Government, Mr Labouchere, after his vain attempt to form the wished-for measure of last session touching the conveyance of mails, consent to modify his scheme so much as in effect to yield a victory to the resisting railway companies? All honest minds must surely have felt *that* attempt to be oppressive and unjust; would it be less so, now to interfere with any private regulations of the several Railway companies, that are not contrary to law? No doubt it may be *done*; but if it be, it is *sheer despotism*, and let all those who would encourage such proceedings look to the certain *end* of them, before it be too late. As to the Railways simply, the public chose to have "King *Stork*," and they have got him.

It, therefore, is not fair to rush to the "omnipotent Parliament" in the matter, neither is it necessary. People have the remedy within their own power, and in the room of pouring out perpetual complaints and grumbings, it were far wiser to be thankful to the Radical Directors at Birmingham, for having given us such early (and not to be mistaken) warning of the inevitable fruits of an *unwholesome* MONOPOLY, that we may look to self-defence in time. The real evil lies in the establishment PRESENT-STOCK COMPANIES, and to the great injury of that finance, and

only reasonable free trade, which ought, in wisdom and in equity alike, to be left to **INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE**.
How is it possible

for the community at large to have any guarantee for their own just treatment, in the long run, so good as that for which an individual's own chance of prosperity is, in fact, the security and pledge? Bring the question to a test. Why is *the Government* of this rich kingdom notoriously the most ungrateful-the hardest and the worst-of all the masters whom man can serve? Because, *as Government*, it has *no feelings*, and is at the same time the most powerful of all *Joint-stock Companies*. Descending in the scale-why is the *Bank of England* the most uncivil and imperious body one can have to speak to? For most a corresponding reason; it is a *Joint-stock Company*, with most abundant care of self-interest, but no *heart*. Why, again, are *all* concerns, (greater or less) conducted exclusively by *servants* or *deputies*, far more unpleasant to transact business with, than those where one has access to the *principals*? How often *should* such a monster as the now-dominant railway do otherwise than give full scope to all its greater means of greediness and tyranny? Its root was selfishness and selfishness done. The plea of 'public spirit' was a mere pretence. Its bits were offered to men's selfishness. Its past and future calculations have been formed, and will continue to be formed, upon the self-same sordid basis; and the more powerful it feels itself, more harder it will gripe. Since people chose, and if they still will choose, for merely selfish ends, to travel at a twenty-mile rate, instead of being rationally contented with one of ten, they must and will be made to pay for it; and ought they not to be? If their *time* be really so very precious, are they not gainers on the balance, and have they not the pound of flesh for which they bargained? Out on their whimperings! say I.

Talk of the *rights of the public* in railways - works of a private speculation, and made by law now private

property! The very notion is either direct invasion of a neighbour's goods, or sheer nonsense. The public have *no* right in the affair, except that single one in which the true and certain remedy for all their new born grievances is to be found. And that right is - the most unquestionable right of *not using the railways*. They have done very well for a long time under the coach system, taken for better for worse; let them be contented to return to it.-'But the horses are all off the road, ' or as some insolent book-keeper the other day taunted no less a person than Mr. Deputy Hicks-'You may, perhaps, find the stage *coaches* still, but you are not so sure of the *horses I* ' - Be it so, for the moment, but the same legs which carried these horses off the road, can very soon bring them on again. Let there be only a demand - let sensible and manful people only determine not to submit to the oppressions of the new dynasty of iron and the cure is wrought. But it will not be effected otherwise.

Aye, but - says one of your Correspondents - we do not like the coach system of *cadging*, and have no mind to be brought back to that - "the coachman, Sir," - "the guard," - "the porter,"-"the waiter, "-and all the tribe of locusts. (By the way, what difference railways make in respect of *dinner* and *waiters*?) But what has led to these practices so much as people's own unreasonableness enticing or compelling coach proprietors to ruinous extremes of opposition? If passengers will not submit to fares which might enable proprietors to pay their own servants, how are those necessary agents of locomotion to be paid, otherwise than by "what you please?" The remedy *here* is, for folks in general to *act* upon the rule of "live and let live;" not to content themselves with merely giving or welcoming it as a *sentiment*, over their cups, but by *considerately acting upon it*. and cannot people see another thing? They complain of the insolence of the railway servants and policemen, to whom no gratuities are allowed; - is no connection to be traced here between cause and effect? Is it so sure, in the existing state of human nature, that the gratuity system, properly

regulated, is a bad one? Has it no counterbalancing advantages? Is there no pleasure in rewarding service or civility - let alone the convenience of obtaining the latter, by means of *well considered* recompense! I should be sorry to stand up for anything *mercenary*; but a fair "give and take" for valuable or obliging offices, has no small tendency to make friends; and it may well be questioned, whether the rudeness or even the abuse of a dissatisfied cadger is *so* offensive or so galling as the contemptuous and high flying *Jack-ery in office* of the railway servants, with whom the traveller has no exchange whatever of kinder feeling, either in prospect or retrospect. All these are points to be considered, in making up the mind justly upon the merits and demerits of the old and new systems. But it is time to cease from further present trespass on your patience.

So, I remain, Sir

Your's respectfully,

SUM CUIQUE