

LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY

EDINBURGH REVIEW FOR OCTOBER, 1832.
ON RAILWAYS AND CANALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE GLASGOW CHRONICLE.

SIR, - The last number of the Edinburgh Review (October, 1832), contains an Article of Treatise, entitled "Inland Transport."

Of the general fallacies and errors with which this article is filled, I shall take no notice. But there are certain positions or axioms laid down by the learned Reviewer who has prepared this treatise, and certain assertions are made by him, in corroboration of his axioms, which are so contrary to fact, that I must undeceive him, in order to enable him to correct his errors in his next publication on a subject so important.

His positions or axioms are as follows:-

1st. "That the greatest speed at which Canals can be advantageously worked is from two to two and a half miles per hour."

2d. "That horse power, at greater speed than about three miles an hour, is altogether incompatible with any useful effect upon Canals."

And he attempts to confirm these axioms by asserting, that "if boats were propelled through Canals at any rapid motion, they must cause a flow of water which would wash down the banks."

These are his assertions. But what are the facts? Why, that I and the other inhabitants of this town and neighbourhood and those of Paisley and Glasgow, are at every hour of every lawful day in the week, conveyed along the Ardrossan Canal, between Johnstone and Paisley, and Glasgow, at the rate of Ten Miles an Hour, and this speed of transport is made in convenient passage boats, completely protected from wind and weather, and carrying each from eighty to one hundred passengers. These boats do not occasion any flow of water on the banks of the Canal, and the banks are now in the best condition, although the passage boats have been running along the Canal at this rapid rate for the last two years.

The power employed to produce this speed is that of horses, and two horses without difficulty draw each boat, containing from eighty to one hundred passengers, at the rate of ten miles an hour. Whether or not this working the Canal be an advantageous, "or a useful effect," (to use the learned gentleman's own

language), I leave it for himself to determine; but this I know, that the inhabitants of Johnstone find it exceedingly advantageous, and useful, and convenient, to have it in their power, whenever they choose, to be conveyed between Johnstone, Paisley, and Glasgow, at the rate of ten miles an hour, and find it to be no less cheap than useful and convenient, the fares charged to each passenger being only one penny per mile in the first cabin, and three farthings per mile in the second cabin.

Although this is, beyond doubt, the cheapest inland transport in Britain, and not one half of the fare per mile charged on the Liverpool Railway, as appears from the documents quoted by the Reviewer, yet the Canal Proprietors have found it so gainful a trade, and a working of their Canal to so gainful a trade, and a working of their Canal to so “useful an effect,” that they have been regularly increasing the number of their boats, and of the trips made by them, during the last two years; and they are actually making a handsome revenues, by charging per mile, fares not exceeding the sum stated by the Liverpool Railway directors in their reports, as the actual cost per mile of conveying passengers along their Railway, or in other words the cost and profit charged by the Ardrossan Canal Company per mile for conveying passengers along their Canal does not exceed the actual outlay or cost expended by the Liverpool Railway Company per mile in conveying passengers along their Railway.

What I have stated are facts which do not admit of denial. The Ardrossan Canal swift passage boats have now been plying for two years, and the improvements effected by them are rapidly extending to various English and Irish Canals. Accounts of the shape, construction, and speed of these canal boats, and of the unequalled cheapness at which they can be and are worked, had appeared in many of the provincial newspapers, and deputations from the managers of many English and Irish Canals have come to the Ardrossan Canal to have ocular proof of the effect of these improvements, so that the facts are or ought to be known to the learned Author of this article or treatise on “Inland Transport.”

In the same article the learned gentleman gives an account of the profits which he says have been realised by the Liverpool Railway Company, for tonnages on their Railway, and as carriers and coach masters. It is not necessary for me to expose the general fallacy of this statement; but it is difficult to conceive how he should have hazarded a statement so incorrect as that

with which his account of the alleged profits concludes. It is as follows: - "The amount of the half year terminating on the 30th of June, 1832, is not yet published: but it appears from the Report published in March last, that a considerable increase of trade took place, in the coaching department in the twelve weeks ending the 23d of March, as compared with the corresponding period in the last year, and that a like increase" was observed in the traffic in merchandise." The learned Reviewer adds, "we may therefore fairly assume that the profits on the undertaking have not yet attained that line at which they will probably fix themselves."

Now this statement is given in October, 1832, when it is a well known fact that not only the Report for the six months ending 30th June, 1832, which the Reviewer states to be wanting, was actually printed, published, and in general circulation in July last, and that extracts from the report have appeared months ago in the newspapers, but further, that this report flatly contradicts the assertions and anticipations of the learned Reviewer.

From this Report, printed and circulated three months ago by the Directors of the Railway, it appears that in place of an increase of the profits on the Railway, there has been so large a decrease, that they have been forced to make an abatement of nearly twelve per cent. on their usual dividend, the profits for the six months ending with June last were not sufficient for making the diminished dividend, except by taking a supply from their capital. Without this encroachment on their capital, the reduction of the dividend must have been more than double that which has been stated.

The above decrease of the Railway Revenue has taken place in spite of a very great increase on the amount of heavy goods carried along the Railway, attended, no doubt, by a small decrease in the number of passengers in the Railway coaches. In the first six months of 1831, the quantity of goods and coal carried along the Railway amounted only to 62,967 tons, whilst the quantity of these articles carried along the Railway in the first six months of 1832 amounted to 87,337 tons, showing an increase of no less than 24,370 tons, or 40 per cent. On the other hand the number of passengers on the Railway in the first six months of 1831 was 188,726, and the number in the same period in the year 1832 was 174,122, showing a decrease of fourteen thousand six hundred and four, or about seven per cent. It appears then that an increase of 40 per cent. on the

heavy goods' traffic did not make up for a diminution of seven per cent. on the passengers; but, on the contrary, this diminution of seven per cent. on one branch of traffic not only swallowed up the profits on the increase of 40 per cent. on the other branches, but took nearly 25 per cent. from the gross profits of the half year in which it occurred.

17th NOV 1832

Financial successes

Reviewer, and they certainly show, as the learned gentleman observes, "that the profits upon the undertaking have not yet attained that limit at which they may probably fix themselves."

Johnstone, 17th Oct. 1832. H.

P.S. The Expenses of the Railway are now upwards of 60 per cent. on the gross receipts, and are increasing.