DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO THE CHAIRMAN AND DIRECTORS OF THE LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY COMPANY.

DRAKE'S

ROAD BOOK

OF THE.

LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY

ILLUSTRATED BY NUMEROUS ENGRAVINGS.

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TO THE

CHAIRMAN AND DIRECTORS

OF THE

LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY COMPANY,

This Volume

IS

BY PERMISSION, RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE PUBLISHER

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHAT has led the Publisher of this volume to indulge the hope of being able to provide an acceptable guide to the London and Birmingham Railway, has been the highly gratifying reception which has already been given to three editions of his Road Book of the Grand Junction Railway. Accordingly, he sends forth this Road Book with the pleasing conviction that he is sending it among persons who, by the acknowledged merits of its predecessor, as well as by the high character of numerous other works of a similar nature, which have issued from the same press, are already prepossessed in its favour. Should a generous public, by the manner in which they receive it, show that the estimation in which they have hitherto held his labours remains undiminished, the Publisher will consider that all his exertions during the many months in which he has been engaged in preparing it for publication, have been abundantly rewarded.

The descriptive part has been written with the utmost carefulness; and, as the whole line was leisurely traversed for the express purpose of obtaining the most correct information, its accuracy may be confidently relied upon. The character of the scenery through which the railway passes is somewhat minutely described; an account is given of every neighbouring town and important village ; and all other interesting objects which can be seen from the line are mentioned in the order in which they appear in view. The Writer has also continually aimed at leading the mind of the traveller into pleasant and instructive trains of thought, and furnishing him with interesting subjects for familiar railway colloquy. With respect to the Illustrations, the name of the artist, H. Harris, Esq., by whom the views were taken, exclusively for this work, will doubtless be deemed a sufficient guarantee for their faithfulness, judicious selection, and intrinsic merit. They have also been engraved by one of the first London artists, and expense has not been spared in order to render them worthy of the noble undertaking which they are designed to illustrate.

By the completion of this volume, a Road Book is provided for the whole line of railway from London to Liverpool and Manchester; which, besides proving a useful hand-book for the traveller himself, will also, it is hoped, be found an agreeable companion, by those who seek to enjoy the pleasures of travelling while comfortably seated at their own firesides.

BIRMINGHAM, *August* 1, 1839.

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CHAPTER:

THE
ROAD BOOK
OF THE
LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY

CHAPTER I

LONDON

As the pleasure we derive from travelling, depends chiefly upon the means we have of gratifying the curiosity which it excites, when we are so fortunate as to have an intelligent companion to point out the spots renowned in history or celebrated in poetry, to inform us as to the productions of the country and the manufactures of the towns, and direct our eye to the most beautiful objects in nature and remarkable works of art, we are placed in the most favourable situation for deriving all the enjoyment from travelling it is capable of affording, and are perhaps almost inclined to complain of reaching the place of our destination too speedily. With the hope that such a companion would be found in this little volume, by those who are about to take a trip by the London and Birmingham Railway, we would at once introduce our readers to this wonder of modern times, were we not too proud of the metropolis of our native land to leave it altogether unnoticed. It will not, we hope, be considered an unpardonable digression, if, before we commence our journey, we briefly glance at this city, the object of a world's admiration.

LONDON, if we may place any credit in the ancient Welch chroniclers, is as old as the times of Homer; for, according to them, it was founded by Brute, the great grandson of Æneas, the Trojan hero. If this be true, London may vie with Rome in point of antiquity; and Troy has had the honour of giving birth to the two mightiest cities the world has ever beheld. But it is more probable, that, for very many ages after the period mentioned by the chronologer, the banks of the Thames, where the mistress of the world now sits, presented no other prospect to the

eye of the wandering savage than that of a wild, unhealthy marsh, the undisputed possession of poisonous reptiles and ravenous beasts. The first time London appears on the page of authentic history is upon its being burned to the ground by Boadicea, after its temporary evacuation by the Romans. Thus London enters upon the stage of history in the interesting character of a sacrifice offered up by vengeance upon the desecrated altar of British independence. It would appear as if this circumstance had in it something ominous; for few cities have suffered so severely from fire and pestilence as London has, since it was burned by Boadicea. Five times has the plague swept through its crowded streets and thinned its inhabitants; and the 10th, 11th, 12th, and 17th centuries were all marked by the occurrence of awfully wide and destructive conflagrations. Yet none of these calamities have been able to check its rising greatness. From the ashes of every conflagration it has arisen more vigorous and beautiful than before. In 1377, the number of its inhabitants amounted to 35,000; in 1680, to 670,000; in 1801, to 864,000; and in 1831, to 1,500,000,—a population which far surpasses that of the most renowned cities of ancient or modern times. Various are the causes which have swelled it to this unparalleled greatness; but the chief one has undoubtedly been its commerce. Its situation on the banks of a noble river, and at a safe distance from the ocean, renders it peculiarly available for purposes of trade; and, the circumstance of being the metropolis of a great and wealthy empire, necessarily creates a brisk internal traffic. Even so early as the twelfth century, a learned monk of Canterbury, in "A Description of the noble City of London," speaks of Arabia, Scythia, Egypt, and Babylon, as pouring their costly merchandise at her feet. If, then, London in the twelfth century, when the metropolis of only a third part of Great Britain, be spoken of in terms so glowing, what language can we find sufficiently elevated to describe London in the nineteenth century, reigning, as she now does, over wide extended dominions in Asia, Africa, and the New World ? Into her warehouses thirteen thousand vessels are on an average continually pouring the riches of the world, and through the hands of her merchants

property to the value of one hundred and twenty millions sterling annually passes. Her citizens furnish foreign princes with the means of making war; her merchants regulate the markets of the world; and her manufacturers produce articles which can nowhere be equalled, and which every nation under heaven is anxious to obtain. In London, also, sparkles the bright crown of "the fair virgin enthroned in the west;" and in its halls the unrivalled aristocracy of England, and the chosen representatives of British freemen, regularly assemble to decide the fate of nations, and consult for the welfare of a hundred million subjects.

Great and powerful as London is, it is daily progressing; and the numerous railways which are now entering it, will doubtless give considerable impulse to its increasing grandeur. The following railways, which are either already completed, or in course of construction, meet in it as their grand focus:—the London and Birmingham, the Great Western, the London and Southampton, the London and Croydon, the Central Kent, the London and Greenwich, the Blackwall Commercial, the Great Eastern, and the North Eastern railways. Commercial prosperity will necessarily result from the rapid communication with all parts of the empire, which the completion of these great arteries will open; and from commercial prosperity will infallibly flow increase of population, and extension of boundary. The benefits of these railways, in a political point of view, will also be considerable; since speedy intercourse between the different parts of an empire has a natural tendency to consolidate and keep it united. Should railways become as extensive on the Continent as they are in England, the political consequences will be of still greater importance. Indeed, as quick and easy international intercourse powerfully tends to produce the coalition of small states into large empires, may we not suppose, that when Europe has been intersected by railways it will present to the eye of the beholder the august spectacle of one vast and mighty republic, firmly bound together by these iron bands ?

Lest the reader should begin to think we are detaining him too long from his journey, we will now suppose ourselves in front of the beautiful Grecian propylæum, which forms the entrance of the London and Birmingham Railway, and where accordingly our duties do properly commence.

CHAPTER II

LONDON TO WATFORD

Seventeen and ¾ miles

THE historical account of this grand national undertaking may be comprised in a very few words; for the history of a railway is like that of the life of a philosopher—rich in important results, but poor in interesting narrative. The project of constructing a railway between London and Birmingham was first formed in the year 1825; it slumbered, however, till 1830; and it was not until 1835 that the company, which had been formed to carry it into execution, could obtain the sanction of parliament. By the act which was then obtained, the company were authorised to raise £2,500,000; and if more should be required, to borrow an additional sum of £835,000, which sum, by a subsequent act, was increased to £1,000,000. By a third act, obtained on the 30th of June, 1837, power was given to raise, under the common seal of the company, another million sterling; and towards the end of 1838 half a million was borrowed; so that the whole cost of the undertaking has been no less than five millions sterling. The railway was opened throughout the entire line on the 17th of September, 1838. The talented engineer by whom it was designed, and under whose superintendence it has been completed, is Robert Stephenson, Esq., whose name, with that of his illustrious brother, will henceforth be honourably linked with those of Arkwright and Watt.

Camden Town was originally intended to be the locality of the London station; but the company, desirous of keeping the merchandise and passenger departments separate, and of bringing the public nearer to the centre of business, afterwards resolved to extend the line; and at an expense of a quarter of a million produced it as far as Euston Grove. Even this, however, was insufficient to satisfy some discontented individuals, and a "City Railway" has been projected to whirl the impatient traveller like a Congreve rocket over the heads of the astounded citizens of

London, and to cause him to alight within a few yards from St. Paul's. We do not think, however, that the good people of Gray's Inn Lane, notwithstanding this scheme is sanctioned by act of parliament, need be very much alarmed by the apprehension of having their midnight slumbers disturbed by the rushing past their garret windows of a train of "City Railway" carriages.

The offices and other buildings at the Euston Grove station occupy an area of seven acres, and have been erected in a style of great magnificence. The noble edifice which forms the entrance does honour to the public spirit of the directors; and Mr. P. Hardwicke, from whose designs it was erected, deserves the thanks of every admirer of Grecian architecture, for having exhibited the unadulterated Doric style on a scale of grandeur unequalled in modern times, and scarcely surpassed by classic Athens herself. The diameter of each pillar is eight feet six inches; the height of the gateway, measured from the top of the pediment, is seventy feet; and the entire line of frontage, including the piers and the two lodges connected with them by massive gates of bronze, measures 320 feet. We will now enter the spacious court yard which measures 100 feet by 470, and passing through the booking offices, proceed into the spacious shed where the carriages await our arrival. Here a scene is presented which to the stranger is most striking and bewildering. The whole scene appears more like one of enchantment than reality. The light and lofty arch thrown across the spacious court seems upheld by fairy hands; the huge row of triple-bodied carriages resembles nothing we are accustomed to see in the world; and the power of self motion of which these ponderous machines exhibit signs, is rather startling to the uninitiated stranger. Upon the arrival of the night trains, this scene is still more striking; as the yard is then brilliantly illuminated with gas. The roof of the shed is constructed principally of wrought iron; is two hundred feet in length, and eighty in width; and is supported in the middle by a row of cast iron pillars.