

MANCHESTER AND LEEDS RAILWAY OPENED, FROM LEEDS TO HEBDEN BRIDGE.

On Monday last, pursuant to public notice, this great and important line of Railway was opened for the conveyance of passengers from Leeds to Hebden Bridge—thus completing, with the exception of nine miles, the entire distance between Leeds and Manchester. Of this distance ten miles, from Leeds to Normanton, are upon the line of the North Midland Railway; twenty-seven miles, from Normanton to Hebden Bridge, have been now for the first time opened; and thirteen miles from Manchester to Littleborough, were opened in July of last year. The nine miles yet unfinished are between Hebden Bridge and Littleborough, and include the Summit Tunnel and the Charlestown Tunnel, in the latter of which the works have been so long at a stand owing to the slipping of the earth. It is confidently anticipated that this distance of nine miles, the final link in the chain, will be ready for opening in the first week in December, when the trains will pass uninterruptedly from Leeds to Manchester.

We speak on the highest authority when we say, that this Railway is the greatest triumph of engineering science over the obstacles interposed by nature, presented in any railway in the kingdom. The high chain of hills which separates the counties of York and Lancaster is only intersected by one valley, namely, the valley of the Calder, and that so narrow and winding, so lined with towns and villages, and so preoccupied by the turnpike road, the river, and the canal, as to make it exceedingly difficult to carry a railway through it. Yet, by embankments and cuttings, by removing rocks and building up arches, by occasionally diverting the river and the road and often crossing both, by piercing the hills with short tunnels and taking first one side of the valley and then the other, a line has been constructed not only capable of being worked by locomotive engines, but of being easily and advantageously worked. There are no objectionable curves, and there is not one gradient having half the inclination of the worst on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. The line is somewhat circuitous, and this is its only disadvantage,—a disadvantage which the speed of locomotive travelling reduces to insignificance. But the railway passes in its entire length through a country as remarkable for its dense population and active industry as for its romantic beauty. There is not a railway in the kingdom, which, for any thing approaching to the same distance, has an equal population on its borders. Within three miles on either side of it there is a population of no less than a million. With Manchester and Leeds as its termini, it has Rochdale, Todmorden, Hebden Bridge, Sowerby Bridge, Elland, Brighouse, Rastrick, Mirfield, Dewsbury, Ossett, Horbury, and Wakefield on its course; and it is situated near, and will ultimately have branches to the towns of Oldham, Heywood, Halifax, and Huddersfield. It is also fully expected that there will be a railway branching off at Todmorden to Burnley. The cotton and woollen manufactures are carried on prosperously through the entire district; this forms the line by which the manufactures of Yorkshire are sent to Liverpool for export, and by which the manufactures of Lancashire are sent to Hull for export; and a large trade in corn exists on the Calder and the canals connected with it. Thus the Manchester and Leeds Railway will be a most important auxiliary to commerce and manufactures, and will give the greatest facilities for travelling to an immense population.

The engineer by whom the line was planned, and under whose superintendence it has been executed, is the celebrated George Stephenson, whose genius and unparalleled works we have so often had occasion to notice with high admiration. Under him Mr. Gooch, one of his pupils, has been employed as the resident engineer, and has displayed abilities equal to the execution of the greatest undertakings. The Managing Director, who has given up his whole time to the superintendence of the work, is Robt. Gill, Esq., to whose remarkable energy, zeal, and talent the Company are very greatly indebted for the completion of the work within so short a period.

Ground was first broken on the 18th of August, 1837; the first portion, measuring thirteen miles, from Manchester to Littleborough, was opened on the 3d of July, 1839, and has been worked with great success; and the entire line will be completed early in December of the present year, within about three years and a quarter from its commencement. The length of the railway from Manchester to its junction with the North Midland at Normanton, is fifty miles; and as Normanton is ten miles from Leeds, the entire distance from Leeds to Manchester by railway is sixty miles. When the magnitude of the work is considered, and the short time in which it has been executed, it must be admitted to be a very extraordinary achievement; and it has been effected, like so many other works of the same nature in this country, with no aid from the Government, or any corporate body, but entirely by the spirit, sagacity, and capital of the trading community.

The opening of the portion of the line from Hebden Bridge to Normanton, which took place on Monday, was not attended with any ceremonial. The Directors came from Manchester to Hebden Bridge, went by railway to Leeds, and returned the same day, but without any kind of display. But this did not prevent a very great concourse of spectators at every town, village, and hamlet on the line: at many of these places flags were flying; and the inhabitants, old and young, and of both sexes, poured forth to witness, for the first time, the interesting sight of railway travelling through the valley of the Calder. Considerable danger arose at some points from the eagerness of multitudes to travel by the carriages on the first day; and it is a happy circumstance that the day passed over without any accidents.

The first train started from Leeds at seven minutes before eight o'clock in the morning, from the station in Hunslet lane. It consisted of carriages and a locomotive engine belonging to the North Midland Company, who will work the line at this end till the railway shall be completed. The ten miles to Normanton were travelled in twenty-four minutes (the first eight miles having been done in 16½ minutes). At this place, a little to the north of the junction of the North Midland and the Manchester and Leeds lines, the foundations are laying for a station for the latter company. Here the carriages brought down the valley of the Calder, and containing passengers for the south, or for Hull, York, Selby, &c. will be detached from the trains proceeding forward to Leeds: those for the south will go by the North Midland trains, and those for York, Hull, or the north will go by the York and North Midland Railway, which branches off in a north-easterly direction two miles on this side of the junction at Normanton. By an arrangement between the Manchester and Leeds Company and the North Midland Company, the former are to be allowed to travel one mile on the North Midland line without paying toll: of course they pay toll for the remainder of the distance they may travel on the line.

At the point of junction, the Manchester and Leeds Railway takes a descending gradient, and the North Midland an ascending gradient, and the difference in the level immediately becomes very apparent. The train went rather slowly over the new ground, as was prudent. Very soon we came in view of Sir Edward Dodsworth's house, Newland hall, situated in a beautiful part of the valley of the Calder. A diversion of the river has been made here, in order to avoid the necessity of building two expensive bridges, and the Aire and Calder Company, according to its custom, threw so many difficulties in the way that this part of the line (the Kirkthorpe contract) has only been completed at the twelfth hour. Here a cut belonging to that navigation joins the river. The railway runs on a considerable embankment through the valley, leaving the village and church of Kirkthorpe on the left, whilst Stanley is seen in the distance on the right. Shortly we passed under the rich woods of Heath, and near the house of Geo. Smyth, Esq., which overlooks the valley. Then a deep cutting, in which, as in most of the other cuttings, the coal strata with which the county abounds are very distinctly seen, brought us close to the town of Wakefield; and we drew up at the Wakefield station, which is near the junction of Thornes-lane with the bottom of Kirkgate, at twenty-six minutes past eight o'clock. Here flags were flying, and a great concourse of spectators was assembled, who received with cheers the first railway train that had ever entered the town of Wakefield. The station-house is a neat and commodious brick building. The distance from Leeds is twelve and a half miles.

Mr. Stephenson, the engineer, and Mr. Gill, the managing director, here entered the carriages; Capt. Laws, the able and active manager of the railway, having come with the train from Leeds. We resumed our progress at 34 minutes past 8, after a halt of eight minutes. The view of the town obtained from the railway is exceedingly good; and here the valley is highly beautiful. Passing on the north side of the river Calder, the railway comes to Thornes, with its pretty church, and passes within a very short distance from Thornes House, the mansion of Benjn. Gaskell, Esq. In less than a mile further it passes through the park and in front of the house of Daniel Gaskell, Esq., Lupset-hall.

Three miles and a half from Wakefield, and about sixteen from Leeds, we came to Horbury, which stands on the hill to the right; this is a populous manufacturing village, and has a beautiful spire. Here there is a deep rock excavation, three quarters of a mile in length, (including a short tunnel) and upwards of seventy feet deep at the greatest depth: this was one of the first works commenced, but from its magnitude it has only just been completed: a portion of it, at the western end, has been tunnelled, which was found to be necessary, owing to the loose material of the shale underneath the rock, and the presence of some old coal-workings, which would have rendered an open cutting at this point insecure. After a stoppage of four minutes at the Horbury station, we proceeded forwards, and in a mile further passed Ossett, having previously crossed a wooden bridge near Healey Low Mill, thrown over as a temporary work, owing to a suit pending in Chancery, arising out of the opposition of the proprietors of the mill, instigated (it is supposed) by the Calder and Hebble Navigation Company. Two miles further, that is, seven miles from Wakefield and nineteen and a half from Leeds, we drew up at the Dewsbury station, which is at Thornhill-lees, within three-quarters of a mile of the town of Dewsbury, exactly at nine o'clock. Here we see the town, lying in an angle of the valley, with the neighbouring village of Earlsheaton. A great number of persons had collected to witness the arrival of the train, and two omnibuses were standing, one of which, with four horses gaily caparisoned, is intended to run from the station to Dewsbury.

The station-house here is built of stone, and, like the other stations on the line, is neat, but not very ornamental. Here we awaited the arrival of the train from Hebden Bridge, Dewsbury being about half way between that place and Leeds; and it came up in safety at 21 minutes past 9, piloted by Mr. Gooch, the engineer, who quitted it at this point, and returned with the Leeds train to Hebden Bridge. At half-past nine we resumed our progress, but for some miles went slowly and cautiously, as there is only one line of rails laid for a

considerable distance, and the road is by no means completed. We believe the opening of the line has taken place rather earlier than it otherwise would, in order to avoid the delay which there must have been if it had not been opened before the 9th inst, on which day the recent Act of Parliament comes into operation. By that Act a month's notice must be given to Government prior to the opening of a railway, and the line must be surveyed by an engineer appointed by the Government, whose favourable report is necessary before the opening can be made. The travelling on the line has therefore been somewhat precipitated; and it will in consequence be necessary to travel over the ground between Dewsbury and Brighouse with caution, until the works are quite finished.

On this line, as on all Mr. Stephenson's railways lately constructed, we perceive that stone blocks are used to support the rails in excavations and on solid ground, whilst wooden sleepers, which tie the rails together, are used on the embankments.

Near Mirfield the two lines are laid down, and the work is complete. Here the railway passes through the valley by an embankment, and crosses the river twice, once by a fine skew bridge, and again by a viaduct of thirteen arches, of about 45 feet span each; the latter, which is a very fine structure, crosses the river obliquely in a wide part near several mills, and also crosses the road from Mirfield to Hopton. The scenery in this part, where the hills rise to a great elevation and are richly clothed with wood, is exceedingly beautiful. A station will be erected at this place. The population came out to gaze at the spectacle, and flags were flying in honour of the event.

It was 48 minutes past nine when we crossed the Leeds and Huddersfield road, at Cooper Bridge, 24 miles from Leeds. Here, we find, there will be a station for the accommodation of Huddersfield, on the North of the turnpike road; and from this point, we presume, there will ere long be a railway constructed to that important town,—the distance being about four miles, along a valley which presents every facility for the economical construction of such a line. At present, however, the station for Huddersfield is at Brighouse. Pursuing our course up the valley, with the fine woods of Kirklees park, (Sir George Armytage's), and the grave of the renowned Robin Hood on our right, the railway again crosses the Calder twice by stone viaducts, each consisting of two arches of 76 feet span. It then enters Bradley Wood, on the south-west side of the valley, where there is a deep cutting, and, issuing from it in a part where the valley bursts upon the traveller with a noble landscape, runs for a mile nearly on the surface to Brighouse.

Near this place we saw the fires where the Low Moor coal is in course of being reduced into coke, by Mr. Walker, a tenant of Sir Geo. Armytage's. This is the best coke in the kingdom for the use of locomotive engines, and the Manchester and Leeds Company have entered into contract with Mr. Walker, who is to supply 30 tons a day for five years at the rate of 14s. per ton. The cheapness and excellence of the coke are of great importance to this railway, as will be seen when we state that the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company have until lately paid 25s. per ton, and are now paying 23s. per ton for their coke, and the London and Birmingham Company pay two guineas a ton. Some coke is of a quality to form clinkers on the bars of the furnace and destroy the bars; but the Low Moor coke has not this bad property.

We reached the Brighouse station, which is 26 miles from Leeds and 34 from Manchester, at four minutes before ten o'clock. This is a very important station, not only from the great population and flourishing trade of the contiguous places, Brighouse and Rastrick, and the neighbouring villages of Clifton, &c. but from its being at present the station for Huddersfield, distant three miles and a half, and also from Bradford, distant seven miles. The station-house is tastefully constructed, somewhat in the Chinese style. Here the crowd was exceedingly great; and many persons having paid for places, who could not be accommodated in the carriages, they mounted on the top of the carriages and sat there, not in a very safe position. The Huddersfield coach or omnibus was awaiting the arrival of the train.

After a stoppage of eight minutes, we moved forward at four minutes past ten. Skirting Rastrick on our left, with the river on the right, we passed over a viaduct of six stone arches, 46 feet span each. Running up the valley the railway enters Strangtry Wood, which, from the precipitous nature of the ground and close proximity to the river, has not been passed without considerable difficulty. By means of high retaining walls and several arches, however, the railway has been very securely formed; and what was once a steep and rugged wood rising almost perpendicularly from the river, presents now a smooth and even surface, over which the rails are laid in gentle and uniform curves. The valley here winds very gracefully, alternately opening and contracting, and lateral valleys run into it between commanding hills luxuriantly clothed with wood; whilst the river, still more serpentine than the valley, sweeps from side to side through beautiful meadows. Up one of the branching valleys, and at a considerable elevation, is seen the church of Southwram. Elland now comes into view, as well as the high hills about Stainland and those of the Blackstone-edge range. A high embankment and a viaduct bring us to the north side of the river Calder near to the ancient town of Elland, which is 29 miles from Leeds and 31 from Manchester; we passed the town at 19 minutes past ten o'clock. Here, to avoid following the curve of the valley, the railway passes through a projecting tongue of land by a tunnel 424 yards in length; and immediately on emerging from the wood-covered hill, which it does by a very fine entrance, the railway is carried across the Huddersfield and Halifax turnpike road, the Calder and Hebble canal, and the river Calder, by means of a stone viaduct of four skew arches of 64 feet span each.

Crossing the valley by an embankment the railway enters North Dean Wood, the intended point of junction for the branch to Halifax, nearly on the surface. The branch will be about a mile and a half in length, and will run up the narrow valley past Salterhebble. This point is a little more than 30 miles from Leeds, and rather less than 30 from Manchester.

The railway then passes over the Calder by two viaducts of stone, about 35 feet above the level of the water, near to Lob Mill, and is carried by a long embankment over the low meadows towards Sowerby Bridge. Before coming to this place, however, there is one of the deepest and most extensive excavations on the line, the greatest depth being eighty feet below the surface, and the material through which it is made is an admixture of hard rock and shale. Several very lofty bridges, one of them having three arches, with the roadways inclining at a very unusual angle, cross the excavation to carry the various roads from the valley to places on the hills.

At exactly half-past ten, having crossed the Blackstone edge turnpike road and the Ripponden stream by a handsome viaduct of five arches, 43 feet span each, at an elevation of 30 feet, we drew up at Sowerby Bridge station, 32 miles from Leeds, and 28 from Manchester. Here the crowd of people was so great, and the rush of those who had taken places to the carriages so alarming, that, after a brief stay of four minutes, it was thought absolutely necessary to cause the train to move on. There being no room in the carriages, the adventurous travellers mounted the tops of the carriages, where already as many persons were sitting as could be accommodated in that position; but those who could not sit *stood upright*, until the whole of the carriages were covered with a crowd of standers, and in that fearful position did they remain all the way to Hebden Bridge, stooping down as they passed under the tunnel and the numerous bridges on the line, and then rising and cheering like a crew of sailors to the astonished spectators! We have seldom witnessed a more alarming scene. The train was proceeding at the rate of 20 miles an hour, and if a single individual had failed to stoop at the moment of passing under the arches, his brains must have been dashed out, and the fall of one person must have thrown many others off the carriages, to their almost inevitable destruction! Yet there was no power to prevent the crowd from thus *boarding* the carriages. The only thing to be done was to move on as soon as the manoeuvre was discovered. Some rather ludicrous incidents occurred in consequence. The train had brought the three Revising Barristers, Messrs. Lutwidge and Cleasby, and Sir Francis Doyle, from Wakefield to Sowerby Bridge, where they got off to proceed to Halifax for the revision of the lists of that borough. But ere their luggage, containing their books, lists, and we know not what other legal mysteries, could be taken off the carriages, the train was obliged to move on. The Barristers, alarmed at the prospect of losing their paraphernalia, ran after the train, calling "Stop! stop!" "We can't stop," said one in authority. "You *must* stop," responded Mr. Lutwidge, with a voice that would have overawed a whole court, and very red with wrath and running. But alas! a new race has sprung up in modern days, that of locomotive engines, who know not Revising Barristers, and have little respect for summonses or precedents. There is no writ of *capias* avails against these iron and elephantine fellows. Away the monster moved, insolently puffing back his scorn at his pursuers, and soon gave the Barristers steam bail; the hue and cry was raised after us in vain; whilst Mr. Lutwidge, out of breath and countenance too, desisted from the pursuit, and returned to consult his learned brothers what decision they should pronounce in this novel case,—a case in which the books would hardly have helped them, even if we had not carried off said books to Hebden Bridge. We made voluntary restitution, however, an hour or two afterwards, by bringing back the portmanteaus, bags, &c. to Sowerby Bridge; and thus we hoped the Revision at Halifax would not have been very long delayed.

In the afternoon of the same day, under similar circumstances, a manoeuvre was practised at Brighouse, which beats all recorded in the history of naval tactics. The train which left Leeds at three o'clock was assailed in the same way as that in the morning. The second-class carriages were crammed to suffocation, so that extremely few of those who were in could sit, and the least enviable position was that of those who were actually sitting. A vigorous and determined effort on the part of the railway authorities abated this nuisance, but those who were chased out of the carriages sealed the deck, and soon all were covered as in the morning. Some shrewd person—we suspect Capt. Laws, as the piece of strategy was worthy of a British tar—perceiving that this load was too much not only for the engine to draw, but for the springs of the carriages to sustain, ordered out a wagon used for the conveyance of cattle, in which those who were on the tops of the carriages were told that they might be accommodated. Instantly the crews descended the decks and rushed into the cattle wagon, which was crowded to excess; and as soon as this had been accomplished, and the wagon was carefully closed, the train *off* the wagon, and moved on at full speed, leaving behind the chased and dismayed cattle, amidst the infinite amusement and applause of the spectators! The necessity of the case must be the apology for this *ruste de guerre*.

But to return—as Mr. Lutwidge did; when we had taken French leave of that gentleman and his colleagues at Sowerby Bridge, we immediately entered a tunnel of about 640 yards in length, chased by numbers who had taken tickets, and whose angry voices were echoed back through the tunnel by shouts of defiance from our outside passengers. Issuing forth into the peaceful valley beyond, we were far out of the reach of any sound but our own; and away we sped, in the manner we have described. The scenery here, as we passed Luddenden foot, Mytholmroyd, &c. becomes increasingly beautiful and grand. The railway runs up the west side of the valley, alternately on embankments and through cuttings,—the river having in several places been diverted, to save the expense of crossing it by bridge. At 49 minutes past 10 o'clock, that is, in two hours and 56 minutes after leaving Leeds, we arrived in perfect safety at Hebden Bridge,—a distance of 37 miles from Leeds and 23 from Manchester. Here is a station both for that place and for Keighley.

The Directors from Manchester here met the train, including Henry Houldsworth, Esq., the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, and about eight other directors; and, together with Mr. Stephenson, Mr. Gill, Capt. Laws, Mr. Gooch, and several other gentlemen, they went by the train at a quarter to twelve to Leeds, and returned again the same afternoon to Manchester. The train was crowded to excess, and several of the wagons intended for cattle were filled with third-class passengers. It started from Hebden Bridge at a quarter before twelve, reached Sowerby Bridge at twelve, Brighouse at 27 minutes past twelve, Dewsbury at two minutes past one o'clock, Wakefield at half past one, and Leeds at a quarter past two o'clock,—having completed the journey in two hours and a half. At Leeds the Directors took a hasty lunch, and left again for Manchester by the train at three o'clock. Owing to the causes we have mentioned, it was after eight o'clock when the passengers by this train reached Manchester.

We understand that the trains have run with as much regularity as could be expected during the week, and with loaded waggons; there has been no accident whatever.