

this line, dated 8th July, 1823. The line was opened on the 27th September, 1825. The speed attained was about five miles an hour. This Act had slipped through Parliament without exciting much antagonism.

323. The next application of any consequence was for a railway between Manchester and Liverpool. Then came the first great Parliamentary battle, fought over this application for a charter. The Committee of the House of Commons to whom the Bill was referred met for the first time on 21st March, 1825. Arrayed against the Bill was a solid phalanx of canal owners, road trustees and landed proprietors. The union of rail and engine was to be seriously opposed. Every interest forbade the bans. Stage-coach proprietors and carriers offered a strenuous opposition. The medical faculty were pressed into the service of the opponents, with direful forebodings of terrible physical evils to follow from travelling over ten miles an hour. Country squires became red in the face as they declaimed against the destruction that railways would work on fox-covers. Territorial magnates joined in the crusade on the ground that the sparks from the locomotives would fire their plantations and destroy the amenities of their domains. Canal proprietors, like the Duke of Bridgewater, urged their vested rights. Sir Isaac Coffin's speech in Parliament is a fair sample of the attack of opponents. He "would not," he said, "consent to see widows' premises and their strawberry beds invaded. Railway trains would take many hours to perform the journey between Manchester and Liverpool, and in the event of the success of the scheme what, he would like to ask, was to be done for all those who had advanced money in making and repairing turnpikes? What with those who might still wish to travel in their own or hired carriages after the fashion of their forefathers? What was to become of coachmakers, harnessmakers, coach-masters and coachmen, underkeepers, horse breeders and horse dealers? Was the House aware of the smoke and noise, the hiss and the whirl, which locomotive engines passing at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour would occasion? Not even the cattle ploughing in the fields or grazing in the meadows could behold them without dismay. Iron would be raised in price 100 per cent or more; probably be exhausted altogether. It would be the greatest mischief, the most complete disturber of quiet and comfort in all parts of the kingdom that the ingenuity of man could invent."

The *Quarterly Review*, issued about the time the Committee pursued its investigations, declared in a fine frenzy that "as to those persons who speculate in making railways general throughout the kingdom and superseding all the canals, all the wagons, mail and stage coaches and post chaises, and in short all and every other mode of conveyance by land and water, we deem them and their visionary schemes unworthy of notice."

The committee heard all the indignant fox-hunting squires, all the canal proprietors, and all the other opponents, during sittings extending over thirty-eight days. After thirty-seven witnesses had been heard and an infinite number of speeches delivered against, and George Stephenson for the bill, the preamble was declared to have been proved by a vote of 37 to 36. A few hours after, the counsel, agents and parties were summoned to be informed that the proposal that the company should have power to build the railway had been put and lost. Some one had gone over, or gone out.