

NATIONAL INDUSTRIES

EDITED BY HENRY HIGGS, C.B.

A HISTORY OF INLAND TRANSPORT  
AND COMMUNICATION IN ENGLAND.

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Edited by  
HENRY HIGGS, C.B.

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The first volumes in this series will be :—

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A HISTORY OF  
INLAND TRANSPORT  
AND  
COMMUNICATION  
IN ENGLAND

BY  
EDWIN A. PRATT

AUTHOR OF "RAILWAYS AND THEIR RATES"; "GERMAN VERSUS BRITISH  
RAILWAYS"; "RAILWAYS AND NATIONALISATION";  
"CANALS AND TRADERS"  
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## PREFATORY NOTE

DESIGNED as the introductory volume of a series of books—by various writers—dealing with our “National Industries,” the present work aims at telling the story of inland transport and communication from the earliest times to the present date, showing, more especially, the effect which the gradual development thereof, in successive stages, and under ever-varying circumstances, has had alike on the growth and expansion of trade and industry and on the general economic and social conditions of the country.

The various phases of inland transport described in the course of the work include roads, rivers, canals, turnpikes, railways, tramways, and rail-less electric traction; and the facilities for communication of which accounts are given comprise packhorses, waggons, stage-coaches, “flying” and mail-coaches, private carriages, posting, hackney coaches, cabs, omnibuses, cycles, motors, motor-buses, commercial motors, and aeroplanes. Reference is (*inter alia*) made to most of the English rivers and to many inland towns; the origin, achievements, and shortcomings of canals are traced; a complete outline of the turnpike system is given; a short history of tramways comprises the leading points therein; the story of the rise, development and prospects of the motor industry is related; while the evolution and development of the railways and their position to-day both as a means of transport and communication and as constituting in themselves a “National Industry” are treated in such a way as to afford, it is hoped, a comprehensive idea of the railway system from its very earliest origin down to the strikes and the con-

troversy following the close of the Royal Commission of Inquiry in the autumn of 1911.

Incidentally, also, allusion is made to the rise of Bristol, Lynn, Liverpool, and various other ports; the early history of the textile industries, the cutlery trades, the iron trade, the salt trade, and the coal trade is briefly sketched, while the facts narrated in relation thereto should enable the reader to realise the bearing, throughout the ages, of State policy towards the general question of transport. Finally, the present situation and the future outlook are brought under review.

Even as these pages are passing through the press new developments are occurring which confirm the suggestion I have made, on page 470, that "in the dictionary of transport there is no such word as 'finality.'"

While it is still true that the electrification of the London suburban railways has not been generally adopted by the trunk companies, yet the scheme in this connection announced, on November 18, 1911, by the London and North-Western Railway Company (see page 507) supplementing the action already taken by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company in regard to some of their suburban lines, is significant of a growing determination on the part of the great railway companies to defend their own interests by competing, in turn, with the electric tramways, which have absorbed so much of the suburban traffic of late years.

Following closely on this one announcement comes another, to the effect that a new company is about to set up, in the Midlands, works covering thirty-four acres for the construction of a type of petrol-electric omnibus for which great advantages over the earlier motor-omnibuses are claimed. (This, presumably, is the vehicle which the Tramways Committee of the Edinburgh Corporation, as mentioned on page 470, propose to watch in preference to deciding at once on a system of rail-less electric traction.)

In commenting on the former of the announcements here in question, "The Times Engineering Supplement" of November 22, 1911, observes :—

It is of importance to realise what this decision portends. The history of the matter is that the steam railways were inadequate to fulfil the requirements of the suburbs, and that an opening was thus afforded to municipalities to provide tramways of their own. It was a crude method of dealing with the problem ; it robbed the main roads of every vestige of rural character, and it added new dangers and checks to street traffic. Nevertheless it was a necessity, and it served its purpose, first, by providing facilities that were always cheap to the travellers, even if they were occasionally dear to the taxpayers ; and, secondly, by stimulating the railway companies to adopt means to get back their lost traffic. Now that the railway companies are fully alive to the opportunities offered to them by electrification, the general aspect of the problem is changed, and additional support is given to the belief that electric railways and motor-omnibuses will carry an increasing proportion of London traffic, and that from some roads at least tramways may even disappear altogether.

In other directions there are reports of individual agriculturists who are constructing light railways of their own to secure direct communication between their farms and the nearest main line railway, sympathetic local authorities having offered them practical encouragement by making only a nominal charge for the privilege of crossing the public roads where this is necessary. A new era in agricultural transport and cultivation is further foreshadowed in the announcement that it is quite reasonable to believe that resort to rail-less electric traction will serve as a means of introducing electrical supply into rural areas for agricultural purposes ; while in the House of Lords on November 22, 1911, Lord Lucas, replying for the Government to some comments made by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu on the first report of the Road Board (dealt with on page 481), said that body considered the most important thing at present was to improve the surface of the roads ; but

“they had borne in mind the fact that it would be necessary for them before long to undertake larger operations, involving heavier expenditure.”

Still further developments occurring, maturing, or under consideration when the text of the present work was already in type include—

(1) A projected alliance between the tube railways and the London General Omnibus Company, following on the conspicuous success obtained by the latter in substituting motor for horsed vehicles for the 300,000,000 passengers it carries annually.

(2) The issuing of “Minutes of Evidence taken before the Departmental Committee of the Board of Trade on Railway Agreements and Amalgamations” [Cd. 5927], containing some notable expressions of opinion by railway managers concerning the future of the railway system, together with much important information on the general subject.

(3) The publication, on December 1, of the Fourth Annual Report of the London Traffic Branch of the Board of Trade [Cd. 5972], which deals with various matters already touched upon in my last three chapters, including the effects of improved transport facilities on the migration of population from the inner to the outer suburban ring; the further widening of the motor-transport delivery radius, to the advantage of urban, but to the disadvantage of suburban traders; the steady substitution of mechanical traction for horse-drawn vehicles of every type—the Report predicting, on this point, that “if two-wheeled horse cabs continue to diminish at the rate of the last two years, they will disappear before the end of 1912”; the improbability of further material extensions of the tramway system, and the assumption that “the competition of promoters for the privilege of constructing tube railways has come to an end”; while the Report also discusses the merits of a scheme for the provision, at an estimated cost of between £20,000,000 and £30,000,000, of about 120 miles of great

arterial roads across London for the accommodation of the increasing traffic, and of still another scheme, put forward by a Departmental Committee of the General Post Office, for relieving the streets of London of a good deal of mail-van traffic by the construction of an underground electric railway,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length, and costing £513,000, across the centre of London from east to west, for the conveyance of Post Office matter, the Report further suggesting that this particular system might be found equally applicable to other forms of enterprise which require the use of carts for the frequent conveyance of goods in small consignments between fixed points.

(4) The passing by the House of Commons, on November 22, of a resolution expressing the opinion that a meeting should take place between the parties on whose behalf the Railway Agreement of August 19, 1911, was signed (see p. 448), "to discuss the best mode of giving effect to the Report of the Royal Commission"; the acceptance by such parties of Board of Trade invitations to a conference, in accordance with the terms of this resolution, and the holding of a conference which began, at the offices of the Board of Trade, on December 7, under the presidency of Sir George Askwith, Chief Industrial Commissioner, and resulted, on December 11, in a settlement being effected.

(5) The prospective increase, from January 1, 1912, of certain season, excursion, week-end or other special-occasion fares (many of which now work out at a rate of a halfpenny or a farthing, or even less than a farthing, per mile) as a means of assisting the railway companies to meet advances in wages, such increases in passenger fares (distinct from any increases in merchandise rates, for a like reason, as foreshadowed by the Government undertaking of August 19, 1911, alluded to on pp. 448 and 511) being already in the option of the companies, provided the latter do not exceed the powers conferred on them by their Acts, and subject to the condition that on fares of over a penny the mile Government duty must be paid.

(6) The reading, by Mr. Philip Dawson, at the Royal Automobile Club, on December 8, of a valuable paper on "The Future of Railway Electrification," in which—after detailing what had already been done in the United States, in Germany, and, in this country, on the suburban systems of the Lancashire and Yorkshire, the North Eastern and the London, Brighton, and South Coast railways—he showed the practicability and the advantages of applying electric traction (single phase system) to main-line long-distance traffic; announced that the surveys and calculations in connection with a scheme for electrifying the whole of the L.B. and S.C. Railway Company's services between London and Brighton were already far advanced; mentioned that such a transformation would allow of a 10 to 15-minute service to Brighton and of the 52-mile journey being done by non-stop trains in about 45 minutes, or by stopping trains in about 60 minutes; and declared that "the equipment of this line if, as he hoped would be the case, it were carried out, would be epoch-making in the history of British railways."

Thus the whole subject of inland transport is now so much "in the air" that the story of its gradual and varied development, as here told—and this, too, for the first time on the lines adopted in the present work—should form a useful contribution to the available literature on one of the most important of present-day problems.

EDWIN A. PRATT.

*December 12, 1911.*

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