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978-1-108-05036-4 - The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress: A Narrative of Modern Enterprise

Frederick S. Williams

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The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress

Frederick Smeeton Williams (1829–86) was a Congregational minister and pioneering railway historian. His first major transport work, *Our Iron Roads* (1852), enjoyed significant popularity, reaching its seventh edition by 1888. This, his second such effort, first published in 1876, is a lively history of the incorporation and development of one of Britain's first major railway companies following the earliest large-scale railway amalgamation of the Victorian age. Including 123 illustrations and 7 maps, this book is valuable for its contemporary description of the building of the Settle and Carlisle line, a notoriously difficult and expensive route to construct, with costs reaching £3.8 million by the time of its opening in 1875. Williams's spirited style lends colour to his portrayal of the Midland Railway's beginnings, its increasing competitiveness and the everyday concern of railway operations, making this an engaging resource for historians of transport, business and engineering.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frederick S. Williams

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE
MIDLAND RAILWAY:
ITS RISE AND PROGRESS.

A Narrative of Modern Enterprise.

BY

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS,

Author of "Our Iron Roads."

"Let the country make the railroads and the railroads will make the country."

EDWARD PRASE.

LONDON:
STRAHAN & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

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Frontmatter

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BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
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Frederick S. Williams
Frontmatter
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TO

EDWARD SHIPLEY ELLIS, ESQ.,

AND TO THE BOARD
OF WHICH HE IS THE CHAIRMAN;

AND TO

JAMES ALLPORT, ESQ.,

AND TO THE EXECUTIVE
OF WHICH HE IS THE CHIEF;

WHO, BY PROBITY, SAGACITY, AND ENTERPRISE,
HAVE CONFERRED

UNTOLD BENEFITS

UPON

THE MIDLANDS OF ENGLAND,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED BY

THEIRS, OBLIGED AND FAITHFULLY,

The Author.

a

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frederick S. Williams

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E .

MR. CHARLES DICKENS was accustomed to account for his fondness for books by the fact, that when he was a child a pile of ponderous and learned folios used, at dinner time, to be placed on the chair on which he was seated; and it was thus that he contracted his early literary tastes. And if the Author were asked why *he* should write the present volume, he is prepared to assign reasons equally philosophical and profound. He has ascertained that both the Midland Railway and himself were born about the same time and near the same place; and doubtless there thus arose, even in their tender years, certain occult but powerful affinities, which strengthened with advancing time,—affinities which the advances of biological science will before long satisfactorily account for! And if, unhappily, such an explanation should not, in the judgment of some, justify what they may deem an irrelevant predilection, the Author can only add, to borrow the humour of another,—*Hic non meus SERMO*.

The last forty years have witnessed a mighty and beneficent revolution in the midlands of England. A few men of enterprise have led others on to a work which has revived trade, created new industries, enriched at once the landlord and the peasant, the manufacturer and the merchant, and promoted the happiness

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05036-4 - The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress: A Narrative of Modern Enterprise

Frederick S. Williams

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

PREFACE.

and well-being of the nation. And in this service the Midland Railway has been especially concerned.

How all this came to pass the Author has now to tell. How the Midland Railway originated at a village inn in the necessities of a few coal-owners; how it has gradually spread its paths of iron, north and south and east and west, through half the counties of England, till they stretch from the Severn to the Humber, the Wash to the Mersey, and the Thames to the Solway Firth; how a property has been created that has cost £50,000,000 of money, and that brings in a revenue of £5,000,000 a year; and how there lies before it a limitless future of usefulness,—these are facts which, in the judgment of the Author, are worthy of record. Yet it so happens that the men who have been most deeply engaged in this work have been so busy with their work that they seem never to have thought of explaining why or how they did it; and so the Author has been led to try, before it is too late, to weave together, from the fragmentary records of the dead and from the fading recollections of the living, a narrative of modern enterprise which has been honourable to those engaged in it, and has been wide spread and beneficent in its results. Accordingly the first part of this book is *historical*.

The second portion of the work is *descriptive* of the Midland Railway—of its engineering works, and of the country through which the line passes. The roads which Roman hands have made and Roman legions have trodden; the ancient manor houses of Wingfield, Had-

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978-1-108-05036-4 - The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress: A Narrative of Modern Enterprise

Frederick S. Williams

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

ix

don, and Rowsley; the abbeys of St. Albans, Leicester, Newstead, Kirkstall, Beauchief, and Evesham; the castles of Someries, Skipton, Sandal, Berkeley, Tamworth, Hay, Clifford, Codnor, Ashby, Nottingham, Leicester, Lincoln, and Newark; the battlefields of Bosworth, St. Albans, Wakefield, Tewkesbury, and Evesham,—these, and a thousand spots besides on the route of the Midland line, ought to be familiar to every Englishman.

The third part is *administrative*. It endeavours to indicate the machinery—comprehensive, intricate, and exact—by which a great system of railway is kept in motion by day and by night, in summer and in winter.

The Author begs to tender his grateful acknowledgments to the numerous officers of the Company, and other gentlemen, who have rendered him cordial and valuable aid in his work—aid to which the following pages bear testimony. To the Chairman, to Mr. Allport, and also to his able Chief Secretary, Mr. Robert Speight, he is under special obligation for the kind and courteous assistance they have frequently rendered him. It is right, however, to state that he is solely responsible for any statements of opinion or fact which this volume contains.

He will only add the expression of his hope that the reader may find as much pleasure in following the thread of this remarkable narrative as the Author has had in unravelling it for himself.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05036-4 - The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress: A Narrative of Modern Enterprise

Frederick S. Williams

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE MIDLAND COUNTIES RAILWAY	1
II. THE NORTH MIDLAND RAILWAY	39
III. THE BIRMINGHAM AND DERBY RAILWAY	60
IV. THE BIRMINGHAM AND BRISTOL RAILWAYS	72
V. LEICESTER TO SWANNINGTON, PETERBOROUGH AND BEDFORD	88
VI. TEMPORARY RISE, CULMINATION, AND DECLINE OF PROS- PERITY	118
VII. EXTENSIONS TO MANCHESTER AND LONDON	152
VIII. NEW LINES TO SHEFFIELD, BATH, AND LIVERPOOL	180
IX. SETTLE AND CARLISLE RAILWAY PROJECTED	208
X. AMALGAMATION WITH GLASGOW AND SOUTH WESTERN PROPOSED	224
XI. CONFLICT WITH GREAT NORTHERN COMPANY	259
XII. LINES TO KNOTTINGLEY, WIGAN, AND SWANSEA	282
XIII. LINE FROM LONDON TO MANCHESTER DESCRIBED	330
XIV. LINE FROM TRENT TO BARROW-IN-FURNESS DESCRIBED	426
XV. SETTLE AND CARLISLE LINE DESCRIBED	478
XVI. LINE FROM DERBY TO BATH AND BRISTOL DESCRIBED	544
XVII. NOTTS, LEICESTERSHIRE, AND WESTERN LINES DESCRIBED	575
XVIII. SHAREHOLDERS, DIRECTORS, AND EXECUTIVE ESTABLISH- MENTS, ETC.	607

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05036-4 - The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress: A Narrative of Modern Enterprise

Frederick S. Williams

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

FROM DRAWINGS BY T. SULMAN, E. M. WIMPERIS, THE AUTHOR, ETC.,
ENGRAVED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF T. SULMAN.

	PAGE		PAGE
Source of the Erewash	1	Swansea	328
Pinxton Wharf	2	Doubling of Metropolitan	333
Charnwood Forest Canal	4	The Fleet Sewer	334
Birthplace of Midland	8	St. Pancras Cellars	336
Bridge over the Trent	15	Belsize Tunnel	353
Nottingham Old Station	30	Hampstead Junction Bridge	358
Ambergate Tunnel	49	St. Albans	363
Bull Bridge	50	Luton	366
Clay Cross	59	Dallow Farm.	368
The Anker Viaduct	66	Elstow	373
Tewkesbury	76	Wellingborough	379
Gloucester	84	The Baptist Mission House, Kettering	381
Bristol	85	Triangular Lodge	382
Metal Ticket	90	Leicester	385
Leicester Station (1832)	92	Soar Bridge	391
Nottingham Station	120	Willersley Cutting	403
Worcester	131	High Tor	404
Wellingborough Viaduct	145	Haddon Hall	405
Monsal Dale	148, 409	Chatsworth	406
Chee Vale	149, 150	Near Cressbrook	408
Foot-bridge in Monsal Dale	151	Miller's Dale Viaduct	410
Blackwell Mill Junction	163	Topley Pike	411
Trent Station	165	Pig Tor	412
Beaumont Leys	166	Ashwell Dale Bridge	413
Barnsley Viaduct	178	Viaduct, Chapel-en-le-Frith	425
Dove Holes Tunnel	192	Codnor Castle	430
Liverpool, from the Mersey	207	Wingfield Manor House	434
Carlisle, Citadel Station	215	Beauchief Abbey	443
Bugsworth Viaduct	223	Leeds	453
Apperley Viaduct	238	Kirkstall Abbey	455
Brent Viaduct	248	Ben Rhydding	457
Haverstock Hill Station.	257	Ben Rhydding, the Tower	458
St. Pancras Goods Station	258	Ilkley	459
Unstone Viaduct	260	Shipley Viaduct	462
Sawley Bridge	265		

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05036-4 - The Midland Railway: Its Rise and Progress: A Narrative of Modern Enterprise

Frederick S. Williams

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE		PAGE
Bradford	463	Lawley Street Goods Station.	549
Saltaire	464	Westwood Park	556
Clapham and Ingleborough .	470	Croome Court	560
Aqueduct near Lancaster .	471	Defford Bridge	561
Lancaster	472	Bitton Bridge over the Avon.	572
Morecambe	473	Weston Bridge over the Avon	573
Lake Side, Windermere. .	476	Wollaton Hall	579
Barrow-in-Furness	477	Newstead Abbey	580
The Ambulance	483	Newark Castle	584
The Bog Cart	483	Lincoln	585
Sheriff Brow Bridge	485	Timber Viaduct, near Mansfield	586
Contractor's Hotel, Blea Moor	493	New Trent Bridge	587
Batty Moor Viaduct	498	Groby Tunnel and Bardon . .	598
Blea Moor Tunnel, North End	500	Ashby de la Zouch Castle . .	600
Dent Head Viaduct	501	Evesham Abbey Gate	602
Arten Gill Viaduct	503	Malvern Station and Hotel . .	603
Dandry Mire Viaduct	510	Hay and the Wye	604
Deep Gill	514	Glasbury and the Wye	605
Intake Embankment	516	Brecon Castle and Viaduct . .	606
Smardale Viaduct	519	Portrait of Mr. Allport	614
Ormside Viaduct	526	New Midland Express Engine	658
Appleby	527	The Break-down Train	659
Crowdundle Viaduct	533	New Midland Carriage	660
Derby Curve	543	Rail Testing Machine	664
Derby	545	Midland Grand Hotel	666
Hampton Station	548		

LIST OF MAPS.

	PAGE
Lines in and near Leicester	89
Midland Lines in London, and Suburban Connections	Opposite page 352
Main Line from London Northwards	Opposite page 368
The Peak District	400
Leeds, Lancaster, and Furness Districts	464
Settle and Carlisle Line	480
Lines from Birmingham to Bristol and the West	560