

## WORDSWORTH ON RURAL RAILWAYS.

[In the present day, when Railways are "the rage," it is interesting to notice the views on that subject entertained by one of the most celebrated Poets of the present day. Mr. Wordsworth, the Poet Laureate, had written a sonnet on the contemplated invasion of the Vale of Keswick, by the Railway Forces, which had found its way into print, and elicited some very severe criticism. The following letter was, in consequence, addressed by Mr. Wordsworth to one of the London papers, in which his sonnet had appeared.—*Ed. L. G.*]

SOME little time ago you did me the favour of inserting a sonnet expressive of the regret and indignation which, in common with others all over these islands, I felt at the proposal of a railway to extend from Kendal to Low Wood, near the head of Windermere. The project was so offensive to a large majority of the proprietors through whose lands the line, after it came in view of the Lake, was to pass, that, for this reason, and the avowed one of the heavy expense, without which the difficulties in the way could not be overcome, it has been partially abandoned, and the terminus is now fixed at a spot within a mile of Bowness. But as no guarantee can be given that the project will not hereafter be revived, and an attempt made to carry the line forward through the vales of the Ambleside and Grasmere, and as in one main particular the case remains essentially the same, allow me to address you upon certain points which merit more consideration than the favourers of the scheme have yet given them. The matter, though seemingly local, is really one in which all persons of taste must be interested, and, therefore, I hope to be excused if I venture to treat it at some length.

I shall barely touch upon the statistics of the question, leaving those to the two several statements before the Board of Trade, which may possibly be induced to refer the matter to the House of Commons; and, contemplating that possibility, I hope that the observations I have to make may not be altogether without influence upon the public, and upon individuals whose duty it may be to decide in their place whether the proposed measure shall be referred to a committee of the house. Were the case before us an ordinary one, I should reject such an attempt as presumptuous and futile; but it is not only different from all others, but, in truth, peculiar.

In this district the manufactures are trifling; mines it has none, and its quarries are either worn out or superseded; the soil is light, and the cultivable parts of the country are very limited; so that it has little to send out, and little has it also to receive. The inhabitants are so few, and their intercourse with other places so infrequent, that one daily coach, which could not be kept going but through its connection with the Post-Office, suffices for three fourths of the

year along the line of country as far as Keswick. The staple of the district is, in fact, its beauty, and its character of seclusion and retirement; and to these topics, and to others connected with them, my remarks shall be confined.

The projectors have induced many to favour their schemes, by declaring that one of their main objects is to place the beauties of the Lake district within easier reach of those, who cannot afford to pay for ordinary conveyances. Look at the facts. Railways are completed, which, joined with others in rapid progress, will bring travellers, who prefer approaching by Ullswater, to within three miles of that lake.

The Lancaster and Carlisle Railway will pass the town of Kendal, about six or seven miles from eminences that command the whole vale of Windermere. The Lakes are therefore at present of very easy access for all persons; but if they be not made still more so, the poor, it is said, will be wronged. Before this be admitted, let the question be fairly looked into, and its different bearings examined. No one can assert that, if this intended mode of approach be not effected, anything will be taken away that is actually possessed. The wrong, if any, must lie in the unwarrantable obstruction of an attainable benefit. First, then, let us consider the probable amount of that benefit.

Elaborate gardens with topiary works were in high request, even among our remote ancestors, but the relish for choice and picturesque natural scenery (a poor and mean word which requires apology, but will be generally understood) is quite of recent origin. Our early travellers—Ray, the naturalist, one of the first men of his age—Bishop Burnett, and others who had crossed the Alps, or lived some time in Switzerland, are silent upon the sublimity and beauty of those regions; and Burnett even uses these words, speaking of the Grisons—"When they have made up estates elsewhere, they are glad to leave Italy and the best parts of Germany, and to come and live among those mountains, of which the very sight is enough to fill a man with horror." The accomplished Evelyn, giving an account of his journey through the Alps, dilates upon the terrible, the melancholy, and the uncomfortable; but, till he comes to the fruitful country of Geneva, not a syllable of delight or praise. In the