

But in order that all the advantages of this route might be realized, it would be desirable that arrangements should be made by which the special service from the East should be continued also through France.

Some further time might also be saved in both directions if the mail trains could be timed to run through from Calais, stopping, say, one hour only at Paris, and making use of the railway which connects the Northern and Mediterranean lines together for avoiding a change of vehicles in that city.

With reference to these subjects I am happy to be able to inform your Grace of the cordial promise of general co-operation which I received at Paris from M. Vandal, the Director-General of the French Posts. I had the advantage of conferring with M. Vandal, both in going to and returning from Italy; and when I informed him on the latter occasion of the result of my journey, of the amount of time that could be saved, and the price at which the Italian Government were willing to perform the service, M. Vandal replied at once that the question was virtually decided. He observed that such an improved means of communications would advance the important interests of the French Empire in connection with the East, as well as our own; and he begged me to assure Her Majesty's Government of his readiness to afford every assistance in furthering this object.

Under all the circumstances of the case, I am of opinion that the route *via* Brindisi may properly be adopted for the Eastern mail service, as affording greater advantages at the present time than any other route; and further, that it might be brought into operation by the 1st June, 1867. It is probable that the Mont Cenis Railway will be opened for traffic before that time, and even if such should not be the case, there would still be no difficulty as regards the passage of the mountain by horses and mules until the autumn; and I cannot doubt that the summit railway will be complete and working, at all events, before the following winter.

It will thus be possible next year to convey the Eastern mails between London and Alexandria punctually, and without difficulty, in 150½ hours, and at some time after 1871, when the permanent line between St. Michael and Susa is at work in 147½ hours. The longest portion of the journey that can be made at present, or next year, without change of vehicle, is from Susa to Brindisi, 716 miles, or twenty-seven hours; but it may be expected, when the tunnel line is completed after 1871, that mails and passengers will travel, without change of vehicles between Calais and Brindisi, 1,391 miles in fifty-four hours, or, if the arrangement above referred to, of using the connecting railway at Paris, be adopted, in fifty-two or fifty-three hours. In either case it is exceedingly desirable that sleeping carriages with proper conveniences should be provided for the journey. I have not failed to represent this want to the Italian Government and railway companies, and I am happy to be able to inform your Grace that the Italian Government undertakes to convey the passengers in special carriages of this description at fares not exceeding, for each, fifteen centimes per kilometre. In the meantime, the mails must necessarily be transferred, if not at Paris, at all events from the 4' 8½" to the 3' 7½" gauge, and *vice versa* at St. Michael and Susa; and with a view to this being more easily effected, as well as to facilitate the transfers on the remainder of the whole route, I would venture to suggest some improvements might be made in the system of packing them.

The average number of boxes of wood or iron forwarded by the mail of the 26th of each month, through France to the East, is now 325, with a gross weight of nine tons fourteen cwt. two qrs. twenty-one lbs., and a gross cubic content of 1,178 feet; and each of these boxes is now thrown down with great violence, perhaps on stone or iron, whenever a transfer is made: 1st, from the "left" at the General Post Office to the Post Office van; 2nd, from Post Office van to the railway station in London; 3rd, from the train to the steamer at Dover, and so on. I understand that the attempt has already been made to substitute bags for boxes, but that it was given up, when the cholera was raging last year in Egypt, because the bags were supposed to harbour infection more readily than the boxes. But I apprehend that this objection might be got over if the bags were enclosed in watertight wooden chests of larger dimensions. The places of transfer being always the same, these chests might be moved by cranes, from the General Post Office to the street, from the street to the railway, from the railway pier to the steamer, and so on. And the hatchways of the steamers employed might be fitted to receive them without any difficulty, whatever the precise form and size decided upon. A great saving would thus be effected, in the weight, the cost, and the wear and tear of the cases, as well as in the time consumed in making the cases up, in making lists of them during the transfers, and in transferring them. And there would probably be less risk of loss. A truck on the Mont Cenis Summit Railway would not, of course, take so many of these large chests as one of the ordinary railways.

As I have intimated at the commencement of this Report, the question to be now solved is solely that of communication through Europe to the East of the Mediterranean. But in saying so much concerning the postal routes to the East, I would ask your Grace's permission to touch also upon the still more important saving of time and distance that may be obtained hereafter, by avoiding the passage of the Red Sea, where a railway shall be constructed from the coast of the Mediterranean along the Euphrates Valley to the Persian Gulf. By this route many hundred miles of distance, and many days of time, might be saved between London and Bombay, which will become within the next two years (when the railways to Madras and Calcutta are completed) the principal port of India. The navigation by the Persian Gulf to Bombay be far preferable to that, *via* Suez and the Red Sea to Bombay; and even that amount of navigation may ultimately be avoided by the connection together of Bagdad and Bombay by railway. But in the meantime the Euphrates Valley scheme has been for many years almost in abeyance. The mere guarantee of the Turkish Government has not been found sufficient even to render the construction of the first portion from the coast to Aleppo practicable; and the financial state of that empire renders progress now all but impossible. But I have so strong a conviction of the important bearing, that the construction of such a railway would have, commercially and strategically, upon the British empire, that I could not but take this opportunity of recommending the subject to the serious consideration of Her Majesty's Government.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) H. W. TYLER,
Captain, Royal Engineers.

His Grace the Duke of Montrose, Postmaster-General, &c.