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DOCUMENT A

Charles DICKENS, *Dombey and Son*, chapter 6, 1848 – Edition Penguin Classics, Great-Britain, pp.120-122

Polly was beset by so many misgivings in the morning, that but for the incessant promptings of her black-eyed companion, she would have abandoned all thoughts of the expedition, and formally petitioned for leave to see number one hundred and forty-seven, under the awful shadow of Mr Dombey's roof. But Susan who was personally disposed in favour of the excursion, and who (like
5 Tony Lumpkin), if she could bear the disappointments of other people with tolerable fortitude, could not abide to disappoint herself, threw so many ingenious doubts in the way of this second thought, and stimulated the original intention with so many ingenious arguments, that almost as soon as Mr Dombey's stately back was turned, and that gentleman was pursuing his daily road towards the City, his unconscious son was on his way to Staggs's Gardens.

10 This euphonious locality was situated in a suburb, known by the inhabitants of Staggs's Gardens by the name of Camberling Town; a designation which the Strangers' Map of London, as printed (with a view to pleasant and commodious reference) on pocket-handkerchiefs, condenses, with some show of reason, into Camden Town. Hither the two nurses bent their steps, accompanied by their charges ; Richards carrying Paul, of course, and Susan leading little Florence by the hand, and
15 giving her such jerks and pokes from time to time, as she considered it wholesome to administer.

The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here, a
20 chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable ; Babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations; carcasses of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and
25 arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed
30 and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth;

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and mounds of ashes blocked up rights of way, and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood.

In short, the yet unfinished and unopened Railroad was in progress; and, from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilisation and improvement.

35 But as yet, the neighbourhood was shy to own the Railroad. One or two bold speculators had projected streets; and one had built a little, but had stopped among the mud and ashes to consider farther of it. A bran-new Tavern, redolent of fresh mortar and size, and fronting nothing at all, had taken for its sign The Railway Arms; but that might be rash enterprise – and then it hoped to sell
40 drink to the workmen. So, the Excavators' House of Call had sprung up from a beer-shop; and the old-established Ham and Beef Shop had become the Railway Eating House, with a roast leg of pork daily, through interested motives of a similar immediate and popular description. Lodging-house keepers were favourable in like manner; and for the like reasons were not to be trusted. The general belief was very slow. There were frowzy fields, and cow-houses, and dunghills, and dustheaps, and ditches, and gardens, and summer-houses, and carpet-beating grounds, at the very door of the
45 Railway. Little tumuli of oyster shells in the oyster season, and of lobster shells in the lobster season, and of broken crockery and faded cabbage leaves in all seasons, encroached upon its high places. Posts, and rails, and old cautions to trespassers, and backs of mean houses, and patches of wretched vegetation, stared it out of countenance. Nothing was the better for it, or thought of being so. If the miserable waste ground lying near it could have laughed, it would have laughed it to scorn, like many
50 of the miserable neighbours.

Staggs's Gardens was uncommonly incredulous. It was a little row of houses, with little squalid patches of ground before them, fenced off with old doors, barrel staves, scraps of tarpaulin, and dead bushes; with bottomless tin kettles and exhausted iron fenders, thrust into the gaps. Here, the Staggs's Gardeners trained scarlet beans, kept fowls and rabbits, erected rotten summer-houses (one
55 was an old boat), dried clothes, and smoked pipes. Some were of opinion that Staggs's Gardens derived its name from a deceased capitalist, one Mr Staggs, who had built it for his delectation. Others, who had a natural taste for the country, held that it dated from those rural times when the antlered herd, under the familiar denomination of Staggses, had resorted to its shady precincts. Be this as it may, Staggs's Gardens was regarded by its population as a sacred grove not to be withered
60 by Railroads; and so confident were they generally of its long outliving any such ridiculous inventions, that the master chimney-sweeper at the corner, who was understood to take the lead in the local politics of the Gardens, had publicly declared that on the occasion of the Railroad opening, if ever it did open, two of his boys should ascend the flues of his dwelling, with instructions to hail the failure with derisive cheers from the chimney-pots.

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DOCUMENT B

House of Commons Debate 02 December 1988 vol 142 cc1019-32

Miss Anne Widdecombe (Maidstone)

I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the issue of compensation for people who will be affected by the proposed high-speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and London, running through Kent. I sincerely hope that, in the event, my constituents will not be affected.

5 British Rail has proposed four routes for the high-speed railway. The fourth has been dropped as being too costly and taking too long to construct. One of the three remaining routes will affect my constituents very badly. The other two give rise to points that I am raising on behalf of the people of Kent generally, rather than of my constituents alone.

10 Routes one or two should be chosen. I have to agree with the Chairman of Eurotunnel, Alistair Morton, who says that he can see no good reason why we are even still considering route three. Whichever route is chosen will cause problems for the people of Kent and there are objections to be advanced against all three. Therefore we must consider whether there are any positive reasons for accepting any of the routes and whether they provide any benefit for the people of Kent.

15 The prospects with routes one and two are quite good. First, there is the possibility of an economic boost for the Medway, which traditionally has been the poorer part of Kent. Secondly, there is the possibility of an improved rail commuter service, of a parkway at Maidstone, and, not least, of a link with the North through King's Cross. That must surely play a fairly major part in British Rail's long-term plans.

20 More important, all Kent is up in arms over the environmental threat from the high-speed railway. Routes one or two could probably be put through tunnels, and certainly through cuttings, for much of their length. Route three runs across the Weald with its wet clay soil, and the line would have to be raised. As such, it would be unsightly and noisy and the environmental damage would be very much greater than from routes one and two. Thus there is no advantage in it, especially as it would be slower than route one, and on this high-speed link the faster the service the higher the revenue for British Rail, and more costly than route two. I see no reason why we are still considering it and why my constituents cannot be immediately relieved of their fear, their worry and the planning blight that is caused by this wholly pointless route. Alistair Morton can see no point in it, nor can British Rail, and nor can the people of Kent.

Enormous questions are raised about compensation for people along the chosen route. I have made available in advance the points that I shall raise both with the Minister and British Rail in the hope

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30 that I shall obtain some fairly clear and definite answers, at least where possible. The issues are complex. We have built no new railways since the turn of the century and our compensation laws are therefore inadequate and in a mess. The laws that apply to motorways do not apply in the same way to railways, which leaves far too little protection for Kent constituents who are affected by the new project.

35 So worried are my constituents that they have formed a campaign to save the heart of Kent—the Weald, Bourne valley and the villages that will be destroyed should route three be chosen. The village of Collier Street will become completely unrecognisable. Headcorn and Staplehurst will be sandwiched between two railway lines and a naturally beautiful part of Kent will be destroyed. Those are just some of the disadvantages.

40 It has been suggested that the building of a high-speed rail link will mean also a more intensive use of existing track, perhaps to carry more freight or perhaps to cope with the extra custom that British Rail expects. Residents near a railway line that carries no traffic between 11.30 pm and 6 am may sleep undisturbed throughout the night. But if the line is used more intensively, with trains running through the night, no statutory compensation is provided for the people who suffer from the consequent noise. Compensation, would, however, have been payable when the line was built.
45 Thousands of people in Kent will be affected if there is, as is generally projected, an intensification of use. I should like to hear some solid proposals for helping those people.

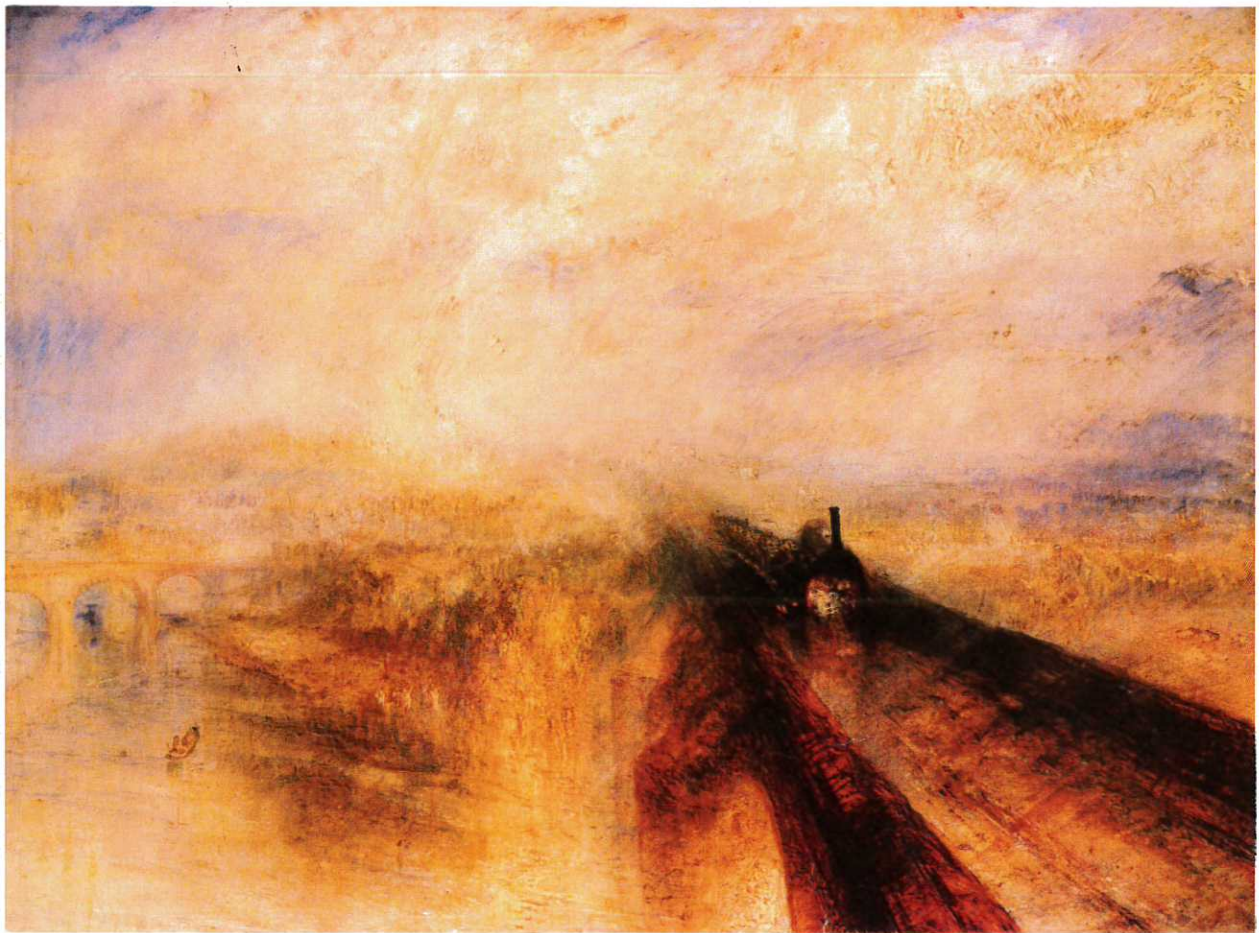
I do not join in the general bashing of British Rail that has been prevalent recently. British Rail had a hopeless task. It had to produce four hideous propositions, take them into the heart of Kent and sell them to people who were to be affected by them. Inevitably, it has been castigated for mistakes which it undoubtedly made. The people trying to sell the proposals were not official public relations men but British Rail officials. They did a good job, and are continuing to do so, under difficult circumstances. (...)

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DOCUMENT C

Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Rain Steam and Speed - The Great Western Railway*, 1844, National Gallery, London.



Medium: Oil on Canvas

Dimensions : 91 x 121.8 cm