

Jim Crow's Description of the New Greenwich Railroad Which Opened on Wednesday, December 14, 1836

Synopsis:

Fantastical and mildly satirical description of the events at the opening of the railroad.

Themes:

<i>Theme ID</i>	<i>Theme Description</i>
017	Railway Opening ceremony,
030	Black-face minstrels
031	Hot-air balloons

Text

Good people give attention, / And listen to Jim Crow
While him sing a little ditty, / 'Bout de Greenwich Rail-road show

So if you wish to trable, / Jim Crow has found the mode
To go sixty mile and hour, / On the new Rail road

Der was such a lots of people / All sorts I do declare
To see this great big sight, / Lord? how the folks did stare.

I started from de 'Delphe, / to de Borough, I declare,
And when I got to Tooley-street, / O dear what sights were dere.

Then first did come de Lord Mayor, / Beside de George and Dragon,
And de coach what he rode in, / Looked like a turnip wagon.

Nezt de Sherriffs in chay carts, / With bellies like a butt,
followed by a sweep upon two donkies, / With a barrow full of soot.

The Lord Mayor got in de Steam coach, / But it would not move a peg,
'Till a pensioner, to make a fire, / Shov'd in his wooden leg.

Then they flew along like Green's balloon, / Jim Crow ne'er saw such rigs,
But on Deptford bridge, his Lordship drove, / Bang o'er a few old pigs.

And when we got to our journey's end, / It's true, I'm going to tell ye,
Dis mayor was a funny chap, / Dey call him Massa Kelly.

When dis great man did see Jim Crow, / He looked quite bery fine,
He shook hands wid me and said, / Jim Crow wid me you'll dine.

Der was Misser Mayor and Missie Mayor, / And all the little Mayors too,
Dey came and shake dere hands wid me, / and say Jim Crow, how do you do?

We then return'd as we did go, / And dinner soon did show,
The great folks all observed me, / And said "your health, Jim Crow".

I eat and drank, I do declare, / 'Till O could no longer stuff,

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When Massa Kelly said to me, / "Jim Crow, you've had enough".

Of all de sights dats in de world, / You may believe Jim Crow,
Nothing was ever half so grand, / As de new Rail-road show.

Glossary:

Delphe	Probably the Adelphe Theatre (see notes on the song and its historical context)
Tooley Street –	Site of London Bridge Station - the terminus
Green's balloon	In 1836, Charles Green he set a long distance record in the balloon "Royal Vauxhall", flying overnight 480 miles (770 km) from Vauxhall Gardens in London to Weilburg in Germany. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Green_(balloonist)

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Music. No tune given

Source of Music: No tune given

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Author : Anonymous

Date: 1836

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Notes of the Song and Its Historical Background

The line reached London Bridge on 14 December 1836. The first section, between Bermondsey and Deptford, opened on 8 February 1836. However; a number of demonstration trains had been running from mid-1835. These were suspended for a while after a derailment in November, but resumed the following year, amid rumours that some trains had reached 60 miles per hour (97 km/h).



Thomas Dartmouth Rice as "Jim Crow" 1832

Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808 – 1860) was a white performer and playwright who used African American vernacular speech, song, and dance to become one of the most popular minstrel show entertainers of his time. Rice's "Jim Crow" persona was a racial caricature contrived to flatter contemporary belief in white superiority. Rice performed at the Adelphi Theatre in the early 1830s. In 1836 he popularized blackface entertainment with English audiences when he appeared in London, although he and his character were known there by reputation at least by 1833.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_D._Rice

Although slavery was not permitted in Britain, it was not abolished in the British Empire until 1833. Many street entertainers of the 1810s were black. Black men stranded in London were often forced to choose between becoming street entertainers or beggars. Following the American Revolution of 1783, five thousand black people who had fought for the British, or who were slave or servants of white loyalists came to Britain. [ref: liberties exiles] One of the most famous street singers was Joseph Johnson an ex-sailor. Johnson was known throughout London and the home counties as 'regular chaunter' of sea songs.

Thomas Kelly was lord mayor of London in 1836.

The sheet is illustrated by what appears to be a stationary engine.