

The engine and the rest of the train left the rails immediately after the van got off. The engine-driver checked the speed of the engine gradually, and brought the whole train to a stand, about 138 yards from the place where the first marks of a vehicle being off the rails were found on the ballast, inside the near rail.

The engine came to a stand in the small dyke at the south side of the line. It was thrown partly on its side. The van next to it was resting on the engine buffer, and was also leaning over; the coaches behind the van remained upright on their wheels, and stood on the ballast in zigzag fashion. None of the couplings gave way.

The engine and all the vehicles of the train were slightly damaged.

The accident appears to have been caused by the uneven state of the permanent way and by the bad state of the sleepers, which were so much decayed,

that they would not hold the spikes and chairs in their proper places, when the engine began to oscillate.

The uneven state of the permanent way was increased by a sudden frost and thaw acting on the sand ballast, which had been thoroughly saturated with wet from the continuous rain.

I would recommend that the speed of the trains on the Hoylake Railway should be reduced until all the decayed sleepers have been renewed and the railway is put in a good state of repair. The engine-driver appears to have shown judgment and presence of mind in the manner in which he stopped his train, when he perceived that the van next to his engine had left the rails.

I have, &c.

F. H. RICH.

*The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.*

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Tunbridge Wells, 17th August 1872.

SIR, I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 27th June, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended a collision that occurred between a passenger and a coal train, at the north junction, Blue Pits, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, on the 24th June.

Three passengers are said to have been injured.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire eastern route from Manchester to Bury and Bolton, leaves the main line at the south junction, Blue Pits, and passes the north junction, and thence through Heywood to Bury. The north junction is about 570 yards north of the south junction, and the junction signals there are slotted, and thus controlled by the signalman at the south junction, so that they cannot be taken off without his permission. The north junction is covered by a distant signal, which is about 550 yards north of the north junction.

On the day in question, the 5.55 p.m. up passenger train from Bury to Manchester, which consisted of an engine, five carriages, one break-van, and one waggon behind, arrived at Heywood at 6.8 p.m. and left at 6.11, according to the guard, and pulled up at Blue Pits north junction, clear of the points at 6.13 p.m. in consequence of the junction signal being on at danger against it. The distant-signal was taken off for this train to approach the junction, but the junction signal was kept on by the south junction signalman.

The north junction signalman shifted the points and waved a green flag to the driver of this passenger train, as a signal for him to draw forward towards the south junction, and thus to clear the road from the north junction into Blue Pits station: but the driver did not move his train, but stood there two or three minutes, until the junction signal was lowered, but this was not done before the collision had taken place. The driver states that his engine was blowing off steam at the time, and he did not hear the signalman shout out to him, nor that any train was coming up the line behind him.

It also appears, that the 3.30 p.m. coal train from Wigan to Rochdale, left Wigan at 3.50 p.m. It consisted of an engine, 15 loaded waggons, and one break-van. It was stopped about five minutes outside Bury, and was overtaken as it was going up the Heywood

bank, by a special train returning to Wakefield, and was assisted up the bank by the special train. It is said to have passed Heywood about 6.13 or 6.14 by the driver, and signals were at caution there, and also at the level crossing beyond, at which point the driver admits that he saw the Blue Pits distant-signal worked from the north junction on at danger against him, and he says that he then shut off the steam, and whistled for the distant-signal to be taken off, and when passing it he whistled for the guard's break, put the tender break on, and reversed his engine 200 yards inside the distant-signal. He states that when he passed the distant-signal he was travelling at from six to eight miles an hour, and that they were running very slow when they struck the passenger train.

The signalman on duty at the north junction states that the collision took place three minutes after the arrival of the passenger train.

The Company's officers blame the driver of the passenger train for obeying the danger signal, and stopping at the north junction and for not drawing past it, when the green flag was waved by the signalman; and they also complain that the signal at the north junction is controlled by the south junction signalman, and urge that the old system of a distinct distant-signal, worked from the south junction, is to be preferred to the present system.

They admit, and it cannot be questioned, that the collision was directly due to the driver of the coal train not pulling up under the distant-signal short of the point of obstruction. But it has been repeatedly stated to the Inspecting Officers of the Board of Trade that the exigencies of the traffic are so great on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, that it is impossible to keep the interval of time between following trains prescribed by the Company's regulations:—and, although this fact has been known for very many years, and the Inspecting Officers have, in consequence, constantly been urging the introduction of the absolute block system for working the traffic, very little has been done in this respect on this important line of railway, where it is probably more required than on any other. The collision could not have occurred if it had been in operation on this part of their line.

I have, &c.,

W. YOLLAND,
Colonel.

*The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.*