

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade, (Railway Department),  
Whitehall, London, S.W.,

17th May 1887.

SIR,

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 1st ultimo, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended the collision that occurred on the 27th March last, at Horwich Junction station, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

While a goods train from Fleetwood, which consisted of an engine, 35 waggons of goods and cattle, a drovers' carriage, and the break-van, was passing through Horwich Junction, it ran on to the Horwich branch, instead of running down the main line, as it was intended to do, and the train was not stopped before it struck a passenger engine, which was standing on the branch, at a speed of about 14 miles an hour. The passenger engine had just got into motion at the time. The driver of the passenger engine had his arm broken and his head cut, and the fireman was shaken and had his head cut. The engine of the goods train was a tender engine, and was fitted with the vacuum break. The passenger engine was a tank engine. The two engines met funnel to funnel. Nothing was thrown off the rails.

The permanent way was not damaged.

The two engines were damaged, but none of the waggons of the goods train were damaged.

Horwich Junction station, is the place where the short branch to Horwich joins the main line between Manchester and Preston. The junction is an ordinary double junction. It is protected with good signals; the signals are interlocked with the points, and are worked from a raised cabin, which is close to the junction. The evidence is as follows:

*Evidence.*

*Aaron Helm*, pointsman, stated: I came on duty at Horwich Junction station cabin on Sunday, the 27th, at 7 a.m. At 1.15 p.m. I had the "be ready" signal offered for the 12 noon goods train from Fleetwood to Miles Platting. This train was given "on line" at 1.49 p.m. At this time the junction points were in their normal position, set for the branch. At 1.17 p.m. I received notice of the Horwich branch train, which I accepted, and the train was given "on line" at the same time. This train arrived at 1.50 p.m. After it arrived, I set the cross-over points on the branch which are next to the junction, for the engine to run round its train previous to returning to Horwich. The engine was run across, and stopped at the other end of the platform, ready to set back to its train. I then said to the fitter, who was employed in cleaning the interlocking machinery under the cabin, "Fleetwood goods is coming, can I pull the home-signal off?" He replied, "No, call him past with a flag." I was about to do so, when the man said, "The signal is now all right," and I took it off. I did not take off the distant-signal. As the points were set for the Horwich branch when the goods train reached the junction, it ran on the branch and collided with the passenger branch engine, which was standing on the down branch road. As the goods train was passing the cabin I saw it was going on to the branch, and I placed the home-signal at danger, to attract the attention of the guard. I do not know whether the guard noticed it or not. The goods train passed the cabin with steam on, but I cannot say at what speed it was travelling. The signal-fitters were at work under the floor of my cabin, cleaning the interlocking machinery, which was disconnected, and which allowed me to take off the main line home-signal without first setting the points right for the main line. It was an oversight on my part not to set the points when I accepted the train. I have not previously been employed in a cabin when

the interlocking has been interfered with for the purpose of cleaning it. I have been 4½ years in the Company's service, and 3½ years a signaller. There was a platelayer on duty on the ground, close to the cabin, to assist in working the junction while the fitter was cleaning the machinery, but I did not see him at the time the goods train ran on to the branch.

*John Atkinson*, driver of the 12 noon goods train from Fleetwood to Miles Platting, on March 27th, stated: I shut off steam when I saw the Horwich distant-signal at danger. I was coming past Whittles siding at the time. When the distant-signal was taken off I put steam on again, as I saw that both the home-signal and the advance-signal were taken off, just as I reached the distant-signal. When I got to the junction cabin, my mate was the first to notice that we were going on to the branch, and I immediately shut off steam, put on the vacuum-brake of the engine, reversed the engine, and did all I could to stop. I think I was running at about 20 miles an hour at the time. When we struck, I got off my engine, and went to the foot-plate of the passenger engine, and found that both the driver and fireman of the passenger engine were injured. The fireman was quite sick, and the driver asked me to take them to Horwich with their engine, which I did. Neither of the engines nor any of the vehicles left the rails, but both engines were damaged. The train consisted of 16 goods waggons, 19 cattle waggons, a drover's carriage, and a break-van, in which the guard was travelling, at the tail of the train. I was about 100 to 200 yards from the distant-signal when it came off. I have been 19 years in the Company's service, and two years a registered driver. I came on duty at 6 a.m. that day.

*J. Woods*, fireman, stated: On the 27th March, when we were within about 100 yards of the distant-signal, it came off, and the home and advance signals

were also off before the distant-signal was taken off. My mate shut off steam when he saw the distant-signal on, but he put steam on again, when it came off. I was leaning over the side of the engine, when it turned up the branch, as we were passing the cabin. I at once applied the break. We were travelling at about five or six miles per hour at the time. I have been five years in the Company's service, and have been a fireman five months.

*William Seddon*, signal-fitter, stated: I was engaged on Sunday the 27th March in cleaning the locking machinery at the Horwich Junction station cabin. I commenced work at 8.30 a.m., and finished at 5.45 p.m. I remember the pointsman telling me, that a very important goods train was approaching, and he asked me if he could take his signals off? My mate called out "No, I am on the levers, call him past with a flag." I found immediately afterwards that I could release the home-signal, and I did so, and I told the pointsman he could take the home-signal off, but the distant-signal could not be worked, as my mate was sitting on the distant-signal lever, and that signal was not taken off. This is the first time the frame has been taken to pieces to clean it since it was erected, about five years ago. There was a platelayer outside flagging. I told the signalman and the flagman, when I went to work, that I was going to take the locking off. The distant-signal was not disconnected. I have been 27 years in the Company's service.

*T. Heyes*, foreman platelayer, Horwich Junction, stated: I was appointed flagman on Sunday the 27th

March in connexion with cleaning the interlocking machinery at the junction cabin. When the work was commenced, I said to the pointsman, "Keep all your signals at danger, and I will bring all trains on with the green flag," and he replied, "All right." But this arrangement was not carried out. Sometimes the signals were taken off, and at other times they were kept at danger. The pointsman called the trains past with a green flag, and I repeated the pointsman's signals. I have been 27 years in the Company's service, and 14 years foreman platelayer. I was standing 20 yards at the Preston side of the cabin when the goods train went down the branch.

*James Benson*, driver, stated: I was engine-driver of the passenger train from Horwich on the 27th March. I arrived at Horwich Junction at 1.50 p.m. I stopped and deposited the passengers at the branch line platform. My fireman uncoupled the engine, I took water and then proceeded on to the down line, and my engine was standing there, when I saw the engine of the goods train coming on the branch, instead of going down the main line. I at once gave steam to my engine, and had just got her into motion before it was struck. I think the goods train was running at a speed of about 14 miles an hour when the goods engine struck my engine. Nothing was thrown off the rails. I was thrown against the screen of the engine, my head was cut by the spectacle glass, my left arm was broken. The fireman's head was driven through the spectacle glass like mine, and he was knocked down on the footplate. He was a fortnight off work. I have been 38 years in the Company's service, and 17 years a driver.

#### *Conclusion.*

On the day in question, the signal-fitter reached Horwich Junction station about 8.30 in the morning, for the purpose of cleaning the locking frame in the signal cabin. He first informed the signalman and a platelayer, who was on duty at the junction as a flagman, that he was going to take off the locking between the signals and the points, in order to clean the frame. He was still at work when the goods train from Fleetwood and Preston arrived at 1.55 p.m.

When the goods train was approaching, the signalman asked the fitter whether he could take off the home-signal. The latter first said "No," but before the goods train reached the junction, he told the signalman that he could do so, and the latter took off the home and the advance signals to allow the goods train to pass. The machinery which locks the junction points with the signals had been taken off at the time that the goods train was approaching. The normal position of the junction points is for the branch, and the signalman omitted to pull these points into their proper position before he lowered the home-signal, and he also omitted to see that the flagman was at the points, where he should have been, to see that they were right, before the signal was lowered and the goods train was allowed to pass. As the junction points were set for the branch the goods train ran down the branch line, on which the passenger engine was standing. The driver of this engine, when he saw the goods train coming, applied steam, and he had just got his engine into motion before it was struck.

The signalman and foreman platelayer are both to blame for neglect of duty, in not seeing that the junction points were in the proper position, before the home-signal was lowered, and thus causing the collision. If the locking had not been disconnected the accident could not have happened.

The fitter is also to blame for not having disconnected the distant-signal before taking off the locking gear. The Company's rules are distinct on this point. If he had obeyed his instructions the distant-signal must have remained at danger while the driver of the goods train passed it.

The Assistant Secretary,  
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.,  
F. H. RICH,  
Colonel, R.E.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 28th May.