

PRESTON AND WYRE RAILWAY.

*Board of Trade
(Railway Department),*

SIR, *Whitehall, 27th October 1865.*

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, for the consideration of [the Lessees of the Preston and Wyre Railway,] [the Directors of the London and North-Western Railway,] [the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway,] the enclosed copy of the report made by Capt. Tyler, R.E., the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the circumstances connected with the collision which occurred on the 27th September between a passenger train and a goods train at the Lea Road station on the Preston and Wyre Railway.

I am, &c.,
W. D. FANE.

*The Secretary of the
Lessees of the
Preston and Wyre
Railway Company.*

*The Secretary of the
London and North-Western
Railway Company.*

*The Secretary of the
Lancashire and Yorkshire
Railway Company.*

SIR, *Hampton Court, 20th October 1865.*

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 28th ult., I have the honour to report, for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended the accident that occurred on the 27th ultimo, between a passenger train and a goods train, at the Lea Road station on the Preston and Wyre Railway.

On the morning in question, as well as on certain other mornings specified in the enclosed notice, a London and North-Western special train was advertised to leave Oldham at 6.30 a.m., and to reach Blackpool at 9.55, taking up passengers at Ordsall Lane (Manchester) and other intermediate stations. But after the passengers at Ordsall Lane had been kept waiting for an hour and thirty-eight minutes, an independent train was started at 9.15 from that place, consisting of an engine and tender, 14 carriages, and a break-van. The number of the passengers increased from the different stations as the train proceeded; two more carriages were taken on at Tyldesley, and three at Wigan; and it reached Preston at 10.55, with 19 carriages and a van, conveying about 700 passengers. It passed through Preston slowly, and the engine driver, who had only been once before to Blackpool, and did not feel competent to conduct it further, called out for a pilot. A porter was sent with him from the platform to act in that capacity by the inspector on duty, and as other trains were due in the Preston station (which has for many years required extension and improvement) he was passed on to Maudlands, 600 or 800 yards beyond that station, to take water. The train was left upon the main line at Maudlands, while the engine uncoupled and went to the water crane in the engine yard; and as soon as the engine returned it proceeded at 11.5 towards Blackpool.

The engine-driver and porter-pilot ascertained from the signalman at the Maudlands junction as they passed that there was no train in front of them; but after having travelled for a couple of miles, and at some 25 miles an hour, through a cutting south of the Lea Road station, the engine-driver saw a signal before him, and asked the porter-pilot what it was. The porter replied, according to his own account, "Lea Road distant signal, whistle it off;" or, according to the account of the engine-driver, that it was

nothing, and that if he would blow his whistle it would be taken off. The engine-driver, however, shut off his steam, and blew his whistle, and the fireman applied the tender-break. The engine-driver also reversed his engine, by his own statement at the same time, but according to the porter when he had rounded a curve which brought him within sight of the station.

On coming thus upon the straight line he saw, about 770 yards before him, a goods train standing upon the line on which he was travelling, with the engine towards him; and finding that he could not pull up, he motioned to the driver of that engine to set back. The station-master at Lea Road, who saw that the passenger train was coming too fast to be able to stop, also directed the goods-driver to get out of the way, and he did his best to obey. But he had not attained a speed of more than 4 miles an hour, or gone more than 70 yards from the station building, before his engine was struck by that of the passenger train at a speed of perhaps 10, or, as the goods driver states, 15 miles an hour.

The driver, porter, and fireman all jumped from the passenger engine before the collision occurred, as well as the fireman from the goods engine, but the driver of the latter remained on it and was unhurt.

The passenger engine, which was less damaged than the goods engine, had its buffer-plank broken and its framing bent. None of the carriages were damaged or thrown off the line, though the waggons suffered more in these respects. About 40 passengers have complained of the effects of the accident, though all but three proceeded forward to Blackpool in the train at 12.40.

The guard, who had been taken suddenly from regular duty between Patricroft and Manchester to go with this passenger train, rode in the 17th vehicle. He was sitting by the side of his break looking forward when he heard the engine-driver whistle. He applied his break, and believes they slackened speed from 20 to 25 down to 7 or 8 miles an hour before the collision occurred.

The goods (a Lancashire and Yorkshire) train left Fleetwood at 9.15 for Poulton, Kirkham, and Maudlands. Though due to leave Kirkham at 9.50, fifty minutes in advance of the 10.10 passenger train from Fleetwood, it was in the habit most frequently of shunting from the up to the down line for that train to pass it at that station. But on the present occasion, as the passenger train was late, the station master directed the goods driver to go forward and shunt at Salwick. The permanent way was, however, under repair at Salwick; there was no available siding there; and the cross-over road between the two main lines had been temporarily taken up: so that the goods train necessarily proceeded to Lea Road. It consisted of an engine and tender, 56 waggons, and two break-vans, and had been shunted from the up to the down line at that station about five minutes before the down passenger train came up.

In approaching Lea Road from the south there is a falling gradient of 1 in 330 up to within 900 yards of the station, after which the line is level. The distant signal is about 580 yards from the station, and is visible without obstruction for 450 yards. A tree then obstructs it for a short distance, and at 546 yards it is again lost sight of, in consequence of a curve which runs on a radius of 75 chains through a cutting. It is again visible, though not distinctly, at 728 yards, and may be seen for some 700 yards further.

On the present occasion, the driver of the passenger engine did not see it until after he had passed the cutting, and the porter who accompanied him as his guide was not aware that it was visible from the south of the cutting. They then had upwards of 1000 yards in which to pull up, and

they ought to have been able to bring the train to a stand within that distance if they had been provided with a proper proportion of break power. But with the preposterously small allowance of one van to 19 carriages, a stoppage within a reasonable distance could not be expected.

I cannot attach blame to the London and North-Western engine-driver, considering that he was avowedly unacquainted with the line, was in the hands of a pilot, and was not provided with sufficient break power.

The porter who accompanied him came on duty at 7.30 a.m., after his breakfast, and was doing porter's duty at the Preston Station till 10.45. He was then suddenly called upon to pilot this train to Blackpool, a duty which he had never performed before. He had some acquaintance with the line, from having acted as guard in charge of a train over it six times, and from having frequently travelled over it to do duty as ticket collector or porter at other stations. But his ideas with regard to the observance of signals were far from satisfactory. He had previously heard that there were no trains before him. He did not know there was a cross-over road at the Lea Road station by which a train could be shunted from one main line to the other, any more than the point from which the distant signal was first visible. And he evidently thought that signal was kept at danger for the protection only of a public road level crossing which occurs at the station. He was certainly not properly qualified for the important duty on which he was sent.

The Preston and Wyre Railway is leased in perpetuity to the London and North-Western and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Companies. The traffic upon it was until within the last two years worked entirely by the engines of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Company. But occasionally for these two years, and regularly during the past summer, the London and North-Western Company have sent their own excursion trains through to Blackpool. As the engine-drivers of the latter company had not previously been in the habit of running over the line, the joint manager of the Preston station and of the Preston and Wyre Railway, instructed the station superintendent to ascertain on the arrival at Preston of each London and North-Western train for Blackpool whether the engine driver was acquainted with the line, and, if not, to send with him as pilot the best man he had. The foreman pointsman from Preston appears to have been more commonly employed on this piloting duty, but in his absence porters have been sent with the trains, as on the present occasion. A luggage porter cannot be considered in the general way a fit person to send as pilot with a strange engine-driver. It is always more proper to employ another engine-driver acquainted with the line for such a duty; but there are no engine drivers connected with the establishment of the Preston and Wyre Joint Railway; and the manager

and superintendent at Preston did what they could under the circumstances in sending a pointsman or a porter with the London and North-Western trains. The London and North-Western Company, on the other hand, made no provision themselves for ensuring the safety of the public in running their trains over a line of railway with which their engine drivers were unacquainted; but they trusted to the joint officers of the Preston and Wyre Railway to forward those trains safely to their destination.

It is desirable that the London and North-Western Company should in future, when they send their trains over this line with engine-drivers that are unacquainted with it, provide a pilot engine-driver to accompany them for that portion of their journey.

As far as the passenger train was concerned then, the collision was caused by its having been sent forward with a strange engine-driver and guard, with an inefficient pilot, and with a grossly insufficient proportion of break power. And it so happened that the goods train was, while being taken *out of* the way of another, shunted *into* the way of this train at Lea Road.

This system of shunting from one main line to another is always objectionable. But it is very common on this line for the want of more sidings.

This particular train has most frequently to shunt to the wrong line at Kirkham, though it sometimes does so at Salwick or Lea Road. On the present occasion the officer who performs all the duties at Lea Road transferred it from less danger on the up to greater danger on the down line, in ignorance, for want of telegraphic information, as to when he might expect the trains upon these lines respectively. It is very desirable and necessary to safety, that a telegraph should be supplied at Lea Road and employed for working the trains, and that sidings should be constructed in suitable localities on different parts of the line, into which the slow trains may be shunted, when necessary, out of the way of the fast trains.

I had occasion to recommend, also, when on the spot, that the distant signal south of Lea Road should be raised, in order that it may be seen from a distance against the sky instead of against some trees which render it very indistinct, as well as that it should be adjusted to turn more nearly at right angles to the direction of an approaching train. It might with advantage be moved further from the station, and an efficient platform signal is much required at the station.

Improvements have as yet by no means kept pace on this line with the very heavy traffic that has grown up and is annually conveyed over it to and from Fleetwood, Blackpool, and Lytham.

I have, &c.,
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. R.E.

*The Secretary of the
Railway Department,
Board of Trade.*

SOUTH DEVON RAILWAY.

*Board of Trade
(Railway Department),*

SIR, *Whitehall, 4th January, 1866.*

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council of Trade to transmit to you, to be laid before the Directors of the South Devon Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Colonel Yolland, the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the circumstances connected with the accident that occurred on the 25th November last to a goods train from getting off the rails near the Cornwood station of the South Devon railway.

I am, &c.
W. D. FANE.

*The Secretary of the
South Devon
Railway Company.*

SIR, *Whitehall, 28th December, 1865.*

I HAVE the honour to state for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, in obedience to your instructions of the 29th ultimo, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended the accident that occurred on the 25th ultimo at the Cornwood station of the South Devon railway, when the driver, John Rowsell, and fireman, Thomas Palmer, of the 10 a.m. down fast goods train were so much injured that they died within a few hours of the occurrence.

It appears that as the train, which consisted of a tank engine, 10 trucks and 2 break vans, with two guards, was proceeding towards Plymouth, between Ivy Bridge station, which is 11½ miles from Plymouth, and Cornwood station, 2½ miles from Ivy Bridge, the guards heard the break whistle