

## LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,  
Whitehall, January 4, 1855.*

Lancashire and  
Yorkshire.

SIR,

Collision at the  
Pemberton  
Station.

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you the inclosed copy of the report which they have received from the inspecting officer upon the accident which occurred on the 13th ult. at the Pemberton station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, from a collision between an express train and a train of empty waggons which were being shunted across the main line.

It would appear, from this report, that the accident mainly arose from the insufficient nature of the signals by which the movements of the train of empty waggons were regulated after its arrival at the Pemberton station; but it would also appear that the station arrangements are such as to render it necessary for trains under such circumstances to be shunted into the opposite main line of rails before they can be moved into their proper siding.

My Lords direct me to request you to point out to the Directors the dangerous nature of such a proceeding, especially upon an important main line of railway, and they will be glad to hear that steps shall have been taken by the Company to construct a through crossing, and thus to render it unnecessary in future.

I am also to call to the attention of the Directors the remarks of the inspecting officer upon the insecurity of the signal arrangements, and the necessity of placing a proper man in charge of the junction of the siding in question with the main line, and to point out how very undesirable it is to employ a young boy in so responsible a position as that of being in charge of signals.

In conclusion my Lords direct me to observe, that they fear that a very great laxity must prevail in the system of working trains on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, inasmuch as an express train was permitted to follow a coal train at an interval of two minutes, whereas the regulations prescribe that between passenger trains an interval of at least five minutes should be maintained. Carelessness in this respect is one of the most fertile sources of accident on railways, and my Lords much regret to find that, after the repeated warnings which the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company have received from accidents attributable to a laxity of system, any further remarks upon this subject should be necessary.

I have, &c.

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

DOUGLAS GALTON,  
*Captain Royal Engineers.*

SIR,

*London, December 21, 1854.*

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 16th inst. 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 13th inst. near the Pemberton station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

Pemberton is a small station  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the west of Wigan, at which the passenger traffic is very limited, but near which there is a colliery, from whence coals are conveyed along the line in each direction. On the south of the main line, and opposite the station building, are two sidings, communicating by a branch with the colliery. The siding nearer to the main line is used for loaded waggons prepared to be sent away, and that farther from the main line is reserved for the empty waggons, which are placed in it as they arrive.

The practice in regard to the trains of empty waggons arriving from Wigan is described to be as follows:—

The driver of any one of these trains travels, as he ought to do, on the down line from Wigan to Pemberton, and, on approaching the latter station, he brings his train to a stand, and gives three whistles; it then becomes the duty of the signalman at Pemberton to direct his further proceedings; if the driver is to remain stationary, the signalman from Pemberton waves a red flag to him, but if no train is approaching on the up line, the signalman, having put on his signals in both directions, waves his hand or his cap to the driver, as an intimation that

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he may back his train from the down line to the up line, and thence move forward into the empty waggon siding.

On the occasion in question, the train of empty waggons arrived at its usual point in approaching Pemberton, and the driver whistled; the station-master then directed a boy who assists him in his duties to make a signal to the driver to remain still, which the driver did, and a goods train passed through on the up line. The station-master states that he then directed the boy to make another signal to the driver to remain quiet, and that he saw the boy do so. But the express train leaving Liverpool at 10.10, and arriving at Wigan at 10.52, passed through the station two minutes after the goods train, and ran into the train of empty coal waggons, the driver of which had in the meantime moved from the down to the up line preparatory to taking his train into the siding. The driver of the express train was unfortunately killed, and the fireman injured.

The driver and fireman of the engine attached to the coal train state, that, when they first stopped near Pemberton, they received a signal from the boy at the station to remain on the down line, and that they did so; but that, after the goods train had passed, they moved back to the up line in obedience to a second signal from the boy, consisting of the usual wave of his hand or his cap.

The boy at Pemberton station is a remarkably intelligent lad, and gave his evidence with great clearness, as to what was his practice in regard to the coal train, and what signals he made to the driver on that occasion; but he looks younger than he is said to be, and even if he be nearly 15 years of age, as alleged, he is not, I think, calculated to perform the duties of signalman at so important a post, because drivers and others are not likely to give that implicit obedience to his signals, which is necessary for the safety of the public. This boy confirmed the evidence of the station-master, to the effect that the driver of the coal train had crossed to the up line in direct disobedience to the signal which he made to him. Thus the driver and fireman on the one side, and the station-master with his youthful assistant on the other, make mutual accusations as to the cause of the accident. I am informed that there were others on the colliery engine, who took the side of the driver in the course of other inquiries, although their evidence was not of the most satisfactory nature; but I had not the advantage of examining them. I must mention, however, that it is a strong presumption in favour of the case of the station-master, that the guard of the express train states, that, as he passed the station, he saw the station-master wave his green flag as a signal of caution, and raise two fingers as an intimation that the goods train was only two minutes ahead of the express. It can hardly be supposed, that, unless the statement of the station-master as to the signal given to the driver of the coal train be correct, he would thus deliberately have permitted the express train to pass him without a more decided warning of danger, as he knew well that if the coal train had not remained on the down line, it would have moved into a position in which the express must shortly have come into collision with it.

But, whether the station-master or the driver be to blame, or both of them, which seems most probable, the fault lies principally with the arrangements under which the station, and the coal traffic in connexion with it, are worked. Looking to the distance from the station at which it is usual to stop the coal train, before backing it to the up main line, it appears to be most unsafe that its future movements should depend upon signals, which may be often uncertain, and, in foggy weather, must be useless; and that those signals should be given by a boy so little likely to command obedience. It is, moreover, far from being a secure mode of working, that the empty coal train should, after arriving near to Pemberton station, be backed from one main line to the other before it is moved to its siding, particularly as it is a train worked at irregular hours, and by persons who are not so directly under the control of the Railway Company as if they were their own servants.

And I would therefore venture to recommend, for the consideration of the Company, that:

1. They should appoint a regular signalman to take charge of the junction of the sidings of the coal branch with the main line.

2. A road should be laid into the empty-waggon siding from the west end of the station, through which the empty waggons might be backed into the siding without being taken on the up main line at all—a measure which would have rendered this accident impossible.

In carrying out these, or some similar improvements, it may also be found possible to bring the levers by which the signals are worked, together, to some spot from which the signals in either direction may be seen. At present the levers are some little distance apart.

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The express train to which this accident occurred, had been timed to run ten minutes earlier in the present than in previous months, and the station-master states, that he communicated this circumstance to the colliery driver on the 30th November last, in his office; but this forms a second point on which the station-master and the driver disagree, for the driver asserts that the station-master never made any such communication to him, and even undertakes to declare that he was not in the station-master's office at all on the day in question. The driver is in the employment of the gentleman to whom the colliery belongs, and the station-master admits that it is his custom and his duty to supply the colliery drivers with time tables of the trains every month on which any alteration takes place in regard to the regular trains; but he states that he was unable to do so at the end of the last month, because he was not himself supplied with them for that purpose.

The rules of the Company prescribe that there shall always be an interval of five minutes between the passage of any two trains past their stations; but it appears, from what happened on this occasion, that this rule cannot be very strictly adhered to, for the guard of the express train, seeing the station-master exhibit his green flag and his two fingers, looked upon it, and described it as the usual mode of indicating that there was another train only two minutes ahead of the express. It cannot be considered safe, in any case, to allow an express train to follow a goods train with an interval of only two minutes, as, in case of the latter breaking down, or any accident happening to it, the former may run into it before there is time to give notice of what has occurred; and I hope, therefore, that if the Company do not adopt the system of working by telegraph which has been recommended by their Lordships for their consideration, they will, at least, take means to secure a longer interval between their trains.

The only other point to which it appears desirable to draw attention, in reference to this accident, is, that the drivers employed by the owners of the colliery are allowed to run upon the line at irregular hours, and I believe that this is far from being the only case in which other drivers than those of the Company are permitted thus to work trains on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. Of all the trains on the line, it would appear to be most desirable that these trains, necessarily perhaps irregular, should be in the charge of men upon whom the Company could depend, and over whom they could exercise every proper control; whereas the contrary is the case, and it is quite possible, under the present system, that drivers of very bad character may be employed on the railway, without its being the fault of the Railway Company. Under these circumstances, it is evident, that, if the Railway Company could make arrangements under which this species of traffic should be conducted by their own servants, it would tend much to the safety of the public, and I am confident they will admit the present to be an appropriate occasion on which to bring this consideration forcibly under their notice, when they have thought it right to give into custody the colliery servants whom they believe to have occasioned, by their disobedience of orders, the present fatal accident.

I have, &c.

H. W. TYLER,

Captain Royal Engineers.

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

*Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway,*

*Secretary's Office, Manchester, January 5, 1855.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th instant, enclosing copy of a report of Captain Tyler, R.E., upon the accident which occurred, on the 13th ult., at the Pemberton Station of this Company's line of railway.

I will submit same to the Directors at their next meeting.

I am, &c.

JOHN DUNSTAN, jun.,

Secretary.

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