

DEAR SIR,

Manchester, July 10, 1841.

IN compliance with your request, I beg to transmit you answers to the questions contained in the report of Sir Frederic Smith to the Board of Trade.

In answer to the first question, respecting the sobriety of Wood at the departure of the train from the terminus, I beg to refer you to the statement of E. Knight, who was fireman to W. Wood at the time of the accident: he states that Wood was sober when he started from Newton race-course, and in this statement he is borne out by B. Derbyshire, engineman of the other race engine, and by others who saw Wood immediately before he started. When the train was ready to start from the race course, I cautioned him and ordered him to proceed slowly until he was fairly upon the train line; and it appears he did proceed with due caution up to the time of the accident. Had he been in a state of intoxication at the time I spoke to him it is not likely that it would have escaped my notice.

In answer to 2 and 3 also, respecting whether Wood assigned any reason to the fireman for leaving the engine, I beg to refer you to the statement of the fireman, from which it appears that Wood, immediately after starting the engine at Newton, requested Knight to take care of it while he went to the first carriage; Knight cautioned him, and said that everything being wet his foot might slip, and that he had better not try, or something to that effect.

This was all that passed between them; Knight did not know why Wood wished to get to the carriages, nor did he ask him the reason. His farther movements were not particularly observed by Knight, who says that had Wood exhibited any signs of intoxication he would have taken care to prevent his attempting to leave the tender. Question 4—William Wood was 29 years of age at the time the accident happened, and had been an engineman on this line from the 26th March, 1837. E. Knight, fireman to W. Wood at the time the accident occurred, is 22 years of age, and has been fireman on this line since 19th July, 1839. Question 5—In the code of rules and regulations given to each of the enginemen and firemen, it is ordered, Rule 1st, line 6th, that "every engineman and every fireman shall stand up and keep a good look out all the time the engine is in motion, except as to such fireman only when he shall be otherwise engaged about his other duties on the engine or tender."

This is, I think, sufficiently to the point, and clearly shows that Wood acted contrary to orders, by leaving the engine and tender at the time and in the manner he did.

As regards reporting irregularities, it is the duty of every servant of the Company to report to the proper authorities misconduct on the part of any other servant, whether that misconduct may be productive of any accident or not.

Any further explanation you may deem necessary I shall be glad to give.

I am, &c.

GEORGE SCOTT.

H. Booth, Esq.
&c. &c.

EMANUEL KNIGHT.

I WAS fireman to William Wood on Friday, June 18, when he met with the accident which occasioned his death; I observed him when we started from the race course, and at that time he appeared to be quite sober. He did his duty and worked his engine up to the time of the accident with his usual care.

Shortly after the train started from Newton, and before the engine had acquired much speed, he requested me to look to the engine while he went to the first carriage; I said he "had much better stop, as every thing being wet he might very easily slip." I did not pay particular attention to his movements after this, nor did I observe him leave the tender; I saw him in the act of returning from the coach to the tender, and I also saw him fall. Had he not appeared to me to be sober, I would have prevented his leaving the tender.

(Signed) EMANUEL KNIGHT.
Witness, GEORGE SCOTT.

No. 8.

NORTH UNION RAILWAY.

North Union.

REPORT of Lieut.-Colonel Sir Frederic Smith on the Accidents of the 7th instant.

MY LORD,

Preston, 18th September, 1841.

YOUR Lordship's instructions of the 13th instant having directed me to report on the two accidents which happened on the North Union Railway on the 7th instant, I have carefully inquired into the circumstances, and I have the honour of laying before your Lordship the following details respecting them.

The first accident was that at the Euxton station, where the road from Chorley to Eccleston and Southport crosses the North Union Railway on a level.

At this point a train of empty coal waggons, belonging to a Mr. Pearson, and drawn by the Asa locomotive engine, came into collision with the Chorley and Southport stage coach, when on its journey to the latter place. The coal waggons were proceeding from Preston to the Springfield colliery at Ince, near Wigan. There were several passengers by the coach, and, according to the return furnished to your Lordship's department by Captain Chapman, the secretary to the North Union Railway, it appears that one of them was killed and six were injured. The return also specifies that the driver and another servant of the coach proprietors were severely hurt, and that Thomas Nickson, the gate-keeper of the Euxton station, had received such injury in his left leg as to render its amputation necessary.

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In the course of my inquiry into this accident, I examined J. Holland, the driver of the Asa engine; Henry Elston, the driver of the stage coach; and Thomas Nickson, the Euxton gate-keeper; and I received from Captain Chapman such information as I required respecting the general working of the line, in reference both to this accident and to that which will form the second portion of my report.

The North Union Railway, as your Lordship is aware, extends from Parkside to, Preston, and is 22 miles in length. It is crossed no less than seven times on the level of the rails, by turnpike or parish roads, and at each of these crossings gates are put up across the road, and placed in charge of a gatesman or keeper, who resides in a lodge erected for him close to the road.

On five of the roads which cross this railway there is considerable traffic, but I am informed that on the other two roads the traffic is comparatively unimportant.

Proceeding southward from Preston, the level crossways occur in the following order, viz.—

1st. The Farrington turnpike road.

2nd. The Leylande parish road. Here two roads unite on the north side of the railway, just after crossing it; so that, in point of fact, this is a double crossing, and four gates are necessary for shutting up the ends of these roads.

3rd. The Turpin Green parish road.

4th. The Euxton parish road. It was here that the collision took place.

5th. The Balshaw Lane.

6th. The Coppal parish road. And,

7th. The Golburn parish road.

The 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 7th roads are those represented to me to be important.

The ordinary traffic on the North Union Railway consists of six passenger and nine coal trains daily, in each direction, besides occasional trains of merchandize.

With this amount of traffic, and with the number of crossings I have specified, it is obvious that the most unremitting attention of the gate-keepers and engine drivers is required, not only for the safety of travellers by the railway, but also of those persons who cross it on the level.

The accident under consideration occurred between 12 and 1 o'clock on the 7th instant, and according to the statements made to me, the coal train consisted of seven empty waggons of a gross weight of about 16 tons.

The Asa, which is a six-wheel engine, weighs about 13½ tons; and the tender, with the quantity of water and fuel it contained at the time of the collision, is supposed to have weighed about five tons.

The train was proceeding tender foremost, and as far as I can learn, at the rate of about 15 miles an hour. On approaching the Euxton station, there was no indication of the line not being clear for the passage of the train, and therefore the engine-man did not slacken its pace, but on reaching the crossing the tender came suddenly into collision with the Southport coach, which was about to cross the rails, and was not perceived by the engine-driver until too late to prevent the damage that ensued.

The gate-keeper, Nickson, had left the gates open and gone into his lodge, and the driver of the coach, seeing the gates open, naturally concluded that there would be no danger in his passing over the railway, and drove down to the crossing for that purpose, not having heard or seen the train.

It is necessary that I should observe that the approach to the Euxton station, from Preston is in a cutting sufficiently deep to hide an engine from the view of a person passing down the road from Chorley, except for a very short distance, where the chimney would be visible; and for the same reason the driver of the engine would be unable to see a coach advancing towards the railway. I therefore acquit both the driver of the engine and the driver of the stage coach of any blame on this occasion. The proximate cause of the accident was unquestionably the neglect of Nickson, the gate-keeper.

In order to have it in my power to form a fair opinion of the degree of culpability of this man, I inquired very closely into the practice of the gate-keepers in general, and of Nickson in particular, as to the closing of the gates; and also into the nature of the instructions issued by the Directors of the Company for the guidance of these servants. I learnt that Nickson had not been regular in keeping his gates closed, and the cause he assigned to me for his neglect was that gentlemen residing in the neighbourhood, and other persons using the crossing, complained of being detained there while the gates were being opened; and it appears that on one occasion some persons actually pulled up the gates by main force. This feeling may in some degree be accounted for by the circumstance that originally the gates stood across the railway, leaving the passage over it free to the traveller on the highway, except at the moment of the passing of a train; but that, in pursuance of a clause in a general Turnpike Act, of 1839, the gates have been removed from their former position and placed at the ends of the roads, and, consequently, some increase of detention is given to the highway traffic.

This local feeling was, I believe, well known to the railway company, and it might have been presumed that it would form an additional motive for issuing the most stringent regulations for the guidance of the gate-keepers; but I was surprised to find that instead of this the only order touching on the duty of the gate-keepers is an obsolete one referring to the opening of the gates when in their original position across the railway. It is as follows:—

“Gatemen and policemen are to be constantly on the look out, and to open the proper gate where the engines are to pass through.”

It is evident that this order could only tend to perplex the gate-keepers; and looking at the importance of the duty assigned to these men, I think the Company will be right to relieve themselves forthwith of the heavy responsibility which attaches to them in allowing these

servants to remain without the most clear instructions for their guidance on such a point as this.

An opinion seems to prevail in the management of this Company that so many points of duty which may be required from their servants cannot be foreseen, and must therefore be left to their judgment and prudence, that it is inadvisable to enter into detail in the code of instructions, lest, by omitting the mention of any particular duty, an opening should be given to the servants to plead such omission as an excuse for any neglect of which they might be guilty.

I admit that great discretion is required in establishing rules for the guidance of railway servants, and that in many cases it is better to fix general principles than attempt very minute details; but this may be carried too far, and in regard to the duty under consideration I can hardly conceive any case where definition could be more easy, more important, or more urgently called for, than in laying down the rules for the change in the duties of the gate-keepers consequent on the alteration in the position of the gates.

I found that it was not in consequence of any disregard of proper precautions on the part of the engine driver that the coal train was running tender foremost, but from the impossibility of his making any better arrangement, as there is no "turn-table" at the colliery. I entertain, as your Lordship will perceive by some of my former reports, a very strong opinion of the danger of allowing trains to proceed with the tender foremost, except at a slow velocity and on a very straight line, and it should not even then be permitted when it can be avoided.

Amongst the reasons against this practice are the following: that it is much less safe to use the break for the purpose of stopping the train when the tender is foremost; that the driver cannot keep so good a look out; and that the tender is more likely to run off the rails when propelled than when drawn by the engine. The tender of the *Asa* had, as we have seen, 30 tons to resist when its break was applied.

I have to observe that the agent of the Spring Field colliery informs me that, in consequence of the accident of the 7th instant, the proprietors have ordered turn-tables to be fixed on their premises, to prevent the necessity of working the trains, in any case, with the tender foremost.

I think it very desirable that the North Union Railway Company, who by their Act of Parliament have the power of regulating the working of their line by colliery trains, should issue an order prohibiting the tenders being propelled, except in cases of emergency; and an order should also be given for the steam whistle being used when any train approaches a level crossing of a turnpike or parish road.

I must not omit to mention that the Euxton gate-keeper, suddenly hearing the engine and the coach approaching, both at the same time, ran to the gates in hopes of being able to close them, but he was too late, and being thrown down received the injuries which required his leg to be amputated, as I have already stated. Had not this poor man been thus so severely punished, his neglect to keep the gates shut would have subjected him to dismissal and prosecution, and it would be well that the Directors should publish to their servants the sense they entertain of this man's misconduct.

I have much satisfaction in stating that I have been informed that the Directors of the North Union Railway, fully sensible of the risk incurred at their level crossings, as well by the passengers on the railway as by travellers passing over it, have expressed serious intentions of building bridges over the railway at the five most important crossings, and have ordered estimates to be prepared forthwith for these works. I trust that no motives of economy will induce them, by weighing the cost against the advantages, to abandon the idea of an improvement which would tend so essentially to the public safety, and I would earnestly recommend that Government and the Parliament should give every facility that the Company may require to carry into effect so desirable an arrangement.

The second accident, on the 7th instant, was caused by the collision of two passenger trains at the Farrington station, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Preston terminus, to which both trains were proceeding.

I examined the guards and drivers of both trains, and the gate-keepers at the Farrington and Leyland stations, and elicited from them the following details.

The first train, which by way of distinction I shall call the *heavy train*, consisted of eight railway carriages, a truck, on which there was a private carriage, and a horse-box. In the second, which was the mail train, there were only four or five railway carriages and a post office carriage.

The heavy train left Parkside at 5 h. 53 m. P.M., and was liable to be stopped at the seven under-mentioned stations, and actually did stop at six of them.

I shall place these stations in the order in which they occur, beginning at Parkside, viz., Golburn, Wigan, Standish, Coppul, Euxton, Leyland, and Farrington.

I find, by reference to the time book at Parkside, that the mail train was despatched from thence at 6 h. 23 m. P.M., and had only to stop at the Wigan and Euxton stations. Thus it appears that the second train did not start till 30 minutes after the first, an interval amply sufficient, under proper management, to prevent a collision in a journey of only 22 miles, supposing both trains to be similarly circumstanced; but as the leading and heavier train stopped at four stations, which were passed by the mail train without stopping, and as each stoppage would, by the slackening of speed and the actual detention at the stations, be equivalent to a loss of from three to four minutes, the effect would be the same as if the trains had started with an interval of only 14 or 15 minutes. Then, again, the weight of the leading train was nearly double that of the mail, and this, on a line having gradients of one in a hundred, as is the case on the North Union, could not fail to reduce very considerably the

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relative velocity of the heavier train, and as the rails were wet, the difference would be still more increased.

From all these circumstances, which must have been known to the driver of the mail train, he ought to have performed his journey with great caution.

There is reason to believe that the heavy train passed the Leylande station only a very few minutes before the mail. If this were the case, the keeper of that station should have given notice of it to the driver of the latter, by exhibiting the signal of caution; but this was not done, and the station keeper states that the heavy train went by at least 10 minutes before the mail. Had this been the fact, no blame could have been imputable to this person; but the station-man at Farrington asserts that the heavy train had only just pulled up when the mail came in sight, which was at about the distance of half a mile; and as the two stations are only two miles apart, the time of transit between them could not have occupied four minutes, as the velocity of the mail was probably about 30 miles an hour. Here then is some glaring error, and as it is unlikely that the heavy train had been more than two or three minutes at Farrington, and the persons who were there are of this opinion, it is evident that the station-man at Leylande has given erroneous testimony.

The article in the North Union code which is intended to apply to the station or gatesman, in respect to the interval between trains, is unsatisfactory. It is to the following effect:—

“If a train approaches when a previous train has only passed a few minutes before, the gatesman must signify it by holding or hanging the hand lamp conspicuously two feet under the gate lamp.” And it goes on to say that if the previous train has passed only two minutes, the next train should be stopped. Now what I object to is, in the first place, the indefinite nature of the former part of this order, for the word “few” may be differently understood by every gate-keeper on the line; and, in the second place, an interval of two minutes is far too little between trains, as it leaves no margin for safety in the event of an accident happening to the leading train.

On some of the best managed railways no train is allowed to pass a station within five minutes of another, and the signal of caution is kept up at every station, until a train has passed or quitted it upwards of 10 minutes.

These rules are in my opinion indispensable for the public safety, and I trust that the managers of the North Union will no longer remain insensible to their great importance.

In almost all the best regulated lines, also, the station-men are required to note the time of arrival and departure of the trains, and some Companies even require that the times of the passing of those trains which do not stop should also be noted. Had such a regulation existed on the North Union, I believe the collision at Farrington would not have taken place, and I therefore hope it will be adopted, as I consider it very essential.

After the accident of last year at the Nine Elms, which arose much from similar causes to those which produced the Farrington collision, I proposed this rule, which was forthwith included in the code of the South-western Railway, and to it I attribute in a great degree the punctuality and increased safety which immediately prevailed on that line.

Article XXVI. of the North Union code prescribes that a red light should be shown on the last carriage of every train, and the guard is held responsible for the due observance of this order, notwithstanding which neither of the trains in question had lights on the 7th instant. It is true that up to the day preceding this accident the heavy train had reached Preston by daylight; and when it started from Parkside on the 7th there was no reason to expect a different result, in which case a tail lamp would have been unnecessary, so far as the safety of the passengers was concerned; but this train did not on that evening reach Farrington, which is two and a half miles short of Preston, till it was dark, and while standing there it was run into by the mail train, and seven of the passengers and one of the servants of the Company were injured.

The absence of the lamp from the hinder carriage of the heavy train was one cause of the accident, for it would have given warning to the driver of the mail at a much greater distance than the red lamp of the station which was exhibited to him.

The mail had neither a tail lamp nor any other light attached to it, and as it was a matter of certainty that this train could not finish its journey before dark, its guard was even more reprehensible than the guard of the heavy train, though both were highly to blame.

It appears that there is no store of tail lamps at Parkside for the North Union, and therefore the trains can only be provided with them at Preston, which renders it a very important part of the duty of the station-master there to see that no train that can require one of these lamps, either for the journey out or home, leaves Preston without it.

The servants of the Company who were present when the collision took place, admit that the station-man turned on the red light as soon as the mail train was seen approaching, (which was at the distance of about half a mile,) and that he ran towards it holding up a hand lamp; and the station-man asserts, that he had proceeded a hundred yards from the station before he met the train. If these statements be true, the driver of the mail acted in a most reckless manner, but both he and his fireman declare that they had been keeping a good look out, and that it was owing to the foggy state of the atmosphere that they did not perceive the station lamps until too late to prevent the collision.

The driver of the heavy train, on perceiving the mail, put his train in motion, but sufficient velocity was not obtained in time to avert the accident. The engine, however, broke away with five carriages from the rest of the train, but without either the driver or fireman. The former states that he was thrown off by the concussion, and the latter that he had gone to see that the station lamp was properly exhibited; the character of both individuals, I understand, is such, as to justify a belief in these statements. Fortunately the engine and carriages were

stopped at Preston by one of the servants of the Company, who deserves great credit for the presence of mind and courage he displayed.

It is incumbent on me to state that the driver of the heavy train mentioned his having found, before reaching Wigan, that owing to the very slippery state of the rails, and the weight of the train, he would be unable to keep his time on the journey without additional power, and that he therefore applied for the bank engine, which is usually kept at Wigan, in readiness to assist heavy trains, but was told that it was disabled.

I believe that the stock of the North Union Company, if duly applied, is sufficient to ensure this extra power whenever required, and it behoves the managers of the line to inquire into the conduct of those who ought to provide an efficient spare engine at the Wigan station: This duty was the more imperative on the 7th instant, when, owing to the unfavourable state of the weather throughout the day, it was highly probable that extra power would become necessary.

After carefully considering the case of the collision at Farrington, in all its bearings, I am of opinion that the engine-man of the mail train must have driven at a rate of speed, which, under the circumstances alluded to, and the foggy state of the weather, was unjustifiable; and if not dismissed, he should at least be subject to some punishment. The fireman was a mere lad, who, I think, ought, until more experienced, to be employed only on merchandize or ballast trains. The station-man at Leylande neglected his duty, and should be severely reprimanded; and I very much question the propriety of either of the guards being retained in the service of the Company.

I feel it to be my duty to remark, that the signal lamps, as well as the carriage and hand lamps, on the North Union Railway, are of a very imperfect description; and I recommend that the attention of the Directors be called to the necessity of a revision of their code of signals.

It will be obvious to your Lordship, from the details which I have had the honour of laying before you of the accidents under consideration, that both are attributable either to an ignorance on the part of some of the railway servants, as to the nature of their duties, or to a grossly culpable disregard of them; and it is equally evident that neither of these sources of danger to the traveller could have been suffered to exist under a superintendence of habitual vigilance.

I conceive I have acted in the spirit of your Lordship's instructions, and certainly in accordance with my own feeling, in not carrying my inquiries into the more minute arrangements of the Company, and in confining myself to the circumstances connected with the accidents which I have been directed to investigate.

I have, &c.,

FREDERIC SMITH, Lt.-Col. R. E.,
Inspector-General of Railways.

The Earl of Ripon,
&c. &c. &c.

LETTER sent to the North Union Railway Company, with Copy of Sir Frederic Smith's Report on the two Accidents on the 7th September.

SIR,

Board of Trade, 25th September, 1841.

I AM directed by the Lords, &c., to inclose a copy of Sir F. Smith's Report on the two accidents which recently occurred on the North Union Railway, and to request that you will submit the same to the Directors of the North Union Railway Company, and call their especial attention to the suggestions therein contained.

Their Lordships are desirous of impressing on the Directors the following recommendations which appear essential for the public safety.

1. That positive instructions should be issued to the gatekeepers at all the level crossings on the line to keep the gates constantly shut across the roads, unless when opened by the gatekeeper to allow carriages, &c., to cross the railway, in conformity with the Act 2 and 3 Vict. c. 45. Their Lordships direct me to point out that under this Act, and the Act 3 and 4 Vict. c. 97, for regulating Railways, the Company have ample powers for enforcing this regulation both on their own servants and on the public.

2. That a regulation should be issued making it imperative on engine drivers to sound the whistle on approaching a crossing.

3. That a regulation should be issued prohibiting the practice of running tender foremost unless in cases of emergency.

4. That the regulations for preserving a proper interval between trains, should be carefully reconsidered.

5. That signal, carriage, and hand lamps, of the best construction, should be provided.

6. That no train which may, by possibility, not finish its journey before dark, should be allowed to start without proper tail lamps.

Their Lordships, in conclusion, direct me to state that they consider it very desirable that bridges should be erected at the crossings where the traffic is considerable, and especially at the Euxton crossing, where the depth of the cutting prevents the approach of an engine from being seen, and they trust that the arrangements alluded to in Sir F. Smith's report for that purpose will be carried into effect.

To the Secretary of the North Union
Railway Company.

I am, &c.,
S. LAING.

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IN reply to Letter from this Office of the 25th October, with copy of Sir Frederic Smith's Report on the two Accidents on the Line.

SIR,

North Union Railway, Preston, October 29, 1841.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th September, inclosing a copy of Lieut.-Col. Sir Frederic Smith's Report on the two accidents which have recently occurred on this railway.

These communications have received the most anxious attention of the Directors, and I am now instructed to lay before the Board of Trade several new regulations, as well as additions to the old ones, either suggested by longer experience, or rendered necessary by a change of circumstances. Other measures are also in contemplation, having for their object the greater safety of the public, but being of a mechanical nature they will require some little time to mature and to bring into operation.

The Directors would not have felt themselves called upon to notice various topics introduced into Sir Frederic Smith's Report, did they not apprehend that their silence might be taken as an admission of the justness of his remarks and conclusions.

Whilst the Directors do not claim for those in their employ that entire freedom from infirmities and imperfections which seems to be looked for, in a larger degree, in this than in any other class of servants, they believe them in the main to be sober, active, and intelligent; the discipline of the line they contend is essentially strict, without being vexatious or oppressive, its staff and general equipment ample and consistent with its rank amongst other railways; and allowing for the difference of circumstances, equal to those of the "best regulated lines" in the kingdom.

With respect to the insufficiency of certain of the rules, particularly that part of the rule (originally numbered 30) animadverted upon in the report, though they admit the charge, they call upon Sir Frederic Smith to share the blame, if any, with them, since the law in question must necessarily have passed under his supervision before it was permanently retained in the Company's code.

The Directors, however, are disposed to complain of the tone of disparagement which runs through the whole report, but ungracious and unmerited as they conceive it to be, they beg to assure the Board of Trade that no feelings to which it may be supposed to have given rise shall ever betray them into the slightest relaxation of duty, though at the same time they may be allowed to observe that a juster appreciation of their management would only have operated as an additional stimulus to their exertions, not merely to go along with, but to anticipate the requirements of the Board of Trade.

The sweeping censures towards the conclusion of the report upon the discipline and management of the line, whether levelled at the Directors or the executive, are, they conceive, uncalled for and unjust; and if regularity of despatch, and freedom from accidents, may be received as evidence, these strictures are singularly inapplicable to the North Union Railway, inasmuch as since its opening, now three years ago, no casualty has befallen a single individual (up to the late occasion) of nearly a million of passengers who have been carried upon it, and the precision with which the post office business has been performed has been such as to call forth the approbation of the authorities of that department. Waiting the approval of the Board of Trade to the amended code of rules for the Company's servants, and to the nine new bye-laws enclosed,

G. R. Porter, Esq.,
 &c. &c. &c.

I am, &c.,
 JAMES CHAPMAN, Sec.

LETTER sent to the North Union Railway Company, in reply to their Letter of the 29th October, relative to Sir F. Smith's Report on the two Accidents, &c.

SIR,

Board of Trade, 13th November, 1841.

WITH reference to your letter of the 29th October, conveying certain observations of the Directors of the North Union Railway, on Sir F. Smith's report on the two accidents which recently occurred on that line, I am directed, &c., to observe that it was far from being the intention of their Lordships to cast any stigma upon the Board of Directors, or upon any individual, or to express any doubt of the anxiety of all parties connected with the management to protect the public safety. At the same time, however, the fact, which does not appear to be contradicted, that two accidents occurred in the course of the same day, by which one person lost his life, and nineteen sustained personal injury, and that both these accidents arose, not from causes beyond the control of the Company, but from admitted defects in the regulations, and irregularities on the part of servants, appears to their Lordships fully to bear out the statement of their Inspector-General that defects existed in the discipline and management of the line.

Without professing to say to whom those defects were attributable, or that they were the result of wilful and culpable neglect, their Lordships thought it their duty to lay the report of their Inspector-General, which had met with their approval, before the Directors, in the hope, which they are glad to find has been realised, that it would call the attention of the Directors to the necessity of introducing such reforms as appeared calculated to diminish the chances of a recurrence of accidents.

Their Lordships have only further to observe, with reference to the remark that the Inspector-General must share the blame of the defective rule animadverted upon in the report, since it must necessarily have passed under his supervision before it was permanently retained in the Company's code, that the only regulations which in terms of the Act for regulating railways require their sanction, and for which they are responsible, are, "Bye-laws, rules, and regulations which inflict penalties for their enforcement on *persons other than servants of the Company.*"

With regard to regulations for the management of the line, and government of servants, their Lordships do not interfere; unless, as in the present instance, the regulations may be called in question by the occurrence of an accident, or specially submitted for their approval; and even in those instances their Lordships confine themselves to communicating to the Directors such suggestions and recommendations as they may be advised by the Inspector-General are calculated to improve the code, and to promote the public safety.

To the Secretary of the North Union
Railway Company.

I am, &c.,
S. LAING.

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No. 9.

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.

No. 9.
Great Western.

REPORT of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Frederic Smith on the Accident on the 7th instant.

MY LORD, Railway Department, Board of Trade, 10th September, 1841.

I HAVE the honour to report that, pursuant to your Lordship's instructions, I have this day proceeded to Wootton Bassett, accompanied by Mr. Saunders, the secretary and general superintendent, and Mr. Gooch, the manager of the locomotive department of the Great Western Railway, and in the presence of those gentlemen I inquired into the accident that occurred on that line to the night mail train of the 7th instant, which, in its route from Bridgewater to Paddington, was thrown off the rails of the embankment of the Wootton Bassett incline plane, near the eighty-sixth mile from London.

By this accident, which was brought under your Lordship's notice by Mr. Saunders' letter of the 8th instant, I regret to say that one passenger was very seriously and three or four others less severely injured, and two servants of the Company slightly hurt.

It appears that the train in question was drawn by two engines, the *Rising Star* and the *Tiger*, and consisted of two second class *close* carriages and one first class carriage, the latter being at the hinder end.

The train which preceded the mail train up the incline was the 6½ P.M. from Bristol, and it passed safely along the embankment at half-past 8 o'clock. Mr. Gooch, who was in that train, informed me that he was not sensible of any extraordinary motion, such as would be produced by an important depression of a part of the rails.

The mail train, however, commenced the ascent of the plane at about 2 o'clock A.M., and on its reaching a spot on the embankment, near the eighty-sixth mile post, the *Tiger*, which was the second engine, suddenly went off the rails, and was followed by the two leading carriages, but the fore-wheels only of the first class carriage were found to have quitted the rails.

The leading engine, the *Rising Star*, and its tender, broke away from the rest of the train, and continued on the rails, but the other engine and the carriages came into collision with each other, by which not only were the persons I have alluded to wounded, but the carriages much damaged.

The front of the leading carriage was broken in by coming into contact with the timbers of the *Tiger's* tender; and the front part of the second carriage, as well as the hinder part of the first, were equally damaged. The passengers who sustained injury were in the leading carriage of the train.

I was informed that the *Tiger* and the carriages ran on nearly a hundred yards from the point where the former left the rails, breaking the transoms which connect the north and south lines of the longitudinal timbers.

It was a piece of great good fortune that they passed between these lines, for had they taken the opposite direction they would in all probability have gone over the embankment.

As soon as the carriages were stopped, and the passengers had received the attention they required, the drivers and conductors of the trains examined the ground, and discovered that there had been a slight slip of the embankment, and that some of the longitudinal timbers of the north line had sunk about three or four inches below the level of those on the opposite line, at the spot where the engine quitted the rails.

Whether the subsidence of the embankment, and the consequent depression of the timbers, had taken place *before* the train came upon them, or whether the weight of the two engines and their tenders passing over a part of the embankment, actually, or on the point of being in motion, caused the slip, it is impossible to determine; but Mr. Collins, the superintendent of the earthwork on this part of the railway, states that in walking along the line at about 6 o'clock in the evening, he observed symptoms of subsidence at the spot where the slip took place, but that as there was no appearance of the foot of the slope having bulged, he did not think the matter sufficiently urgent to require him to give orders for the slope at this spot being particularly watched during the night.

I am disposed to think that the subsidence continued very gradually from that time to the passing of the train at half-past 8, and that the weight then increased and accelerated it; but