Accidents appertaining to the Rolling Stock and Road.

Accidents due to facing points.

if the Company have no objection to urge against the points being so weighted, I recommend that they be altered to stand open for the sidings both on the up and down lines. In making this recommendation I desire to add my opinion, that nothing would justify the Company to trust alone to the action of these points for the safe working of trains through them. The danger of facing points is universally admitted, and I believe on every well-regulated line it is an established rule that such points are invariably to be held while a train is passing through them; and any Company that should neglect to enforce such a rule would incur a serious responsibility in the event of an accident occurring from the points not acting. When facing points are weighted to keep a train from running into an obstruction an additional element of safety is thereby introduced.

I have, &c.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

GEO. WYNNE,
Lieut.-Colonel, Royal Engineers.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE AND LONDON AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAYS.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, December 17, 1856.

SIR,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 15th instant, 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 9th instant at Manchester, near the Victoria Station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire, and London and North Western Railways.

The east end of the Victoria Station is under the control of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, and is used by that Company for their traffic to the north and east; but the west end is under the management of the London and North Western Company, and accommodates the traffic in that direction of both these and the Cheshire Junction Railway Companies.

Altogether, 108 trains pass in and out of the west end of this station every day. To accommodate this vast traffic, there are but two main lines, leading into three platform lines, which are used, according to necessity, for arrival or departure; and into another—a standing line for carriages. As will presently appear, all the traffic both ways passes over a portion of, or across, what ought to be the departure line.

There are three sets of points only, to which it will be necessary to refer in the present report, namely, the "*top points*," leading from the arrival or up, to the departure or down line; the "*buffer points*," leading to the southernmost platform line, on which there is a stationary buffer; and the "*middle points*," leading to the middle line, which is, in fact, the third line from the south, but which is so called to distinguish it from the "*back line*" to the north of it, which is used as a standing line for carriages. A line between the *middle line* and the *buffer line* is called the "*departure line*."

The *top points* are about 140 yards to the west of the nearest platform on the *departure line*; and the *buffer points* and *middle points* are, respectively, 70 yards and 110 yards to the east of the *top points*.

The following is the mode in which the traffic is ordinarily worked into the station:—

The trains approach at such speed as the judgment of the drivers may point out, according to circumstances; and, while they are in motion, the engine is uncoupled from the train about 100 yards to the west of the *top points* (or more or less according to the state of the atmosphere), and is brought to a stand on the up line at the same time that the detached train is turned across to the down line, or from thence into the *buffer line* or *middle line*, according to the state of the station. In order to save time in bringing out carriages, so as to make room for an incoming train, or for other purposes, the engine is sometimes turned across, in front of its own train, from the up line towards the *buffer line*, instead of being at once brought to a stand on the up line.

The engine is uncoupled from the train on the level, but the train afterwards runs down a gradient of 1 in 100, which commences about 50 yards to the west of the top points, into the station.

The London and North Western trains have always a guard in front of them as they approach the station, and, in some cases, with heavy trains, a guard in the rear also; the Lancashire and Yorkshire trains come in with a guard behind only, unless they are heavy enough to require two, in which case they have also one in front; and the Cheshire Junction trains, which, as before stated, also run into this station, adopt a similar arrangement.

On the 9th instant, a Lancashire and Yorkshire train arrived from Blackburn punctually at 9.57 a.m.; and, as it approached the station, the engine was uncoupled, while in motion, at the usual place. It first ran along the up line, and was then, in accordance with a previous arrangement entered into between the pointsman and the driver, and sanctioned by the station master, turned through the *buffer points*, so as to cross in front of its own train to the *buffer or south line*; while the train, consisting of seven carriages, including two break carriages, one at each end, followed it, to be turned through the *middle points*, and so on to the *middle line*. It was the duty of the same pointsman to work both these pairs of points, which, as has been previously explained, are 40 yards apart; and he would no doubt have done so, as usual, but for the circumstance that the carriages followed very closely after the engine, and that thus he had not time, after turning the engine through the *buffer points*, to run to the *middle points*, and turn the carriages in the opposite direction.

The carriages, therefore, ran down the *departure line* instead of the *middle line*, which had been prepared for them, and came into collision with an engine and carriages which were standing there, at a speed of five or six miles an hour, bruising one gentleman in the face, knocking out the tooth of another, and crushing the hats of several other passengers.

It would appear from the evidence that the carriages descended the incline with greater speed than usual after having been detached from the engine, but that they might even then have been stopped if they had been turned into their proper line. It is not clear whether this speed is attributable to the driver's having run in too fast, considering the weight of his train and the state of the rails, or to the neglect of the guard in not applying his break at the proper time. It seems that the engine had barely time to get out of the way of the carriages while crossing in front of them, though the guard says that he screwed his break tightly on as soon as the engine was uncoupled, and the driver and fireman state that they did not exceed the usual speed in running in. The foreman porter at the station, seeing what was about to occur, jumped up on the train and applied the front break, but not in time to be of much service.

The acting guard was a porter from Blackburn, who had done duty in that capacity thirty or forty times before, and had conducted trains seven times previously into the Victoria Station. The regular guard of the Blackburn train was absent on account of sickness. It is undoubtedly desirable that there should be a guard at the rear of every train running on the line, but it is also necessary to have a guard in front when entering this station in the manner above described, and particularly in so thick an atmosphere as that of Manchester; for, independently of the difficulty of determining from the last of seven carriages the amount of break power necessary to pull up the train at a given point, the guard is often unable to see anything at such a distance on account of the fog.

The collision was the result of a little extra speed given by the driver to, or permitted by the guard on, an arriving train, and was a very likely accident to occur under the system adopted for working the trains into the station. The officers and servants of the Company are in a great measure compelled to the adoption of that system, in consequence of the insufficiency of accommodation, and the necessities that exist with this heavy traffic for crossing the engines and trains in different directions, for making the most of time in getting the trains in and out again, and for keeping the platform lines clear as much as possible for arrival and departure.

There is sufficient difficulty in doing this safely when the trains are punctual; but when they are not so (a not unfrequent occurrence) then the arrangements require to be continually altered according to the exigencies of each particular occasion. An improvement, though comparatively a slight one, might be made, by bringing the levers of the points together, and working them from stages, instead of employing the pointsmen to dart about, between, and across the engines and carriages, in some cases at no little risk to their lives. But what is principally required is the permanent enlargement of the station, and the establishment of separate arrival and departure platforms; and it behoves the Companies interested to take immediate measures for the prosecution of this object. The expense would, no doubt, be considerable; but the step must be taken, sooner or later, to enable the increasing traffic to be carried on; and the shorter the delay, the less will be the risk arising from the present unsatisfactory state of the station.

I am, &c.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

H. W. TYLER,
Captain, Royal Engineers.

LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, March 6, 1856.

SIR,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 27th ultimo, 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 18th ultimo, at the Huddersfield Station of the London and North-Western Railway.

There is a passenger platform on the "up" side only of this station, the other side being devoted to the goods' traffic; and all the down trains have to cross the up line on their arrival, in order to get to the siding which is alongside of the platform