

PRESTON AND WYRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade,
(Railway Department),
Whitehall, 24th September 1872.

SIR, I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 28th ultimo, the result of my inquiry into the collision which occurred on the 21st ultimo at Poulton junction on the Preston and Wyre Railway, from a Midland Company's excursion train, in charge of Lancashire and Yorkshire Company's servants, running into a Lancashire and Yorkshire Company's passenger train standing at the station.

Forty-nine passengers in the latter train were more or less injured, the two worst injuries consisting of fractured ankles. In the excursion train one passenger was shaken.

At Poulton junction the lines from Blackpool and Fleetwood unite into the line to Preston. The junction is provided with a raised signal-cabin, in which the points and signal levers are collected and interlocked. There is a connecting curve between the Blackpool and Fleetwood lines, the points of which curve are about 220 yards from the signal-cabin, from which they are not worked or controlled in any way; but are attended to by a pointsman stationed at about the centre of the curve, where the point levers are brought together.

For trains approaching from Blackpool there is a junction distant-signal 720 yards from the junction, visible for a long distance, and a junction home-signal, of which there is also a good view. The line is level for half a mile on the Blackpool side of the distant-signal, next falls towards the junction at 1 in 500 for 500 yards, and then rises at 1 in 200 up to the junction, just beyond which is Poulton station.

On the evening in question, the 6.35 p.m. train from Blackpool for Preston, consisting of 10 vehicles, reached Poulton (three miles from Blackpool) at 6.45. After doing its work, it drew ahead to allow the Fleetwood portion to enter the station, and the engine of the latter to run forward and back into a siding, after which the Blackpool portion would set back and the whole train be united to proceed to Preston. The Fleetwood portion, consisting of four vehicles, arrived at 6.48. Its engine was detached, and went into a siding, and the Blackpool portion had set back and had just been coupled to the Fleetwood portion when an excursion train from Blackpool ran into it, at a speed variously estimated at from 15 to 5 miles an hour. The collision occurred at about 6.52. The driver of the passenger train, who was looking round for a signal to start, saw the excursion train coming in time to put on steam and get his carriages in motion. The passengers were principally hurt in jumping out just as the collision occurred. But little damage was done to the passenger train; the break gear of the last van was disarranged, and a second-class carriage next but one to the van slightly injured.

The excursion train was one from Ilkley to Blackpool and back. From Ilkley to Colne it had been in charge of the Midland Company's servants, and consisted, up to Colne, of engine and tender, break-van, 25 coaches, and another van. At Colne the train came into charge of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Company, and there was attached in front a set of two carriages and a van coupled with continuous breaks. The engine now was a powerful six-wheel coupled goods engine and four-wheeled tender, reported by the driver (Kay) to be in good order. Kay had been an extra driver 2½ years, and a fireman 2½ years previously, and had been selected for the trip as being a steady careful man. His fireman had been acting as extra fireman for about 11 months, and in the Accrington shops for two years previously.

The guard in charge of the train, Smith, had been a passenger guard for six months, and a goods guard for 10 years. The other guard, Bracewell, was a goods guard of 17 years service.

There were from 800 to 1,000 people in the train. Everything went right upon the journey to Blackpool. According to the excursion time-table the train should have left Blackpool at 6.20 on its return journey; but in consequence of a message from Manchester, its departure was postponed till 6.40, at which time it started punctually, consisting of engine, tender, break-van, 28 vehicles, and another break-van, the latter and the two vehicles in front of it being now those coupled with continuous breaks, making in all 4 out of 30 vehicles provided with break-power.

The driver states that he knew before starting that the regular passenger train had preceded his train by five minutes, and that it had to take on the Fleetwood portion at Poulton, and that he expected in consequence to find the Poulton signals against him; but that on coming in sight of the distant-signal, about a mile from it, he thought it was off, put on his injector, and did not look at the signals again till he was passing the distant-signal, when he saw that the home-signal was at danger; that his speed was at this time 18 miles an hour, steam having been shut off, and his tender breaks applied when he came in sight of the distant-signal; that he whistled for the guards breaks, and reversed his engine on seeing the home-signal at danger, and again gave the break whistle a short distance further on; that he got steam against his engine about a quarter of a mile from the junction, and struck the passenger train at a speed of from 8 to 10 miles an hour.

The fireman, although giving generally much the same evidence as the driver, contradicts him as to the point at which he applied his break, viz., not till close to the distant-signal; and also as to where contrary steam was applied, as being close to the junction, instead of a quarter of a mile from it.

I am sorry to say that I cannot credit the evidence of the driver, nor to a certain extent that of the fireman, but believe that the engine passed the distant-signal showing danger at a speed of at least 20 miles an hour, and that the driver shut off steam, but did not reverse or apply contrary steam till he was close to the signal-cabin.

The rear guard seeing the distant-signal at danger on approaching it, applied his break, first gently, and then, on seeing the home-signal also at danger, got it on hard. He estimated the speed at the distant-signal as 20 miles an hour, and on collision 4 miles.

The front guard, Bracewell, also saw the distant-signal at danger before reaching it, and in consequence applied his break. He estimated the speed at the distant-signal at not less than 25 miles an hour. Hearing the engine beating, he looked out to see what the driver was doing, and noticed that he looked up from the injector a few yards past the signal, and then shut off steam and had his break applied, but did not reverse till close to the cabin. On nearing the cabin, and seeing the signalman showing a red flag, he (Bracewell) shouted and waved to him to get the passenger train ahead. Bracewell estimates the speed on collision at from 6 to 10 miles an hour. He and the fireman jumped off before the collision, and were neither of them hurt.

The signalman at Poulton junction watched the excursion train pass the distant-signal, which was at danger; thinking the speed too fast, he showed the driver a red flag, at the same time shouting to the station-master to get the passenger train ahead. On seeing the red flag, the driver, who then had steam off, whistled, and continued looking up at the signalman with his hand on the regulator till

he was opposite the cabin, when he reversed and gave the break whistle. The signalman estimates the speed, as the engine passed the cabin, at 12 miles an hour. He believes that the rear breaks were on.

The station-master, who was on the platform, on hearing the signalman's shout, tried to get the driver of the passenger train to move ahead, which he had just commenced to do when the collision occurred. He saw the driver of the excursion train reverse, and put on contrary steam just by the signal cabin.

This collision was the result of gross negligence on the part of the driver of the excursion train in approaching a junction (where he knew that, in all probability, there would be a train on the line) in defiance of signals, and at such a speed as made it impossible for him to stop, notwithstanding the application of the guards breaks long before he had whistled for them. There is no evidence to show that he was the worse for liquor; and as he was allowed, after the collision, to take the train on to its destination, it is probable that he was sober.

There seems to have been a great want of judgment in altering the departure of this train, which was to

run through to Preston without stopping, so that it followed with only a margin of five minutes—instead of preceding by 10 minutes—the passenger train, which had to stop at Poulton and Kirkham.

As usual with these monster excursion trains, there was a great want of break-power; had it been supplied with the proportion ordinarily available in Lancashire and Yorkshire trains, it is very probable that the guards, spite of the driver's recklessness, might have pulled up the train in time to have saved the collision. Insufficient as the amount of break-power was between Colne and Blackpool, viz., in the proportion of 4 break carriages to 30 vehicles, it was still worse on the heavy gradients between Colne and Ilkley, where the Midland Company had supplied only 2 break carriages to 27 vehicles.

I have, &c.,
C. S. HUTCHINSON.

The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.

RHYMNEY RAILWAY.

SIR,
Newport, 16th October 1872.
In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 4th inst., 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 ulto., at the north side of Pengam station on the Rhymney Railway.

A mineral train from Cardiff ran into a passenger train from Rhymney on the single line. There were three passengers in the train, but only one of them was hurt.

The engine-driver of the passenger train had two ribs broken, and the guard of the passenger train was shaken.

On the day in question, a mineral train which is due to leave Cardiff at 5.25 a.m., did not start till 6.12 a.m., as the train was not ready. It consisted of a tank-engine, which was in front of the train, 34 loaded waggons, eighteen empty waggons, two break-vans, with two guards and two breaksmen, and two engines and tenders at the tail of the train.

As this train approached Pengam station, the distant-signal was at "all right," and all three engine-drivers appear to have made up their minds to run through the station to Bargoed.

There is a loop which forms a double line at Pengam. The loop extends for 370 yards to the south of the station and for 220 yards to the north of the station. The station-signals are on the platform. The distant-signal at the south side is about 420 yards, and the distant-signal at the north side is about 560 yards from the station-signal. These signals are well placed, and can be distinctly seen by engine-drivers approaching the station.

The railway rises from Cardiff towards Rhymney. The gradient is 104 at the south side of Pengam station, and 1 in 200 at the station and at the north side of the station.

The station-signals for the up and down lines of rails were at "danger," but both distant-signals were at "all right."

The mineral train passed Pengam station about 7.49 a.m. The passenger train from Rhymney was due at 7.48 a.m.

The station-master at Pengam was just returning from examining the points of the loop line, at the north side of the station, when he observed that the mineral train was running through the station, although the station-signal was at "danger." He held up his hands to stop the mineral train. On his

doing so, all three engine-drivers appear to have shut off steam. The two at the tail of the mineral train appear to have reversed their engines at once, but the engine-driver who was in front of the train does not appear to have done so, until after he had passed the points at the north end of the loop. The mineral train separated into two parts. The two engines at the tail of the train, with the two break-vans and ten waggons, remained on the loop line, and the rest of the train ran forward and met the passenger train at the distant-signal at the north side of the station, where the railway is a single line.

The leading engine of the mineral train and the engine of the passenger train were damaged. Seven empty waggons of the mineral train were thrown off the line. Three of them were considerably damaged. The carriages of the passenger train were all more or less damaged. The second carriage from the engine was lifted up from the rail.

The passenger train left Rhymney at its proper time, 7.20 a.m. It consisted of a tender in front, an engine, a guard's break-van with a guard, a first, a second, and a composite carriage, coupled together in the order in which they are given. The train was running very nearly to its proper time. As the engine-driver was approaching Pengam station the distant-signal was at "all right." He could not see the station-signal until he rounded the curve, about 150 yards before he reached the distant-signal.

He observed the station-signal to be at "danger" as soon as he came in sight of it. Steam was shut off, and the guard had already applied his break, so as to stop at the station. The engine-driver saw the mineral train approaching as soon as he observed the station-signal at "danger." He reversed, put on steam, and the fireman applied the tender-break, but they could not stop the passenger train before it ran into the engine of the mineral train, just at the distant-signal.

The fireman of the passenger train and the driver and fireman of the mineral train jumped off just before the collision.

The station-master at Pengam ran and put the distant-signal to "danger" against the passenger train, as soon as he saw that the mineral train was not going to stop at the Pengam station-signal, but the passenger train engine had already got too close to the signal to allow of its stopping in time.

The accident was caused by the gross neglect of the driver of the leading engine of the mineral train in running past the station signal, which was at "danger."