

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, January 16th, 1860.*

SIR, I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, for the careful consideration of the directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Captain Tyler, R.E., of his inquiry into the circumstances attending the collision which occurred on the 16th ultimo at the Ringley Road station.

I am, &c.

*The Secretary of the Lan-
cashire and Yorkshire Railway Co.* JAMES BOOTH.

*Whitehall,
January 5th, 1860.*

SIR, In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 23d ultimo, I have the honor 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 collision, that occurred on the 16th ultimo, at the Ringley Road station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

This station is $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the north of Manchester, and $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles to the south of Bury, on the East Lancashire section of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. It is approached from Manchester on a rising gradient of 1 in 96, and it is protected towards Manchester by a wire signal, 250 yards from the passenger platform.

On the 16th of December, a goods train left Bury about 6.40 p.m., nearly 4 hours late, for Manchester. It consisted of an engine and tender, 14 waggons, and a van. It was not due to stop at Ringley Road, but the two guards who accompanied it, and the driver, mutually agreed that it would not be prudent for them to proceed to Molyneux Brow, a mile and a half further, where they had to detach a waggon, because the express passenger train timed to leave Bury for Manchester at 6.50, was likely to overtake them.

They therefore determined to bring their train to a stand at Ringley Road, and to shunt it across to the down line from Manchester, that it might remain there while the up express passed the station on the line on which they were travelling.

They reached Ringley Road about 3 minutes past 7, and crossed over with their train immediately to the down line. They waited until 7.15; but the express train did not appear.

It was freezing hard, and was exceedingly foggy. A second passenger train was due to arrive at the station in a few minutes, on the line to which they had crossed. The guards hardly knew what course to pursue; but, at the recommendation of the driver, who left his engine, and joined them in the station building, they proceeded out with their fog signals, one in each direction. The head guard went towards Manchester, the second guard towards Bury.

It was agreed between the station master and the second guard, that the signal was to be kept at "all right" for the express from Bury, and that that train was to be allowed to pass, unless the Manchester train should arrive first. In the latter case, the goods train was to be shunted back again into the way of the express, and the second guard, upon seeing the distant signal turned to "danger," was to assist in stopping the express with his fog signals.

When the second guard had gone about a quarter of a mile, he heard the express starting from Radcliffe Bridge, half a mile from him. He therefore ran

back towards the station, to say that the express was coming. The white light was kept burning at the distant signal; the second guard also exhibited a white light from his hand lamp, and the express passed Ringley Road at 7.23, about 25 minutes after its proper time.

As soon as it had gone by, the goods train was started, to cross over to the *up* line to Manchester, that it might follow the express *to* that place, and that it might get out of the way of the train which was overdue *from* that place.

The Manchester train, however, came up while the goods train was in the act of crossing from the *down* to the *up* line. The engine and nine of the waggons had already got out of its way, but it struck the five last waggons, while travelling at a speed of 7 or 8 miles an hour. Fortunately, only one child was injured, and the damage to the rolling stock was comparatively slight, though the shock must have been considerable, as the passenger train and the waggons were travelling in opposite directions when the collision took place.

The driver of the passenger train from Manchester had experienced a good deal of inconvenience during the severe weather of that day from the state of his pumps. He was busily engaged with them as he approached the station, and, in the very thick fog that prevailed, he was not aware that the station was so near him as it afterwards proved to be. The frost prevented his "pet taps" from working, and he and his fireman appear to have been devoting more attention to them than was prudent at that moment. They neither of them saw anything of the distant signal, which was visible for 20, or 50 yards through the fog, according to different accounts, as they passed it.

They appear to have received, however, a warning of danger, at the same distance from the distant signal as that from which they could have seen it. The head guard of the goods train asserts that he put down two fog signals, one at 30, and another at 50 yards on the Manchester side of the distant signal; and that he heard the latter explode as the engine passed over it. The driver and fireman of the passenger engine heard it explode, but do not believe that it was so far from the goods train as it was stated to be. The driver of the goods train and the guard of the passenger train found it, exploded, 5 or 6 minutes after the collision, not far from the position stated; but the second fog signal was neither heard to explode nor seen afterwards, and it does not appear what became of it.

The passenger train is stated to have been proceeding at a speed of 12 or 14 miles an hour when the fog signal exploded, and 7 or 8 miles an hour when the collision occurred. As that fog signal was 220 yards from the point of collision, and as the passenger train was travelling up a rising gradient of 1 in 96, the driver ought to have been able to bring his train in safety to a stand, if he had not been away from his regulator attending to his pumps; and it would appear that the fireman, who was on the foot-plate of the engine, might have done so if he had at once closed the regulator, whistled for the guard's break, and reversed the engine. But the account given by these men is, that they had hardly time to shut off the steam, and no time to sound the usual break-whistle, before the collision occurred.

It must be admitted that the distance was very limited for warning a train of danger, even on so steep a gradient. One or two hundred yards is a very short space in the travelling of a passenger train.

The goods guard should, no doubt, have proceeded farther from the point of danger, and should, under such circumstances, have put down at least three fog signals, at a distance that would have left the driver without excuse for not stopping his train, even at the point where the one fog signal is proved, and where two are stated, to have been placed on this occasion.

This accident has not, fortunately, led to any very important consequences; but the evidence which it became my duty to take, in inquiring into it, has not the less pointed out some serious defects in the working of the traffic, and in the management of the line.

It will have been observed, from what I have already stated, that the goods train which thus obstructed the main line at Ringley Road, was nearly four hours late in leaving Bury,—was started from that place only 10 minutes before an express passenger train was timed to leave it,—was shunted from the *up* line at Ringley Road some minutes after the express train was due to pass the station on that *up* line,—and was, finally, placed in such an awkward situation that the driver and guards hardly knew what to do with it. The question that they seem to have discussed was, whether they had better stand the chance of a collision in their front from the Manchester train, on the wrong line, or whether it would be better for them to proceed to their legitimate line again, and there expose themselves to the chance of a collision from behind, from the Bury express.

They certainly adopted, in their difficulties, a course which was wholly unjustifiable. Overlooking altogether the contingency, which might easily have occurred, of a special train preceding the regular train from Manchester, they left the goods train standing upon the wrong main line for 10 or 12 minutes, in a thick fog, without taking any extra precaution to protect it. It was only at 7.15,—four minutes before the passenger train was due to arrive at, and five before it was timed to start from, Ringley Road,—that they sallied forth, at the instigation of the driver, with their fog signals.

If any excuse can be made for this conduct, it must be found, partly in the want of some more responsible person on the spot, and partly in the excessive irregularity of the traffic. Such causes always tend, more or less, to the production of individual carelessness, or, as it may more properly be termed, when applied to the details of railway traffic, recklessness, in regard even to matters involving serious risk to human life.

The goods guard started from Bury with his train at 6.40, 10 minutes only before the express passenger train was timed to start, in direct disobedience to the company's regulations. He did so on his own responsibility; and it is evident that there is a want of proper control over the starting of such trains, as there was no one to prevent him from thus leaving Bury. His excuse for doing so is, that the Bury express, which comes to the Lancashire and Yorkshire line from the Midland Railway, is habitually very late, and has been so for many months. I am informed that it is, on the average, as it was on this occasion, 20 or 25 minutes after its proper time, though he was not aware of its being actually late on this occasion when he left Bury. Either some means should be adopted for making it run more punctually, or its time for running should be altered.

The goods guard was afraid to shunt his train at the Radcliffe Bridge station, where there is a siding, because, as I have had occasion to point out in a recent report, upon a collision which occurred there, the signals at that station are so bad. He therefore shunted it at Ringley Road, where the signals are not, as I have also pointed out in another recent report, by any means as good as they ought to be,

and where there was no siding; and, in getting it out of the way of this express, he placed it in the way of another passenger train.

The goods train itself was nearly four hours late. It is generally two or three hours late in starting from Salford in the morning, and the same in getting in at night. The engine by which it is worked is employed with a double set of men, and has to perform double duty. Coming in late from its night's work, it is not, of course, ready to start at the proper time in the morning. It makes one trip from Salford to Colne and back in the night, and one from Salford to Accrington and back in the day. It therefore makes only 92 miles of journey altogether in the 24 hours. The shunting is so heavy, that it takes $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours to go 44 miles. It is impossible for it to get through its work in the allotted time under present circumstances. There is a great want of siding accommodation at some of the stations. The Haslington and Crane Road stations are nearly always blocked up with traffic, for want of such accommodation; and at Salford alone, the trains are sometimes kept waiting by the hour.

The driver of the passenger train from Manchester was an *extra* driver, and had been so for 2 years. The fireman of that train had been for the same time an *extra* fireman, going out of the shops, sometimes once a week, sometimes more, sometimes less. The head guard of the goods train was porter and *extra* guard for 5 years, and had been a regular guard for only 12 weeks. The second guard had, certainly, been a porter for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, and a guard for the same period. The station master at Ringley Road, though he had been in that situation for 10 months, and for 3 years a porter, was only 20 years of age.

Of the men immediately concerned in the production of this accident, therefore, there seems to have been an undue proportion of *extra* and young servants, and a want of *regular*, experienced, responsible men.

In my reports upon the accidents at Ringley Road and Radcliffe Bridge, made in November last, I had occasion to refer to the want of telegraph instruments at these stations. I would now add, that the present is a strong instance of the necessity for such auxiliaries in the working of the traffic. It was from want of knowledge as to the position of the two passenger trains, and as to the times at which they might have been expected, that the difficulty in regard to the goods train arose. Under judicious telegraphic, and signal arrangements, the required information would have been afforded, and the necessary protection given. The goods train would have been enabled to get out of the way of the passenger trains at some less objectionable station, or would have been prevented from proceeding on its journey, except when it was desirable for it to do so, on such an unfavourable night.

For the want of the necessary signal and telegraph arrangements, and for the want of the required accommodation at the stations, which are the most important desiderata that I have now had occasion to enumerate, and without which regularity, safety, or even, in the end, economy, in the working of the traffic, cannot be expected, the directors of the company must be considered as being themselves personally responsible. It is to be hoped that they will accept the warning which this accident has afforded them, and lose no time in carrying out the very obvious and necessary aids to regular working and public safety which are so much required on this section of their railway. They must otherwise expect to receive more serious lessons, as the inevitable result of the very defective arrangements which it has now been my duty to describe.

I have, &c.

The Secretary
Railway Department.

H. W. TYLER,
Capt., R.E.