

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, 1st December 1860.

SIR,
 I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, for the consideration of the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Colonel Yolland, R.E., the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the circumstances which attended the collision that occurred on the 1st ultimo, near the Wigan Station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

I am, &c.

The Secretary of the JAMES BOOTH.
Lancashire and Yorkshire
Railway Company.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, 27th November 1860.

SIR,
 I HAVE the honour to report for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, that, in compliance with your minute of the 7th instant, I have inquired into the circumstances which attended a collision that occurred on the 1st November, near Wigan Station, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, between a passenger train and the engine of a coal train, by which the driver of the coal engine was killed, his fireman was severely injured, and 13 persons in the passenger train received bruises or contusions, or were severely shaken.

About 1220 yards east of the Wigan Station, a connection is made between the down line of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, and some sidings leading into the Ince Hall Colliery, which is situated north of the railway. This connection is protected by distant signals on each side, and a pointsman, provided with a cabin, is placed at the side of the up line, 20 yards east of the back points by which the sidings are entered from the down line. The siding lying nearest to the main line is connected at its eastern extremity with a pair of back points extending from the up line; and this connexion with the up line was established so as to avoid the necessity for shunting coal trains across the main lines when entering or departing from the colliery sidings. A considerable subsidence of this siding has, however, taken place towards the eastern end owing to coal workings below; and the railway company have neglected to keep it in good order, so that the siding has not of late been entered at the eastern end by trains from the up line. On the day when the accident occurred, the regular pointsman was absent at Liverpool, attending to give evidence at the sessions—as well as on the previous and following days—and his duty was performed by a platelayer employed at that part of the line, who had acted as pointsman on two different occasions—once for a single day, and another time for two days. This man could read fairly, but he stated that he was unable to write, and did not understand the company's time tables.

On the 1st November, the coal engine had brought a train from Blue Pits to Wigan Station, and the engine was on its return journey, some considerable time after its proper time, and had taken the break van from Wigan, by the up line, as far as the Ince Hall Colliery Siding, from which place the coal engine was to take a train of loaded coal waggons. The break van was left on the up line, and the coal engine, after crossing to the down line, passed into the colliery sidings and brought out the coal waggons on to the down line, and then shunted them on to the up line, from whence they dropped down the incline of 1 in 97 towards Wigan to the front of the break van.

When this had been completed, the coal engine stood on the down line close to the points, and the driver, Moses Howarth, asked the pointsman if the signals were all right, in the hearing of the fireman, and the pointsman replied that they were all right, and

the fireman says he observed a green light showing towards the cabin from the down distant signal, which would involve the exhibition of a red light or danger signal to any down train approaching the Ince Hall Colliery Sidings. The fireman then observed a down train approaching, and the driver remarked that it was the passenger train, but the pointsman said "it is not the passenger train, but the pilot engine which has to stop here for some waggons;" and the train continued to advance at so great a speed that there was no time to get out of the way. An attempt was made to get the engine into motion towards Wigan, but too late to be of any service, and the engine of the train came into collision with the coal engine just at the points. The driver was knocked off the engine, and fell into the six foot space seriously injured, with his skull fractured; he lived till the following Sunday. The fireman lay down on the tender, was struck by the screw jack, and was a good deal hurt, having his leg and thigh broken, and he was rendered insensible for the time. The coal engine was set into motion down the incline, and was stopped by some of the company's servants at Wigan.

The collision is said to have occurred at about 5h. 49m. p.m., at which time it was quite dark, but a fine clear night. The 5h. 5m. p.m. down express train, from Manchester to Liverpool and Southport, was due at Wigan at 5h. 44m., so that if the pointsman had done his duty in a proper manner, he should not have permitted the down main line to have been occupied by a coal train or engine, unless he had been informed from Wigan, that the passenger train was behind its proper time. No such intimation had been sent.

All the parties concerned appear to have overlooked the fact, that this down express was due while they were engaged in bringing the coal waggons out of the siding; and although the full responsibility for this act undoubtedly belongs to the pointsman, still the driver and guard of the coal train should have called the attention of the pointsman to the circumstance of the passenger train being due. But the circumstance that a coal train is permitted to be on the main line at an improper time, should not of itself be productive of danger, if the place at which it stands is protected by signals. I have already stated that the connexion with the Ince Hall Colliery Sidings was protected by distant signals, and the pointsman, in reply to the inquiry from the driver of the coal engine, stated that they were all right, meaning that they were placed at danger in order to protect the coal engine and train. But on this head the evidence is most contradictory. The pointsman, a coal inspector, goods' guard, and brakeman all speak to the lever handle of the down distant signal having been let go, so as to place the signal at danger, and several of them, in addition to the fireman of the coal engine, deposed to having seen the green light from the cabin. The line is perfectly straight for a considerable distance at this place, so that if a green light at the down distant signal were seen at the cabin, from which it is a quarter of a mile distant, it would follow that, on the opposite side, a red light would be visible to a down train for a considerable length before the distant signal is reached.

But the engine-driver, fireman, and two out of three guards of the 5.5 p.m. down passenger train all state distinctly that no red light was visible.

There is a level crossing 780 yards east of the pointsman's cabin; and the driver of the passenger train says that when he whistled for the level crossing, he could see all the lights down the line as far as the junction with the North Union Railway, 600 yards west of the cabin, and that all were white; that he stood on the left side of the engine as they passed the Ince Hall Colliery Siding down distant signal, and that it only showed a white light; that he was within 40 yards of the coal train engine when he first saw the head light (white) on the engine; that

he had only time to sound the whistle and to grasp the reversing lever and hand railing, when the collision occurred; that he thinks he was running at the time about 25 miles an hour, and that after the collision occurred, seeing that the coal train engine ran from him, and that no portion of his own train was thrown off the rails, he gradually pulled up his train near the North Union Junction.

The third guard, however, of the passenger train states that he came out of his break van (on the right side) as they passed the level crossing, and he noticed that the distant signal was not full on at danger but exhibited more of the white light than of the red, so that he did not know what to make of it, but remained at his break, and commenced to apply it immediately the sharp whistle was sounded, just previous to the collision.

The gatekeeper at the level crossing states that no light was visible at the distant signal from the level crossing up to the time of the passenger train passing, although he could see that the lamp (oil) was lit; and this distant signal remained dark until after the 5h. 15m. p.m. down train from Manchester to Liverpool, due at the crossing at 6h. 12m. p.m. had passed; and then he observed that some one came and took off the signal, and it then showed a good white light.

The driver of the Wigan pilot engine (which followed the 5h. 15m. down passenger train, and which was expected by the pointsman to have arrived prior to the 5h. 5m. passenger train that ran into the coal engine,) informed me that he stopped between the distant signal and the place where the collision occurred, and he found that the distant signal was not quite on when he passed it, that he only saw a white light until he passed it, and his guard got off and pulled the wire and put the signal full on.

It is impossible entirely to reconcile these conflicting statements, but the Superintendent of the Line examined the signal on the morning following the accident, and he ascertained that if the lever handle were let go gently the signal would stand at an angle of nearly 45°, and at night show the light part red and part white. It was also found that the catch of the lever might fall into the slit in which the lever moves, and prevent it from falling completely over, so that it is possible that a man on the left side of the engine should only see a white light, and the guard on the right side of the van might see

the light partly red and partly white. This explanation relieves the Company's servants in charge of the 5h. 5m. p.m. passenger train from blame.

Sufficient care does not appear to have been exercised in selecting a man to perform the pointsman's duty at Ince Hall Colliery Siding. The man was selected by the foreman of Platelayers, and he objected to the performance of the duty; he was certainly, from neglecting to keep the main lines cleared for the passenger train, the sole cause of the accident.

There is no duty connected with railways that requires to be more carefully or accurately performed than that of pointsman. Neglect in its performance generally endangers the public safety; and this duty is in consequence usually better paid for. But in this instance a man is taken from his ordinary duty, that of platelayer, and put in a responsible position, against his own wish, and without being placed on a higher rate of pay while so employed. Fortunately for the public, the 5h. 5m. p.m. train, which was composed of six carriages and three break vans, did not run into the coal engine with a train of coal waggons behind or in front of it, or the consequences would probably have been much worse.

I think the Railway Company's management is to be blamed for having placed an incompetent man in charge at the Colliery siding points; in having allowed the siding to remain out of order, obliging a dangerous mode of working to be adopted; and in permitting the signal to remain in bad working order; and I would recommend that the attention of the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company should be called to these points, and to the desirability of erecting a fixed station signal at the Ince Hall Colliery Siding. I think it more than probable that, if one had been there, this accident would not have occurred. The lamp used at the distant signal is susceptible of considerable improvement, by retiring the lens of the white or "all right" light in a short tube, or placing a projecting shade at one side, by which means it could not be seen by the driver of a down train, until it was fully turned in the direction of the train; and the absence of any light must be considered as a danger signal.

I have, &c.,

*The Secretary to the
Board of Trade,
Whitehall.*

W. YOLLAND.
Col. Royal Engineers.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

*Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, December 29th, 1860.*

SIR, I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, for the consideration of the Directors of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Capt. Tyler, R.E., the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the circumstances which attended the collision that occurred at Moses Gate station on the 10th instant.

I am, &c.

T. H. FARRER.

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

London,

SIR, 19th December, 1860.

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your Minute of the 13th 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 10th instant, at the Moses Gate station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

This station is a mile and a half to the east of Bolton, and nine miles to the north-west of Manchester. About 150 yards to the west of it there is a crossing, leading from the down line, across the up line, to certain goods sidings.

On the day in question, the 11.35 a.m. coal train from Salford (near Manchester) for Bolton, arrived with 10 or 12 waggons, soon after noon, at Moses Gate; and after it had waited on the down line for five minutes, to allow the express train from Bolton to pass, the engine was turned across the up line into a siding, to fetch out five waggons which were to be taken on by it. Before the engine had got back to the down line with these waggons, a stopping passenger train, following the express, approached the station on the up line from Bolton, and was checked by the distant signal, which is situated about 300 yards to the west of the crossing leading from the down line to the sidings.

The passenger train consisted of a tank engine and five passenger carriages, including two break-carriages. It started from Bolton two or three minutes after its proper time, and reached Moses Gate about 12.18 instead of 12.15. The driver reduced his speed to 6 or 8 miles an hour when he found the distant signal from that station at danger; but he turned his