

employed, it has failed, and as the question is one which involves the public safety, the present system calls for at least serious consideration if not revision. Appendix No. 54.

Captain Simmons, R.E.,
&c. &c.

I have, &c.
GEO. WYNNE,
Capt. Royal Engineers.

ACCIDENTS.
Shropshire Union
Railway.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, June 28, 1852.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you a copy of a report they have received from the officer appointed by them to inquire into and report upon the accident which occurred on the Shropshire Union Railway on the 28th May, and request that you will bring to the earnest attention of the Directors the observations contained therein with respect to the supervision of the men employed in the locomotive establishment.

The Secretary of the
London and North Western Railway Company.

I have, &c.
J. L. A. SIMMONS,
Capt. Royal Engineers.

London and North Western Railway, General Manager's Office,
Euston Station, July 23, 1852.

SIR,

IN reference to your letter of the 28th of June last, I beg to enclose you copy of a minute of the locomotive sub-committee of the 13th instant.

Captain Simmons, R.E.,
&c. &c.

I have, &c.
MARK HUISE.

LONDON AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

Extract from the Minutes of the Locomotive Sub-Committee, Liverpool, July 13th 1852.

READ the report of the Government Inspector to the Board of Trade, on the accident upon the Shropshire Union Railway, on the 29th day of May.

The Committee were of opinion, that the valuable suggestions contained therein were entitled to, and should have, every attention, particularly that wherein it is recommended that no responsible man in the locomotive department should leave his post until relieved by another; and Mr. Trevithick was instructed to see that the foreman carry out this order.

APPENDIX No. 55.

Appendix No. 55.

SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY.

South Eastern
Railway.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, March 12, 1852.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, that I have inquired into an accident that occurred on the 31st December at the Bricklayers Arms station of the South Eastern Railway, occasioned by the tender of an engine having been thrown off the line in passing through a pair of facing points.

The following are the circumstances under which the accident occurred:

At the Bricklayers Arms station there is but one platform for arriving and departing trains, which is on the down line, the up trains therefore have to pass on to the down line to reach the platform, and this is effected by means of a through crossing between the up and down lines about a quarter of a mile from the station; a train coming on to the down line immediately after passing through the crossing encounters a pair of facing points leading to an engine shed, and at a few yards farther on a second set of facing points leading to a siding; it was at the first-named points that the accident occurred.

All arrival trains draw up to the station platform without their engines, and in consequence the engine with its tender is detached from the rest of the train a short distance from the through crossing on the up line; it is therefore necessary in order that the engine may get clear of the carriages that it should pass through the crossing, and take the facing points at a higher speed than under ordinary circumstances would be done; at the second pair of facing points the engine leaves the main line.

On the occasion of the accident the engine was detached in the usual manner, and while passing through the first set of points the driver says he felt the points spring, and immediately saw that the tender was off the rails; he was then about thirty yards ahead of the carriages; he beckoned to the guard to put on his break; there was not time, however, to

Appendix No. 55. prevent a collision, the engine being almost immediately brought up by the resistance of the tender, the leading carriage struck with its buffers the engine, at the same time slightly grazing the side of the tender which was entirely off the rails, the trailing wheels of the engine were likewise drawn off the rails.

ACCIDENTS.

South Eastern
Railway.

The switches, which were down at the time of the accident, had been removed, and a new pair of the same pattern substituted; the old ones were pointed out to me, but they bore no marks that would indicate the cause of the accident; the inner face of each joint chair was broken off, and the switch which stands open had the appearance of having received a blow at about one foot from the joint.

There is no class of accident to which it is more difficult to assign an adequate cause for the effect than those connected with trains leaving the rails, because the marks left on the rails and roadway are always speedily obliterated, and the servants of the Company who first reach the spot after an accident are necessarily more engaged in putting matters to right than in seeking to investigate the causes which produced it, consequently the information to be derived from their narrations is generally of a very unsatisfactory character; but with regard to this accident on which I am reporting, I have learned from the officers and servants of the Company that the description of points in use on this part of the line have, under the pressure produced by heavy engines passing over them, a tendency to spring or open at their extremities. After repeated observations of every class of engine passing over the points I was not able to detect this tendency, but it was so positively stated to me that I cannot doubt the fact. It has long been known that all switches under heavy pressure have a tendency to spring, and to counteract it stops or projecting pieces are made fast to the side of the switch, which have a bearing against the rail on which it closes, and if these are in sufficient number it is not easy to conceive how such action can take place. The switches of the points in use on the Bricklayers Arms branch are but ten feet in length, and they are constructed to work on cast iron plates somewhat longer, on which eight chairs are cast, to each of which the outside rail is secured; the switch is provided with the stops I have described, but there are only two which are placed one foot apart commencing from the joint; in the remaining length therefore of eight feet there may be room for the springing which it is stated takes place, and the introduction of an additional stop might overcome this tendency, but I do not think it would be prudent to trust to this alone when the effectual remedy suggests itself of immovably fixing the switch handle by means of a pin, and carrying out this arrangement at the points where the accident occurred I am led to believe would not be attended with inconvenience, as the passage of engines to the shed to which they lead is not very frequent, and there is a man always close by attending to another set of points; facing points in the vicinity of a large terminal station are unavoidable, and so circumstanced are less objectionable than elsewhere as the trains necessarily proceed at low speeds, but at the points in question the manœuvre of detaching the train requires a somewhat higher speed than ordinary, and consequently some further precautions are called for. At the second set of points the switchman should be directed, after letting the engine into the siding, to throw his weight on the switch handle which would be sufficient to secure these points.

I would, in conclusion, observe that though in comparison to the number of trains which daily pass through facing points the accidents that occur are numerically trifling, yet their frequency is sufficiently great to require notice, and to suggest that the self-acting principle is not so safe a one as at its first introduction it was thought to be, and it may be worth consideration whether a modified application of the principle generally might not be desirable.

Captain Simmons, R.E.,
&c. &c.

I am, &c.
GEO. WYNNE,
Capt. Royal Engineers.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, March 15, 1852.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, for the information of the Directors of the South Eastern Railway Company, a copy of the report that has been received from the officer appointed by their Lordships to inquire into the circumstances attending an accident that occurred at the Bricklayers Arms station.

My Lords direct me to request that you will call to the attention of the Directors the suggestion in the report as to the self-acting principle in points not being sufficient to secure at all times their proper action, and consequently the safety of the trains that pass over them.

On this subject my Lords would be glad to receive any observations the Company may have to offer, and especially as to whether some mode of securing the points supplemental to or in lieu of the self-acting principle in the limited cases of such points as occur on main lines, and are set to face or meet the traffic, would not be adopted with advantage.

The Secretary of the
South Eastern Railway Company.

I have, &c.
J. L. A. SIMMONS,
Capt. Royal Engineers.