

The usual practice at this station is for the bell to be rung when the station master sees that all is ready, and for the guard then to give the driver a signal to start. It seems that on the occasion in question the bell was not rung at all, though the driver believed that he heard it, and looked round for the guards' signal as he moved off, keeping his eyes fixed on the rear of the train as he approached the junction, which, as has been before stated, was only thirty yards distant.

Considering the state of the junction, it would have been more prudent in the driver to have waited for the pointsman's signal of "all right" before he crossed it; but it must be admitted that no danger or caution signal was exhibited to him at the time to prevent his proceeding.

It may perhaps be said that the pointsman ought to have held the red light towards the Musselburgh train whilst he allowed the Dalkeith train to pass the junction; but he certainly could not with one hand lamp make the necessary signals to two trains at a time; and there is no doubt that at this junction, at all events, where trains have to stop and start again after passing his distant signal, he ought to be provided with main junction signals.

If such signals were properly placed, and kept at danger, no driver could start from Niddrie, or pass the junction, without first whistling to the pointsman, and obtaining his special permission, indicated by the fixed light or semaphore arm; and to the want of such signals, therefore, the accident must be attributed.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. Royal Engineers.

NORTH-EASTERN RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, May 24, 1856.

SIR,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 14th 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 6th instant, near the Gateshead Station of the North-eastern Railway.

Three quarters of a mile to the south of the station at Newcastle, and opposite to the "old shops" at Gateshead, there is a branch called the Allhusens Branch; and its junction with the main line is protected towards the south by a disc signal, 300 yards from the points, worked by a wire. This signal can be seen upwards of 1000 yards in tolerably clear weather. There is also a signal towards the north, and one on the branch, the latter having been fixed about three months since.

The gradient of the branch falls 1 in 70 from the main line, and that of the main line 1 in 300 towards Newcastle. A few minutes before six o'clock in the morning of the 6th instant, the mail train from the south came into collision with twelve empty ballast waggons which had been placed in its way on the main line, the last waggon of which was 100 yards from the junction, and therefore 200 yards within the signal. None of the carriages or waggons were thrown off the line, but one lady was injured.

The atmosphere is always thick in this neighbourhood; and it is stated, that on the morning in question there was a good deal of fog, and that the rails were very greasy.

The driver of the mail train estimates his speed at fifteen or sixteen miles an hour when he first saw the danger signal at 200 yards distance, and at three or four when the collision occurred. It may have been rather greater, but there seems to be no reason to blame this man, as the signal could not probably have been seen sufficiently far, under the circumstances, to enable him to stop his train.

This signal might, with advantage, be moved to a much greater distance from the junction. The evidence, as to the manner in which the ballast waggons were brought in the way of the mail train, is somewhat conflicting. The signalman who was in charge of the junction asserting that it was done in direct disobedience to his warnings and injunctions; and the driver and fireman of the ballast engine denying that the signalman interfered with them or expressed his disapprobation in any way. They admit, however, that they brought their waggons on the main line without his permission, and while his signal was at danger; and they attempt to excuse themselves for passing that signal, by saying that they totally forgot all about it, in consequence of its having been a comparatively recent addition. They admit, also, that the signalman was standing close at hand at his post when they came off the branch; and that he should have done so without taking any notice of their proceedings, at a time when the mail was so nearly due, appears, to say the least, highly improbable. He had been five years in that situation, and there seems no reason to believe that he was usually guilty of any laxity in the performance of his duties.

The waggons were placed on the main line because, on account of the severe gradient of the branch, it was found impossible to bring out the whole train at once; but there was a siding close by which might have been used as a receptacle for the twelve waggons while the engine went to fetch the others from the branch; and it is brought by the signalman as an additional charge against the driver, that he did not use that siding instead of blocking up the main line.

The driver, fireman, and breakman of the ballast train state, that they believed that the mail train had passed, and that they had been induced to think so by hearing the Sunderland train go by as they were preparing their train on the branch; but if the evidence of the signalman be correct, that the driver and fireman said afterwards, when they were told that the mail would soon be due, that there was still plenty of time first, then this must be a false excuse.

It seems probable, altogether, that the signalman may not have been sufficiently energetic in enforcing his authority, that these men may partly have misunderstood each other at the time, and that the two parties may each be giving additional colour to their own after-version of the circumstances of the occurrence; but there can be no doubt that the driver and fireman were to blame for passing the signalman's danger signal without his permission, for taking it for granted—if they did so—when they heard the Sunderland train pass, that it was the mail, and also for leaving their waggons on the main line when they might have placed them in a siding; and whilst it is desirable that the danger signal to the south should be further removed from the junction, it may be fairly asserted that the cause of the collision was in great measure attributable to the misconduct of the driver and fireman of the ballast engine.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. Royal Engineers.

ACCIDENTS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS.

LONDONDERRY AND COLERAINE RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, June 27, 1856.

SIR,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 11th 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 28th April last, near the Bellarena Station of the Londonderry and Coleraine Railway.

On the day in question, the 5 p.m. passenger train reached Bellarena from Derry at the usual hour, about 6.15, and, the passengers having been landed on the platform, the train was backed, to place the engine opposite the water tank. In giving water to an engine from this tank, it is necessary that some person should mount a ladder, and work a valve at some distance from the ground, and it appears that the gateman in charge of a level crossing a few yards to the east of the platform had been appointed to perform this duty.

During his absence, the gates were opened, and some cars taken across the line, and just as the train started, a man, upwards of eighty years old and rather deaf, walked in front of it, and was knocked down by the buffer.

Although the train was moving very slowly, the driver was powerless to prevent the engine from passing over the poor man's legs, which were cut off, the driving wheels of the engine standing almost on them after it stopped.

This accident would not probably have occurred if the gateman had not been called away on other duties at a time when his presence was most required at the crossing; and I understand that the station master has been dismissed for thus taking him away.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. Royal Engineers.

WATERFORD AND LIMERICK RAILWAY.

Railway Department, Board of Trade,
Whitehall, June 27, 1856.

SIR,

In compliance with the instructions contained in your letter of the 11th 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 30th ultimo, near the Fiddown Station of the Waterford and Limerick Railway.

Accidents appertaining
to the Management.

Collisions at junctions.

Accidents at level
crossings.