I have to observe, in conclusion, that there was no break-van or break-carriage at the tail of the Carnarvon train, though that train had run for 32 miles over rising gradients of 1 in 60, and it being customary to run the trains in that direction with a van in the front only. That van, next behind the tender, was certainly useful on the present occasion, in lessening the shock of the collision to the passengers in the carriages behind it; but the accidental fracture of a coupling on the gradients above referred to, might, on the other hand, with no break at the tail of the train, lead to the most serious results; and I am glad to learn that some break-carriages are in course of introduction with a view to the avoidance of this source of danger.

I have, &c.,
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. R.E.

The Secretary of the
Railway Department,
Board of Trade.

LONDON AND SOUTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

Board of Trade
(Railway Department),
27th June 1865.

Sir,

I am directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you, to be laid before the Directors of the London and South-Western Railway Company, the enclosed copy of the report made by Captain Tyler, R.E., the officer appointed by my Lords to inquire into the circumstances connected with the collision at Nine Elms, on the London and South-Western Railway, on the 15th ultimo.

I am, &c.,
JAMES BOOTH.
The Secretary of the
London and South-Western
Railway Company.

Sir,

Hampton Court, 22nd June, 1865.

In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 19th ultimo, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Lords of the Committee for Privy Council for Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances connected with the accident that occurred on the 15th ultimo, at Nine Elms, on the London and South-Western Railway.

At two miles from the Waterloo Station there are two signal-boxes about 200 yards to the south which are connected by the upper box and the further box, the former on the east side of the railway, the latter to the north of it and on the west of the railway. The two main lines, as well as the lines to and from Twickenham and Windsor, run between these boxes, and there are junctions with the goods yard on the west, and the locomotive yard on the east of the railway near them. The goods-yard signal, the main line down and auxiliary signals, and all the up signals are worked from the upper box; while the Windsor line stop signal and auxiliary, and the main down line stop signal, as well as three pairs of points, are worked from the further box. There are telegraph bells and instruments, on Mr. Preece’s system, in the two boxes.

At 5.15 p.m. on the afternoon in question, a shunting engine from the goods yards went into the “excursion line,” which is a siding next to the Windsor up line, and which is connected with that line by a pair of facing points, opposite to and worked from the further box. The driver of this engine whistled twice, as a warning to the signalmen in the two boxes that he wanted to turn his engine into the locomotive yard. The signalman at the further box, Malthouse, heard the above two whistles, and saw at the same time a train approaching from the south on the main line, third from his box; but he did not notice that a train was also approaching from the same direction on the Windsor up line, nearest to his box. Thinking that this Twickenham train had previously passed, and that the signalman in the upper box would signal the shunting engine to turn as soon as the Portsmouth train had passed, he pulled his points over in readiness for it: and as these were facing points to the Twickenham train then approaching, he, in fact, turned them over in time to allow that train to run into the “excursion line,” and prevent it from continuing its course towards the Waterloo Station.

On hearing the whistle of the engine driver, he endeavoured to turn the points back again, but he caught hold, in his hurry, of the “right lever and the wrong catch,” and was therefore unable to do so, and the whole train ran into the “excursion line,” and came violently into collision with the shunting engine, which was standing on it at a distance of 70 or 80 yards from the points.

The Twickenham train started from that place at 4.50 p.m., consisting of an engine and tender, 11 carriages, and two break-vans, one at each end of the carriages. The engine driver left Clapham Junction nearly at his proper time, and soon after saw the signals lowered for him to pass the Nine Elms Junction. He shut off his steam, while travelling at 25 or 30 miles an hour, a quarter of a mile from that junction. The Portsmouth train passed him near a bridge which was a short distance to the south of the further box, and about the same time he observed that the facing points leading to the “excursion line” were set in the wrong direction. He at once, when 40 or 50 yards farther along, opened both his whistle, reversed his engine, and turned on his steam, while his mate applied the tender break; but he could not, of course, do much to reduce his speed, which he estimates at 12 to 14 miles an hour, before the collision occurred.

He was thrown against his fire-box, and covered with coals, which flew forward upon him from the tender, and was much bruised. The fireman was thrown forward past the gauge-glass and the fire-box, and was severely injured in the arm and scalp. The guard, who rode in the van next behind the tender, began to apply his break as soon as he heard the engine-whistle; but he was thrown down in his van after seeing the engine turned in to the “excursion” line, and he remembered nothing further until he found himself afterwards at the Waterloo Station. Forty-four of the passengers were unfortunately injured, but the majority of them slightly, with bruises and contusions.

The pointsman, Malthouse, frankly and fully admitted his errors, in forgetting that the Twickenham train had not passed, and in altering his facing points before his colleague in the upper box had turned off the signal to allow the shunting engine to come off the “excursion line.”

But the arrangements of the Company were defective in permitting these facing points to be worked by one man from the further box, while the signals which protected them, and by which the engine-drivers of the Windsor and Twickenham trains were necessarily guided in approaching them, were worked by another man in the upper box. It is extraordinary that such a system should have been allowed to remain so long in operation at so important a point, when, with proper appliances, the work that was done by two men at these two boxes could have been done more economically, and without any risk of such an accident, by one man from one box conveniently situated. But I am happy to be able to add in conclusion, that the arrangements in connection with this junction are being entirely re-modelled. The facing points in question are to be done away with, and a new cabin of superior construction, and with the best apparatus, is being fitted up to the south of the boxes above referred to, from which all the important points at those boxes will be more satisfactorily performed.

I am, &c.,
H. W. TYLER,
Capt. R.E.
The Secretary of the
Board of Trade,
Whitehall.