whistle and turned on his steam, but he did not notice the condition of the points until he had passed through them. He then suddenly observed that he was running towards the buffer-stop on the siding, in place of running towards the third line at the south end of the loop. He believes that he had passed about the length of his engine and tender through the facing-points before he noticed that he was going in the wrong direction. He then, while travelling at a speed of 12 miles an hour, shut off his steam, reversed his engine, and re-applied his steam; but he had no time to whistle for the guards' breaks before he brought his engine to a stand about 80 yards south of the points.

The under-guard, who rode in the leading van, was commencing to sort his luggage, in starting from the station, when he felt a sudden jerk; and, on looking out of his van, he saw that it was going along the wrong line, while the composite-carriage behind it was going towards the third line, on which the engine, tender, and break-van ought to have proceeded. He attempted to apply his break, and as soon as the train came to a stand he ran back to protect it.

The head-guard, in the rear van, was looking towards the front as the train left the station, and he saw the composite-carriage next behind the leading van leave the rails with its front end. He attempted to apply his break, and his van came soon after to a stand.

The engine-driver and head-guard went separately to the points after the accident, and they each tried them. They both found them in good working order. They both tried to make them stick in the wrong direction, but failed to do so.

The engine, tender, and leading break-van came to a stand after the accident with all their wheels on the rails of the siding; but the trailing end of the break-van was slightly damaged by the buffers of the composite carriage behind it. This carriage was turned over on its side, or nearly so, and the five passengers who rode in it, one in a first-class and four in a third-class compartment, were got out of it through the windows,—the former assisted by the engine-driver and the four latter by the head-guard.

The platform-inspector was leaving the telegraphic office, into which he had gone after starting the train, when he saw the composite-carriage above referred to turning over on its side. He first went to the assistance of the passengers, and then went to test the facing-points. He found them working well, and was not able to make them stick in the wrong direction. He could find nothing to account for their so sticking previously to the accident.

Five minutes before the starting of this passenger train, the horse-box and carriage-truck before referred to were drawn from a turn-table on the buffer-stop siding, in place of falling back into the position for which they were weighted, so as to be right for a train proceeding towards the third line, after the horse-box and carriage-truck had been brought through them. No person appears to have noticed that they did not fall back into their proper position before the starting of the passenger train. As the passenger train approached them they clearly were set in the wrong direction, because the engine, the tender, and the leading break-van ran forward towards the turn-table and the buffer-stop, in place of running towards the third line. Inasmuch as the composite-carriage behind the break-van ran through the facing-points in the other direction,—that is, towards the third line of rails, it would appear that the points must have fallen back by the action of the weight upon the lever, after the break-van had passed through them, so as to be jolted by the passage of that vehicle, as the composite carriage approached them. The composite-carriage, on taking the points towards the third line, was apparently pulled out of working order, and turned over nearly on its side, as above described, between the break-van running up the siding and the carriages behind it running towards or along the third line.

This accident could not have occurred if the facing-points had been worked by a signalman and interlocked with a starting-signal. I am informed that the arrangements for working the points and signals on the south of the Western Station have never yet been supplied with modern improvements because it has been in contemplation, in adding a fourth line through the station, to make extensive alterations in the lines of rails, the sidings, the platforms, and the station-buildings. It will take, I am told, six months before these additions and alterations are completed. It is desirable in the meantime that these facing-points should be connected with a signal-cabin on the south of the station, and should be interlocked with a starting-signal, without the lowering of which no train should be allowed to start from the platform-line referred to.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 13th October.

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LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

Cheddington Station, 13th November 1873.

In compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 17th September, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended the accident that occurred on the 11th September at the Cheddington junction on the London and North-Western Railway.

In this case, the 6.55 p.m. passenger train from Tring, for Aylesbury, was being backed from the junction points on the north of the Cheddington station, certain of the carriages were thrown off the rails.

No person has complained of injury.

The Cheddington station is 36 miles from London, and four miles from Tring. The Cheddington junction is 145 yards on the north of the Cheddington station. At this junction the line from Aylesbury joins the down main line of the London and North-Western Railway. There is a signal cabin opposite the junction points, containing levers for working the points and signals; which levers are interlocked with one another. The junction points, which are immediately to the north of the cabin, are worked by lever No. 9 in the locking-frame. Several yards from the junction points, there are, on the Aylesbury branch, a pair of points worked by lever No. 10 in the locking-frame; and these points are the connection between the platform line of the Aylesbury branch and a loop.
The passenger train left Tring at 7.2 p.m., seven minutes late, on the evening in question, consisting of an engine and tender, and four carriages, of which two were break-carriages. It proceeded in due course past the Cheddington station, and also past the Cheddington junction signal-cabin, so as to be clear of the points leading to the Aylesbury branch. As soon as the train came to a stand the signalman in the junction cabin exhibited a white light from his hand-lamp, as a signal to the engine-driver to back his train on the Aylesbury branch. The engine-driver, believing that the signalman would have set the junction points for the Aylesbury branch before exhibiting this light, set his train into backward motion; but, while moving back past the signal-cabin, he noticed, in looking along the train, that the two carriages next the engine were off the rails. He brought his train to a stand as quickly as he could, with his engine opposite the signal-cabin. On getting off his engine he saw what had happened. He found that two carriages furthest from the engine were on the rails of the main line, and had not gone along the branch line as they ought to have done; and that the two carriages next to the engine stood across between the main line and the branch line, with their buffers interlocked; while the engine was on the rails of the branch line, and the tender was nearly through the points in the same direction.

The engine-driver tested the points after the accident, and found that they worked correctly. No damage was done to either of the carriages, in consequence of the slow speed at which the train was backing when the accident occurred. After a detention of one hour and a half the carriages were got from the engine. He saw a white light given from the signal-cabin, for the train to back on to the branch, and noticed that the driver set his train back in obedience to it. He was standing looking towards the platform at the station, with his hand on the break-handle, when he felt some unusual motion of the carriages; and, on looking round, he found that two of them were off the rails, and that the engine-driver had brought them to a stand.

A porter, and relieving-pointsman, of the name of "Downes," was on duty in the signal-cabin on the evening in question, in the place of the regular signalman, who was temporarily absent. I have not had an opportunity of personally examining "Downes," but I have received the following, which was written by him after the accident, and which fully explains the cause of it:

"I was on duty at Cheddington last night (11th September), and in shunting the Aylesbury passenger train, 6.55 p.m. from Tring for Aylesbury, I opened the wrong pair of points; and when I found out my error, and thinking the train had not got on the points I tried to open them, but the train was on them, causing two carriages to leave the rails, blocking down line about two hours. Carriages were got on before the break-down gang arrived."

"I am very sorry it has occurred, but I will be more careful in future."

I am informed that he was well acquainted with the cabin and with the levers, and has always been a careful, steady man. He simply made a mistake between two levers—Nos. 9 and 10 above referred to—which were next to one another in the cabin, and he caught hold of the wrong one.

The cause of this accident is very evident. A steady, careful man made a mistake,—to which all men are liable. He first pulled on the wrong point-lever, and then, on finding that he had done so, he pulled on the right one. In moving the right one, however, he caused the carriages to leave the rails. If he had let it alone, after his first mistake, until the train had passed through the points in the wrong direction no accident would have occurred, nor anything more than a little delay, which would have been necessary to allow the train again to set forward on the main line, and for the points to be shifted to allow it to set back into the branch. There is locking-apparatus, as already described, in the cabin; but inasmuch as the operation thus gone through, of backing the train through the junction points, did not require the movement of any signals, the points were not locked, and were free to be moved in any direction. As this backing operation is daily conducted, in order to get the train from Tring back into the Aylesbury branch, it would be better to add a ground-disc, or other suitable signal, to be employed as an indication to an engine-driver, in place of the white light from the hand-lamp above referred to, as to when it was right for him to set back into the branch. This signal will be easily added, and the lever working it being interlocked with the levers of the three pair of points, through which the train is required to back in order to get from the main line to the branch, it will be impossible for an accident of this description again to occur through any such mistake on the part of the signalman.

Orders have now been given to carry out this improvement.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary,
(Railway Department),
Board of Trade.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 8th December.

LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.

Sirs,

Chester, 9th October 1873.

I have the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 4th instant, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances which attended a collision between a passenger and a goods train that occurred on the 27th ultimo, between the distant and junction signals on the Crewe and Chester line of the London and North-Western Railway, at Crewe station, on which occasion 30 passengers

are returned as having been injured, but none of the injuries received are believed to be of a serious nature.

This portion of the Company's line is, at the present time, worked on the permissive block system; but the arrangements for working it between Crewe and Chester on the absolute block system are, I understand, in a very forward state.

On the morning in question, the Birkenhead and North Stafford goods train arrived at Crewe about