

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

16 November 1875

BoT Report into Accident at
Smithy Bridge.

(1 Page).

No. 16 (in doing which he declares he felt no unusual difficulty), and then lowered the starting, rear, and distant signals for the passenger-train; the passenger train then arrived and departed, and he did not, he says, put back the starting-signal to danger till the tail of the train had passed it; he did not see the engine leave the rails, nor did he notice any of the levers rattle in the cabin when it did so. Before the occurrence of this accident he was not aware that it was possible for him to have pulled over No. 16 lever far enough to liberate the starting-signal lever, unless the facing-points were lying right for the main-line; he however saw this done after the accident. Constant work had been for some time going on in connection with the point rods.

A signal-fitter in the Lancashire and Yorkshire Company's service, in charge of the Brighouse signal apparatus, was on the spot about 1½ hours after the accident. He found that it was possible, though in his opinion difficult, to pull over No. 16 (the locking-bar) lever, without the plunger entering the slot in the cross-bar between the points, and that thus the starting-signal might be lowered while the points were

not properly closed. A good deal of work had been lately going on in connection with the rods, in the course of which those worked by No. 15 and 16 levers had been altered.

There is no doubt but that this accident was caused by a want of proper adjustment in the rods worked by No. 15 and 16 levers, the points not having been properly closed by the movement of No. 15; and this imperfection not having been detected as it ought to have been by the signalman, who, had the apparatus been in proper order, should have been prevented from pulling over No. 16 lever sufficiently far to release the starting-signal.

The best arrangements will of course fail if not kept in proper working order, but the greater the distance between cabins and the facing-points worked from them, the greater the risk of something going wrong, and it seems therefore only right to restrict this distance within reasonable limits.

I have, &c.,
The Secretary, C. S. HUTCHINSON.
(Railway Department,) Lieut.-Col. R.E. and
Board of Trade. Colonel.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 22nd December.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade,
(Railway Department,)
 Whitehall, 15th December 1875.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the order of the 30th ultimo, the result of my inquiry into the circumstances connected with the accident which occurred on the 16th ultimo, at a public road level-crossing at Smithy Bridge station, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, a girl who was crossing the railway having been knocked down by a passing train, and so seriously injured that she died 21 hours afterwards.

A public road crosses on the level the main lines of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway at the down end of Smithy Bridge station. The gates close alternately either the road or railway, and are worked by an interlocked lever in a raised signal cabin on the down side of the crossing, but on the up side of the line. The wickets for foot passengers are not in any way controlled from the cabin, but it is the duty of the signalman to look out of his window on the approach of any train, for the purpose of warning any persons who may be about to cross. The view of the line from the crossing towards Manchester is good, towards Leeds moderately good.

At about 5.45 p.m. on the evening in question, the driver of the 5.21 p.m. up passenger train from Todmorden to Manchester was running through Smithy Bridge station at a speed of 14 or 15 miles an hour, having been checked by signal, when as he passed the level-crossing he heard the fire-irons rattle on the front of his engine, (which was a tank engine running coal box first,) but he heard no screams, and felt no shock; it was quite dark at the time. He thought one of the fire-irons had fallen off, and went on to Rochdale without stopping; he there examined his engine, and found the paddle (one of the fire-irons) turned partly round, but no marks of it having struck any one.

The signalman on duty had kept his signals on (not having received "line clear") against the up passenger train until it approached the home-signal,

when he lowered it, and the train passed at a speed of about 10 miles an hour. Just at this time a down cattle train had drawn over the level-crossing preparatory to setting back into a siding off the down line, the points of which are close to the crossing and on the up side of it. He says that he was at his window, but from the van of the cattle train being in the way was unable to see the wicket on the down side of the crossing, or he should have warned any one who might have been there of the approach of the up passenger train. As it was, he was unaware that there had been any accident until afterwards informed of it by the station-master.

The station master, who lives in a house close to the level-crossing gates on the down side of the line, was at tea when the accident happened; hearing a rattling noise he thought there was something wrong, and looking across the line saw a girl lying in the middle of the 4 ft. space of the up road, in a line between the wickets. He thinks the whole train must have passed over her. She was badly hurt about the head and body, and died in less than 24 hours. Two girls who had been with her informed the station master that they had told her to stop, but that she persisted in running across. The cattle train had no doubt prevented her from seeing how close the up train was.

As this crossing is stated to be largely used by workpeople going to and from neighbouring mills, it is certainly most desirable that a subway or over-bridge for foot passengers should be provided. As it is impossible for a signalman in a raised cabin some little distance from the wickets to keep back incautious people, he should I think have the power (until a subway or bridge is provided) of keeping the wickets closed when necessary by means of a lever in his cabin.

I have, &c.,
 C. S. HUTCHINSON,
 Lieut.-Col. R.E. and
 Colonel.
The Secretary,
(Railway Department,)
Board of Trade.

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 3rd January 1876.