

The
VIRTUAL MUSEUM
of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

20 June 1871

BoT Report into Accident at
Middleton Junction.

(1 Page).

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Manchester, 26th June 1871.

SIR, IN compliance with the instructions contained in your minute of the 24th instant, 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 collision, that occurred on the 20th instant, near the Middleton junction of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

In this case the 4.40 p.m. passenger train from Manchester to Bury caught up and came into collision with a special train of empty waggons from Middleton junction for Blue Pits, about a mile and a quarter on the east of Middleton junction.

The Middleton junction is five miles to the east of Manchester, on the main line to Yorkshire. There is a gradient of 1 in 1056 rising eastward for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the junction, and this is followed by a steeper gradient of 1 in 152 for $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile, also rising eastward.

The passenger train left Victoria at 4.42, two minutes late, consisting of a four-wheel-coupled engine and tender, and six carriages, of which the five last carriages were coupled together with Fay's continuous breaks. The engine-driver found the distant-signal at danger as he approached the Middleton junction, and he slackened speed in obedience to it, and ran in, as it was taken off, to the station-platform. As soon as the passengers had been exchanged the signal was lowered for starting, and the engine-driver proceeded forward, after a total delay of only two minutes, at his usual speed, towards Heywood. He received no caution of any train being in front of him, and he was running, as he believes, at 20 miles an hour, but probably at considerably higher speed, when in a storm of heavy rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, he suddenly saw the goods train about 50 yards in front of him. He states that he at once shut off his steam and reversed his engine, but that the reversing lever slipped forward again at the first attempt. By the time that he pulled it over again, he was within "two yards" of the goods train; and the collision occurred without his being able to whistle for the guard's breaks. The fireman says he applied the tender-break while the engine-driver was reversing the engine; but the guard knew nothing of the proximity of the goods train until he felt the shock of the collision.

The engine of the passenger train ran in under the break-van of the goods train, and, after running forward for 70 or 80 yards, fell over partly on its side in the ditch on the left of the line. The buffer-plank and buffers were broken, as well as other parts of the engine; but it was not so much damaged as might have been expected. The leading wheels of the front carriage were off the rails; but, with the exception of three windows being broken, the carriages were not damaged. Six of the passengers have complained of injury.

The goods train which was thus in the way of the passenger train, left the Middleton junction at 4.55 p.m., consisting of an engine and tender, 47 empty waggons, and a break-van. The engine, No. 295, had six wheels coupled, and weighed 28 tons in working order. It had 15-in. cylinders with a 24-in. stroke, and driving wheels five feet in diameter. The engine-driver states that he was unable to attain to a greater speed than 14 or 15 miles an hour, and that he was travelling at about that speed when he was caught up by the passenger train. He was only aware of the collision by feeling a "rebound" of his engine, or, in other words, by its being pushed suddenly forward; and he then sent back his fireman to see what had happened.

The guard from the tail of the goods train first saw the passenger train about 150 yards or more from his van, and he watched that train as it ap-

proached him. Seeing that the steam was not shut off, he jumped out of his van, when, as it appeared to him, the passenger train was within 40 or 50 yards of him; and he fell with his legs across a telegraph-post which lay in the six-foot intermediate space between the two lines. He was unhurt, although his train was going, as he believes, at a speed of 14 miles an hour at the time. He saw the collision occur, some 20 yards in front of him, immediately afterwards. His van was stove in, and seven of the waggons of his train were more or less damaged.

It was this man's impression that the engine-driver and fireman, while crouching down behind the weather board to avoid the very heavy storm which was then raging, came into collision with the goods train, with their steam on, and without having previously noticed it. But this the engine-driver and fireman positively deny, asserting that, as before stated, the engine was reversed and the tender-break applied before the collision occurred.

Neither the station-master, nor the foreman-porter, nor the signalman, can state exactly what amount of interval there was between the starting of the two trains from the Middleton junction, though they believe it to have been about eight minutes. But the guard of the goods train gives 4.55, and the guard of the passenger train 4.57, as the times of departure of the two trains, respectively, from the junction station, while a porter states that the goods train commenced to leave the goods siding at 4.46. The passenger train was started by the foreman porter, who rang the station bell for the purpose; and the signalman lowered the junction signal to *caution*, to allow it to start. As that signal is never lowered beyond *caution*, it would not, at *caution*, have indicated to the engine-driver any other meaning than that he was to proceed on his journey. As it started, the signalman called out to a porter on the station platform, "Go and tell the driver that the goods train has gone ahead of him;" but the train was by that time in motion, and the porter could not make the driver hear. All he could do was to communicate this information to the guard, who did not know that it had not also been communicated to the engine-driver, and who made no use of it.

This station is worked under the ordinary rules of the company, which direct that a danger signal shall be exhibited for five minutes, and a caution signal for five minutes more, after the passage of a train. But owing to the enormous amount of the traffic, it is impossible for the servants of the company at all times to carry out these regulations. The view is somewhat obstructed on this part of the line; and the engine-driver of the passenger train does not appear under the circumstances of a violent storm to have kept as good a look-out as he might have done from his engine; but he ought not to have been allowed to follow, and especially without warning, so closely after the goods train as he must have done from the Middleton junction. It cannot, however, be expected that any system of time intervals would be safely worked on this section of railway. The only mode of working that can properly be applied on such a line, with so heavy a traffic, is that of the block-system by telegraph; and I am happy to find that steps are being at length taken to put this system, the introduction of which has been so long delayed, into operation.

Strangely enough there were the same engine-driver, fireman, and guard with this passenger train, as with the passenger train which came into collision with the goods train at Miles Platting on the 19th ultimo.

I have, &c.,
H. W. TYLER.

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

Copies of the above report were sent to the company on the 7th July.