

The
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of the
LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Accident Reports.

2 October 1873

BoT Report into Accident at
Mirfield.

(2 Pages).

ahead for the driver to look to, the signal given by the station inspector that the work at the station has all been completed, the station inspector's hand-signal is all that is given to authorise the down train to proceed.

Portions of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, here and there, are now worked on the absolute block system with the assistance of the electric telegraph. Thus a portion of the branch line from North Dean towards Halifax and Bradford, as far as Dryclough junction, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from North Dean, and another portion on the main line about 1,000 yards in length between Elland station and the west end of the tunnel, which is about 350 yards from North Dean station, are thus worked.

On the day on which the collision occurred, the 8h. 10m. a.m. up passenger train from Huddersfield for Halifax and Bradford consisted of an engine and tender, four carriages, and one break-van, with continuous breaks on the last five vehicles.

It reached North Dean station at 8h. 46m. a.m., and the up platform about 8h. 51m.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company run a short local train between North Dean and Halifax, and this local up train from North Dean to Halifax, due to leave the former place at 8h. 40m., did not leave until just before the 8h. 10m. up train for Halifax and Bradford reached the up platform, as an up main line train reached North Dean station at 8h. 42m., and was detained there six minutes.

The driver of the 8h. 10m. up train for Halifax and Bradford states that all the signals were against him when he came out of the tunnel, and that he was called forward by the signalman on duty by means of a hand-signal; but this is distinctly contradicted by the signalman who says the driver drew up to the platform without any signal whatever from him.

The evidence is very conflicting as to the practice followed by the signalmen with respect to their lowering the up junction-signals for all trains that leave the up platform; they and the station inspector assert positively that it is always done, while the driver and the guards state that up trains frequently leave on being merely given a hand-signal by the signalman, in addition to the "all right" from the station inspector, when the work at the station is done.

The driver of this train further states, that after they had finished the work at the platform, the station inspector who stood near the engine called out "all right;" that on looking towards the signal-box he did

not see the signalman, and he looked at the main line up junction-signal and saw that it was on at danger against him; that he then looked for the branch line up junction-signal, but it was obscured by steam; that when the section in front to Dryclough junction is blocked the signalman comes and shows a red flag or a red light, to stop them from going, but if the section is clear, they sometimes start without getting the signal lowered or any signal from the signalman; that he gave three whistles for the branch line (which turns sharply off to the right) before starting, and that he did not observe that he was running on the straight main line, as he was looking towards the rear of his train to see if it was following over the junction, until on turning round he found that he had run about 38 yards on the main line instead of on the branch, and he then whistled for the guard's break, reversed the engine, and applied the steam the reverse way, but he did not succeed in stopping his train until the engine had come into collision with a coal train which was shunting on the up main line, about 94 yards from the spot from which he had started. This train started at 8h. 56m.

The buffer-plank of the passenger train engine was broken, and four waggons of the coal train were damaged.

The guard of this train only heard the driver give the usual starting whistle, and not the three whistles required to tell the signalman that the train was going on to the branch line to Halifax and Bradford.

The driver of the 8h. 10m. a.m. up train for Halifax and Bradford is to blame for having started his train without having received any signal from the signalman, when the section of line between North Dean and Dryclough junction was already occupied by the local train that left North Dean as he was drawing up to the platform, and also for his carelessness in not having seen at once that he was travelling on the wrong line.

At the same time, I think it probable that a very loose practice of signalling the trains out of this station has at times prevailed.

A re-arrangement of the station and the position of the signals is very much required, and is, I understand, to be made, so that the drivers of all trains will be obliged to look to the starting-signals before they attempt to leave.

I have, &c.,

W. YOLLAND,
Colonel.

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

Printed copies of the above report were sent to the Company on the 27th December.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.

Board of Trade,
(Railway Department),
Whitehall, 11th November 1873.

SIR,
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 6th ultimo, the result of my enquiry into the circumstances connected with the collision between a cattle train and a passenger train which occurred on the 2nd ultimo at the east end of Mirfield station, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

Two passengers are reported to have been shaken.

There are two signal-cabins at the east end of Mirfield station; from the one next the station at Cleckheaton junction, called the Tower cabin, 170 yards east of the platform end, the arrival and departure of trains coming from and going to the east is regulated; the second, W. cabin, 450 yards east of the

Tower cabin, is placed at the junction of two goods sidings with the main lines.

The next cabin east of W. is at Thornhill junction a mile distant, and between these two cabins the traffic is worked on the absolute block system. The necessary instruments are also provided for working block system between W. and the Tower cabins, but hitherto the traffic has been worked on this system only in case of fog; and on Sundays, when W. cabin is shut up, the block working is carried on between Thornhill junction and the Tower cabin.

For down trains going eastward, W. cabin is provided with a down distant-signal 400 yards off, (visible from the platform,) and with a down home-signal 40 yards west of the cabin. The Tower cabin has down home-signals and for a down distant-signal, starting-signals at the east end of the platforms, regulating the starting of trains from the main line and two bays.

The time of all trains or engines entering or departing from Mirfield is registered by a ground signalman stationed at cabin S, near the east end of the platform.

From Mirfield to Thornhill junction the line is situated on a descending gradient of 1 in 440, and there is a curve between the Tower and W. cabins, so that if the north siding is full of carriages it interferes with the view of a driver (approaching from Mirfield) of anything standing on the main line near W. cabin.

At 10.22 on the evening of the 2nd ultimo, the 10.15 train from Mirfield to Wakefield, consisting of engine, tender, and eight vehicles, including two break-vans, each coupled to the three adjoining vehicles with continuous breaks, stopped near the down home-signal at W. cabin, which was at danger, the block section between this cabin and Thornhill junction not being clear. The train had been standing about four minutes (according to the signalman) when it was run into by a special cattle train from Liverpool going to Doncaster via Wakefield. The signalman on duty neither saw nor heard the collision, but just before it took place he heard break whistles from the cattle train engine. The tail of the passenger train was standing 330 yards inside the W. cabin down distant-signal, and there is no dispute as to this signal having been at danger to protect it. The train had been detained at Mirfield about five minutes beyond its time until it had been ascertained that a London and North-western train due at Mirfield at 10.8 would arrive too late to be waited for, and then started with only two passengers, both in the last carriage, one of whom remained in his seat smoking after the collision.

The last four carriages were slightly damaged and had their break gear strained, and the right side light was knocked off the last carriage.

The special cattle train from Liverpool to Doncaster consisted, after leaving Soverby Bridge, of engine tender, 15 cattle waggons, a carriage with drovers, and a break-van with a guard. The driver states that the signals were clear for him to run through Mirfield station, and that he did so at about 10.20, at a speed of four miles an hour; that he gave his engine steam about halfway down the platform, at the end of which he noticed the W. cabin distant-signal at danger; that he in consequence shut off steam again and whistled for the signal; that on passing the Tower cabin, where the home-signal was off, he got no hand-signal; that he then saw the W. cabin home-signal at danger, and was letting his train run so as to stop at this signal, when he caught sight of one red light, which he at first thought was in the siding, but soon after discovered to be a side light of a train in front of him on the down main line; that he had time to whistle for the guard's break, have his tender-break applied, reverse his engine and give it back steam before striking the last carriage of the train at a very slow speed. The driver further states that the tail light of the passenger train was hanging downwards and burning dimly, and that had it been showing a proper light he would have seen it in time to have stopped.

The guard of the cattle train makes the time of passing through Mirfield, where they got clear signals, the same as the driver, viz., 10.20, and believes that the speed did not exceed five miles an hour on passing the Tower cabin, where he saw nothing of the signalman; he states that after hearing the break whistle he had time to put on his break before the collision occurred; that the blow was very slight, the drovers not being aware that anything had happened.

The cattle train sustained no damage.

There is considerable disagreement as to the interval of time that had elapsed between the passenger train and cattle train passing the Tower cabin.

According to the driver and guard of the passenger train they had hardly stopped before they were run into.

The fireman thinks they had been standing from 5 to 10 minutes before the collision occurred.

The signalman in W. cabin makes the interval four minutes between the arrival of the passenger train and the collision.

The signalman in the Tower cabin says that one train was five or six minutes after the other.

The signalman stationed near the end of the platform in cabin S, who registers the times of the trains, entered the passenger train as passing at 10.16, and the cattle train at 10.18, and this interval of two minutes probably represents the true state of the case.

Again, there is a curious discrepancy as to the proceedings of the cattle train; the servants of the Company with that train declare that no signals were against them at Mirfield till they came in sight of W. cabin distant-signal, whereas the Tower signalman declares that he checked the train by his signals before taking them off, and the signalman at cabin S. that the cattle train was absolutely stopped in the station.

As to the tail light of the passenger train it was probably burning dimly or lunging badly, for though this was not acknowledged by the driver, guard, or foreman porter at Mirfield, the Tower cabin signalman thought it was out as the train passed his cabin, and drew the cabin W. signalman's attention to the fact by ringing his bell several times; this notification the signalman in cabin W. admits to have received and understood as applying to the tail light, though he had taken no action in consequence, but was waiting, as he said, until the train passed into the advanced section when he would have seen the tail light, and then if necessary have called the guard's attention to it.

After fully considering the conflicting evidence in this case, the primary cause of the collision is, in my opinion, to be attributed to the Tower signalman having neglected to stop the cattle train at his cabin by keeping his home-signal at danger, as he ought to have done, in consequence of the short interval (probably two minutes) that had elapsed since the passenger train had passed; and this more particularly considering that he believed the tail light of the latter train was not burning. His mind evidently misgave him on the subject as the cattle train passed, for he acknowledges to have tried to attract the driver's attention by exhibiting a red hand light.

The cattle train driver was not running as cautiously as he ought to have been in approaching W. cabin, the signals of which were at danger, or he could, I believe, have stopped before striking the other train.

The weight of the evidence, I think, shows that the tail light of the passenger train was not burning as it ought to have been, and for this the guard is to blame.

This collision would have been prevented had the line between the Tower and W. cabins been worked upon the absolute block system. The superintendent of the line informed me that it was intended shortly so to work it.

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