

Ashburton, we believe that he allowed that desire to override his better judgment, and consequently maintained an excessive speed, expecting that No. 21 south would be in Rakaia in due time, and that the first excursion train would have cleared that station. The supposition that his mind was almost exclusively bent upon this one object seems to afford a reasonable explanation of the failure of himself and his fireman to see the green light which Burrows, the guard's assistant, alleges that he waved almost persistently between Chertsey Station and the scene of the accident.

We believe we shall not be travelling beyond the scope of your Excellency's Commission in making a few comments on the method of working as disclosed by the evidence :—

First : The system of crossing passenger-trains at a station unprovided with home and distant signals is one which should, with all possible despatch, be discontinued as dangerous. In this case, had such signals been in existence, Carter would have been instructed, under the usual rules governing their use, to come to a stop at the distant signal, immediately afterwards pulling slowly within and proceeding to the home signal, or as far as any obstruction on the road would permit ; the distant signal therefore protecting his rear.

We beg to submit that every station used for crossing passenger-trains, and having a resident staff, should be supplied with such signals, and that where trains have to be crossed at stations without resident staff the working time-table should provide for each train coming to a stand outside these points, and specify which train was to enter the station first.

Second : We are of opinion that the practice of running double-engine trains, consisting of anything like thirty carriages with passengers, is unwise, more especially in the absence of continuous brakes. Even with such brakes double-engine trains should not be used for the carriage of passengers except where such additional power may be necessary to assist a load over an exceptionally bad grade.

We are informed that an expenditure of £275,000 would equip the whole of the New Zealand railway stock with the Westinghouse continuous brake, and, as doubtless this work could only be done gradually and charged over a series of years, it seems probable that the burden of the annual interest would be less than the cost of repairs following slight accidents on some of the heavy grades worked in this colony.

Third : It would be very desirable to institute a system under which stations in advance of a fixed crossing-place should be advised of the late running of a train so booked to cross. For example, if in this case prompt advice had been given to Ashburton of the late running of No. 21 south, and it had been the duty of the Stationmaster to advise Carter to that effect, he would have been forewarned, and doubtless would have run more steadily between Chertsey and Rakaia.

Fourth : We are of opinion that an important rule such as 317 should not be allowed to fall into abeyance. We are aware that the working-book provides a maximum speed for (a) express and (b) ordinary trains, but it does so without expressly amending or cancelling an authorised rule (317) which forbids the making-up of lost time ; and even these maximums are, we believe, exceeded by the drivers. This is a state of things likely to bring about a comparatively lax adherence to regulations, and we suggest for consideration whether Rule 317 should not stand, with an added authority to the driver to exceed time-table speed only at the written request of the guard, and within stated limits. This system has been found to work well elsewhere.

In conclusion, we desire to express our thanks to all the officers of the Railway Department with whom we have been brought into contact in the discharge of our duties, the performance of which has been facilitated by the courtesy extended and the anxious wish manifested on all hands to contribute to the efficiency of our work.

We remain,

Your Excellency's most obedient servants,

(L.S.) ALAN G. PENDLETON.

(L.S.) J. GILES.

Wellington, 5th July, 1899.