

FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE RAILWAY.

We regret to announce that Mr Edward Smith, the surveyor of parochial roads, met with a fatal accident on the Railway at the Three Bridges Station, on Monday. The particulars will be gleaned by the following evidence, taken at the Inquest which was held on Tuesday, before the Coroner of Brighton, the unfortunate man having expired while on the way to the Sussex County Hospital.

William Burgess examined—I am a porter in the service of the London and Brighton Railway Company and reside at Three Bridges. The accident happened at the Three Bridges Station, yesterday morning, about 25 minutes before 11 o'clock. I was just closing the luggage box door, which was about five yards from the spot where deceased met with his death. The Brighton express train was coming from Brighton at the time. The Horsham goods train had arrived about five minutes before. We put part of the goods into a siding. Then we came down to the platform with the remainder of the trucks with the articles to put into the luggage box. As soon as we had got the articles out of the luggage box, we were going back to the points, as the express train was passing. I looked round, and saw the deceased step back on the metal where the truck was going to pass along; he was then looking at the express. The engine driver could not see the deceased; but, seeing the danger in which deceased was, I held up my hands to motion the driver to stop, and he did so as soon as he could. The driver sounded his whistle before he started; I am quite sure of that, he never moves his engine without blowing his whistle, as far as my recollection serves me. The buffer struck deceased in the back; and he fell with his legs across the metal. The truck was laden with fire-wood. There was not time for the driver to stop before the wheels passed over the deceased. I cannot saw whether the driver the engine or not. There was not time for him to stop the engine, after I gave the signal, before the train came in contact with deceased. The porter, Cox, ran as hard as he could run, and put his hand to deceased's shoulder just as the train struck him. The larry, loaded with firewood, passed over deceased; two or three other carriages and the engine also went over him. The train stopped about two or three yards from the body. The engine driver observing what had happened, immediately jumped off the engine; and the driver and myself picked up the deceased. One leg was cut nearly off, and the other seemed very much cut about. We bound up the legs with handkerchiefs and then went for the doctor, leaving the deceased in the care of Mr. Savage, station master. Deceased raised himself up, and looked at his legs after the handkerchiefs were bound round them. We went to Crawley for a surgeon; but could not meet with one. He did not see the deceased after that. I have known the deceased 20 or 30 years; his occupation was a road surveyor in Worth parish. He had some men on the incline, below the station unloading some flints.

In reply to a question from the Coroner the witness said the engine and train might have acquired such a momentum as to have passed over the body, more especially if the engine driver had not seen witness signal him immediately.

Thomas John Savage examined—I am station-master at the Three Bridges Station. I did not see the accident; but on being apprised of it, I found that the driver and the last witness had got deceased on the side of the rails. I ordered the engine driver to go to Crawley with all haste; and get the doctor. Finding he was so badly hurt, I felt certain that the doctor would order him to the hospital. I should think that scarcely a pint of blood came from deceased. The legs were cut asunder close up to the body. Deceased seemed conscious up to the time of death, which was about three quarters of an hour from the time the accident happened. Finding that the doctor was not to be seen, I put on a special train for the purpose of sending the deceased to Brighton; but he died between the Burgess Hill and the Hassocks Gate stations. I accompanied the deceased down the road till he died. He seemed perfectly conscious up to the last moment of his life. He put his hands up apparently in the attitude of prayer. We administered brandy to him; but he gradually sank under the injuries he had received.

George Cox, a porter at the Three Bridges Station, was called to prove that he was the person who attempted to rescue deceased from danger and failed.

Charles Goldsmith examined—I am an engine driver in the service of the London and Brighton Railway Company. I have been in the Company's service fourteen years. I had charge of the Horsham goods train on that day. The train consisted of engine and tender, luggage box, and coal waggon. When I started the engine, I heard a porter say "Allright." I whistled, as usual, when I put the steam on. The train was not screwed up tight. I was looking out on the right side of the engine when I started; and it was clear on that side. I should say that I had proceeded ten to fifteen yards before I observed any signal. I saw Allcorn on the left hand side just clear of the line. He looked at me; and made no signal. The first signal I saw was given by Burgess holding up his hands; and, as I said before, it might be ten yards or more after I started. If the front truck should come in contact with a person's leg I should not feel it, but I did feel a slight vibration when the engine went over deceased; and from this circumstance and the signal given, I feared something had happened. I stopped the train as quickly as I could after I saw Burgess's signal. It is the practice to start the goods trains occasionally by direction of the porters; but it is not specified in the printed rules. The usual practice is to start the passenger trains by the direction of the station master or the guard. I do not know which of the porters it was that said "All right." Thomas Liffen, the fireman, was on the engine at the time of the accident. On receiving a signal to stop suddenly, I reverse the engine and put on the break, which I did on the present occasion; but, by that time, the engine had obtained a momentum, so as to be going at the rate of five or six miles an hour.

John Allcorn, of Pound Hill, Worth, was witness to the accident; and, after other corroborative evidence, the Jury expressed themselves satisfied that no blame was attached to any party, and they returned a verdict of "Accidental death."