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October 21, 1911.

The Interstate Commerce Commission,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sirs:

On August 18, the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway reported by fire an accident which occurred near Grand View Avenue, about three miles west of Columbus, Ohio. Inspectors G. C. Cash and J. J. Coutts were assigned to make an investigation, and I herewith submit summary of their report:

Train No. 46 on the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway, hauled by Big Four engine 6418, consisting of one mail car, one baggage car, three coaches, and one dining car and two Pullman sleepers, was derailed at a switch leading to the Toledo & Ohio Central Railway's transfer track near Grand View Avenue, about three miles west of Columbus, Ohio, at 12:02 p. m., August 18, resulting in injuries to forty-five passengers, some of them serious.

The Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway crosses the Toledo & Ohio Central Railway about three miles west of Columbus, Ohio. This crossing is protected by a mechanical, manual controlled interlocking plant, which is under the control and supervision of the Toledo & Ohio Central Railway Company. The switches and signals are operated from a tower located just east of the crossing.

Passenger train No. 4, on the Toledo & Ohio Central Railway, had just passed this crossing. When the Towerman placed the signals back to normal on the Toledo & Ohio Central Railway, and endeavored to line the signals and switches for Big Four train No. 46, he discovered that lever No. 7 would not work. This is the lever that locks switch No. 6, leading into the Toledo & Ohio Central transfer track, and which must be locked before the towerman can give the clear "Home" and "Distant" signals to Big Four trains. Upon discovering that this lever would not work he disconnected lever No. 7 which throws the plunge or lock, and lever No. 6 which throws No. 6 switch points. The switch points then had nothing to hold them in proper position except their own weight. After disconnecting these two levers the mechanically controlled features on the interlocker were removed, and the towerman could give train No. 46 the clear "Home" and "distant" signals, which he did, and allowed the train to pass over this facing switch in this insecure and loose condition. The towerman stated that when he noticed No. 46 approaching at a high rate of speed he gave the engineer a slow down signal with his hand, pointing to the track, indicating to the engineman that something was wrong with the track or switch. On receiving this signal the engineman applied the air brakes in the emergency, and reduced speed from 50 miles an hour, so that at the time of the derailment the train was running about 25 miles an hour.

But for the engineer's prompt action in this particular it appears certain that the loss of life would have been great. All of the signals are on a straight track with nothing to obstruct the view for the distance of more than half a mile, and where so set as to indicate to train No. 46 the right to proceed at schedule speed.

The engine and three cars passed over this switch, the fourth car and all cars following being derailed. The two day coaches after derailment ran on the ties for about 800 feet and then turned over on their sides, the dining car and one sleeper turned over, the remaining car derailed standing in an upright position. Most of the injured passengers were in the day coaches which turned over on their sides.

Rules 620, 623 and 624 of the Toledo & Ohio Central Railway read as follows:

Rule 620. If a signal fails to work properly, its operation must be discontinued and the signal secured so as to give the normal indication until repaired.

Rule 623. If there is a derailment, or a switch is run through, or if any damage occur to the track or interlocking plant, the signals must be restored so as to give the normal indication, and no train or switching movement permitted until all parts of the interlocking plant and track liable to consequent injury have been examined and are known to be in a safe condition.

Rule 624. If necessary to disconnect a switch from the interlocking apparatus the switch must be securely fastened.

These rules were not complied with.

The towerman in charge of this interlocking plant had been employed by the Toledo & Ohio Central Railway at this tower since May 31, 1911. He was about 45 years of age, and upon taking charge of this tower was instructed in the work for three days by the towerman whom he relieved. He had no other experience as towerman or interlocking operator, but had been employed for four or five years at some previous time as a crossing watchman. This tower is not a train order or block signal station, and no records are kept on passing trains.

This accident was caused by the towerman disconnecting that part of the interlocking plant that secured the facing switch points of switch No. 6, leaving into the Toledo & Ohio Central transfer tracks, and disregarding the rules and instructions requiring him to securely fasten any disconnected switch before giving clear signals for a train to pass over it.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector.