In re Investigation of an accident which occurred on the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad at Westfield, N. Y., September 9, 1916.

On September 9, 1916, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad at Westfield, N. Y., which resulted in the death of 1 employee. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

This part of the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad is a single track line. Trains are operated by time-table and train orders. Approaching the point of accident the track is tangent for more than one mile, while the grade is slightly descending.

Eastbound freight train first No. 44 consisted of 41 cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 461, and was in charge of Conductor Mooney and Engineman Cornell. On its arrival at Westfield at 8:48 p.m., the train order board was found to be displayed, and a message was received to pull the train in on the siding, clear of the main line, and for the crew to remain within reach. The engineman instructed the fireman to operate the train into the side track, while he and the conductor remained at the station. After entering the side track the fireman stopped with the locomotive opposite the water tank for the purpose of taking water, and afterwards he pulled ahead until within three car lengths of the east end of the passing track, where it was standing when it was struck by train second No. 44.

Eastbound freight train second No. 44 consisted of 35 cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 425, and was in charge of Conductor Stevens and Engineman Luce. It arrived at Westfield at 8:53 p.m. and also found the train order board displayed, and received a message to pull into clear and remain within reach. Conductor Stevens remained at the station while Engineman Luce pulled into the passing track and stopped about 10 car lengths behind the rear end of the first section. He then oiled the locomotive, and as the first section had in the meantime pulled ahead, after having taken water, he moved his train ahead until it was within five or six car lengths of the caboose of train first No. 44. At this time the rear end of his train was about two car lengths into clear. Engineman Luce shortly afterwards received a signal to back up, but was unable to do so. He then took the slack, and while moving ahead for that purpose his locomotive collided with the caboose of the first section while running at a speed of three miles an hour, telescoping the caboose a distance of about 12 feet.

Engineman Luce stated that when he received the back-up signal he sounded three blasts on the whistle and attempted to back the train, at the same time telling the fireman to go out and uncover the headlight. Being unable to start the train backwards, he took the slack of 10 or 12 cars and again tried to back the train, but was unable to do so. He then moved ahead for the purpose of taking the slack of the entire train. He was watching the caboose, but got a little closer to it than he intended to and he stated that he had just reversed the locomotive when the slack ran up and pushed the locomotive forward into the caboose, telescoping it a distance of about 12 feet. Just as the locomotive reached the caboose, he pulled the throttle wide open. Engineman Luce also stated that he did not apply the air brakes, as he did not realize that he was close enough to do any damage, and he was expecting the locomotive to take the slack at any time and start the train moving backward. He further stated that there was nothing connected with the locomotive which interfered with its operation, or his observation, and that he was the only member of the train crew at fault for the accident.

Fireman Sydow stated that the engineman received a signal to back up and then sounded a back-up signal on the whistle, after which he told him to go out and uncover the headlight. The train started ahead and as he was on his way toward the front of the locomotive for the purpose of uncovering the headlight, the train stopped, after having moved ahead about one car length. The train then started again and when he reached the front end of the locomotive, at which time the two trains were about 2-1/2 or 3 car lengths apart, the speed of his train was about 3 miles an hour. After uncovering the headlight, he got off on the ground, at which time the front end of his locomotive was about 6 feet from the caboose. He whistled to warn the employees in the caboose and a brakeman, who was on the platform of the caboose, jumped to the ground. At this time his train was still moving ahead at a speed of about 3 miles an hour and he heard the emergency application of the air brakes. After the accident he boarded the locomotive and upon looking at the brake valve, found that the brakes had been applied.

Head Brakeman Brown stated that after the back-up signal had been sounded, he boarded the fourth car from the locomotive, hanging on the side ladder while the train moved ahead. He did not know how often the engineman took the slack, but stated that once the train moved ahead about one and one-half feet. After stopping about ten minutes, it again moved ahead and did not stop until the collision occurred. Brake-

man Brown also stated that he did not know whether or not the engineman was working steam at the time of the accident. He also said that the air brakes were not applied before the collision occurred, but afterwards he said that he was not certain whether or not they were applied. He also stated that he did not know whether or not the slack ran forward just before the collision occurred, but that it did run forward at the time of the collision. After the accident he did not notice whether or not the brakes were applied.

Brakeman Walters, who was standing at the main line switch in the rear of the caboose of train second No. 44, stated that the engineman took the slack twice. After the accident he did not notice whether or not the air brakes were applied. Conductor Stevens said he did not hear any application of the brakes being made and that after the accident he did not notice whether or not they had been applied.

Flagman Richards, of train first No. 44, stated that he was resting in the caboose when he heard a back-up signal sounded. He then heard the locomotive of train second No. 44 working steam, but on account of the noise made by the locomotive he did not hear any warning whistle which might have been sounded by the fireman of that locomotive. He got up, however, and saw the locomotive moving ahead toward the caboose. He did not know whether or not he called to Brakeman Clark, who was in the caboose with him and was killed in the accident, but stated that he did call out and then went out on the rear platform and jumped, at which time the locomotive was about 8 or 10 feet from the caboose, and was working steam.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Luce to exercise proper care in the handling of his train. He knew that the caboose of train first No. 44 was only a short distance ahead of his train, and the markers were burning brightly, showing a green indication to the rear; there was nothing to obstruct his view, neither was there anything connected with the operation of his locomotive which would have prevented him from properly attending to his duties. Under such circumstances, there is no excuse for such an accident.

Engineman Luce was employed as a fireman in December, 1898, and was promoted to engineman in February, 1905; his record was good. At the time of the accident he had been on duty 6 hours and 10 minutes, after an off-duty period of 9 hour and 20 minutes.