

## THE FATAL ACCIDENT ON THE RAILWAY AT SOUTHAMPTON.

An inquest was held at the Royal South Hants Infirmary, on Saturday morning, by Mr. W. Coxwell, borough coroner, on the body of William Love, who was knocked down and killed the previous day by some goods' trucks which were being shunted near the Marsh-lane footbridge, as reported in our last impression. Mr. M. Moseley, solicitor, appeared to watch the proceedings on behalf of James Odiam, the driver of the shunting engine, and Mr. R. P. Wiltshire, the superintendent at Southampton, represented the railway company.

After the jury had been sworn and viewed the body, the following evidence was adduced:—

Edward Love, a youth, wearing the company's uniform, identified the body of the deceased as that of his father, who lived at Bishopstoke, and was a blacksmith in the employ of the London and South-Western Railway Company. Witness believed his age was about 44 years; his mother told him so the previous evening.

John Barnett, an inspector of permanent way in the employ of the London and South-Western Railway Company, said the deceased on Friday was sent to Southampton to work, to "shut" some iron gates at Bevois-street. At 11.50 a.m. he was crossing from the down side of the goods yard near Marsh-lane, between the footbridge and the new over bridge. He crossed to get some red lead, and was knocked down by No. 1 shunting engine, which was shunting goods. He was knocked down by a wagon, the buffers of which he passed quite close to, and three wagons passed over his legs. Witness was about fifty yards off. No warning was given to him as he was crossing. The engine had stopped, and the wagons were going by themselves when the deceased was struck. There was no one on the trucks to put the break on. If there had been it would not have saved the deceased, as he was close to the wagon, and, he believed, had his hand on the buffer of the one that struck him. The general practice was to cross at least one length of a wagon in front, so that if they saw the trucks coming they would have time to get out of the way. Could not exactly say where the shunter was. The shunter was on one side, and deceased on the other. Only two were employed on the shunting. Did not see the second man. Had no doubt he was there, but he did not see him.

By a Juror.—It is not usual for the whistle to be sounded, as the public complained so much about it in consequence of the shunting going on all day. We have a temporary smith's shop near where the deceased was killed, and he was going from that shop to the gasfitters' to get some red lead. He was at the blacksmith's shop for the purpose of "shutting" a piece of iron belonging to the Bevois-street gates. He had been in the company's employ seven years, and was accustomed to this kind of work going on. He had been employed near the place for months.

Thomas Norwood, a fireman in the employ of the London and South-Western Railway Company, said he was on the shunting engine, and when he last saw deceased before the accident he was standing by the side of the last wagon. The engine and trucks were at a standstill. Witness went to shut the injector off, and he then saw no more of deceased.

The Coroner said if the witness saw the man there he should have told the driver. Did he do so?—Witness: There was not time, for we moved directly.

The Coroner.—Did you sound the whistle?—Witness: No. If we did that we may whistle all day long.

The Coroner.—I don't care two pins about that. It is your duty to guard against accidents, and if by any negligence you cause the death of a person you must take the consequences.

In answer to farther questions from the Coroner, witness said he did not think deceased would have heard the whistle, as the engine was blowing off steam. The driver got the signal from the shunter, whose duty it was to see the road was all clear before the signal was given. Could not say whether the driver had the signal in this instance. There were two men, he believed, shunting, but he did not see either of them when the accident happened.

The shunter of the train, named Henry Shergold, was duly cautioned by the Coroner, who asked him after that if he desired to give evidence, telling him that he did not wish to frighten him, but it was his duty to caution him that should the jury find him guilty of culpable negligence, which meant manslaughter, then the evidence he gave might be used against him at his trial.

The witness then retired from the room with Mr. Wiltshire, and on returning said he would give evidence of his own free will.

Shergold was sworn, and said he was standing about ten yards away from the trucks. His mate unhooked one, and witness gave the signal to the driver to "hit" them up. After unhooking, his mate went to the end of the engine to get out of the way of some coaches on another line. Deceased crossed over, and then stepped back in front of the wagons while they were in motion. He stepped quite clear, and then back into the four-foot. He turned himself round to do this. Was quite sure he did this. When he first crossed witness had just given the driver a signal to move. Witness called out to him. Deceased was had on his feet.

By the Jury.—I don't think he saw the coaches coming up the other line. I did not call to him to come back. I was in my proper place—before the trucks—when the signal was given.

Mr. H. W. Shettle, resident surgeon at the Infirmary, said deceased was admitted on Friday, suffering from a compound fracture of both thighs. He died from shock to the system within half-an-hour after his admission.

The Coroner, in summing up, said if the jury believed the evidence of Shergold the deceased crossed in front of the trucks with his eyes open, and was knocked down. That did away with any culpable negligence, which he at first imagined existed. There was no reason to doubt Shergold's evidence, and he could not see that culpable negligence attached to anyone, but that deceased came accidentally by his death.

The jury, after consulting a few minutes, returned a verdict of "Accidental death," adding that no blame attached to the shunter.

The Coroner said he quite agreed with them. It was a pure accident, and if any blame attached it was to the deceased himself.