

FEARFUL ACCIDENT ON THE NORTH-EASTERN RAILWAY.

T W O M E N K I L L E D .

A melancholy accident occurred on Friday night, a short distance from Usworth Station, on the North-Eastern Railway, which resulted in the loss of two lives; namely, those of John Craggs, 35 years of age, farmer, Strother House, Usworth, and Thos. Richardson, aged 61, brickmaker at Usworth Colliery. It appears that Craggs had been on a visit to Richardson, and the latter agreed to accompany him to his home, which was about a quarter of a mile distant. The railway being the nearest road and the best to travel upon, they selected it, and proceeded on their journey. After they had gone a short way, they observed a goods train coming down at a rapid pace, and they stepped on the up line. It is stated that both men were slightly deaf. Moreover, the rails were covered with snow, and in that state a train is not easily heard. A passenger train, due at Newcastle at half-past ten o'clock, coming along at an impetuous rate, the unfortunate men, unaware of its approach, were struck by it. The engine-driver of this train had seen the figure of a man, and suspecting that he had come into collision with some one, he at once reversed his engine, and brought it to a stand as soon as he was able. On going back a man was found destitute of one leg; this was Richardson, and he was dead. On a further search Craggs was discovered in a ditch in a deplorable state—his skull being fractured, part of his boot being torn away, he having been hit by the engine, and there was no doubt that he was the man whom the engine driver had seen. He was insensible, and both were taken to Newcastle. The body of Richardson was laid out in one of the offices at the Central Station to await being claimed by his friends. Craggs was conveyed to the Infirmary, where he died on Saturday morning at four o'clock.

THE INQUESTS.

On Saturday evening, Mr J. T. Hoyle, coroner, held inquests at the Durham Ox Inn, Cattle Market; first upon the body of Thomas Richardson, and next upon the body of John Craggs. The jury having viewed the bodies, the following evidence was received:—

Thomas Richardson spoke to the identity of his father; and after stating the facts as to his father accompanying Craggs home, &c., added, that they had to cross the railway to get to Craggs' residence—Strother House. There was a notice up against trespassing on the line.

John Laidler, of Gateshead, said: On Friday night he was driving the passenger train which left York at 7.15 p.m., and arrived at Newcastle at 10.30 p.m. They were just about time when the train came to Usworth. The train got to Usworth about six minutes past ten. The train was going at the usual speed—about 45 miles an hour. The line was level. The ground was covered with snow. His attention was directed to a dark spot within the space between the "up" and "down" lines of rails. He could not tell, from the speed the train was going at, the great distance the dark object was off. It was a light night, but stormy. He did not immediately turn off the steam, as he could not make out the dark object, and besides it was not in front of the engine. When about 30 yards distant he saw that the dark object was a man, who made a step forward to pass in front of the engine. He saw him step back again; and he thought he made a kind of stumble, and the buffer in front of the engine caught him either on his back or side, and threw him on to the "up" line. He thought the blow from the buffer of the engine would be sufficient to kill him; but there was a goods train coming on the "up" line, and the wheels of the engine of that train passed over one of his legs, and severed it from the body. The leg was found about forty yards from the body of the deceased, it having been carried forward by the wheels of the engine. The deceased was quite dead. He did not see Craggs struck, nor did he see him in company with Richardson, when he saw the last-named on the "six-foot." A guard and he found Craggs lying on the ground about five minutes after they got the body of Richardson. Craggs was very much injured, but was alive; he was moaning very heavily, and that attracted their attention to him. Craggs was lying clear of the line altogether, in the gutter by the side of the "up" line.

John Craggs, farmer, West Boldon, said: The other body shown to the jury was that of his son, John Craggs, 29 years of age. He was a husbandman, and worked a farm belonging to him called Strother House, near Usworth. His son left Strother House at five o'clock on Friday evening to seek in some money owing for potatoes and pigs, and, as far as he knew, was coming home with Richardson when the occurrence took place. The occurrence took place near the crossing, and his son and Richardson might not have been trespassing on the line, but going over at the proper crossing to get to Strother House. He had heard that they came along the road to the crossing, but they had no proof of that.

Mr MITFORD, who appeared on behalf of the North-Eastern Railway Company, produced a plan of the railway, and pointed out where the accident took place. He said it was just possible that the men had been crossing at the time at the proper crossing.

The above was the most important testimony given; and, in each case, the jury returned the same verdict of "Accidentally Killed."