October 17, 1911.

The Interstate Commerce Commission,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sirs:-

On September 5th, 1911, the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway notified this office by wire of an accident at Fremont, Wis., and Inspector C. F. Merrill was assigned to investigate the same. A synopsis of his report is herewith submitted.

Train No. 17, a fast north bound passenger train running from Chicago, Ill., to Duluth, Minn., was derailed one-half a mile south of Fremont, Wis., at about 1:16 A.M. September 5th, by striking a misplaced facing switch.

The train was about twenty-five minutes late and consisted of engine 2607, one combination mail and baggage car of wooden construction, two steel coaches, three sleepers, and one combination sleeper and observation car. The engine was equipped with a speed recorder and this showed that the train was running at about 54 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

The engine, combination mail and baggage car, two coaches and one sleeper left the track, the engine tipping

over on its side. The baggage car landed right side up, stripped of its trucks, part of it being outside of the right of way. The two coaches and the sleeper were listed over, one of the coaches plowing into the sand for quite a distance.

The engineman and three trespassers were killed, while the fireman and one passenger were injured. The three trespassers were stealing a ride, one on the pilot of the engine and the other two between the tank of the engine and the combination mail and baggage car.

On the day after the wreck, a boy about fifteen years of age was arrested for being responsible for the wreck. He confessed that he had broken the switch lock on the south passing track and had loosened the lever, but claims that he did not take the lever out of the socket. He did this at about 3 P.M. September 4th. Passenger train No. 3, a Limited train running between Chicago and St. Paul in the same direction as the derailed train, passed over this switch about 40 minutes before No. 17, and the supposition is that the switch lever, the lock being broken, was thrown out of the socket by the vibration of No. 3, causing the switch to become slightly misplaced.

The switch stand was about six and one-half feet high and was located on the engineman's side. The fireman states that just as he went to get on his seat box from the deck of the engine he noticed that the light did not look just right, but did not say anything about it, as they were

so close to the switch when he noticed it that he did not have time. The engine was of the Atlantic type and the engineman and fireman were in direct communication with each other.

The engineman had been running about six years, although he had not done very much passenger work, and his record was good. All of the employees had been on duty for short periods only, and previous to this trip had been off duty for from nineteen to thirty hours.

The track was straight for two miles south of the point of the accident and is governed by manual block signals. If some form of block signal system employing continuous electric track circuit had been in operation instead of the simple manual system used, it is probable that the accident would have been avoided, for, as soon as the switch was displaced, the circuit would have been broken and the signals would have indicated danger.

The coaches were of steel construction, and to this can be attributed the fact that none of the passengers was killed, while only one was injured.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of
Safety Appliances.