

Slip Coaches on the L.B.S.C.R.

By H. M. MADGWICK

IT is interesting to recall that the operation of slipping coaches, practised at one time or another by almost all the larger pre-grouping railway companies, was introduced on the former London, Brighton & South Coast Railway nearly one hundred years ago. In February, 1858, the 4 p.m. express from London Bridge, which previously had called at Haywards Heath to detach a Hastings (*via* Lewes) portion, commenced to run non-stop from Croydon to Brighton, slipping coaches for Hastings at Haywards Heath. Shortly afterwards, a similar slip portion was introduced on the 10 a.m. express from London Bridge.

The following instructions for detaching carriages without stopping from these trains appear in the appendix to the contemporary working timetables:—

"On starting, the Brighton part of the train will be in front. Each part will have two guards and two tail lights, so that when detached at Haywards Heath each part will form a perfectly appointed train. Before starting, the head guard of the Hastings part must see that it is properly coupled with the patent coupling, and that the side chains are *not* coupled but hung up. He must also see that his rope communication with the Brighton under guard is properly connected.

"The carriages *must not be detached* until the Haywards Heath distant signal is in sight. If it indicates 'all right,' the driver must give one distinct whistle for the guard to detach, but if on at 'stop' the carriages must not be detached, and the driver must give the usual alarm whistle, that all the brakes may be applied, and the train stopped as quickly as possible. The speed of the train must never exceed 25 m.p.h. on approaching the Haywards Heath distant signal.

"The head guard of the Hastings part will first detach his rope communication from the Brighton train, and then his coupling, seeing which properly effected the under guard of the Brighton train will give a hand signal to the driver to proceed. The head guard of the detached train will then brake it gently, and not *too suddenly*, up to the station platform, at night showing his hand lamp in front as a head-light.

"In case anything should prevent the detaching, the guards must give a stop signal to the driver, who must then stop

at the station; and in case of snow, storm or fog obscuring the distant signal, the driver must sound the alarm whistle for the brakes to be applied, and the detaching must not be done until the train has stopped at the station.

"If, by any chance, the train should become detached before arriving at the proper place, the snapping asunder of the guards' and driver's communicator will warn them all of the occurrence, and they must act in accordance with General Rules 43 and 173. The under guard of the detached train will leave the breaking of it at Haywards Heath to the head guard, and must only give his assistance if necessary.

"Care must be taken that none but the Brighton passengers get in the Brighton part of the train. The Hastings engine must not leave the siding at Haywards Heath until the train has stopped at the platform."

When it is remembered that only hand brakes were available for stopping the trains, one feels that the whole procedure must have been fraught with a measure of uncertainty. Possibly it was the cause of some excitement among the passengers, particularly those in the portion slipped!

Although the L.B.S.C.R., as with so many innovations, was very early in the field with slip coaches, references in the South Eastern Railway public timetables for January, 1858, suggest that such services were then in operation at certain places. However, the Brighton Company's claim to have introduced slip coaches in the February of that year is definitely established. In December, 1858, the Great Western Railway, which afterwards was to become the principal operator of slip coaches, introduced the feature on the 9.30 a.m. train from Paddington, which dropped a coach at Banbury.

The practice of slipping coaches was continued and extended on the L.B.S.C.R. The introduction of the Westinghouse automatic brake brought about a refinement of the operation, which could then be carried out at higher speeds and quite safely. The original crude rules were much amplified.

In 1914, twenty-one slip coach services were operated at various junction stations

on the L.B.S.C.R., but the first world war caused a drastic reduction, and in 1918 only two remained. After the end of the war, slip coaches were restored, and the timetables for 1921 showed 19 at the following stations: Haywards Heath (6); Polegate (4); Preston Park (3); Ashurst (2); and Barnham Junction, East Croydon, Horley, and Sutton (1 each). They were continued after the grouping of 1923, although from then onwards the total gradually decreased. By 1929, only two services survived.

The practice ceased completely on the Central Section of the Southern Railway (which the L.B.S.C.R. had become) in 1932, nearly three-quarters of a century after its introduction on the Brighton line. On Saturday, April 30, of that year, the 5.20 p.m. train from Victoria to Eastbourne slipped its East Grinstead and Forest Row portion at Three Bridges for the last time, and thus brought to a close the once-familiar operation of "slipping the slip," as it was commonly known.