

# Bicycle Brake=Van Competition

## THE RESULT

We little expected to obtain such numerous responses to our offer when, in the April issue of the RAILWAY MAGAZINE, we announced a prize competition and offered "three prizes—the first of Ten Guineas, the second of Five Guineas, and the third of Two Guineas—for the best designs which, in the opinion of the judges, shall best arrange for the proper, safe, and economical stowage of bicycles in railway brake-vans, the object aimed at being a brake-van that combines the advantages of close stowage, easy access to any particular bicycle, and safety of the machines during transit, together with simplicity and economy of design."

As soon as the competition was announced we commenced to receive numerous letters asking all kinds of extraordinary questions relative to the competition, and these letters increased as the last day for sending in the designs approached. We thought the terms of the competition were most lucidly announced, but apparently many of our numerous readers do not understand plain English, or they would have refrained from writing to us asking for information on the subject of the competition. A careful reading of the terms of the competition as printed in the April and May numbers of the RAILWAY MAGAZINE would have rendered 90 per cent. of the letters we received upon the subject unnecessary.

We must have a very modest and diffident body of readers. Many competitors wrote asking whether their names would be published if unsuccessful, or whether the fact that they had competed would be disclosed to anybody. One wrote saying a friend proposed to compete; need this friend disclose his identity? Could he not describe himself as "A Friend of Mr.—"? Well, we don't mind telling all these bashful people that, excepting the prize-winners, we have not troubled to open the envelopes containing the names and addresses of the competitors; so that, so far as the judges and the officials of the RAILWAY MAGAZINE are concerned, the names of the unsuccessful competitors are still unknown. Then many people wrote asking that they might be informed of the result of the competition by post, some naïvely stating that if they were successful they wished to patent their design before we published the result.

As is the case in all competitions, several people did not trouble to comply with the rules and were thereby disqualified. One wrote a letter giving some incomprehensible description of his idea, without drawings and models, and stated that it was the best suggestion we should receive, and that he was entitled to the first prize! Another calmly stated that he had reached finality, and that of course his design must be adjudged the best. Either through careless packing or rough usage in the post-office several designs never reached us at all, the address labels which were delivered being the only intimation we received that certain designs had been sent in. Had these packages been sent by rail instead of parcel-post they would doubtless have safely reached the offices of the RAILWAY MAGAZINE.

After the 1st of May the designs began to arrive three or four daily, and so we expected them to continue during the month; but we were greatly surprised on this point. We did not know that the RAILWAY MAGAZINE contained so large a number of inventors amongst its numerous readers. Have you chanced to pass along the Liverpool Road, Islington, upon the last day for receiving machinery exhibits for the annual cattle show of the Smithfield Club? If so, you know that there is a long line of hundreds of railway and carriers' vans arranged along both sides of that thoroughfare and of Barford Street, awaiting their turn to unload exhibits. We are inclined to think Temple Avenue must have presented a somewhat similar appearance on Whit Monday, when the competition closed; but, as we did not attend on the Bank Holiday, we were spared the sight of seeing the exhibition of patience that the carmen and others would have to undergo when awaiting their turn to unload.

Then we were at times taken aback by mechanics forcing their way into our office for the purpose of fixing the wonderful apparatus they had prepared for "the proper, safe, and economical stowage of bicycles in railway brake-vans."

At last the number of exhibits increased to such an amount that we were obliged to rent additional rooms for the purpose of unpacking and showing them to the judges. Then we

had to engage a qualified staff to undertake the work of unpacking and arranging the designs and models.

When the day arranged for the judging arrived the gentlemen who had so kindly promised to act as judges were astonished, but not dismayed, with the task before them. They probably knew that the circulation of the RAILWAY MAGAZINE far exceeded the combined total circulation of all other railway periodicals (except the "Railway Herald"); but, calculating on the average number of competitors, compared with the circulation in competitions of this kind, these experienced gentlemen must have immediately recognised that our circulation far exceeded the most sanguine ideals of anyone unconnected with its publication.

The judges went to work with a will, and their wide experience and knowledge of the necessities of the case enabled them to at once decide the inutility of many of the designs and models. Thus some competitors arranged for the bicycles to be stored upside down or on end. Others dependent upon delicate mechanism were also passed over, the rough usages incident to a brake-van not being adapted for such apparatus. Nor did complicated fittings entailing much work stand a chance—railway guards have not the time or inclination for such methods of storing bicycles.

Many of the designs were all right for loading up the machines, but when it came to getting out a certain machine their uselessness was apparent. It meant unpacking most of the van-load to get at that bicycle. It will be seen that the number of possible winners was therefore at once greatly reduced; and even when the traffic officials saw designs that appeared good, a reference to the technical judges resulted in the pointing out of mechanical faults, so that the numbers were further reduced.

At last, after many trials and various tests, a decision was arrived at; but the judges distinctly stated that, although they awarded the three prizes in the terms of the competition to the best designs sent in, they did not consider any of them sufficiently simple and inexpensive for adoption on a large scale. Indeed, one judge stated that he already was experimenting with a better apparatus than any sent in for competition.

We append a copy of the judges' award:

*We hereby certify that we have examined the designs sent in for competition in connection with the RAILWAY MAGAZINE BICYCLE BRAKE-VAN COMPETITION, and award the first prize to the design sent in under the motto of "X," the second prize to "Ixion," and the third to "Rigidity and Security."*

*Dated this 15th day of June, 1898.*

*Signed:*

- T. I. ALLEN, Superintendent of Line, Great Western Railway.*
- W. PANTER, Carriage Superintendent, London and South Western Railway.*
- W. F. PETTIGREW, Carriage Superintendent, Furness Railway.*
- R. TURNBULL, Superintendent of Line, London and North Western Railway.*

After receiving this certificate we opened the three sealed envelopes containing the successful names and addresses, and found that ("X") Messrs. Willford and Co., Limited, Sheffield, are entitled to the first prize; ("Ixion") Mr. R. Collins, Kirk Burton Vicarage, Huddersfield, to the second prize; and ("Rigidity and Security") Mr. H. T. Sayer, 12, Well Court, Bow Lane, E.C., to the third prize.

Competitors desiring the return of their designs will please note that they must call or send for them without delay. All designs not so applied for by Saturday, July 31st, 1898, will be otherwise disposed of without further notice.

