

Review of *Victorian Railway Days*

by B.A.

Francis Bennion could hardly be bettered in his fine evocation of life in an English village during the period of social change that followed the coming of the Railway. The mysterious appearance of golden sovereigns in the hands of the lamp boy at the new branch line station, an excursion train to the gruesome spectacle of a public hanging (and a woman at that) which divides the village, the vicar's daughter of uncertain age who falls in love with a youthful shunter, the local Squire faced with a designing woman who gets herself locked in his first-class compartment to London, a ghost (or is it?) that haunts a nearby signal box, disaster on a Sunday school trip to the seaside end of the branch line - these are some of the incidents in this eventful and highly-readable collection of stories about the coming of the branch line railway to an English village in the 1860s. Patterns of life, undisturbed for centuries, altered overnight with the arrival of gangs of Irish navvies, closely followed by a type new to the English village - the Railway Company Official. The author's eye for the period is so matched by his narrative style that it is difficult to believe he was not actually present, knowing the characters and witnessing at first hand the events he so movingly depicts.

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For full version of abbreviations click 'Abbreviations' on FB's website.