SAM'S SAFETY-LAMP.

A FACT.

LIMESTONE JUNCTION is not a particularly inviting sort of spot on a November night when the north-easter is raving over the hills. These hills form part of what is in the elemental geography books called "the back-bone of England." A deep and devious valley intersects bleak moorland heights. Over the valley the line of a great railway company is carried along a terrace of rock blasted by dynamite out of the side of the hill-slope. Now the steel road perforates a threatening mountain tor by a damp tunnel; anon it is carried over a rushing mountain stream by a viaduct sensational in its giddy height; then it winds in a cutting through rocks that rise in precipitous masses on either side, their austere ruggedness broken by a lace-like thread of falling water, or by glimpses of glancing fern and green climbing plants.

Limestone Junction forms a confluence of railway lines. They lead to the great cities of the North in one direction; in another they form the highway to London; in a third they convey the traveller to lead-mines and coal-fields; in a fourth they take him to Spaville-in-the-Peak, whose waters cured Roman centurions of rheumatism, and to-day bubble up a medicinal miracle for the benefit of British generals who have left their livers in India.

I have been staying at Spaville-in-the-Peak. I went there on crutches: I have left those artificial limbs at the well as a testimonial to the efficacy of the waters. To-night I am doing a vigorous sort of quarter-deck exercise up and down the platform of Limestone Junction, with the springy step of a young pedestrian in full training. The train that brought me from Spaville-in-the-Peak has deposited its passengers, and has shunted into a shadowy siding where the engine-fire is burning Schalcken effects in the dark night.

"She's fifty-three late, sir," says a friendly porter, referring to the express that is to carry me to the South. The north-east wind tears down the valley; snow is carried on its swift breath. The small fire in the small waiting-room is monopolised by a miscellaneous company. They are listening to the talk of a lead-miner, who looks as if he had been born and brought up in a flour-bin. He is eloquent about "t'owd mon"—not the "Grand Old Man" of the House of Commons. The "owd mon" referred to lived some odd thousand years or more ago, and left the speaker a legacy in the way of a lead-mining pick and shovel, which he is showing to the company. Lead-miners in this North-Midland shire sometimes come across "t'owd mon." The expression describes the Roman predecessor who delved for ore, and who left traces of his presence in the workings in the shape of tools and lamps. When the modern workmen encounter these relics, they say they have met "t'owd mon."

While I am examining these curious old-world tools, the aforesaid friendly porter comes into the waiting-room. He makes some inquiry concerning my luggage, which involves my returning to the platform. The storm is still sweeping down the valley; the wind seems to blow direct from the heart of an iceberg.

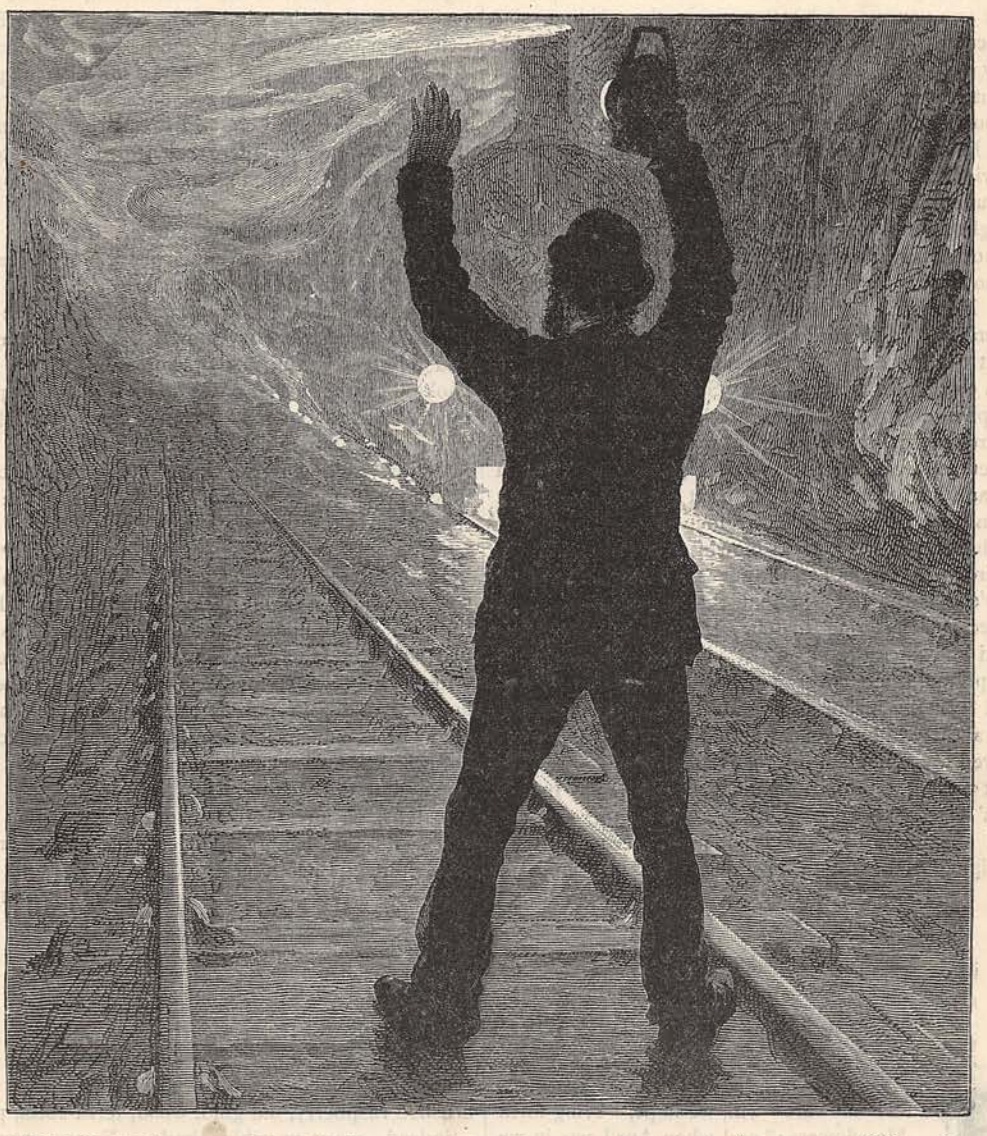
"We've a better sort of a fire in 'ere, sir, if you would not mind the place being a bit rough like," says the attentive official. The invitation applies to a room at the end of the station-buildings. It is as warm as a stove, and seems fragrant with fustian, lamp-oil, and frizzled bacon. It is the *sanctum* of the station staff. Railway regulations and notices diversify the white-washed walls. A kettle hisses on the fire in competition with the wind. Half a dozen men of the line are congregated round the fender. An engine-driver, so black and gritty that he might have been carved out of a corpulent pillar of coal, is drinking scalding tea out of a basin, and at one and the same time consuming cold slices of bread-and-something, and smoking strong Cavendish tobacco from a cutty-pipe—quite a Rembrandt pipe in the extraordinary blackness of its "colouring." A goods guard is discussing with his mates the merits of the Railway Servants' Orphanage, while he is straining his eyes over the small print of a "working time-table," "for the use of the Company's servants only." A bell rings, and the driver rises from his repast, and pulls on a great-coat, leaving, I notice, his pipe among a litter of cans and pots on the encumbered mantel-shelf, to be taken up, when he is gone, by a plate-layer-looking man, who extracts from the black clay the few whiffs of consolation that its red-hot ashes contain. The pipe, it transpires, is the common property of the men, and its sacred fire is never suffered to go out. Originally it cost one penny, but its value has increased with its blackness.

The north-east wind still sweeps down the valley in icy gusts.

"Just such a night as this, Sam, when you saved the express," says the porter who has introduced me to the rough hospitality and roaring fire of this little room.

"When I heard the wind, I was a thinkin' on it myself," replies Sam. He is the plate-layer-looking man, who is taking the "consolatory whiffs" out of the pipe: a heavy, unkempt, weather-beaten man, with a rugose face. His ponderous lace-up boots, and

strapped corduroy trousers, seem to contain sufficient clay to establish a small landed estate. I am anxious to hear the story. One or two of his comrades of the line prompt him to recount his experience.



"JUST IN TIME . . . TO WAVE THE RED SIGNAL TO THE DRIVER OF THE 'SCOTCHMAN'" (*p.* 306).

An earnest look comes over the rugged face. His eyes have an expression as if they were looking far away.

"Well, sir," he begins, "there's not much in it. It's nigh fifteen years ago. There wor none o' them block talegrafts, and Westin'house brakes, and Pullman cars on cut then. It wor just such a dirty night as this, when the wind wor up and wouldna be said. We had a pitch in just at the edge on the viaduct at the Junction. The shuntin' ingin wor a collectin' her wagons, and she got astride on the facin'-p'ints, just as the down slow passenger train came a knockin' into her, and blockin' both roads. Some sed it wor all on account on the signals. Others made it out as it wor cos the lockin'-bar wor out of order. Anyhow the Govinment inspector couldna clear it up, although there wor any amount of ingineers and officials down wi' plans and sections. We wor all confusion. Luckily none was much the worse. Some was shook a bit, and an owd woman died of the fright. I live close by the line, and hearing the crash, runned up to see what wor amiss. I wor just a goin' to help to

clear one of the roads, when something quite of a sudden like occurred to my moind.

"I asked Job Croft, 'Is the "Scotchman" gone up yet?'

"'No!' said somebody in the dark.

"I think it wor the station-master. I had a red lamp in my hands, and off I started to stop her. Have you never seen her go across the viaduct, sir? She comes down the bank at sixty miles an hour every night of her life. The incline falls one in seventy, so you may guess she's not wasting time. She just slips down with her fifteen coaches like well-oiled lightnin'. Well, as I wor a sayin', I runs over the viaduct like a madman, makes my way through the tunnel, and when I got in the cuttin', the wind brought me the roar of the 'Scotchman' going like a red-hot rocket through Drabble Dale station, a mile or more off. The wind it came through the cuttin' till I had fairly to howd mysen on the rails, to keep mysen from being a' blown away.

"It wor then my lamp went out. It wor blown clean out, and in no time the 'Scotchman' would be a ripping down the hill like a havalanche of flame. I searched my pockets for a match. In my coat-pockets never a one, although I generally carries a box, and have done ever since that fearful night. At last in my waistcoat-pockets I found *one match*. One match, and the wind wor a blowin' through the cuttin' as through a funnel! I'm not a saint, sir; but I know'd that the lives in that thunderin' express depended on that one match. If she went into the fouled line she'd drop over the viaduct into the river. The prerspiration covered me with a cold sweat. I could 'ear my 'art a thumpin'. For a moment I went a' dizzy like. Then I pulled mysen together and throwed my whole life into one short prayer.

"It wor all done in a moment. I felt then in the cuttin' for a crevice, and, thank God! there wor a small opening where the fog-men shelter when they are signallin' the trains on thick nights. I crept in this 'ere place. I opens my lamp, and put the match inside the frame. I trembled lest it should fail. But somehow I wor strangely cool and steady about the hands. I struck, and huddled round the match. The wick caught the fire, and I wor just in time to jump from the hole into the six-foot and wave the red signal to the driver of the 'Scotchman,' as she rushed past faster than the wind. She wor a goin'! But the driver wor on the look-out, and had seen the red light. All I could see wor the tail-lamps on the rear guard's-van; but I could 'ear the danger whistle for all the brakes to be clapped on, and I 'eard 'em a grindin' on the metals, and then there wor a gratin' that told me he wor a reversin' the ingine."

"Stopped?"

"Yes, sir, just as she got on the edge of the viaduct. He had her buffer-plank not three yards from where the line wor a fouled.

"The sweat poured down my face as I made for the Junction again; but I know'd I'd saved the train, and I prayed again, not in words, but with a sort of choking gratitude that came up in big, burning lumps in my throat. Some of my mates gave me this 'ere watch and chain, and I wor shifted up by the Superintendint to a ganger's job; but I dunna take so much credit to mysen, for Providence lit the match that night in the storm."

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Just as the speaker is finishing his story, the gong rings in announcement of the London train. I grasp the great, hard, honest hand of Sam in a cordial good-bye; and when the express is whirling me to the South I repeat his story to myself, and think that there are heroes, working in humble obscurity on the line, who are as great as any on the battle-field; undecorated, unrewarded, unknown, they may be; but they are as brave and unflinching, when duty calls and danger threatens, as any of the valorous ones upon whose red coats the Empress-Queen has with her royal hands pinned the Victoria Cross.

EDWARD BRADBURY.

WHAT TO WEAR.

CHIT-CHAT ON DRESS. BY OUR PARIS CORRESPONDENT.

"APRIL showers" will, we hope, "bring forth May flowers;" and when April sets in we begin to have a foretaste of spring, and to think of a change of clothing. The first thing you will be wanting is, possibly, a bonnet, so I have been doing my best to find out—for your benefit—the newest ideas in the matter of millinery. The close Princesse shape continues to be fashionable amongst English women; and at the present moment straw is the material most used, not only black and white, but far more popular are such colours as *fraise écrasée*, mahogany, olive-green, sapphire-blue, electric blue, bright golden yellow, crushed raspberry, old gold, wood, terra-cotta, petunia—indeed, every possible shade. Fancy straws are sold—a few of them—but the predominating bonnets are of fine plain closely-plaited straws. The Olivia shape, associated with the well-known character of *Olivia Primrose*, has come out as the very newest form in hats, caps, and bonnets, all these *coiffures* standing up in a cloven point over the face, and the vacuum—which is large above the forehead—filled in with plaited lace. A very handsome bonnet of this kind was of cream satin and lace trimmed with pearls and gold; for when bonnets are really French, and not Anglicised, they are large and important-looking. A black velvet of the same form has the edge laced