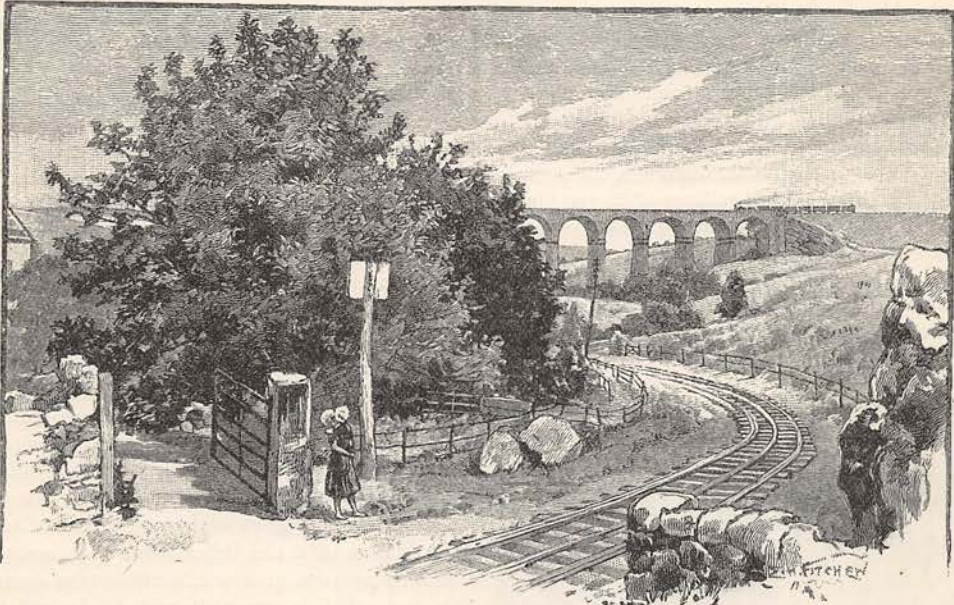


A MODEL IRISH TOWN.



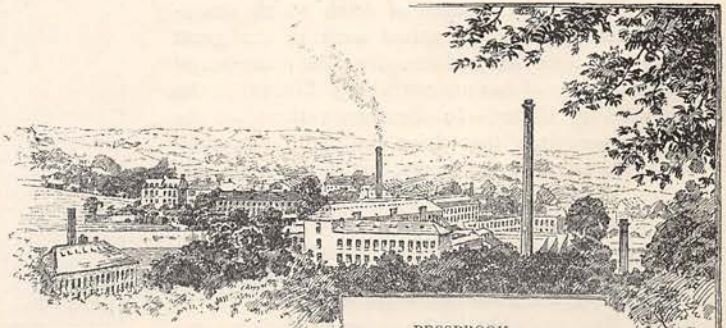
THE ELECTRIC TRAMWAY, MILL VALE, BESSBROOK.

ON the journey between Dublin and Belfast, and when Dundalk is passed and the Gorahwood junction is near, a tramway-line may be seen burrowing deep under the main line. In that hilly region a town has arisen in recent years which has an interest and a history, and to which the electric tramway leads from the port Newry, in the valley below. The little manufacturing town of Bessbrook is neither so large as some of the towns near that build up the linen trade of Ulster, nor does there attach to it the historic association that others have, but as a social experiment it has an interest they have not. It is the realisation of a dream of a manufacturer, who desired to locate his works in a place where there should be "neither publican, pawnbroker, nor policeman." Trade had prospered with him, and he desired to so improve the surroundings of the workmen he employed that they should share in that prosperity. Hence arose what has been called the model town of Bessbrook. There have been others, earlier and later, who have endeavoured to build up towns free from some of the objectionable accompaniments of town life generally; but of all, the little Irish town may be said to be the most complete. It lacks the noble Grecian buildings which attract the visitor to Saltaire, but it has an isolation which the

latter has not; and similarly it may be distinguished from other "model towns."

When the century was young, there was born at Lisburn, to a manufacturer named Richardson, a son, who was called John Grubb. Comparatively early in life he entered also into the linen trade, and shared in the prosperity the industry knew through the improvement of processes and through the introduction of steam power in the first half of the century; whilst later, some of the blows which wars have temporarily given to the cotton trade have benefited the sister textile industry.

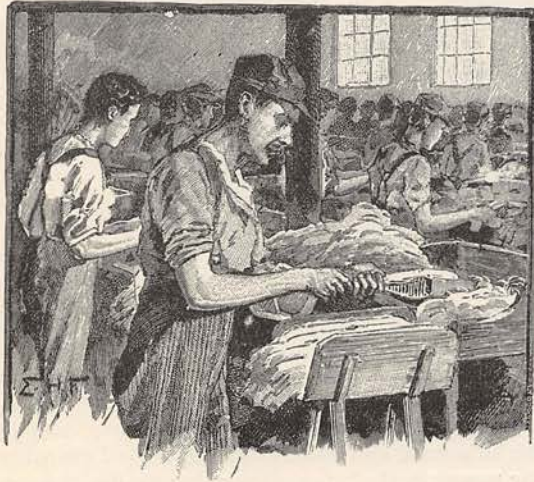
Forty years ago the Bessbrook works were established. The estate of that name, consisting of some 6,000 acres, came into the market, and was bought by the Richardson family, and for years the direction of



BESSBROOK.

(From the Grounds of the late Proprietor's House.)

the concern was in the hands of the late Mr. John Grubb Richardson. Granite found on the estate has given much of the material for the massive buildings of the factory; then substantial streets arose, with dwellings of various sizes, each for one family, and with a central square, where are most of the more public buildings. A school, a dispensary, a news-room, formed part of the plan, but no public-house. Chapels and churches arose; and naturally the religious views of the founders suggested the addition of a Quakers' meeting-house. The huge mills, with their tall chimneys, the public buildings, the cottages of the workmen, and a few dwellings of larger dimensions—these form still the material Bessbrook—the centre of works which in normal times employ some 4,000 workpeople, and in the mills of which 800 looms and 13,000 spindles are placed. To the original design there have been slight additions: an



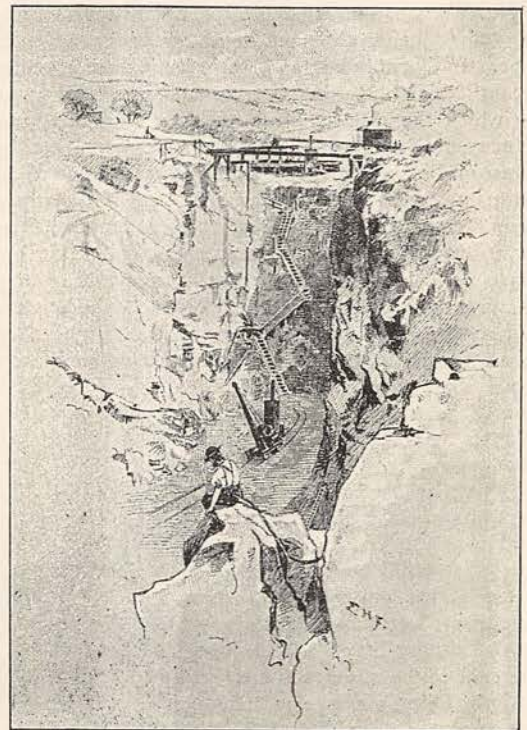
HECKLING AT BESSBROOK MILLS.

electric tramway carries goods and passengers down from Bessbrook to Newry, and gives the benefit of ready and cheap carriage thereto; education is assured to the workmen; provision against the accidents that will happen; and there are many organisations for giving, by co-operative effort, greater comfort to the workers.

It is this and the absence of drink which distinguish Bessbrook. In the actual work of the great mills there is little that is distinctive; the processes of the manufacture of flax are not widely different in the many mills in Ulster. In Bessbrook there are the huge steam-engines that drive the multifarious machinery, the hundreds of looms, and the thousands of spindles; there is spinning and dressing, weaving and pressing, and many a process until the flax becomes linen in the form desired. The workers, too, are of the type and largely recruited from the class long associated with the great textile trade of the north of Ireland. And probably, in the nature of the remuneration, in the method of work, and in the accompani-

ments of labour, there is little that varies at Bessbrook from other factories that feed the great warehouses at Belfast. But the difference lies in the absence of some evils which elsewhere manifest themselves in communities, and in the endeavour to foster habits of temperance, of thrift, and of recreation that is without the presence of "the drink." The colony at Bessbrook is in itself still free from the presence of what was desired to be absent, and is still thus a temperance town.

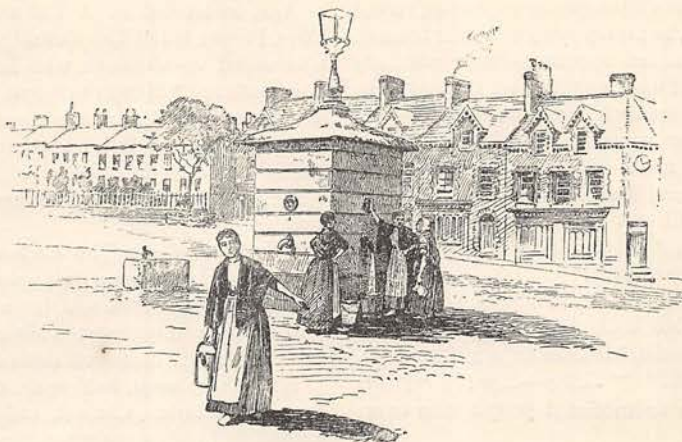
It is not yet a huge aggregation, it is chiefly dependent on one industry knowing some of the fluctuations of trade. But on the breezy uplands the cottages of Bessbrook, with their large gardens, give a fairly contented body of workpeople to the many-storeyed mills; peace is undisturbed by drunken brawls in its streets; and whilst around it there are patches of sterility, it is an industrial oasis, and one also that has its picturesqueness near in wood, and stream, and heath-clad moorland. The district it is centred in is one which is associated with the development of the textile trades of Ireland, and it is on the chief of these that the prosperity of Bessbrook depends. Its prosperity must in some degree, therefore, depend on the condition of the linen manufacture; for thrift can only cause the wise use of the earnings of workmen—it cannot remove all the causes of trade depressions that come and go. And there are not many other industries centred there to give relief in any such period. Indeed, in Ulster generally agriculture is the alternative great industry to linen; though there are iron mines and one or two other subsidiary workings. But the dependence so



THE GRANITE QUARRY.

largely on one industry will give to this little "model Irish town" a more partial prosperity, though it brings out into fuller relief some of the methods by which in

it the Richardson family, who chiefly own it, are endeavouring to foster thrift, temperance, and industry.



IN BESSBROOK.

"ONLY JUST!"

THE AUTHOR OF "WHO IS SYLVIA?" "MISS HILARY'S SUITORS," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

LOVELY September afternoon was just on the wane; the wide gardens of Weston Manor still looked lovely, but the trees around were golden-tinted and scarlet-berried. The robin had nigh a monopoly of music; swallows circled restlessly under the clear sky in busy consultation about their seaward journey; and—

"Summer is nearly gone," said the master of the place, regretfully, to a late-arriving lady guest, a temporary neighbour only, who rustled along beside him in the splendour of much satin and jet, "so our young people are lucky

indeed to have two such days for their tournament. When the weather breaks up, away go the tennis-nets till Whitsuntide."

"Oh, pray don't prophesy such disagreeable things, Mr. Clifford," begged the lady. "Please enjoy the present moment without dark forebodings. That's what I always make a point of doing. The present is so nice, so amusing, so interesting. Hark how they are clapping; do let us go and watch the final. I was in an agony for fear my stupid callers should prevent my getting here in time for it. I wonder which will win: your niece or my cousin."

"Doth can't, unluckily," returned her host; "they and their partners seem so well matched one hardly

knows which pair to back. Oh, good!" as a very pretty rally between the two girls ended in a stroke that sent the ball over the head of the taller one, to be dexterously whizzed back by her nimble partner, only to be still more cleverly taken in the opposite court by his male adversary, and "placed" so neatly that a headlong rush barely reached it at its second bound, and a shout of "Game!" rose from the crowd of onlookers. "Bravo, Jack! That was well played."

"My cousin is handicapped," exclaimed the lady, rather crossly, "your niece and Mr. Fergusson understand each other's style so perfectly."

"They ought. They've played often enough together; and I am bound to say successfully, too."

"Perhaps they will make a successful pair in another way before long," said the lady significantly. "I've heard whispers of that more than once."

"Whispers are not always right," said her host. "Come and have a cup of tea, Mrs. Forbes, before we watch the last game."

Handsome, suave Mrs. Forbes was no vast favourite of Mr. Clifford's. He was not disposed to confide to her what, nevertheless, he felt tolerably well assured of himself—that Jack Fergusson, the clever rising young doctor of this country district, had fallen more and more in love with his beautiful niece ever since he first settled among them, three years before: just the date when Clarice Clifford had been left at Weston Manor while the major, her father, went on foreign service for the last time. But that was the actual state of the case, and Mr. Clifford made no question but that the young people understood each

