

tings and embankments required for canals; hence they were called "navigators," which was abbreviated into "navvies." Though rather rough in manners, they were not, on the whole, bad fellows at bottom. Under Mr. Brassey many of them rose to comfort and independence, and some became employers of labour. Of course they belonged to various nationalities; and on the same line of railway it was nothing uncommon to hear English, Irish, Gaelic and Welsh spoken.

These navvies then were the privates in the great army of workers of which Mr. Brassey was commander-in-chief; and to guide their operations aright required almost as high talent as to direct the movements of an army in the tented field. It was no uncommon thing for Mr. Brassey to have ten or a dozen contracts on hand at the same time. The number of men he employed was enormous. On a single railway—the Great Northern—he had, at one time, between five and six thousand men employed, and of course, many thousands elsewhere at the same time. No employer ever dealt more liberally with labour; and he was quite above the meanness of screwing down wages. Probably there never was a man who made so much money, caring so little for the money itself. The great secret of his success was that he chose his agents with great care and with consummate judgment; and after he had chosen them he placed implicit confidence in them,—merely looking to results, not details, and never wearying them with minute criticism, never worrying them with fault-finding. When his operations became very extensive, he ceased to pay much attention to details and looked only to results, reserving his force of thought for larger matters, or intricate questions. This is where so many men fail who rise from small to large transactions—they still pay too much attention to details, and so waste their energies on things which others could do as well as they. Mr. Brassey did not fall into this error; but skilfully used the powers and intelligence of subordinates, reserving his energies for high resolves. His powers of calculation and memory were wonderful, and his sagacity, in railway construction, hardly ever at fault. His equanimity under losses, his ingenuity and courage in meeting a sudden emergency, were hardly surpassed by the first Napoleon, who boasted that in "two o'clock in the morning courage"—that is, presence of mind on the announcement of unexpected danger or difficulty,—he had few equals. The men in his employment