

losses. His reply was characteristic of the man: "No," he said, "I have contracted to make and maintain the road, and nothing shall prevent Thomas Brassey from being as good as his word."

Like all sensible men, who hope to do any good in the world, Mr. Brassey got married, and in the matrimonial line, as in his railway lines, he proved to be most fortunate and successful. His wife was, in the best sense, a "helpmeet;" and it was in a great measure owing to her advice, that he determined to leave Birkenhead, where he had a large and increasing business, and throw in his fortunes with the small band of men who had then taken in hand the construction of railways. Mrs. Brassey's spirit and sound judgment convinced her that, in this new career, her husband would find a far more important sphere for the exercise of his great abilities. And be it remembered, that when Mrs. Brassey was courageous enough to form this opinion, railways were everywhere decried; and the bulk even of the intelligent classes regarded the project of carrying passengers on them, with speed or safety, as an absurdity. Influenced then by his wife's advice, he entered on a career which proved to be most brilliant and successful, and one of great service to the world. Her advice, too, was most disinterested as far as her own domestic comfort was concerned. The life of a railway contractor necessitated constant change of residence. In thirteen years she changed her residence eleven times, some of those changes being to the continent of Europe. This, however, was not the greatest of Mrs. Brassey's trials. The nature of her husband's employments made constant absence from home inevitable: and even when at home, his family saw little of him from nine in the morning till ten at night. Like a true woman, Mrs. Brassey bore all this without a murmur; devoted herself to the education of her three sons; gloried in her husband's public career; and in her he ever found a wise, sympathetic counsellor, in all the weightier matters of business in which he was concerned.

In a brief article like this, it would be of course impossible to follow Mr. Brassey throughout his busy career of thirty-six years, till his death in 1870. I shall only dwell on some incidents in his career illustrative of the character of the man, and the principles which led to his great success. First of all—a word or two about his occupation—that of a contractor of public works. With the commencement of the railway system began an age of great