

A BIT OF BLARNEY.

No pun is intended by our heading, although the name suggests it; but whether there be blarney in the concrete or abstract, the fault is not ours. What we are about to quote is a practical bit of the town of Blarney, and some of its associations, as pictured by the special correspondent of the *Daily News* in his letter of the 8th inst. :—

"Blarney, for other reasons than its groves and 'the stone there, that whoever kisses, he never misses to grow eloquent,' is one of the most interesting places in the south of Ireland. It is not only the centre of a rich agricultural country and the abode of an improving landlord, Sir George St. John Colthurst, of Ardrum, but the seat of an important manufacture of woollens, a rare and curious industry in Munster. The Blarney Mills make a great "turn over" of tweed, and employ 550 men, women, and girls. I had an excellent opportunity of seeing the factory hands, for I went to Blarney on pay-day, and was greatly struck by the difference between their appearance and that of the people engaged in agriculture alone. The number and appearance of the women employed is a good answer to those pessimists who maintain that the curse of the poorer Irish is the filthiness, laziness, and general slatternliness of the women. In dress and general bearing the girls of Blarney would compare favourably with those of many English manufacturing towns; and, inasmuch as Blarney Mills are successful, their work must be well done. One reason, of course, of the comfortable look of the Blarney folk is, that all the family work. Perhaps the husband works at agriculture and the wife and daughter at the mill. All work, and hence a good income, as at Blackburn and other cotton towns, instead of the starvation which attends a useless woman who, with her string of helpless children, hangs like a millstone round her husband's neck. There are no 'useless mouths' at Blarney, where everybody helps to maintain the family roof-tree, and to prove that the Irish of the south, like those of Connemara, are susceptible of being taught, if only pains be taken with them. It must be admitted that Blarney Mills are in the second generation, having been founded by Mr. Mahony, the father of the late 'Father Prout' and of the present proprietor. The houses of the work people at Blarney are neat and trim, white and clean, and a repose to the eyes of beholders, sick of slouching thatch and bulging walls."

[Taken from *Irish Builder*, Vol. XXII, 1880, p.357]