

Newsletter

Full article of the Event

CALDER GLEN LAUNDRY

LOCHWINNOCH. Dec. 21 1888



MR ROBERT WILLIAMSON

Lochwinnoch is the most picturesquely situated little town, we have always thought when passing it by rail, on the Glasgow and South—Western system. Its auld-fashioned kirks and steeples show well in the fresh sunlight of early morn against a rich hilly background. With Kilbirnie and Castlesemple Lochs on either side, and its ain Lochwinnoch between town and railway, it may be said to be the prettiest and cleanliest little town in the lake district on the boundaries of Ayrshire. But the district around the town of Lochwinnoch has other beauties, not so open to the public gaze, that are worthy—as every thing of beauty is—of being sought out.

In the course of a walk a short way from the town on a fine day not long ago, we were introduced to one of these, which we have heard spoken of, but never till lately knew even its whereabouts. It is that pretty spot called Calder Glen, the geography of which, we believe, is known to few persons unacquainted with the neighbourhood of Lochwinnoch. And there, in that secluded glen, we daresay, nearly all of the natural beauties of the town of Lochwinnoch are cabined and confined for the most part of the livelong day. We have indicated how employed; but may say their occupation is one that should fit them to be thrifty, cleanly housewives - for such smart girls are sure to be found out despite their hiding in the Glen. The buildings in which they are employed, we should say, were at one time used as a wool mill, but now as a laundry. They are beautifully situated on the banks of the Calder Water, and well sheltered by rising ground—the neighbourhood of which is finely wooded, and the site for a laundry, as regards water supply,



Calder Glen Mill



Cloak Burn

pure air, and absence of smoky atmosphere—cleanliness and healthiness of situation—could not have been better chosen.

It is on the banks of the Calder burn, and away from what smoke there is even in the cleanly little village of Lochwinnoch. The place is every way fitly chosen for the purposes of a good laundry, and on entering we found an air of cleanliness about all apartments of the large building, and about the girls and other persons employed in it, that was in keeping with the freshness of the outward scene. In company with Mr Williamson, we made a hurried run over the premises. Those who have seen nothing larger than their own little kitchen laundry, may be interested if we give them a rough idea of what a large factory of this description is

like. In the present instance, two large buildings—one of three stories, the other four stories, besides out-houses - are used in the work of the laundry.

On the lower flat in the apartment

DASH WHEELS AND WASHING MACHINES

are erected, the goods undergoing a thorough rinsing before they are subjected to the boiling and washing processes. There are several large boilers, steeps, &c., all arranged with a view to turn out a large quantity of goods with expedition. After washing, they are wrung through a Hydro's Extractor, driven at a high speed, which turns them out in a condition ready for

STARCHING.

This is a most interesting process. While looking on we were much astonished at the rapidity with which this operation was carried through (the machines turning out about 80 to 100 dozen shirts per day), and amused at the starcher, who (taking us for a connoisseur in such matters) with evident pride drew out from a machine and held between us and the light, some of the fine pure linens he had in his starch tub, to show us the beautiful azure shade of his "blue." Housewives, who are fastidious

as to laundry work, would have been delighted to see such a purity of tone in the fine 1800 linen; and Mr Williamson evidently saw that the starcher had scored a point, for he interposed the remark, "I make all my own blue. It is a special preparation of my own, and I find it takes the market particularly well. By it I can get up a colour that none else can equal."

THE WHOLE PROCESS

gone through is something like this:—The goods, having been received direct from the warehouse, are checked, and instructions given as to the finishing; then they are passed on to the washing process; after which they are separated and sent to the stove to dry; then prepared for dressing. In

THE DRESSING ROOM

A large number of young women were at work—each at her own bench, or ironing-board, with iron in hand, which was passed dexterously over the smooth, hard surface of the shirt, or whatever else was in hand, all the irons are heated by gas, asbestos being used for combustion*. This article is a mineral found between the fissures of rocks, and is applied in many ways in the commercial world, from that of engine packing to the manufacture of gloves—the latter article, when soiled, being simply put in the fire, and its original colour restored: being a non-combustible, no injury is done. The ironers are on piece-work, and they go over the smooth surfaces of the linen articles with a will. So do the shirt and collar ironing machines, which can be made to iron 1 inch, 1-16th of an inch, or the whole collar or front at once. It is a simple construction; is wrought by the foot; and altogether well adapted for collar ironing, eight of which it does at a time. But it can be made to iron a whole collar, or part, missing the button-hole, if desired, to spare the temper of a crusty wearer—and that, as every knows, when one's humph is up, is a great matter. Mr Williamson says it is not uncommon thing to get orders for dressing 400 dozen collars and fronts at a time.

POLISHING

That seemed to us one of the most interesting and mysterious part of the operations, was that of polishing. Two strong young men were making their arms wave at a rapid rate, and manipulating most dexterously irons with two handles, which produced a finish on the shirts making them shine like a mirror, and feel like a beautiful piece of enamel. On asking our guide what substance produced such a beautiful polish, "Oh, that's a secret of my own," but the principal ingredient is "Elbow grease."

TICKET OFFICE.

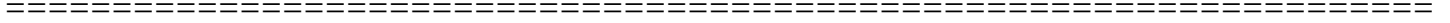
At the end of the room is the office of the ticket clerk, who gives out and receives work—examining each article as it is returned, to see that there is no scamped work, or flaw in it. By the ticket attached to each piece the worker employed on it can be traced after the job is out of hands. When the goods have been “dressed” by the workers, they are sent to the

PACKING ROOM

on the middle floor, to be assorted. There each order is carefully selected from the other, and all of a certain number and size put together and despatched. We understand Mr Williamson does a considerable trade with Ireland - notwithstanding the depressed state of business there; and he was, on the occasion of our visit, still further enlarging the area of his operations by making extensive alterations on what used to be the Wool Mills, and by this time will have made a fresh start in the premises on the other side of the court as well. A masher would feel like a young colt in a clover field were he to have the run of this large place for one hour. The spacious tables are laid out with collars and cuffs of every conceivable description—white shirts dressed and beautifully finished; print and check shirts of most fashionable patterns, all alike beautifully done up and ready for despatch to the wholesale houses. We noticed large orders of goods for the Colonies, as well as Forsyth's "Acmes" ready for despatch—all fine specimens of workmanship and finish.

The goods are taken from the wash house on the ground flat by means of a hoist or shoot, which is self-acting—and finely situated for water power—to the upper flat, where we saw 80 dozen, between shirts and “dickies,” hung out in the stove to dry in a temperature of 120 degrees; also some curtains. In the new portion, or what was known as the New Mill, there is a fine engine, and in addition, an American "Leffel" Turbine Wheel, either of which can be used at will; also a large Lancashire boiler, sufficient to provide both heating and driving steam—thus rendering Mr Williamson somewhat independent of the water supply as a motive power. There is a good jobbing shop alongside, with turning lathe and other necessary appliances. Altogether, Mr Williamson is going on with a brisk business in The Glen. At present he employs about 80 hands, with every prospect of increasing that number; and there is accommodation in the laundry for 200 workers altogether. On parting with Mr Williamson, we could not help remarking on the beauty of his surroundings, "for inside was comfort, and a' things looked bright," while externally nature smiled benignantly on all around, and we felt inclined to fall in with the utterances of the local rhymster who, in describing the place, said -

*“There are few sweeter places I e'er ha'e seen
Or can think o', mang a' that I ken,
That stir my emotions and feelings so keen
As the beauteous, sweet Calder Glen.”*



* as stated in the article