

## THE CHANNEL FLEET AT QUEENSTOWN.

THE arrival of upwards of twenty vessels of the Royal navy in the somewhat secluded naval station (of Queenstown) made great excitement among the inhabitants. Such a spectacle was never before witnessed by the present generation. For once the memory of the "oldest inhabitant" is at fault in seeking for anything approaching to a parallel to the present naval gathering. Neither under its time-honoured but obsolete name of "Cove," nor its more modern designation of Queenstown, has there been such a warlike display in the port as is now to be seen upon its waters.

Queenstown has long been known as a naval station, and seems to have been fashioned by nature expressly for the purpose. Here the river Lee, just before mingling its waters with the ocean, broadens out into a wide and ample estuary, deeply indenting the land towards the south, where, however, finding no outlet, it turns northward, again, and finds a narrow channel seaward through a gap in the hills to the west.

The result of this configuration is, that the estuary is land-locked in the ample embrace of high ground on all sides, except at the entrance to the westward, which is not more than a mile and a quarter across, from point to point, at the narrowest part of it; while, as if to complete the security of the shelter, Spike Island lies opposite to, and not more than a mile from, the narrows, acting as a natural breakwater against any sea that a west or south-west wind might send through the mouth of the harbour. Nor must it be forgotten that the entrance is as easy as the harbour is secure. There are no shoals nor sunken rocks in the way; and the largest vessel in the British navy, may enter at all times of the tide, and be certain of finding secure anchorage within.

While nature has been thus bountiful to the place, the resources of art have not been neglected to seal it against any hostile approach. At the narrowest point of the channel, two batteries have been erected, nearly opposite to each other—Fort Camden and Fort Caroline—each mounted with upwards of thirty heavy guns; while there is a third battery on the seaward side of Spike Island. So that, supposing a hostile fleet to be rash enough to attempt the passage, they would be exposed to the destructive fire of two forts on each flank; while the guns from Spike Island would pound them in front. It may safely be said that the defences of Queenstown are complete.

Into this beautiful and spacious harbour, then, the Channel Fleet began entering on Saturday; and we take from the *Cork Examiner* the following details:—

About twelve o'clock on Saturday (the 17th) the squadron of Admiral Corry steamed into Cove Harbour, the *Prince Regent*, bearing the Admiral's flag, being the first in advance. As she came abreast of Camden Fort she fired a salute of twenty-one guns, which was answered from the guardship; and the various ships of the squadron took their places in the roads. Then

the squadron of Commodore Martin was discerned, steaming in from the direction of Kinsale, and forming a long line as they approached the harbour, the *Duke of Wellington*, bearing the Commodore's flag, taking the lead. At one o'clock a salute of fifteen guns, answered from the *Terrible*, announced their arrival, and immediately after the whole of the two squadrons had occupied their places. The following is the Fleet now in the harbour: The *Queen*, *Prince Regent*, *Duke of Wellington*, *Agamemnon*, *Leopard*, *Valorous*, *Sidon*, *Amphion*, *Vulture*, *Desperate*, *Tribune*, *Highflyer*; *Arrogant*, *Terrible*, *Wizard*, *London*, *Blenheim*, and *Impériuse*—in all, 18 sail. It appears that a portion of one of the squadrons, to the number of six, including two three-deckers (the *St. Jean d'Acre* and the *Princess Royal*), parted company off or near Clear Island, and was expected to arrive very soon. Some vessels, too, of considerable force are in company with the *Black Eagle*, in which the Lords of the Admiralty make their tour of inspection, and will be added to the number of the fleet already in our waters. The sensation which the arrival of this large and powerful fleet—the largest for many years to be seen here—caused, was amply evidenced by the crowds which flocked from the city from an early hour yesterday morning down to the very last available moment of daylight. Every steamer was crowded, and some had to start earlier, to escape the over-number which was pouring into them; trains of 10, 11, and 12 carriages were crowded to inconvenience. The appearance which Queenstown presented was gay and animated in the extreme, being filled by dense crowds of all classes and conditions, added to and taken from every moment and all in movement. The day was beautiful in the extreme, bright and cloudless, and the surface of the bay was scarcely ruffled by a breath of wind. The fleet lay in a long and almost direct line stretching from near the shore of Kuskenny right across to Carlisle Fort. Nearest the shore of all the vessels of large force was the *Prince Regent*, bearing the Admiral's flag, and beyond that lay the *Queen*; further on stretched the *London*, the *Blenheim*, the *Agamemnon*, and last of all, at the very extreme of the line, conspicuous even at that distance for her enormous bulk, the *Duke of Wellington*. Among these, and filling up the long line, were grouped the vessels of lesser magnitude. During the entire day the bay was alive with crowded boats. The large barges of the ships-of-war were to be seen darting in all directions, proceeding from vessel to vessel, and gay parties filled all the shore-boats, whose course was generally around the fleet. Permission was very kindly given by those in charge to visit and inspect the principal vessels; but this permission was scarcely taken advantage of in the case of any but the *Duke of Wellington*, that appearing to be the grand centre of attraction to which all attention was directed. Accordingly, her decks were for the greater part of the day filled with groups of astonished and admiring visitors, who could scarcely know whether most to admire the vastness of her proportions, so enormous and so just, the number and force

of her great armament, the neatness and order with which the vast machine was regulated, or the almost unaccountable power of discipline, which enabled the thousand men who live, breathe, and have their being between her decks, to act with the unity of a single force. So much has been already said and written on the vast powers of this vessel, that it is scarcely needful to enter into any detail upon the subject; but an idea may be formed of her capabilities as a screw from the fact that, the wind having fallen short off Kinsale, she was obliged to get up steam; and, though with only half steam on, came into harbour at the rate of between six and seven knots an hour.

A not unimportant effect of the arrival of the Fleet has been its influence upon the state of business at Queenstown. There has seldom been a worse season experienced by those who let lodgings, or whose dependence is placed upon the stay of visitors, than the past has been; but since the announcement of the coming of the Fleet, lodgings have been eagerly caught up, provisions have increased in price, boats and boatmen have got into remunerative employment, and altogether a general and increased activity is visible in almost every department of business. The arrival of the Lords of the Admiralty, and that of the remaining portion of Commodore Martin's squadron, will add to the interest of visitors, and will probably swell the crowds of sight-seers even to a greater extent than hitherto, especially as the arrangements made by the railway and river steam companies are such as will probably enable them to view the ships far out at sea.

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