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DOINGS IN QUEENSTOWN.



Na run down to the ancient Cove of Cork, and a brief glance at matters in the town, we observed many evidences of progress, compared with what met our eyes when we first visited Queenstown several years since. Just now, trade and business in general is subject to the same depression and dullness as is being experienced in other towns in the three kingdoms for some months past. The season for visitors is now opening, and the first half of May has brought several welcome arrivals for the hotels and those making a livelihood out of furnished lodgings on the winding terraces, on the steep cliffs, or those on the lower levels of the sea. On the quays of Queenstown may still be seen the

tide of emigration, flowing hither and thither, the outward bound apparently in an increasing number. The sight gives rise to many sad reflections, taking the mind back for thirty years at least to that drear Famine period, from which the exodus first sprang, with an intensity that continued for years. It is an ill luck, it is said, that blows nobody good, and out of the evil of continued emigration, Queenstown has for several years benefited, and is likely to still benefit. Irish emigrants have their many wants, while on their way from their peasant homes, or their homes in the inland towns to the port of embarkation. The dealers and shopkeepers of Queenstown are the last persons the emigrants have transactions with in their native land, and, as a consequence, a considerable sum of money, in the aggregate, is expended in Queenstown during the year in supplying the sundry wants of emigrants, in food, lodging, clothing, and general outfitting.

There is little, if any, local industries in Queenstown at present, the great body of those engaged in business being shopkeepers and traders for supplying local wants and those connected with the shipping interests. As many and various vessels put in at the port, of course the town is benefited, and, to some extent, the supply of stores to warships and Government forts and depots is drawn from Queenstown, or, through it, from Cork. The establishment of some local industries or manufactures, with a view to the future, would be most desirable; for a town that is so wholly dependent on fluctuating interests as Queenstown

is liable to suffer severely betimes from periodic depression. If we would throw out a hint to the local body of the town, we would say, Gentlemen, look to the future, possible and probable, wants of your town, as well as to its present wants; but do not, by any means, overlook its urgent wants—sanitary, social, and industrial.

Sanitarily speaking, Queenstown is capitally situated for making it a healthy resort, and keeping it so. Being situated on a rather steep decline, with a beautiful bay and harbour in its front, and an expanding country district in its rear, with sea and mountain breezes ever and anon mingling, there is nothing wanting but what a little exertion on the part of man can supply. If the town is only kept ordinarily clean by the removal of nuisances, and the providing of sufficient main or leading lines of sewers for receiving the discharge of the house drains, the remainder of the sanitary work will be light. The houses of the poor internally, particularly in the old quarters, are not in a good condition; and the drainage in these quarters, and the removal of some nuisances common to the localities, need a little more efficient supervision. A rainy day in Queenstown, with a swift downpour, acts as a good flushing agent on the steep gradients of the roads and intersecting terraces on the heights above the town, and at all times there is good ventilation, owing to the situation of the town, healthy ocean and inland current being generally prevalent. It is only strict justice to say that the Town Commissioners of Queenstown are, as far as our observation and enquiries extended, endeavouring to do their duty, and are succeeding in doing it. Within the last few years they have attended to the house drainage in several of the old parts of the town, and at present where there are defects it is owing in part to the nature of the house property, the expiration of leases, and the demolition of this property will soon lead the way to the improvements that are needed.

Places of public accommodation are, to some extent, already provided in the leading thoroughfares of the town; and in this direction the glaring defects that existed some years ago in connection with shipping, and to the extreme hardships of emigrants, have been remedied. A few years ago, very little attention was paid in Queenstown by emigration agents to providing waiting rooms or sanitary requisites for the poor emigrants. Owing to many cases of drowning and bodies washed ashore from time to time, a public morgue, near the shore, is a necessity as well as for ordinary cases. A coroner's court and a morgue could be combined,—thus supplying a double want, and getting rid at once of abuses that have long surrounded the holding of inquests.

Remarking, during our visit, that more cemetery space, or a new cemetery, was required for the growing necessities of the town, we were informed that the Town Commissioners have taken steps to supply the want, and have acquired some acres of ground for additional burial purposes.

Although Queenstown has expanded considerably during the last quarter of century, the building business has seldom been rife, or afforded employment to any large number of hands. The new terraces of domestic dwellings have cropped up rather slowly than otherwise, each year, however, adding more or less to the number. Roomy, well-built houses on the heights of Queenstown, in good positions and with good views, let at high rents —

indeed, we are of opinion that in several instances the rents are too high, and tend rather to the keeping away of would-be residents than to their encouragement. Landlords, or the owners of building land, we think, also stand much in their own light by not affording better facilities to those inclined to build, for honest speculative purposes, or for themselves. One or two local building contractors of Cork and Queenstown are at present engaged in erecting a number of villas for themselves or others, out and about the town.

Among the projected improvements in Queenstown is a new quay, at the cost of £30,000, and a new boat harbour, at £5,000. These works will be executed by a local contractor, and will afford employment to a number of local building workmen.

The principal building work in Queenstown at the present time is that of the, new Catholic cathedral. For several years it has afforded constant employment to a large number of workmen, and we may add artists also, for both the plain chiselled work and the carving and statuary have been executed on the ground. The mason work executed at the cathedral is undeniably excellent,—no better can be witnessed anywhere. Several of the hands engaged on the work have in a manner been educated and made proficient in the practice of their craft while working in the masons' sheds and workshops under the very walls of the cathedral buildings. It ought to be a source of pleasure to both the Catholic clergy and laity that such work can be executed in Queenstown by native workmen. There have been few works—perhaps none—in Ireland heretofore in which all the sundry needs have been provided independent of the labour of outsiders in the distance, in the Irish capital, or in that of the sister kingdom, and on the continent. From foundation to roof tree, the workmanship is thoroughly native in execution, and the materials, as far as was possible—stone, lime, and sand,—indigenous to the country, native limestone being used for the tracery work, opes, dressings, and Portland stone for the statuary, life-size figures, several of which are already executed and in their places on the top of the cathedral walls. It is not our intention to enter into architectural details in our present rather brief notes; and we must content ourselves in saying, in a general way, that the work, as far as we could observe it, is progressing most satisfactorily. The walls are ready for the roof, and the timbers of the latter are being framed in the workshops at the building. The work and workmanship at the cathedral appear to have received an able supervision, no approach to negligent execution being observable. The work is certainly built for time, and not for a generation; and certain we are our great grandsons will be more proud of it than we are. Nothing less than some gigantic convulsion of nature can shake the foundations of the cathedral. To speak in the language of the church of which it is, or will be, a noble national monument when finished, the structure at Queenstown is truly "built upon a rock," and its mason work is solid as its supporting cliff or base.

Over on the island of Haulbowline the Government dock and other works, being executed by convict labour, are proceeding rather slowly. We asked an old resident in Queenstown when did he think the works at Haulbowline would be finished? His answer was definite enough, for it terminated with the Day of Judgment—a rather long time in advance of our day.

The landing-stages by the water's edge at Queenstown have suffered severely from dry-rot and the ravages of sea worms and wood-boring insects, and are at present being replaced in their sheeting, and, in some instances, their supporting timbers. We are not aware whether the Harbour Commissioners are about adopting any method or process for securing the new or old timbers in future from destruction by dry-rot or insects. There are several methods open for experiment, Borne of which have been successful in different places. We would counsel the Harbour Commissioners (if they have not done so already) to seek professional advice, and try what can be done in securing a longer term of duration for their harbour timbers.

The meat, fish, and vegetable markets are fairly supplied throughout the town for the wants of the inhabitants, or, perhaps we should say, there is a supply for all who are able to pay the prices at all times current. In consequence of the influx of visitors in the summer season, and shipping demands, the prices of food are run up, and are often ten per cent. higher in Queenstown than in the inland towns. The poor and the working-classes resident in the town feel pinched at times to provide sufficiently for their ordinary wants.

Re building materials, we saw some very fairly made and durable bricks, the local outcome of the district, well suited for domestic buildings; but bricks, except for inside work, chimneys, &c., are sparsely used, in Queenstown sandstone being in abundance. Most of all the old and new houses are built of sandstone raised on the site of the houses. The villas and new terrace buildings have their sandstone rubble walls, faced with compo; but the majority of the old houses scattered over the town, inhabited by the poor and working-classes, have their walls externally rough, save what it coating of "dashing" or whitewash can effect. Indeed, many of the walls within are rough, bare, and cheerless enough; yet withal the people are wonderfully healthy.

Had we time to prolong our visit, we would have written more. Our object is not to decry but to assist the people; to tell the truth, as far as we have ascertained it by observation and inquiry and by doing this independently, to lead to reform. Our brief notes may have a sequel, but for the present our remarks are made in a kindly spirit, and tending, we hope, to lead to renewed efforts on the part of the Town Commissioners and others interested in the future of Queenstown, to make it worthy of itself, from its great natural advantages, and a little queen in itself, of healthy and prosperous watering places.

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