

members and their friends. Readings, recitations, songs and original papers make up the programme of each evening. The plan is a good one, and has already done much to popularise the movement in the capital. The next social meeting takes place on the first Monday in October, and as several ladies and gentlemen have promised their assistance, the patrons of the League can reckon on spending a pleasant evening. There is no charge for admission, but the usual subscriptions are handed in and acknowledged during the evening, and new members are enrolled.

A BEAUTIFUL AND HISTORICAL SPOT IN IRELAND.

(By ROSA MULHOLLAND in the *Pilot*.)

Dublin, July 6.

INTENDING visitors to Ireland ought to make a note of Howth as a place well worth the hours of a long summer's day, and distant from Dublin but thirty minutes or so, in the train. Howth is an isthmus, with a good chance of finding itself an island some bright morning, so narrow is the strip of grass and sand that links it with the continent of Erin. Running out seaward, it forms one protecting arm of Dublin Bay, and is, if the wildest, not the least beautiful shore of that noble reach of waters, by many said to be lovelier than the Bay of Naples.

Last evening as I drove along the fine, well-made road that travels round the entire peninsula skirting the cliffs, I reassured myself that there is no exaggeration in the above saying, always making allowance for the difference of colouring. I felt that if we lack the deep Italian blue, the sapphires in the wave, the unbroken forget-me-not tint of the heavens, there is yet something infinitely enchanting in the tender varying greys, ever gathering, fitting, dispersing over and about our own peculiar blues and greens on sky and water, and that no sumptuous depth of hue could possess more fascination than do these glories softened and traversed by filmy shapes that move off the sea in pensile shadow, and re-appear on its verge, luminous and glad, like hands of spirits fresh from the world behind you silvery cloudland.

The train brings you to the foot of the hill climbed by the village, and to the edge of the harbour with its brown-sailed fishing boats, weather-beaten by many a storm braved in pursuit of the herring, which, when fresh from the water, is esteemed such a luxury.

Wives and mothers 'maist despairing
Ca' them lives of men.

And the herring-fishery of Howth is as rife with danger as other herring-fisheries. Through an unfortunate blunder, the harbour of Howth, on which £300,000 were expended, is rendered comparatively useless from its position, placed further eastward by another furlong, it would have been thoroughly valuable, instead of provokingly inefficient. The village is poor, but no amount of whitewash is spared to make it look decent, and there are a few neat houses here and there, fronting the sea on various levels, where lodgings can be found. Leaving the village straggling about the hill above the harbour, the highroad carries you up and out on the green heights, and away through rich grass-land skirted by golden gorse and plummy ferns, and occasionally overshadowed by clumps of wood, with you all the way, the broad bay washing nearer and nearer as the cliffs grow more bare and lonely, as the snug houses of the gentry, nestling in sheltered spots, get left behind, and the famous lighthouse, the Baily (*Bailium*, habitation), breasts the waves on its perch, a ridge of outlying rocks. Here the waves between the huge green cliffs and the opposite shores of Lambay, are wide enough and magnificent enough to receive a whole fleet of Vikings, but the loveliest scenery is on the other side of the isthmus, as you will return, having rounded the point of the lighthouse, which, by the way, on misty evenings gives forth a warning sound, far reaching as Roland's horn, and so terrible and ghostly, that simple strangers, not knowing what it means, grow sick with fright on hearing it. On the side overlooking Dublin Bay, Howth is more beautiful than words could describe. Between the road and the cliffs there is a foreground of kine-dotted pasture, with occasional villa-houses and gardens and ivy-hung walls, and the trees that make open screen between you and the bay, and the panorama of the opposite shores of Bray and Killiney grow in a peculiar manner that reminds you of the stone pines of Italy. A child said "the trees here are so statuesque," and one knew what was meant. Far out between their stems and branches lies that world of shimmering light, and cloud, and colour, which is Dublin Bay, and nothing was ever lovelier than the delicate and wayward outlines of the shore beyond, all blotted in blue and faint purple and veiled in gray, and here and there a deeper pencilling where the cliff frowns or the hills fold. Over yonder are the terraces of Dalkey, the steeps of Killiney, the great Head of Bray, with Dalkey Island asleep in the blue. If you are here at the right hour you can see the Holyhead packet making for where a hovering of smoke far down at the foot of the bay, hints at Kingstown and the city, streaming through a flare of red and golden light, like Turner's fighting *Teméraire*.

Back on the lower land you must visit the demesne of the Earl of Howth, where a quaint old castle stands in a prim garden with swan-inhabited pond and plashing fountain, encircled by dark beautiful woods, full of lofty, cathedral-like aisles, moss-carpeted and echoing with the cawing of rooks. The demesne is overhung by huge granite rocks purple with heather and golden with gorse, from which the whole peninsula can be viewed, even to the cliffs of the Baily, where a band of defeated Danes took refuge after the Battle of Clontarf.

"Night closed around the warrior's way,
And lightning showed the distant hill
Where those who lost that dreadful day
Stood few and faint, but fearless still."

Howth bristles with warlike traditions. Here stands, in front of the castle walls, the ancient tree from under which the sea-queen Grania stole the heir of Howth and carried him out to sea, in anger at finding the castle gates closed on her arrival because it was dinner time. The Irish dined with doors open to the traveller, and the haughty queen refused to restore her hostage 'till promise was given that the gates at Howth should be in future flung open while the lord and his retainers sat at board. To this day the gates of Howth Castle are thrown open at the dinner hour. The ancient tree is of immense width, but hollow and broken with time. The efforts which have been made to hold it together by means of metal plates and girdings have given rise to a story that the race of the lords of Howth will become extinct with the tree.

The founder of the family of Howth was a gallant Norman knight, Sir Armoric de Tristram. In the twelfth century, Armoric and his companion-in-arms, Sir John de Courcy, having, in the Church of Notre Dame at Rouen, solemnly vowed to serve together, to live and die together, and equally to divide between them what they won by the sword, or received for its service, sailed for Ireland, furnished with letters patent from the king, giving to them and their heirs forever all the land they could conquer by the sword, reserving for the King homage and fealty. Arriving on their errand of plunder they landed at Howth and fought a cruel fight with the Irish defending their own. De Courcy, being sick, remained in his ship while Armoric de Tristram won a victory which secured him the lands even now held by William Ulick Tristram St. Lawrence, the present Earl of Howth. Proceeding further into the country he took possession of other lands. The Norman knights, in their coats of mail and helmets, armed to the teeth, and mounted on horses also clad in armour, struck horror to the Irish imagination, which had never pictured the like. The Irish fought in linen clothing, and were at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless they fought again, and were resolved to expel these apparently miraculous invaders.

The truly gallant incident of Armoric's life was his death. Learning that his friend de Courcy's lands in Ulster was threatened by Cathal O'Connor of the Red Hand, King of Connaught, de Tristram marched towards Connaught, and met the Irish, in force too great for his band, of some 200 foot soldiers and a smaller number of mounted knights. Seeing that there was nothing but death before his soldiers, while those on horseback must be invincible and secure, he instantly elected to die among those whom he had led, and, announcing his resolution, made his will as follows:

"To God I render and yield my soul; my service to my natural prince; my heart to my brother, Sir John de Courcy, and my wife; my force, might, pain and good-will to my poor friends and fellows here."

"He lighted" (says the old Chronicler), "kneeled upon his knees, kissed the cross of his sword, ranne his horse through, saying, 'Thou shalt never serve against me, that so worthily hath served with mee.'"

Having charged two young gentlemen to witness the fight from a hill, and afterwards bear tidings to Sir John de Courcy, Armoric led his band to meet their foes, who, on their part, exerted all their prowess in the attack on these terrible mysterious strangers in their mail, and with their armed horses, believing that those they saw were but the advance guard of an army. The Normans were destroyed to a man, fighting desperately, and "thus died Sir Armoric de Tristram, who among a thousand knights might be chosen for beauty and heroic courage, for humility and courtesy to his inferiors, yielding to none but in the way of gentleness." Sir Armoric's two-handed sword is still, I believe, preserved at Howth Castle.

A feature of interest within Howth Park is the great Cromlech, supposed to be the tomb of Aideen, wife of Oscar, son of Ossian, who was slain at the battle of Gavra, near Tara, in Meath, of grief for whom his widow died.

Sir Samuel Ferguson, in a striking poem of many verses, has honoured poor Aideen's grave:—

"A cup of bodkin-pencilled clay
Holds Oscar: mighty heart and limb
One handful now of ashes grey;
And she has died for him.

"They heaved the stone, they heaped the cairn.
Said Ossian: 'In a queenly grave
We leave her, 'mong her fields of fern
Between the cliff and wave.'

"The cliff behind stands clear and bare,
And bare above the heathery steep
Scales the clear heaven's expanse to where
The Danaan Druids sleep,

"And all the sands that, left and right,
The grassy isthmus-ridge confine
In yellow bars lie bare and bright
Among the sparkling brine."

The "reliable news" from Khartoum discloses a terrible picture of the state of that mysterious city. The Sisters of Charity are selling beans cooked in oil at the Mahdi's front door; Lupton Bey is the Mahdi's coiner; Slatin Bey is the Mahdi's footman; Neufeld is used as an experimental dummy for the Mahdi's hangman, spending the interval in chains. These are only a few items which are interesting to Europeans. Hanging and murder are every day occurrences. He who smokes or sells tobacco, he who trades, he who keeps his cash, he who stores his corn, is immediately done to death. So much for the message from Khartoum which has been brought down the Nile by native messengers. Down the Congo Mr. Ward has sent news which confirms the rumour that Stanley, the master of surprises, was marching to the relief of these miserable captives who have fallen into the hands of the great ogre of the desert.