

INAUGURATION OF A RUSSIAN GUN AT SEAHAM HARBOUR.

Few, if any, of our seaport towns can boast such youth and vigour as the harbour of Seaham. Less than thirty years ago it had no existence. A bold rocky foreshore, with little inlets and sandy bays, indicated its site. No fishermen's huts crowned the banks ; no boats lay basting on the beach. As far as progress was concerned, all was at a dead stand. Now and then a few women from the neighbouring town of Sunderland might be caught sight of among the rocks in search of bait; or a stray artist, sketch-book in hand, in quest of the picturesque. No sounds reached the ear other than the scream, of the gull or the constant chafing of the waves against the rocks.

Happily, other eyes than those of the painter scanned the place, and other drawings than those for mere ornament were made. The energetic mind of Charles Stewart, then Marquis of Londonderry, conceived a nobler destiny for this rocky shore than pictures and shellfish. He saw here a suitable place for the shipment of his coals for the London market. Battling with every difficulty, blasting out of the rocky cliff a dock, carving out a harbour, protecting it by piers, and indicating its bearings by a lofty lighthouse ; laying down an iron road from his coal-mines; planting powerful steam-engines; erecting whole streets of workmen's dwellings and suitable workshops: in fact, starting Seaham Harbour, properly equipped.

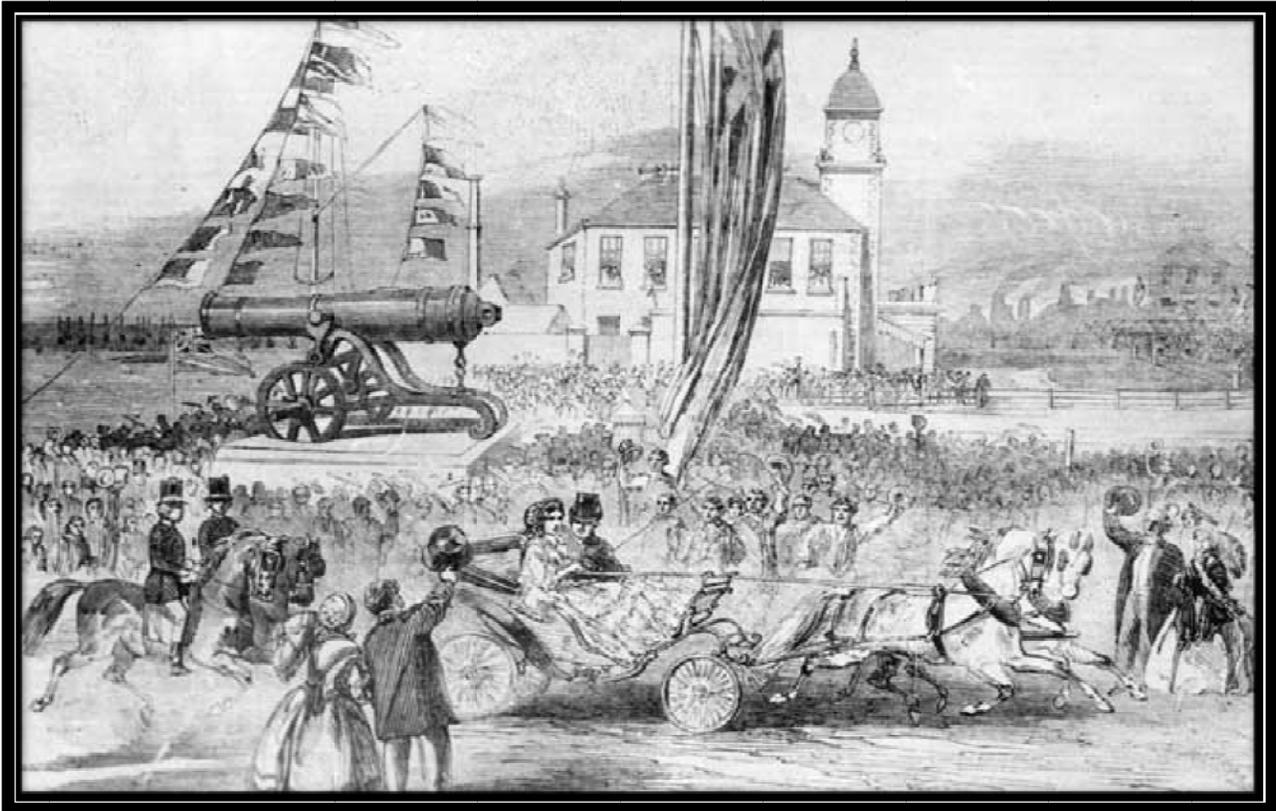
As a natural consequence, ships crowd the dock and harbour; factories, houses, shops, schools, charitable institutions, churches, chapels, and public buildings, have sprung up, and visitors are now whirled to and fro on the railway from Sunderland. Thus has the great scheme of the late Marquis been crowned with complete success. Seaham has now 7000 inhabitants; and it is no uncommon occurrence for seventy vessels to leave at one tide.



Like a true-hearted English lady, Frances Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry, after the death of the Marquis, carried on the work with increased vigour, trimmed up the place with taste and neatness, erected buildings with an eye to the beautiful, and still watches over the health and prosperity of the place with genuine solicitude; and as, year by year, she pays her visits, she invariably leaves some souvenir of her love and attachment for the place.

Seaham has recently been the scene of two interesting demonstrations on the occasion of a visit by the Marchioness of Londonderry to her seat at Seaham Hall.

On Monday, the 2nd instant, the children attending the various colliery schools founded and maintained by the Marchioness attended at Seaham Harbour, to receive from the hands of her Ladyship prizes for ability and good conduct. The ceremony took place in a large and handsome marquee erected for the occasion contiguous to the new school at Seaham Colliery. Upwards of 1300 scholars were present, who were conveyed to Seaham in colliery wagons', and then marched to the rendezvous, each school with the master or mistress at its head. The children were addressed by her Ladyship and the Lord Bishop of Durham in a spirit of affectionate and earnest simplicity.



The other demonstration which forms the subject of our engraving was the inauguration of a Russian gun. This event took place on Saturday, the 31st ult., in the presence of two thousand of the principal inhabitants of Seaham and neighbourhood. The interesting trophy—a 38-pounder, weighing 66s cwt.—was erected on a stone pedestal and placed in the centre of "The Green," which has been laid out as a public promenade, and faces the sea.

Near to the spot was erected a platform for the accommodation of Lady Londonderry and her visitors, who arrived shortly after one o'clock—the Earl and Countess Vane, Lord Ravensworth, Lord A. Vane Tempest, the Countess of Portarlington, and the Misses Longley arriving first in an omnibus-carriage drawn by four greys, and followed by a second carriage in which was Lady Londonderry and the Bishop of Durham.

Having ascended the platform, Lady Londonderry stepped to the front, and gave the signal for displaying the gun, which was covered by a large naval ensign. At this moment her Ladyship's private band struck up "God Save the Queen," and a salute of twenty-one guns was fired by the coastguard men. This was followed by loud cheering, on the subsidence of which the assemblage was addressed by Earl Vane, Lord Ravensworth and Lord Adolphus Vane Tempest. An address was then presented to the Marchioness of Londonderry expressing the gratitude of the inhabitants of Seaham for the important benefits recently conferred by her Ladyship upon the place; to which the Marchioness replied as follows:—"Gentlemen,—I confess that the spontaneous and unexpected expression of your kind feeling towards me has caused me the deepest gratification. It is encouraging and cheering to find my humble efforts to improve this place have been appreciated; and it is most satisfactory to watch its increased prosperity and importance during my care and tenancy. While I thankfully acknowledge the progress and contemplate the rise with pride and pleasure, believe me I take no merit for any little share I may have had in this, for it is my happiness as well as my duty to direct my best energies to the welfare of a place which I have watched from its commencement, thirty years ago, and received as a sacred legacy from its founder, to whose name it remains as a touching monument that all connected with him may well feel proud of.

The ceremony this day is particularly satisfactory, for these guns have only been presented to towns of certain importance and population; and the promise of a County Court from the Lord Chancellor, after four years' patient and repeated petitioning, is another just advance in the scale and position Seaham town and harbour holds in this county. Gentlemen, I thank you sincerely for your affectionate address and good wishes, and in return can only reiterate my promise, that while God spares my life it will be devoted to the interests of this place, and the welfare of all in my employ."

This terminated the proceedings of the "inauguration." Three cheers were then given for Lady Londonderry, three for Earl and Countess Vane, one for their son, Lord Seaham, an interesting child, who bowed acknowledgment, and three for Lord Adolphus Vane.