

## Geography & Topography

### *The international geography*

Hugh Robert Mill

1916

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Let things be—not seem,  
I counsel rather,—do, and nowise dream !  
EARTH'S YOUNG SIGNIFICANCE IS ALL TO LEARN :  
The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn  
Where who seeks fire finds ashes.  
*Robert Browning.*

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### The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

#### GENERAL

By Hugh Robert Mill, D.Sc.

Name.—In popular usage the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland is most frequently, though incorrectly, called *England*. When James VI., King of the Scots, acceded to the English crown he employed the name *Great Britain* to include the kingdoms of England and Scotland, and the use of this name for the whole country has since been general in official writings, while the more concise form of *Britain* is also in use. It is, however, better in several ways to call the country as a whole the *United Kingdom*, in the same way as the United States of America are spoken of as the United States. It is convenient to use the word *British* for “ of the United Kingdom ” as it is convenient to use *American* for “ of the United States.” The official form *Britannic* does not commend itself for general adoption. Euphony suggests the use of *Anglo-* in compound words where the name of the United Kingdom comes first, and of *British* where it comes last ; thus, *Anglo-American* but *Russo-British*. It is necessary to give these definitions because there is no general usage in the country, and some local jealousy exists as to the abuse of the words. The *British Islands* is a convenient name for the region occupied by the United Kingdom, and the *British Empire* is a popular expression including all the countries and colonies acknowledging the British Crown,

Position and Extent.—The United Kingdom occupies two large islands. Great Britain and Ireland, and about 5,000 small islands and rocks lying in groups to the north—Orkney and Shetland ; to the west—the Hebrides, Isle of Man, the small coast islands of Ireland, and the Scilly group ; and to the south—the Isle of Wight, and the Channel Islands, the latter belonging physically to France. The total area is 121,000 square miles, the United Kingdom coming eighth in order of size amongst the countries of Europe. It is convenient to remember that the whole land and sea area of the British Islands is defined by a rectangle of 10° of latitude and longitude. Only Lizard Head, the Scilly, and the Channel Islands lie south of the parallel of 50° N. ; and only a part of the Shetland group extends further north than 60° N. The meridian of 10° W. runs through the tips of the western peninsulas of Ireland ; while only the south-east of England projects beyond the meridian of Greenwich.

Geology and Configuration.—Although there are now no lofty mountain chains or great rivers in the British Islands, there is much variety of land-form and of scenery, the result of remote geological changes, and of the more recent action of erosion upon the different kinds of rocks which form the surface. In no other part of Europe, or perhaps of the world, is so great a range of geological strata found in so small an area. In the north and west the most ancient and disturbed rocks known form the land, which is similar in character to the Scandinavian peninsula. Towards the south and east these ancient rocks are succeeded by Carboniferous strata containing the Coal Measures, which give place further south and east to more recent formations usually but little disturbed and resembling those of western France. The northern and western regions have possibly been on the whole land areas since a very early geological period ; the rocks of the south and east have been formed by the sediments worn off the northern lands and spread out on the shores of seas, or in great fresh lakes. Volcanic outbursts leading to the accumulation of masses of hard igneous rocks have occurred at various geological periods down to and including the Tertiary in the regions of ancient rocks, which have also been subject to much faulting and folding ; but apparently the more recent regions of the east and south were not affected in this way. These facts fully account for the occurrence of the highest land and finest scenery in the north and west, and the lowest and most uniform towards the south and east. Many of the minor surface features of the islands have been produced by the ice-sheet and glaciers of the Great Ice Age, which scratched, polished, and rounded the exposed rocks, and smothered the lower grounds in vast sheets of boulder clay, partly obliterating the former surface relief. The extreme south of England alone escaped this action. The indented island-starred coast of the west of the British Islands points to a depression or a tilting of the whole region westwards after a complex system of valleys had been impressed upon it by erosion. The drowned valleys of the west form fjords or rias penetrating the land, or uniting together to cut off islands. On the east the generally smooth coast, practically without islands, may result from the softer nature of the rocks.

Configuration and History.—The natural physical divisions of the British Islands have given rise to the larger historical divisions by guiding the long struggles of the settled inhabitants against successive invaders. Wherever the character of the resistance to invasion the old race was enabled to retain its independence, language, and customs. Strong local differences, even distinct feelings of nationality and separate laws are still perpetuated, long after the complete political union of the old countries into the United Kingdom, of which England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands may be looked upon as natural units.

Rainfall and Storms.—The rainfall depends conjointly on the prevailing wind and the height of the land. The west coast is naturally the wettest. In Ireland and the outer Hebrides the average annual rainfall is 40 inches, and is very uniformly distributed, as the rain-bearing wind is not stopped by any continuous high land. In Ireland also the numerous lakes and great expanses of damp bogs maintain the moisture of the air.

Flora.—In the highland regions of great rainfall little soil remains on the steep mountain slopes, and the land presents a bare surface of stones or rock. On the gentler slopes covered with thin soil only moss, fern and heather can grow, and this forms the characteristic vegetation of the high moorlands of Scotland, Wales, and the Irish mountains, which glow with a wealth of purple blossom in autumn. Most of the rest of the surface is covered naturally with rich grass suitable for pasturage. The yellow blossoms of the whin or gorse appear in every month of the year, and in spring the wild flowers of the low grounds are rich and varied.

At the dawn of history Great Britain was a densely wooded island ; but now less than 4 per cent, of the land is under trees, and little of the original forest remains. The clayey plains and peaty moorlands were largely occupied by morasses, most of which have been drained and reclaimed, the most characteristic which remain being the great bogs of Ireland. The native flora of the British Islands is identical with that of continental Europe with the addition of a few American species. The fact that there are fewer species common to the continent and Ireland than to the continent and Great Britain is one of the strongest proofs of the earlier separation of Ireland from Great Britain, than of Great Britain from continental Europe. Pyrenean types found in the south-west of Ireland, but not in Great Britain, may point to a former land connection with south-western Europe.

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## Ireland

By Grenville A. J. Cole,

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**Position and Outline.**—The name /r^ /a wt/ or £/r^-/a«rf, according to tradition, comes from that of Eire (earlier Eriu), one of the queens of the Tuatha De Danann. Ireland stands on the edge of the European plateau, the sea-floor sinking to oceanic depths on the west ; while on the east it is divided from Great Britain by shallow seas, rarely deeper than 70 fathoms. The western coast-line is deeply indented, and obviously reproduces the features of the sea-lochs of Scotland and the fjords of Norway. The long inlets are river-valleys that have been lowered beneath the sea, and the walls that bounded them now jut out as headlands into the Atlantic, their outermost peaks forming characteristic chains of islands. The attack of the ocean-rollers has, in places, formed cliffs of considerable height ; at Slieve Liag in Co. Donegal, and at Achill Island, there are almost sheer descents of 2,000 feet. The east coast of Ireland includes few fjords, though the names of Wexford, Carlingford, and Strangford show how the typical structure even there impressed the Danish settlers. In general, however, on the east there is a series of broad bays and accumulated sands, broken only here and there by some bold feature like Bray Head.

**Surface and Structure.**—The general form of the surface of Ireland resembles a shallow basin, the highlands being grouped along the coast. The watershed between an eastern and a western group of rivers may be traced from Lough Foyle to Mizen Head, but is a sinuous line marked by no special surface -features. In some cases rivers of both groups arise on opposite sides of the same central bog-land.

**The Northern and Eastern Mountains.**— The high plateaux of grey limestones of the central counties, and the fine-grained sandstones of Donegal are used for city-buildings. The black marbles of Galway and Kilkenny, the red from Co. Cork, and the unique green serpentinous marble of Connemara, are used for decoration. Grey granite is quarried at Newry, and red granites occur in Co. Galway and elsewhere. Hard flags occur in Co. Clare. The cost of carriage and of working retards the Irish stone industry. The one material excavated with unflinching regularity is peat—locally called turf—which is extensively used for fuel.

**People and History.**—Separated from South Wales by some 50 miles, and from Scotland at one point by only 13 miles, and with the broad Atlantic on the west, it is clear that the natural incorporation of Ireland in the British Isles has profoundly influenced her history. Her insular

position laid her open to attack from a variety of nations, at a time when journeys by sea were simpler than those by land. The early settlers in Ireland appear to have come in some small degree from southern Europe, but mainly from the Keltic tribes of Gaul and Britain ; but these invaders found men of the Stone Age already in occupation. Though the characteristic civilisation and language of the country thus had a Keltic origin, anthropological research shows that the people are non-Keltic and of still earlier type. The distinctive characters of the peasantry are not confined to those who still speak the Irish language. Courtesy, quickness of idea, a delicate or humorous aptness of expression, a conservatism of method, and a deep sense of the supernatural in ordinary life, are features of the agricultural community, and imply less mixture of race than might have been expected from the frequent immigrations. The dominant tribe became ultimately known as the Scots, who occupied the plain, holding the country from the centre, much as the Magyars now hold Hungary. These Scots and their subject tribes invaded Wales and Cornwall. A colony in Galloway spread northward, and gave its name to Scotland. The Romans never established themselves in Ireland ; but in the middle of the fifth century St. Patrick successfully introduced Christianity, and the country still abounds in Christian monuments erected by his monastic successors. The round towers are now believed to belong mostly to the ninth century. Ecclesiastical learning and art flourished, and Irish missionaries spread into central Europe. The seizure of the harbours by Danes and Norwegians from 800 A.D. onwards checked external enterprise ; but the development of the towns of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, and Limerick, as commercial centres, dates from this invasion. Dublin became the centre of Norse power in Ireland, while rival Irish kings strove for inland supremacy. Brian, however, drove the Danes from Limerick in 968, and broke their power at Clontarf in 1014. They held Dublin, Wexford, and Waterford till the Norman invasion under Richard de Clare in 1170. The Anglo-Norman governors soon regarded themselves as local Irish chieftains, and their insular position often overcame their loyalty, despite the existence of an official Viceroy in Dublin. This defection of many of the settlers reduced the English district to a small area round Dublin. Henry VIII. came to be styled king of Ireland, and drew to his side those who had long looked for a central authority. But no English predominance was established until after the wars of extermination carried on by Elizabeth's generals. The virtual forfeiture of Ulster by the government of James I. led to the introduction of sturdy English settlers on an organised basis, and the name of Londonderry records the source of many of the colonists. The emphasis laid upon religious differences resulted in a bitter rising in 1641, the ultimate suppression of which was left to Cromwell. The loyal party under William III. secured the passing of "penal laws," whereby land and other property were gradually brought into the hands of the Protestants. The export of wool was forbidden, and, outside the district of the linen industry, the people were driven to rely on agriculture alone. The conciliatory measures of the Dublin parliament came too late to check the sanguinary rebellion of 1798. Parliamentary union with Great Britain took place in 1801, and in 1829 Roman Catholics were first allowed to sit in parliament. To this day the country presents suggestive traces of its comparatively recent colonisation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1901 the Roman Catholics numbered 74 per cent, of the entire population.

Present Economic Condition.—The growth of population was rapid between 1800 and 1845, and the general reliance on the potato as a source of food led to the disastrous famine of 1846, when the potato crop failed. The western peasantry, isolated in small bodies among the mountains, naturally suffered most, even when relief had been freely supplied from England. A steady decline in population has since gone on. The sea has provided a simple means of exodus to America, just as in old times it served as a means of approach. At the present time the country appears to be increasing in prosperity, and much is being done, by legislation and private effort, to maintain the population on the soil. In former days water-power was largely used for mills, and the formation of reservoirs may again utilise the rainfall. From poverty in

coal, the country must always depend largely on systematic agri-culture and grazing. Of late years crops have been neglected, while large numbers of cattle have been exported. In the north, flax is cultivated, as a basis for the flourishing linen-industry. Shipbuilding prospers in Belfast. Distilling and brewing are important in the large towns. Cloth and lace are manufactured locally. The sea-fisheries have largely developed. Butter and bacon form the main exports of the south and south-west. The Congested Districts Board, the construction of "light railways," and the new department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction have done much to stimulate industry. Many lines of steamers connect the eastern ports with England and Scotland ; and American liners call at Queenstown, and at Moville on Lough Foyle.

Divisions and Towns.—The division of Ireland into provinces, under an over-lord, dates from prehistoric times, though the boundaries have slightly varied. The provinces are divided into counties, and these into baronies, which mostly bear ancient and interesting Gaelic names.

Leinster includes the twelve counties of Louth, Longford, Westmeath, Meath, Dublin, King's Co., Queen's Co., Kildare, Wicklow, Kilkenny, Carlow and Wexford. The north consists largely of a Carboniferous limestone plateau, used for grazing. The Boyne rises in the bogs near Edenderry, and runs through a wooded valley below Navan. Drogheda occupies its mouth, on a good inlet for shipping. The Liffey rises in the Wicklow Mountains, makes a loop of 75 miles through the plain, and enters the sea at Dublin Bay. A wooden bridge was erected across it here in ancient times, and Dubh-linn, the Black Pool, became the site of a town guarding the passage. The bay, sheltered between the hills of Howth and Dalkey, was accessible both to Norsemen and English ; and Dublin became the capital of the invaders. It is the seat of the Viceregal court, and of the Dublin University, founded in 1591 ; also of the Royal University. There are several important libraries and museums. The quays on the Liffey serve for a good import and export trade ; the mails cross to Holyhead from Kings-town, a fine harbour six miles down the bay. The city has of late extended greatly on the south. The old quarter round the Castle and Cathedrals is poor and dilapidated ; but the expansion in the eighteenth century provided Dublin with many handsome public buildings, classical in style. Dublin is mainly an administrative and professional city, but has large breweries, mineral water factories, chemical works, and other manufactures. South of Dublin, Leinster broadly divides itself into the mountain axis on the east, and the western Carboniferous synclinal, including the pastoral lowlands of Kildare and the high Kilkenny coal-field. Beyond the Slieve Bloom range, the King's County stretches to the Shannon. The Nore and the Barrow run north and south on either side of the coal-field, uniting at New Ross in a navigable channel. The Leinster granite chain rises to 3,039 feet in Lugnaquilla, and forms a long moorland, commonly 2,000 feet above the sea. The flatter ground east of the chain widens towards the south, where Wexford town has a fair shipping and agricultural trade.

Ulster includes the nine counties of Donegal, Londonderry, Antrim, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh, and Down. The planters of the seventeenth century introduced a virile and enterprising element. Immigration from Scotland took place at various times ; and a great part of the population remains Presbyterian. Antrim contains high basalt plateaux, the columnar jointing of the lavas being admirably seen in the Giant's Causeway near Portrush. Belfast (Beal feirsie, the "ford of the sandbank") was occupied by the Normans, and was finally secured for England in 1573. The steady growth of trade in the port, and of the linen and shipbuilding industries, have raised the population from 30,000 in 1810 to some 350,000 at the present day. The modern city has handsome well-kept streets, with conspicuous commercial buildings. The Queen's College is on the south, and there are seven public parks. The shortest route to Britain is from Larne, some 20 miles to the north. The basalt plateaux fall towards Lough Neagh, the largest lake in the British Isles. The Bann runs through it,

continuing as a broad stream to the sea at Coleraine, 100 miles from its source in the Mourne Mountains. Londonderry, still walled, rises picturesquely on the west bank of the Foyle, and has large agricultural exports. From the Sperrin Mountains across Donegal there stretches a romantic highland, mainly occupied by Irish-speaking people. The south-west of Ulster is less rugged, and the scenery of the two Loughs Erne graduates into that of the plain. An agricultural country of green rounded hills extends from this point eastward. The Mourne Mountains occupy the south-east of Co. Down, Slieve Donard (2,796 feet) and Slieve Binnian (2,449 feet) being conspicuous summits.

Connaught includes the five counties of Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Galway, and Roscommon. It lies almost entirely west of the Shannon, and its comparatively poor lands were often occupied by persons ejected from the east. In the mountains of Galway and southern Mayo lies some of the most beautiful scenery of Ireland; but the whole area eastward belongs to the limestone plain. Loughs Conn, Mask, and Corrib are thus broad sheets of water, with low eastern and mountainous western shores. The population of the Connaught highlands is thickest along the coast, and is engaged in fishing. The towns of Galway and of Sligo are thus fishery-centres. The former stands at the outfall of Lough Corrib, and is a natural port for the trade of Galway Bay, which runs 30 miles west to the open ocean.

Munster includes the six counties of Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Kerry, and Cork. The indentations of the coastline render it highly picturesque. The warm south-westerly winds preserve a richness of vegetation, except on the limestone terraces of Clare. Co. Tipperary consists partly of the plain, partly of the Old Red Sandstone ranges. The acropolis of Cashel is one of the most remarkable groups of antique buildings in Europe. Limerick, despite its trade in bacon and agricultural produce, has felt the effects of decreased population. It has a beautiful situation on the Shannon, above which the Norman stronghold rises. The east and west mountain-ranges occupy most of Cos. Cork and Kerry, culminating in Carruntuohill (3,414 feet), a peak in Macgillicuddy's Reeks. The lower lake of Killarney belongs to the plain, while the upper is enfolded in wooded mountains. The population of Kerry preserves many ancient characteristics, and dwells mostly on the coast. The island of Valentia is a starting-point for one of the most important transatlantic cables. In the east, Munster becomes richer and more cultivated; the Suir and the Blackwater often run between high banks of woodland. Cork, the third largest city in Ireland, is well built upon the Lee, and its suburbs run down towards Queenstown, a station for the American mails. The winding but spacious harbour is set with wooded islands. The chief trade lies in agricultural exports, Waterford, founded by the Danes, occupies a similarly sheltered position on the inlet of the Suir, and has a corresponding trade with England. The east and west ranges that form the south of Ireland are here broken by St. George's Channel, and we pass somewhat abruptly to the foot-hills of the Leinster chain.

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## To My Comrades

The Irish wars, a military history of Ireland from the Norse invasions to 1798

J. J O'Connell M.A.

1920

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### The Military Topography of Ireland.

The most reliable way to study the history of warfare in any country is to begin with the topography or natural geography of the country. The physical make-up of a region very largely determines the character of any military operations carried on within it. This fact is quite as true at the present time as it was two thousand years ago. Topographical features in any country that we examine as a possible theatre of war must come under either of two heads : they may be *avenues* along which an army can move towards a given objective, or they may be *obstacles* calculated to hamper its march. We must develop each of these a little more fully.

The avenues through a theatre of war are of several kinds—roads, railways, navigable rivers, canals. But even in the very earliest times they had to be such as would allow of the passage of large bodies of men kept united. There had to be enough space to hold the numbers available, and the surface underfoot had to have at least some kind of solidity. These routes might be, and in early times were, very unsatisfactory ; but at least they were better than none at all, and as time went on they were improved and developed. Practically in every country the earliest routes used followed the valleys of rivers. Nearly always the land bordering rivers had a large enough amount of level surface, and frequently the rivers themselves could be used as routes. So much for the avenues in the first instance ; the further development of them was largely conditioned by the lie of the obstacles with reference to them.

Obstacles in the military sense are any such natural features as might prevent or impede the movement of a large body of troops. For example, a mountain range, a river, bog, or lake—these are all military obstacles. So also are any fortifications such as a fort or castle or line of earthworks. Evidently obstacles have the effect of diverting or making more difficult the natural routes in any district. So that it is not hard to understand how any point where an avenue and an obstacle come into contact becomes at once of military importance. Thus a pass where a road pierces a chain of mountains, a bridge or ford where it crosses a river, or a causeway where it crosses a bog are all strategic points of more or less importance as the case may be.

Now that the elementary principle underlying the influence of geography on strategy has been outlined it may be helpful to consider an actual example. Everybody knows that Limerick was a Danish stronghold, that the Normans built a great castle there, that the city has stood several sieges, and that to-day it is a railway and road junction and an important port. But what was it long ago that made it successively become all these other things ? It was (*a*) a point at the head of a great tidal estuary, (*b*) a point at the lowest crossing of a great river, (*c*) a point where the angle of a fertile plain touched that estuary and river. All this meant that Limerick was the terminal of a sea route, a passage over an obstacle, and a centre for storing cattle and corn. So Limerick did not happen to have a military importance—it owed that importance directly to its geographical situation. Other places are important for similar reasons, but at the moment there is

no need to examine any of them in detail : the one example will be sufficient. We must now proceed to make a general survey of the country as a whole.

### Size and Situation of Ireland.

Ireland is not a very large country—the longest land line that can be drawn in it measures about 300 miles. This longest line is the long diagonal of a rough lozenge and extends from Fair Head in the North-East to Mizen Head in the South-West. Along the short diagonal from North-West to South-East the distance is about 200 miles. Now the size of a country has a certain significance. For one thing it has a certain influence upon the amount of population. But—still more important—the defensive capacity of a large country is greater than that of a small one. For instance, Belgium is so small as to be easily over-run, while the Boer Republics, though of quite feeble numerical power, were enabled by their extensive territory to make a protracted resistance to the English, course, the factor of size may be, and often is, offset by other considerations, but none the less it has its importance.

In the case of Ireland the fact of the country's being an island was one of those considerations calculated to offset the matter of its size. The country could not be suddenly marched across and overwhelmed by an invader in greatly superior force. Its insular character, as we shall see later, gave choice of several lines of attack, but most of these lines were only secondary.

In respect of situation Ireland is the most westerly country in Europe, and her nearest neighbour was the larger island of Great Britain—in early times and through the Middle Ages two separate kingdoms, Scotland and England. Great Britain extended all along the eastern shore of Ireland from which it was separated by a strait of varying width. Such were the general external conditions of Ireland from the point of view of possible warfare with an external army. And as regards the internal conditions, the following quotation, though of a later time, will give a pretty accurate idea : “ Ireland is one of the worst countries to make war in or to conquer, for there are such impenetrable and extensive forests, lakes, and bogs, there is no knowing how to pass them. It is so thinly inhabited that whenever the Irish please they desert the towns and take refuge in these forests, and live in huts made of boughs.”

Manifestly then Ireland had considerable defensive possibilities in early times. As to Irish expeditions of aggression into foreign lands, they do not come within our scope—except that they indicate a martial vigour as a leading feature in the national character. The introduction of Christianity diverted this energy : only the Roman Empire was “ raidable,” and that empire was Christian. The spoils went to other races who had chanced to remain *Pagan*.

### General Structure of Ireland.

Having now some idea of the size and situation of Ireland, it is necessary to enumerate the main divisions of the surface of the country. Of these there are three—a mountainous region in the North, another such in the South, and a Central Plain. This structure of Ireland is most important to bear in mind for this reason : The mountains in the North of Ireland are a geological continuation of those of Scotland, northern and southern ; the mountains in the south of Ireland are a like continuation of the Welsh Mountains. Thus the eastern side of the Irish Central Plain lay directly opposite what is known as the Chester Gap. In other words, the most exposed and most inviting region in Ireland lay opposite England's only outlet to the north-west. There is no need to emphasise the importance of this fact.

The northern mountain region covers about one-fourth the area of the country, and roughly lies north of a line drawn from Sligo to Dundalk. It thus very nearly coincides with the present province of Ulster. The southern mountain region covers about half of the remaining area and lies, roughly, south of a line drawn from Limerick to Dublin. It is worth while drawing attention to the fact that every one of these four points—Sligo, Dundalk, Limerick, and Dublin—has played an important part in Irish Military History. This is only what would be expected from their geographical positions.

#### The Central Plain.

We have alluded to the fact that this region is directly open to the sea on the east—between Dundalk and Dublin. On the west the plain is not open to the sea for all its extent ; but at Sligo, at Westport, and at Galway it throws out arms which reach the sea by gaps in the Ox and Connemara mountains. At Limerick the case is different : it is that the sea *comes up* to the plain rather than that the plain reaches out to the sea. But evidently there were no lack of approaches to the Central Plain either from the west, or especially from the east.

To-day much of the commerce of the western sea entries has been diverted to the east. But for many centuries the more natural geographical conditions governed this question of transport. Then Galway was the port of Connacht. The natural difficulties of communication internally were too great for any other arrangement.

The dividing line of the Central Plain was the River Shannon which crossed it in a north and south direction. Of the two regions into which the Shannon divides the plain the western, comprising most of Connacht and Clare, was upon the whole far less fertile than the eastern. The eastern portion thus became naturally enough Royal Meath—the Mensal Land of the Ard-Ri. This area was rich and productive and thus able to support fittingly the royal state : it was also central, and from it supervision over the whole could be most readily exercised. The River Boyne afforded a centrally-placed sea entry, and live roads, though of a very primitive kind, radiated from Tara—to the North, South, South-West, West, and North-West. From the point of view of military control of Ireland modern developments have not diminished but increased the relative importance of this hall of the Central Plain. How important possession of it has been will become abundantly clear in the course of the narrative : it is not too much to say that the cause of the native Irish as against their successive invaders waxed or waned in direct proportion to their degree of control of the ancient province of Meath. That is to say, of course, in the purely military sense.

This is as suitable a place as any to explain how Royal Meath lost its significance for the Ard-Ris, and what was the result. In the middle of the sixth century the Ard-Ri Diarmuid violated the sanctuary of St. Ruadan, who retaliated by proceeding to Tara, excommunicating the King, and solemnly cursing the royal rath and palace. Thereafter Tara was abandoned ; and even residence in Meath was given up after a time. Later Ard-Ris resided usually in their tribal domain, and their supreme authority went into complete abeyance. The desertion of Tara was an unmixed national calamity ; for all practical purposes it prevented for ever the establishment of a strong central monarchy, and brought immeasurable evils on the land.

The Central Plain as a whole was naturally far more passable for armies than the two mountainous extremities of the country. Yet even within the central region itself there were many physical features of the nature of military obstacles. We have already mentioned one—the River Shannon. This great river was an obstacle of the greatest importance. It traversed the entire extent of the plain, included many large lakes in its course, and was fed by many

tributary streams, some of considerable size. Moreover its banks were for great distances marshy and boggy. In short, the Shannon has always been a formidable military obstacle : it has always been regarded as the real military frontier of Ireland on the west—or at least of all Ireland that mattered. As for the Liffey, like the Boyne, it provided an entry of importance on the east.

Intimately connected with the Shannon is another remarkable feature lying about thirty miles to the east of it—the chain of waters known as the Westmeath Lakes, which are drained by tributaries of the Shannon. These lakes are six in number—Sheelin, Kinale, Derravaragh, Iron, drained by the Inny into Lough Ree ; Owel and Ennel, drained by the Brosna further south. The entire chain measures over thirty miles long and extends due south from the border mountains of Ulster. The area round these lakes is boggy and was formerly well wooded, so that we shall not be surprised to find that the main routes to the west of Ireland lay to the south of the chain—striking the Shannon at Athlone.

A similar chain of lakes extends from Killala Bay to Galway Bay—Loughs Conn, Mask, and Corrib. Castlebar, midway in the chain, thus became an important strategic point as the native Irish in Connacht were gradually forced westward by the Normans.

The bogs of the Central Plain were another important consideration in all military operations. Most of the boggy area lay west of the Shannon, but the most important area of this kind by far was the Bog of Allen. This bog embraced the districts around the upper reaches of the Boyne, the Hill of Allen, and the upper reaches of the Barrow. In great measure it constituted the natural frontier of the Pale, and for many centuries it was a safeguard to the native Irish territories of Leix and Offaly. Of course this was not one continuous marsh, but was split up by patches and ridges of dry land called “ eskers.” The roads even at the present day follow these eskers, which are in effect natural raised causeways over the boggy area.

The general expanse of the Central Plain has only two real breaks of a mountainous character—as distinct from projections of the northern and southern mountain areas and the mountains along the Atlantic coast. The two breaks are

(1) the Slieve Aughty, Slieve Bearnagh, and Cratloe Hills in Galway and Clare

(2) and the Slieve Bloom, Keeper, and Devil’s Bit ranges in Queen’s County and Tipperary.

The protracted independence of Thomond in the one case, and Ely, Offaly, and Leix in the other, were largely due to the protection afforded by these ranges

In former times the following areas of the Central Plain were covered by very extensive woods :

(1) The banks of the Shannon,

(2) the land around the chains of lakes,

(3) the stretch from Galway Bay to Lough Derg,

(4) part of Louth,

(5) much of the present counties of Tipperary, Kilkenny, Carlow and Queen’s.

## The Northern Mountain Region.

In considering the two mountainous extremities of Ireland the most important thing to note is how the Central Plain could be reached through them. The regions actually were not central, not very productive as a whole, and in a great degree impassable or at least difficult to traverse. Practically all the feasible routes were river valleys, and practically all these rivers entered the sea by good harbours. Moreover, in all these river valleys the land was much more fertile than the surrounding areas. Naturally, then, these valleys have been the channels of invasion, conquest, or plantation. There are four such in the north and four more in the south.

The four northern entries are the Erne, the Foyle, the Bann and the Lagan. Between them these account for practically all the area north of the Sligo-Dundalk line. Incidentally it is appropriate to name the Erne first, because the earliest of the legendary colonies is said to have entered the country by this route. And certainly its valley has been the scene of plenty non-legendary warfare. This is not surprising, for the valley greatly surpasses in richness the neighbouring counties of Donegal and Leitrim, and the Erne itself is a famous salmon stream.

The sea-entry of the Erne is Donegal Bay which runs in some 30 miles from the open sea, and the lowest stretch of the river itself is about eight miles long and somewhat broken by rapids. The next stretch is Lower Lough Erne—an 18-mile expansion, with further on the 10-mile expansion of Upper Lough Erne. Between the two lakes is a distance of 10 miles, and Enniskillen is situated midway, in a position of great military importance. The upper courses of the river lie among a mazy pattern of smaller lakes in the hill country of Cavan. From the west to the Erne valley there are two lateral routes ; along the coast from Sligo to Ballyshannon—a most historic route, and along Lough Gill and Macnean to Enniskillen.

The Foyle entry is Lough Foyle, a 10-mile inlet. The name Foyle is only given to the river between Derry and the double town of Lifford-Strabane, a distance of 16 miles. In the 20 miles from Strabane to Omagh it is called Mourne and Strule. Omagh is a centre of numerous routes, and the Foyle has many tributary valleys in this mountainous region. Lateral routes from the Erne valley are from Ballyshannon along the coast region to Donegal and thence by the Barnesmore Gap along the Finn valley to Lifford, and another from Enniskillen by Fintona to Omagh.

The Bann measures 37 miles from the sea to Lough Neagh. It is a considerable stream but broken by a fall at Coleraine. Lough Neagh, measuring 15 miles by 10, was always naturally a very serious military feature. So many rivers drain into this great basin that the area was always a communication-centre of the first importance. To the west the valley of the Moyola and Ballinderry rivers extend so as to practically link up with those of the Foyle tributaries, Owenkillew and Camowen. To the south-west the lake receives the Blackwater which, by the Clogher valley, leads to within a day's march of Enniskillen, so complete is the network of river-valleys. The Upper Bann itself flows into the south-east angle of the lake, flowing 40 miles from the Mourne Mountain at the head of Carlingford Lough.

The last of the Ulster rivers is the Lagan, of which Belfast Lough, well sheltered and a dozen miles long, is the sea entry. Up to Magheralin, a distance of 15 miles, the valley tends towards Lough Neagh, which is only four miles distant. Above that point to its source in Slieve Croob the river parallels the course of the Upper Bann. Strangford Lough and Carlingford Lough are two other inlets of the sea which admit of alternative means of access to the valleys of the Bann and Lagan. Lough Swilly in the north of Donegal links similarly with the Foyle valley—from Buncrana half way up that long inlet to Derry, and from Letterkenny at its head to Lifford.

Apart from the river routes enumerated, the bulk of northern Ireland, we must repeat, is mountainous, or at any rate sufficiently so to hamper appreciably the movements of armies. In addition there existed here as well as in the Central Plain extensive wooded areas, and these areas were pretty evenly distributed all over the province. As regards routes between Ulster as a whole and the Central Plain there were only two. We have already mentioned the western coast road going north from Sligo. The other was on the other flank from Dundalk to Armagh. Successive campaigns will familiarise us with both of these.

### The Southern Mountain Region.

We have stated that four approaches in the nature of river-valleys existed in the southern part of Ireland as in the northern. These were the Slaney, the Barrow-Suir basin, the Blackwater and the Lee. In addition there were a number of long, narrow, sheltered inlets on the south-west coast of Kerry and Cork which afforded excellent anchorages. But these were too far away from the vital centre of resources, and the land in the immediate neighbourhood was mountain, forest, or bog. The head of any one of these inlets is a good fifty miles of most difficult country from Charleville, the extreme angle of the Central Plain in this direction.

Wexford Harbour is a sheltered inlet extending inland for some half a dozen miles. Then at Ferrycarrig it receives the Slaney. Here the banks rise high and steep and the channel narrows most abruptly—a miniature “Iron Gates” in fact. Here very naturally the Norman invader built his castle to control the river itself and the road which bridged it. From Ferrycarrig the valley runs somewhat west of north to Bunclody or Newtown Barry where it pierces the Leinster Chain—one of the two passes through that range. Above Bunclody it skirts the Wicklow mountains on the west, rising on Lugnacullia at the head of the Glen of Imaal.

Along the other side of the Leinster Chain flows the Barrow, the next river we must consider. This river and the Suir both flow into Waterford Harbour, a six-mile inlet forming a fine natural harbour. As far as New Ross—20 miles from the sea—the Barrow is tidal, and just above Ross it receives the Nore, an 80-mile tributary flowing from the north-west. Actually, in mediæval times the Nore was the more important stream of the two, being less exposed to attack by the mountaineers from the east. Thus Kilkenny, the largest inland town in Ireland, grew up on the Nore. To return to the Barrow: for the 30 miles from Ross to Bagenalstown its course follows the narrow, wooded valley between the Leinster Chain and the mountainous ridges of Kilkenny, of which Brandon is by far the chief summit. At Bagenalstown the Central Plain is definitely reached. At the present day the Barrow is navigable for barges as far as Athy.

The next two rivers, the Suir flowing into Waterford Harbour and the Blackwater flowing into Youghal Harbour, can be suitably considered together—for this reason. All the mountain ranges in the south-west of Ireland run east and west with the rivers for most of their courses flowing in valleys between them. Thus the Suir backed by the Comeraghs and Galtees, and the Blackwater similarly backed by the Nagles and Boggeragh mountains, together constitute a double wet ditch and rampart covering the harbours in the south of Ireland—Waterford, Dungarvan, Youghal, Cork, Kinsale. It was thus comparatively easy for an overseas invader to maintain himself in these districts. And it is to be remembered that the rivers themselves are navigable for considerable distances, the Suir up to Carrick and the Blackwater to Cappoquin. In view of the west-east trend of those rivers the routes into the Central Plain would have to follow passes through the mountain ranges and crossings of the rivers—hence the military value of places like Mallow, Fermoy, Lismore, Cahir, Clonmel, Carrick.

North of the Suir and east of the Galtees are the mountains of which the highest is Slievenamon. Between these and the Galtees the Suir basin trends due north into the plain, the source being in the Devil's Bit range.

The fourth of the southern entries was more limited in its influence, being in a measure overshadowed by the two preceding. Still Cork Harbour is a magnificent land-locked bay and its valley offered a suitable avenue into west Minister. Northward the chief outlet of the Lee valley was to Mallow, and eastward a natural expanse of country spreads as far as Youghal. One further point with reference to Cork Harbour must be indicated : we have said it was overshadowed in importance as an entry by some of the others. But it should be observed that this was only as an entry ; once possession was definitely established the superior character of this inlet as a harbour resulted in its outstripping the others and attaining its present relative position.

To round off the survey of the Southern Mountain Region it is only necessary to indicate those areas formerly most thickly covered by forests. The Wicklow Mountains, the Galtee region and great part of Kerry were the mountain districts that were most densely wooded. Thick woods also lay long the valleys of the Slaney, Barrow, and Blackwater.

#### Social Features Influencing Warfare.

Military operations of any definite kind were only possible after the clan system had developed to some extent by federation into larger units occupying a definite territory and with a definite community of interest : for example, about the time of establishment of the five provinces and their larger sub-divisions. All the males of military age fought when the chief went to war. Spoils, or the more definite and important sort of spoils—Tribute—was the normal recompense of victory ; the life of the people being mainly pastoral and partly agricultural, with occasional trade exchanges. Such handicrafts as existed were mainly exercised by slaves taken in battle or purchased abroad,

A feature tending to make operations vague and inconclusive was the absence of towns. A territory had no ' capital' in the modern sense. The chief had a residence—almost invariably a hereditary one—around which houses and buildings grew up. But these places were not centres of industry or resources or wealth in any sense. They could be abandoned without loss, and restored without trouble. In the earliest times, indeed, operations followed the natural routes of the country in successive expeditions and campaigns ; but otherwise no very precise character distinguished the warfare of the times.

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