

ROSCOMMON, an inland county in the province of Connaught in Ireland, bounded on the north and north-east by the county of Leitrim, on the east by that of Longford, and on the south-east by those of Westmeath and King's, from all which it is separated by the river Shannon, except just on the north side; on the south-west it is bounded by the county of Galway, on the west by that of Mayo, and on the north-west by that of Sligo. The river Suck, a tributary of the Shannon, separates it along the greater part of the border from the county of Galway; and the Curlew mountains for a short distance from that of Sligo. The form of the county is irregular; the greatest length is nearly from north to south, from the border of the county of Leitrim west of Lough Allen to the junction of the Suck with the Shannon, 60 miles; the greatest breadth, at right angles to the length, is from the junction of the three counties of Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon to the bank of Lough Forbes near Tarmonbarry, 40 miles. The area is estimated by MacCulloch (*Statistical Account of the British Empire*) at 952 square miles, or 609,405 English acres, of which 453,555 are in cultivation, 131,063 unimproved mountain or bog, and 24,787 lakes. In the returns of the population for 1831, the area is stated to be 557,103 acres. We believe MacCulloch's statement, which is taken from a table furnished by Mr. Griffith, the engineer, to the Lords' Committee on Tithe, to be the most exact. The population in 1831 was 249,613, giving 262 inhabitants to a square mile. In area it is rather below the average of the Irish counties, but in amount and density of population rather above the average. Roscommon, the capital, is 80 English miles in a direct line west by north of Dublin, or 95 English miles by the road through Mullingar, Longford, and Lanesborough, or by Mullingar, Ballymahon, and Lanesborough.

*Surface, Geology, Hydrography, Communications.*—The surface of the county is partly undulating, but along the banks of the Shannon and the Suck, and in other parts, it is very flat. There are some mountains. The principal groups are the Braulieve, or Braughlieve, and Slievh Curkagh mountains (estimated at 1000 or 1200 feet high), which enter from the counties of Leitrim and Sligo on the north-west, and extend a little way into the county west of Lough Allen; the Curlew mountains, on the borders of Sligo near Boyle; the Slievh Bawn mountains, 839 feet in the northern part, and 857 feet high in the southern, parallel to the Shannon, and not far distant from it, on the east side of the county; the hills between the Shannon and the Suck in the south; and Slievh Aelwyn, between Castlerea and Ballinlough in the west. The Braughlieve and Slievh Curkagh have steep rugged acclivities and broad perpendicular faces of rock near their summits. The eastern side of the Slievh Bawn mountains slopes gradually down to the bogs in the valley of the Shannon at their base; the western side is more broken; the district at the foot is varied with wood.

The level parts of the county are for the most part occupied by the formations belonging to the great carboniferous limestone district of central Ireland. The impure argillaceous limestone, or 'calp,' the black shale, and the sandstone, which form one of the subdivisions of the limestone group, and the lower limestone, which constitutes another subdivision, subjacent to the calp, are found in this county. The

hills west of Castlereagh are composed of the yellow sandstone which is the lowest member of the limestone group. The Braughlieve and Slievh Curkagh mountains are composed of shales and sandstones, with three beds of coal resting on beds of the millstone-grit series, from which good ironstone is obtained. The coal of this district is not extensively diffused; it forms two fields partly or wholly in this county, separated from each other by the river Arigna, which flows between Braughlieve and Slievh Curkagh. There are some other coal-fields in other adjacent counties round Lough Allen. The coal answers well for smelting iron, and is used in the Arigna iron-works (the only iron-works in Ireland) in this county. Cast-iron of the best quality is produced at these works at a moderate expense. The company by which they are worked are in possession of the most extensive and valuable coal-fields of the neighbourhood.

The Curlew mountains and the Slievh Bawn mountains consist of rocks of the old red-sandstone formation. (Griffiths, 'On the Geological Structure of Ireland,' in *Appendix to Second Report of Irish Railway Commissioners; Parliamentary Papers for 1837-8*, vol. xxxv.) Good limestone is quarried for building. Potters'-clay and pipe-clay are found in various parts of the county.

The county belongs to the basin of the Shannon, except a very small portion at the western extremity, which is drained by the Moy, which flows into Killala Bay. Lough Allen, which the Shannon enters about five miles from its source, and through which it flows, is on the north-eastern boundary of the county. From the southern extremity of this lough the Shannon flows along the eastern boundary of the county to Carrick-on-Shannon, where it receives a stream from Lough Gara and Lough Key. From Carrick the Shannon pursues its course along the border, passing through Lough Corry, Lough Boderig, or Bodarg, Lough Boffin, and Lough Forbes to Lanesborough, below which it enters Lough Ree. It quits the southern extremity of Lough Ree just above Athlone, and runs southward to the junction of the Suck, where it quits the county, after a course along its eastern side, including the loughs through which it passes, of about 75 miles. The fall in this distance is very trifling. Lough Allen is only 160 feet above the level of the sea, and the fall between Lough Allen and the lower end of Lough Derg, which is above 40 miles below the junction of the Suck, is not more than about 62 feet, or about six inches to a mile. The Suck, the only important tributary of the Shannon, rises just within the county of Mayo, but its course is almost entirely within or upon the boundary of Roscommon; its length may be estimated at more than 60 miles.

Both the Shannon and the Suck are navigable. The navigation of the Shannon commences in Lough Allen, from whence to Battle Bridge, about seven miles and a half below the Lough, a canal is cut for the purpose of avoiding the difficulties of the natural channel. Other short canals are cut to avoid rapids or other difficulties in the lower part of the course. Agricultural produce, turf, coal, timber, bricks, flags, stone, slates, sand, and manure are the chief articles conveyed by the river. The navigation through Lough Ree is difficult, owing to its shoals and sunk rocks, notwithstanding which a great number of pleasure-boats are kept on it. The Royal Canal opens into the Shannon opposite Tarmonbarry in this county; the Grand Canal, just below the junction of the Suck. The traffic on the canals consists chiefly of corn and butter sent to Dublin, and English manufactures and general goods sent in return. The navigation of the Suck commences at Ballinasloe (county of Galway) for light flat-bottomed boats; small row-boats ascend higher. But a canal is cut parallel to it on the Galway side of the river, from Ballinasloe to the Shannon. Both the Suck and the Shannon abound with fish, especially eels, of which great quantities are taken in weirs and sent to Dublin. Those of the Suck are peculiarly fine.

The principal roads are the mail roads from Dublin to Sligo and to Galway. The Sligo road just crosses a corner of the county between Drumsna and Jamestown, re-enters at Carrick, and passes north-west through Boyle. The Galway road enters the county at Athlone, and crosses it in a south-west direction to Ballinasloe in Galway. The roads are excellent. Another road to Sligo, which branches off from the mail road at Longford in Longford county, passes through Tarmonbarry, Strokestown, and Elphin, and rejoins the mail road at Boyle. The road from Dublin to

Roscommon (whether by Ballymahon or Longford) enters the county at Lanesborough, and runs south-west nearly eleven miles to Roscommon. Generally speaking the roads of the hilly district in the northern part of the county are inferior to those in the more level districts of the centre and south.

The principal lakes are Lough Allen (8 miles long from north to south, and 3 miles broad); Lough Bodarg, or Boderig, and Lough Boffin (forming one sheet of water of intricate form, 5 miles from the northern extremity to the south-eastern, and 7 miles to the south-western); Lough Forbes and Lough Ree (17 miles long from north to south, and 7 miles broad), all on the Shannon; Lough Gara (5 miles long from north to south, and 5 miles broad); Lough Key (otherwise Rockingham Lough); and Lough Oakport, all communicating with the Shannon by a stream called the Boyle Water; Lough Skean and Lough Meelagh, also communicating with the Shannon, and situate, as well as those just mentioned, in the northern part of the county; Lough Glin or Glynn, Lough Cloonagh, and Lough Aeluyn, all small, in the western part; Lough Funcheon and Lough Ballyneeny, in the southern part; and several others in the central and eastern part. The line of lakes on the Boyle Water, Lough Glynn, and Lough Meelagh are surrounded by picturesque and beautiful scenery. Besides these there are a number of 'turloughs,' or temporary lakes, formed in the hollows of the limestone tracts. They usually disappear in summer, but not always; and when dry early in the season, such as have grassy bottoms produce abundant crops. The water is drained off by fissures and passages in the limestone rock, which get choked by the vegetable matter washed into them by the first winter floods, and are cleared next summer by the decay of this obstruction. The size of these 'turloughs' varies with the season: some of them are of considerable extent.

The soil in the limestone district is commonly fertile; there is however a large extent of bog or other waste. The amount of pasture land is considerable: the natural pastures, which are esteemed to be some of the best ground in the county, are in the limestone districts, especially between Tulsk, Castlereagh, and Boyle. Rich deep loams are met with; and there are, especially along the limestone ridges between the Shannon and the Suck, extensive tracts of light shallow soil, so shallow indeed that in some parts the plough cannot be used. These tracts are commonly used for sheep-feeding. The surface of the mountains is commonly wet and boggy, but there are intervening spots of dry ground covered with heath. Some of the soil in the sandstone districts, as in the Curlew Mountains, near Boyle, is very poor, but is capable of great improvement from the admixture of lime, or rather of a compost of lime and bog earth, which is to be had readily. Much may be done in this way, as well as by draining cold wet lands, whenever capital comes to be employed more extensively than at present in agricultural improvement.

The extent of the unimproved mountains and bogs has been estimated at above 130,000 English acres, the bogs being dispersed over the face of the country in patches of various size and in almost every variety of situation: they are found on the tops of the highest mountains, on the banks of the loughs and rivers, and in the bottoms of the valleys. Several of those on the uplands are comparatively dry, and afford in their natural state coarse pasturage for young and hardy cattle. Something has been done by spirited individuals towards reclaiming some portions of this large amount of waste land, but nothing has been done upon a large scale or upon any plan of co-operation.

Many of the estates in the county are large, some belonging to resident landlords, others to absentees. Rents vary; on farms of several hundred acres, 20s. and 25s. per acre are usual, but, sometimes 30s. and 35s. are given, and, in the immediate neighbourhood of towns, as much as 60s. and 80s. Tillage has been much extended of late years, and the quantity of food raised is probably greater than at any former period; but, excepting on the land held by a few wealthy individuals, the state of agriculture is very wretched, especially on the smaller farms. 'To say nothing of the deficiency of produce attributable to bad ploughing, unskilful sowing, want of manures, and an utter inattention to the alternation of green crops with those of corn, potatoes alone excepted, the loss upon what the land actually does yield is considerable, from bad and careless stacking, and the general want of barns. The stacks are commonly made

very small, resting upon the earth; for in a country so bare of timber and hedgerows, boughs and bushes are scarce articles. If wet weather comes on and continues long, much of what lies below, next to the earth, perishes by attracting moisture: from the want of a broad and firm basis, the frail structure is liable likewise to be swayed by the wind; and the tops and sides losing their original form, and being no longer capable of throwing off the rain, still more damage ensues. To such losses are likewise to be added the deprivations from vermin, rats, mice, and small birds, whilst the corn remains out of doors.

'As for barns, in the English and Continental acceptation of the term, they are literally unknown. The floor of some outhouse, or perhaps even that of the family room, may be used for threshing; but a vast proportion of the grain is beaten out in the open air, very commonly near the road side, where there happens to be a dry spot. These observations, it must be understood, apply to the small holdings; but upon such is raised a considerable quantity of the corn which is thrown into the market from the county of Roscommon.' (Weld's *Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon*, 8vo., Dublin, 1832.)

The common ploughs of the small farms are very wretched: whether the instrument works well or ill is a matter of chance, and the plough is commonly followed by a man with a spade, or rather a 'loy,' to turn back the earth, which would else, after the plough had passed, revert to its former bed. However, on the lands of the principal gentry examples may be found of excellent tillage, with Scotch ploughs of the most approved construction, drawn by a pair of horses and driven by the ploughman. The 'loy' mentioned above is a sort of curved spade or shovel, of clumsy form, and with a handle of unusual length, far inferior to the spade in general utility, but not ill adapted for use in turning up a light shallow soil in rocky districts, where the plough cannot be used. In certain districts of the county where spade labour is common, the labourers unite in companies, and work for each other in rotation. This is the case especially in busy times, such as potato planting or digging, and lightens their toil by the cheerfulness which prevails.

'Wheat is commonly sown immediately after the crop of potatoes has been dug out. After the wheat, two or three crops of oats are taken, all for the one manuring for the potatoes; and then the ground is sometimes laid down with grass seeds, in a state unquestionably too poor for the purpose; sometimes "let out," in the phrase of the country, that is, left to nature to be clothed with grass of spontaneous growth, a process which is sure in time to be accomplished, though always more tardily than if the seeds were sown.' (Weld, *Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon*.) This practice of 'letting out' is very injurious; and it is supposed that by the introduction of stall-feeding, and the cultivation of the artificial grasses and other green crops, the productiveness of the soil might be increased twofold.

The extensive grazing-farms of the county contrast favourably with the tillage land; yet, even in these, much improvement is needed. Thistles are allowed not only to remain, but to spread; so that it is no unfrequent circumstance for sheep to be pricked in the eye and blinded by them. The highest quality of pasture land consists commonly of natural grass. The favourite breed of oxen seems to be the long-horned Leicester. The principal graziers supply themselves at fairs for summer feeding: they raise only a few head themselves, and those of some superior breed. It is common also to have brood-mares on the large grazing-farms, and several fine horses of good blood are bred. There are no dairies on a large scale, but butter is made more or less in every part of the county. The sheep are considered to be far better than those reared in the adjacent counties, a result attributable partly to the superior skill and intelligence of the sheep-farmers, and partly to the dry and wholesome nature of their sheep-walks. The favourite breed is a cross between the old Connaught sheep and the Leicester, 'which produces an animal little inferior in size to the former, with a greater disposition to fatten in a short space, and with less waste or offal on the carcass.' (Weld, *Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon*.)

The 'con-acre' system is general, but in some parts of the county is not carried to any great extent. The consolidation of the small farms into large has not been much practised; in some instances where it has taken place the

tenants who were dispossessed were assisted to emigrate. Emigration has taken place in most parts of the county, but not to any great extent: the emigrants have been from various classes. They have gone chiefly to Canada or to the United States, but a few have gone to Australia. (*Appendix to First Report of Commissioners for inquiring into the State of the Irish Poor*.)

The condition of the peasantry, or 'cottiers,' is very miserable. In some places they occupy cabins without paying any rent; but more commonly they pay for a cabin, without land, a yearly rent varying with the locality, frequently rising to 1*l.*, in some cases to 1*l.* 10*s.*, and in the town of Boyle, as high as 2*l.* 10*s.*; with land, the yearly rent rises occasionally to 3*l.* and 3*l.* 10*s.* The rent is paid sometimes in money, sometimes in labour, in which cases the rate of wages is about 6*d.* a-day, and occasionally 8*d.* or 9*d.* The cabins are wretched hovels, built of mud or sods; or, where stone is abundant, with stone walls, either dry or with mortar, and thatched with straw or potato-stalks. The furniture is of the most miserable description, made up of a table, three or four stools, a box, and a pot or two. Bedsteads are comparatively rare; and the bedding consists of straw, having a blanket, perhaps only a sack, with the addition of the sleeper's day-clothes for a covering. In some parts of the county it is common for two families, or even more, to reside in one of these wretched habitations. The condition of the peasantry has very generally deteriorated since 1815, partly in consequence of the linen manufacture having declined. Disturbances have been frequent in many places, while in others the people have been very peaceable. There are a few charitable loan societies, some of them established from the funds raised in England for the relief of the Irish in 1823. Illicit distillation is prevalent, especially when corn is at a low price. Employment is scarce, and only a small portion of the peasantry have constant work. Wages are commonly 8*d.* or sometimes 10*d.* a-day without diet; or 6*d.* with diet, in summer; and 6*d.* a-day without diet in winter. In busy times, and in the neighbourhood of the towns, higher wages are paid. The average yearly gains of a labourer are variously estimated, but commonly from 7*l.* or 8*l.* to 10*l.* a year. Women and children get little employment, except at busy seasons, such as potato setting and digging, and ir. harvest, when they earn 4*d.* or 5*d.*, or even 6*d.* a-day without diet. Herdsmen are usually better off. On a farm of fifty acres, they get a cabin, an acre of potato or cabbage garden, and grass for a cow; on a farm of a hundred acres, two acres of garden, and the grass of two cows, with the opportunity besides of keeping a pig or a few geese. The diet of the peasantry consists of potatoes, with the addition, in some cases, of milk, or buttermilk, red herrings, and oatmeal for gruel. Their clothing is commonly of the most wretched character.

*Divisions, Towns, &c.*—The county is divided into six baronies, or half-baronies, as follows:—

	Situation.	Pop. 1831.
Athlone . . . . .	S.	56,865
Ballintobber* . . . . .	W.	70,597
Ballymoe (half barony) . . . . .	S.W.	7,353
Boyle . . . . .	N. & N.W.	66,105
Moycarne or Moycarnon (half-barony) . . . . .	S.	7,243
Roscommon . . . . .	Central	41,450

There are, in the county, the assize and market town of Roscommon; the market and post towns of Boyle, Castlereagh, Elphin, Frenchpark, and Strokestown; and the post towns of Athleague, Keadue, and Mount-Talbot. Portions of the borough of Athlone [ATHLONE], and of the towns of Ballinasloe [BALLINASLOE], Carrick-on-Shannon, and Jamestown [LETRIM, COUNTY OF], and Lanesborough [LONGFORD, COUNTY OF], are also within the border. The principal villages are Lough-Glynn, Ruskey, Knockcroghery, Tarmenbarry, and Castle-Plunket.

Roscommon is in one of the detached portions of the barony of Ballintobber. It appears to have derived its origin and its name (Ros-Coman, 'the pleasant place of Coman') from an abbey founded about A.D. 550, by St. Coman or Comanus. Another abbey of greater magnificence was founded here for the order of Preaching Friars, about A.D. 1257, by O'Conor, king or prince of Connaught; and a few years after, a strong castle was built by Sir Robert de Ufford, one of the early English adventurers. Of these last

\* The principal part of the barony of Ballintobber is on the west side of the county; but there are two other large portions quite detached from it, on the banks of the Shannon and Lough Ree.



two edifices there are considerable remains; the castle is on the north side of the town, and the abbey on the south side. Both are on level ground, while the town occupies the eastern and southern slopes of an intervening eminence. The castle is an oblong quadrangle, with a tower at each angle, and two additional towers to defend the gateway, which is on the eastern side. The town consists of three or four streets irregularly laid out, having in the centre an open space opposite the old gaol, a building situated on the summit of the eminence on which the town stands, but now disused as a prison from want of sufficient space. Near this is the old court-house, now converted into a Catholic chapel. A new court-house, a substantial and commodious building, but deficient in architectural correctness and effect, and a new gaol, have been built, and near them are some good new houses; but with the exception of these, the town presents an appearance of wretchedness and decay; four-fifths of the houses are mere cabins. There is a neat church with a square tower. The town is ill supplied with water. There is a county infirmary near the new court-house, a plain brick building. The ruins of the Abbey church are of various dates; they contain a tomb, said to be that of O'Connor, founder of the abbey, with a mutilated effigy recumbent on it, and effigies of Irish gallow-glasses (antient light-infantry) sculptured in relief on the perpendicular sides of the tomb. The interior of the church is still used as a burial-ground.

The parish extends into the barony of Athlone; the entire population in 1831 was 8374, of whom 3306 were in the town. The shops are numerous, but business does not appear to thrive as in some other towns in the county. Coarse pottery is manufactured near the town. There is a weekly market on Saturdays, well attended, at which corn, the materials of clothing, and articles of clothing made up, are sold to a considerable extent. There is no direct communication with Dublin; but there are cars to Athlone and to Killashee on the Royal Canal. Mendicity and prostitution prevail to a frightful extent. There is a barrack not far from the town.

The assizes for the county are held here; and also the Epiphany and Midsummer quarter-sessions for the division, which comprises the baronies of Athlone, Ballymoe, Moycarne, and part of Ballintobber, and petty sessions for the district. The town was formerly a parliamentary borough, but was disfranchised at the Union, since which time the corporation has become extinct. There were in 1835 six schools connected with the Kildare-place Society, the London Hibernian Society, the London Ladies' Hibernian Society, or supported by endowment or contribution; a classical school, and eleven hedge-schools: in all, eighteen schools.

Boyle is about 108 miles from Dublin, on the mail-road to Sligo, and on the stream (the Boyle Water) which flows from Lough Gara into Lough Key. The town appears to have risen under the protection of a Bernardine abbey, which was transferred to Boyle, A.D. 1161, and attained great wealth. The ruins exist on the left or north bank of the Boyle Water, about a quarter of a mile below the town bridge; they are tolerably extensive, and include the remains of the church and of some of the monastic buildings, now enclosed in a private garden. Some of the arches were walled up after the suppression, when the abbey was for a time occupied as a military post. The older part of the town stands on the northern side of the river; the more improved part on the southern. The newer houses are in this part; they are built of limestone or sandstone. Of about five hundred houses, three-fifths are miserable thatched cabins, and half the remainder are little better. The town is inconveniently laid out. The bridge over the river is a handsome structure, 100 feet long and 42 feet wide, of three arches, and lately built in place of an older bridge, which had five low narrow arches. A new bridge of one arch has been thrown over the river a little below the town bridge, and just above the ruins of the abbey; and a third bridge lower down. The church is capacious, but the architecture is not in good taste. There are two Roman Catholic chapels, one or two dissenting places of worship, a new sessions-house, a bridewell, and a barrack; the last was formerly a nobleman's mansion. The old sessions-house has been pulled down, and a building for religious and charitable purposes erected on its site.

The population of the town, in 1831, was 3433; of the whole parish, 12,597. The town is fairly provided with shops, and is the mart of the surrounding district. Corn, and but-

ter, which is sold in firkins for exportation, are the staple articles of trade. The butter-market is on Monday; but the principal market, at which a considerable quantity of linen yarn is sold, is on Saturday. Heavy goods are chiefly brought from Sligo, lighter ones from Dublin. There are six fairs in the year.

Boyle was formerly a parliamentary borough, but the privilege of returning members was lost by the Union; and the corporation has been dissolved by the late Irish Municipal Reform Act. There were in the parish, in 1835 seventeen day-schools, including two private boarding schools, two national schools, one school supported by the Baptist Society, four schools partly supported by subscription, four private day-schools, and four hedge-schools. There were beside four Sunday-schools. A weekly newspaper is published at Boyle.

The quarter-sessions are held here twice in the year, for the division which comprises the baronies of Boyle and Roscommon and part of the barony of Ballintobber; petty-sessions are also held. There is a barrack for the county constabulary, of whom a body are stationed here. There are a charitable loan society, and two dispensaries, one maintained by Lord Lorton, whose beautiful mansion and demesne of Rockingham are on the banks of Lough Key near the town.

Castlereagh is in Kilkeevan parish, in the barony of Ballintobber, 17 miles north-west of Roscommon, on the river Suck, which runs through the town, and divides it into two parts; a small stream, a feeder of the Suck, also runs through the town, and joins the river just below. The town consists principally of one long street, the continuity of which is interrupted by two bridges over the Suck and its feeder. Many of the houses are new, nearly one-half of the southern side of the street has been rebuilt, and new cottages for the peasantry are springing up on every part of the estate of Lord Mountsandford, whose demesne and residence are close to the town. The population of the town, in 1831, was 1172; that of the whole parish, 10,867. Of about 170 houses, nearly 70 were mere cabins, and about 25 were thatched houses of two stories; but the cabins are better than in most other towns in the county, and some of them are remarkably neat. There are several neat cottages with gardens in the neighbourhood.

The market is on Wednesday for corn, and on Saturday for provisions. There are a malthouse, a distillery, and a tan-yard, and a number of small shops. There is a market-place, with convenient shambles. There are four fairs in the year. The Easter quarter-sessions for the Boyle division of the county are held here. The sessions-house stands near the market-place; and there is a bridewell. Petty sessions are also held. The parish church of Kilkeevan is close to the town, and there is a Catholic chapel.

The parish had, in 1835, twenty-three day schools, including two national schools, one school chiefly supported from Erasmus Smith's fund, nine supported by Lord Mountsandford, one supported by the Catholic clergy of the parish, a classical school, and nine hedge-schools. There are a loan fund and a dispensary.

Elphin is in the barony of Roscommon, 11 miles south by east of Boyle. The town extends along the summit of a ridge, and runs nearly east and west: more than two-thirds of the houses are mere cabins, many of them of the most wretched character; there are scarcely any slated houses. The cathedral stands at the eastern end of the town, and the Catholic chapel at the western. The cathedral, a modern building, of barn-like appearance, about 80 feet long and 28 broad, with a slated roof, is little in harmony with the tall dilapidated square tower with which it is united. It is used as the parish church, and is neat in its internal appearance. The bishop's palace is a spacious and comfortable country-house, with a lawn in front. The Catholic chapel is commodious, but not elegant.

The population of the town, in 1831, was 1507; of the whole parish, 6643. The shops are small and ill-supplied. A market has been established within the last few years by the bishop. There is a dispensary. There were, in 1835, three day-schools, supported, one by the clergy and the Society for Discouraging Vice, and two by the London Ladies' Hibernian Society, and nine hedge-schools. The diocesan school, founded by Bishop Hodson, A.D. 1685, is not noticed in the Parliamentary Returns. There are two yearly fairs at Elphin.

French-park is in the barony of Boyle, 9 miles south south-west of Boyle. It is a small place, containing about

2 hundred houses, most of them mere cabins, at the junction of four roads. There are a Catholic chapel, a school-house, and a sessions-house; and a market-house has been erected within the last few years. The mansion and demesne of French-park, the seat of the French family, are close to the town; and about half a mile distant, on the verge of a bog, are the ruins of Clonshanvill Abbey. The ruins consist of the walls of the church, with its steeple, two detached chapels in the burial-ground, and the remains of a square building belonging apparently to the habitable part of the abbey. The ruins, from their situation in a flat open country, form a striking object at a distance, but are neither very picturesque nor of much antiquarian interest when viewed nearer. In the burial-ground, which is still used, is a lofty cross. The population of the town, in 1831, was 447; that of the parish of Tybohan or Taughboyne, in which it stands, was 16,460. Butter, yarn, and pigs are sold in the market, which is held on Thursday. There are three yearly fairs. Good sandstone is quarried in the immediate neighbourhood, and limestone in the town itself. Petty sessions are held here. French-park has a dispensary.

Strokestown is in the barony of Roscommon, between Elphin and Lanesborough. It contained, in 1831, about two hundred and sixty houses and 1547 inhabitants. The town consists of two streets crossing at right angles; the one which runs east and west is nearly 150 feet wide, and has Lord Hartland's demesne and mansion at one end, and a new church at the other. Three-fifths of the houses are mere cabins, and more than another fifth are thatched cottages, little better than cabins. The rest are built of limestone or sandstone, both of which are procured near the town, and are roofed with Welsh slates, imported into Sligo, and brought from thence by land carriage. Trade is prosperous, and the market is well attended; a considerable quantity of wheat, for the growth of which the soil round the town is particularly favourable, is sold; and the country-people bring in linen, linen yarn, tow, woollen stockings, flannels, and a peculiar kind of woollen stuff which is dyed and dressed in the town. The market is also well supplied with lake and river fish, and some sea-fish, and goods of all kinds are sold in stalls. There are four yearly fairs. There are a sessions-house and bridewell, and the quarter-sessions for the Boyle division of the county are held here once in the year. There is also a dispensary. The old mansion-house of Lord Hartland has been modernised: in the grounds, at a short distance from the house, are the roofless walls of an old church, used as the family burial-place. Races are held at Ballynafad, three or four miles south of the town.

Athleague is a small place, containing, in 1831, eighty-seven houses and 488 inhabitants: there is a long bridge, or rather series of bridges connected by a long causeway, carried obliquely across the river Suck, which here flows in a divided channel. Athleague is a dull place, with little trade; there is a flour-mill. Four fairs are held in the year. The church is an old building in bad repair; there is a Catholic chapel in the town. Keadue is in Boyle barony, ten or eleven miles north-north-west of Carrick-on-Shannon; it consisted, in 1831, of about forty houses, chiefly cabins. A market-house was then building; and the place was increasing in prosperity from the neighbourhood of the Arigna iron-works. There are ten yearly fairs. Keadue has a dispensary. Mount-Talbot is in Athlone barony, on the banks of the Suck, and takes its name from the demesne of the Talbot family, which is close to the village. It is a small place, pleasantly situated. Mount-Talbot has four fairs in the year. Petty sessions are held both here and at Keadue.

Lough-Glynn had, in 1831, about fifty houses, chiefly cabins, but superior to those commonly met with; there were a Catholic chapel and a dispensary near the village, and a parish church at some distance: the population was 254. Ruskey or Rooskey is in Ballintobber hundred, and on the Shannon, over which is a bridge of nine arches: the village extends across the river into Leitrim and Longford counties. The church of the parish of Tarmonbarry is in the village; also a Catholic chapel. Knockeroghery (pronounced Nocerohery) is in the barony of Athlone, about 5 miles south-east of Roscommon, not far from Lough Ree. It has a new church and new school-houses. A considerable manufactory of tobacco-pipes is carried on; and there are two yearly fairs, one of them a large one. Tarmonbarry is in Athlone barony, on the right bank of the Shannon, which is here divided into two arms, over each of which

there is a bridge: these bridges are connected by a causeway over the intervening island. The Royal Canal terminates in the Shannon at Richmond harbour opposite Tarmonbarry: there are extensive basins, docks, and warehouses on the Longford side of the river. Castle-Plunket is a miserable place of about forty miserable cabins. Lough-Glynn and Tarmonbarry have each four fairs in the year; Castle-Plunket has three.

*Divisions for Ecclesiastical and Legal Purposes.*—The number of parishes in the county is differently stated; we believe the correct number to be fifty-six. These, with some of the adjacent parishes in the next counties, make up thirty-one benefices; of which twenty-seven are in the diocese of Elphin, one in that of Clonsfert, one in Ardagh, and two in Tuam. All these dioceses were in the ecclesiastical province of Tuam, except Ardagh, which was in the province of Armagh; but by the late alterations in the Irish church, all are now in the province of Armagh.

The county is included in the Connaught circuit: the assizes are held at Roscommon, where is the county gaol. The county is divided into two parts for the sessions business: the division of Athlone comprehends the baronies or half-baronies of Athlone, Ballymoe, Moycarne, and part of Ballintobber; the division of Boyle comprehends the baronies of Boyle, Roscommon, and the rest of Ballintobber; the sessions for the first are held alternately at Athlone and Roscommon; those of the second, twice in the year at Boyle, once at Castlereagh, and once at Strokestown. The county gaol is at Roscommon, and there are bridewells at Athlone, Boyle, Castlereagh, and Strokestown. The discipline of the county-gaol is very defective; the great objects of prison discipline are altogether lost sight of; nor is the size of the gaol or the number of the cells sufficient. The bridewells of Athlone and Boyle are clean and well ordered. Those of Castlereagh and Strokestown are for the temporary lodgment of prisoners. The constabulary force, on 1st January, 1838, amounted to 244, viz. 1 subinspector, 6 chief constables, 7 head-constables, 43 constables, and 187 subconstables.

There is a county infirmary at Roscommon, and dispensaries at Athlone, Boyle, Castlereagh, Elphin, French-park, Strokestown, Keadue, Lough-Glynn, Croghan, Tulsk, and Ballyleague. The county is included in the district of the Connaught lunatic asylum, which is at Ballinasloe.

Two members are returned for the county, who are elected at Roscommon. Athlone, which is partly in this county, is the only parliamentary borough. The number of voters on the register for the county in 1834-5 was 1864; for the borough of Athlone 274.

The amount of grand-jury presentments in the year 1837 was 27,051*l.* 18*s.* 3*d.*, viz.: for new roads, bridges, &c. 2502*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.*; for repairing roads, bridges, &c. 7884*l.* 2*s.* 11*d.*; for building or repairing gaols, bridewells, and houses of correction, 41*l.* 10*s.*; for prison and bridewell expenses, 1915*l.* 15*s.*; for the police and expenses of witnesses, 4196*l.* 0*s.* 10*d.*; for salaries of county officers, not included in the foregoing heads, 3376*l.* 18*s.*; for public charities, 1454*l.* 17*s.* 2*d.*; for the repayment of government advances, 5108*l.* 6*s.* 10*d.*; and for miscellaneous expenses, 572*l.* 3*s.* 10*d.*

*History, Antiquities, &c.*—In the earliest historical period this county appears to have been partly or wholly in possession of the Auteri, a people mentioned by Ptolemy, and supposed by Sir James Ware (*Hist. of Ireland*, vol. ii., ch. vi.) to have inhabited some part of the counties of Galway and Roscommon. At a later period it was occupied by the sept or clans of O'Conor Ruadh (red), Rough, or Roe; and O'Conor Dhunne (brown) Dunn, or Don, whose territories comprehended respectively the baronies of Roscommon and Ballintobber; and by the sept of the Macdermots, whose territories now constitute the barony of Boyle; the parts bordering on Galway were occasionally encroached upon by the O'Dalys and the O'Kellys of Galway. The territories of the two tribes of the O'Conors were called Hy-Onach; those of the Macdermots were called Moylarg or Moylurg; and those of the O'Dalys and O'Kellys, Hy-Maine or Mainech. Part of the county was included, with a portion of Galway, in Clanconow, the territory of the Bourks: the most northern part was included in Corcachlann, the territory of the O'Hanlys and O'Broenans; between the Suck and the Shannon was the district of Dealbna Nuadhat; Hy-Briun Sinna was another district along the bank of the Shannon; and a district called Kierrigia-ai, afterwards Clan-Kethern, was included in the county, but

in what part is not specified. (Ware, *Hist. of Ireland*, chap. vii., sec. 1.)

Of the earliest period there are few memorials, the raths hill-forts or earth-works are the principal. Of these there are more than four hundred and seventy. They are always upon natural eminences. They contained within their ramparts the dwelling-places of the chieftain and his family, commonly constructed of earth and hurdles, but having sometimes wooden walls upon a foundation of earth. At Oran, between Roscommon and Castlereagh, is one of the round towers whose use and origin are so uncertain. It is only about twelve feet high, and bears the appearance of never having been finished, rather than of having been thrown down. Its interior diameter is 11 feet 3 inches; and the thickness of the walls 4 feet 6 inches. It is built of limestone; the stones are well cut, fit closely, and are laid in even courses.

Seven years after the English invasion of Ireland, the county was attacked by Milo or Miles de Cogan, one of the most active and warlike of the English adventurers. Roscommon formed at that time part of the kingdom of Connaught, and was governed by Roderic O'Conor, recognised as sovereign of Ireland. De Cogan advanced with 40 knights, 200 other horsemen, and 300 archers to the town of Roscommon, where he was joined by Murrrough, son of Roderic, at the head of a body of malcontents. The natives however, by driving away their cattle and laying waste their country, reduced De Cogan and his army to great danger from famine, and obliged them to retreat. In 1204 the county was again ravaged by William Bourke (or de Burgo) Fitz-Aldelm, lord of Limerick and the neighbouring country: in 1216, the castle of Athlone, on the frontier, was erected to secure a ford of the Shannon, and in 1268 that of Roscommon was built to secure the quietness of the county, at that time assumed to be subject to the English, and included in a grant of Connaught, made by Henry III. to the family of De Burgo, or De Burgh, who held also the earldom of Ulster. The native princes of the country, though recognising the supremacy of the English crown, were not disposed to submit to such wholesale spoliation, and the castle of Roscommon was twice taken by them, A.D. 1272 and 1276. This part of Ireland appears to have been long in a state of anarchy, the Irish septs struggling for independence with the De Burgos, their Anglo-Norman masters. In A.D. 1315, Richard de Burgo, earl of Ulster, and Fedlim or Phelim O'Conor, Irish prince of Connaught, advanced in conjunction from Roscommon, to repel the invasion of the Scotch under Edward Bruce; but O'Conor, seduced by the offers of Bruce, entered into a secret treaty with him; and returned home to guard his own inheritance against his kinsman Roderic, who sought to usurp it. Fedlim, whose treaty with Bruce was not known, was supported by the English, and by their aid he defeated Roderic, who fell in the battle. He now avowed his alliance with the Scots, but was entirely defeated by the English under William de Burgo, brother of Earl Richard, and Sir John Bermingham, at Athenry in Galway, A.D. 1316. The victory utterly broke the power of the O'Conors, who split into clans or septs, of which two have been noticed as occupying portions of Roscommon. These two septs became rivals, and wasted their strength in mutual hostilities. Meanwhile, the inheritance of the De Burgos came by marriage to Lionel, duke of Clarence, son of Edward III., whose descendants afterwards came to the throne in the person of Edward IV., except such of the territories of the family in Connaught as were usurped by some of the younger branches.

Of this troubled period there are several memorials, in the ruined castles and monastic buildings which exist. Roscommon Castle, and Roscommon, Boyle, and Clonshanvill abbeys, the last near French-park, have been noticed. Between Roscommon and Castlereagh are the ruins of Ballintobber Castle, the antient stronghold of the O'Conor Dhunne or Don. The walls enclose a quadrangle 270 feet by 237 feet, and are strengthened by polygonal towers resembling those of Caernarvon Castle. The walls and the towers are tolerably complete externally; but the towers are little more than shells. There are the walls of the church and of some of the dependent buildings of Tusk Abbey standing. There was formerly a strong castle at Tusk, and there was one at Ballynafad near Strokestown, of which the ruins are still visible: it was the stronghold of O'Conor Ruadh. A very remarkable ruined fort of unknown antiquity is to be seen near Lough Glynn. The keep of Athlone Castle, which is

yet standing, is a decagon, and is in the Roscommon part of the town. There are several remains of small castles, especially of one on Castle Island in Lough Key, but none of them deserving particular description. There are considerable ruins of Coote Hall, a fortified mansion of the middle ages, between Lough Key and the Shannon.

In the reign of Elizabeth, Connaught was formed into counties, and the county of Roscommon divided into baronies. This measure is ascribed by some to the earl of Sussex lord-lieutenant (A.D. 1562-64); by others to his successor, Sir Henry Sidney, lord deputy (A.D. 1665-67); while Mr. Weld (*Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon*) ascribes it to Sir John Perrot, lord deputy, whose administration was considerably later (A.D. 1584-88).

In the rebellion in Elizabeth's reign, the O'Conors remained faithful to the English. Boyle Abbey was besieged by the Ulster insurgents in the war of 1641. The county fell into their hands, and the O'Conor Dhunne now took part with them: some severe encounters took place, especially in 1642, when Callaugh O'Conor was defeated by the English. The insurgents long retained possession of the county, but on the termination of the war their chiefs were deprived of their estates, which were confiscated, and divided among English and Scotch adventurers. At the Restoration O'Conor Dhunne or Don obtained the greater part of his property again, and his descendants are among the few native Irish families who have retained their lands. In the war of the Revolution, the principal events connected with this county were the first ineffectual siege of Athlone by a body of William's army, under General Douglas (A.D. 1690), and the subsequent siege and capture of that city (A.D. 1691) by the main body of William's troops, then under General Ginkell. [ATHLONE.] This was followed by the decisive battle of Aghrim [AGHRIM], fought in the adjacent county of Galway. Roscommon gives the title of earl to the noble family of Dillon.

(Weld's *Statistical Survey of Roscommon*; Ware's, Cox's, Gordon's, and Moore's *Hist. of Ireland*; *Parliamentary Papers*; Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*.)