

## **LIMERICK (county of):**

In the province of Munster, bounded on the north by the estuary of the Shannon and the county of Tipperary; on the east by the same county; on the south by that of Cork, and on the west by that of Kerry: it extends from 52°17' to 52°45' (N. Lat), and from 8°6' to 9°15' (W. Lon.); and comprises an area, according to the Ordnance survey, of 640,621 statute acres, of which 548,640 are cultivated land, and 91,981 are occupied by unimproved mountain and bog. The population, in 1821, was 218,432; and in 1831, 24,201.

Of the tribes mentioned by Ptolemy, the Coriondi appear to have inhabited this portion of Ireland; and although from a very early period it was included in the native kingdom or principality of Thomond, it is said to have had at one time a separate political existence, under the name of Aine-Cliach, or Eoganach-Aine-Cliach, and to have been divided into five cantreds, governed by subordinate chieftains. That of Carrigoginniol belonged to the O'Kiarwicks, and afterwards to the O'Briens, whence the name of Pubblebrien was given to the barony; Uaithney, now the barony of Owneybeg, belonged to the O'Ryanes; Cairbre Aobhdha, or Kenry, to the O'Donovans; Hy-Cnocnuil-Gabhra, now the baronies of Upper Connello and Coshma, to the McEneirys and O'Sheehans; and Connalla, now Lower Connello, to the O'Kinealys and O'Thyans. At the time of the English invasion, the O'Hurleys, Mac Sheehys, O'Gormans, O'Collins, O'Coins, O'Scanlans, and O'Hallinans, were also among the principal families. About the middle of the ninth century, the Ostmen made themselves masters of the city of Limerick and of the island of Inniscattery, in the Shannon; and maintained their power in both places until the commencement of the eleventh century, when Brien Boroimhe, King of Thomond, compelled them to become his tributaries. The city subsequently became the chief state of the rulers of Thomond, of the O'Brien family, whence their country was often called the Kingdom of Limerick.

Henry 2nd. granted this kingdom to Herebert Fitz-Herebert; who having soon after resigned his claim, it was bestowed upon Philip de Braosa, and the grant was renewed to him by Richard 1st., with the exception of the city and the cantred of the Ostmen, which were committed to the custody of William de Burgo, who established a settlement there that defied all subsequent attacks of the natives. Braosa's grants having been forfeited, various Anglo-Norman settlements were made in the county (which was one of the twelve formed by King John, in 1210) under Theobald Fitzwalter, ancestor of the Butler family, Hamo de Valois, William Fitz-Aldelm, and Thomas, son of Maurice Fitzgerald. With these the O'Briens of Thomond had part possession: Donogh, O'Brien, lord of Thomond, having been enfeoffed of the extensive lands of Carrigoginniol by King John. The Irish of Thomond often proved themselves formidable enemies of the English settlers. In 1367, they took prisoner, at Manister-Nenagh, the Lord-Justice Gerald Fitzgerald and many persons of distinction; and in the war between the houses of York and Lancaster, the county was entirely overrun by them. During the rebellion of the Earl of Desmond in the reign of Elizabeth, that nobleman possessed the towns of Kilmallock, Askeaton, Rathkeale, and Newcastle, then the four chief places in the county, and the confiscation of his estates after his death caused the transfer of a considerable portion of its fertile lands to new proprietors. It suffered a similar fate in the wars of 1641 and 1688, each of which considerably increased the number of English settlers.

Early in the last century, Lord Southwell brought over a number of German Protestants, whom he settled at Court-Matrix, or Castle Matres, near Rathkeale; other colonies were also planted in various places through the county; their descendants have increased greatly in number and are now generally distinguished by the name of Palatines. For a long time they were objects of great hatred to the native peasantry. The feeling has gradually but not wholly subsided, and they are now chiefly noted for their habits of cleanliness and order and for their superior skill in agriculture and rural economy. In the year 1762, a most alarming spirit of insurrection showed itself in this part of the country; the peasantry assembled in great numbers, chiefly by night, dug up corn-fields, levelled enclosures, houghed or killed the cattle of the gentry, and even put to death or treated with great cruelty individuals obnoxious to them from their harsh mode of collecting the tithes and taxes: from wearing shirts over their clothes in order to know on another in the night, they were called the Whiteboys. Some very severe statutes were enacted to suppress this spirit, the execution of which being enforced by a large body of the military, tranquillity was after some time restored, several of the leaders of the insurrection were executed, and many of their followers transported. A similar insurrection broke out in 1786, in which the hostility of the insurgents was directed against the same objects as before; they even assembled and traversed the country in military array during the open day, compelling every person they met to take an oath against the payment of tithes or taxes; they were, however, soon put down by the strong arm of the law, aided by the military. But the pause was of short duration. A new association appeared in 1793, under the name of Defenders, who had so well matured their plans that they made a simultaneous attack upon the towns of Kilfinane and Bruff, and though repulsed from the former by the spirited resistance of the inhabitants, supported by the Palatine yeomanry, they succeeded in gaining possession of the latter; but were shortly driven out of it with some loss of life by a detachment of the army, against which they ventured to make a stand. In 1803, a project was conceived of seizing the city of Limerick, as a means of co-operating with the insurgents of Dublin under Emmet; but on learning that preparations were in progress to oppose them, they dispersed. Symptoms broke out in an insurrection of peculiar violence, which raged during that and the greater part of the succeeding year, but was ultimately subdued by the operations of the insurrection act. In 1817, a general failure of the crops occasioned a very distressing famine, which, though relieved by issues of public money and liberal contributions of benevolent individuals, entailed on the districts most visited by the dearth a frightful scourge of contagious disease. In 1820 succeeded the distresses occasioned by the failure of nearly all the principal banks in Munster; the scarcity of provisions caused by the failure of the crops in the following year reduced the peasantry to the last stage of calamity; the consequence was an insurrection more maturely planned and vigorously executed than any that had preceded. In every quarter of the county predatory bands appeared under the directions of an invisible chief, styled Captain Rock, declaring their determination to reduce high rents, tithes, and taxes, and threatening with destruction all proprietors of land who should attempt to disobey their mandates. The outrages of the insurgents increased and extended in spite of the exertions of the gentry, military, and Catholic clergy; Abbeyfeale, on the borders of Limerick and Kerry, became their chief place of rendezvous. The police were augmented; large bodies of regular troops were sent into the county and quartered generally in the western baronies, yet still the insurgents kept up a kind of guerilla warfare: several parties of them were attacked by surprise and deprived of their arms, yet when dispersed in one quarter they showed themselves suddenly in another, committing their devastations often in the open day; the churches of Kilkeedy, Ballybrook, and Athlacca, together with several gentlemen's houses, were burnt by them, and the

plundered property publicly and systematically divided among the captors. Several wealthy and influential persons were murdered, amongst whom was a Roman Catholic clergyman, who rashly attempted to exhort them to submission to the laws; and it was only under the application of the insurrection act, and the most vigorous exertions of the magistracy, that the spirit of violence was at length suppressed.

The county is chiefly in the diocese of Limerick, with some small portions in those of Emly and Killaloe. For purposes of civil jurisdiction it is divided into the baronies of Clanwilliam, Lower Connello, Upper Connello, Coonagh, Coshma, Costlea, Kenry, Ownybeg, Pubblebrien, and Small County; Lower Connello is subdivided into the barony of Lower Connello East, and the division of Shanid; and Upper Connello, into that of Upper Connello East, and the division of Glenquin; these arrangements have been found necessary from the great extent of the baronies, which comprised fully one-half of the county; the new divisions were named after the castles whose ruins are conspicuous near their respective centres. It contains the ancient corporate towns of Askeaton and Kilmallock; the market-town of Kilfinane; the market and post-towns of Rathkeale, Newcastle, Bruff, Ballingarry, Pallaskenry, and Glin; the post-towns of Castleconnell, Shanagolden, Croom, Cahirconlish, Pallas Greine, Adare, and Broadford; and the penny-posts of Abbeyfeale, Barrington's Bridge, St. Patrick's Well, and Drumcolloher. Previously to the Union, it sent six members to the Irish Parliament, two for the county at large, and two for each of the boroughs of Askeaton and Kilmallock; but, since that period, the two returned to the Imperial Parliament for the county at large have been its only representatives. The number of electors registered at the close of the year 1835 was 2891, of whom 27 were £100, 457 £50, 506 £20, and 1727 £10 free-holders; 9 £50, 17 £20 and 133£10 leaseholders; and 15 rent-chargers: the place of election is the city of Limerick. The county is in the Munster circuit: the assizes are held in the county town, where the court-house, county gaol, and the house of correction are situated. Quarter sessions are held in Limerick, Newcastle, Rathkeale and Bruff; and there are bridewells at each of these places and also at Glin, Kilfinane, and Croom. The local government is vested in a Lieutenant, 17 Deputy-Lieutenants, and 98 other magistrates, with the usual county officers and 3 coroners. There are 38 constabulary police stations, having in the whole force: 1 sub-inspector, 5 chief and 44 sub-constables and 132 men, with 6 horses; besides which there is a force of the 'Peace preservative police', consisting of 1 chief constable and 74 men, who have 10 stations, at which there are 41 of the men, the remainder being distributed among the ordinary constabulary force. The lunatic district asylum for this county and those of Clare and Kerry is in the city of Limerick: there are four fever hospitals, besides that of Limerick, and 24 dispensaries, supported by county presentments and private subscriptions in equal portions. The amount of Grand Jury presentments in the year 1835 was £32,088.5.3., of which £1838.4.8. was for the public roads of the county at large; £9089.4.11. for those of the baronies; £16,651.2.7., for public establishments, officers' salaries, buildings, etc.; and £4509.13.1 for the police. In military arrangements the county is included in the south-western district.

Its general aspect is flat, though diversified by many small hills, and in some parts by mountains of considerable elevation. The whole western district, from Loughill to Drumcolloher, is composed of an unbroken range of mountain, stretching in a vast but regular and beautiful curve. On the south-east, the plain country is bounded by the Galtees, rising precipitously to a great elevation, forming the boundary of Limerick, and stretching thence far into the county of Tipperary. On the north-east the barony of Ownybeg embraces the skirts of the Slieve Phelim mountains, which forms an extensive group penetrating the interior of Tipperary. In the neighbourhood

of Pallas Greine are several hills of considerable height and beauty. The Ballingarry hills, lying near the centre of the county, and rising abruptly from a fertile plain, are very conspicuous; the principal elevation is Knockfierne, a conical mountain, said to be one of the highest in the county. Another conspicuous height is Knockpatrick, between Shanagolden and the Shannon. From the banks of this river stretches south-eastward a vast tract of land which is justly considered to be the richest in Ireland, the soil being in general a deep mellow loam, for the most part based on limestone and fit for every kind of culture. The most productive tract, comprising about 100, 000 acres, is in the neighbourhoods of Bruff, Kilmallock, Athlacca, and Hospital, forming part of the district called, from the extraordinary richness of its soil, 'the Golden Vale', which extends through this county in length from Pallaskenry to Kilfinane, and Kilfrush, a distance of thirty-two miles, and in breadth from Drehidarsna, by the city of Limerick, to Abington, a distance of eighteen. The corcasses, or low meadow lands, which extend from the Maigue along the Shannon to Limerick, have a substratum of yellow and blue clay, covered with a black mould, occasionally mixed with sand and gravel. The soil of other parts of the county not occupied by mountain, particularly to the west of the River Deel, consists of a light loam resting on limestone or stiff clay, and well suited both for pasture and tillage. In several of the lower districts there are small detached portions of bog, which kind of land is exceedingly valuable in some places, bringing the high rent of £1 per rood; when reclaimed, it is peculiarly adapted to the culture of hemp, though very little either of flax or hemp is grown in the county. A great part of the surface of the western mountains also is a light turbary, but not so good in the low grounds. The climate is remarkably good, and the weather less variable than in any other county in Ireland; an effect which has been much promoted by the drainage and cultivation of the bogs. It is said that in some seasons the heat of the summer's sun is scarcely powerful enough to ripen thoroughly the heavy crops of grain. The entire face of the country, notwithstanding its great natural fertility, presents a very denuded appearance, from the want of trees; hedgerows being very uncommon, and timber trees in any number being seldom seen except in the immediate vicinity of the residences of the wealthier proprietors.

Although a considerable portion of the soil is calculated to produce abundant crops, having been regarded by Mr. Arthur Young as the richest that he had ever seen, yet not more than a fourth is under tillage, the remainder being wholly devoted to the fattening of black cattle and sheep; and it is here worthy of observation, that in some leases there is a special clause under heavy penalties to prevent more than one acre in 20, and in some cases more than one in 50, being broken up or in any way cultivated. Even where no such clause exists, if a farmer begins to bring his land into tillage, it is regarded as a certain indication of approaching poverty. Many of the landholders round Dromin, Bruff, Bulgadine, Kilpeacon, Crecora, and Lough Gur are very wealthy, and have stocks of from 400 to 600 head of cattle. In the baronies of Clanwilliam and Small County, the quantity of pasture far exceeds arable land. The barony of Kenry is the most remarkable for the abundant crops and fine quality of its grain. The wheat crops are everywhere heavy; and the produce of potatoes is about sixty barrels, in some instances one hundred barrels, of twenty-one stone each per acre. The tillage, except on large farms which are mostly in the hands of gentlemen, is generally conducted in a slovenly manner, and even the wealthier landholders are not wholly exempt from the charge of negligence. In some parts the land is much divided, and wretchedly exhausted by the impoverishing system of subletting. The crop of the greatest importance to the peasant is the potato, the cultivation of which is chiefly by the spade: the potato is generally followed by wheat, then oats or potatoes again, and thus in succession until the ground is wholly exhausted, when it

is left to recruit its powers by the unassisted efforts of nature. This system of subdivision, though too common, is by no means universal. It exists to a great extent in the neighbourhood of Kildeemo, where scarcely half a dozen persons in the district keep a horse, and even more so around Tankardstown, near Kilmallock; the con-acre system is also on the increase in the neighbourhood of Galbally and other parts of the county. Still there are many good and extensive practical farmers, and many landlords who discountenance altogether the system of parcelling out and subletting; and the tillage farms, in many instances, are managed under the most approved systems: some few are drained and well fenced, but these are rare. Irrigation is little if at all practised; indeed, the soil is so productive by nature, that most farmers deem any outlay for its improvement a superfluous expenditure; some even of the more intelligent assert that sowing grass seeds, in laying down land, completely destroys it for the next seven years. Flax grows here to an extraordinary height; but notwithstanding the efforts of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce and the Agricultural Society, the farmer is not yet, convinced that it will prove a remunerating crop. This and the contiguous county of Clare are famous for their orchards, which produce the much-esteemed Cackagay cider. The most celebrated districts for its manufacture are those round Pallaskenry, Adare, Croom, Rathkeale and Kilpeacon. The greatest variety of apple is to be seen around the farmhouses of the Palatines. Dairy farms are very numerous and large, varying from 150 to 600 acres, the management of which appears to be well understood. The cattle are chiefly crosses between the Leicester, the Devon, the Durham, the Teeswater, the Kerry, and the old or native Irish; and the breed, called by the Cork and Kerry farmer 'the Limerick heifer', appears to be admirably adapted to the soil. The horses are mostly light, being a cross between the Suffolk and Ayrshire; in the neighbourhood of Adare, Croom, and Kilmallock, a very useful and active kind of horse is to be met with. The breed of sheep has been greatly improved by crosses with English stock, principally the Leicester, and in some parts of the county, considerable flocks are kept. That of pigs embraces every variety, but a mixture of the Berkshire and Irish appears to fatten with the least trouble and to be the most profitable. The agricultural implements are generally of the newest and most improved construction, particularly the plough and the harrow: the old Irish car is quite banished, except among the very poorest people, and its place is supplied by a light cart, composed of shafts, and a frame resting on a pair of wheels, on which is placed an oblong basket of wicker work, capable of containing a large quantity of field or garden produce, and removeable at pleasure, when timber or other bulky articles are to be conveyed on it. The fences are in some places stone walls; in others large ditches or banks of sods, with a deep trench on both sides. In some places furze is planted on the tips of the banks; the thorn fence is very rare. The agricultural association for the county holds its meetings regularly in Limerick: it is energetically supported; many premiums have been distributed and much encouragement for improvement held out both by instruction and example, but little advantage has been derived as yet from its spirited efforts.

In a geological point of view the county comprehends four formations, calcareous, coal, sandstone, and basalt. The calcareous district comprises the greater portion of the champaign part of the entire county, extending with little interruption from Newcastle, in the west, to Abington in the north-east, and from Mount-Trenchard on the Shannon to the eastern boundary of the county south of Kilfrush, comprising the greater part of the vales of the rivers that are tributary to the Shannon. The range is almost uniformly from east to west, and the dip or inclination westward. It presents a great variety both in structure and colour, the stone being raised in some places in blocks of very great size, and in others in thin laminae; the prevailing colour is light

grey, and it is susceptible of a high polish. It presents its greatest varieties near Croom and Monaster-Nenagh. Near Askeaton are some indications of lead ore, but not of a character that would encourage any great outlay in tracing the veins: there are indications of a very valuable ore near Tory hill. The coal formation forms the western boundary of the limestone field. The coal lies in thin seams, the lower increasing in goodness of quality and in thickness, but no attempts of any importance have yet been made to raise this mineral except on a small scale and from the upper stratum, which is merely a thin seam of coal shale. The ironstone that alternates with the coal is only used in road-making; nor is it probable that any vigorous researches will be made in quest of coal, while bog fuel can be had in abundance on the surface. Besides the coal-field above described, there are thin seams in a glen between Castlereaugh, Galbally, and the town of Tipperary. The old red sandstone formation comprises the hills of Ballingarry, Knockaderry, and Kilmeedy, which rise abruptly from a limestone plain and range from the Deel to the Maigue in a direction east and west. The new red sandstone comprises the mountains of Castle Oliver, the Long mountain, the Black mountain and others from Charleville to Glenbrohane, forming the boundary between Cork and Limerick, and merging into the Galtees. The basalt shows itself in the hill of Ballygooly on the verge of Lough Gur, in those of Knockruadh, Knockgreine, Cahirnarry, Garrigoginniol and the hill of Newcastle. At Linfield, near the Dead river, it rises to a height of nearly 200 feet, presenting a perpendicular colonnade of massive pillars towards the north, bearing a striking resemblance to the promontory of Fair head in Antrim. Some of these pillars are 109 feet long, and approximate to the pentagonal or hexagonal form; but in general the basalt of this county is amorphous. To the south-east of this range is Knockgreine, 'the Hill of the Sun', 500 feet high, with a base of limestone and a summit of basalt. It everywhere contains a large portion of iron. Oxide of iron and iron clay are found in great quantities at the foot of the hills, and near Bohermore are procured specimens containing shells with an appearance of partial calcination. There are appearances of greenstone and millstone grit in several places: near Doon is a very valuable bed of excellent freestone. Specimens of very pure copper ore have been collected near Abington, and some attempts made to trace the vein. At Rathmore, in Monaster-Nenagh parish, is a large bed of inferior pipe clay. Slate, but of inferior quality, is obtained in the demesne of Daragh and at Towerlegan; and in the mountains near Athea are procured large, thin, smooth, and very superior flagstones.

The manufactures and commerce, except an inconsiderable supply of coarse frieze, coarse linen and flannel for domestic use, and a manufacture of linen and cotton checks at Glin, centre wholly in the city of Limerick, under the head of which they are described. There are bleach-greens, principally for domestic use, at Newcastle, Castleconnell, and Lingland; and paper-mills at Ballygooley, Anacotty, and Rossbryn, the two latter in the liberties of the city; also very extensive flour-mills at Askeaton, Cahirass, Rathkeale, Croom, Corbally, Kilmallock, and Sunville, where great quantities of flour are annually shipped for London, Liverpool, and the Clyde. The exports are butter, grain, flour, and salted provisions; the whole of which are either shipped at Limerick or sent to Dublin by the canal, but the great outlet is by the Shannon. This noble river forms the northern boundary of the county. Below the pool of Limerick it expands into a wide estuary, and after a course of about 17 miles, mingles its waters with those of the Fergus, forming an arm of the sea several miles wide, interspersed with islands of very various character, and discharging itself into the Atlantic between Loop Head and Kerry Head, about 60 miles from Limerick. All the rivers of the interior are branches of the Shannon; they are the Maig or Maigue, the Commogue, the Daun or Morning Star, the Deel, and the Mulcairne. The Deel is

navigable to Askeaton, and the Maigue to the parish of Adare. On the south-west the county is bounded for some distance by the Feale river, flowing by Abbeyfeale; and on the south-east for about three miles by the Funcheon. Except the short canal above Limerick, made in 1759, to facilitate the navigation of the Shannon, there is no artificial navigation within the county. The roads are everywhere remarkably good, particularly those leading respectively from the city of Limerick to Tipperary, a new and excellent level line; to Cork, of which a great portion is new, and the old portions have been much improved; to Tralee, a new mail line greatly improved, widened, and levelled; to Tarbert, on the banks of the Shannon, a new, level, and excellent road; and lastly, the Dublin line, which, though good, is decidedly inferior to any of the others, being circuitous and hilly, and at Annacotty both narrow and dangerous. A new line of road has recently been opened leading through the mountains from Abbeyfeale to Glin, which will be of great advantage to that part of the country; another is now being formed between Croom and Charleville, on the western bank of the Maigue, intended for the mail line between Limerick and Charleville; and a third from Kilfinane to Mitchelstown, intended for a shorter and more direct mail line from Limerick to Fermoy and Cork.

The vestiges of antiquity are numerous and of great variety of character. There are two ancient round towers; that at Ardpatrik fell a few years since; the other, at Carrigeen, is in good preservation. Of the earlier and ruder kind of pagan relics are the cromlech on Bailenalycaellach hill, and two others near it; fortifications on Knocktow; a large fort at Friarstown; a large and very perfect moat at Kilfinane and another at Pallas-Greine, a tumulus at Bruree; an earthen fort of great height near Croom; stone circles at Grange; a large dun or entrenched mount, with raths and other circular fortifications, at Kilpeacon; a circular fort divided into segments near Shanid castle, and traces of an ancient city in Cahir park. The number of religious houses that have been founded here is about 35, exclusive of those in the city and its liberties: there are still remains of those of the Trinitarians, Augustinians, and Franciscans, at Adare; of Monaster na Geailleach; of Askeaton abbey; of Kilshane abbey, in the parish of Ballingarry; several extensive ruins of the ancient college of Mungret; of Galbally friary; of Kilflin monastery; of Kilmallock abbey; of Monaster-Nenagh abbey; and of the fine old abbey in the parish of Rochestown, all of which are more particularly described in their respective parishes. There are upwards of 50 ruins of churches: it is, however, but right to observe, that in many instances new structures have been built in more eligible situations, and every parish has now a church, or is united to a parish in which there is one. So numerous were the castles rendered necessary by the former unsettled state of the country, that they are sometimes found within half a mile of each other; there are still ruins, more or less extensive, of nearly one hundred, which, with the modern seats of the nobility and gentry, are also noticed in their respective places. The peasantry differ little in their manners, habits, and dwellings from the same class in other southern agricultural countries; their dwellings being thatched cabins, their food potatoes with milk and butter occasionally, their fuel turf, their clothing home-made freize and cheap cottons and stuffs: their attachment to the neighbourhood of their nativity, and their love of large assemblages, whether for the purposes of festivity or mourning, are further indications of the community of feelings and customs with their countrymen in the surrounding counties. Among the natural curiosities may be included Lough Gur, with its romantic knolls, islands, and cave; the Castleconnell chalybeate and astringent spa; and the sulphuric spring at Montpellier, in the parish of Kilnagariff. Bones and horns of the moose deer have been found in many parts of the county, from five to ten feet deep in boggy ground; five pairs of horns were found at Castle Farm, near Hospital, and seven pairs near Knocktow. In many parts of the county old

fireplaces of the primitive inhabitants are occasionally turned up, containing burnt earth, charcoal, sooty and siliceous stones.