

**A CATECHISM OF IRISH  
GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY:  
PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, HISTORICAL  
AND BIOGRAPHICAL, FOR  
SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649035021

A Catechism of Irish Geography and Topography: Physical, Social, Historical and Biographical,  
for Schools and Families by John H. Greene

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Cover @ 2017

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**JOHN H. GREENE**

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BY  
JOHN H. GREENE,

AUTHOR OF "A MEMOIR OF LANSIGAN."

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"We must forget all feelings save the one,  
We must behold on object save our country."—BYRON.

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PRICE, (WITH COLORED MAP,) ONE DOLLAR AND SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS.

CINCINNATI:  
PRINTED BY WILLIAM DOYLE, 73 WEST THIRD STREET,  
1859.

*Dr 14/118.59*  
~~9492.56~~



1860. May. 12.  
*Gift of*

*Rev. Moncure S. Conway*  
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Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine, by JAMES H. GREENE, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of Ohio.

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TO

THE MOST REVEREND

JOHN BAPTIST PURCELL, D. D.,

FIRST ARCHBISHOP OF CINCINNATI,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE, WITH PERMISSION, INSCRIBED,

As a Token of

ESTEEM AND GRATITUDE,

BY HIS HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

## PREFACE.

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To write a book without books, is something like making a tool without tools; and to expect a creditable geography of Ireland without the writings of Kirwan, Griffith, and Portlock on its geology—of Keogh, Mackay, and White on its botany—of Young, Wakefield, and Curwin on its agriculture and social condition—of Kane on its general productive capacity—of Frazer on its mines and fisheries—of Ware, O'Reilly, and Wills on its biography—of Petrie on its architecture—of the Collectanea and the Dublin Penny Journal, on its antiquities—of Burke on its peerage—Simon on its coins, and Croker on its legends—without the local dictionaries of Lewis, Gorton, and Carlisle—without the Surveys of the Dublin Society—without the natural histories of Boats and Berkenhoist—without the excursions of Fisher, Brewer, and Mrs. Hall on its scenery—without having ever seen one of the two hundred quarto manuscript volumes of antiquities by the Ordnance Survey—one of its three thousand manuscript name books; and, worst of all, without one of its ten hundred superb maps—without Thom's Almanac, Mr. Donnelly's Returns, the Devon Report, a single census, or a single blue-book—is something like expecting a Prologomena from Lanigan, or his Commentaries from Clarke, without conceding to either a copy of the Septuagint. Those works are the topographical Scriptures of Ireland; and a single glance at any one of them, by the present writer, has not been a possibility during the production of the following pages. The homa apothegm of "finding a needle in a bundle of straw," obligingly circumscribes the difficulty by telling where the needle is to be found; but what wizard can tell where Hamilton's Letters on Antrim—Dubourdien, Giesekie, or Whitehurst on the Giant's Causeway—Piers on Westmeath—Downing on Mayo—Smith on Cork and Kerry—Ryland on Waterford—Hardiman on Galway—Sampson on Derry, and Grose on Meath, are to be found on the banks of the Ohio? It is a positive fact, that in the neighboring city of Louisville, with a population as large as that of Limerick, there could not be found, last year, a map of Ireland to illustrate, for a moderate audience, a lecture upon the subject of this volume, the *artistic* substitute having been a barbarous outline of the Irish coast, in chalk, on a blackboard!

It is due to the country here undertaken to be portrayed, and it is due to the writer, to have this very qualifying fact set forth; and if the character of the former were not as much involved as that of the latter, the latter would consult his own feelings by withholding, because of its personal complexion, a circumstance still more qualifying. Though having, for several years, made preparations for supplying, in the old land



itself, a long and deep-felt want—that of a well digested and carefully-worded school and family geography of Ireland—it little occurred to him that he should ever be thrown, in the new world, upon those compilations and observations, as a means of subsistence. Such, however, came to pass about nine months ago, soon after his arrival in this country, when this publication was first commenced, in nearly hebdomadal issues of eight pages each; yet he trusts, that a higher motive soars herein than any which seuds around the stagnant depths of mere self-interest. This periodical form of publication at once set going the ordinary wheel of consequent periodical duties; and, as a single line here published was not composed before that date, it created the inevitable necessity of writing to *catch time*. Thus, between canvassing for subscribers, writing the next "number," correcting the proof-sheets, delivering every copy of every issue, keeping and collecting small accounts, and even binding the "parts," one poor literary factotum was well split; the delivery alone keeping him on the foot four days successively out of the seven! To the original subscribers in Cincinnati, Newport, and Covington, these facts, which they know so well, need not be recalled, except as a complete apology for the long trial of patience, to which this tedious routine has subjected them, and of which their humble servant is deeply and gratefully sensible.

Such are the very uninviting circumstances under which the following pages have been produced; yet, the consequent topographical and typographical commissions and omissions will be found of little material consequence, perhaps not more serious than the sly *lapsus* on page 107, where a nominal coincidence has transferred an historical association from Baltimore, in Longford, to Baltimore, in Cork. Respecting the interrogatory form and the extreme explicitness of the composition, they proceed from a sincere contempt of literary pretension at the expense of *utility*—the deliberate exchange of the rhetorician's esteem for the plain man's thanks.

To omit, in the midst of these reminiscences, the name of George Petrie, LL. D., M. R. I. A., &c. &c., should argue, in the writer, either a little head or a little heart. To this gentleman's friendship, since 1849, he is indebted for his privileges in the great Library of the Dublin University, and that of the Royal Dublin Society; and to E. R. Colles, Esq., Librarian of the latter institution, to Dr. Todd and Dr. Graves, Senior Fellows of the former, and his securities therein, he deems this the most appropriate place to make known his obligations. The first-named of these three gentlemen has secured his special gratitude; and, though not in immediate connection with this little production, he can not forget, in this place, a proved literary and personal friend, whose political virtue and large talents first inspired him with a turn in the direction of fatherland—Charles Gavan Duffy.

His acknowledgments are now ended, when he adds—that, from his own personal experience, a few manuscript volumes of notes, a pocket manual, named "the Hibernian Gazetteer," printed in "1789," and now nearly half obsolete, a few books acknowledged through the work, and lent him by two or three of his subscribers, in particular by the Very Rev. K. T. Collins, V. G., and W. G. Halpin, Esq., the following pages are compiled.

Cincinnati, May 23, 1869.

J. H. G.

the title of Lord-Lieutenant or Viceroy, and who keeps his court in Dublin, the capital.

What, then, is the use of still retaining the old division of provinces?

It is a very pretty division, and is still useful for legal and ecclesiastical purposes.

Please explain.

I mean that, for the better administering of the laws, countries are sectioned into judicial circuits, as is the case in America and Great Britain. Ireland has four such circuits, corresponding to the four provinces. And, as to church government, the same arrangement is equally convenient. Since the twelfth century, each of these quarters has been a separate archiepiscopal province. Besides, if you look at the map of Ireland, you will see there are natural grounds for this quarterly division of the island.

I see now, the natural, the political, the judicial, and the ecclesiastical provinces are identical, in this country.

They are nearly so, and this is seldom the case. England, for instance, is divided into six judicial circuits, but only into two ecclesiastical provinces; and neither arrangement is based upon any obvious natural distinctions in the geography of the country. By a recent act of Parliament, the Established Church in Ireland was deprived of two of its archbishops, in order that it might resemble the Established Church in England, but the Irish Catholic church keeps up the ancient tetrarchal system.

#### CHAPTER II.—COUNTIES.

What are the objects of dividing countries into counties?

Chiefly, local government and representation in the legislature. Grand juries of counties look after the public roads, hospitals, jails, etc., within their respective shires; and every county has a sheriff, whose business it is to see that the law is executed within his district.

How many counties in Ireland?

Thirty-two: twelve in Leinster, nine in Ulster, six in Munster, and five in Connaught.

Why no more and no less?

Partly, because of natural causes, and partly, for political reasons, now not easily traced.

I'm not satisfied; tell me the natural causes, and give me your idea of the political reasons.

All physical boundaries are the same in all countries, such as rivers, mountains, the sea, etc.

Name one Irish county determined by rivers.

I could several; but Antrim and Down, in the north-east of the island, are two complete instances.

Name an instance or two showing that hills or mountains have obviously done the same thing.

Sligo is completely encompassed by a circular chain of hills. Kerry is separated from Cork by a mountain line; while Donegal and Wicklow are plainly determined by their mountain features.

Any other illustrations of a similar kind?

Every one of the counties affords such, more or less; and not only the larger, but also the smaller subdivisions, as baronies, parishes, and townlands. Look at all those promontories indicated on the map; every one is a separate barony, while no part of the county Clare passes beyond the natural boundary line by which it is almost insulated.

Now I should like to know what are the political reasons to which you have alluded?

In ancient times the island was cut up into a great many principalities, each controlled by its own lord or chief; and some of the present divisions are exactly identical with the chieftaincies upon which they were founded.

Give an instance.

The O'Tooles owned the mountain district now constituting the county of Wicklow. The O'Donnells (one of whom was Dictator of Spain in 1857 and '58) held Tir-Connell, now named Donegal. The patrimony of the Maguires surrounded Lough Erne, and is now the county Fermanagh. Tyrone, (Tir-Owen, or the land of Owen,) before it was reduced to shire-ground, was much more extensive, as the territory of the O'Neills; and some of the smaller shires of Ulster would seem to be slices of it handed over to sheriffs, one by one, as they were taken by the strong arm of England, in its long struggle with that powerful family.