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The oldest source of information that we possess regarding the ancient geography of Ireland is contained in the work of the second-century Alexandrian Ptolemy.

The following are the geographical names which he preserves for us in Ulster. The *Okeanos Hyperboreios* or “Northern Ocean” washed the northern shore of the island. Into this projected three promontories, called respectively *Boreion Akron*, *Venniknio Akron*, and *Robogdion Akron*—probably corresponding respectively to the Bloody Foreland, Malin Head, and Fair Head. There are five tribes mentioned by Ptolemy as occupying the region now called Ulster. These are the *Venniknioi* in the north-west; the *Robogdioi* in the north-east; the *Erdivnioi* south of the first named; the *Darinoi* south of the second; and the *Volountioi* south again of the last. The Volountioi had a city, *Regia*. These are certainly the “Ulidians,” who gave their name to the province, and their city may have been *Emhain Macha*, the royal seat of the northern kings. The *Erdivnioi* are by name and position equated to the Erna of Irish history. The name of the Robogdioi has been ingeniously compared to Roboc, the traditional name of an aboriginal chieftain compelled by a later invader to servile labour, according to the *Book of Invasions*; as these Robogdioi were established in the place where the native traditions put
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the Pictish aborigines, Roboc may well have been one of their tribal names. Ptolemy also mentions the mouths of the following rivers; in the west, the Ravis or Erne; in the north, dividing the Venniknoi from the Robogdoi, the Vidova, probably a copyist's mistake for Vilova or Foyle; and the Argita, which from its position must be the Bann: in the east, the Logia or Lagan, and the Vinderis. The last-named has not been identified; from its position it must have been somewhere near Newry. Somewhere north of the mouth of the Boyne was Isamnion, which may have been either a cape or a town: its identification is uncertain.

The modern name Ulster, like Leinster and Munster, is a hybrid, consisting of the suffix -ster (Icelandic stadar = a steadying), added to the old name Ulaidh. Like most of the ancient territorial names in Ireland, this was originally the name of a population, not of a tract of land. Originally the Ulaidh occupied the whole of what is now called Ulster—that is, the part of Ireland cut off by a line joining the mouth of the Droghas (now the Drowse, at Bundoran in Co. Donegal) with Inbher Colpitha, the mouth of the Boyne. After A.D. 332, however, the name lost its extended application, and the Ulidians proper were restricted to the lands east of the River Bann, Lough Neagh, and the Newry river; that is, the modern counties of Antrim and Down. A very mixed population inhabited this region, with a large infusion of the aboriginal element, called Cruithne in Irish history—the same race as is usually spoken of as the Picts. The district was further subdivided among a number of

1 It is barely possible that the name is a corruption (due to a lapse of memory on the part of Ptolemy's informant) of Ceanntragha, the old name of the site of Newry.
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ancient septs, as the Dál Riada in North Antrim, the Dál n-Araide in South Antrim and North Down, and the Dal Fiatach in South Down. It appears that the kings of Ulidia (in this restricted sense) were selected alternately from the Dal n-Araide and the Dal Fiatach.

The remainder of the modern province of Ulster was divided as follows. In the central portion was the great territory of Tír Eoghain, the Land of Eoghan—the territory of the tribe claiming descent from Eoghan (died A.D. 465) son of Niall of the Nine Hostages (king of Ireland A.D. 379-405). The peninsula between Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle bears his name (Inshowen, i.e. Inis Eoghan, the island of Eoghan). The western part of Donegal bore the name Tír Chonaille, the land of Conall—the territory of the reputed descendants of Conall Gulban, another son of Niall, died A.D. 464. The remnant of the Airghialla occupied the south of the province—in Louth, Armagh, Monaghan, and Fermanagh. They had originally occupied the whole of Central and Southern Ulster, but were dispossessed from Tír Eoghan at the beginning of the fifth century.

On the coming of the English, Ulster was granted as a palatinate (that is, a territory the administrator of which had sovereign powers delegated to him), to De Courcy. It was afterwards re-granted by King John to the De Lacys. No success, however, attended their efforts to extend the powers of England in this province, which, till the Tudors, remained the least amenable of the five to English authority. Some time before the reign of Edward II. counties called Antrim, Down, and Louth had been formed, the last-named at the time being counted to Ulster; but no other counties were made till the end of the sixteenth century. As a pre-
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liminary to the extension of English jurisdiction over the whole province, after the rebellion of the O’Neills, the limits of the modern counties of Donegal, Fermanagh, Cavan (till then counted to Connacht), Coleraine (now Londonderry), Armagh, Tyrone, and Monaghan were laid down by Sir John Perrott; but the troubles in the province prevented the final establishment of the division till about 1610.

The wholesale confiscations and compulsory colonisation of Ulster by aliens, under the reign of James I., has had a permanent effect on the population of the province. Already, as we have seen, there was a considerably mixed population within it, as the aboriginal Pictish inhabitants were very largely represented here; probably in a greater proportion than in the other provinces. The Anglo-Normans did not make any very great upset in the balance of the elements of the population. This was reserved for the early Stuarts, who, in order to save themselves further annoyance from this troublesome province, deported its eastern inhabitants to the barren lands of the west, and settled its rich plains with colonists from Scotland and England. The descendants of these settlers remain to this day. The distribution of the colonists varies greatly. In Antrim they form about 75 per cent. of the population; in Cavan they are not more than about 20 per cent; in the county of Donegal they are practically non-existent.

POPULATION

No observations of the physical anthropology of Ulster have ever been taken, and it is therefore impossible to give any details of the mixed multitude that forms the population of this province. The stronghold of the
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Irish language in the province is Donegal, the Irish of which has, as might be expected, many points of resemblance to Scottish Gaelic. The census returns of 1911 show an advance in the number of Irish speakers; even of those who could speak Irish only the number rose from 4456 in 1901 to 4737 in 1911. The total number of Irish speakers was in 1891 84,152, or 5.2 of the population of the province; in 1911, it was 96,440, or 6.1 of the population. Most of the counties showed a rise, except Cavan (a county that is much depleted by emigration). Thus Antrim rose in the twenty years from 894 to 2724; the city of Belfast from 917 to 7595.

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Ulster occupies the northern fourth of Ireland. No general, well-marked lines form its demarcation from Leinster and Connaught (on which it abuts on the south), such as the line of the Shannon, which separates the two last-named provinces from each other. On its eastern edge, indeed, the frontier of Ulster is guarded by the barrier of hills which separates Newry from Dundalk, and which culminates in Slieve Gullion (1893 feet). But elsewhere the boundary is unmarked by outstanding physical features. Starting on the Atlantic shore in Donegal at the Drowse river, which separates Donegal from Leitrim for a few miles, it traverses Lough Melvin, a large and pretty lake, and follows the valley south-east through Kiltyclogher to Lough Macnean, where Co. Cavan comes

1 10.7 per cent.—3.2 per cent. higher than any other of the Ulster counties.
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in on the northern side. Turning south through the mountains, it almost reaches Lough Allen, and runs thence over the top of Slievenakilla (1793 feet), on through the low lake-strewn country to near Carrigallen, where Leitrim gives place to Longford, and the provinces of Ulster, Connaught, and Leinster meet. The line meanders on across the mazy Lough Gowna to Lough Kinale, where, for a few miles, Westmeath fronts Cavan across the open expanse of Lough Sheelin. The boundary then lies between Cavan and Meath as far as Kingscourt, its general direction now changing from south-east to north-east. Monaghan now replaces Cavan on the northern side, and faces Meath for a few miles and then Louth. On the Leinster side Louth continues the boundary to the sea, but on the Ulster side Armagh replaces Monaghan. The country again becomes mountainous for some miles, and the boundary line reaches tidal water at Narrow-water, on the shallow inlet which runs from the head of Carlingford Lough to Newry. Thence to the open sea Carlingford Lough forms the boundary, where the Mourne Mountains look across to the high serrated ridge of Carlingford Mountain.

Nine counties are included in the province, notes on which will be given later. They have a total area of 8566 square miles. This area is exceeded by Munster (9536 square miles), and itself exceeds that of Leinster (7619), and Connaught (6802).

The province offers a remarkable variety of types of surface and scenery, due to the variety of rocks of which it is built up. A line drawn from Magilligan Point in Co. Derry to Portadown, and thence to Belfast, cutting off the north-eastern part, defines roughly the basaltic
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area, which forms a high, well-marked plateau of wide moors overlooking the eastern coast, and a less well-marked upland in the west. It is depressed in the centre, where a broad, fertile valley runs northward to the sea from Lough Neagh, whose waters escape down this trough. The line which marks the southern limit of the basalt, if prolonged S.E. to the boundary of Connaught, forms the northern edge of a great area of slates, which occupies all the country southward save for the granite areas around Carlingford Lough. This slate country is hummocky, fertile, and highly tilled. Another line drawn westward from Lough Neagh to Donegal Bay roughly defines the boundary of the large area of granite and metamorphic rocks which prevails over the north-west, and of the region of limestones and other rocks of the Carboniferous period which form south-western Ulster. The types of surface in these areas reflect the structure and composition of the underlying rocks: in the north-east the plateau is deeply covered with peat; its coast-line is precipitous and extremely picturesque; the lower grounds are highly fertile. The slate area, as stated above, is hummocky and fertile. The N.W. area of schists etc., is mountainous and wild, with great ridges running N.E. and S.W. The Carboniferous area is very varied, as in many places masses of shales and sandstones overlie the limestone floor, and produce abrupt changes in the characters of surface and soil. Taken as a whole, Ulster is a hilly but fertile area. The only large stretch of low or flattish ground lies around Lough Neagh and thence northward down the Bann valley to the sea.

The Ulster climate has the characteristic features of the Irish climate in general—that is, it is cooler in summer
and warmer in winter than most areas situated within the same latitude; it has a heavy rainfall and a perennial humidity. The coldest winters in Ireland (below 40°F, average in January) are found in an oblong area stretching from the central part of Ireland almost to the north-east coast: this area includes most of Ulster except Donegal; there the winter temperature is higher, western Donegal being above 42°F in January. The coolest summers in Ireland are found in the coastal regions of northern Ulster, where the average July temperature is as low as 58°F. The annual rainfall may be roughly said to be below 40 inches in the eastern half of the province, and above this in the western half, the precipitation increasing to over 50 inches (probably exceeding 60 in some of the mountainous parts) in the western half of Donegal, where also the effects of the prevailing westerly winds are felt in a peculiar degree.

MOUNTAINS

The largest area of high land is in the north-west, in Donegal and Tyrone; but the loftiest summits lie in the south-east, in the compact upland of the Mourne mountains. The following mountain groups may be distinguished, though in the north-west the highlands are almost continuous.

Donegal is strongly folded from north-east to south-west, and erosion along the axes of folding has given rise to rocky ridges and deep valleys. The highest points amid a sea of hills are Muckish and Errigal (2466 and 2197 feet respectively) far to the north-west. Muckish is a heavy, rather featureless dark ridge; Errigal a beautiful cone of white quartzite, which contrasts with the dark hills by which it is surrounded. The low-lying
lakes around its base tend to enhance its height, and add greatly to its beauty.

Immediately to the south of the ridge which contains Errigal and Muckish, the Derryveagh mountains form a massive ridge culminating in Slieve Snacht (2240 feet). A short distance south of this upland lies the deep and romantic Glen Veigh, which occupies part of the most remarkable of the N.E.-S.W. valleys of which mention has already been made. These ridges and valleys cross Lough Swilly into the peninsula of Inishowen, where another Slieve Snacht rises to 2019 feet. Far to the south, the group of the Blue Stack mountains or Croaghgorm reaches 2219 feet.

The strong folding to which Donegal has been subjected has a marked effect on human life within the area. Traffic naturally lies along the troughs which run north-east and south-west; the construction of roads or railways in directions more or less at right angles to this is fraught with difficulties, as the successive ridges offer serious obstacles. The effect is to cut off the north-western portion of Donegal from free communication with other parts of the country. The coastal district, which is strongly indented in the direction of the folding, though very irregular in surface, is generally low, and comparatively level roads join the heads of the many bays and inlets, where most of the villages are situated. Good roads also traverse the valley troughs; but from the fertile district of the Foyle basin, lying south of the hill-area, only a very few roads and a single railway find their way, by many windings and steep climbs, across the wave-like succession of heathy ridges.

A high bare east-and-west ridge of mica-schist, the Sperrin mountains, rises on the borders of Derry and
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Tyrone, attaining 2240 feet in Sawel. For twenty miles or more, on almost every side of this central mass, hills rise, stretching to the Swilly valley on the west and the Bann valley on the east, and overlooking Lough Foyle on the north. Two of the most conspicuous of the outliers of this mass are Slieve Gallion on the south-east, which looks down on the Tyrone coal-field and Lough Neagh, and the beautiful cliff-walled hill of Benevenagh on the north, which rises imposingly above the great sandy flat of Magilligan, at the entrance of Lough Foyle.

The basaltic plateau of Antrim and Derry has been alluded to already. The highest points are in the north-east of Antrim, where Trostan and Slievenaune form flat domes rising to 1817 and 1782 feet respectively. Further northward, Knocklayd forms a fine isolated dome of 1695 feet. The basaltic hills impend over Belfast to a height of over 1500 feet. The hills thus form a kind of broken rim to the basaltic area, on the eastern side running from Ballycastle southward to Larne, and thence along Belfast Lough to Lisburn, and on the western side south from Magilligan to the more ancient ridge of the Sperrin mountains. A broad fertile basin lies between the two edges. The upper part of the basin has sunk so far as to become flooded, and Lough Neagh, the largest extent of fresh water in the British Isles, 153 square miles in area and generally only 40 to 50 feet in depth, is the result. The lower part of the basin accommodates the outlet stream from Lough Neagh—the Lower Bann—and is a rich and well-wooded area with many busy linen factories. Along the Antrim coast, the exposed edges of the basalt and underlying Mesozoic rocks have been carved into deep romantic glens.