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HISTORY OF IRELAND:

FROM THE

EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE PRESENT TIME.

ADAPTED FOR

YOUTH, SCHOOLS, AND FAMILIES.

BY MISS CORNER,

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QUESTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF EUROPE,
THE HISTORY OF FRANCE,—OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL,—IRELAND,
ENGLAND AND WALES,—DENMARK, SWEDEN, AND NORWAY,—GERMANY AND THE GERMAN
EMPIRE,—TURKEY AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE,—POLAND AND RUSSIA,
ITALY AND SWITZERLAND,—HOLLAND AND BELGIUM,
THE HISTORY OF CHINA AND INDIA,
&c. &c.

A NEW EDITION, ENLARGED AND IMPROVED.

SIXTH THOUSAND.

LONDON:

THOMAS DEAN AND CO.
THREADNEEDLE-STREET.

PREFACE.

THE history of a country so nearly connected with England as that of Ireland, can scarcely fail to interest every reader. Recent events have drawn particular attention to the political and moral state and condition of the inhabitants of this portion of the British empire; and it may therefore be expected that an historical account of the changes of government, or revolutions, which have chiefly contributed to influence the character and condition of the great mass of the population, if carefully and impartially executed, will be favourably received.

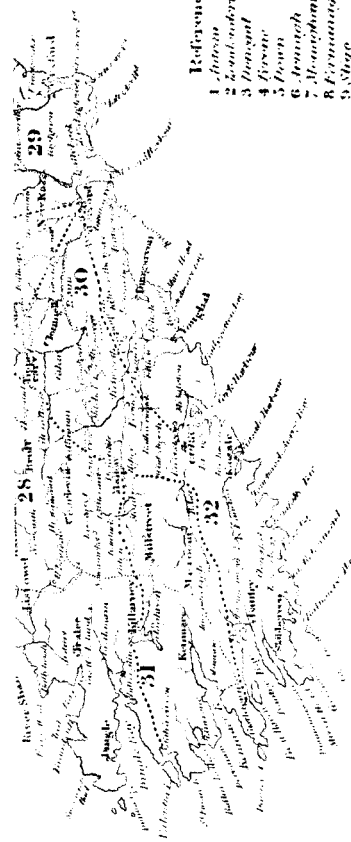
Most young persons must have heard of the distresses of the Irish peasantry, and their indolence, recklessness, and consequent want of all the comforts of life, which occasionally lead to the commission of acts of violence and cruelty, almost unparalleled elsewhere. In the course of this history will be pointed out the causes of these crimes and misfortunes; and it will be shewn how it has happened that a people, inhabiting a country abounding in all the beauties of nature, with a temperate climate and

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a fertile soil, should still be so poor and destitute; and, as respects the lower classes, in so backward a state of mental culture and civilization.

Of late years, however, commercial and manufacturing enterprise has been more extensively pursued, capital is gradually flowing into the country, and education has been on the increase by the institution of national schools. The making of railways will not fail to transfer a vast amount of capital into the country, employ a large proportion of the peasantry, tempt the wealthy to reside on the spot, and open communications from port to port, thereby facilitating the internal trade of the country, while the resources of Ireland will become better known, and a new impulse will be given to its commercial and social prosperity. Much has been done by our government within the last fifty years for the benefit of the country; and it still gives evidence of a disposition to meet emergencies in a liberal and conciliating spirit.

In reprinting the History of Ireland, several improvements have been made to the former edition; and those events added which have occurred since the first publication of the work, which is thus brought down to the present time.

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HISTORY OF IRELAND.

EARLY HISTORY.

THIS beautiful and fertile country seems to have been, at some very remote period, the abode of a wealthy, learned, and polished nation; but, in the absence of authentic records, it is impossible to say by what race of people it was originally inhabited. It is most probable that, for some ages, its coasts were alone peopled by adventurers from foreign countries; and at the time of the Roman invasion of Britain, it is most likely that the possessors of the country, like those of Gaul and Britain, were Celts, one of those races which originally migrated from the neighbourhood of the Euxene and the Caspian Seas, since a dialect of the Celtic language is still universally spoken by the lower orders of Ireland, as it also is by those of Wales, Scotland, and part of the north of France.

That the Celts formed the main proportion of the Irish population, and have continued so to the present time, is as evident, from certain characteristics of language, &c., as that they still form the staple population of Wales and Scotland.

It is most probable that parts of Ireland were extensively colonized by a more polished people from the east, as we read of its early wealth, prosperity, and its cultivation of literature and the arts; and these eastern people were most probably the Phœnicians, the great traders and navigators of the east, whose country was situated on the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean sea.

The Phœnicians did not visit other countries for the purpose of plundering and destroying, but with the laudable intention of founding peaceable trading colonies on the coasts, and establishing a commercial intercourse between their own country and that in which they settled. The colonies formed by these enterprising and industrious people consisted of rich merchants, skilful manufacturers, clever artisans, and bold hardy mariners; and in the early days of the ancient Grecian states, they had towns and factories on the coast of Spain, and made voyages to the British isles, to some of which they gave the name of the Cassiterides, or Tin Islands.

It is probable that Ireland, at that time, was either quite uninhabited, or only peopled by a few savages, and that the Phœnicians, being pleased with its fertility and beauty, took possession of it, and in the course of time, filled it with people from their Spanish settlements, who carried with them all the arts that were known in their own country of Phœnicia; and thus the civilization of oriental nations was introduced into Ireland, although, in fact, the population derived its origin from Spain.

There are no ancient histories, or writings of any kind, which afford us this information; but there have been antiquities discovered at different times, in various parts of the country, that must have lain buried in the earth for many ages, and by their resemblance to things that were in use among the Phœnicians and other people of Asia, serve to prove that there must have been such people in Ireland at some very remote period. Weapons, and golden ornaments, of beautiful workmanship, have been dug up out of the ground or bogs; and it is said there are traces still remaining of ancient roads or causeways, and also of extensive coal works, and mines that have probably produced gold and silver, but must have been worked in ages long prior to the date of any historical account we have of this island.

Of all the antiquities existing in Ireland, those which afford perhaps the strongest evidence of its early connexion, with other parts of the world, are a number of curious stone buildings, called Round Towers. Many learned antiquaries have endeavoured to discover for what purpose these towers were built, and by whom they were erected. Some suppose them to have been built by the Norwegians or Danes during their invasions, and to have been used either as beacons or lighthouses, or as stations whence they might descry the approach of an enemy; but there never were any buildings like them discovered in other parts of Europe, although there are similar edifices both in Persia and India, which countries anciently exhibited a highly-civilized people, called "Fire worshippers." Some conjecture that they might have been constructed for the purpose of keeping burning on them what these people called the "Holy fire;" or else, if they were not used by the fire worshippers, they were certainly erected either for religious or astronomical purposes, by people who came from the east. Many persons, however, think that they were also used as sepulchres, from the circumstance of there having been lately skeletons found at the foundations of some of them.

We are told by Irish historians, that long before the beginning of the Christian era, the Milesians, a tribe of warriors, of Grecian origin, from the north of Spain, led by a prince called Milesius, made themselves masters of the whole country, and are the ancestors of a considerable portion of the present Irish people, who in their habits, laws, and institutions, appear to have closely resembled the ancient Britons. They were divided into many tribes, each governed by a chieftain; but the laws were made by the Druids; whence it may be inferred that the Milesians neither destroyed nor interfered with the authority of the priesthood, as it existed at the time of their arrival. However this might be, their religious rites were extremely