which the animal is said to have left the marks of its hoofs on the rock whence it started, and their traces are supposed to be visible to the present day ; or from a leap over the drawbridge, made by a knight in effecting his escape from the castle. The castle is also noted in history as being the place where the same De Lacy was treacherously killed by one of his own menials. The castles of Sonnagh, Rath- wire, and Killare, were built by the same nobleman. In the barony of Moycashel are the remains of several castles formerly possessed by the M'Geoghegans, the ancient pro­prietors of the soil. Some of the old monastic buildings have been converted into parochial places of worship, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. The ruins of a few are still in existence, but the locality of many others is now a subject tending rather to excite than to satisfy curiosity. The ruins of Tristernagh Abbey, called also the Priory of Kilbixy, and founded by one of Hugh de Lacy’s imme­diate successors, were visible till the year 1783, when they were totally destroyed. Near them are the remains of the chapel of Templecross, which, though of inferior note as a structure of monastic celebrity, is memorable from being the place where the corp-naomh, or blessed body, a relic of extraordinary sanctity, was found. The relic consists of a wooden box about the size of a small Bible, clasped with bands of brass, studded with valuable stones, and marked with a crucifix. Its contents, if any, are unknown, for no hand has yet been found of nerve sufficient to venture to force it open. It is used as a test of evidence. An oath on the corp-naomh is considered as an act of peculiar so­lemnity ; a pledge which, if given in support of a falsehood, is supposed to bring down on the guilty person some visi­tation of dreadful consequence. Such is the respect paid even to its name, that if any one asserts what he wishes to be received with implicit credit, he avers its truth “ by the corp-naomh that arose at Templecross.” The site of the Abbey of Multifernan can still be traced by its ruins. It lies about four miles north of Tristernagh, and is singularly remarkable as being in possession of the Franciscan friars till the commencement of the year 1641, notwithstanding the total suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII. upwards of a century before. For some years previous to the breaking out of the civil wars at the above-mentioned period, it had been much frequented by visitors of every description, who went thither, as was said, to arrange the plans of the ensuing insurrection. The unusual assemblage of strangers is also said to have excited such apprehensions in the mind of the then bishop of Ardagh, that he removed with all his property to England, and thus escaped the cala­mities with which so many who continued to reside in the country were visited. There were three religious houses at Mullingar, belonging respectively to the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians. At Kilkenny-west are the reliques of a preceptory of the Knights of St John. It is also remarkable for a noted holy well.

The population of Westmeath is so exclusively rural, that Mullingar, where the assizes are held, is the only town containing more than 2000 inhabitants. It is situate nearly in the centre of the county and of Ireland, at the junction of the barony of Fertullagh with that of Moyashel and Magheradernon, on the stream of the Golden Arm, about midway between Loughs Owell and Ennell. It was one of the ancient palatinate towns of the county, and suffered much by the ravages committed during the petty wars with the Irish. In the war of 1688, it was fortified by General Ginckcll, and was for some time the head-quarters of the English army. Though it obtained a charter, it enjoyed **none** of the usual corporate rights, except that of returning **two** members to parliament, a privilege of which its proprie­**tor** or patron availed himself till the union. Four general sessions of the peace are held here. It is the site of the county court-house, prison, and infirmary, and has a large

church, and a Roman Catholic chapel capable of holding 6000 persons, which is considered to be the cathedral of the diocese ; the parish, with two others and a part of a third, being the mensal of the bishop, who resides in the town. The vicinity of the Royal Canal, which passes close to the northern side of the town, and on which steamers ply regularly to Shannon harbour, has made the place the cen­tre of an increasing inland trade, which is also aided by the mail-road to Sligo passing through it. It holds a weekly market, and four fairs during the year. Large quantities of butter are brought to the former, and the latter are great marts for wool, homed cattle, and pigs ; the November fair is for horses. One half of the town of Athlone is in this county, and is connected with the other half, lying on the Roscommon side, by a long bridge over the Shannon, so narrow that two carriages can with difficulty pass each other ; but this check upon the communication between the two provinces of Leinster and Connaught is about to be obviated by the erection of a new bridge. The town is governed by a sovereign, two bailifs, and a recorder. It returned two members to the Irish parliament, and since the union one to the imperial parliament. The number of electors in 1832 was 243 ; in 1834, 274 ; and in 1839, 275. It is a place of great antiquity, being known as such before the settlement of the English ; and after their arrival a castle was erected here by King John, to secure the main pass of the Shannon, which was deemed of such importance, that in a grant of the whole of Ireland by Henry III. to his son Edward, Athlone was specially excepted. It afterwards was the seat of government for the lord president of Con­naught. In the war of 1642 it was taken by the Irish after a stubborn and protracted resistance, but subsequently re­taken by the parliamentary army. In the war of 1688 it was invested by King William’s forces under General Douglas, who was forced to raise the siege by means of the gallant defence of Colonel Grace ; but it was soon after taken by storm by General Ginckell, in the face of the Irish army commanded by St Ruth. In 1697, the magazine was struck by lightning, and the castle and town nearly de­stroyed. It is still considered of such importance in a mi­litary point of view, that large works have been thrown up on its western side, in which a garrison is maintained. The population of Mullingar amounted in 1831 to 4295, that of the eastern portion of Athlone to 5655. The popula­tion of the other towns whose number of inhabitants ex­ceed 1000 each is, Kilbeggan, 1985; Moate, 1785; Castlepollard, 1618. (c. p.)

WESTMINSTER, a city which forms the west part of the capital of Britain, but has a government distinct from the rest. This city had its name from the situation of its abbey, anciently called a *minster,* in respect of that of St Paul. That part properly called the city of Westminster, comprehending the parishes of St John and St Margaret, was once an island formed by the Thames, called *Thornry Island,* from the thorns with which it was overrun ; and the abbey that stood in it, Thorney Abbey. The liberties of Westminster contain the several parishes of St Martin in the Fields, St James’s, St Anne, St Paul, Covent Garden, St Mary le Strand, St Clement Danes, St George, Hanover Square, and the precinct of the Savoy. The government, both of thc city and liberties, is under the jurisdiction of the dean and chapter of Westminster, in civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs ; and their authority extends to the pre­cinct of St Martin le Grand, by Newgate Street, and to some towns of Essex, which are exempted from the juris­diction of the bishop of London and the archbishop of Can­terbury ; but the management of the civil part has, ever since the Reformation, been in the hands of laymen, elected from time to time, and confirmed by the dean and chapter. The chief of these laymen are the high steward, the deputy­steward, and the high bailif, who hold their offices for life.