

were inscribed with the emblem of their faith, 'the green, immortal Shamrock : ' the brightest names in their history were all associated with their religion—' Malachi of the collar of gold,' dying in the midst of the monks, and clothed with their holy habit, on an island of Lough Ennel, near Mullingar, in the Meath—Brian, 'the great King, upholding the crucifix before his army on the morning of Clontarf, and expiring in its embraces before the sunset—the brave Murkertach O'Brien, answering fearlessly the threat of William Rufus—for, when the English king said, looking towards Ireland, 'I will bring hither my ships and pass over and conquer the land ; ' 'Hath the King,' asked the Irish monarch, 'in his great threatenings said, 'if it please God ? ' ' And when answered, no ; ' Then tell him,' exclaimed the Irish hero, 'I fear him not, since he putteth his trust in man, and not in God '—Roderick O'Connor, the last ' High King ' of Ireland, closing his career of disaster and of glory amongst the canons of the Abbey of Cong—saint, and hard, and hero, all alike presented themselves to the national mind surrounded by the halo of that religion which the people were now called upon to abandon and despise. Powerful as was the appeal of history and antiquity, I cannot give it any great weight in the preservation of Ireland's Catholicity. I do not believe that adherence to ancient usage because of its antiquity is a prominent feature of Irish character. We are by no means so conservative as our English neighbours. It is worthy of remark that usages and customs once common to both countries, and long since abandoned and forgotten in Ireland (Christmas 'waits' for instance, harvest-home feasts, May-pole dances, and the like) are still kept up faithfully and universally throughout England. The bells which, in Catholic times, called the people to early mass on Sunday mornings, are still rung out as of old, through mere love of ancient usage, although their ringing from Protestant towers in the early morning has no meaning whatever, for it invites to no service or prayer. And yet, in the essential manner of religion, where