

vernment of the land; as have done the Irish, purely and legitimately, for the space of many succeeding ages, until the impious career of maddening ambition seemed to stalk through the land, as the twin-born sister of an unbridled, unrestrained licentiousness; which, waxing at length to a certain age, and a certain independence, became the fruitful parent of the most vicious and servile usurpation; and in the plenitude of such adoptive power, like an eagle with expanded talons, when he watches to pounce on his pray; not with less insolent power, those harpies went to destroy, by every possible means, hundreds of precious volumes, as well sacred as profane, and thus perished, in one moment, what the wreck of time, nor the envy of man, nor the mouldering vista of whole ages, could not have destroyed; and it is to this alone we can justly attribute the strange inconsistencies, the gross absurdities, the faithless plagiaries, which characterize the greater part of the historians, who sought as basely as disingenuously to attain the native lustre and pristine greatness of our Saintly Isle: to this, as its parent source, may be attributed that want the world now deploras, of those wholesome laws, and wise maxims, whose scattered fragments, after escaping the common wreck, are revered even to this day in every country and clime, as well by the learned Statesman as the sublimer Poet; and hence arises the difficulty of preserving for posterity the mere gleamings of truth, amongst the cavils of party, the ambition of men, and the licentiousness of the age. It is, however, almost universally allowed by the most enlightened historians, as well ancient as modern, that Ireland was peopled at a very early age. The celebrated Francis Plowden, whose laborious researches as an his-