

PREFACE.

THE restoration of her ancient Church, and the maintenance of its liberties against all the intrigues of the Imperial power, is the chief glory of Ireland in the XIXth century. It is quite glory enough ; it is a triumph without parallel in the ecclesiastical history of our times. That national churches (if the phrase can be correctly used by a Catholic) may be extinguished in blood or destroyed by schism, the ecclesiastical history of Western Asia, of Northern Africa, of some of the German States, of England, of Scandinavia, all instruct us. That the total extinction of the Irish Church was the darling design cherished by generation after generation of the greatest ministers of a great Empire, British history exists to prove. The heroic constancy of the Irish Catholics is the very epic of chivalrous resistance to arbitrary power, and one of the freshest episodes in that epic, is the life of the late able and apostolic Bishop of Derry, which I have undertaken, at the request of his nearest surviving relations, to write.

The part taken by that courageous churchman is much enhanced in importance by recollecting the Province in which it was played. Old Ulster had resisted "the Reformation" with iron fortitude, and had paid the penalty : its six fair counties were confiscated by one stroke of the first James' pen ; its nine venerable cathedrals were given over to the new sectaries ; its once famous schools of Armagh and Bangor were overthrown and obliterated. Presbyterian communities were chartered and privileged, to hold the passes and ports of the Province ; the Kirk, struggling for its existence in Scotland against kingly theories of conformity, was a recognized and favored step-child of the State from its first plantation in Ulster. Its rigid discipline and economical ministry were not ill suited to a half mercantile, half martial