

Bishop Higgins has a wide knowledge of literature, and in college was also a science scholar of repute. He is a scholarly writer and an excellent speaker, his first public utterance at Ballarat being described by the local press as a fine example of oratorical ability. Amongst the most notable articles that have emanated from his pen are 'The Church of Ireland during the Nineteenth Century,' which was written for and read at the first Australian Catholic Congress in Sydney, and a series of articles in the 'Australian Catholic Record' on St. Peter's Episcopacy at Rome. In literature, art, religious matters, and the courtesies of life, his taste and discernment are unfailingly correct. When travelling by boat or train he is immediately on the best of terms with his fellow-passengers, and chatting away with perfect strangers as though they were old acquaintances. Ballarat diocese, which has just lost a Bishop of strong character, who did great and lasting work in his day, is fortunate in coming under the crozier of so able and strenuous a prelate as its present ruler.

NEW BOOKS

Australian C.T.S.

The Australian Catholic Truth Society have added to their fast-growing list of admirable publications the two following important biographies by Cardinal Moran: 'St. Brigid,' and 'St. Columbkille.' Each consists of about 50 pages demy 8vo. and the price—a modest penny—brings them within the reach of every Catholic in these colonies. 'The Society is to be congratulated in having among its contributors so distinguished a scholar as the Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney. His Eminence is one of the greatest living authorities upon the lore of ancient Ireland, and he has compressed within the modest compass of these two pamphlets the results of the best and most up-to-date scholarship bearing upon the lives of St. Brigid and St. Columbkille. These publications should command an extensive sale and find their way into every Catholic home in these countries. The veteran journalist, Mr. Benjamin Hoare, has contributed to the Society's publications an excellent Catholic story for children—'Little Ernie's Birthday Gift' (1d). The Society's publications are obtainable from all Catholic booksellers advertising in our columns.

'The Last Days of Jesus.'

Mother M. Loyola (the Bar Convent, York) is well known in Great Britain as a writer of books for children. The latest publication from her gifted pen is 'The Last Days of Jesus.' It is a companion volume to her book, 'The First Days of Jesus,' and tells in a simple and taking way to the little ones the incidents in the life of our Lord from His entry into Jerusalem till His Ascent into heaven. The size of the book is 11in by 8½in. It contains 10 illustrations, five of which are full-page colored pictures of a rather gaudy kind. R. and T. Washbourne, 1-4 Paternoster Row, London (Price, stiff paper cover, 6d, linen, 1s.).

'A Bush Girl's Songs.'

A morbid pessimism is one of the features introduced into Australian song by Gordon and Kendall. The spirit of despondency has been continued by their more or less neurotic imitators ever since. The young Australian Catholic poetess, Miss 'Rena' Wallace, has broken clean away from the gloomy and depressing influences of the traditional school of Australian poetry, and, in her recently published book, 'A Bush Girl's Songs,' has come before the world with notes as fresh and joyful as the matin song of a lark. Her book (of over 150 pages demy 8vo) is marked throughout with a cheerful optimism, and betrays no trace of the melancholy of what may be called the 'older' Australian poetry. In fact, there is in her book very little local color. She tells, indeed, of the hot Australian noon, 'when birds sit panting in each dim retreat.' And sometimes the fragrant wattle blossom peeps out from a chink in her verse, as when she sings in 'My Dear One':—

'Bright are the golden dyes
The wattle bloom waves in the air—
But never so bright as the tint that lies
On the gold of my darling's hair.'

What is, however, really Australian in her poetry is the flooding sunshine of her atmosphere. For the rest her models—if, indeed, she took any, which we doubt—are, for some of her measures, Poe, and for her 'Isolt,' a powerfully descriptive mediaeval romance, Tennyson; for 'Rena' Wallace seems to sing, as a bird sings, because her heart is full of song. She is a ready versifier, strains not after effect, and her theme is (with the ex-

ception of an occasional religious poem) 'love's young dream,' bright, pure, true, idyllic. The young poetess shows genuine feeling, and her sunshiny heart is ever telling that true affection wears the crown and carries the sceptre, and that sorrow and sacrifice have their compensation in this life as well as in the next. Here is a specimen (though in form by no means the best) of her songs of the heart:—

'Were I a bird with silver throat
I'd pour such heav'nly strains about me
That you, for whom I'd sing each note,
Would not be one brief hour without me.
So ravishing I'd make my song
With love's divinest rapture ringing,
You could not choose the whole day long
But hang enchanted on my singing !

'Were I a rose-bud gemmed with dew
Blowing within your garden, sweetly,
So rich I'd bloom—so bright of hue—
I'd win your generous praise completely ;
And, standing by, the while I shed
My sweets around me and above me,
You'd pluck me from my od'rous bed,
And for a space, at least, you'd love me !

'And, since I'm neither bird nor rose,
But just a simple loving woman,
Give me your heart, and I'll disclose
A thousand sweetesses all human.
You could not choose but feel delight
In love that has no bounds—no measure—
I'd live to make your whole life bright,
Or die to give you one hour's pleasure !'

Miss Wallace is a true and promising poetess. She has already done Australian literature a distinct service by introducing into its poetry the element of freshness and wholesome optimism which it so greatly needed. (Published by Angus and Robertson, Sydney ; pp. xii., 140 ; 5s.).

'Ballads of a Country Boy.'

The 'Country Boy' who has written these Ballads is the well known Irish author, Seumas MacManus, of Mountcharles, in 'Ould Donegal.' His book of ballads is an unpretentious little volume. It is dedicated to the cherished memory of 'one at whose feet the Boy had laid his love—to wit, Ethna Carbery, his wife, 'beloved by Eire, to whose sad soul she sang sweetest songs.' To the memory of that gifted writer some of the 'Country Boy's' sweetest verses are sung. One of these ('The House with the Green Door'—that is, the grave) is a gem of poetic thought and expression. We quote the last three stanzas:—

'It opened but once before,
Once it will open again,
The house with the green door,
And noiseless bolt and chain.

'Many my fruitless journeys ;
Yet, sometime the light will burn,
And friends watch late in my house,
And I shall not return.

'I shall have found my welcome,
And a wide-thrown green door ;
And I will tarry, in my Love's house
Shut close for evermore.'

The poem was written by the little 'House with the Green Door' where all that the 'Country Boy' loved lay cold. He was left 'on the Lonely Road,' and her sweet spirit went

'To the mystical land, where all are young,
Where the silver branches have buds of snow,
And every leaf is a singing tongue.'

Seumas MacManus's modest book of Ballads deserves to be as widely known as his stories, which have brightened so many firesides in every land that gives a home to 'the sea-divided Gael.' They are penetrated through and through with the atmosphere of Ireland—with its folk-lore, its history, and its stories told by the ingle-nook. Mountain and moor, cabin and cottage and farmhouse look out at you from the 'Ballads of a Country Boy', and you hear sarcastic Thurisk and many a peasant and fisherman talk and sing to you in the mellow accents of Donegal. Here is a scrap from a lament to the famous old hedge-school master, Michael Maguire :

'No ; Teddy may forget to keep
A dhrop of something nate,
Mat Murphy may forget to growl,
Ned Lynch forget to chate—
And Frank Maguire forget to rhyme,
And Tully Mack to pray—
But, throth, we won't forget you, Mick,
Although ye're in the clay !'