

PREFACE

THE Irish priest who is also a poet commands a range of emotions which are inaccessible and almost inconceivable to the decadent versifiers who have made the phrase "The Minor Poets" a term of contempt. There is, as in the great days of poetry, something of the divine in his calling. He is privileged, as is no other man, to enter the Holy of Holies of the Irish soul, which contains a virgin mine of passion, pathos, mirth and tragedy still awaiting the poet's alchemic touch. The surprising thing is that so few Irish priests have yet turned to account for the enrichment of literature the wealth of human interest and feeling which lies around the poet-priest in the wildest mountain parish. The brooks that babble around his daily path make music, and there is no cabin whose blue peat-smoke perfumes the moors around his chapel that could not yield up its little lyric or its tale of deep and haunting pathos. Two Irish priests are at this moment setting the example of what men who combine literary ardour with a passionate love of their people can do to give the world some glimpse of the charms of the true Irish temperament, horizon, and spirit-world. Father P.A. Sheehan's famous book, "My New Curate" gives perhaps the boldest as well as the truest picture ever painted of the Irish priest and of his people, in habit as they live. Father Dollard, the author of this book of lyrics treats Irish life and sentiment through the more glowing medium of verse, and with the intensified passion of an exile