

SONG OF THE AGES.*

THE most casual reader of Mr. O'Byrne's very handsome and charming volume cannot fail to perceive that he has before him the work of a highly-cultured scholar and an exceptionally gifted poet. Mr. O'Byrne's lines can be read easily—they bear scanning as will the verses of very few poets in these days of hurry and drive and slipshod work. And if the measure the author has adopted in his "Song" sometimes seems a trifle heavy, the reader is amply repaid by the veritable gold-mine of words which he finds—the shaft of which, however, has been driven a little too deep occasionally to be satisfactory to the general reader, as in the lines in the Prelude—

"Come, Lesbia, turn thine eyes on me, with me defy the blind
Chance universe revealed to sense but not revealed to mind.

Our love is real. Holding thee, I care not if the world,
The cinder-heap of *æreic* Chance, be into chaos hurled."

Such instances, however, are few, and may be condoned for the sake of the real beauty of the poems.

"The Song of the Ages" is, the author says in his preface, an attempt to "vindicate the ways of God to Man," but our readers need not be deterred from taking up the book by such a phrase. Mr. O'Byrne does not confine his invocations to any one god, and the Olympian deities have no reason to complain of any neglect. The "Song" is in two books—I., The Stone Age; II., The Bronze Age; and in these two books the author does his best to solve "the problem of the ages." If he has not succeeded in this any better than many others, we can only say that it is on account, not of a want of true poetic and imaginative power, but of the inherent insolubility of the problem. We would like to transfer many of Mr. O'Byrne's stanzas to our pages, but must be content with giving one or two as samples. Readers of "Upon This Rock" will remember Mr. O'Byrne's fine poem "England," and this stanza will recall its sentiment:

"I love thee, Ocean, for thou art the bed
Whereon from youth to age my sires have slept
Lulled by thy melodies, and Freedom's head
Is pillowed on thy bosom; thou hast kept
Her home inviolate, the sea-girt isle
Whose hills are altars where her sacred flame
Burns brightly, and shall wax in splendour while
Its jealous wardens, mindful of the fame
Of those who in the days of old were nourished on thy breast,
Shall brook no rival on the wave, the realm they love the best."

*SONG OF THE AGES. A Theodicy. By M. C. O'Byrne, Barrister-at-law, Illinois. Published by the Author. Heavy paper, red lines, bound in white and gold. \$1.00, post free. DOMINION REVIEW office, Toronto.