

## SOLOMON AND SOLOMONIC LITERATURE.

"The general world has for ages been working under the spell of Solomon while believing him to be dead," says Mr. Moncure D. Conway in his latest and perhaps the most important work of his long literary and public career. "Solomon is very much alive. Many witnesses of his talismanic might can be summoned "from the homes and schools wherein the rod is not spared, however much it "spoils the child, and where youth's 'flower of age' bleaches in a puritan cell because the 'wisest of men' is supposed to have testified that all earth's pleasures "are vanity. And how many parents are in their turn feeling the recoil of the rod, "and live to deplore the intemperate thirst for 'vanities' stimulated in homes "overshadowed by the fear-of-God wisdom for which Solomon is also held responsible? On the other hand, what parson has not felt the rod bequeathed to the "sceptic by the king whom Biblical authority pronounces at once the worldliest "and the wisest of mankind?"

Many of the articles which constitute this book have appeared in *The Open Court*, and our readers, who will remember the skill, learning, and sententious wit with which Mr. Conway has collated and interpreted the Solomonian legends of the world, will be glad to have these essays, with much additional and supplementary material, collected into the present compact and attractive volume.

In the development and spread of that vast body of universal folklore known as the Solomonian legends, Mr. Conway believes there are two distinct streams of evolution; one issuing from the wisdom books of the Bible, the other from the law-books. These two streams "are clearly traceable in their collisions, their periods of parallelism, and their convergence,—where, however, their respective inspirations continue distinguishable, like the waters of the Missouri and the Mississippi after they flow between the same banks." He continues: "The present "essays by no means claim to have fully traced these lines of evolution, but aim "at their indication. The only critique to which it pretends is literary. The "studies and experiences of many years have left me without any bias concerning "the contents of the Bible, or any belief, ethical or religious, that can be affected "by the fate of any scripture under the higher or other criticism. But my interest "in Biblical literature has increased with the perception of its composite character ethnically. I believe that I have made a few discoveries in it; and a volume "adopted as an educational text-book requires every ray of light which any man "feels able to contribute to its interpretation."

And every reader of this book, whatever his prepossessions, will say that if Mr. Conway has not "enlightened" his subject, he has certainly *enlivened* it. We quote his beautiful concluding words:

"The human heart kneels before its vision, and with Mary Magdalene cries "Rabboni, *My* Master; but Theology recognises only the perfunctory Rabbi, and "carries her beloved off into union with thunder-god, war-god, or with a deified "predatory Cosmos. Yet will not the heart be bereaved of its vision; it still sees "a smile of tenderness in the universe. And philosophy, though it regard that "smile as a reflexion of the heart's own love, may with all the more certainty itself "find a religion in this maternal divinity in the earth, ever aspiring to its own supreme humanity.

"Solomon passes, Jesus passes, but the Wisdom they loved as Bride, as "Mother, abides, however veiled in fables. She is still inspiring the unfinished

"work of creation, and her delight is with the children of men." *Solomon and Solomonic Literature*. By M. D. Conway. Chicago: The Open Court Pub. Co. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Pp., 248. Price, \$1.50 (6s.).

### THE MONK.

BY J. L. M'CREERY.

A pious monk, in mediæval days,  
 Within the confines of his narrow cell  
 Fell on his face and passionately prayed:  
 "O Being infinite and immanent,  
 "Pervading Spirit of the Universe—  
 "If aught there be in earth or heaven besides  
 "A figment by tradition handed down,  
 "A vast Nonentity, to which we cling'  
 "With fierce tenacity because we shrink'  
 "From saying, 'Death is an eternal sleep'—  
 "If Thou hast said, 'Ask and ye shall receive,'  
 "Or promised to the heavy-laden soul,  
 "'Come unto me and I will give thee rest,'  
 "Grant me, O God, some token that Thou art,  
 "Lest I should perish in my unbelief:  
 "I weary of this world of vanities,  
 "Its transitory and illusive joys,  
 "Of my own ceaseless and ignoble strife  
 "To gather bubbles to my cheated arms;  
 "I long for the Eternal and the True,  
 "I thirst for Peace, and Holiness, and Thee."

As gently as the faint but growing dawn  
 Displaces darkness from the face of earth,  
 About the monk a tender glory grew;  
 He seemed to be no longer in his cell;  
 As tenuous as the spiritual world  
 Had been before to his material eyes,  
 Such gossamer were the monastery walls  
 To his illumined spiritual sense,  
 And he afloat upon the pulsing waves  
 Of an ethereal infinitude.

Then from the glory came a Voice that said:  
 "My son, lo, I have waited for thee long;  
 "Have heard thy cry, 'O what and where is God?'  
 "As though a bird should ask, 'Where is the air?'  
 "Thou wert enveloped in the Great I Am,  
 "But knew it not, because thy sense was dim:  
 "I am thy Life—there is no other life;  
 "I am the central and surrounding Source of Light;  
 "I am the Fountain of all forms of Joy;  
 "I am thy faithful never-failing Friend;