

QUEEN'S QUARTERLY.

VOL. III.

OCTOBER, 1895.

No. 2

All articles intended for publication, books for review, exchanges,—and all correspondence relating thereto—should be addressed to the editors, Box A, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

TENNYSON'S "IN MEMORIAM."

"IN MEMORIAM" is the poem of a period, in more senses than one. Begun soon after Arthur Hallam's death, an event which gave the occasion for its composition, it took at least fifteen years to complete, and in the shape that we have it is less a single poem than a series of poems not unlike the sonnet series in Rossetti's *House of Life*. Singular art has been shown in joining the separate portions, but a careful inspection will discover the junctures. As in many other poems—for instance, Pope's *Rape of the Lock* and Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*—the original poem remains imbedded in the final whole and is easily separable from it.

There are one hundred and thirty sections, frequently called 'poems', in the poem as we have it, but the real original elegy, *In Memoriam* proper, closes with the fifty-sixth section, where the poet finds comfort for his loss in the assured hope of a blessed immortality "behind the veil." It is to a statement of this assurance that the previous sections lead up, an assurance to which the poet passionately clung, a belief that may be called his 'sheet anchor.' With its deliberate statement in the fifty-sixth section the construction becomes less vertebrate and trails off, so to speak, into particular reminiscences, musings, and speculations having a less intimate connection with the main subject, and less of a causal connection with one another. This first grand division of the poem is really a history of the wounding and healing of a human spirit, while the rest belongs to the period of convalescence.