

The unfavourable reception that *Maud* met with on publication is referred to somewhat at length, as the impression then made on the public mind has been by no means yet dissipated. Tennyson, himself, attributed the unpopularity of the poem to the fact that it was not understood. Indeed, in his anxiety that it should not be misinterpreted, he has left us his own explanation. "This poem," he says, "is a little *Hamlet*, the history of a morbid, poetic soul, under the influence of a recklessly speculative age. He is the heir of madness, an egoist with the making of a cynic, raised to sanity by a pure and holy love which elevates his whole nature, passing from the height of triumph to the lowest depth of misery, driven into madness by the loss of her whom he had loved, and, when he has at length passed through the fiery furnace and has recovered his reason, giving himself up to work for the good of mankind through the unselfishness born of his great passion."

In the first place, as Edward Everett Hale very shrewdly points out in the *North American Review*, the fact of Tennyson having recently been appointed Poet Laureate, had much to do with contemporary judgment. He says: "One must hesitate before he accepts the wreath of the Poet Laureate; for from that moment it seems as if the poet, most loved, even most petted, were given over, as if he were a politician, to be food for unkind, biting comment, which he would have been wholly spared had not the Queen chosen him as her own. We are certain to have heard unkind things said of *Maud* which would never have been said had Mr. Alfred Tennyson been a plain D.C.L." Jealousy is not unknown even in the realm of literature.

In the second place, Tennyson, by the part that he