

that the production does not justify the high eulogiums passed upon it by the *Times*: that nothing like it has appeared since the creations of Shakespeare's genius.

Coming with such heralds of praise and promise, it would be hard, even with a new "Iliad," or a "Paradise Lost," to satisfy expectation thus aroused. The remark that "a moderate success commands respect, but a failure of complete success is often fatal," is fittingly illustrated in this case. This, however, is Mr. Tennyson's misfortune, not his fault; and an incident that qualifies the absolute felicity of his honours and success. But whatever divergence of opinion there may be as to the merits of the new work, Mr. Tennyson may claim credit for the result achieved, considering that his labour has been in a field entirely new to him, and one in which an experiment, though rash, was quite pardonable. It would be curious to know what prompted Mr. Tennyson to venture into the dramatic field. His muse is essentially lyrical and narrative, and he has confined his compositions to these alone for nigh a lifetime. Whether he has caught the contagion of ecclesiastical strife from Mr. Gladstone's recent efforts, or has been firing his brain with the inspiration of an Irving or a Salvini, we know not. But, though he has not hitherto piped to the glare of the foot-lights, his muse has not altogether been indifferent to the traditions of the stage. The ode to Macready, which he wrote on the retirement of that actor from professional life, shows his interest in the drama.

"Thine is it that our drama did not die,
Nor flicker down to aimless pantomime."

But whatever may have suggested to Mr. Tennyson the dramatization of this sad piece of English history—and we may not be far astray in hinting that, like a true Englishman, Mr. Tennyson views with alarm the recent aggressions of Rome upon the domain of English thought and English affairs, and may wish to recall the malign influences of its policy upon a former era in the nation's history—there is this benefit likely to result from the Poet's new effort: that it will give a much-needed impetus to the literature of dramatic art, and probably greatly contribute to the restoration to the stage of the glories and higher influences of the historic drama, of which the modern theatre has known so little. In saying this, however, we do not commit ourselves to the opinion that "Queen Mary" is such a revival of the Shakspearian drama as may win for it success upon the stage. Doubtless, whatever it may lack as a creation adapted for dramatization, should it be placed upon the stage, it will have the benefit of every auxiliary, in actors, pageantry, scenery, dress, &c., with which to vitalize its characters, and vivify its dramatic situations. But Mr. Tennyson's effort is too serious

and too earnest in the direction of a high dramatic composition, and his name and influence is too great, for his work to fail of effect upon the writers of the day in inciting them to turn their attention to the literature of the drama, and to endeavour to use it for the high lessons and purposes which the dramatist can so powerfully influence with. To our mind, this is the feature for congratulation in the Poet's new venture, more than the merit of the work as a drama. A valuable and prized addition to our English literature it undoubtedly is; but it is not more than a careful, accurate, and elaborate historical study. It lacks both in spirit and movement the characteristics of the drama. Its characters are vividly brought out, and its situations are often picturesque and telling. But the personages are wanting in the play of creative effect, and the incidents lack the stir of inventive resource. Moreover, though the story of Mary's life is essentially dramatic, and the incidents of her reign are tragic in the extreme, the author does not seem to us to have extracted from either that which goes to the making of a great drama. This evidently is the result of following too faithfully the events of history and the records of the time, as well as, in some degree, from want of sympathy, which the writer could not impart, with the leading characters and their actions. Still, much has been made of the materials; and though the personages and incidents appear in the narrative in the neutral tints of history, yet the period is made to reappear with a freshness and distinctness which, while it satisfies the scholar, gives a true charm to every lover of the drama. Again and again, as we read, are we reminded of the Laureate's rare poetical fancy and fine literary instinct, and the dialogues contain many passages of striking thought and noble utterance. But the work is overcast by the great gloom of its central figure—the gloom of bigotry, passion, jealousy, disappointment, and despair which ever environs the miserable Queen; and much though the Poet has striven to brighten the picture, and awaken sympathy for the weakness of the woman who, royal mistress though she was, could not command her love to be requited, the poetic measure of his lines roughens and hardens to the close, when the curtain falls on what is felt to be a tragic and unlovely life.

As the work is so accessible in the neat and inexpensive Canadian edition which has been published, and as most of our readers are, doubtless, now familiar with its narrative from the many selections which have appeared in press, we do not think it necessary to extend our notice by extracts from the work. We may simply refer to the other *dramatis personæ* introduced to us, who are among the notable historical characters that figure during Mary Tudor's reign. They are those who take part in the incidents, religious, civil, and political, of