

MAUD.

A POEM, BY ALFRED TENNYSON.

THIS poem was published for the first time in 1855, in a collection bearing the title "*Maud and other Poems.*" The poem grew out of, or at least was suggested by, a remark of Sir John Simon's to the effect that the couplet

"O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain—"

though beautiful in itself and suggestive, needed fuller illustration. The poem is almost a development of the thought hidden in these lines; they voice the refrain which rings mournfully throughout the whole poem.

Its reception by the public was by no means favorable; criticism on all sides was severe, and in some cases even virulent. Tennyson's peculiar genius, of which this poem is in some respects a striking exemplification, was perhaps the chief cause of this cold reception, to which the unusual form and the general tone of the work also contributed. On its appearance the poem was to all, as it yet is to many, a puzzle, owing to its weird, disjointed form and the subtle power with which the poet alternately delights and harrows the feelings of his readers. As the years went by and the poem was more widely read and studied it rose in public favor; yet to-day it is difficult even for devoted lovers of Tennyson to grasp fully and clearly the true meaning and inter-balance of the various parts as the author conceived them.

Maud is called a monodrama; the character of the work, however, is not dramatic but purely lyrical. It is a strikingly grouped collection of variously hued lyrics, ranging from intense horror to the gay-noted song of successful love, and sinking again to the wail of a heart distraught with woe. These elements are woven into a song, inharmoniously it may be, yet like "sweet bells jangled out of tune," showing their beauty even through their discord. The whole poem is to me a grand ode to the passions; it sweeps across the harp of human feeling till every string vibrates in harmony with the poet's touch.