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EDITORS:

D. H. SIMPSON, SR., J. GOODWIN, JR.,
F. D. CRAWLEY, SR., B. W. LOCKHART,
Sophr.

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W. H. ROBINSON, Sec'y.

CONTENTS:

Autumnal Musings.....	9
Independant thought.....	9
The force of circumstances (continued).....	10
Autumn.....	10
The voices.....	10
Perspicuity.....	11
Queen Mary.....	12
Prof. Sumichrast's lecture.....	13
Our Reading Room.....	13
Greatness in Littleness.....	13
Conversation.....	14
Character.....	14
Personals.....	14
Locals—Acknowledgments.....	15

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"QUEEN MARY."

TENNYSON the poet has won a new name. Tennyson is now a dramatist, *in embryo* indeed, but still a dramatist. How it will sound in future years:—"Tennyson the great poet and dramatist of the Nineteenth Century!"

This is all very fine, but in our opinion the glory of the "Idyll" is one, and the glory of the "Tragedy" another, and that must be a star of transcendent brightness in the literary sky, which unites the brightness of the twain. It is fair to infer that Shakespeare did not, that Milton did not, because neither attempted both departments of writing. Whether posterity will say that Tennyson did possess this rare combination of diverse genius, or no, half a century more or less, subsequent to this will decide. At present the English critics are ecstatic. Their verdict is, "The greatest drama since Shakespeare." Alas then for the merit of the drama since that time. It is our candid opinion that there is not more than two or three passages that would be encored by the theatrical auditors of the last four centuries. Such a production would afford small room for the expansion of the genius of a Garrick or Macready. But there are merits. We may say that the character of Queen Mary is most carefully and truly drawn. If we do not see in her portrait any of that intensity of passion; that depth of emotion; that wondrous eloquence of the inner life, it is

owing to the fact that truth to the original made it an utter impossibility. We see a woman possessed of three passions: love, hate and jealousy. A narrow minded bigot, her one idea is the establishment of the Papacy in its former vigour. To this end everything else is made subservient, even her violent passion for Philip as bigoted and narrow minded as herself. More for this than for maternal tenderness, she feverishly desires offspring, who shall carry forward her cherished designs and trample Protestantism under foot. Thinking, by some mistake, that this longing is about to be satisfied, she thus bursts forth in her stern enthusiasm something after the "Balfour of Burley" style:—

He hath awaked, he hath awaked,
He stirs within the darkness!
The second prince of peace,
The great unborn defender of the faith,
Who will avenge me of mine enemies.
He comes and my star rises,
The Ghosts of Luther and Zuinglius fade
Into the deathless hell which is their doom,
Before my star.
His sceptre shall go forth from Ind to Ind,
His sword shall hew the heretic peoples down,
His faith shall clothe the world that shall be his,
Like universal sunshine! Open
Ye everlasting gates! The king is here,
My star, my son!

In this we still see the hope of her life, the goal for which she aimed. Protestantism was the object of her hate; Philip of her love; religion of her superstition, and Elizabeth of her jealousy. The first she could not conquer, though she ruthlessly trampled humanity under her feet in the endeavor; the second she knew to be false; the last she dare not destroy. And so the poor Queen, sour minded, having drunk the cup of bitterness to the dregs, fell sick with shame, grief and despair. Her love for Philip, and her grief, so touching in its wild and utter abandonment is the highest, we had almost said the only mark of her womanhood. Philip gone, Calais gone, with a people's hate, she wails:—

"Clarence Clarence! what have I done?
Beyond all grace, all pardon?
Thou knowest never woman meant so well,
And fared so ill in this disastrous world,
My people hate me and desire my death."

And now the faded leaves of her life all sere and yellow, rustle in the autumn blast before her darkening vision. Her mind trembles on the verge of madness; she weeps upon her lute:—

Love will hover round the flowers when they first
awaken;
Love will fly the fallen leaf and not be overtaken;
Low my lute, Oh, low my lute, we fade and are
forsaken,
Low dear lute low!

In her delirium we see the sincerity of that ruling passion. Poor deluded bigot, she really thinks her mission is divine. She had fiercely kindled the martyr fires in life, and now in death she raves:—

Oh God I have been too slack, too slack.

Let this tribute be paid to her memory. No doubt of God's approval seems to have entered her mind. If she piled hecatombs to the manes of the Papacy, she thought that the incense of heaven hallowed the sacrifice.

Although there are many beauties throughout this tragedy, for we suppose it comes most appropriately under that name, yet from what we were led to expect by the noise of transatlantic critics, and the reputation of the author, the result has not been quite satisfactory. If we are wrong, we claim Mary's virtue, sincerity. We love Tennyson. Not because he is an Englishman, nor because the laureate wreath has fallen on his brow; but because he has ennobled and reflected a lustre on both by his fine genius. It is not prejudice then, and if it is ignorance we willingly submit to rebuke.

One cause of this barrenness and frigidity is, that the characters he chose for "dramatis personæ," were cold, unfeeling, and calculating. It seems to us that he selected an unhappy subject. The passionless, relentless bigotry of the times was not congenial air for the flights of high dramatic genius. A pigeon-souled Bonner, or a shifting, time serving Cranmer do not strike the mind as effective characters in a drama if truth he sought. Tennyson has very well succeeded in the portraiture of the superficial life of that period, but he has not laid bare the palpitating arteries and the quivering heart. The province of the dramatist is that most difficult one of throwing on his canvass the emotions and passions of the soul. To embody those vague intangible existences found in the depths of the heart, and to place in the physical world the incarnated wonders of the unseen sphere of mind. A great dramatist takes a great theme, as a great painter will copy a great original. Landseer painted dogs, but Angelo and Raphael took Christ and the Deluge for their great originals. So the true dramatist does not stop at small things; nay, he even enters into an ideal realm, and traces the outlines of a vaster conception than is met in the common walks of life; a conception in whose grandeur and power we see all the forces of the soul in their infinite intensity. In this high success Tennyson has, it seems to us, failed. He aimed too low. But now we will close these remarks with a passage which is most like some of those old Shakespearean ones which used to thrill us so. It is one of the best in the whole work. Princess Elizabeth in confinement, with her life in danger exclaims:

Those damp, black, dead nights,
Nights in the tower! dead—with the fear of
death—
Two dead, even for a death-watch! Toll of a bell,
Stroke of a clock, the scurrying of a rat
Affrighted me and then delighted me,
For there was life and there was life in death,
The little murdered princes in pale light,
Rose hand in hand, and whispered "come away."