THERE is little in Mr. Tennyson's volume of "Ballads and Other Poems" that can be expected to reconcile the widely-varying estimates in which he is held by his own time. Those doubting and hesitating souls that have feared to give premature approval to the author of "In Memoriam" and the "Idylls of the King," are but little likely to experience conviction under the influence of a garrulous "Village Wife" or a reformed "Northern Cobbler"; while people already satisfied of Tennyson's full claim to the title of Poet will find no new revelation of his genius in even the tragic pathos of "Rizpah" or the poetic splendors of "Maeldune." There is no depreciation of these poems in this suggestion that they will not materially affect the author's permanent fame. With very few exceptions, they are entirely worthy of him; and readers who are fortunately able to supplement Mr. Tennyson's gift of poetry with an adequate gift of poetic appreciation will find a great deal to delight and entertain them. Excellent as some of these pieces are, however, they must be considered rather as the incidents than the serious events of a great poetic career; and he who may seek to assign Tennyson's poetry its permanent place in literature will pass rather lightly by these later trifles and rest his judgment upon the earlier and more substantial manifestations of the author's genius—upon the fire and passion and intense human emotion of "Maud" and "Locksley Hall," the fine repose and deep philosophy of "In Memoriam," the exquisite beauty of "The Princess," and the grand epics of Arthur, Merlin, and the Knights of the Round Table. The title to greatness proven by these early achievements will be confirmed, if it could not have been established, by the "Ballads and Other Poems." The strongest and most satisfactory of

them, judged as poetry, is undoubtedly "Rizpah"—the story of an English peasant woman whose son was gibbeted for some slight crime, such as sufficed for this dreadful punishment in the last century, and who tells her wrongs in a strain of mournfulness and intensity which places her by the side of that grandly pathetic Bible figure from whom the poem is named. Its impression as a whole is more profound than that left by any other piece in the collection. In similar strain and measure, "The First Quarrel" is less tragic, but still strong and touching. A wife in the Isle of Wight tells to the old doctor who has called to see her sick boy the story of her life, and of her quarrel with her husband, from whom she parted in foolish anger, refusing to kiss him before he left her to cross the water to his work—closing the story with the pathos of a single line:

"And the boat went down that night—the boat went down that night."

Those who have appreciated the fine humor of Mr. Tennyson's "Northern Farmer" will be delighted with the two companion pieces in a similar dialect, "The Northern Cobbler" and "The Village Wife." The former is the better of the two; but both are good, and when we shall have read them as often as we have "The Northern Farmer," and become as familiar with the delicious humor and quaint character hidden beneath the unpromising Yorkshire dialect, we may think them fully as good as the older piece of the trio. Either would be sufficient to establish the reputation of its author as a humorous poet of the very first rank. The ballads of "The Revenge" and "The Defence of Lucknow" have had a previous appearance in print. They are very stirring, and abound in fine and even splendid verses; while their material must make them especially grateful to the British pride. It is difficult to imagine an Englishman so stolid as not to be moved by the combined patriotism and poetry of the line, recurring so effectively at the end of each stanza of "The Defence of Lucknow,"—

"And ever upon the topmost roof the old banner of England blew."

"In the Children's Hospital" is a touching but rather ghastly piece of pathos. "Sir John Oldcastle" and "Columbus" have fine passages, but are comparatively uninteresting, being written in a more than ordinarily stiff blank verse—a measure which Mr. Tennyson has shown himself too thoroughly a master of in "Enoch Arden" and "Idylls of the King" to render any failure here significant of more than inappropriateness in theme. We confess to an inability to make much of the poem called "The Sisters," which strikes us as decidedly commonplace; and the verses under the titles "The Two Greetings" and "The Human Cry" are an almost painful suggestion of what indifferent things a great poet can occasionally be capable. Several sonnets, translations, etc., make up the remainder of the volume—with one piece which, as being, next to "Rizpah," the best piece of poetry in the book, we have purposely reserved till the last. It is "The Voyage of Maeldune"—a version of an old Irish epic which in Mr. Tennyson's hands becomes both epic and allegory, and in which the wonderful swing and melody of the verse are equalled only by the beauty and richness of the descriptions. The islands at which the mariners rest in their vengeful quest—the Isles of Silence, of Shouting, of Flowers, of Fruits, of Fire, and the Bounteous Isle—are portrayed with a vividness and color which recall the splendid luxury of description shown in "Locksley Hall": the "breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster," the

"Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

This fine poem is perhaps the most characteristic—the most thoroughly Tennysonian—in the book. We are glad to say, for the credit of the American book-trade, that Messrs. J. R. Osgood & Co.'s clear right to the first publication of these poems in this country has been respected, and the liberality and enterprise of this firm in securing to Mr. Tennyson his fair remuneration as an author, and in preparing so prompt, and, considering its cheapness, so excellent an edition, have thus been allowed to receive their legitimate reward.
