

VIRGIL FOR THE ENGLISH STUDENT.

BY THE REV. C. P. MULVANY, M.A., CARRYING PLACE.

THE phase of classical culture which has obtained of late years has made Greek and Latin more unapproachable than ever to other than University Students. For the classical languages are now studied more for their form than their matter—more for grammatical and philological criticism than for the appreciative culture of the literature itself. Yet surely the latter at least ought not to be neglected. Its refining influence is the most permanent benefit to be derived from the classical part of a College course. And it would enable those whose education is for commercial or other purposes, confined to what can be read in English, to obtain at least this part of the advantage of a University training, if adequate representatives of the great monuments of classical culture were within their reach. Mr. Matthew Arnold has pleaded in his lucid and appreciative essay on *Translations of Homer*, for a version of the *Iliad* in the measure of the original. To his arguments may surely be added the advantage to the purely English student of seeing the movement of the Greek poetry represented in a measure like that of the original.

All that has been said of Homer applies, of course, to Virgil's great epic. The latter, indeed, is perhaps more easily appreciated. It has contributed important influences to European thought, and Christian popular eschatology (as it is called) is under

no slight obligations to the description of the descent into Hades of the hero of Virgil's poem.

Such a work as I desiderate would be published in cheap form. It would commence with a brief popular sketch of the Poet, of his position in classical literature and that of the Christian decadence. It would not puzzle the student with dactyls, spondees or cæsmas—even the word "hexameter" should be eschewed. It would simply be stated that the versification was a rhythm, identical as far as possible with that of the original, and that the order and literal force of the words were given as nearly as might be.

Explanation should be added of the localities, and of the chief oft-recurring names for Greek or Trojan. Some of the more striking portions of the entire poem, as the adventures of Æneas, might be then given in one book at least, to be rendered from beginning to end. For this purpose the second might well be chosen—its subject, the destruction of Troy by fire, stands complete as a picture, apart from the rest of Virgil's poem, and the growing force of the tremendous catastrophe increases in interest from the time that the midnight spectre announces to the son of Venus that all is lost, and through the hurry to and fro of midnight battle, to the tragic dignity of Priam's death; till at last the hero, undaunted by mortal arms, shrinks in terror from the vision, like that of the young Æan "whose eyes Elisha opened"