

must not be therefrom inferred that she is artistically perfect. She owes this pre-eminence not to her own superiority, but to the inferiority of the poet's other creations. They are but faint shades; she is at least strikingly real. But is she the type of womanhood a poet should set before us? True lovers of poetry declare that its office is not to charm the ear or tickle the fancy, but to set before man lofty ideas which are to serve as stepping-stones to raise him to a more perfect life. And history bears out their statement. The verdict of all ages has been unanimous in declaring the Iliad to be a master poem, and it was in great measure this very poem which engendered amongst the Greeks that wondrous civilization, from which all other civilizations have sprung.

Is Dido, then, in accordance with this standard, an ideal character? Is not that violence by which her actions are so strongly marked something foreign to true womanhood? Is not Andromache, busy about her household cares and cherishing an ardent love for her husband and child, a much more lovable woman and one better calculated to inspire us with reverence for the sex, than is Dido with all her tragic love-affairs? The Grecian nation exhibits that spirit which makes home the sweetest place on earth, and woman, God's greatest gift to man; the Carthaginian queen seems rather inspired with that which but too frequently turns this blessing into a curse.

But if Virgil's women are inferior to those of Homer, his men suffer still more by a like comparison. His hero, Æneas, is always cruelly selfish, and in his dealings with Dido shows himself in a most unenviable light. Of the first charge he is convicted out of his own mouth, for his account of the loss of his wife during the flight from the burning city of Troy proves that with him self was always the first consideration. He showed praiseworthy filial affection, it is true, by bearing his father Anchises forth from the ruins upon his shoulders, but he left his wife to follow as best she might, never turning to see if she still came on, and consequently never missing her until it was too late.

In his subsequent voyage to Carthage, and indeed throughout all his adventures, he displays very little courage. Whenever any difficulty confronts or danger

threatens him, he forthwith begins to whimper for his goddess mother's aid. Piety towards superior powers is indeed commendable, and the greatest heroes were at all times most religious men, but when total reliance is placed in supernatural aid by one who poses as a great leader, it does not tend to enhance our conception of his heroism. A man displays far more moral force by acting courageously upon the principle that "God helps those that help themselves" than he does by sinking upon his knees in the time of trial, and trusting entirely to heavenly intervention to bring him safely through the struggle.

But what most detracts from Æneas as a hero, is his conduct towards Dido. After basely taking advantage of her weakness, he, like many a similar wretch before and since, still more basely forsook her and left her to bear the brunt of her shame alone. Her prayers might have moved a heart of stone, but his remained untouched, for it was of adamant. It may be said that he was but obeying the command of the gods, and that, however willing he might have been to stay, fate had rendered such a course impossible. But his actions belie this. When he receives the message to depart he is in no way grieved, nay, he seems rather rejoiced, for he begins at once to make preparations to go without ever giving a thought to the unfortunate woman he is forsaking. No, as generally happens in such cases, he is tired of the alliance, now that the charm of novelty has worn away and is only too well pleased at the excuse afforded to depart. His conduct in Italy is not calculated to raise him in our esteem. Wherever he appears, he seems to bring sorrow and that to those who receive him kindly and treat him as a kinsman. Here he arrives just in time to break up a union between a young couple each of whom seems quite eager for its consummation. He prefers to have the girl for himself and, of course, she must be his at any cost. Her lover killed, she becomes his prize, and with this heroic act he disappears from the stage.

Even in the duel by which this termination is brought about, Virgil has managed to belittle his hero. The gods again are at work; they unman Turnus and paralyze his strength. Maddened with fear, he cowers at the feet of Æneas who