

sees the spirits which will one day live in the bodies of Roman kings, consuls, heroes and statesmen. With masterly touches the poet paints the greatest scenes and the greatest characters in Roman history. Not only does he display artistic power of delineation, his insight into the character of men and events is even more remarkable. He fully comprehended the spirit of the Roman civilization, and he has described it in three hexameter verses so fully and so accurately that the retrospect of nineteen centuries cannot change a word that he wrote. Few men can comprehend the genius of their own times, or the spirit of their nations, or of contemporaneous nations. How difficult it would be to describe in three lines the genius of Russia, or of France, or the United States, or of Germany. But Virgil seized the spirit of the two greatest civilizations of antiquity, one at its climax in his own day and the other passing below the horizon. See how briefly, and yet how powerfully, he contrasts the genius of Greece and of Rome.

*"Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera
Credo equidem, vivos ducent de marmore voltus,
Orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent."*

Others, I ween, with happier grace
From bronze or stone shall call the face,
Plead doubtful causes, map the skies,
And tell when planets set or rise.

*"Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento ;
Hac tibi erunt artes ; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos."*

But ye, my Romans, still control
The nations far and wide ;
Be this your genius—to impose
The rule of peace on vanquished foes,
Show pity to the humbled soul,
And crush the sons of pride,

Aeneas passes through the cavern of the Sibyl on Lake Avernus into the lower world. When he reaches the bank of the Styx, that dark river separating the upper from the lower world, he finds an innumerable host of spirits trying to get across the river. Good and bad throng along the shore and beg the ferryman for a passage over.

*"Each in pathetic suppliance stands,
So may he first be ferried o'er,
And stretches out his helpless hands
In yearning for the further shore ;
The ferryman, austere and stern,
Takes these and those in varying turn,
While other some he scatters wide,
And chases from the river side."*