

gods. The reader is made to feel at once that the little band of wanderers from Troy are quite powerless of themselves, but swept along on the stream of fate which is flowing irresistibly and grandly to Rome, the great ocean of time and humanity.

The gods themselves cannot stop the stream of destiny, and Juno's wrath is as powerless as Dido's love. Even Jupiter, who shakes the world with his nod, must hold the balance justly and let the Fates fulfil their decrees. Back in the womb of chaos Rome was begotten, and now the time of birth is full. Jealous gods and goddesses conspire to prevent its achievement, and the elements themselves are used for attack and defence. The contest wages in earth, sky and ocean; and continents are battle-grounds. The destiny of Rome! Gods and men contending, some to promote and some to prevent! Surely a noble theme for an epic, and most nobly handled!

Full appreciation of the *Æneid* demands, of course, not only the sympathetic and frequent reading of the entire poem, but a large acquaintance with the ancient systems of law, religion, social life and politics. Like all literary masterpieces, its power is beneath the surface; and it grows in beauty and strength, as you live with it and make it a friend.

School-boys are unable, from lack of time and from lack of easy familiarity with Latin, to read the twelve books. If a selection is to be made, the first two books afford very interesting matter. The third book is a weak imitation of Homer, and is not to be compared with the others in interest or in perfection of finish. The fourth book, which narrates the love and suicide of Dido, is one of the most remarkable literary products of antiquity. Nowhere else may be found a female character approaching so nearly the modern literary type as Dido. There are passages in this book worthy of Scott, or even of Shakespeare. The fifth book is not essential to the course of the epic, and might be passed over, although the description of the athletic contests would probably furnish interesting matter to school-boys.

The climax of the *Æneid* is Book VI, which gives an account of *Æneas* descending into Hades, conversing with the ghost of his father, and beholding, as they lie unborn in the womb of time, the great heroes and events of Roman history. We have here two themes that well might inspire the noblest genius, the greatness of the Roman civilization and the mystery of the future life. Virgil handles them both with rare power and skill.

In company with the spirit of his father Anchises and the Cumæan Sibyl, *Æneas* wanders through the Elysian Fields and