

AENEAS AND DIDO.



It was early morn in the yet unfinished city of Carthage. The thick mantle of mist with which the fierce storm-king had, during his recent passage, enveloped the plain in which it stood, was being slowly stripped off by the glorious god of day; the sea which but last evening had wildly lashed the shore with its white-capped breakers, now softly embraced it and murmured gentle apologies for its recent furious outburst; the sky lately over-cast with frowning clouds, now rivaled the azure hue of the Mediterranean rolling beneath it; every thing proclaimed that peace had once more wooed the wild forces of nature into submission to her soothing sway. Nor did its benign influence end here; deep in the heart of Queen Dido, she reigned as absolutely on this auspicious morn as she did in the realm of nature. That heart had likewise been tempest-tossed by sorrow and treachery. Her husband snatched from her by the hand of the remorseless reaper, ere yet the cup of nuptial bliss had been fairly tasted, her brother become her despoiler and sworn enemy bent upon her death, the Tyrian queen had had good reason to bemoan her cruel fate. But time, that universal healer, had dealt kindly with her, and had removed all but a half pleasing remembrance of her terrible trials. Thus it was that her spirit, untroubled by any dark portent of the future, accorded so thoroughly with that pervading nature. Poor Dido! could she but have foreseen what was to come as she walked through the streets on this beautiful morning, clad in her robes of majesty to the temple where she was to hold her solemn court, how different might have been her fate. But she went forth in blithesome mood to meet it just as we all go forth on some day of our lives, and ere night falls,

There comes a mist and a weeping,
And life is never the same again.

In that temple she meets the Trojan wanderer, Aeneas, driven thither by the storm, and from this meeting springs

the most pathetic love tale that ever was written.

Bitter experience has taught Dido that she who loves must suffer, and this coupled with her lingering affection for her deceased husband, has caused her to steel her heart against love's soft allurements and to refuse many brilliant matrimonial alliances. But, as Virgil makes one of his heavenly messengers inform Aeneas :

Woman is a various and a changeful thing.

In spite of all her resolutions, Dido falls deeply, madly in love with the Trojan hero. His terrible misfortune excites her pity, and pity is very much akin to love. In addition, his god-like appearance, and his wonderful deeds, of which she has often heard, might well prove irresistible charms to a youthful matron of a passionate disposition such as was Dido, even without the intervention of Divine powers, who, we are told, are also at work to make her succumb to them. When passion has entirely taken possession of her as it very soon does, she informs her sister of the matter, and adds naively enough that had she not so irrevocably determined to never, never marry again, she might be tempted into an alliance with the stranger. The sister, like a true courtier, proceeds to show her the utter folly of one so young and so situated adhering to such a resolution and, needless to add, succeeds perfectly. This is a happy stroke of the poet, as he here shows two very common traits of human character. The first, a rather curious one, is that which induces us to ask for and listen to our friends' advice as if it were to be the law of our actions, when we have already determined absolutely upon the line of conduct we intend to pursue. Dido, as her after conduct proves, would have married Aeneas did the will of all Carthage oppose the union, yet she humbly seeks the counsel of her sister and expresses her distrust of her own judgment. The other trait is equally common and reflects still less credit upon mankind. It is the servile adulation everywhere paid to the rich and powerful. Very many men, be it said to their shame, will change every