

## VI.

More direct influence still upon our literature is distinctly traceable to Vergil<sup>1</sup>. Langland knows him only as the hero of a grotesque mediæval myth<sup>2</sup>; but his contemporary, Chaucer, finds room for him in his *Hous of Fame*. In this, he summarizes the *Æneid* and slurs over everything but the love-story. Dido fascinates him. He can hardly tear himself away from the entrancing tale. Not content with what he finds in Vergil, he borrows from Ovid's *Heroides*, and at last, like Shakspeare afterwards, he brings in frankly his own variations upon the given theme.

"Non other auctor alegge I,"

and he puts a new speech in Dido's mouth. Dido also figures in his galaxy of "good women." One other sign of his appreciation of Vergil is seen in the way he renders the apparition of Venus:

"— that day,

Going in a queynt array;  
As she had been a huntresse,  
With wynd blowinge upon her tresse."

This is the story which has enthralled the imagination of the world. The great Elizabethans teem with references to it. Nash and Marlowe made a drama<sup>3</sup> of it. But in this, as in many other things, Shakspeare teaches us, as no one else can. His references, outside of *Troilus and Cressida*, are nearly all to some aspect of the Carthaginian queen's unhappy love; but he takes most glorious liberties<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible within the limits of this lecture even to outline Vergil's influence upon pastoral poetry from Spenser down.

<sup>2</sup> *Piers Plowman*, B. xii., 43f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hayward, *The Iron Age*, Pt. ii.

<sup>4</sup> Turberville (Of Dido and the Truth of her Death) justifies her against the testimony of Vergil; he holds she slew herself to avoid shame.