

We are informed in a few dozen passages—sometimes by the modest hero himself—that *Æneas* was “*pious*,” that is, possessed of filial affection; and we now learn that he earned this epithet by carrying his father on his back out of the burning city. I am not of those who believe that he was actuated in this conduct by any ignoble consideration that his venerable sire might serve as a shield against the darts of the victorious Greeks; or that he instructed his wife to “follow his footsteps *in the distance*” (v. 711) in the hope that her capture might retard his pursuers and gain time for his escape. Appearances are not always to be trusted.

As a matter of fact, however, *Creusa* soon *was* lost, and her husband went after her in a homicidal and suicidal frame of mind, during which, however, no Greek ventured to molest him, and he molested no Greek, but vented his “noble longings for the strife” in hallooing for his wife. The sight of her ghost presently calmed him. By her advice he abandoned the rampage, went back to his father, and gave the old man another hoist. She had entreated him to wipe his tears (784); but, nevertheless, she left him weeping still (790). Indeed, he displayed more fondness for her on this occasion than he displayed when she was alive. He tried to kiss her, and, finding it impossible to embrace a ghost, he renewed the vain but flattering attention again and again (792-794).

“Who could equal the trials of that night with his tears?” *Æneas* asked, still thinking of his favourite subject, in line 362. It must have been modesty, it cannot have been ignorance, that prevented him from telling us the answer to this enigma.

The Third Book completes *Æneas*' narrative; but it is, perhaps, prudent to stop here at present and not approach too closely to the Fourth Book,

which recounts the love and suicide of the deceived *Dido*. Some hearts are too tender to bathe, without melting, in the flood of tears with which the pious and magnanimous hero, presumably, mourns his own desertion of his benefactress.

This plaintive son of a goddess is prone to other emotions besides tearful sympathy, ineffectual rage, and love tempered by desertion. He often feels bewilderment and fear. While covered with the cloud, he and his trusty *Achates* experienced both sensations (B. I., vv. 513-514). He was one of those who “fled bloodless” from the serpents assailing *Laocoon* (B. II., v. 212). He was terrified again and passive at the death of *Priam* (559). He shivered at the silence when he was looking for *Creusa* (755). He was still more frightened at her apparition: “I was astounded,” he says, “and my hair stood on end and my voice stuck in my throat.” He uses the same words soon afterwards to describe the way he was startled by an enchanted tree (B. III., v. 48). A little earlier his terror at the same object was more pitiable: “A cold shivering shakes my limbs and my chilled blood congeals with dread” (29-30).

The *Æneid* closes with a parting groan; and its abrupt ending has been ingeniously attributed to the probability that the pious hero wept so much over his slain enemy, *Turnus*, that he was drowned in his own tears, and changed by *Venus* into a fountain of salt water—an improvement which very likely suggested one of the lost *Metamorphoses* of *Ovid*.

Unlike the present Laureate, *Virgil* shows no sympathy for “idle tears”—his hero's tears are industrious and persistent. The figure of the demigod towers a head and shoulders over his followers; and his moral eminence is as great. No dozen men of these degenerate days could match—his water-power.