

glory ; there can, surely, be no rivalry between them. The rivalry, the jealousy, is only between injudicious partizans, more bent on proving their own orthodoxy than on converting those who differ.

And yet, granting all this, there is a sense, a domain, in which comparisons may justly be made. The writer already quoted, Professor Sellar, at a subsequent point in his article, admits as much. "Virgil's free and yet idealizing interpretation of the imperial idea of Rome," he writes "..... is the basis of the monumental greatness of the *Æneid* as a representative poem." That is, we must recognize clearly, Virgil's purpose, Virgil's dominant idea, and the limitations which inevitably result therefrom. It is a "nationalist" poem, rather than a "humanist" one, if the terms be admissible. "The inferiority of the poem to the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*," Professor Sellar continues, "as a direct representation of human life is so unquestionable, that we are in greater danger of underrating than of overrating the real, though secondary interest which the poem possesses as an imitative epic of human action, manners, and character."

"Imitative epic." Those two words are "significant of much," to quote the Sage of Chelsea. Whom did Virgil imitate, whom should he imitate but Homer? The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were, so far as we know, the only epics wherewith he could possibly be familiar. Homer, so far as Virgil was concerned was first in the field ; though Homer, one cannot doubt, followed some yet earlier model. "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun." So said the Wise Man, deliberately, and, apart from inspiration, it is literally true. The epic deals with man : his passions, sufferings, actions : with humanity. Not the greatest of all poets can create, he can only reform and use anew the indestructible material—human nature.

Virgil, then, dealt, not with mankind in general, but with mankind as fashioned, modified, transformed, it may be, by the genius of Rome ; a genius whether republican or imperial, pagan or Christian, the like of which the world has never seen nor shall see paralleled, except in Judaism. Virgil's epic is national, as truly as the Books of Kings, or Maccabees, are Hebrew. So that we return whence we set out : There cannot be comparison between him and Homer. And this because Roman human nature differs, with a difference almost past our comprehension from the Greek, or Asiatic—Oriental,