

## V.

But it is high time for me to show some reason for trespassing on the preserves of the Professor of Classics. The indirect influence of Vergil upon English literature is seen first in the sway of what may be called the Troynovant legend. It can be traced to Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century. Vergil was not only transformed into a magician by mediæval fantasy, but his name was one to conjure with. In imitation of Æneas' voyage from Troy to found Rome, there springs up a companion piece, the voyage of Brutus, his descendant, to Albion, to found New Troy, Troynovant or London. A parallel tradition is found in France, whence the myth was conveyed to England in the authority Geoffrey used and which he called *vetustissimus*. The idea flattered the national pride. Wace, a Jerseyman, made a French poem on Geoffrey's history, and this Layamon, a priest of Ernley, again translated and amplified into the poem known as *Brut*. The basis must be a collection of Celtic tales; and from the outset, Geoffrey and his romance were fiercely assailed, as a fabler and fables. Very surprising is the stream of poetry this Archdeacon of Monmouth in the twelfth century set free to flow as it would. Down to the middle of the seventeenth century the myth was generally regarded as fact. Even Milton, although he cannot help feeling suspicious, will not rashly set it aside and devotes a large part of the first chapter of his history to recounting "descents of ancestry long continued, laws and exploits not plainly seeming to be borrowed or devised." Elizabethan literature bristles with allusions to this legend. As might be expected, Drayton makes ample use of it in his *Polyolbion*; and finds it