

dispatches him without a struggle. How different is Achilles! He preys upon no weak defenceless women, nay, he acts towards the lowliest of them with all the chivalry of a noble nature, as is evidenced by the affection Briseis shows for him. He reverences the gods, but he relies much also upon his own trusty arm. In his final combat with Hector he is given no mean advantage. Hector is terrified, it is true, but not to such a degree as to be unable to defend himself. Granted that Achilles is guilty of some barbarity towards his enemy's body, theirs has been a feud of long standing, and one in which the passions of each had been raised to a white heat, a fact which in part atones for this, and it must not be forgotten that when his transport of rage is over, he returns the body at old Priam's request. If, then, we apply the standard laid down above for the estimation of the worth of poetic characters—that they should be such as to excite in us admiration and lofty aspirations, we shall find Æneas still more wanting than is Dido. Few of his actions are worthy of imitation, and many of them call for condemnation. Achilles, on the contrary, stands before us in massive strength, every inch a man. He has strong passions, it is true, but what *man* has not? That he is occasionally carried away by them is not surprising, for perfection is not of this world. Yet shall we be much the better for a study of his character and an attempt to copy many of its traits. Homer knew the human heart as an organist knows the keys of his instrument. Virgil only scanned its sentimental side, and unfortunately he seems to have considered sentiment unworthy of a hero. Hence, he has given us instead a cool, calculating schemer.

Defective as is the poem in point of characterization, however, it still is a great work, in some respects perhaps the greatest of all similar productions. The testing of ages—that best of all criterions has been to this effect. The chief points in its favor are its exquisite style, its oft-occurring pathos and its spirit of nationality. The polished execution of the whole work, but especially of that portion which had received the finishing touches, is too well known to every classical student to require

any comment. The frequently quoted verse

(Quadrupae dante putrem sonitu quatit ungula
campum,

in reading which rapidly one seems almost to hear the clattering of the horse's feet, is but a sample of Virgil's command of imitative harmony and the general beauty of his style.

The exquisite delineation of sentiment in the poem has been justly regarded as its finest feature. Many critics, indeed, would place Virgil above all other poets as a portrayer of the pathetic. This is, perhaps, an extreme view as it would be hard to find any where in the Æneid, a bit of pathos more finely wrought out than that shown forth in the episode of Hector and Andromache. It must be admitted, however, that whilst this is the only jewel of the kind which adorns the handiwork of the Grecian artist, that of his Roman brother is bestudded with similar ones throughout. The fine sentimental touch to Dido's character has been already noted, but this is surpassed by that embellishing the story of Nisus and Euryalus. This latter episode has been at all times looked upon as one of the finest, if not the finest occurring in any literature.

It is doubtful, however, whether the Æneid would have been awarded the high niche it now occupies in the temple of poetic art, were it not so strongly characterized by a spirit of nationality. In the choice of his subject, at least, Virgil may well contend with any other poet for the palm of excellence. It embodies the whole national life and all the national pride of the Romans. To them, in consequence, it was the first of all epics. And so deeply is the spirit of nationality rooted in the human heart that even at the present day, though we be not Romans, not even Latin, we still feel a thrill of triumph as we read this wondrous tale of the foundation of imperial Rome. Virgil, though probably he knew it not, bespoke for his work the sympathies of not merely the Roman people, but of the whole human family when he wrote as indicative of his purpose in detailing so minutely the trials of Æneas, "So great a work it was to found the Roman race."

D. MURPHY, '92.