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VERGIL

O degli altri poeti onor' e lume!

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I.

If it be written, as Capulet's servant avers, that the shoemaker should meddle with his yard, and the tailor with his last, the fisher with his pencil, and the painter with his nets, no lengthened apology is necessary for a teacher of English who meddles with Vergil. Besides, I hope to show that the relation of Vergil to English literature is closer than is generally suspected, and, by so doing, explain and justify my presence in this particular classical galley. In order to make my position quite clear, I must risk the reproach of egotism and offer frankly some autobiographic details, believing as I do that my experience, in part at least, is typical. I speak as a Canadian to Canadians.

At a certain stage of his journey through the wilderness of this world, the pilgrim I know most about lighted upon a Canadian High School, and began the study of Latin. He learned to con *mensa*, *mensæ* in Harkness, and went through declension and conjugation in the orthodox way, writing prose exercises and translating easy sentences until the time came to attack a real author. To this day he remembers the point in the dark backward and abysm of time, when he was confronted with the page of Vergil containing the lesson for the coming day. The volume had come down to him from his father's school-days, and was in fact the text which the learned Carolus Ruæus, S. J., prepared for the use of His Serene Highness, the

Dauphin of France, in the seventeenth century, *vita*, *interpretatio*, *notæ*, *index vocabulorum* and all. The lesson was a few lines of the Second Æneid, and to this day I recall vividly the baffled feeling, when face to face with the text. I felt that there was a meaning in those words, if it could only be got at; but they seemed all the same. There appeared to be no way of distinguishing them. They might have been a uniformed Roman legion, close-ranked in battle array, determined to keep out the northern barbarian, or a labyrinth of grey boulders all the same shape and size, a labyrinth without a silken clue, without an Ariadne. Little by little the path opened, and the tale of Troy divine, as Father Æneas discoursed it from his lofty couch, took form and awakened interest. In spite of this particular pupil's idleness and lack of proper instruction, he could not altogether miss the subtle charm of the Roman poet's grand style. Dull as he was, he did not altogether fail to catch the penetrating Vergilian cry in the moving tale of the Sea-priest and his sons, and the phrase,—*parva duorum Corpora natorum*—touched him with its pathos and could not be shaken from the memory. But it was many a long day before he was to attain to anything like a just appreciation of the poet or his work.

One reason for this is that the merits of Cæsar and Horace are more to the taste of the average boy than the peculiar excellence of the great Mantuan. A stirring story told in crisp soldier fashion and well-bred man-of-the-world sentiment, wit, or playfulness, are much more likely to impress the unformed mind than the dignity of the great Vergilian style, or the tenderness and nobility of the Vergilian thought. Not that I realized then why I took but little interest in Vergil: but looking back from the man's point of view to the boy's, I can understand it now. Another reason lay in the teaching. I do not wish to disparage my teachers. They were both honest, painstaking men, who did their duty by us. I remember them with affection, but I still have something of a grudge against them, that they did not give us the guidance really needed. How we acquired them I cannot say, but the notions certainly did prevail in the class, that the only reasons why anyone should study Latin were that it was required for examinations, and helped druggists to read the labels on their jars. The trouble was that we never saw the wood for the trees. Latin words we studied; but Latin literature, never. Syntax, grammar, scansion, there was, good measure, pressed down, heaped together and running over; but real feeling for the language there was not. Still less there was any feeling for style. And I am afraid that in twenty years there has been little improvement. Only last summer I heard a lesson in Vergil in a model Ontarian High School; and it had both the excellences and the defects of the system under which I was trained. The fault does not really lie at the door of the teachers. It is a lamentable fact that the English tradition of elegant classical scholarship has never really taken root in this country, and the study of Greek and Latin literature has had to make head against the crude democratic demand for immediate utility, which means for an educational article which can be, as soon as possible, turned into dollars and cents. The cause of education in our country could hardly be better served than by leavening our Canadian schools with some scores of Oxford men. This is, of course, easier said than done. The healthy Canadian youth objects to being patronized; the Oxonian is a delicate exotic, hard to acclimatize; and above all, first-class men are few. The happiest solution would be obtaining Canadian teachers with English training. Something has been done already. The recent drawing together of our foremost Canadian university and the two famous homes of English culture by the Isis and the Cam, will set a stream of student emigration flowing from west to east, from which only good can come.

Before leaving the topic of schools and schoolmasters, I wish to say a word of a third teacher, whom every old pupil of a certain collegiate institute will recognize under the pseudonym of Barbarossa. His peculiarity was the possession of a relentless driving power, for which at least one old pupil is grateful. There was a book of Latin prose exercises, of which the mystic number seventy had to be prepared for a certain examination. At this distance of time, it seems to me, as if every one of those seventy exercises was written on the black-board, under his eagle eye, unto seventy times seven. Besides the knowledge this process brought of some scandal about that gross materialist Balbus, who lived to eat, and besides the permanent acquisition of some golden phrases like *Negari non potest*, and *Non est dubium quin*, it is plain that the training was useful for something more than passing examinations. To those hours of unrelaxing drill must be credited the fixing in my mind of a considerable vocabulary and of a feeling for sentence-structure. Should this ever meet his eye, he may feel assured that one "unprofitable grammarian," as old Harrison has it, is thankful for having been forced to work.

On reaching the university, I found there a system which forced men to specialize from the beginning of their course, and, worse than that, formed the specialists into opposite camps, Classics, Moderns, Mathematics, Natural Science and Metaphysics. Naturally where the kinship was closest, the feud was most bitter, and the battle raged chiefly between the partizans of the old literature and of the new. None of us, in our simplicity seemed to be aware that the quarrel was two hundred years old, and that the last gun had been fired by a certain satirical Dean of St. Patrick's. With the impetuosity of the undergrad, I threw up my cap for the Moderns, and defended them against all-comers for several years, confirmed in my heretical idea that between the two branches of European literature there was an irrepressible conflict, and that new lamps were better than old. Nobody told me that European literature, like European history, is one, and that the end is not comprehensible without the beginning. Other interests crowded the classics to one side for a long time. With some inkling of the beauty of the *Eclogues*, two *Georgics*, and two *Æneids*, I left Vergil behind me at the university, practically, a book with seven seals.

The process of awakening was a curious one. The specializing bent remained and worked out its way, but happily, it is impossible to study modern languages, at any school for specialists, without keeping up more than a bowing acquaintance with the forms of Latin; and, though literature suffered, touch with the language was not altogether lost. At last, what may perhaps be called a happy accident led me back to Vergil. One night in the middle of a severe bout of examination-paper reading, I chanced upon a quotation from the *Æneid*. I opened a long disused school Vergil to verify the reference, but as that one leaf was torn across I could not find it, and struck into the middle of the wonderful Fourth Book. I found that I could get the meaning without trouble, and that that tale of Dido's passion was absolutely fascinating. It was in a state of enthusiasm that I reached the famous

"Vixi, et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi,"

which has thrilled many a reader before and since Jane Baillie Welsh, aged nine, sacrificed her beloved doll in the character of Dido on a pyre of lead-pencils and sticks of cinnamon. From that night I became a Vergilian, perhaps deserving at times the reproach addresssed to the young monk who found undue pleasure in the works of the pagan author. From that time, my interest burnt like a flame, and the many hours spent on the beggarly elements of Latin grammar and Latin prose now yielded a rich if far-off interest of literary pleasure. For a long summer holiday Vergil was my constant companion. Much of his poetry was read under skies as blue and splendid as those that overarch his own beloved Parthenope, and in the music of his verse I shall always hear the soft breathing of summer airs through evergreens, and the washing of the ripple against a granite shore.

Reading the bare text without note or comment of any kind, I found many questions cropping up which I could put to myself but which I could not answer—in regard chiefly to the personality of the author, to his sources, to Roman culture, to Roman religion, to epic poetry. These had to wait until I could get back to books, when I found in Conington's scholarly edition and Sellar's sane, close-knit and learned monograph the guidance I required, and in the essay of Myers, such praise of my author as did my heart good, and as I felt accorded him justice. In these and other books which might be named, students will find ample learning, vouched for by scholars of world-wide fame. I speak in no sense as a classic, as one with authority, but as a barbarian to fellow-barbarians. My crude notions may call up a gravely amused and tolerant smile to the lips of the professed priests and guardians of the classical mysteries This is a record of personal experience, a series of confidences set forth in the hope that others who have also wandered in darkness may feel encouraged to grope forward to the light.

II.

At the outset, I wish in the most solemn and public manner to abjure and renounce the pestilent heresy which had long been losing its hold upon me, that there can be real conflict between the old and the new. The literature of Europe is one. Modern literature has its roots in the past, and no scholar or man of culture can feel that he really understands the new without a knowledge of the old. Truisms as these statements are, there is urgent need for repeating them with conviction at this time.

Beginning the *Æneid* is like setting out upon a broad and beaten highway, along which countless feet have passed in the course of nineteen centuries. It is a spiritual highway, winding through every age and every clime Thousands have passed this way before you, and if you give your thoughts free wing down this strange pathway of the fancy, they carry you to many a strange scene,—to the pensive citadel of many a lonely student, to many a monkish scriptorium, where pious brothers wrote the *Pollio* as carefully as the *Horae*, and illuminated its margins as gaily,—to the maiden bower of many a learned princess, a Lady Jane Grey, an Elizabeth prisoner,—to the quaint printing rooms of Aldus, and Stephanus and Elzevir,—to Avignon and Vaucluse,—to the court of Charlemagne,—to the Rucellai gardens, to the Esquiline and the pleasance of Mecænas. To many it has been a via dolorosa, down which generation after generation of flagellants have passed with tears and extreme reluctance. On that long road there are the strangest meetings, at "unset steven." In a charming passage in *Ebb-tide*, Stevenson pictures two university men on the shore of an island of the Pacific, finding common ground in capping a line from the *Æneid*, and he moralizes on the delights of being caned for Vergil so that it becomes a possession for after yeras. The price of many stripes may not be too great to pay, but personally, I am thankful that I read only a small portionof Vergil in school. The bits I read then are precisely those I take least interest in now.

The first impression the epic made upon me was that of grandeur. I could understand, without a trace of resentment. why men who were born to such a language, and took pleasure in such a poem, would look down upon the speech of the German and English tribesmen as barbarous. To go straight from Augustan Latin to *Beowulf* or the *Edda* or the *Nibelungenlied*, or even to Shakspere and to Goethe at their best, makes you feel that the language as language is inferior. By comparison, even the English of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the German of *Faust*, is, as Byron said, "our harsh, northern, whistling, grunting guttural." Perhaps the greatest charm of Vergii is "lo bello stile," which Dante felt did him such honour, and which Tennyson has termed, in justifiable superlatives, "the stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man."

An example or two will help to make this clear. Readers of *Comus* will remember the fine line Milton flings in gratuitously near the beginning:—

> "An old and haughty nation proud in arms,"

as descriptive of the English temper. The line has the Miltonic ring and the unmistakable air of Miltonic distinction, but it is really only giving back in English a Vergilian line both in word and feeling:—

> "Hinc populum, late regem, belloque superbum"

What impresses the English reader of Milton, the happy union of sonorous word-music with dignified phrase and deep feeling, is present in at least an equal degree in Vergil.

If we understand the verse nearest to us, we can hope to appreciate the one more remote. If we understand both, we have a greater pleasure in reading Milton, the pleasure of literary reminiscence. In a very subtle way, the sentiment of the Vergilian phrase seems to blend with Milton's in the quoted line, to reinforce and to enhance it.

III.

At this point it may be well to deal with what is commonly termed Vergil's plagiarism. When young persons are told that the *Eclogues* are an imitation of Theocritus, that the *Georgics* are imitated from Hesiod, and that the *Æneid* is not only modelled on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but that whole episodes and many lines are taken bodily from the older epics, they feel that their author stands convicted of literary petty larceny. In the rashness of youth, they conclude at once that he has shown great weakness, and proved that his work is inferior to that from which he borrows. Now, Vergil wrote for a refined and learned court circle, with whom Greek literature was a passion; and it was of deliberate design that he modelled his work upon the Greek. The re-appearance in the Latin poet of a favourite line, phrase, idea, situation, episode transmuted into something precious and national, gave his Roman audience the same pleasure that we feel in the re-appearance of Vergil's phrase in Milton's line. In regard to what is commonly called plagiarism, I hold that those should take who have the power. The literary weakling merely translates, and the purple patch shames the fustian about it; the man of genius transmutes. If he take gold, or silver, or even baser metal, he fuses all together into a Corinthian brass more precious than gold itself. Dryden says rather flippantly: "The poet who borrows nothing from others is yet to be born; he and the Jews' Messias will come together," while Voltaire goes further, holding that if Homer created Vergil, it was the best thing he ever did. Shelley's judgment is: "Vergil, with a modesty that ill became his genius, had affected the fame of an imitator, even while he created anew all that he copied," and so the list goes on. Lately the question has assumed an international aspect. Vergil has always been the chief poet of the Latin races; the French in particular have never wavered in their allegiance to him; but within our own century the great impulse towards the study of naïve literature, ballads, folk-lore, primitive epics, has tended to depose Vergil in favour of Homer. Over this point a long battle has raged between the French and the Germans. At present, there are signs that in English-speaking countries at least, there is a clearer perception of Vergil's peculiar excellences, and although he may never again reign supreme, he cannot long remain a king in exile, without a crown and without devoted subjects. Here again the partizan is an absurdity. Whoever aims at the acquisition of taste, or culture or scholarship, should leave his mind open to the influence of both the Latin and the Greek.

Another prevalent superstition is the notion that the second six books are so inferior to the first six that they are practically not worth reading. Now, Vergil never surpassed the pictures of the Second, the passion of the Fourth, or the ethics of the Sixth, but it is known that he did not write the books in their present sequence. To despise any of the second six on the ground that they are unfinished, is in all probability to stultify oneself. No other book, as a whole, equals any one of these mentioned; but single episodes and lines of greatest interest abound. To disregard the last six books is to disregard Turnus and Camilla. Take the Seventh, which is not usually quoted, and let us look at two or three passages in it chosen almost at random. All readers who have enjoyed the short poem of Tennyson's called *Will*, remember with pleasure the comparison of the strong man to

> "—a promontory of rock,
> That compass'd round with turbulent sound,
> In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
> Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd."

This is really a Vergilian simile which the poet liked so much that he used it twice. In the seventh book, Turnus, unshaken in the midst of confusion, terror and adverse counsels, is likened to a rock amid the sea:

> "Ille velut pelagi rupes immota, resistit:
> Ut pelagi rupes, magno veniente fragore,
> Quæ sese, multis circum latrantibus undis,
> Mole tenet scopuli; nequidquam et spumea circum
> Saxa fremunt, laterique illisa refunditur alga."

The figure is borrowed, the sentiment is the same; and whoever can appreciate the beauty of the Tennysonian lines, or the fine *ritardendo* close of the *Deserted Village*.

> "But self-dependent power can time defy,
> As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

may feel encouraged to hope that there are new sources of pleasure awaiting him in Vergil. Again, interpreting the older poetry in the terms of English verse, whoever feels a thrill of horror as the passing bell of Constance de Beverley echoes on the night, is prepared to enjoy a similar beauty in Vergil.

> "Slow o'er the midnight wave it swung,
> Northumbrian rocks in answer rung;
> To Warkworth cell the echoes rolled,
> His beads the wakeful hermit told,

The Bamborough peasant raised his head,
But slept ere half a prayer he said;
So far was heard the mighty knell
The stag sprung up on Cheviot Fell,
Spread his broad nostril to the wind,
Listed before, aside, behind,
Then couched him down beside the hind,
And quaked among the mountain fern,
To hear that sound so dull and stern."

The Roman poet's picture is different. At the unearthly sound, even inanimate nature is deeply stirred. The human touch is reserved to the last, and the comprehending terror of the mothers moves us more profoundly than the panic of the dumb creatures of the wild. At the deadly sound of the war-horn blown by the Fury,

"omne
Contremuit nemus, et silvæ intonuere profundæ.
Audiit et Triviæ longe lacus: audiit amnis
Sulfurea Nar albus aqua, fontesque Velini;
Et trepidæ matres pressere ad pectora natos."

Vergil never forgets the women and the children. War is less terrible for the men, the red slayers and the slain, than for those who must bide at home and suffer. Vergil's heart is not in the battle, he is really on the side of the mothers who curse it.

It may be hard to bring home the more subtle effects of Vergil's style, but it is worth while trying. He has a pervading sense of the pathetic, of the tears of human affairs, which penetrates all his verse. When he is girding up his loins for the battles of the final books, he calls upon the Muses for aid:—

"Pandite nunc Helicona, Deæ, cantusque movete,"

The sacred Nine know to what battles the kings were roused, what ranked array followed what leaders and filled the plains, with what men this Italian land which bred me flourished in that age, and with what wars it flamed.

For the Immortals can remember and they have power to tell the tale.

> "Ad nos vix tenuis famæ perlabitur aura."

Surely one is not mistaken in seeing here something more than the plain statement that barely a faint breath of the fame of these deeds has come down to us of the later age. Surely there is some feeling of the contrast between the knowledge of the Immortals and shifting inscience of men; and it cannot be mere fancy to suspect behind the words a sense of "things done long ago and ill-done," the very sentiment of Wordsworth's

> "—old, unhappy, far-off things
> And battles long ago."

The style, then, of Vergil, his own way of uttering his thought, whatever that thought may be, is a perpetual delight. The air of distinction is maintained from first to last, without effort and without harshness. At the same time it would be hard to find ten consecutive lines without some turn of phrase, some single epithet, some woven harmony of words, on which to linger in pleased surprise. Beside Shakspere's Gothic rudeness of form and his divine disorder, beside Goethe's long-winded dawdling, his "sprawl" after his "spring," Vergil gives you the sense of finished workmanship. The temple is complete from floor to frieze. If the master-builder wished to change the setting of some single stone, or carve some capital, or cornice more delicately, no other eye may scan the fault. It is only echoing the praise of centuries to call Vergil's an unequalled style.

IV.

Apart from the constant pleasure derived from the mere form, the chief impressions Vergil's poetry left upon my mind were three—an impression of civilization, an impression of tenderness, an impression of patriotism.

The man of the present day finds himself more in accord with Vergil than with any other poet of antiquity, for the man of the present day lives, consciously or not, under the influence of Christianity; and Vergil is the most Christian of the pagan poets. Horace, the Epicurean, who called him "animæ dimidium meæ," said also of him that earth bore no whiter soul. The men of the middle ages found in him a prophet of the Christ. Now whatever else Christianity has done, it has greatly enlarged the range of our sympathies and deepened our emotions. It has made the world thoughtful and sad. This thoughtful sadness, this range and depth of emotion are characteristic of Vergil. Those French and German translators of the Middle Ages who made his epic a tale of chivalry and Æneas and Turnus knights-errant have been often laughed at for their simplicity. But were they not unconsciously right? Vergil is chivalrous in his feeling, with the chivalry of the *Idylls of the King*. He understands as well as the wildest berserker who ever died under a score of foemen's swords, the fitting end of a warrior's life. Geraint,

> "——crowned
> A happy life with a fair death, and fell
>
> * * * *
>
> In battle fighting——"

And Virgil's fighters—

> " dant funera ferro
> Certantes, pulchramque petunt per volnera mortem[2]."

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[2] Cf. —— an sese medios moriturus in enses,
Inferat, et pulchram properet per volnera mortem?
Cf., also *ib.* xi., 154f, —*Æn* ix, 400f.

This primitive feeling is no stranger to such a modern as Nelson. But his conception of a " fair death" is far grander than that of mere mad, hot-blooded killers. England's great captain on the quarter-deck of the *Victory* at Trafalgar, presaging triumph over a continent in arms, mindful only of his duty, his country's honour, and the conduct of this, his last battle, and forgetful of standing weaponless, the stars on his breast marking him for death is a type of courage, of which berserker never dreamed. But Vergil feels the stir of sympathy with all disastrous fight. Like Milton, he understands that defeat is not defeat, if the will remain unconquerable. Such speeches as—

> " Tu ne cede malis ; sed contra audentior ito,
> Quam tua te Fortuna sinet. '

And

> " Disce, puer, virtutem ex me, verumque laborem ;
> Fortunam ex aliis "

breathe the " deliberate valour" of the modern man. It is to ringing words like these that his heart responds most quickly. They brace the spirit for more than battle, the life that is all battle.

In his sadness, too, Vergil speaks for our later world. The most majestic example of this feeling is the wondering exclamation of Æneas that souls should wish again for earth:

> " O pater ! anne aliquas ad coelum hinc ire putandum est
> Sublimes animas, iterumque in tarda reverti
> Corpora ? quae lucis miseris tam dira cupido ?"

Such a thought shows how, nineteen centuries ago, the Roman poet bowed beneath

> "——the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world. '

Throughout the *Æneid* there is a sense of the complexity of human affairs, a sense of world-wide interests bound up with the exploits and responsibilities of a dominant race. The acts of the hero demand an empire for a stage on which the eyes of the world are fixed. Beside the struggle of Rome and Carthage, of Octavius and Antony, the death of Harold at Hastings, of King Olaf under Svald seem without significance. These wars are but as the flocking of kites and crows; but Vergil's *Æneas* and Augustus bear up the world upon their shoulders.

The tenderness of Vergil, his sympathy with the weak, is perhaps his most lovable quality. His mention of the sons of Laocoon, of Camilla's baby lips and slender limbs, of Silvia's pet stag, of Dido's hands dabbled in blood all show what a deep-hearted poet he was. His references to the mothers are especially noteworthy. A warrior is slain, but at the moment of his hero's victory, Vergil's thought turns to the mother of the dying boy, and to the laborious token of her love.

> "Transiit et parmam mucro * * *
> Et tunicam, molli mater quam neverat auro."

One reference has been made already to the mothers who have cause to quake for fear. Two more may serve to show how well Vergil understands the human heart. The youthful warriors in glittering squadrons ride out of the city gates; the women cannot go, but from the battlements they follow them with their eyes, till they are merely a cloud of dust.

> "Stant pavidæ in muris matres, oculisque sequuntur
> Pulvereamque nubem, et fulgentis ære catervas."

Again in his wonderful picture of a city sacked, he sees the women clinging to the door-posts of their homes, and pressing their lips to them in despair.

> "Tum pavidæ tectis matres ingentibus errant;
> Amplexaeque tenent postes, atque oscula figunt.

Vergil's poetry, especially the *Æneid*, I have likened to some great Roman road joining the utmost bounds of a wide-spread country. Like a road, parts of it are famous because way-worn men have rested at them and found there refreshment and delight. In other words, some lines have gathered significance from their association with great names. The most famous, perhaps, is the infinitely musical,

> "Manibus date lilia plenis:"

which Dante heard the Blessed chanting in the Paradise of God. To some these words are sacred, because they recall England's veteran statesman strewing flowers on the laureate hearse of Tennyson, as he lay in the Abbey, that high altar of our race. All roads lead to Rome, and Vergil's great poem takes us straight to imperial Rome, the mistress of the world. The reason for the existence of the *Æneid* is Vergil's patriotism. "The impulse both of poets and historians was to build up a commemorative monument; not as among the Greeks, to present the spectacle of human life in its most animated, varied and noble movements."[1] In this year of reminiscence it should not be hard for any subject of the British empire to understand Vergil's pride in his country. Place our bead-roll of heroes beside the file of those whom Anchises pointed out to Æneas in the under-world, or those whose deeds were fashioned on the famous shield,

"——clipei non enarrabile textum,"

set the battle with the Armada, or Trafalgar beside "Actia bella," and we thrill with poet's own deep emotion. The most famous expression of it is in sublime close of Anchises' speech:

> "Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera,
> Credo equidem; vivos ducent de marmore voltus;
> Orabunt caussas melius; cœlique meatus
> Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent.
> *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento:*
> *Hae tibi erunt artes; pacis imponere morum,*
> *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.*"

The similar limitations and the similar destiny of our race should bring home to us the spirit of these majestic lines. One English writer, to whom perverse criticism would deny the name of poet, has infused it into English verse. Macaulay is the most patriotic of historians, and he never fails to awaken the patriot passion in the breast, even in singing those glorious legends of early Rome, which none but a brave and high-minded race could have imagined. In

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[1] Sellar, 287.

"The stone that breathes and struggles,
The brass that seems to speak ;—

he comes very close to the first part of the extract. The manifest destiny of Roman civilization is brought out in such ringing lines as these :

Leave gold and myrrh and jewels,
Rich table and soft bed,
To them who of man's seed are born
Whom woman's milk hath fed.
Thou wast not made for lucre,
For pleasure, nor for rest ;
Thou, that art sprung from the war-god's loins,
And has tugged at the she-wolf's breast.

* * * *

Leave to the soft Campanian
His baths and his perfumes ;
Leave to the sordid race of Tyre
Their dyeing vats and looms ;
Leave to the sons of Carthage
The rudder and the oar ;
Leave to Greek his marble Nymphs
And scrolls of wordy lore.

Thine, Roman, is the pilum :
Roman, the sword is thine,
The even trench, the bristling mound
The legion's ordered line ;
And thine the wheels of triumph,
Which with their laurelled train
Move slowly up the shouting streets
To Jove's eternal fane.

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 necessary to protest against the destructive criticism of the time.

> "And they but idly talk upbraiding us with lies
> That *Geoffrey Monmouth*, first our Brutus did devise,
> Not heard of till his time our Adversary says[1]."

Jasper Fisher has a play with the title *Fuimus Troes—The True Trojans*, in which occur stanzas like these :—

> "Ancient bards have sung
> With lips dropping honey,
> And a sugared tongue
> Of our noble knights :
> How Brute did giants tame,
> And by Isis current,
> A second Troy did frame,
> A centre of delights."

This history of England, "Antiquitee of Faery Land", is the book Sir Guyon[3] reads in the castle of Alma. From this the material for the first English tragedy *Gorboduc* was taken, as well as the material for the greatest, *Lear*. Here also we find Cymbeline and "Sabrina fair." It is little wonder Sir Guyon looked into it "greedily." The material of these old tales is certainly Celtic ; but for our purpose the significant fact is their connection with Vergil's epic, and the faint shadowing of the original tale.

The history of the Vergil translations in English begins at least as early as the setting up of the first printing press in the scriptorium at Westminster. Caxton made and printed a prose translation of the great Mautuan. This performance did not please Gavin Douglas, and to shame the Southron and vindicate Vergil, he made a translation of his own. This again was used by the ill-fated Earl of Surrey in his translation. Phaer turned the first ten books of the *Æneid* into the lolloping "fourteeners" so fashionable towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, and the work was finished by Twine. The men of the seventeenth and eighteenth century are not fond of translating Vergil. Ovid and Horace are more to their taste. But the number of those who have been tempted to try their hand at the hardest of tasks is very great. Waller Englished part of the fourth *Æneid*, as did Surrey; Denham translated the second as well as the fourth into blank verse. Roscommon turned the sixth *Eclogue* into verse, and Cowley, part of the second *Georgic*. "Glorious John" gave up a large part of his old age to making what is still in all probability the best complete version of Vergil in our language. Addison, as might be expected from his character, was drawn to Vergil. His essay on the *Georgics* is said to have been written when he was twenty-one. Besides, he turned the fourth *Georgic* except the story of Aristaeus, into Popian couplets, and the episode of Achimenides in the third *Æneid* into Miltonic blank verse. Few get beyond the fourth book; but mention should be made of the adventurous William Hamilton, of Bangour, who versified the incident of Lausus and Mezentius in the tenth[1]. Our own age has been especially rich in translations of Vergil. Professor Conington made two, one in the metre of Marmion and one in prose. The last poet to undertake the entire *Æneid* was William Morris. He used the long "fourteeners" which were so effective in *Sigurd the Volsung*, but they do not please all English critics. Mr. Frederick Harrison speaks of the work with scant respect as a "marry come up, my merry men men all sort of ballad."[2] A really satisfactory version of Vergil in English is yet to be made.

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[1] *Polyolbion* x, 243—255 cf. *ib.* 219—327.

[2] Dodsley's Old Plays, vii., 411.

[3] *Faerie Q.*, bk. ii., cant. x.

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[1] Chalmers, xv., 649.

[2] At the same time Mr. Myers, who must be an excellent judge, pronounces it to be "brilliant and accurate." Who shall decide when doctors disagree?

VI.

More direct influence still upon our literature is distinctly traceable to Vergil[1]. Langland knows him only as the hero of a grotesque mediæval myth[2]; 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 Shakspere 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[3] of it. But in this, as in many other things, Shakspere 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[4] with his subject. According to Vergil, Dido slew herself as soon as the false Trojan's galleys were hull down on the horizon ; but Shakspere has another vision. Two young lovers lately wed are watching the moonlit heavens in the gardens of Belmont. They give themselves up to the loveliness of the scene, and are so full of new-found happiness that they can endure the least shadow of a far-off, romantic melancholy :

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

[2] *Piers Plowman*, B. *xii.*, 43f.

[3] Cf. Hayward, *The Iron Age*, Pt. ii.

[4] Turberville (Of Dido and the Truth of her Death) justifies her *against* the testimony of Vergil; he holds she slew herself to avoid shame.

> "In such a night
> Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
> Upon the wild sea-banks and waved her love
> To come again to Carthage."

Full moonlight on the sea! Can anything be fuller of yearning, except the single lonely figure on the shore with its hopeless signal of welcome ? But Shakspere sees life in the round. Moving as is the love-tale of Dido, it has even its ridiculous side. Two epithets do it all : "*widow* Dido," "*widower* Æneas".[1] Spring is the only mating-time. The loves of middle-aged people do not move us except to laughter.

Nearer our own day, English poets have given utterance to their personal sentiments in regard to Vergil. Dryden calls him his divine master. Cowper says that he

> "should have deem'd it once an effort vain
> To sweeten more sweet Maro's matchless strain,"

until Mr. Hayley gave him a copy of Heyne's edition. Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold find interest in the poet's tomb. Wordsworth's greatest joy is in the landscape,

> "that delicious Bay
> Parthenope's Domain—Virgilian haunt ;
> Illustrated with never-dying verse,
> And by the Poet's laurel shaded tomb,
> Age after age to Pilgrims from all lands
> Endeared[2]."

Arnold feels the contrast between this and Heine's resting-place in trim Montmartre. His feeling for Vergil is warmer than Wordsworth's. The irregular verse bears the accent of deep feeling.

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[1] *Tempest* II., i.

[2] *Memorials of a Tour in Italy.*

> "Ah, I knew that I saw
> Here no sepulchre built
> In the laurell'd rock, o'er the blue
> Naple's bay, for a sweet
> Tender Virgil."

In that fine series of appreciations, her *Vision of Poets*, Mrs. Browning fails in her praise of Vergil, all the more dismally, as the lines on Lucretius, which come next, are a brilliant success. But the last is the best. It is curious to think, that after five centuries of modern English literature, we had to wait until the very end for an adequate essay like Mr. Myers', for an adequate poem like Tennyson's. The latter written at the request of the Mautuans not only masses in a consummate way the chief excellences of Vergil, but it shows how near English verse can reach to his rich music, and is instinct with one great poet's gratitude to another. With it, as with some jewelled and embroidered band, too precious for such use, I draw together these my poor belated gleanings from Vergilian fields:

> "Roman Virgil, thou that singest
> Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
> Ilion falling, Rome arising,
> wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre.
>
> Landscape-lover, lord of language,
> more than he that sang the Works and Days;
> All the chosen coin of fancy
> flashing out from many a golden phrase;
>
> Thou that singest wheat and woodland
> tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
> All the charm of all the Muses
> often flowering in a lonely word.
>
> * * * *
>
> Thou that seest Universal
> Nature moved by Universal mind;
> Thou majestic in thy sadness
> at the doubtful doom of humankind;

Light among the vanished ages ;
    star that gildest yet this phantom shore ;
Golden branch among the shadows,
    kings and realms that pass to rise no more ;

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
    fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Through thine ocean-roll of rhythm
    sound for ever of Imperial Rome.

Now the Rome of slaves has perished,
  And the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
    sunder'd once from all the human race.

I salute thee, Mantovano,
    I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
    ever moulded by the lips of man."