

skies of Italy and in air filled with poesy, is distinguished for the simplicity of his statements, for his sweetness and mellifluous harmony, and for the richness of his scenery and description. He leads one, charmed by his sweet music, lovely figures and remarkable similes, to brighter fields of truth and virtue, and leaves us to wander enchanted in the realms of the ideal. His similes lack that sublime quality found in Homer, yet he pictures life as we really find it; not like the famous painter who tries to paint nature more beautiful than it really is. An unjust critic has attributed all this to Homer, regardless of that marvellous beauty, which characterizes Virgil. If his similes were taken from Homer, they have been rearranged to produce different, and equal, if not superior effects. He makes one see and feel the charms of "the sparkling stream [of fresh water]" the "cool shade [trees]" and the cave with climbing vines o'er grown: the bright tender hues of violets, poppies and hyacinth; the luxuriant vegetation, clothing hill and dale, mountains and meadows, and finally, blending all into one grand, beautiful picture of harmonious loveliness.

"As when spring adorns the woods, renews the leaves,
The parent earth the genial seed receives."

Again he makes one hear with strange delight the murmur of the bees among the wild flowers, accompanied by the moan of the turtle dove, the low strain of the sheep-herd, and the gentle chant of the river, kissing the shores with its soft waves: then he harmonizes all in a melody which the tuneful Orpheus could but stop to hear. He makes one see them toiling from first light of day until called home by the hollow murmur of evening bells, laden with honey.

"As when the empty bark on billows float,
With sandy ballast the sailors turn the boat;
So bees bear dewy sweets, whose passing weight,
Steer through the wind their homeward flight."

He closes this canto by a simile which would stimulate the most slothful mind to fire of reaction. He pictures so vividly the uselessness of the sluggard, not only to himself but also to his companions, by comparing him with the lazy drone, that one feels that,

Idleness is the curse of God, and
Diligence the wings wherewith we fly to heaven.
"All, with united force, combine to drive
The lazy drones from the laborious hive:
With envy sting they view each others deeds.
With diligence the fragrant work proceeds.
As when Cyclops, at th' almighty nod,
New thunder hasten for their angry god,
Subdued in fire the stubborn metal lies;
One brawny smith the puffing bellows plies,
And draws and blows reciprocating air;
Others to quench the hissing mass prepare
With lifted arms they order every blow,
And chime their sounding hammers in a row."

The greatest of Virgil's works is the Aeneid. This may not be regarded as more perfect than the Eclogues and Georgics, yet it is a work of higher inspiration. He evidently intended to make the Aeneid, as it certainly is, his crowning work. It was by this poem that he gained that place in the minds of the people which he has never lost. His name has been cherished by the poets, who came after him, with veneration. Says Bede: "Virgil casts ever me the same spell which he cast over Dante: verses from the Aeneid breaks his narratives of martyrdom, and the disciple ventures on the track of the great master, in a little eclogue descriptive of the approach of

spring," a part of which has already been quoted. Dante gave himself up to the guidance of Virgil, and we see him even in Milton. "Burke," says Butler, "always had an old ragged Virgil at his elbow." The Aeneid enables us to feel in a way in which no other work of Latin can do. All those elements which characterize Rome and the Imperial State appear softened and mellowed by his marvellous art and humane feeling. "The Aeneid," said an able critic, "reflects the whole glory of Rome as from a mirror." The dreadful fate of Laocoon in the fall of Troy, for condemning the wooden horse, is one Virgil's grandest similes. He makes the heart sick by the cries and agony of Laocoon, whose fate the gods decree for opposing the entering of the Grecian horse into the tower. He makes one see the two serpents sweep along the swelling tide, their ardent eyes filled with bloody deeds, their hissing jaws ready to suck the life blood of the two boys, and gnaw away their flesh with sharpened fangs: then seize and kill Laocoon himself by fatal coils around his waist and throat, while endeavoring to rescue his two sons.

"With both hands he labors at the knots:
His holy fillets the blue venom blots,
His roaring fills the fluttering air around,
As when an ox receives a glancing wound,
He breaks his bands, the fatal alter flies,
And with loud bellowing breaks the yielding skies."

The statue itself conveys little to one who has not read these lines. But when once the narrative is known a thousand thoughts come crowding into the mind.

Again, he has produced in the fourth book of the Aeneid, that which only one since his time has produced. Dido, like the true and noble Ophelia, the very emblem of purity, allowed her passion for Aeneas to kindle in her heart and fetter her in chains of love. She dreamed only of the celestial chords of happiness, accompanied by everlasting bliss. She dreamed only of uniting the Trojan with the Tyrian race in a lasting league of peace and prosperity: to unite with one who alone could soothe and heal her bleeding heart.

"Sick with desire, and seeking him she loves,
From street to street the raving Dido roves.
So, when a watchful shepherd, from the blind,
Wounds with a random shaft the careless hind,
Distracted with her pain she flies the woods,
Bounds o'er the lawn, and seeks the silent floods—
With fruitless care: for still the fatal dart
Sticks in her side, and rankles in her heart."

She pleaded with Aeneas, but his heart never felt the pointed darts of love. She showed to him the Tyrian wealth and her lovely city: and when her hopes seemed bright as the noon day sun, all were eclipsed by deep dark gloom which clings, like filings to the magnet, around her heart. Her sister, who had always been her constant companion and consoler, now failed to calm her troubled mind. But when she learned that Aeneas had deserted her entirely, she chose, like Ophelia, to end the bitter cares of earth. Like Ophelia she shows the true character of womanhood by her sweet temper and even by her last words—

"Dear pledges of my love, while heav'n so pleas'd,
Receive a soul, of mortal anguish eas'd.
My fatal course is finished: and I go,
A glorious name, among the ghosts below."

The piercing steel did the work. The spouting blood came streaming from her heart. She raised her hands towards heaven to ask forgiveness of her darling sister, but fell fainting on the couch of the marble hearted one