

**CAXTON'S
ENEYDOS, 1490**

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Caxton's Eneydos, 1490 by M. T. Culley & F. J. Furnivall

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M. T. CULLEY & F. J. FURNIVALL

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Caxton's Eneydos

1490

ENGLISHT FROM THE FRENCH *LIURE DES ENEYDES*, 1483.

EDITED BY

THE LATE M. T. CULLEY, M.A., OXFORD,

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HON. DR. PHIL. BERLIN,

WITH

A SKETCH OF THE OLD FRENCH *ROMAN D'ÉNÉAS*

BY

DR. SALVERDA DE GRAVE.

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PREFACE.¹

THIS curious little book was printed by Caxton, and specially dedicated to Prince Arthur, eldest son of King Henry VII. It is a translation into English by Caxton himself of a French version of the 'Aeneid,' and is a folio, as usual without any title-page; but Caxton in his colophon at the end gives the date of the translation as June 22nd, 1490, that being probably the period at which he completed it. There are, according to Mr. Blades in his 'Biography and Typography of William Caxton,' eighteen or nineteen copies extant, of which three are in the British Museum, three at St. John's College, Oxford, one at Trinity College, Cambridge, one in the Hunterian Library, Glasgow, and the rest in private libraries. The first and eighth leaves out of a total of eighty-six are blank, but the first is not reckoned in the signature, and the Prologue begins on the second, signed **Aj**. The lines are spaced to an even length, measuring four and three-quarter inches, and thirty-one go to a full page. No other edition is known. Caxton englisht his *Eneydos* either from the French '*liure des eneydes*' printed at Lyons by Guillaume Le Roy on Sept. 30, 1483, or from a more correct MS. of it. A fairly full collation of Mr. Alfred Huth's copy of the French print has been made by Dr. Furnivall—misprints and all—and will be found at p. 188-214 below.

As to the great English printer and his other works nothing need here be said, but we may add a few words on the work before us. It begins with a Prologue by Caxton himself, and ends with a colophon of his own as well, in which he gives the date of the translation. The Prologue is amusing, especially for his perplexity as to the style of words to be used in his translation. No doubt the English language was changing very rapidly in Caxton's time, but in his Prologue he uses most plain and excellent English, quite readable at the present

¹ By Mr. Culley, with a few corrections on pages v—vii by me.—F. J. F.

day, and very different to that in which 'Piers Plowman,' for instance, was written, not so very much over a century before. The same can hardly be said of the translation, but that seems to be (to some extent) the fault of his original. From a remark of Caxton's in his Prologue, the French version appears to have been written by a priest, who says that he translated it out of Latin into French. On the whole, Caxton adhered faithfully to his original, as in the latter part of the Prologue he states he has done, but he often put two words for one, and the language of the 'Eneydos' is frequently turgid and exaggerated, epithets being heaped on epithets in a marvellous and bewildering manner, and the tautological repetition of words is wonderful: see in *Capitulo* x. 39/9, "grete assaultes, effortes and bataylles;" in *Cap.* xiv. 52/9, "thondres, lyghatuynges, choruscaycions and merveyllouse tourmentes;" *Cap.* xv. 59/19, "had construed, edified and made" (*Fr. construit et edifie*). Though the book is not in a general way difficult to read, the construction is curious, as Caxton very often translates the French idiom literally,—as, by the bye, Lord Berners often does in his translation of the French Romances,—and he frequently uses the French words without rendering them into English at all. No better example of the former can be found than in *Cap.* xvi., p. 63-4, when Mercury addresses Aeneas as "Man effemynate wythout honour ravysshed in to dilectacion femynne," or of the latter than the use (25/35) of "syncopysed" for fainted, or elsewhere (46/1) of "orages" for storms, and "suffouge" (87/26) for smoke or fumigate. It is needless to multiply examples which any reader can easily see for himself.

Though Caxton tells us that he translated his French original, the 'Eneydes,' most carefully into English, that French original was by no means a literal translation of Virgil's 'Aeneid,' but rather an extremely free paraphrase,—with importations from Boccaccio and other authors, omissions and abridgments,—not only telling the story of Aeneas in quite a different way to the 'Aeneid,' but occasionally giving an altogether different account. It is more or less interesting to trace these differences, and to do so will serve as a preliminary digest of the tale. Instead of being in twelve books like the 'Aeneid,' the 'Eneydos' is divided into sixty-five ill-arranged

chapters of varying length. Its story begins quite differently from the 'Aeneid,' the first book of which is occupied with the shipwreck of Aeneas, caused by Aeolus letting loose the winds at the instigation of Juno; the kind reception of him and his companions at Carthage by Dido, together with the promise made by Jupiter to Venus of Aeneas's future greatness in Italy; Venus's appearance to Aeneas after his shipwreck; her brief recital to him of Dido's story, and her changing Cupid into the form of Aeneas's son Ascanius to inspire Dido with love for Aeneas; while the second and third books are filled with Aeneas's recital to Dido of the story of the destruction of Troy, and of his six years' wanderings. In the 'Eneydos' (French, *les Eneydes*: Caxton turned this plural into a genitive singular), after a brief prologue by the unnamed author, the first subject handled is Troy, which is said to have been built by Priam. This is odd, as everywhere else Priam is stated to have been the last king of Troy. Here he is said to be son of Laomedon, and descended from Dardanus, son of Jupiter and Electra, which is the old Greek tradition, but it is not mentioned in the 'Aeneid.' Then comes a notice of the siege of Troy by the Greeks under Agamemnon, when Priam,—that his family should not become extinct in case of defeat,—sends his son Polydorus to Plasmator (Polymestor), King of Tarce (Thrace), who, on the decline of Priam's fortune, murders Polydorus and buries him in the sand by the seashore. The first chapter ends by the burning of Troy by the Greeks, only the gate Stex being left. In the second Cap. the gate Stex takes fire, and Eneas flies, bearing his father Anchises, leading his son Yolus (Iulus), and accompanied by Creusa his wife. (No mention is made of Sinon and the wooden horse, Laocoon and the snakes, or the loss of Creusa, so particularly described by Aeneas to Dido.) Eneas and the Trojan refugees reach the port of Simois and put to sea, pass Anchandron (Antander) and the forest of Yde, and arrive in Trace, where they begin to build a city, and because the building goes on slowly they hold a sacrifice. This is on the spot where Polydorus is buried; and on Eneas attempting to cut down some of the bushes to crown his altar with, blood issues from them; and on his trying to tear them up, Polydorus speaks, tells his sad fate, and informs

Eneas that he must not remain there, but that the gods have ordained Italy as his future home. The third, fourth, and fifth chapters are occupied by this and the obsequies of Polydorus, after which the Trojans go to sea. All is described much as by Aeneas himself to Dido in Book iii. of the 'Aeneid,' but at very much greater length, and a considerable portion of the story as told by Virgil is here omitted, namely, in the first place, that which recounts, as related by Aeneas himself to Dido, his voyages to Delos and Crete, the oracle of Delos and the prophecy of the Trojan gods, the visit to the Strophades, the Harpies, and the prophecy of Celano, though this is referred to long after in Cap. xxxiv., where it is attributed to Anchises. No mention is made either of how Aeneas finds Andromache in Epirus, one of the most touching scenes in the 'Aeneid,' of his interview with Helenus, of the arrival of the Trojans in Sicily, or of the death of Anchises, though Anchises is evidently considered as being dead when the Trojans arrive in Italy, and his tomb in Sicily is mentioned in Cap. xxx. Aeneas is not mentioned again till the tenth Cap., and in Cap. vi. we come to Dido, leaving Aeneas at sea, and we are told of the two different stories, one by Boccaccio, the other by Virgil. Boccaccio's story occupies Caps. vi., vii., viii. It does not differ seriously from Virgil's, though told at much greater length, up to the foundation of Carthage; in both we are told of Dido's royal birth, her marriage to Acerbas, otherwise Sichæus, the murder of the latter by her avaricious brother the King Pygmalion, her exodus with a body of followers and her husband's riches, her arrival in Libya, her purchase of land, and the founding of Carthage. The principal differences are, that Dido is said by Virgil to have been made aware by a vision of the murder of her husband, which Pygmalion had long concealed, and that Virgil says nothing of Dido's visit to Cyprus on her way to Libya, which is told at length in "Jhonn bhocace's" story, as quoted by the writer of the 'Eneydos'; but then Virgil gives Dido's antecedents briefly. The two accounts of Dido's death, however, differ *in toto* as to the cause, though not quite so as to the manner, for that taken from Boccaccio relates that a neighbouring king asked Dido in marriage, threatening destruction to Carthage if he were refused, and Dido having been inveigled by

her subjects into a statement that it was noble for a person to die for his country, to solve her difficulties ascends an altar and sacrifices herself in public. (Her self-murder as described in the 'Aeneid' is of course secret.) This description of Dido's life and death is taken from Boccaccio's 'Falles of Princes.' The Latin copy of this work in the Bodleian Library is entitled "Johannis Bocacii de Certaldis historiographi prologus in libros de casibus virorum illustrium incipit," and is dated in MS. "Vlmæ 1473." It is not divided into books or chapters, nor are the pages numbered, but our story begins on or about page 46, and is headed "de Dydone regina." An early printed translation in the Bodleian is thus entitled, "Here begyneth the boke calledde John bochas descrivinge the falle of princis princesses and other nobles trāslated ito Englissh by John ludgate mōke of the monastery of seint edmūdes Bury at the coñandemēt of the worthy prince humfrey duke of Gloucestre beginnyngē at adam and endinge with kinge john take prisoner in fraunce by prince Edwards." R. Pynson 1494. Our story comes in the second book, and is headed "Howe Dido quene of Cartage slough hir silf for conservacyon of her chastitie." Wayland's later edition—(undated) beginning thus, "The Tragedies gathered by Jhon Bochas, of all such Princes as fell from theyr estates throughe the mutability of Fortune since the creacion of Adam until his time: wherin may be seen what vices bring menne to destruccion wyth notable warninges howe the like may be auoided. Translated into Englysh by John Lidgate, Monke of Burye. Imprinted at London by John Wayland, at the signe of the Sunne over against the Conduite in Fletestrete,"—gives the story at Book ii. Cap. xiii., "Howe Dydo quene of Cartage slough herself for conseruacion of her chastitie." The writer of the 'Eneydos' of course wrote from much earlier copies, probably manuscripts, but we seem to have no clue as to the period. The story given in the 'Eneydos' as Boccaccio's was taken by Boccaccio, or the authority Boccaccio followed, from Justin, who gives the story of Dido, otherwise Elissa, and the founding of Carthage, in the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of Book xviii. of his 'Historiæ.' The facts are almost precisely the same as given by Boccaccio and quoted in the 'Eneydos,' but the terse Latin of Justin