

**THE AENEID, BOOKS I-VI;
TRANSLATED
INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY
JAMES RHOADES**

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THE ÆNEID OF VERGIL

BOOKS I—VI

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

JAMES RHOADES

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26/7/02

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1893

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TO MY WIFE



P R E F A C E

To write a verse-translation of the *Æneid*, though the labour be one of love, must in the nature of things be a somewhat thankless undertaking : for in the first place, if it is impossible to reach perfection in the rendering of any poem from one language to another, it is past impossible, when the two languages are so remotely akin as Latin and English, and when the style of the author was, even in his own tongue, unapproachable for subtle delicacy and artistic finish : and secondly, even should he attain to a high degree of excellence, the qualified approval of a few scholars, and the thanks of an infinitesimal fraction of the reading public, are likely to be the translator's sole reward.

And yet it has seemed to me that, if one could produce a version of the *Æneid* that should be in itself an English poem, and at the same time a faith-

ful reflection of the original, neither adding to the text nor diminishing from it, such an achievement would be worth the time and labour required for the task. Admitting to the full the high standard that has been reached by some of my predecessors, though with the details of their work I have purposely kept myself unacquainted, I do not think that the prime virtue of a translator, namely absolute fidelity to the original—eschewing paraphrase where possible, and resisting all temptation to be brilliant on his own account—has hitherto been kept sufficiently in sight. I am far from supposing that in the present volume I have done more, myself, than honestly attempt it; but it cannot be said to have been seriously attempted by those, however able and felicitous, who have hampered themselves at starting with the exigencies of a rhyming metre.

Notwithstanding the argument of Sir Charles Bowen in the Preface to his '*Virgil in English Verse*,' I hold that lineal conformity is not a matter of the first importance, and that verbal closeness, or, at any rate, identity of meaning, is. For this reason I should in any case have chosen Blank Verse as the vehicle best adapted to my purpose: but, besides this, it is the metre of the English Epic, and therefore, in my opinion, the metre most fitted for reproducing the Epic

of another nation. Further, as a matter of personal taste, I feel that the deep seriousness, the pensive majesty, the underlying pathos of Vergil's poetry, are fundamentally incompatible with any measure more rapid than the English Iambic; I can conceive nothing less like the Vergilian cadence than what Milton terms 'the jingling sound of like endings'; nor, on the other hand, do I know of anything that savours so much of Vergil as parts of the Blank Verse of Milton and of Cowper.

Such is the substance of my defence against possible assailants of the metre which I have selected, and also my apology to critics and readers for venturing to add my 'sum of more to that which' already perhaps in their opinion 'hath too much.'

It seems almost superfluous to state that in the present work, as in my translation of the Georgics, the debt I owe to the late Professor Conington's writings is incalculable. And I would also here express my sense of obligation to Mr. Arthur Sidgwick, from whom, in the way of warm encouragement and friendly criticism, I have received more help than any book could give.

THE OLD GARTH, READING :
January 10, 1893.

