

**THE ÆNEID OF
VIRGIL: BOOKS I-VI**

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The Aeneid of Virgil: Books I-VI by Virgil & G. K. Rickards

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VIRGIL & G. K. RICKARDS

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THE ÆNEID OF VIRGIL

BOOKS I.-VI.

Preparing for Publication

THE ÆNEID OF VIRGIL

BOOKS VII.-XII.

TRANSLATED IN ENGLISH BLANK VERSE

BY

LORD RAVENSWORTH

W. BLACKWOOD & SONS, Edinburgh and London

Edin. 1872.

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BOOKS I-VI.

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BY

G. K. Rickards
G. K. RICKARDS, M.A.

WITH

AN INDEX OF PROPER NAMES

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P R E F A C E.

IT is with unfeigned diffidence that I offer to the public a new attempt to render the *Æneid* into English verse. The world, it may be feared, is becoming sated with translations from the classic poets, which have of late years issued in extraordinary numbers from the press. Yet it is by means of such a competition of translators that the desired result is most likely to be attained. The version which the general judgment pronounces to be the best obtains possession of the field: the unsuccessful sink into oblivion.

To represent worthily through the medium of another language the work of one of the most consummate masters of diction in the whole range of literature, is a task sufficiently arduous in itself; and in the case of the *Æneid* a new

translator may well feel daunted by the great names and high reputation of his predecessors. The number of English writers who have tried their hands on the great Latin epic is very considerable, though but few are at the present day held in much estimation. Without disparaging other versions, it may fairly be said that there are two which any new aspirant must regard as his most formidable competitors—viz., those of Dryden and of the late Professor Conington.

Each of these works, widely as they differ in character and style, unquestionably possesses great merit. It would be the height of presumption to question the genius of Dryden, to whom, though his poetry is not much in accordance with the taste of the present day, common consent has assigned a prominent place in the hierarchy of English poets. But without at all disparaging his title to the rank which he thus holds, I cannot think either that Dryden's translation of the *Æneid* deserves to be placed on a level with his own greatest works, or that it bears that true resemblance to the original which the discriminating admirers of Virgil are entitled to expect in a translation. It was composed, as we learn from his own account, under the depressing conditions of advancing years, failing health, and poverty; it was done

with great rapidity, and in many parts bears evident marks of haste and inadvertence. It is extremely diffuse in style; and whatever other merits it may have, it certainly does not possess that of fidelity to the original. On this latter point, indeed, I am not disposed to be over-critical—extreme literalness is, in my opinion, not to be looked for in a metrical translation. If such a work is to give any pleasure to an English reader, it must be composed in free, natural, and idiomatic English, with which a rigid adherence to the *verbum verbo reddere* rule is absolutely incompatible. But Dryden takes liberties with his author which even the prerogative of original genius will not warrant. “*Pecca fortitè*” would seem to be his motto. He interpolates much that Virgil never said; he omits still more which he finds it inconvenient to translate, slurring over too often the delicate touches and fine shades of his master. The more critical spirit of the present day would, I believe, visit with considerable severity such laxity of execution in a modern version.

But not to dwell on imperfections of detail, I confess that my dissatisfaction with Dryden's *Æneid* rests on broader grounds. As an ardent admirer of Virgil, and deeply impressed with his peculiar beauties, which have been my study and delight for more than forty