specting it, and the highest expectations were entertained of its merits, as may be gathered from the prognostication of Propertius, who thus anticipates its future fame :

Cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Graii,

Nescio quid majus nascitur Iliade.

In 729, Augustus expressed a strong desire to be favoured with a perusal of the poem, so far as it had been completed; but Virgil excused himself, on the ground that the work was not yet worthy of such an honour. About a year after­wards, however, he was prevailed on to read the sixth book to Augustus, in the presence of his sister Octavia. When the poet reached the beautiful passage in which he alludes so pathetically to the death of her son Marcellus, the adop­ted child of Augustus, and the universal favourite of Rome, Octavia is said to have swooned away; and, on reviving, to have ordered the poet to be rewarded with ten *sestertia* for each line. In conformity with the usual practice among Roman poets, Virgil occasionally recited portions of his verses to his literary friends; not, however, for the sake of display, but in order to be favoured with their critical re­marks. His recitation is represented as highly effective, and as distinguished by remarkable sweetness, and propri­ety of articulation.

Having completed the Æneid, he resolved to travel in­to Greece, that he might, at leisure, correct and polish his great work, and bring it to the greatest possible perfec­tion before giving it to the world. On this occasion, Ho­race addressed to him the beautiful ode, beginning, “ Sic te diva potens Cypri;” in which he expresses in the most affec­tionate terms, his anxiety for the safe return of his beloved friend. On arriving at Athens, Virgil proceeded to execute the task which he had imposed upon himself; and, besides, composed the splendid introduction to the third book of the Georgics. His original intention, on quitting Italy, was to dedicate three years to the work of revisal, and then, amid the scenes of his native country, to devote the rest of his life to the study of philosophy, in which he had always de­lighted. Augustus, however, on his return from the East, having reached Athens, Virgil, probably in consequence of the state of his health, resolved to accompany him to Rome. But his days were now numbered. The vessel in which he sailed along with the emperor, touched at Megara, where he was seized with extreme debility; and his distemper in­creased so much during the remainder of the voyage, that he died a few days after reaching Brundusium. This event took place, a. u. 735, in the fifty-first year of his age. In compliance with his dying wishes, his bones were conveyed to Naples, where, in literary seclusion, he had spent so many years of his life; and his tomb is still pointed out at a spot about two miles distant from that city. The urn which was supposed to contain his ashes, bore the fol­lowing inscription, which is said, but without sufficient au­thority, to have proceeded from the lips of the dying poet :

Mantua me genuit ; Calabri rapuere ; tenet nunc Parthenope; cecini pascua, rura, duces.

The precise locality of Virgil’s tomb has been made the subject of controversy ; but there seems to be no good reason for rejecting the common tradition of the country on this point. He bequeathed the greater part of his wealth to his brother ; the rest, to Augustus and Maecenas, and his friends L. Varius and Plotius Tucca.

Virgil is represented as tall of stature, of a swarthy com­plexion, negligent in his dress, and somewhat ungraceful in his deportment. The melancholy with which he was tinged probably arose from the delicacy of his constitution, and the ill health under which he laboured. Of the native warmth of his heart, and the sincerity of his friendships it is impossible to doubt, since he was universally beloved as well as admired by his contemporaries; who, amid their mutual jealousies and literary rivalry, seem to have united in doing honour to one, who ever cheerfully recognised the merits of others, and rejoiced in, and, to the utmost of his power, promoted, their success. Of the more private and familiar life of Virgil, nothing is known. Unlike Horace, whose works constitute his best biography, Virgil has few allusions to himself, and none that throw light on his domestic habits. He passes before us with much of the indistinctness and shadowy grandeur in which he envelopes the shades in Elysium.

When he perceived his end approaching, he is said to have ordered Varius and Plotius Tucca to burn the Æneid, on which he had expended so many years’ labour, and on which his future fame was expected mainly to rest. The reason of this command has been the subject of much discussion. The common opinion is, that not having re­ceived his finishing hand, he was unwilling to transmit to posterity and peril his fame on a work, which he had not brought to that degree of perfection which he had contem­plated. Some, again, account for the poet’s conduct on the supposition that, on the approach of death, he felt re­gret at having produced a work which, instead of inspiring sentiments of liberty, was intended to reconcile his coun­trymen to the chains which had been imposed upon them by a successful but unworthy usurper. Fortunately for the interests of literature, Augustus interposed his authority to save a poem, to the completion of which he had looked forward with intense interest, and from which he antici­pated so much glory to himself and the Roman state. It was intrusted to Varius and Tucca for revisal and publi­cation, but with express injunctions that they should make no additions to the words of the poet; and we have rea­son to believe that they executed their honourable task in a spirit of due reverence for departed genius.

The Æneid, as already mentioned, excited the highest expectations among the literary contemporaries of the poet during its composition ; and on its publication, was hailed with universal approval. Ovid alludes to it more than once in terms expressive of his conviction that it occupied the first place in Roman literature, and that, in common with the other works of the author. It would last while the eter­nal city should endure. The sentence thus early pronounc­ed, has been confirmed by the consenting voice of suc­ceeding ages; and, whatever difference of opinion may have existed respecting its comparative merits, the Æneid has ever been ranked as one of the rare productions of human genius, which are destined to immortality. If considered as the rival of the Iliad, the Æneid will be presented in a false as well as unfavourable point of view; and it is diffi­cult to conceive that it was composed under any such pre­dominating idea. Neither the age which produced it, nor the genius of the poet, was favourable to such an achieve­ment ; but having resolved to compose an epic poem, Virgil no doubt took Homer as his mode), and endeavoured to transplant into the fabric of his work as many of the beau­ties of the Grecian poet as suited the nature of his subject. We accordingly find that he drew equally on the Iliad and Odyssey, the first six books being on the model of the former, and the remaining six on that of the latter. How far his plan was adopted with a view to avail himself of the whole range of Homeric materials. It is difficult to de­termine ; but it was a bold attempt, if it was ever contem­plated, to rival or surpass in a single work, the combined excellencies of his matchless models.

The chief design of the Æneid appears to have been, to deduce the origin of the Romans from the Trojans, and by tracing the family of Augustus to Æneas, to establish his divine title to the sovereignty of Rome. This leading idea pervades the whole texture of the work ; and the restraint which was thus necessarily imposed on the poet, must have interfered most unfavourably with the freedom of epic movement. The character of Æneas is meant to shadow forth that of Augustus ; but while he constantly occupies