

SUETONIUS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY
J. C. ROLFE, P.H.D.

PROFESSOR OF THE LATIN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN TWO VOLUMES

II



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
MCMLXX

Univ. Library, Univ. Calif., Santa Cruz

American ISBN 0-674-99042-0

British ISBN 0 434 99038 8

First printed 1914

*Reprinted 1914, 1920, 1924, 1930, 1939, 1950,
1959, 1965, 1970*

Printed in Great Britain

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

VITA VERGILI

1 P. VERGILIUS¹ MARO Mantuanus parentibus modicis
fuit ac praecipue patre, quem quidam opificem
figulum, plures Magi cuiusdam viatoris initio
mercennarium, mox ob industriam generum tradi-
derunt, egregieque substantiae silvis coemendis et
2 apibus curandis auxisse reculam.² Natus est Gn.
Pompeio Magno M. Licinio Crasso primum cons.
Iduum Octobrium die in pago qui Andes dicitur et
3 abest a Mantua non procul. Praeagnas eo³ mater
somniavit enixam se laureum ramum, quem contactu
terrae coaluisse et excrevisse ilico in speciem
maturae arboris refertaeque variis pomis et floribus,
ac sequenti luce cum marito rus propinquum petens
ex itinere devertit atque in subiecta fossa partu
4 levata est. Ferunt infantem ut sit editus neque
vagisse et adeo miti vultu fuisse, ut haud dubiam
5 spem prosperioris geniturae iam tum daret. Et
accessit aliud praesagium, siquidem virga populea
more regionis in puerperiis eodem statim loco
depacta ita brevi evaluit tempore, ut multo ante
satas populos adaequavisset, quae arbor Vergilii ex
eo dicta atque etiam consecrata est summa gravi-

¹ *The mss. all have the spelling Vergilius throughout.*

² *regulam, mss.* ³ *eo, ς ; eum, G ; cum, BP.*

ON POETS—VERGIL

THE LIFE OF VERGIL

PUBLIUS VERGILIUS MARO, a native of Mantua, had parents of humble origin; especially his father, who according to some was a potter, although the general opinion is that he was at first the hired man of a certain Magus, an attendant on the magistrates, later became his son-in-law because of his diligence, and greatly increased his little property by buying up woodlands and raising bees. He was born in the first consulship of Gnaeus Pompeius the Great and Marcus Licinius Crassus, on the Ides of October, in a district called Andes, not far distant from Mantua. While he was in his mother's womb, she dreamt that she gave birth to a laurel-branch, which on touching the earth took root and grew at once to the size of a full-grown tree, covered with fruits and flowers of various kinds; and on the following day, when she was on the way to a neighbouring part of the country with her husband, she turned aside and gave birth to her child in a ditch beside the road. They say that the infant did not cry at its birth, and had such a gentle expression as even then to give assurance of an unusually happy destiny. There was added another omen; for a poplar branch, which, as was usual in that region on such occasions, was at once planted where the birth occurred, grew so fast in a short time that it equalled in size poplars planted long before. It was called from him "Vergil's tree" and was besides worshipped with great veneration by

Oct. 15,
70 B. C.

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

darum ac fetarum religione suscipientium ibi et solventium vota.

- 6 Initia aetatis Cremonae egit usque ad virilem togam, quam XV¹ anno natali suo accepit iisdem illis consulibus iterum duobus,² quibus erat natus, evenitque ut eo ipso die Lucretius poeta de-
- 7 deret. Sed Vergilius a Cremona Mediolanum et
8 inde paulo post transiit in urbem. Corpore et statura fuit grandi, aquilo colore, facie rusticana, valetudine varia; nam plerumque a stomacho et a faucibus ac dolore capitis laborabat, sanguinem
9 etiam saepe reiecit. Cibi vinique minimi; libidinis in pueros pronioris,³ quorum maxime dilexit Cebe-
- 10 Plotia Hieria. Sed Asconius Pedianus adfirmat, ipsam postea maiorem natu narrare solitam, invitatum quidem a Vario ad communionem sui, verum
11 pertinacissime recusasse. Cetera sane vitae et ore et animo tam probum constat, ut Neapoli Parthenias vulgo appellatus sit, ac si quando Romae, quo rarissime commeabat, viseretur in publico, sectantis demonstrantisque se subterfugeret⁴ in proximum
12 tectum. Bona autem cuiusdam exsulantis offerente
13 Augusto non sustinuit accipere. Possedit prope

¹ XVII, *BP*; VII, *G*. ² duobus, *omitted by G*.

³ promoris, *G*; pronior his, *BP*.

⁴ subter fugere, *G*; subterfugere solitum, *ς*; suffugere, *BP*; suffugeret, *Reiff*.

ON POETS—VERGIL

pregnant and newly delivered women, who made and paid vows beneath it.

Vergil spent his early life at Cremona until he assumed the gown of manhood, upon his fifteenth birthday, in the consulship of the same two men who had been consuls the year he was born; and it chanced that the poet Lucretius died that very same day. Vergil, however, moved from Cremona to Mediolanum, and shortly afterwards from there to Rome. He was tall and of full habit, with a dark complexion and a rustic appearance. His health was variable; for he very often suffered from stomach and throat troubles, as well as with headache; and he also had frequent haemorrhages. He ate and drank but little. He was especially given to passions for boys, and his special favourites were Cebes and Alexander, whom he calls Alexis in the second poem of his "Bucolics." This boy was given him by Asinius Pollio, and both his favourites had some education, while Cebes was even a poet. It is common report that he also had an intrigue with Plotia Hieria. But Asconius Pedianus declares that she herself used to say afterwards, when she was getting old, that Vergil was invited by Varius to associate with her, but obstinately refused. Certain it is that for the rest of his life he was so modest in speech and thought, that at Naples he was commonly called "Parthenias,"^a and that whenever he appeared in public in Rome, where he very rarely went, he would take refuge in the nearest house, to avoid those who followed and pointed him out. Moreover, when Augustus offered him the property of a man who had been exiled, he could not make up his mind

^a "The Maiden."

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

- centiens sestertium ex liberalitatibus amicorum habuitque domum, Romae Esquiliis iuxta hortos Maecenatianos, quamquam secessu Campaniae
- 14 Siciliaeque plurimum uteretur. Parentes iam grandis amisit, ex quibus patrem captum oculis, et duos fratres germanos, Silonem inpuberem, Flaccum iam adultum, cuius exitum sub nomine
- 15 Daphnidis deflet. Inter cetera studia medicinae quoque ac maxime mathematicae operam dedit. Egit et causam apud iudices unam omnino nec
- 16 amplius quam semel; nam et in sermone tardissimum eum ac paene indocto similem fuisse Melissus tradidit.
- 17 Poeticam puer adhuc auspicatus in Ballistam ludi magistrum ob infamiam latrociniorum coopertum lapidibus distichon fecit :

“ Monte sub hoc lapidum tegitur Ballista sepultus ;
Nocte die tutum carpe, viator, iter.”

- Deinde “Catalepton”¹ et “Priapea” et “Epigrammata” et “Diras,” item “Cirim” et “Culicem,” cum
- 18 esset annorum XVI. Cuius materia talis est. Pastor fatigatus aestu cum sub arbore condormisset et serpens ad eum proreperet,² e palude culex provolavit atque inter duo tempora aculeum fixit pastori. At ille continuo culicem contrivit³ et serpentem in-

¹ *The mss. have catalecton.*

² *proriperet, B¹P ; praereperet, G.*

³ *attrivit (adt-), B¹P.*

ON POETS—VERGIL

to accept it. He possessed nearly ten million sesterces from the generous gifts of friends, and he had a house at Rome on the Esquiline, near the gardens of Maecenas, although he usually lived in retirement in Campania and in Sicily.

He was already grown up when he lost his parents, of whom his father previously went blind, and two own brothers: Silo, who died in childhood, and Flaccus, who lived to grow up, and whose death he laments under the name of Daphnis.^a

Among other studies he gave attention also to medicine and in particular to mathematics. He pleaded one single case in court too, but no more; for, as Melissus has told us, he spoke very slowly and almost like an uneducated man.

He made his first attempt at poetry when he was still a boy, composing the following couplet on a schoolmaster called Ballista, who was stoned to death because of his evil reputation for brigandage:

“ Under this mountain of stones Ballista is covered
and buried;

Wayfarer, now night and day follow your course
without fear.”

Then he wrote the “Catalepton,” “Priapea,” “Epigrams” and the “Dirae,” as well as the “Ciris” and the “Culex” when he was sixteen years old. The story of the “Culex” is this. When a shepherd, exhausted by the heat, had fallen asleep under a tree, and a snake was creeping upon him, a gnat flew from a marsh and stung the shepherd between his two temples; he at once crushed the

^a *Ecl.* 5. 20.

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

teremit ac sepulchrum culici statuit et distichon fecit :

“ Parve culex, pecudum custos tibi tale merenti
Funeris officium vitae pro munere reddit.”

- 19 Scripsit etiam de qua ambigitur “ Aetnam.” Mox cum res Romanas inchoasset, offensus materia ad “ Bucolica ” transiit, maxime ut Asinium Pollionem, Alfenum Varum et Cornelium Gallum celebraret, quia in distributione agrorum, qui post Philippensem victoriam veteranis triumvirorum iussu trans Padum
- 20 dividebantur, indemnem se praestitissent. Deinde scripsit “ Georgica ” in honore Maecenatis, qui sibi mediocriter adhuc noto opem tulisset adversus veterani cuiusdam violentiam, a quo in altercatione
- 21 litis agrariae paulum a fuit quin occideretur. Novissime “ Aeneidem ” inchoavit, argumentum varium ac multiplex et quasi amborum Homeri carminum instar, praeterea nominibus ac rebus Graecis Latinisque commune, et in quo, quod maxime studebat, Romanae simul urbis et Augusti origo contineretur.
- 22 Cum “ Georgica ” scriberet, traditur cotidie meditato mane plurimos versus dictare solitus ac per totum diem retractando ad paucissimos redigere, non

^a *Culex*, 413 f.

ON POETS—VERGIL

gnat and killed the snake; then he made a tomb for the insect, inscribed with this couplet:

“Thee, tiny gnat, well deserving, the flock’s grateful
keeper now offers
For the gift of his life due funeral rites in
requital.”^a

He also wrote the “Aetna,” though its authorship is disputed. Presently he began to write of Roman story, but thinking himself unequal to the subject, turned to the “Bucolics,” especially in order to sing the praises of Asinius Pollio, Alfenus Varus, and Cornelius Gallus, because at the time of the assignment of the lands beyond the Po, which were divided among the veterans by order of the triumvirs after the victory at Philippi, these men had saved him from ruin. Then he wrote the “Georgics” in honour of Maecenas, because he had rendered him aid, when the poet was still but little known, against the violence of one of the veterans, from whom Vergil narrowly escaped death in a quarrel about his farm. Last of all he began the “Aeneid,” a varied and complicated theme, and as it were a mirror of both the poems of Homer; moreover it treated Greek and Latin personages and affairs in common, and contained at the same time an account of the origin of the city of Rome and of Augustus, which was the poet’s special aim. When he was writing the “Georgics,” it is said to have been his custom to dictate each day a large number of verses which he had composed in the morning, and then to spend the rest of the day in reducing them to a very small number, wittily

42 B.C.

471

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

absurde carmen se more ursae parere dicens et
23 lambendo demum effingere. "Aeneida" prosa prius
oratione formatam digestamque in XII libros particu-
latim componere instituit, prout liberet quidque, et
24 nihil in ordinem arripiens. Ac¹ ne quid impetum
moraretur, quaedam imperfecta transmisit, alia
levissimis verbis veluti fulsit, quae per iocum pro tibi-
cinibus interponi aiebat ad sustinendum opus, donec
25 solidae columnae advenirent. "Bucolica" triennio,
"Georgica" VII, "Aeneida" XI perfecit annis.
26 "Bucolica" eo successu edidit, ut in scena² quoque per
27 cantores crebro pronuntiarentur. "Georgica" reverso
post Actiacam victoriam Augusto atque Atellae
reficiendarum faucium causa commoranti per con-
tinuum quadriduum legit, suscipiente Maecenate
legendi vicem, quotiens interPELLARETUR ipse vocis
28 offensione. Pronuntiabat autem cum suavitate et³
29 lenociniis miris. Ac⁴ Seneca tradidit, Iulium
Montanum poetam solitum dicere, involaturum se
Vergilio quaedam, si et vocem posset et os et
hypocrisin; eosdem enim versus ipso pronuntiante
30 bene sonare, sine illo inanes esse mutosque. "Aenei-
dos" vixdum coeptae tanta exstitit fama, ut Sextus
Propertius non dubitaverit sic praedicare :

"Cedite, Romani scriptores, cedite Grai:
Nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade."

¹ ac, *G*; ut, *BP*. ² scenam, *BP*; sena, *G*.

³ suavitate et, *ς*; suavitate cum, *BP*; suavitatem, *G*.

⁴ ac, *Hagen*; et, *Reiff.*; ut, *mss.*

^a 2. 34. 65 f.

ON POETS—VERGIL

remarking that he fashioned his poem after the manner of a she-bear, and gradually licked it into shape. In the case of the "Aeneid," after writing a first draft in prose and dividing it into twelve books, he proceeded to turn into verse one part after another, taking them up just as he fancied, in no particular order. And that he might not check the flow of his thought, he left some things unfinished, and, so to speak, bolstered others up with very slight words, which, as he jocosely used to say, were put in like props, to support the structure until the solid columns should arrive.

The "Bucolics" he finished in three years, the "Georgics" in seven, the "Aeneid" in twelve. The success of the "Bucolics" on their first appearance was such, that they were even frequently rendered by singers on the stage. When Augustus was returning after his victory at Actium and lingered at Atella to treat his throat, Vergil read the "Georgics" to him for four days in succession, Maecenas taking his turn at the reading whenever the poet was interrupted by the failure of his voice. His own delivery, however, was sweet and wonderfully effective. In fact, Seneca has said that the poet Julius Montanus used to declare that he would have purloined some of Vergil's work, if he could also have stolen his voice, expression, and dramatic power; for the same verses sounded well when Vergil read them, which on another's lips were flat and toneless. Hardly was the "Aeneid" begun, when its repute became so great that Sextus Propertius^a did not hesitate to declare:

"Yield, ye Roman writers; yield, ye Greeks;
A greater than the Iliad is born."

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

- 31 Augustus vero—nam forte expeditione Cantabrica
aberat—supplicibus atque etiam minacibus per iocum
litteris efflagitaret, ut “sibi de ‘Aeneide,’” ut ipsius
verba sunt, “vel prima carminis ὑπογραφή vel quod-
32 libet κῶλον mitteretur.” Cui tamen multo post per-
fectaque demum materia tres omnino libros recitavit,
secundum, quartum et sextum, sed hunc notabili
Octaviae adfectione, quae cum recitationi interesset,
ad illos de filio suo versus, “tu Marcellus eris,”
33 defecisse fertur atque aegre fociata est. Recitavit
et pluribus, sed neque frequenter et ea fere de quibus
ambigebat, quo magis iudicium hominum experiretur.
34 Erotem librarium et libertum eius exactae iam
senectutis tradunt referre solitum, quondam eum in
recitando duos dimidiatos versus complexse ex tem-
pore. Nam cum hactenus haberet: “Misenum
Aeoliden” adiecisse: “quo non praestantior alter,”
item huic: “aere ciere viros,” simili calore iactatum
subiunxisse: “Martemque accendere cantu,” statim-
que sibi imperasse ut utrumque volumini ascriberet.
35 Anno aetatis quinquagesimo secundo inpositurus
“Aeneidi” summam manum statuit in Graeciam et
in Asiam secedere triennioque continuo nihil amplius
quam emendare, ut reliqua vita tantum philosophiae
vacaret. Sed cum ingressus iter Athenis occurrisset
Augusto ab Oriente Romam revertenti destinaretque ¹

¹ destinaretque, *G*; destinareque, *B¹P*.

^a *Aen.* 6. 884 f.

^b *Aen.* 6. 164

^c *Aen.* 6. 165.

ON POETS—VERGIL

Augustus indeed (for it chanced that he was away on his Cantabrian campaign) demanded in entreating and even jocosely threatening letters that Vergil send him "something from the 'Aeneid'"; to use his own words, "either the first draft of the poem or any section of it that he pleased." But it was not until long afterwards, when the material was at last in shape, that Vergil read to him three books in all, the second, fourth, and sixth. The last of these produced a remarkable effect on Octavia, who was present at the reading; for it is said that when he reached the verses about her son, "Thou shalt be Marcellus,"^a she fainted and was with difficulty revived. He gave readings also to various others, but never before a large company, selecting for the most part passages about which he was in doubt, in order to get the benefit of criticism. They say that Eros, his amanuensis and freedman, used to report, when he was an old man, that Vergil once completed two half-verses off-hand in the course of a reading. For having before him merely the words "Misenum Aeoliden," he added "quo non praestantior alter,"^b and again to "aere ciere viros" he joined "Martemque accendere cantu,"^c thrown off with like inspiration, and he immediately ordered Eros to add both half-lines to his manuscript.

In the fifty-second year of his age, wishing to give the final touch to the "Aeneid," he determined to go away to Greece and Asia, and after devoting three entire years to the sole work of improving his poem, to give up the rest of his life wholly to philosophy. But having begun his journey, and at Athens meeting Augustus, who was on his way back to Rome from the Orient, he resolved not to part

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

non absistere atque etiam una redire, dum Megara vicinum oppidum ferventissimo sole cognoscit, languorem nactus est eumque non intermissa navigatione auxit ita ut gravior¹ aliquanto Brundisium appelleret, ubi diebus paucis obiit XI Kal. Octobr.

- 36 Cn. Sentio Q. Lucretio cons. Ossa eius Neapolim translata sunt tumuloque condita qui est via Puteolana intra lapidem secundum, in quo distichon fecit tale :

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

- 37 Heredes fecit ex dimidia parte Valerium Proculum fratrem alio patre, ex quarta Augustum, ex duodecima Maecenatem, ex reliqua L. Varium et Plotium Tuccam, qui eius “Aeneida” post obitum iussu
38 Caesaris emendaverunt. De qua re Sulpicii Carthaginiensis exstant huiusmodi versus :

“ Iusserat haec rapidis aboleri carmina flammis
Vergilius, Phrygium quae cecinere ducem.
Tucca vetat Variusque ; simul tu, maxime Caesar,
Non sinis et Latiae consulis historiae.
Infelix gemino cecidit prope Pergamon igni,
Et paene est alio Troia cremata² rogo.”

¹ gravior, *ms.*; aegrior, *Hagen.*

² cremata sepulta, *G*; sepulta, *Hagen.*

ON POETS—VERGIL

from the emperor and even to return with him ; but in the course of a visit to the neighbouring town of Megara in a very hot sun, he was taken with a fever, and added to his disorder by continuing his journey ; hence on his arrival at Brundisium he was considerably worse, and died there on the eleventh day before the Kalends of October, in the consulship of Gnaeus Sentius and Quintus Lucretius. His ashes were taken to Naples and laid to rest on the via Puteolana less than two miles from the city, in a tomb for which he himself composed this couplet :

Sept. 21,
19 B.C.

“ Mantua gave me the light, Calabria slew me ; now
holds me
Parthenope. I have sung shepherds, the
country, and wars.”

He named as his heirs Valerius Proculus, his half-brother, to one-half of his estate, Augustus to one-fourth, Maecenas to one-twelfth ; the rest he left to Lucius Varius and Plotius Tucca, who revised the “ Aeneid ” after his death by order of Augustus. With regard to this matter we have the following verses of Sulpicius of Carthage :

“ Vergil had bidden these songs by swift flame be
turned into ashes,
Songs which sang of thy fates, Phrygia’s leader
renowned.
Varius and Tucca forbade, and thou, too, greatest
of Caesars,
Adding your veto to theirs, Latium’s story
preserved.
All but twice in the flames unhappy Pergamum
perished
Troy on a second pyre narrowly failed of her
doom.”

477

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

39 Egerat cum Vario, priusquam Italia decederet, ut
siquid sibi accidisset, "Aeneida" combureret; at is¹
ita facturum se pernegarat; igitur in extrema valedi-
tudine assidue scrinia desideravit, crematurus ipse;
40 ea cavit. Ceterum eidem Vario ac simul Tuccae
scripta sua sub ea condicione legavit, ne quid
41 ederent, quod non a se editum esset. Edidit autem
auctore Augusto Varius, sed summatim emendata, ut
qui versus etiam imperfectos sicut² erant reliquerit;
quos multi mox supplere conati non perinde valuerunt
ob difficultatem, quod omnia fere apud eum hemi-
stichia absoluto perfectoque sunt sensu, praeter illud:
42 "quem tibi iam Troia." Nisus grammaticus audisse
se a senioribus aiebat, Varium duorum librorum
ordinem commutasse, et qui tunc secundus esset³ in
tertium locum transtulisse, etiam primi libri correxisse
principium, his versibus demptis:

"Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena
Carmina et egressus silvis vicina coegi,
Ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono,
Gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis—
Arma virumque cano."

¹ at is, *Hagen*; sed is, *Reiff.*; et is, *BP*; omitted (Italia
. . . at is) by *G.*

² sicut, *Gronov.*; si qui, *mss.*

³ tunc . . . esset, *Hagen*; nunc . . . sit, *mss.*

^a Cf. *Aug.* ci. 3.

^b *Aen.* 3. 340. This is no real exception, for we probably
have the line as Vergil intended to leave it. Andromache
purposely avoids naming the *amissae parentis* (341).

ON POETS—VERGIL

He had arranged with Varius, before leaving Italy, that if anything befell him " his friend should burn the "Aeneid"; but Varius had emphatically declared that he would do no such thing. Therefore in his mortal illness Vergil constantly called for his book-boxes, intending to burn the poem himself; but when no one brought them to him, he made no specific request about the matter, but left his writings jointly to the above mentioned Varius and to Tucca, with the stipulation that they should publish nothing which he himself would not have given to the world. However, Varius published the "Aeneid" at Augustus' request, making only a few slight corrections, and even leaving the incomplete lines just as they were. These last many afterwards tried to finish, but failed owing to the difficulty that nearly all the half-lines in Vergil are complete in sense and meaning, the sole exception being "Quem tibi iam Troia." ^b The grammarian Nisus used to say that he had heard from older men that Varius changed the order of two of the books and made what was then the second book the third; also that he emended the beginning of the first book by striking out the lines:

"I who on slender reed once rustic numbers did
render,
Parting then from the groves, commanded the
neighbouring fallows
Tribute to pay to their lords, however much they
exacted,
Task hailed with joy by the hind; but now dread
deeds of the war-god,
Arms and the hero I sing."

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

43 **Obtrectatores Vergilio numquam defuerunt, nec mirum ; nam nec Homero quidem. Prolatis “ Bucolicis ” Numitorius quidam rescripsit “ Antibucolica,” duas modo eglogas, sed insulsissime παρωδήσας quarum prioris initium est :**

“ Tityre, si toga calda tibi est, quo tegmine fagi ? ”

sequentis :

“ Dic mihi Damoeta : ‘ cuium pecus ’ anne Latinum ? ”

Non. Verum Aegonis nostri, sic rure locuntur.”

Alius recitante eo ex “ Georgicis ” : “ nudus ara, sere
44 nudus ” subiecit : “ habebis frigore febrem.” Est et adversus “ Aeneida ” liber Carvili Pictoris, titulo “ Aeneomastix.” M. Vipsanius a Maecenate eum suppositum appellabat novae cacozeliae repertore, non tumidae nec exilis, sed ex communibus verbis, atque ideo latentis. Herennius tantum vitia eius,
45 Perellius Faustus furta contraxit. Sed et Q. Octavi Aviti ‘ Ομοιοτήτων octo volumina quos et unde versus
46 transtulerit continent. Asconius Pedianus libro, quem “ Contra obtrectatores Vergilii ” scripsit, pauca admodum obiecta ei proponit eaque circa historiam fere et quod pleraque ab Homero sumpsisset ; sed

-
- ^a “ Plough naked, naked sow.”
 - ^b “ A chill will give you the fever.”
 - ^c The scourge of Aeneas.
 - ^d See *Aug.* lxxxvi. 2.

ON POETS—VERGIL

Vergil never lacked detractors, which is not strange; for neither did Homer. When the "Bucolics" appeared, a certain Numitorius wrote "Anti-bucolics," consisting of but two poems, which were a very insipid parody. The first began as follows:

"Tityrus, if a warm toga you have, why then a beech mantle?"

The second:—

"Tell me, Damoetas, I pray, is 'cuium pecus' really good Latin?"

Nay, but our Aegon's way, and thus men talk in the country."

Another man, when Vergil recited from his "Georgics," "nudus ara, sere nudus,"^a added "habebis frigore febrem."^b There is also a book in criticism of the "Aeneid" by Carvilius Pictor, called "Aeneomastix."^c Marcus Vipsanius called Vergil a supposititious child of Maecenas, that inventor of a new kind of affected language,^d neither bombastic nor of studied simplicity, but in ordinary words and hence less obvious. Herennius made selections confined to his defects, and Perellius Fausta to his pilferings. More than that, the eight volumes of Quintus Octavius Avitus, entitled "Resemblances," contain the verses which he borrowed, with their sources. Asconius Pedianus, in a book which he wrote "Against the Detractors of Vergil," sets forth a very few of the charges against him, and those for the most part dealing with history and with the accusation that he borrowed a great deal from Homer; but he says that Vergil used to meet this

THE LIVES OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN

hoc ipsum crimen sic defendere adsuetum ait: cur non illi quoque eadem furta temptarent? Verum intellecturos facilius esse Herculi clavam quam Homero versum subripere. Et tamen destinasse secedere ut omnia ad satietatem malevolorum decideret.

ON POETS—VERGIL

latter accusation with these word: "Why don't my critics also attempt the same thefts? If they do, they will realize that it is easier to filch his club from Hercules than a line from Homer." Yet Asconius says that Vergil had intended to go into retirement, in order to prune down everything to the satisfaction of carping critics.