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SERIES. BUCOLICS, PART
I.-INTRODUCTION AND
TEXT; PART II.-NOTES**

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VIRGIL . & C. S. JERRAM

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Clarendon Press Series

VIRGIL'S ECLOGUES

JERRAM

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Clarendon Press Series

VIRGIL
BUCOLICS

EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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'Helena,' 'Iphigenia in Tauris,' &c*

PART I.—INTRODUCTION AND TEXT

Oxford

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

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'molle atque factum
Vergilio annuerunt gaudentes rure Camenæ.'

HORACE.

'Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
Tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charms of all the Muses
Often flowering in a lonely word.'

TENNYSON.

INTRODUCTION.

Titles of the poems. Early life of Virgil. Origin and rise of Pastoral poetry. The 'Muse of Sicily' developed by Virgil. How far was he an *original* poet? The rise, progress, and decline of modern Pastoral. Publication of the Eclogues. MSS. and principal Editions. Various readings and critical remarks.

THE earliest descriptive title by which the following poems were known was *Bucolica*, or Songs of Herdsmen (*Βουκόλαι*): hence, by extension of meaning, poems on country life, in which shepherds and husbandmen and other rustic characters play their respective parts. The name, if any, which Virgil himself gave to these early essays in verse is unknown: their alternative title *Eclogues* seems to mean 'selections' (*ἐκλογαί*) from a number of pieces on a similar subject¹, now published in a collected form. At what time and on what occasions these Eclogues were severally written will appear from the following sketch of the poet's life, down to the year 37 B.C. when the tenth and last poem of the series was completed.

Our chief source of information is the Life of Virgil ascribed to Aelius Donatus, a grammarian of the fourth century A.D., but almost certainly the work of Suetonius² early in the second century. There is also a fragment of a Life by Valerius Probus, of the first century, which is of little additional value. Both these seem to have been drawn from

¹ Or possibly 'selected passages' for imitation, *studia* (so to speak) from the Greek poets, especially Theocritus.

² For evidence of this see Nettleship, *Ancient Lives of Virgil*, pp. 29, 30.

contemporary records, especially from Memoirs by the poet Varius (*Ecl.* ix. 35) and other personal friends of Virgil. We have besides the internal evidence from Virgil's own writings¹, and from other poets of the time, among whom Horace was his intimate friend and often mentions him as a kindred spirit. Lastly there are anecdotes of Virgil and scattered references in Gellius, Seneca, Macrobius and the early commentators on his poems.

P. VERGILIUS² MARO, the son of a small landowner, was born at Andes near Mantua, B. C. 70. He went to school, first at Cremona, then in his 16th year at Mediolanum (Milan), and was shortly afterwards removed to Rome. There he studied rhetoric under Epidius with a view to the Bar, but finding the legal profession uncongenial, he turned his attention to philosophy under the direction of Siron the Epicurean. In one of the minor poems ascribed to Virgil³ he expresses his joy at exchanging, not only grammar and rhetoric, but even poetry, for natural science, which seems to have had peculiar attractions for him throughout his life. We have evidence of this in a famous passage of the fourth *Georgic* ll. 475, etc., and the influence upon his mind of Lucretius (whose poem *de Rerum Natura* was then newly

¹ See Introductions and Notes to *Ecl.* i. iii, iv, vi, ix, x, also the concluding lines of the fourth *Georgic*.

² The spelling *Vergilius* is attested by the best MSS. in *G.* iv. 563, as well as by inscriptions. But with Conington and others I have retained the familiar *Virgil* in English. For a complete life of the poet see Sellar's *Virgil*, or the shorter one by Prof. Nettleship in Macmillan's series of *Classical Writers*.

³ The seventh poem of the *Catalecta* (more accurately *Catalepton*, i. e. *Poemata κατὰ λεπτὸν* or 'trifles'). Part of it is here quoted—

Itē hinc, Inanes, ite, rhetorum ampullae,
 inflata rore non Achaico verba . . .
 Nos ad beatos vela mittimus portus.
 Magni petentes docta dicta Sironis,
 Vitamque ab omni vindicabimus cura.
 Itē hinc, Camenae, vos quoque ite iam sane
 Dulces Camenae,¹ etc.

published) is clearly traceable in the sixth Eclogue, in *Aen.* i. 740, vi. 724, etc. and other passages of his works.

Following the Life by Suetonius we read—'Mox cum res Romanas incobasset, offensus materia ad *Bucolica* transiit.' This evidently means that Virgil began a history of Rome in verse, or a poem on the wars of Rome—'reges et proelia' *Ecl.* vi. 3—but found the task beyond his powers¹; or, as he himself says, Apollo warned him to desist, and confine himself to the slighter themes of rural poetry. It is not, however, till some years later that we find him actually employed on the Eclogues. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, which broke out in 49 B.C., Virgil was probably domiciled in his native Andes, where in the intervals of farm-work he would have ample time for pursuing his literary studies. The influence of Greek poetry, especially the Idylls of Theocritus, must have powerfully affected him; hence his earlier compositions took the form of pastoral or bucolic poems, as being congenial to his habits of thought, and easily imitable in their subjects and manner of expression. Hitherto nothing of the sort had been attempted at Rome, for although the inhabitants of ancient Italy were devoted to agricultural pursuits, these were of so practical a kind, as to leave no room for leisure and contemplation. But the rural descriptions of Theocritus could not fail to charm, and Virgil must have struck a responsive chord, when he endeavoured to reproduce them to Roman ears. It is quite likely that he wrote many other specimens of bucolic verse, besides what have come down to us, during this period of retirement; the earliest of the 'selections' can hardly however be assigned to an earlier date than the year of Philippi (42 B.C.) or the one preceding.

¹ So Milton in his youth formed the idea of writing a British epic, as well as a Scriptural tragedy. The one eventually became a prose *History of Britain*, the other (like Virgil's *Aeneid*) developed into an epic poem, the *Paradise Lost*.