

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-
 24 latim componere instituit, prout liberet quidque, et
 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, γ; suavitate cum, BP; suavitatem, G.

⁴ ac, Hagen; et, Reiff.; ut, mss.

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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 appear-
 ance 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 wonder-
 fully 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."

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- 31 Augustus vero—nam forte expeditione Cantabrica aberat—supplicibus atque etiam minacibus per iocum litteris efflagitarat, ut “sibi de ‘Aeneide,’” ut ipsius verba sunt, “vel prima carminis ὑπογραφή vel quod-
- 32 libet κῶλον mitteretur.” Cui tamen multo post perfectaue 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 complese ex tempore. Nam cum hactenus haberet: “Misenum Aeoliden” adiecisse: “quo non praestantior alter,” item huic: “aere ciere viros,” simili calore iactatum subiunxisse: “Martemque accendere cantu,” statimque 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 destinaretque¹

¹ destinaretque, G; destinareque, B¹P.

• Aen. 6. 884 f.

• Aen. 6. 164.

• Aen. 6. 165.

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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 larger audiences but never frequently, and he selected 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

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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*.

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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.”

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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 verum nemine offerente nihil quidem nominatim de
 ea cavuit. 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.*

* Cf. *Aug.* ci. 3.

[†] *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).

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He had arranged with Varius, before leaving Italy,
 that if anything befell him^a 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 writ-
 ings 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 cor-
 rections, and even leaving the incomplete lines just
 as they were. These last many afterwards tried to
 finish, but did not wholly succeed owing to the
 difficulty that nearly all his half-lines are complete
 in sense and meaning, except "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."