684, b.c. 70, during the first consulship of Pompey and Crassus. He was thus seven years older than Augustus, and five years older than Horace. He commenced his studies at Cremona, where he remained till he assumed the *toga virilis.* This he did on entering his sixteenth year, on the very day, according to some accounts, on which Lucretius died; thus transmitting, without interruption, and with in­creasing splendour, the intellectual inheritance of Roman genius.

Virgil now proceeded to Milan, and from thence, after a short stay, to Naples. Here he devoted himself to study with intense application, and laid the foundation of that varied learning, for which he was no less remarkable than for poetical genius. To the language and literature of Greece he applied himself with peculiar ardour ; and, in this department, enjoyed the instructions of Parthenius Nicenus, an author of some reputation. But literature alone, however varied and attractive, could not satisfy the inquisitive and capacious mind of Virgil. He strove also to penetrate the depths of philosophy and science; and medi­cine and mathematics continued to be favourite subjects of pursuit with him through life. Along with his friend Varius, he studied the system of Epicurus, under Syro, a distinguish­ed teacher of that sect, and the intimate friend of Cicero. Traces of this early discipline are perceptible in his works; although by some he is represented as an academic, and as preferring the sentiments of Plato to those of all other philosophers. To some tradition of his addiction to science, to the revelations contained in the sixth book of the Æneid, and to the magic spells described in the eighth Eclogue, Virgil probably owes his reputation as a wizard, the cha­racter in which he principally figures during the middle ages.

Donatus carries Virgil from Naples to Rome, and there makes him the subject of several fabulous stories, which it would be idle to repeat. The probability is that he did not visit Rome at this time, but having finished his studies at Naples, returned directly to his paternal abode; where he continued to reside till his fame as a poet had begun to attract public notice.

Much uncertainty prevails respecting the early pro­ductions of his muse. That the Eclogues were not the first offspring of his genius, we have sufficient testimony; but the genuineness of the minor poems, which usually pass under his name, may well be questioned. The most pro­bable conclusion is, that they are either entirely spurious, or so much disfigured by interpolators as to leave few traces of their original form. Donatus enumerates the following as youthful productions of Virgil : *Cataleeton, Moretum, Priapeia, Epigrammata, Dirœ, culex,* and, while he ad­mits that doubts existed respecting its authorship, *Ætna.* He is also said to have undertaken a poetical work on the early wars of Rome, but to have been deterred from the prosecution of his design, by the rugged and inharmonious structure of the ancient Italian names. To this attempt the poet probably alludes in the sixth Eclogue, where he re­presents himself as having prematurely undertaken a work beyond his strength. But whatever may have been the early essays of Virgil, there can be no doubt that he con­tinued sedulously to cultivate those talents with which he was so richly endowed; and to peruse with intense ad­miration and delight those masterpieces of Grecian ge­nius, which it was his great ambition to rival and excel. Nor was he inattentive to the literature of his own coun­try ; which however presented a comparatively limited field for the poetical student. Yet the works of Ennius, Plautus, Terence, Catullus, and above all, Lucretius, con­tained a rich poetical mine, from which much precious ore might be extracted, and to which. It is manifest, he did not scruple freely to resort. Into the genius, structure, and capabilities of his native tongue, he appears to have pene­trated more deeply than any other writer; and his diction became the standard to which succeeding poets yielded an' implicit, perhaps a slavish obedience. What Cicero effect­ed for prose, Virgil effected for poetry. Few literary pheno­mena, perhaps, are more remarkable, than the mastery over the Latin language, which even his earliest productions dis­play. In the works of preceding writers may be found many detached passages scarcely to be surpassed; but in uniformly-sustained beauty and propriety of diction, the Mantuan bard leaves all his predecessors, as well as succes­sors, at an immeasurable distance.

Virgil is usually represented as having undertaken the composition of his Eclogues at the suggestion of C. Asi­nius Pollio, a nobleman who was not more distinguished as a commander, than as a cultivator and patron of let­ters. On the formation of the second triumvirate, a. u. 711, Pollio was entrusted by Antony, whose interests he had espoused, with the command of Gallia Transpadana, in which district the patrimony of Virgil lay. The rising ta­lents of the youthful poet early attracted his notice, and he continued to extend to him his patronage and protection as long as he remained in the command of the province. The services thus generously and seasonably rendered to genius, were amply rewarded; and the name of Pollio will for ever continue associated with some of the poet’s noblest strains.

The date and order of composition of the Eclogues have been matter of dispute among critics. By some they are supposed to have been written in the order in which they now stand in the printed editions, and. It is believed, in all the manuscripts of Virgil’s works; by others, the second, third, fifth, and sixth are thought to have preceded the first. The determination of the question is of little importance, and our present limits forbid discussion. The subject of the first Eclogue sufficiently indicates the date of its com­position. After the battle of Philippi, a.u. 712, Augustus, in fulfilment of a promise which had been previously given to the army, made a large division of lands among the veteran soldiers. Cremona having espoused the cause of Brutus, was among the first to suffer on the present oc­casion. Its territory was assigned to the soldiers; but not proving of sufficient extent, the deficiency was supplied from the neighbouring district of Mantua. Virgil was thus involved in the general calamity, and driven with violence from his humble patrimony. About this time, however, he appears to have renewed his acquaintance and friendship with Alphenus Varus, who had been his fellow-student at Naples, and who now discharged some important public function in the poet’s district. Under his protection. It is supposed, Virgil repaired to Rome, and by personal appli­cation obtained from Augustus the restoration of his farm. To record his gratitude for this signal favour, he composed the first Eclogue, which, in the person of Meliboeus, pre­sents a vivid picture of the distress and misery by which he was surrounded; while in that of Tityrus, he eulogises in glowing strains, and honours as a god, the youth to whom he owed his own more fortunate lot. It appears, however, that he experienced no slight difficulty in recovering his farm, notwithstanding the order of Augustus; and that, on one occasion, when pursued by the tribune Arrius, who had taken forcible possession of it, he saved his life by swimming across the Mincius. To these fresh disasters he is suppos­ed to allude in the ninth Eclogue. Besides Augustus, the persons chiefly celebrated in the Eclogues are Pollio, Varus, and Gallus, who had been the poet’s earliest patrons, and who ever after continued his most esteemed and beloved friends.

The Eclogues, in the composition of which he is said to have spent three years, were received by his countrymen with unbounded applause. They were universally read and admired, and such was their popularity, that they were pub­licly recited in the theatre at Rome. Their novelty, for