

*His studies
begin:
55 B.C.*

Vergil began his studies at *Cremona*, where, we are told, he assumed the *toga virilis* on the same day on which Lucretius died. The town itself had already been noted, having been the birthplace of *Furius Bibaculus*, and of the critic, *Quinctilius Varro*.

*Vergil goes
to Rome,
B.C. 55.*

After a brief stay at *Cremona*, and subsequently at *Mediolanum* (*Milan*), the poet went to *Rome*. In the capital, Vergil, after the fashion of the day, attended the lectures of rhetoricians and philosophers. Under *Epidius*, the rhetorician, the teacher of *Marc Antony* and afterwards of *Octavius*, and under the Epicurean philosopher, *Siron*, the poet became acquainted with the outlines of rhetoric and philosophy. It is quite probable that his father intended him for the bar, but a weak voice and a diffident manner were insuperable barriers in the way of obtaining distinction in public speaking. Vergil soon gave up rhetoric, and, in fact, renounced poetry for the more congenial study of philosophy. Under *Siron*, he seems to have made considerable progress in Epicurean philosophy, and the love he retained for this branch of learning is plainly observable in many of his extant writings.⁴ In a minor poem, generally supposed to be genuine, he welcomes the exchange of poetry and rhetoric for more useful studies:

"Away with you, empty coloured flagons of the rhetoricians, words swollen, but not with the dews of Greece; and, away with you, *Stilo*, *Tagitius* and *Varro*, you, nation of pedants, soaking with fat: you, empty cymbals of the classroom. Farewell, too, *Sabinus*, friend of all my friends; now, farewell, all my beautiful companions, we are setting our sails for a haven of bliss, going to hear the learned words of the great *Siron*, and we mean to redeem our life from all distraction. Farewell, too, sweet *Muses*; for, to tell the truth, I have found how sweet you were: and yet, I pray you look on my pages again, but with modesty and at rare intervals."⁵

*Goes to
Naples.*

After a short stay at *Rome*, Vergil probably went to *Naples*, where, we are told, *Parthenius*, another Epicurean, was his instructor. The great Epic⁶ of *Lucretius*, added to the

⁴ Eclogue: VI.; Georg: IV., 219; Aen: I., 743; VI., 724; Georg: II., 475-492.

⁵ Catalepta: VII.

⁶ *De Rerum Natura*.