

LIFE OF VERGIL.

Publius Vergilius Maro¹ was born on the fifteenth of *Birth.* October, B.C. 70, in the first consulate of M. Licinius Crassus and Cn. Pompeius, at Andes (now *Pietola*), a small village near Mantua. Since the full franchise was not given to this part of Gaul (*Gallia Transpadana*) till some years afterwards², the poet, like many of his predecessors and contemporaries in literature, was not a Roman, but an Italian provincial.

The parents of Vergil, like those of Horace, were of *His Parents* obscure birth. Some authorities say that the poet's father was a potter, others, that he was a brickmaker, while others again assert that he was the servant of a travelling merchant, Magius, whose daughter, Magia Polla, he afterwards married. Whatever may have been his occupation, certain it is, that he was at the time of the poet's birth, the steward, factor, or possessor of an estate near Mantua. The childhood of Vergil was passed amid the hills and woods that fringed the verdant banks of the Mincius, and the early association of the poet with the lovely scenery of the neighbourhood of his native town may account for the exquisite touches of pastoral life which appear in the *Elogues* and the *Georgics*.

¹ The English equivalent of Vergilius is often spelt Virgil. Indeed the poet is best known by the name thus spelt. However, it is better to adopt the spelling that harmonizes with what is undoubtedly the correct Latin form. The form Virgilius was not common till the middle ages. Every Roman citizen had regularly three names—denoting the *individual*, the *gens* or clan, and the *familia*. Thus in *Publius Vergilius Maro*, *Publius* is the *praenomen*, marking the *individual*; *Vergilius* is the *nomen*, denoting the *gens* or clan; while *Maro* is the *cognomen*, or family name. Sometimes an *agnomen* was added for military distinction, as *Africanus* to Scipio, *Numidicus* to Metellus.

² B.C. 49.