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The Classical Background as a Factor in the Spiritual Development of Walter Pater's 'Marius the Epicurean'

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THE CLASSICAL BACKGROUND AS A FACTOR IN THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF WALTER PATER'S 'MARIUS THE EPICUREAN'

by

MARGARET HARRIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of English
Butler University

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This paper is a study of Walter Pater's mature philosophy which is revealed through the spiritual development of the chief character of the book, Marius, in whom Pater is really picturing his own mental reactions in studying various fields of philosophy throughout his life. In order to fully appreciate and comprehend Pater's philosophic conception of life in this work, it is necessary to trace the development of his thought throughout several of his earlier writings. Thus may his philosophic scheme be examined in its entirety.

For this purpose, three works, The Child in the House, Diaphaneité, and Studies in the History of the Renaissance, have been chosen as most valuable in expressing Pater's philosophy before the writing of Marius the Epicurean. After considering these works, the reader is then prepared for an intelligent analysis of Marius the Epicurean, which represents the peak of Walter Pater's philosophic development.
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A study of Walter Pater's work reveals the fact that from childhood he was actuated by an instinctive love of beauty apprehended through the senses and by an innate seriousness bordering almost on melancholy. These two factors exerted a very profound influence upon his highly sensitive nature in all the phases of thought through which he passed and were of utmost importance in determining the ultimate development of his philosophy.

Although in his earliest years, Pater's thought was turned toward a very definite ideal from which he did not deviate greatly during all the rest of his life, yet he did undergo a certain growth in philosophic conception, as he grew into maturity, which brought him more into sympathy with the mass of humanity. This gradual development may be very
nicely traced through four of Pater's writings, *The Child in the House*, *Diaphaneix*, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, and *Marius the Epicurean*, all of which are expressions of his philosophic attitude at certain periods of his life.

*The Child in the House*, although it pretends to be a portrait of an imaginary character is chiefly autobiographical and gives us an excellent picture of Pater as a child. We see that, even then, he was almost painfully sensitive to impressions of beauty, which reached him through the senses. With burning intensity, he loved the old house, which was his childhood home, "its trimness and comely neatness", its curtains and couches, the paint on its walls, on which the light and shadow played so delicately, the shadowy angles of its stairs, and the window on the landing, from which he could look down upon the snowy blossoms of the pear tree in the garden. With this fervid love of beauty, he early became conscious of a sense of sorrow and suffering in the world, and an agonizing fear of death, from which he seemed unable to rid himself. In speak-

ing of these influences upon him Pater says:

"And the sense of security could hardly have been deeper, the quiet of the child's soul being one with the quiet of its home, a place 'inclosed' and 'sealed.' But upon this assured place, upon the child's assured soul which resembled it, there came floating in from the larger world without, as at windows left ajar unknowingly, or over the high garden walls, two streams of impressions, the sentiments of beauty and pain-recollections of the visible, tangible, audible loveliness of things, as a very real and somewhat tyrannous element in them and of the sorrow of the world, of grown people and children and animals, as a thing not to be put by in them. From this point he could trace two predominant processes of mental change in him—the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and choice form—the sweet curvings, for instance, of the lips of those who seemed to him comely persons, modulated in such delicate unison to the things they said or sang, marking early the activity in him of a more than customary sensuousness, 'the lust of the eye,' as the Preacher says, which might lead him, one day, how far!" 1

And in reference to his fear of death:

"So it was, until on a summer day he walked with his mother through a fair churchyard. In a bright dress he rambled among the graves, in the gay weather, and so came, in one corner, upon an open grave for a child—a dark space on the brilliant grass—the black mould lying heaped up round it, weighing down the little jewelled branches of the dwarf rose-bushes in flower. And therewith came, full-grown, never wholly to leave him, with the certainty that even children

1. The Child in the House, in Miscellaneous Studies, p. 180-181
do sometimes die, the physical horror of death, with its wholly selfish recoil from the association of lower forms of life, and the suffocating weight above. No benign, grave figure in beautiful soldier's things any longer abroad in the world for his protection; only a few poor, piteous bones; and above them, possibly, a certain sort of figure he hoped not to see."

Thus, as a child, Pater is already keenly responsive to sensuous beauty in any form. He is beginning to place his reliance upon the eye as the means of receiving impressions of the world about him. In this he shows himself to be a natural Epicurean, for he has the innate tendency to trust his senses as the criteria of the truthfulness of his impressions.

The little sketch, Diaphaneity, written during Pater's student days at Oxford, carries out this ideal of response to beauty further, and shows that in young manhood the ideal of his early years had changed little. Here, he pictures the kind of character which he feels is most ideal for the basic type. Such a character must be transparent like a crystal, "sensitive to all lights,

1. The Child in the House, in Miscellaneous Studies, p. 190-191
able to reflect all impressions, but always remaining itself, simple, whole." He says of it:

"It does not take the eye by breadth of colour; rather it is that fine edge of light, where the elements of our moral nature refine themselves to the burning point.... It seeks to value everything at its eternal worth, not adding to it, or taking from it, the amount of influence it may have for or against its own special scheme of life."

His ideal, then, is to make himself perfectly receptive to all impressions coming to him through the senses, to receive those impressions exactly as they are, and to get from them all that he can, while, at the same time, keeping himself pure and simple.

The *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* is particularly valuable for our purpose, because in its *Conclusion*, Pater makes a very definite statement of his philosophy, the viewpoint, which he had reached in his early thirties. He sees in the physical life about us constant change in all things, continual changes in the face of nature, continual changes in the human body, mind, and thought. The most that we can get from life is an impres-

2. *Diaphaneità*, in *Miscellaneous Studies*, p. 248
sion of a fleeting moment, which is gone almost before we can say that it existed. How, then, are we to get the full effect of these impressions? Pater believes that we must strive to keep ourselves always at the point of their greatest intensity, and be constantly alert to catch every impression and sensation to be received from the outward world.

"A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?"

"To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening."

Our life is so short that we must expand it by making every moment worthwhile by noting and appreciating some beautiful impression. This appreciation of and response to beauty should be the purpose and aim of life.

2. Ibid., p. 237
"Well we are all condemned, as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve-les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indefinis: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among 'the children of this world,' in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion— that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."  

In the Conclusion to the Studies in the History of the Renaissance, Pater determines to rely upon the power of his senses to enlarge and expand life by extracting from every moment all the impressions and sensations, which it can possibly offer. He must make every moment count in building up his ability to respond to beauty. He has become definitely an Epicurean of the Cyrenaic school in that he is putting absolute reliance upon his senses to determine impressions of the outer world, and that his purpose is to wring from every

moment all pulsations of pleasure possible.

Marius the Epicurean begins at this point, but goes beyond this somewhat narrow philosophy of getting the most for one's self from every moment. It reveals a broader sympathy for human kind, and a willingness to make concessions in one's beliefs for the good of humanity as a whole. This book was written to offset a misinterpretation of the philosophy in the Studies in the History of the Renaissance, and to make clear Pater's position in regard to his belief in the reliance upon sensation to get the most from life. Pater felt the need of this, for he had been severely condemned as a hedonist by contemporary critics after the Studies in the History of the Renaissance appeared. Now a hedonist is one who feels free to yield to any sensation whatever for the mere pleasure of the sensation. Pater had been ridiculed as such a person in Mallock's New Republic in the character of Mr. Rose, who speaks of everyone "as if they had no clothes on," as one woman in the book remarks. This was, of course, extremely offensive to

1. Benson, A. O., Walter Pater, p. 53
Pater, whose ideal was far different from hedonism. It is his purpose in *Marius the Epicurean* to make his position clear and to free himself from unpleasant criticism.

Pater sees in the character of Marius the case of one, who passes from Epicureanism of the Cyrenaic school into a philosophy of greater scope and of sympathy for humanity. In tracing this development in Marius, he is really giving us a picture of himself and an account of his own thoughts and feelings in studying various fields of philosophy, while growing into maturity. The book, then, is really a spiritual biography of Walter Pater.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the growth which has occurred in Pater's philosophy since the appearance of the *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* by tracing the development of Marius from Epicureanism to the threshold of Christianity, and to show how Pater has used the classical background of the book as a factor in this development.
In Marius the Epicurean, Walter Pater has created an exquisitely delicate imaginary portrait of a peculiarly sensitive soul, that of a cultivated young Italian born in the second century during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. His motive in writing the book is to trace the spiritual history of this character, Marius, from childhood through various stages of pagan philosophy to the threshold of Christianity. In his wonderful understanding of and interpretation of this brilliant and colorful period of Roman history, with its conflicting ideals and religions, dominated by the figure of the philosophic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, against which the story is laid, Pater has given us a treatment amounting "to an appreciation" of the second century in its more refined aspects. 1

Two phases of Roman life are touched upon in

1. Marius the Epicurean, ed. by Anne Kimball Tuell, Introd., p. xiii
this treatment. First, the quiet, peaceful life of the outlying rural districts, where the old fashioned religion still flourished, is pictured, and secondly, that of the gay society in the city of Rome itself torn this way and that by the many varied philosophies and ideals of the cosmopolitan group which made up its populace.

(1) The Old Roman Religion

Marius is first pictured as a country lad dwelling far away from the bustle of the city upon one of the old Roman farms, where life seemed to have stood still for several centuries. Our first glimpse of him is as a child in his home, that beautiful old Roman villa, *White Nights*, set far back from the dusty road in the deep shade of overhanging trees. He is about to take part in a traditional Roman religious ceremony, the Ambarvalia, a sacred festival in honor of Mars, performed by a single family for the welfare of all belonging to it. At this time, all work of the farm ceased, the working implements were hung with wreaths of flowers, and masters and servants walked in slow procession about the fields and vineyards, conducting the sacrificial victims, soon to be slain for the puri-
ification of all the land they had walked around.

Marius comes to this ceremony with a great seriousness and a recognition of the significance of the occasion, as he does to all the religious observances of the old Roman religion, the "religion of Numa," to which his family was still devoted, although it was dying out at that time in the great cities of Italy. He is anxious to bring to the ceremony a mind serene and reverent, befitting the sacredness of the festival.

"With the lad, Marius, who, as the head of his house, took a leading part in the ceremonies of the day, there was a devout effort to complete this impressive outward silence by that inward tacitness of mind, esteemed so important by religious Romans in the performances of these sacred functions. To him, the sustained stillness without seemed to be resting upon that interior, mental condition of preparation or expectancy, for which he was just then intently striving." 3

Marius is very thoughtful as he watches the performance of the service and his mind is stimulated to speculative meditation.

1. Cf. (Cato, De Agri Cultura, ed. by Georgius Goetz, p. 58-59.) Pater was undoubtedly drawing upon this for his source material.
2. So called from the second king of Rome, Numa, who, according to Livy, Bk. I, Ch. 20-21, established religious rites at Rome.
3. Marius the Epicurean, p. 6
"But in the young Marius, the very absence from those venerable usages of definite history and dogmatic interpretation, had awakened much speculative activity; and today, starting from the actual details of the divine service, some very lively surmises, though scarcely distinct enough to be thoughts, were moving backwards and forwards in his mind, as the stirring wind had done all day among the trees, and were like the passing of some mysterious influence over all the elements of his nature and experience."

Even as a child, Marius' mind is marked by a natural seriousness and tendency toward philosophical thought, just as was the mind of the young Pater in the great house where he lived throughout his early years. The old Roman religious rites serve to bring forth and intensify this trend in his character.

With this peculiar seriousness of nature, Marius was also becoming conscious of misery in the world and had a sense of pity for those who were suffering, even for dumb animals. He sympathized with the sacrificial victims with the look of terror in their eyes as if they realized their approaching fate.

"One thing only distracted him—a certain pity at the bottom of his heart, and almost upon his lips, for the sac-

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 7
rificial victims and their looks of terror, rising almost to disgust at the central act of the sacrifice itself, a piece of everyday butcher's work, such as we decorously hide out of sight; though some then present certainly displayed a frank curiosity in the spectacle thus permitted them on a religious pretext." 1

This feeling of the seriousness and solemnity of the occasion remained with Marius throughout the whole day, and prevented him from joining in the noisy feasting which brought the evening to a close. Instead, he fell asleep, musing upon the imagery of the ritual, which he had been looking upon during the day's observances.

"The young Marius himself took but a very sober part in the noisy feasting. A devout, regretful after-taste of what had been really beautiful in the ritual he had accomplished took him early away, that he might the better recall in reverie all the circumstances of the celebration of the day. As he sank into a sleep, pleasant with all the influences of long hours in the open air, he seemed still to be moving in procession through the fields, with a kind of pleasurable awe." 2

Our first glimpse of Marius, then, has given us an idea of his reaction to the old Roman religious ritual. It has revealed the fact that religion produced in him a peculiar seriousness and solemnity, a feeling of pity for the sacrificial victims, and a response to the beauty of the ritualistic

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 7
2. Ibid., p. 8
forms. A love of beauty, of sensation, which reaches him through the eye, has already become apparent in his nature.

(2) The Old Roman Home Life

Just as the rites and observances of Roman religious ceremonies served to inculcate in Marius' nature a recognition of the solemnity of the occasion, so did the farm life, in which his family had been engaged for generations, inspire him with a certain reverence for the sacredness of life itself. His interest in the cultivation of the ground, the culture of the olive and vine, those mainstays of Roman life, and the care of the flocks seemed to awaken in him a sense of the cleanliness and sanity of life near to the soil, and seemed to bring him nearer to the elementary conditions of life itself.

The atmosphere of the farm and home, in which Marius lived, was conducive to such feeling and meditation. In this house,

"Vulgarity seemed impossible. The place, though impoverished, was still deservedly dear, full of venerable
memories, and with a living sweetness of its own for today." 1

Marius' father, long dead, had been a member of a local priestly college, and this fact had caused the life of his home to become imbued with a spirit of respect for and a devotion to religious ceremonies. Augury, itself, a particular privilege, had once been practiced by his race, which meant that there was a certain power of intuition and of foreseeing the significance of certain events inherent in the family. This power had been passed on in some measure to Marius, himself.

"---and if you can imagine," Pater says of him, "how, once in a way, an impressionable boy might have an inkling, an inward mystic intimation, of the meaning and consequences of all that, what was implied in it becoming explicit for him, you conceive aright the mind of Marius, in whose house the auspices were still carefully consulted before every undertaking of moment." 2

The life of the Roman widow, his mother, seemed to Marius like "one long service to the departed soul" in its constant observances centered about the little carved marble funeral urn, which held the ashes of his father. She

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 11
2. Ibid., p. 12
3. Ibid., p. 12
came to him to be the very type of maternity in all things, the central type of love, with her unfailing pity and protectiveness. She served to foster in him a scrupulous conscience.

"A white bird, she told him, once, looking at him gravely, a bird which he must carry in his bosom across a crowded public place—his own soul was like that! Would it reach the hands of his good genius on the opposite side, un­ruffled and unsoiled?" 1

Although Marius loved the dim peacefulness of the interior of his home and found its atmosphere a stimulus to meditative thought, yet, he seemed to find even a greater pleasure in the natural beauty of the countryside, in which the old villa was situated. He loved it in all seasons, in summer, when it was glorious with fragrant wild flowers, with the deep blue Italian sky above, and the scent of new mown hay in the air, and in its stormy winter aspect, with the hail beating about the walls of his cozy home.

"One important principle, of fruit afterwards in his Roman life, that relish for the country fixed deeply in him; in the winters, especially, when the sufferings of the animal world became so palpable even to the least observant. It fixed in him

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 12
a sympathy for all creatures, for the almost human troubles and sicknesses of the flocks, for instance. It was a feeling which had in it something of religious veneration for life as such—for that mysterious essence which man is powerless to create in even the feeblest degree. 

(3) A Visit to the Temple of Aesculapius

During this time, Marius took one of his first journeys away from his home, that to the temple of Aesculapius among the hills of Etruria to be healed of a childish illness.

At this time, the religion of Aesculapius, the religion of bodily health, was at the height of its popularity in the Roman world. According to classical mythology, Aesculapius was the son of Apollo and endowed by his famous father with the knowledge of medicine and the power of healing. A peculiar cult of worship in his honor had grown up in Italy and seemed at this time, under the Antonines, to be well on its way toward stamping out other pagan religions and becoming the one religious doctrine of the Roman people. The priesthood of Aesculapius was believed to be in possession of very precious

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 16
medicinal secrets, enabling them to heal all manner of illnesses. So the temples of Aesculapius had come to be in a sense hospitals for the sick as well as shrines for religious worship. It was believed that dreams were inspired by Aesculapius himself in which the sick person learned the causes of his illness and the means by which it might be cured. It was thus necessary for those afflicted with illness to spend several days and nights in the temple of Aesculapius in order that the god might instruct them as to a means of curing their diseases.

Therefore, it was but natural that Marius, himself, should undertake this journey to the shrine of Aesculapius, situated on a stream of pure water, high up in the hills of Etruria, to find relief from his indisposition. This visit was of utmost importance in turning Marius' train of thought in the direction which it was to follow throughout the development of his philosophy in after life. Here, for the first time, he heard expressed in actual words a type of philosophic thought toward which he had a natural bent, namely, that of the reliance upon sensation approaching

1. An account of the healing functions of Aesculapius and of the development of his cult may be found in Jayne, Walter A., The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations, p. 240-303
him through the eye as the determining influence of his life. He was meeting, for the first time, Epicurean philosophy in the emphasis upon the senses as the criteria of truth. This he learned from the discourse of a young priest, who came to his bedside in the night, when he had wakened from feverish slumber.

"He caught a lesson from what was then said, still somewhat beyond his years, a lesson in the skilled cultivation of life, of experience, of opportunity, which seemed to be the aim of the young priest's recommendations. The sum of them, through various forgotten intervals of argument, as might really have happened in a dream, was the precept repeated many times under slightly varied aspects, of a diligent promotion of the capacity of the eye, inasmuch as in the eye would lie for him the determining influence of life; he was of the number of those who, in the words of a poet, who came long after, must be made perfect by the love of visible beauty."

He is also told of the need of keeping himself always temperate and of always training himself to appreciate beauty and to discriminate in types and shades of beauty.

"If thou wouldst have all about thee like the colours of some fresh picture, in a clear light, 'so the discourse recommenced after a pause,' be temperate in thy religious notions, in love, in wine, in all things, and of a peaceful heart with thy fellows." To keep the eye clear by

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 23
a sort of exquisite personal alacrity and cleanliness, extending even to his dwelling-place; to discriminate, ever more and more fastidiously, select form and colour in things from what was less select; to meditate much on beautiful visible objects, on objects, more especially, connected with the period of youth—on children at play in the morning, the trees in early spring, on young animals, on the fashions and amusements of young men; to keep ever by him if it were but a single choice flower, a graceful animal or sea-shell, as a token and representative of the whole kingdom of such things; to avoid jealously, in his way through the world, everything repugnant to sight; and, should any circumstance tempt him to a general converse in the range of such objects, to disentangle himself from that circumstance at any cost of place, money, or opportunity; such were in brief outline the duties recognized, the rights demanded, in the new formula of life."

For several days, Marius remained in this sacred place under the careful tutelage of the priests. He was shown the Houses of Birth and Death, where those about to become mothers and those about to die were cared for by the priests, and the famous well of water said to have been given its healing properties by Aesculapius himself. He was taught by the priests to repeat the prayer of the Aselepladae to the Inspired Dreams. But it was the last day of his visit, which was destined to remain always in his memory. On this day, he was conducted by one of the priests to a very cleverly constructed panel in the back of a carved seat, and told to

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 24
look through. The view, which he saw, was that of a beautiful valley, so hidden by the formation of the land about it, that it could only be seen from this particular spot. Sunlight bathed the rocky slopes and the green meadows at the foot, where some of the young novices were taking their morning exercise. In the distance, a beautiful, blue mountain rose, its summit veiled in the early morning mist. The scene was one of such beauty that Marius was breathlessly excited, nor did he lose the consciousness of this impression for days to come.

This wonderful experience served to awaken in his mind a sense of the hidden beauty of things in unexpected places. It fed the ideal already firmly rooted in his mind of esthetic beauty connected with religious observances.

"All this served, as he understood afterwards in retrospect, at once to strengthen and to purify a certain vein of character in him. Developing the ideal, pre-existent there, of a religious beauty, associated for the future with the exquisite splendor of the temple of Aesculapius, as it dawned upon him on that morning of his first visit— it developed that ideal in connection with a vivid sense of the value of mental and bodily sanity." 1

Thus was Marius as a child, naturally of a very

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 29
serious and sensitive temperament, particularly impressionable to all aspects of beauty in the outward world, devoted to the ritual of religious observances. He has shown himself to be particularly susceptible to Epicurean philosophy, for he has the natural tendency to respond to impressions of beauty coming to him through sensation, and to have an inclination toward serious and contemplative thought.

"Marius, before he became an Epicurean, was molded for his fate; his creator demanded an exceptional nature for the esthetic ideal to react upon in a noble way, and so Marius was born in the upland farm among the fair mountains to the north of Pisa, and was possessed from boyhood of the devout seriousness, the mood of trustful waiting for the god's coming, which is exacted in all profound idealism."

Soon this delicate nature was to yield itself to the varied influences of the old town of Pisa, where Marius went to attend the school of a famous rhetorician.

1. Woodberry, G. S., Studies of a Litterateur, p. 3
CHAPTER III

THE YOUTHFUL EPICUREAN

We next see Marius as a school boy in the old town of Pisa. His mother had died soon after his return from his memorable visit to the shrine of Aesculapius and Marius had been sent to live at the home of a guardian at Pisa that he might attend the school of a famous teacher there.

The beauty of the old city with "its fair streets of marble" and with "the solemn outlines of the dark hills of Luna on its background" appealed deeply to his sense of the loveliness in the outer world and fed in him "the idealism constitutional with him—his innate and habitual longing for a world altogether fairer than he saw." In his wandering about the town, associating with his friends there, enjoying himself to the full, Marius seemed to catch a glimpse, an intimation, perhaps, of the Cyrenaic philosophy of Aristippus to which he was soon to give serious study, namely the ideal of the value of the present moment which is here and now, the idea

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 32
2. Ibid., p. 32
3. Ibid., p. 32
of living in the present.

"His entire rearing hitherto had lent itself to an imaginative exaltation of the past; but now the spectacle actually afforded to his untired and freely opened senses, suggested the reflection that the present had, it might be, really advanced beyond the past, and he was ready to boast in the very fact that it was modern." 1

(1) Association with Flavian

Among his school fellows, Marius became particularly attracted to the figure of Flavian, a youth of so keen and brilliant an intellect that he seemed to dominate the school. "Prince of the school, he had gained an easy dominion over the old Greek master by the fascination of his parts, and over his fellow scholars by the figure he bore." 2 "He was like a carved figure in motion" Marius thought of him as he watched him in the classroom, exhibiting his remarkable keenness in reckoning, and his wonderful ability in declaiming Homer. Yet, later, Marius found that there was something unhealthily sensuous in his character, and that he had already yielded to "the seductions of that luxurious town." 4

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 34
2. Ibid., p. 35
3. Ibid., p. 35
4. Ibid., p. 37
So, when he came to look back upon Flavian in his later life, he seemed to be a representation of all evil things which cloak themselves in outer loveliness.

"To Marius, at a later time, he counted for, as it were, an epitome of the whole pagan world, the depth of its corruption, and its perfection of form." 1

(A) The Golden Ass of Apuleius

It was in company with Flavian that Marius first had the experience of reading a book, which had come to be looked upon almost as the "golden book" of the time, The Golden Ass of Apuleius. This is a tale which would be particularly fascinating to boys of their age. It is a romance of witchcraft and adventure, with its setting in the mysterious towns of Thessaly, the original home of magic art. A boy, Lucius, spying upon an old witch witnesses her transformation into an owl by the rubbing of her body with a certain ointment. He attempts to do the same thing, but only succeeds in transforming himself into an ass. The rest of the book deals with Lucius' adventures while in this form.

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 38
Marius and Flavian, of course, read the book with breathless excitement. However, it was the beautiful tale of Cupid and Psyche, found incorporated in the story, which left a lasting influence upon their minds. This story is a perfect gem, an exquisite bit of poetic imagery, which may be taken from the book and considered as a complete piece of literature by itself. Its effect upon the two boys was entirely different. In Flavian it inspired a Euphuistic tendency, a love of language for its own sake, and served to foster a desire, already natural with him, to write in a somewhat artificial and conceited style, with emphasis upon unusual words and figures of speech. To Marius, on the other hand, it presented an ideal of the "hiddenness of perfect things," and fed his imagination with the idea of perfection in pure beauty.

"Set in relief amid the coarser matter of the book, the episode of Cupid and Psyche, served to combine many lines of meditation, already familiar to Marius, into the ideal of a perfect imaginative love, centered upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clean—an ideal which never wholly faded from his thoughts, though he valued it at various times in different degrees." 3

2. Marius the Epicurean, p. 65
3. Ibid., p. 88
It caused his poetic imagination to take a purely sensuous turn, and served to make him conscious of an ideal of which he was vaguely aware, "the art, namely, of so relieving the ideal or poetic traits, the elements of distinction in our everyday life—of so exclusively living in them—that the unadorned remainder of it, the mere drift or debris of our days, comes to be as though it were not." 1

In this he was learning his first lessons in Epicureanism of the higher order, the emphasis on seeking for happiness and tranquility in life which would make it possible to rise above the common place events of the workaday world, which bring so much dissatisfaction and unrest.

(B) The Pervigilium Veneris

About this time, Marius enjoyed with Flavian another experience, which served to strengthen his impression of the beauty of the pagan world in which he was living. Pisa was about to celebrate the Navigium Isidii, a festival

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 38
held on March 5 of each year in honor of Isis, the goddess, who, at that period, had become almost a second Venus, and like her, a patroness of sailors. At this time, a ship heavily laden with spices and rich gifts, was borne down to the water's edge in a magnificent procession, and towed far out to sea by a stronger vessel manned by a crew of white robed mariners, who were to desert it at a certain distance from shore in the open sea. All the evening before the great day, Marius and Flavian heard the young men of the city singing joyously the refrain of a song which has since become known as the *Pervigilium Veneris*, or Watch of Venus. Pater has used this refrain as an inspiration to Flavian to compose a poem in honor of Venus, and he has thus made Flavian the author of the *Pervigilium Veneris*, itself. As the two listened thrilling to the words:

"Cras amet, qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet.

"To-morrow shall be love for the loveless

1. For a description of this festival and the procession preceding it see Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, bk. XI, ch. 3-17.
And for the lover to-morrow shall be love,"

Marius seemed to catch again the brilliant loveliness of the pagan world with its blithe religion.

On the morrow, after the Ship of Isis had been towed from the shore, Marius and Flavian slipped away and spent the day upon the river in their boat, while Flavian composed his poem to Venus.

This was Marius' last expedition with his beloved schoolmate, for a few days later Flavian lay dead, a victim of the plague, which the armies of Marcus Aurelius had brought back from their conquests in the East.

To Marius, Flavian's death seemed terribly final. It was as if the spark of life had gone out completely, and that his soul was dead as well as his body. Brooding upon this thought, Marius found developing in his mind a curiosity as to what great philosophers had thought about the soul and its fate after death. We find him soon after this, then, taking up the study of Greek philosophies.

(2) Greek Philosophy
Philosophy in general interested Marius greatly, and from this study, he found himself developing a certain sense of "a poetic beauty in mere clearness of thought, the actually aesthetic charm of a cold austerity of mind, as if the kinship of that to the clearness of a physical light were something more than a figure of speech."

(A) Plato

Platonic studies claimed Marius' attention first. He was particularly impressed by Plato's emphasis on the indifference of the soul to the body in which it is lodged. The soul Plato believed to be the immortal part of man given him by God. It belongs to the world above the senses, and therefore, the possession of good or happiness can only be reached by elevation into the higher world. It is in the higher world, the world of ideals, that the realities of things may be found, not in the material world about us.

"The body, on the other hand, and sensual life is the grave and prison of the soul, which has received its irrational elements through combination with it, and is the source of all disturbances of the intellectual activity."

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 88
2. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 155
3. Ibid., p. 155
The soul was placed in the body by necessity and has come into it as the result of a fall from a more noble existence. Perfection, then, can only be reached by endeavoring to free the soul as much as possible from the limiting influences of the body. The relation between the two is often described in the well known allegory of the Charioteer and the Winged Horses, in which is symbolized reason, on the one hand, and on the other, courage or appetite.

"Now the winged horses and the charioteer of the gods are all of them noble, and of noble breed, while ours are mixed; and we have a charioteer who drives them in a pair; and one of them is noble and of noble origin, and, as might be expected, there is a great deal of trouble in managing them... Now the chariots of the gods, self-balanced, upward glide in obedience to the rein; but the others have a difficulty, for the steed who has evil in him, if he has not been properly trained by the charioteer, gravitates and inclines and sinks towards the earth, and this is the hour of extremest agony and conflict of the soul."

There is thus an antagonism between the body and the soul, the influence of the body, and being degrading and defiling to the soul.

Marius, with his natural love of beauty expressed in the human body, and his reliance upon the power of bodily sensu-

1. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 155
2. Bury, Brief History of Greek Philosophy, p. 95 —— quoted from Plato’s Phaedrus
sation, could not accept this belief." It was to the sentiment of the body, and the affections it defined—the flesh, of whose force and colour that wandering Platonic soul was but so frail a residue or abstract he must cling." 1

(B) Heraclitus and Protagoras

From Platonic study, Marius next passed to a consideration of the work of Heraclitus of Ionia, the originator of the idea of the "eternal flux." Heraclitus seemed to feel that a true understanding of the universe could only be found by getting beneath the surface of things to a great hidden truth. We cannot depend upon our senses as a means of discovering the truth, for they deceive us, since what appears to be fixed and unchanging is in reality in constant flux, and there is no permanence in anything.

"Eyes and ears are bad witnesses to persons who have untutored souls," he states. 3

"The appearance of stability in things is an

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 88
2. Scoon, Greek Philosophy Before Plato, p. 62
3. Ibid., p. 54
illusion of the senses which must be corrected by the understanding; and the understanding shows that a thing is not permanently fixed and stereotyped against its opposite but is inevitably destined to pass into it. All things are changing, and the whole is like a river which is never the same on account of the flow of fresh water. The world is a process."  

In this constant flux of substances, there must be a unifying force holding the universe together and keeping it in order. This force Heraclitus believed to be fire.

"Sea and earth must therefore represent transformations of fire and fire is thus both the cosmic process of transformation and also one of the stages of the process." He chose fire as the primary of all substances because it is the least permanent of all substances and least allows permanency in another. Even the soul itself is part of this divine fire. It is the cosmic principle in epitome, the principle of intelligence, of self direction in the form of fire in the body. This soul fire, too, is affected by change and must be renewed constantly by the senses and breath. Also, when these souls pass from the body, they continue their existence and enter into a higher life. Heraclitus naturally

1. Scoon, Greek Philosophy Before Plato, p. 54
2. Ibid., p. 56
3. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 155
had a certain contempt for the senses, which he felt to be a confusion to the mind in presenting to us a false permanency in the world about us. Instead of relying upon the senses, we must trust in the divine order of things from which we may achieve the highest good, namely happiness and contentment.

Along with the Heraclitean doctrine, Marius studied the philosophy of Protagoras, whose chief tenet was that "the measure of all things is man." In other words, following the idea of Heraclitus of the eternal flux, he believed that knowledge is based on subjective appearances. Since there is no true standard by which we can measure the reality of things, which are constantly in a state of change, we must in the end come back to our senses which can give us an idea of what is true for a moment.

"This doctrine, it will be perceived, is simply the Heraclitean doctrine (superficially interpreted) of the eternal flux of things in general transferred from nature to man. Strictly applied, it would signify not only that no two persons think or perceive the same thing, but that no person thinks or feels twice alike; it would mean also that there is and can be no real fixed object of knowledge. Contradictory opinions are equally true; right and wrong are merely matters of subjective
opinion; the state is a compact based on force." 1

Marius was deeply impressed with the emphasis of these philosophers on the constant motion of things.

"He was become aware of the possibility of a large dissidence between an inward and somewhat exclusive world of vivid personal apprehension, and the unimproved, unheightened reality of the life of those about him. As a consequence, he was ready now to concede, somewhat more easily than others, the first point of his new lesson, that the individual is to himself the measure of all things, and to rely on the exclusive certainty of his own impressions." 2

These studies seemed to confirm in Marius his determination to rely upon his senses as the criteria of the truth of his impressions. Whatever seemed to be true to his senses would be the truth for him.

(C) Aristippus of Cyrene

Marius was just now in a receptive mood for the study of Cyrenaic philosophy, and we next find him absorbed in the teachings of Aristippus of Cyrene, finding in

1. Burt, Brief History of Greek Philosophy, p. 36
2. Marius the Epicurean, p. 94
this happy philosopher a particularly congenial spirit.

Cyrenaic philosophy grew up in that beautiful Greek colony, Cyrene, located on the blue Mediterranean sea on the northern shores of Africa. The true systematic development of this doctrine is ascribed to Aristippus of Cyrene, a follower of the Socratic school. Sensations, Aristippus believed, give us information about our own feelings, but not about those of other persons. Therefore, we can base our actions only upon our own subjective feelings. The chief point of his contentions, then, is that all action should be directed toward getting the greatest amount of pleasure possible for ourselves. By pleasure, Aristippus meant the actual, positive enjoyment of the moment. Yet he recognizes that some pleasures bring more of pain than of enjoyment, and these should not be sought. Nor did Aristippus believe that every pleasure of sensation should be yielded to, although every kind of pleasure is a good. Instead, he remained always master of himself and of his life. He means, of course, to enjoy
himself as much as possible, but he represents that superior mind which can adapt itself to any situation, extracting from it the best that it has to offer him, although securing happiness and contentment for himself by limiting his desires with self-control and wisdom.

This doctrine of the constant emphasis of the positive pleasure of the moment is in contrast to the Epicurean ideal of a more passive and negative pleasure, which should be the aim of life.

(D) A Comparison of Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism

In comparing the thought of the two great philosophers, Aristippus and Epicurus, we find that there are many points of similarity in their tenets. Both believed that the sensations and perceptions are the basis for the criterion of truth. In other words, "the measure of all things is man." Our senses should always be the basis of our judgment of truth in the outside world. Also, both believed thoroughly that

the highest aim of life should be to win pleasure for one's self. In the sort of pleasure this should be, however, they did not agree. Aristippus thinks of pleasure as the positive enjoyment of the moment. Each moment filled to the full with a maximum of pleasures forms the aggregate of individual experience. Epicurus, on the other hand, thinks of pleasure as extending over a whole lifetime. Happiness should consist in the tranquility and repose of spirit accomplished by freeing the mind from all pain, all prejudice, all fear. Self-control should be exercised at all times, for it saves us from sorrows by giving us correct conduct in regard to pleasure and pain. He does not advocate all suppression of sensual impulses and the pure enjoyment of life for its own sake, but he feels that the greatest happiness comes in not putting too much reliance upon such things, for they are transitory and not permanent. "It appears, then, that the highest pleasure is not, as the Cyrenaics declared, a motion, but a state; e.g., contentment, freedom from ambition, from fear and apprehension."

2. Burt, Brief History of Greek Philosophy, p. 230
In attempting to free men from fear, especially the fear of death, Epicurus taught that, although there are gods, they have no especial concern for men, but live in a higher sphere apart from all connection with the material world. Hence, there is no need to fear them, for they have no concern with man. He also taught that there is no need to fear death, for there is no after life. "Specifically, the highest happiness of which human life is capable is a freedom from all apprehension relative to death and eternity, a state of the soul born of the knowledge that death is no concern either of the living or the dead, since to the one it has no existence and the other class has no existence itself!"

Cyrenaic philosophy made a very strong appeal to Marius. Our knowledge is limited to what we feel, he mused, but can we be sure that our impressions are really correct? Perhaps things are really not what they seem to us at all. Still, what pleasure we receive from our outward impressions of beauty, and what a relief it is, after all, to return to di-

1. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 363
2. Burt, Brief History of Greek Philosophy, p. 231
rect sensation for our knowledge of the outward world!

"And so the abstract apprehension that the little point of this present moment alone really is, between a past which has just ceased to be and a future which may never come, became practical with Marius under the form of a resolve, as far as possible, to exclude regret and desire, and yield himself to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind." 1

So Marius, at this time, as his school days at Pisa were drawing to a close, reached a true Epicureanism, toward which he had been strongly inclined all of his life. To be sure, it was an Epicureanism influenced by the teachings of Aristippus of Cyrene, in that he means to find his happiness by wringing from every moment all the pleasure that it can possibly give him. He has determined, following Epicurus, to rely solely upon his senses as the means of discovering the truth of impressions of the outward world, and he has come to believe that happiness or pleasure is the highest good toward which goal he must devote all the efforts of his life. Pleasure, at this time, however, means to him the pleasure

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 98
of the moment. He determines to pursue an education which shall develop his powers of receiving stimuli from the outer world, so that every moment may be as rich as possible in impressions for him. However, his thought is directed toward making his life as a whole beautiful and complete, also, by filling every moment of it with beautiful images and impressions.

"Not pleasure, but a general completeness of life, was the practical ideal to which this anti-metaphysical metaphysic really pointed. And towards such a full or complete life, a life of various yet select sensation, the most direct and effective auxiliary must be, in a word, Insight. Liberty of soul, freedom from all partial and misrepresentative doctrine which does but relieve one element in our experience at the cost of another, freedom from all embarrassment alike of regret for the past and of calculation on the future; this would be but preliminary to the real business of education—insight, insight through culture, into all that the present moment holds in trust for us, as we stand so briefly in its presence. From that maxim of Life as the end of life, followed as a practical consequence, the desirability of refining all the instruments of inward and outward intuition, of developing all their capacities, of testing and exercising one's self in them, till one's whole nature became one complex medium of reception, towards the vision—the 'beatific vision', if we really cared to make it such—of our actual experience in the world." 1

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 100-101
A confirmed follower, then, of Epicurus, Marius was destined soon to go to Rome, where he was to come in contact with another great philosophy becoming at that time a serious rival of Epicureanism, namely that of the Stoic doctrine, which he met in its most delightful form in the person of the emperor, Marcus Aurelius.

How is this related to the spiritual development of Walter Pater himself? In reality, Marius has reached at this point, the same philosophic conception at which Pater had arrived in the Conclusion to the Studies in the History of the Renaissance. In the Conclusion, Pater is an advocate of "Life as the end of life." He realizes the terrible shortness of the time that we are allowed to spend in this world, and it is his determination to expand that life by getting from the present moment all the beautiful impressions and pleasant sensations possible. Like Marius, he would make his life a long series of pleasures by the active enjoyment of every moment in it. Those who spend their time in art and song will have a richer and fuller life, he thinks. Thus, art should be pursued for its own sake. In tracing the further development of Marius' spiritual history, we shall see how Pater himself changed this conception of philosophy into
something of greater scope, for, just as he has given us a picture of himself as a youth in the young Marius, so will he give us an account of his own mature philosophy in the later life of Marius.

Augustus was pleased to have soon after this an old friend of his, who was ready to offer him a place as an emissary to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. His first introduction to the great city was in the evening before the triumph accorded to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Vero for their victory in the East. On this day, he had the opportunity of witnessing this triumph and of hearing Marcus Aurelius give an address harmonized with Stoic philosophy in the people.

This was Marius' first contact with Augustus, through the person of the philosopher propertus, who was able to present the main tenets of this philosophy to him in a very appealing and persuasive way. The facts were clearly explained to him, and he left Rome with a better understanding of the man himself and his contributions to Augustus.
CHAPTER IV

ROME AND STOICISM

Marius was called to Rome soon after this by an old friend of his father, who was ready to offer him a place as an amanuensis to the emperor, Marcus Aurelius. His first introduction to the great city was on the evening before the triumph awarded to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus for their victories in the East. Next day, he had the opportunity of witnessing this triumph and of hearing Marcus Aurelius give an address impregnated with Stoic philosophy to the people.

This was Marius' first contact with Stoicism, through the person of the philosophic emperor, who was able to present the main tenets of this philosophy to him in a very appealing way. Later, Marius was to hear the Stoic ideals explained by the famous rhetorician, Cornelius Fronto, and, through him, he was to come to a better knowledge and understanding of the philosophic scheme which was to color his own
In developing the systematic scheme of Stoic philosophy, chief credit must be given to Zeno of Citium, a Phoenician, who spent the greater part of his life as a teacher in Athens. Although Zeno and other leading Stoics divided philosophy into three branches, logic, physics, and ethics, they placed the greatest emphasis on ethics. The method of relating these three divisions is as follows:

"The chief good is virtue; virtue is 'life according to nature' (a saying of Speusippus and Xenocrates); a true life according to nature must depend upon the having a right conception of nature; but a true conception of nature is reached only in a certain way—by a certain method, and by the application of a certain standard or criterion. The science of the good is ethics; of nature, physics; of methods and criterion of knowledge, logic."  

The first principle of Stoic ethics is to live life according to nature. But the student may well ask, what is life according to nature? The term "nature" was expanded to mean both human nature and the particular nature of the individual. Thus, life according to nature means in reality life according to a social order, "for nature is but a synonym for

1. Burt, Brief History of Greek Philosophy, p. 199
reason, and society is but a natural off-spring of reason, the common nature of mankind.\(^1\)

For a rational being, then, virtue or reason is the only good and vice the only evil. All other things, such as sickness, pain, poverty, life, death, property are of no particular concern to the individual. The only true virtue lies in freedom from disturbance, repose of spirit, and inward independence. Passions, particularly, must be controlled. Pleasure must never be thought the highest good, nor must it ever be sought for its own sake. It may be the consequence of our actions if our actions are of the right kind, but never the aim of action. The ideal is to be perfectly independent of everything, which does not influence the moral nature, and to rise above the external relations and bodily conditions of life.\(^2\)

The Stoic felt himself closely connected with other individuals of his kind. He believed that he was a part of a universal whole and that he was pledged to work for this entire social group. All rational beings are ho-

1. Burt, Brief History of Greek Philosophy, p. 207
2. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 345
mogeneous and have equal rights and are under the control of the same laws of reason and of nature. The two primary conditions of society, then, are justice and humanity. So greatly did the Stoics feel this emphasis on the common humanity of mankind that they stressed the connection of a man with the whole of humanity as more important than his connection with his nation. We are all citizens of one state and members of one body.

According to their philosophy of nature, the Stoics conceived of a universal humanity of man, of the world as a community made up of gods and men. To the laws of this community we must give absolute submission. In reality, the Stoics believed that there was only one god rather than many. He is the principle of good or reason, "the all pervading fire, the soul and seminal principle of the world." God created the world out of his own substance and it will again be absorbed into that. The human soul is a part of the universal soul, and after death will be eventually dissolved into this substance from which it was born. All the mythological tales of Roman religion dealing with

1. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 253
2. Ibid., p. 244
3. Ibid., p. 244
many gods were really treating of one god in different aspects. Thus, God might be worshipped directly in the form of Zeus, or indirectly in the form of other gods, which are only evidences of his divine power made visible to us in stars, elements, fruit, and grain, in great men and benefactors of mankind.

The most important result of Stoic logical thought was that it produced a carefully worked out system of dialectic, really a two-fold system, for, on the one hand, it dealt with ideas, and, on the other, with the expressions of those ideas. The Stoics believed that ideas are originated from sensation or the working of sensations upon the mind. Perceptions cause certain impressions upon the soul, which, remaining in the soul, become memories, from which general conceptions or notions arise. Thus, the criterion of knowledge is perception. Since we can only know what we perceive, perceptions or ideas give us certain knowledge of real objects. In the method of expressing these ideas, the Stoics developed a theory of deduction with particular emphasis on hypothetical and disjunctive syllogisms.

1. Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, p. 254
2. Ibid., p. 238
(1) Contact with Marcus Aurelius

(A) Discourse on the Vanity of Human Ambitions

This was the type of philosophy of which Marius found so strong an advocate in Marcus Aurelius. His first contact with the philosophy of the emperor was in the discourse delivered to the people on the day of his memorable triumph. The sum and substance of this speech was the Stoical ideal of indifference to things of the material world, and of the shortness and lack of permanency in human life, and the folly of human ambition.

"Art thou in love with men's praises, get thee into the very soul of them, and see what judges they be, even in those matters which concern themselves. Wouldst thou have their praise after death, bethink thee, that they who shall come hereafter, and with whom thou wouldst survive by thy great name, will be but as these, whom here thou hast found so hard to live with." 1

"Bethink thee often, in all contentions public and private, of those whom men have remembered by reason of their anger and vehement spirit—those famous rages, and the occasions of them—the great fortunes, and misfortunes, of men's strife of old. What are they all now, and the dust of their battles? Dust and ashes indeed; a fable, a mythus, or not so much

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 142
as that. Yes! keep those before thine eyes who took this
or that, the like of which happeneth to thee, so hardly;
were so querulous, so agitated. And where again are they?
Wouldst thou have it not otherwise with thee?

"Consider how quickly all things vanish away—their
bodily structure into the general substance; the very me-
mory of them into that great gulf and abyss of past thoughts.
Ahi! 'tis on a tiny space of earth thou art creeping through
life—a pigmy soul carrying a dead body to its grave." 1

Marius could not but feel the great difference in
this apathetic attitude toward life and his own eagerness
to get the most from every moment. In this he found his
first great point of dissidence with the emperor's ideal.

"Marius could but contrast all that with his own
Cyrenaic eagerness; just then, to taste and see and touch; reflect-
ing on the opposite issues deducible from the same text. 'The
world, within me and without, flows away like a river,' he had
said; 'therefore let me make the most of what is here and now,'
'The world and the thinker upon it, are consumed like a flame,'
said Aurelius, 'therefore will I turn away my eyes from van-
ity; renounce; withdraw myself alike from all affections.' " 2

To Marius, there was something mediocre in this phil-
osophy which seemed to make no effort to improve the life
about us, but only to seek to ignore and withdraw from mater-
ial sufferings.

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 145
2. Ibid., p. 142
(B) At the Gladiatorial Show

This thought came to Marius much more forcibly, when, sometime later, he attended a gladiatorial show in the arena, at which he had an opportunity of observing Aurelius, who was also present.

The spectacle presented at this time was in celebration of a festival in honor of Diana, who was thought of as the Deity of Slaughter, one who brought sudden death and rabies upon wild animals. Thus, as many such animals as possible had been brought to the arena to be killed by horrible torture for the amusement of the spectators. Also, as an added feature, a number of condemned criminals were put to death by having their skin flayed from their bodies, and it was thought highly amusing to watch the expression on the faces of the victims while this operation was being performed.

Marius was utterly sickened by the exhibition of extreme cruelty and horrible suffering which he saw there before him. But what was Aurelius' attitude toward all this?

"And Marius, weary and indignant, feeling iso-
lated in the great slaughter-house, could not but observe that, in his habitual complaisance to Lucius Verus, who, with loud shouts of applause from time to time, lounged beside him, Aurelius had sat impassibly through all the hours Marius himself had remained there. For the most part indeed, the emperor had actually averted his eyes from the show, reading, or writing on matters of public business, but had seemed, after all, indifferent. He was revolving, perhaps, that old Stoic paradox of the Imperceptibility of pain; which might serve as an excuse, should those savage popular humours ever again turn against men and women. 1

This attitude was one with which Marius found it impossible to sympathize. That innate sense of pity which had become apparent in his nature even in childhood could not allow him to feel indifferent to any spectacle of suffering. That Marcus Aurelius could ignore it seemed to Marius to mark him as an inferior.

"There was something in a tolerance such as this, in the bare fact that he could sit patiently through a scene like this, which seemed to Marius to mark Aurelius as his inferior now and forever on the question of righteousness; to set them on opposite sides, in some great conflict, of which that difference was but a single presentment. 2

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 170
2. Ibid., p. 170
So far, Marius' ideal had been that of trusting the eye and striving to be always correct as to his impressions of the outward world. Now he began to recognize that there was a question of righteousness which must be considered and that there were some things which were not worthy of being looked upon.

"Surely evil was a real thing and the wise man wanting in the sense of it, where not to have been by instinctive election on the right side was to have failed in life." 1

Thus, this disgusting spectacle of the gladiatorial show and Marcus Aurelius' indifference to it served to arouse in Marius' mind the conception that right and wrong are great powers in the world and that he must begin to consider something other than the mere emphasis upon the power of sensation as his guide in life.

(C) Marcus Aurelius' Diary

Shortly after this new mode of thought and

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 172
purpose of life had begun to take form in Marius' mind, he had a rare opportunity of reading a diary or commentary on the history of the times written by Marcus Aurelius for the guidance of his son, Commodus. Here, Marius came to find something more congenial to his own spirit and thought. He felt, as he read it, that he had met for the first time a soul as delicate and refined as his own.

The thing, which impressed Marius most in this manuscript was Aurelius' reiteration over and over again of the presence of a divine or spiritual companion just behind the veil, which he felt to be always with him.

"There could be no inward conversation with one's self such as this, unless there was indeed someone else aware of our actual thoughts and feelings, pleased or displeased at one's disposition of one's self."

It was the purpose of Aurelius to keep his mind constantly fit and ready for the reception of this guest. A soul, which was thus disposed, always ready to receive this guest, had really risen above the common pleasures and ambitions of life into a higher and purer existence.

1 Marius the Epicurean, p. 206
Marius could not fail to feel as he read this document that there was a certain sadness and melancholy in Aurelius' life. His whole nature seemed burdened with sorrow. What cheerfulness he did have seemed to be a sort of resignation to the misery of the world, but not a true happiness. His philosophy was certainly not a happy one.

Although he was deeply impressed with Aurelius' idea of a divine companionship, Marius found himself in absolute disagreement with him on one point. In the emperor, he found a despiser of the body, one who believed that no suffering or sensation of the body should be allowed to break in upon the meditations of the mind.

"Since it is the peculiar privilege of reason to move within herself, and to be proof against corporeal impressions, suffering neither sensation nor passion to break in upon her; it follows that the true interest of the spirit must ever be to treat the body, well, as a corpse attached thereto, rather than as a living companion—may, actually to promote its dissolution." 

In fact, Marcus Aurelius even advocated suicide.

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 210
"'Tis part of the business of life to lose it handsomely," he says.

To Marius, of course, this idea was abhorrent. There must really be some diseased thought in the emperor's mind to produce in it so unhealthy a view, he felt. Marius had always found a great delight in the beauty of the human body and the power of bodily sensation had always been of utmost importance in the development of his philosophy.

From his contact with Marcus Aurelius, then, Marius had learned of two important tenets of Stoic philosophy; first, that of indifference to bodily suffering and the things of the material world; and, secondly, the presence of a divine companion present in all things, really the presence of the spirit of the one god, which is able to manifest itself in all forms of nature and even in mankind. Marius cannot be in sympathy with the apathetic attitude of indifference to pain and suffering in the world. He is disgusted with this quality in the emperor. Yet, from observing it in others,

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 210
he himself learned of the existence of the principle of right and wrong in the world, which must be reckoned with.

(2) Contact with Fronto

In his contact with Stoical philosophy in the great rhetorician, Cornelius Fronto, Marius caught a more noble view of Stoic philosophy and a conception of righteousness which wrought a profound change in his own philosophic thinking.

He found the expression of Fronto's Stoicism in an address given to the people for the purpose of instructing them in morals. Here, for the first time, he encountered the Stoic ideal of the common humanity of man, "of a universal commonwealth of mind, which becomes explicit, and as if incarnate, in a select communion of just men made perfect." 1

"--the world is as it were a commonwealth, a city; and there are observances, customs, usages, actually current in it, things our friends and companions will expect of us, as the condition of our living there with them at all, as really their peers or fellow-citizens. Those observances were, indeed, the creation of a visible or invisible

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 179
aristocracy in it, whose actual manners, whose preferences from of old, become now a weighty tradition as to the way in which things should or should not be done, are like a music, to which the intercourse of life proceeds—such a music as no one who had once caught its harmonies would willingly jar.

It seemed to Marius that Fronto was speaking directly to him, for he proceeded to picture for his hearers a follower of Epicurean or Stoic philosophy who was trying to work out for himself a relationship between duty and righteousness, a principle which would give unity of motive to life. Such a one he felt,

"—knows for how much the manner, because the heart itself, counts, in doing a kindness. He goes beyond most people in his care for all weakly creatures; judging, instinctively, that to be but sentient is to possess rights. He conceives of a hundred duties, though he may not call them by that name, of the existence of which purely duteous souls may have no suspicion. He has a kind of pride in doing more than they, in a way of his own."

Righteousness, Fronto stressed was but a following of the will of this gentle, invisible commonwealth of humanity, "of the royal or lawgiving element in it." It is recognizing duties toward our fellow men and performing

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 180
2. Ibid., p. 178-179
3. Ibid., p. 180
them with pride. It is serving and caring for those who are weaker than ourselves.

This conception of humanity as a great community and of the eternal brotherhood of man had a profound influence upon Marius. It caused him to ponder deeply upon his own philosophic attitude, to probe it for weaknesses. It seemed to him, after careful study, that there was a certain narrowness in his Cyrenaic philosophy. There had been something of ardent youthful selfishness in it, a desire to win for one's self the greatest amount of pleasure that the moment can offer, to increase the power of the senses to receive impressions in order that life may be filled to the utmost with beauty for the enjoyment of the individual. This new philosophy;

"--defined not so much a change of practice, as of sympathy--a new departure, an expansion of sympathy. It involved, certainly, some curtailment of his liberty, in concession to the actual manner, the distinctions, the enactments of that great crowd of admirable spirits, who have elected so, and not otherwise, in their conduct of life, and are not here to give one, so to term it, an 'indulgence'."

Marius felt that he must make this concession, that

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 192
he must subordinate many of his own desires for the benefit of society as a whole. He must have broad sympathy for his fellow man. This ideal is now taking precedence in his mind over that of the Cyrenaic emphasis on the pleasure of the moment in the enjoyment of life.

Marius had thus met Stoic philosophy at its best in these two great minds. In Marcus Aurelius, he learned of the ideal of the apathetic indifference to bodily pain and the ignoring of things of the material world, and of the conception of the spirit of God which reveals itself in many forms in the world about us, and is constantly with us, a divine companion. From Fronto he became acquainted with the Stoic idea of the common humanity and commonwealth of man to which we owe certain duties and obligations. In absorbing these ideas, Marius was departing a considerable distance from his Cyrenaic or Epicurean philosophy of the pleasure of the moment for its own sake and was learning of duties which he owed to mankind, in the fulfilling of which he must curtail some of his personal liberty; and, besides this, he was developing a sympathy for his fellow man. In fact his mind seemed prepared for the influence of Christianity, which we find claiming his attention next.
CHAPTER V

TO THE THRESHOLD OF CHRISTIANITY

Thus far, Marius had come in contact with Christianity only through his friendship with the Roman knight, Cornelius, whom he first met on his journey from his old home to Rome, when both happened to stop at the same inn to pass the night. There was something so honorable and upright in the figure of this handsome Christian youth, clad in his military dress, that Marius was instinctively drawn to him. They became friends at once, and remained so to the end of Marius' life.

Marius had the opportunity on the following day of seeing Cornelius fit himself up in his military array, and he was fascinated as he looked upon the gleaming pieces of armor and saw them fastened on one at a time. It was the beauty of Cornelius' figure, then, which impressed Marius particularly at this time.

"As he gleamed there, amid that odd interchange of light and shade, with the staff of a silken standard firm in his hand, Marius felt as if he were face to face for the first
time with some new knighthood or chivalry, just then coming into the world."

Thus, in his first glimpse of Christianity, Marius was impressed with its peculiar outward beauty. It touched him through the medium of his senses as all things of moment were to do throughout his life. As yet, however, he had not been deeply influenced by this new religion.

Soon, Marius was to go through a series of experiences which were to bring him to the very doorway of Christianity. Had not death cut him off at this point, he might have taken the final step and become a true Christian. We cannot predict what his further development might have been.

(1) The Divine Companion

The first of these experiences came to Marius as he was traveling through the Sabine hills on a short vacation. He had stopped at an inn to have the trappings of his horse repaired. As he sat in the olive garden attached

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 120
to the inn to rest, it seemed to him that all the thoughts and meditations over which he had been pondering all day became crystallized into an ideal of a divine presence or companion which had always been beside him, sharing in his joys and sorrows, sympathizing with him in trouble, rejoicing in his happiness. Marius had never had this feeling so strongly in connection with himself, and it brought him a sense of great satisfaction. He seemed to have found a spiritual presence at work in all things, "creator", a conception bordering closely on the Christian ideal of an omnipresent God.

"A bird came and sang among the wattled hedges; an animal feeding crept nearer; the child who kept it was gazing quietly; and the scene and the hours still conspired, he passed from that mere fantasy of a self not himself, beside him in his coming and going, to those divinations of a living and companionable spirit at work in all things, of which he had become aware from time to time in his old philosophic readings—in Plato and others, last but not least, in Aurelius. Through one reflection upon another, he passed from such instinctive divinations, to the thoughts which give them logical consistency, formulating at last, as the necessary exponent of our own and the world's life, that reasonable Ideal to which the Old Testament gives the name of Creator, which for the philosophers of Greece is the Eternal Reason, and in the New Testament the Father of Men—even as one builds up from act and words and expression of the friend actually vi-
sible at one's side, an ideal of the spirit within him." 1

Although Marius never again felt this divine companionship so strongly, he carried away a happy memory of that day among the hills which never completely left his mind. He could never again feel really alone after having experienced the consciousness of divine companionship as he had at that time.

"But for once only to have come under the power of that peculiar mood, to have felt the train of reflections which belong to it really forcible and conclusive, to have been led by them to a conclusion, to have apprehended the Great Ideal, so palpably that it defined personal gratitude and the sense of a friendly hand laid upon him amid the shadows of the world, left this one particular hour a marked point in life never to be forgotten." 2

(2) Meeting with Apuleius

Soon after this, Marius had the opportunity of meeting the great Apuleius, the author of his beloved book,

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 221
2. Ibid., p. 224
The Golden Ass, at a banquet, and enjoyed the pleasure of a conversation with him afterwards. From Apuleius, he heard for the first time the conception of certain beings who are intermediary between gods and men, carrying the prayers of men to the gods, and in other ways acting as mediators.

"Well then there are certain divine powers of a middle nature, through whom our aspirations are conveyed to the gods, and theirs to us. Passing between the inhabitants of earth and heaven, they carry from one to the other prayers and bounties, supplication and assistance, being a kind of interpreters. This interval of the air is full of them! Through them, all revelations, miracles, magic processes, are effected. For, specially appointed members of this order have their special provinces, with a ministry according to the disposition of each."

Thus ran the gist of Apuleius' remarks to Marius. This is, in reality, the Christian doctrine of the angels, who act as the messengers of God and as mediators between men and God. Marius could not accept this view entirely because of his innate insistence on the power of his senses and on the reality of what he could see with the eye.

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 236
Yet, it did give him a conception that there are many facts behind the veil of which he was not yet aware, and that there might be a great world there which he could scarcely conceive of even in imagination. This is just a suggestion of the Christian idea of Heaven.

(3) At Cecilia's House

While he was in this frame of mind, generally receptive to Christianity, Marius went in company with Cornelius to the home of Cecilia, a Christian widow. There he had the opportunity of walking through the catacombs of the family of the Cecillii to whom the house had belonged for generations. In these catacombs, built in a hillside near to the house itself, the dead had been buried, contrary to the usual Roman custom of cremation. Many of these tombs had over them images and memorials of martyrdom, showing that many of the family had died as Christian martyrs. It seemed to Marius that in all these he found the hope of regeneration and escape from the grave.

"Hercules wrestling with death for possession of Alcestis, Orpheus taming the wild beasts, the Shepherd
with his sheep, the Shepherd carrying the sick lamb upon his shoulders. Yet these imageries after all, it must be confessed, formed but a slight contribution to the domin­ate effect of tranquil hope there—a kind of heroic cheer­fulness and grateful expansion of heart, as with the sense, again, of some real deliverance, which seemed to deepen the longer one lingered through these strange and awful passages."

This was the first time that Marius had ever found a religion or mode of thought which really seemed to bring him that sense of having conquered death, of having really lost that old fear which had clung to his mind since childhood. He seemed to emerge quieted by hope.

(4) Two Mass Services

Later Marius witnessed two Christian mass services at Cecilia’s house. The first one he came upon unexpectedly, when he went there early in the morning seeking Cornelius. It was the great beauty of the service with the white robed priest officiating, and the majestic chanting of the congre­gation which impressed Marius so deeply. Yet, at the same time he seemed to feel that there was something here which

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 247
touched his understanding and intellect as they had never been touched before.

"In the old pagan worship there had been little to call the understanding into play. Here, on the other hand, the utterance, the eloquence, the music of worship conveyed, as Marius readily understood, a fact or series of facts, for intellectual reception. That became more evident, more especially, in those lessons, or sacred readings, which, like the singing, in broken vernacular Latin, occurred at certain intervals, amid the silence of the assembly. There were readings again, with bursts of chanted invocation between for fuller light on a difficult path, in which many a vagrant voice of human philosophy, haunting men's minds from of old, recur- ed with clearer accent than had ever belonged to it before, as if lifted, above its first intention, into the harmonies of some supreme system of knowledge or doctrine, at length complete." 1

"Was it this?" Marius asked himself, "Was it this made the way of Cornelius so pleasant through the world." 2

Marius went away feeling that his soul had never been so satisfied by religious service before.

In the second service to which Marius went of his own accord, because he felt the need for this religious inspiration again, he seemed to catch again an even greater feeling of future conquest over death. A letter from the churches of Lyons and Vienna, telling of the death of hundreds of Christian martyrs, was read to the congregation, but, in-

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 267-268
2. Ibid., p. 272
stead of being oppressed with sadness, they seemed to feel a sort of joy and exaltation that these people had died gloriously for the sake of the church.

"Amid stifled sobbing, even as the pathetic words of the psalter relieved the tension of their hearts, the people around him still wore upon their faces their habitual gleam of joy, of placid satisfaction. They were still under the influence of an immense gratitude in thinking, even amid their present distress, of the hour of a great deliverance."

It was their power of keeping their cheerful spirit of belief in deliverance in the very face of calamity that impressed Marius so much.

On this same day, Marius was also present at the burial of a child in this house, and he observed again that, even in intense grief, the placid satisfaction of mind and spirit of exaltation in these Christian folk could not be crushed.

(5) Suffering in the Streets of Rome

During these great experiences, Marius was also

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 306
growing in sympathy and pity for suffering mankind. This sense was increased as he noted unhappiness and misery in the life about him in the city of Rome.

First, there was a fine race-horse, which had been hurt in some part of its body and was being led away to slaughter. It seemed to know its fate, such imploring looks did it cast upon the bystanders as it passed. It was almost human in its misery. Next, he noted a poor old peasant woman, who was being abandoned by her kindred and left to be cared for in a home for the afflicted. How she implored and begged them to take her home again! Then, Marius saw a little boy, who had been forced to begin work early in life and had been cruelly injured by a fall from some brick work. With an effort, he was riding home bravely on his father's shoulders. Though Marius knew that everything would be done to keep the child alive, yet there would be a great sense of relief when death released his spirit from his poor shattered body.

All of these incidents served to arouse in Marius a conviction that the world and we ourselves are made for suffering. We must therefore, try to relieve the misery of common humanity by sympathizing with and assisting those, who are suffering and in pain as much as possible.
"At all events, the actual conditions of our life being as they are, and the capacity for suffering so large a principle in things—since the only principle, perhaps, to which we may always safely trust is a ready sympathy with the pain one actually sees—it follows that the practical and effective difference between men will lie in their power of insight into those conditions, their power of sympathy." 1

Insight, now, has come to be an understanding for and sympathy with suffering humanity, not a means of learning how to increase one's own capacity for receiving pleasant impressions of the outward world. In fact, Marius is forgetting himself more and more in his greater interest in the great brotherhood of men about him.

(6) Conversation between Lucian and Hermotimus

About this time, Marius had the opportunity of hearing a conversation between the brilliant Lucian, the famous author of the Dialogues of the Gods, and a young philosophical student, Hermotimus.

Lucian, himself, is believed to have been born at

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 302
Samosata about 125 A.D. In his work entitled The Dream, he tells us much of his own life. He says that he became an apprentice to his uncle, who was a sculptor, but grew tired of the work, and gave it up, becoming a rhetorician. He travelled much in Italy and Greece, speaking and giving declamations. Later, he became a writer of satire, for which he grew to be very famous, his best known satires being, perhaps, the Dialogues of the Gods, and the Dialogues of the Dead.  

In the original Hermotimus of Lucian, Hermotimus is represented as an old man, who has spent twenty years of his life in the study of philosophy but has found nothing which has given him satisfaction or which seems to be the true philosophic conception of life. Pater draws heavily from the Hermotimus in describing the conversation between Lucian and Hermotimus, but he has deviated from the original in one particular essential in that he has made Hermotimus a young man, who is just beginning the study of philosophy rather than one, who has spent his life in philosophical studies to no avail. He has therefore

made Hermotimus, with youthful ardor, demand from Lucian an explanation of how a young student may know which philosopher can offer him the true solution of the mystery of life, and the highest ideal for conduct. Lucian, by skillful questioning, finally leads Hermotimus to the conclusion that we can never know certainly which philosophy is the true one, for all philosophers are seeking the means of gaining the greatest amount of happiness for themselves, and what seems the best means to a happy life for one seems all wrong to another. So Marius came to realize that he, too, could not be sure that he was following the true philosophy. Yet, he had faith in this new and enlarged charity toward human kind, which had come into his life, bringing him a new satisfaction and gratitude.

Just at this point, when Marius seemed to be ready for further development in the Christian ideal, his death came with surprising suddenness. He had returned to his old home to have some work done on preparing a mausoleum for the remains of members of his family, and had set out again on the return journey to Rome in company with Cornelius and other Christians.
The party stopped to pass the night in a village where the plague was raging among the inhabitants. While they were there, a terrible shock of earthquake occurred, causing much terror among the townsfolk. Believing that the presence of the hated Christians had been responsible for the disaster, they took the little group, including Marius, prisoner. It was agreed that certain of the prisoners, because of their rank, might be taken to the chief town of the district or even to Rome itself for trial. Marius and Cornelius, thus, with some of the others, set out on the long journey to Rome under military guard. It was believed that one of the prisoners was not a Christian, and Marius, one night, taking advantage of this fact, bribed one of the guards to permit Cornelius, as the innocent person, to go free in order that he might return to Rome and prepare a means of defense for Marius, when he arrived at Rome for trial. This move undoubtedly hastened Marius' death, if it did not cause it altogether, for the hardships of the march soon brought on the illness which was to prove to be his last.

This was the first time that Marius had ever
really performed a self-sacrifice for the sake of someone else. It brought him a great sense of joy in the recognition of his own power. He felt that he had reached a great critical moment in his life and that he had had the strength to meet it properly.

"At last, the great act, the critical moment itself comes easily, almost unconsciously. Another motion of the clock, and our fatal line—the great climacteric point—has been passed, which changes ourselves or our lives. In one quarter of an hour, under a sudden, uncontrollable impulse, hardly weighing what he did, almost as a matter of course, and as lightly as one hires a bed for one's night's rest on a journey, Marius had taken upon himself all the heavy risk of the position in which Cornelius had then been—the long and wearisome delays of judgment, which were possible; the danger and wretchedness of a long journey in this manner; possibly the danger of death. He had delivered his brother, after the manner he had sometimes vaguely anticipated as a kind of distinction in his destiny; though indeed always with a wistful calculation as to what it might cost him; and in the first moment after the thing was actually done, he felt only satisfaction at his courage, at the discovery of his possession of nerve."

Marius, however, was not destined to have to stand trial. A few days later, the military guard left him dying of a burning fever, with some country people, who, as it happened, were Christians, themselves.

1. Marius the Epicurean, p. 323-324
In the intervals of consciousness, which came to Marius as he drifted away into his eternal sleep, he seemed to catch the conception that, after all, he had not failed in life. He had sought always for insight, a vision of the perfect life, and it had come to him in these last few months in his ideal of a perfection of humanity in which all would be conscious of the universal commonwealth of men and of the duties and obligations laid upon them as members of that common community of man. And, again and again, the feeling came to him of some divine presence at his side bringing to him a sense of gratification.

Thus were Marius' last meditations as death gently came down upon him and carried away his soul, which seemed now almost truly Christian. "Anima Christiana," "A Christian soul," the country people said of him, as they laid his remains to rest in the evening with Christian burial rites.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

When we consider Marius' philosophy as a child and that at the time of his death, we get a glimpse of how far he had developed in his lifetime. All the events of his early days, those bits of old Roman life, the old religious services, the happenings of his peaceful childhood in the old Roman villa, White Nights, which Pater has handled so dexterously, served to strengthen in him an innate love of beauty, reaching him through the senses and caused him to put a great emphasis upon the eye as the determining influence of his life. Marius, like the young Pater, himself, had developed into an Epicurean by the time he had reached early manhood. According to his philosophy, he accepted the senses as the criteria of determining the truth of his impressions of the outward world. It was his intention to educate himself so that he might expand his life by increasing his ability to appreciate all pleasurable sensations of beauty in the outer world. To get from every moment all the pleasure possible was his ideal.

Then came his contact with Stoicism in his association with Marcus
Aurelius and Cornelius Fronto. This did much to broaden his views and to lead him away from a selfish desire to get the greatest amount of pleasure for himself from life toward a recognition of his duties to his fellow men and toward a greater understanding of right and wrong. Thus, in this frame of mind, did he come under the influence of Christianity, which served to inculcate in his mind the ideal of striving to relieve the suffering of humanity and of self-sacrifice for another as the highest perfection toward which the human soul might aspire. So did he die, with this thought in his mind, believing that he had caught a vision of the perfect life.

Since Marius, at the end of his school days has reached the philosophic conception, which Pater has portrayed in the Conclusion to the Studies in the History of the Renaissance, we know that he is really picturing himself in the young Marius. The development, then, in Marius' philosophical thought is indicative of the change which took place in Pater's own philosophy after the publication of the Studies in the History of the Renaissance.

Pater never wholly gives up his love of beauty for its own sake, nor does he cease to rely upon his senses as the
means of recording impressions. He has Marius keep his love of sensual beauty to the end of his life. In fact, it is the beauty of the Christian mass service, which first attracted him to Christianity and first brought him under its influence. Still, although Pater never relinquished his ideal of searching for beauty in the outer world, he ceases to make it the chief aim of his life, just as Marius did after becoming fully acquainted with Stoic philosophy. Rather, his greatest interest becomes that of a sympathy for suffering humanity as a duty, which must be fulfilled. He has outgrown the rather selfish Cyrenaic philosophy of his eager youth and has undergone a certain spiritual growth and development, which brought him into sympathy with his fellow men. Like Marius he has become truly "Anima Christiana."
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