

**ENGLISH MEN OF
LETTERS;
WALTER PATER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649730865

English Men of Letters; Walter Pater by A. C. Benson

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

A. C. BENSON

**ENGLISH MEN OF
LETTERS;
WALTER PATER**

ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS

WALTER PATER

BY

A. C. BENSON

FELLOW OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

LONDON: MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SIX

PREFACE

IN the absence of any official biography of Walter Pater, it has been necessary to collect information as to the events of his life from his relatives and friends. My thanks are due, in the first place, to Miss Pater and Miss Clara Pater, his sisters, who have given me the most kind and courteous assistance throughout; to Dr. Shadwell, Provost of Oriel, Pater's oldest friend and literary executor, of whose sympathy and interest it is impossible to speak too gratefully; to Dr. Bussell, Vice-Principal of Brasenose, who has communicated to me many important particulars; to Mr. Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen; to Dr. Daniel, Provost of Worcester, and Mrs. Daniel; to Mr. Basil Champneys; to Mr. Humphry Ward, formerly Fellow of Brasenose; to Mr. Douglas Ainslie; to Miss Paget (Vernon Lee), and others who have put their recollections at my disposal; to Mr. Edmund Gosse, who has permitted me to use his published materials; to Mr. Howard Sturgis and Mr. C. Fairfax Murray for careful criticism; to Miss Beatrice Layman, who has given me invaluable help in verification and correction.

The books and articles which I have consulted, and to some of which reference is made in the following

pages, are the original editions of Pater's volumes, of various dates, and the Collected Edition of his works, edited by Dr. Shadwell, 1902-1904 (Macmillan and Co.); *Essays from the Guardian*, privately printed in 1896, and since published, 1901 (Macmillan and Co.); *A Short History of Modern English Literature*, 1898 (Heinemann); *Critical Kit-Kats*, 1896 (Heinemann), and an article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1895 (Smith, Elder, and Co.), by Mr. Edmund Gosse; *Walter Pater*, by Mr. Ferris Greenslet, in the *Contemporary Men of Letters Series*, 1904 (Heinemann); an essay, *Walter Pater*, in *Studies in Prose and Verse*, by Mr. Arthur Symonds, 1904 (J. M. Dent); and an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, "The Work of Mr. Pater," by Lionel Johnson, September 1894 (Chapman and Hall).

A. C. R.

100

100

100

100

100

100

WALTER PATER

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

VERY little is recorded and still less is known about the pedigree of Pater. It is only in the main line of families that are established in ancestral estates, and whose home is inherited by a succession of heirs, that family traditions are apt to accumulate.

The name Pater is uncommon in England, and not at all uncommon in Holland, the Dutch frequently latinising their names; this, and the fact that a Dutch Admiral of that name settled in England at the time of William of Orange, made some members of the Pater family think they were originally of Dutch extraction; but this has never been verified. In a journey through Holland, Walter Pater was much interested in a picture at Amsterdam, by Van der Helst, of archers, with a tablet giving the names of the winners in a contest of skill; at the top of the list stands the name Pater.

The forefathers of Walter Pater were living at Weston-Underwood, near Olney in Buckinghamshire, the home of Cowper, in the eighteenth century, and some verses in the handwriting of the poet were preserved by their descendants. One of the Olney Paters emigrated to America; and here Richard Glode Pater, the father

of Walter Pater, was born. Early in the nineteenth century the household returned to England, settling at Shadwell, between Wapping and Stepney; and here Richard Pater practised medicine, careless of money and success alike, a man of unobtrusive benevolence, labouring at the relief of suffering among poor people, who often could not afford to pay for his advice. Here he married a Miss Hill: four children were born to him, two sons, of whom the elder, William Thompson Pater, became a doctor and died in 1887, and two daughters. Walter Horatio Pater was born in 1839, on August 4th. Dr. Richard Pater died so early that his famous son could hardly remember him. After his death the household moved to Enfield, and here at an old house, now demolished, with a big garden, in the neighbourhood of Chase Side, the children were brought up. This quiet life was varied by visits to a place called Fish Hall, near Hadlow in Kent, the residence of Walter Pater's cousin and godmother, Mrs. Walter May.

(It is stated in biographical notices of Pater that for some generations the sons of the family had been brought up as Catholics, the daughters as Anglicans. But this has been too much insisted upon; as a matter of fact the Roman Catholicism in the family was of late date. Walter Pater's great-grandfather was a convert, having married a lady of great piety and sweetness, whose mother's maiden name was Gage, belonging to an old Roman Catholic family in Suffolk. Richard Pater, Walter's father, quitted the Roman Church before his marriage, and adopted no particular form of faith; and Walter Pater was brought up as an Anglican.

At the age of fourteen the boy was sent to the King's School, Canterbury, where he seems to have

been regarded at first as idle and backward; but he was popular in spite of an entire indifference to games. Not till he entered the sixth form did his intellectual ambition awaken.

It would be interesting to know something of the thoughts of this grave, silent, and friendly boy through the impressionable years; but, like many boys of ability, he was affected by a sensitive shyness, a reticence about his inner thoughts. Cheerful, lively, chattering children, who too often, alas! degenerate into the bores of later life, can generally talk easily and unaffectedly about their tastes and interests, and blithely reveal the slender sparkling stream of their thoughts. But with boys of perceptive and meditative temperaments it is mostly far otherwise. They find themselves overmastered by feelings which they cannot express, and which they are ashamed of trying to express for fear of being thought eccentric. Pater was always apt to be reticent about his own interior feelings, and confided them only to the more impersonal medium of his writings. He had no taste at any time for indulging in reminiscence, and tended rather to be the recipient of other people's thoughts, which he welcomed and interpreted with ready sympathy, than to be garrulous about the details of his own life, which, with characteristic humility, he was disposed to consider destitute of interest.

But one trait of character does undoubtedly emerge. He was instinctively inclined to a taste for symbolical ceremony of every kind. In the family circle he was fond of organising little processional poms, in which the children were to move with decorous solemnity. He looked forward to taking orders in the Church of England; and this bias was strengthened by a visit he paid, as a little boy, to a house of some friends at