

playing ball than of his Latin and Greek, and that he sinned in transgressing the commands of his parents and masters. Yet he could not forget that he had been dedicated to Christ from his birth—"sealed with the mark of His cross, and salted with His salt." He complains of the immoral teachings of the pagan writers, and the "wine of error was drunk," he says, "from the golden vessel of the classic poets." Freed from the restraints of home and exposed to the temptations of the dissolute city of Carthage, with its large pagan population, where there sang all around in his ears, he says, a chorus of unholy passions, Augustine plunged into a career of dissipation and sin, which he records with keenest self-upbraidings and compunctions of soul.

Such was the effect of the evil companionships with which he "walked the streets of Babylon," as he expresses it, "and wallowed in the mire thereof, that he was ashamed to be less vicious than they, and made himself appear worse than he really was, that he might not be dispraised." He describes a youthful escapade in which, with a set of wild young students, he robbed an orchard of pears, not for eating, for they flung them to the hogs, but for very joy of the theft and sin itself. And he falls into deep metaphysical moralizing upon innate depravity and the strange human love of sin.

The attractions of the theatre, with its pernicious pleasures and miserable felicities, also carried him away. "What marvel was it that, a forlorn sheep, straying from Thy flock, and impatient of Thy keeping, I became infected with a foul disease? My life being such, was it life, O my God?"

Augustine was first arrested in his sinful course, as Milman remarks, "not by the solemn voice of religion, but by the gentler remonstrances of pagan literature. It was the 'Hortensius' of Cicero which awoke his mind to nobler aspirations, and the contempt of worldly enjoyments."

"But philosophy," continues the historian, "could not satisfy the lofty desires which it had awakened; he panted for some better hopes and more satisfactory objects of study. He turned to the religion of his parents, but his mind was not subdued to a feeling for the inimitable beauty of the New Testament. Its simplicity of style appeared rude after the stately march of Tully's eloquence. But Manichæism seized at once upon his

kindled imagination. For nine years, from the age of nineteen to twenty-eight, the mind of Augustine wandered among the vague and fantastic reveries of Oriental theology."

But his mother, the faithful Monica, watched and prayed and wept over him, more, he writes, than other mothers weep the bodily deaths of their children. In her sorrow of soul she was comforted by the wise words of a Christian Bishop, who had been himself entangled in the mazes of the false philosophy of Manichæism. "Let him alone," he said, "only pray God for him. Go thy ways and God bless thee, for it is not possible that the son of so many tears can perish."

Till the twenty-eighth year of his age Augustine remained in Carthage, teaching rhetoric and seeking poetic prizes, the fading garlands and the evanescent praise of the theatre. Yet there was an innate nobility about him that would not stoop to the petty arts employed to gain success. Once contending for a prize, a wizard or soothsayer asked what sacrifice he would offer to win. "Through the garland were of imperishable gold," replied the proud spirit, "I would not suffer a fly to be killed to gain it."

About this time Augustine wrote a philosophical treatise on "The Fair and Fit," but little to his own satisfaction. "I turned, O sweet Truth," he says, "to thy inward melody, longing to hearken unto thee, and to rejoice greatly at the Bridegroom's voice, but could not."

The Manichæan heresy in which he had become entangled neither met the deep religious cravings of his soul nor satisfied the demands of his acute and subtle intellect. He was urged by his literary friends to seek a wider scope for his distinguished talents as a teacher of rhetoric, at the capital of the world. But his mother's heart yearned over her wayward son, and she besought him not to leave her. "But I lied to my mother," he writes with bitter self-accusings, "and to such a mother, and escaped. That night I privily departed while she remained weeping and in prayer. For this also, O God, Thou hast mercifully forgiven me."

At Rome he soon won distinction as a teacher of eloquence, and on the recommendation of the orator Symmachus, he received an invitation to practise his profession at the episcopal city of Milan. Here he was brought within the influence of the great Ambrose, whose piety, apostolic