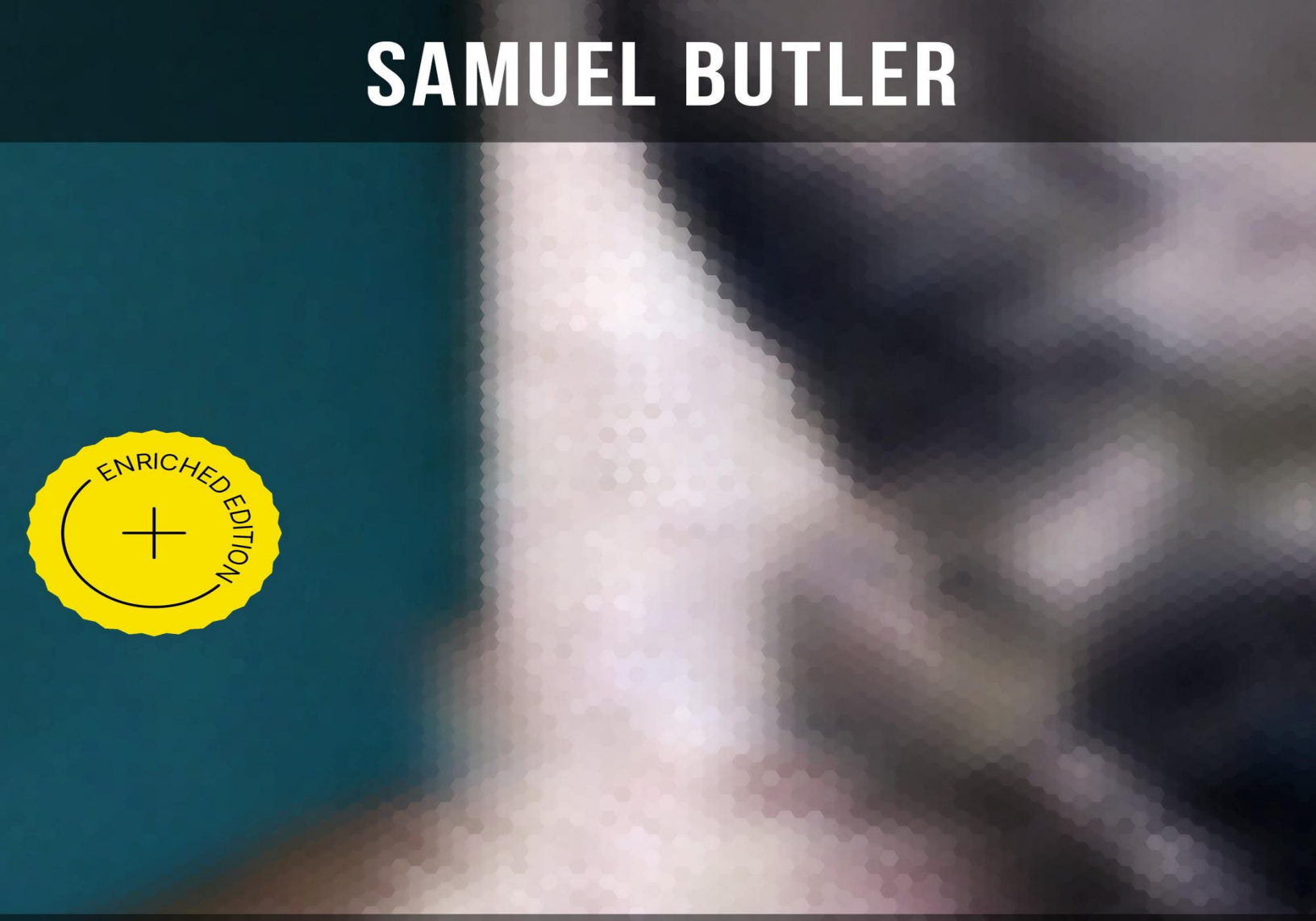
SAMUEL BUTLER



THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

Samuel Butler

The Way of All Flesh

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Troy Whitaker

(Autobiographical Novel)

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Introduction

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In The Way of All Flesh, Samuel Butler charts the perilous passage from inherited obedience to self-directed life, exposing how the comforts of respectability can harden into cages, how love within a well-meaning family can injure as deeply as overt cruelty, and how an individual trained to accept doctrine, routine, and judgment must slowly assemble a conscience sturdy enough to resist, so that the universal friction between what tradition demands and what inner integrity requires becomes not merely a philosophical question but a daily apprenticeship in courage, perception, patience, and the sometimes comic, sometimes painful art of becoming oneself.

First published posthumously in 1903, The Way of All Flesh is a semi-autobiographical novel set in nineteenth-century England, largely within the orbit of a respectable clerical household and its provincial surroundings. Written across the later Victorian decades, it reached readers only after its author’s death, its appearance coinciding with the waning of the culture it scrutinizes. The book blends family chronicle and coming-of-age narrative, tracing the formative pressures that shape a child of piety and ambition into an adult who must evaluate those pressures. Its narrator, an observant older friend, composes a reflective life-story that doubles as a portrait of an era’s domestic ideals.

At its surface, the plot follows Ernest Pontifex from infancy through youth, schooling, and early work, while the narrator arranges episodes that reveal how guidance becomes control and how mistakes teach independence. The voice is

urbane and dryly ironic, alternating gentle sympathy with pointed satire, and the pace is unhurried, allowing small domestic rituals to accrete meaning. Butler’s prose favors clarity over ornament and uses cool analysis to frame moments of comedy and pain. Readers encounter a measured, essayistic storyteller who pauses to weigh motives and customs, creating the sense of a biography composed by a clear-eyed, morally inquisitive witness.

The novel’s core themes include the shaping power of family, the authority of religion, the uses and abuses of education, and the slow cultivation of a conscience capable of dissent. Butler challenges the assumption that virtue is guaranteed by social standing or clerical vocation, showing instead how conformity can erode honesty and vitality. He is interested in the mechanics of habit: how praise and punishment mold a character, and how inherited values can be examined rather than merely obeyed. Without collapsing into despair, the book insists on the possibility of self-revision, asking what must be unlearned before moral freedom can begin.

Structurally, the book frames Ernest’s life within a lineage, observing how grandparents, parents, and local mentors transmit expectations about work, worship, and decorum. The household he inhabits is outwardly orderly, ambitious for respectability, and confident in its judgments, providing him with both security and a narrow horizon. Schooling extends this regimen, surrounding him with hierarchies, rules, and rivalries that feel natural until they pinch. As episodes accumulate, Ernest learns to read the subtext of advice and to test the claims others make upon him, not through grand rebellion but through tentative choices that carry consequences he must interpret for himself.

Butler’s method is satirical without caricature: he favors patient accumulation of detail, letting a mannerism, a phrase, or a family ritual reveal the architecture of belief. The narrator’s digressions function like marginal essays, clarifying customs and exposing logical knots while preserving the characters’ humanity. Humor arrives quietly, often through understatement, and it counterbalances harsher scenes so that critique does not curdle into invective. The prose moves confidently between anecdote and analysis, producing a biography that reads like a moral case study and a social panorama at once. The result is intimate, lucid, and steadily provoking rather than sensational or melodramatic.

For contemporary readers, the book’s questions feel immediate: How should one honor parents and teachers without surrendering judgment? What does a healthy conscience owe to tradition, and where must it refuse? In an age debating educational pressures, institutional trust, and the costs of public virtue, Butler’s analysis of respectability remains bracing. His portrait of intergenerational influence anticipates modern conversations about psychological inheritance and the effort required to break patterns. The Way of All Flesh endures because it takes ordinary life seriously, showing how freedom grows through incremental insight, and because its skeptical compassion offers a durable tool for reading any age.

Synopsis

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The Way of All Flesh, an autobiographical novel by Samuel Butler, was composed in the 1870s and 1880s and appeared posthumously in 1903. Told by Edward Overton, a family friend and godfather, it charts the upbringing and young adulthood of Ernest Pontifex within a precise satire of Victorian domestic and religious life. Overton's measured voice tracks Ernest's development while coolly appraising the conventions that shape him, especially the authority of parents and clergy. The narrative opens with the Pontifex family's genteel lineage, then narrows to the home ruled by earnest piety and social anxiety, establishing both the subject and the critical distance.

Ernest's childhood is dominated by his father Theobald, a clergyman, and his mother Christina, whose pursuit of propriety masks impatience and fear. Discipline in the household is strict, often justified as moral nurture, and the boy's mistakes become lessons in submission. School offers little relief: competitive routines and petty cruelty replicate the same hierarchy beyond the front door. Overton records these episodes with a blend of sympathy and dispassion, showing how expectations of respectability teach Ernest to doubt his own impulses. The stage is set for a personality formed by deference, caution, and a desire to satisfy standards he scarcely understands.

As Ernest matures, he is steered toward university and the Church, his parents' vision of safe advancement. He studies dutifully, absorbs the language of belief, and prepares for ordination, yet encounters currents of skepticism among

peers and writers that unsettle him. Overton describes the dry mechanics of early clerical work and the awkwardness of a novice who confuses convention with conviction. The weight of sermonizing without clear faith, combined with small humiliations, sharpens his crisis. The novel traces how public piety can mask private confusion, and how an inherited role fails a young man seeking a reliable ground of meaning.

Eventually his doubts and misjudgments converge, and Ernest abandons or is pushed from the clerical path. Seeking independence, he drifts between modest employments and ill-chosen acquaintances, hoping to reset his life outside the expectations that formed him. A public scandal follows, bringing legal trouble and a short imprisonment that exposes the limits of charity in a culture obsessed with reputation. Overton treats the episode as both moral lesson and social diagnosis, noting how institutions punish weakness more readily than they cultivate growth. The narrative pauses on this turning point, then resumes with Ernest’s tentative efforts to start again on humbler terms.

In the aftermath, Ernest is drawn into a precarious domestic arrangement that promises stability yet compounds his difficulties. The relationship exposes his innocence about money, dependence, and social stigma, while the pressures of survival harden the compromises he must make. Family assistance is conditional, offered only on terms that would reassert earlier control, and old pieties reappear as instruments of leverage. Overton continues as a steady, sometimes sardonic witness, offering practical counsel but withholding judgment that would foreclose change. The scenes emphasize how moral vocabulary can be used to disguise economic realities, and how good intentions falter without experience and support.

Gradually Ernest learns to live more deliberately. He experiments with plain work, values modest competence over display, and begins to write reflections that sift inherited beliefs from personal convictions. A clearer sense of self emerges as he sets boundaries with his parents and discovers friendships that do not depend on deference. Overton’s narrative stresses incremental gains rather than sudden revelations, presenting a moral education founded on candor, thrift, and patience. The story’s later chapters describe a quieter prosperity of spirit, achieved not by triumph over enemies but by a narrowing of claims, a willingness to fail, and an effort to begin again.

Butler’s novel endures for its unsparing anatomy of Victorian pieties and its humane curiosity about how character is built under pressure. By filtering Ernest’s life through Overton’s ironic steadiness, it joins narrative with essay, observation with critique, without relying on melodrama or easy resolution. Its posthumous publication made possible a candor about family, class, and church that resonates beyond its era. Readers encounter not a tidy conversion or clear-cut revolt, but a study of how one person navigates tradition, error, and self-respect. In that quiet argument, The Way of All Flesh retains a persistent relevance to questions of authority and growth.

Historical Context

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Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh is an autobiographical novel written mainly between 1873 and 1884 and published posthumously in 1903. Set within the social and intellectual fabric of Victorian England, it observes provincial rectories, English public schools, Cambridge University, and the Church of England. The book's time frame mirrors Butler's own mid-nineteenth-century generation, charting the forces that shaped an aspiring cleric's upbringing and conscience. Its satire turns on institutions that fashioned character - family, church, school, and university - at a moment when Britain's expanding urban society and imperial confidence coexisted with anxious debates about morality, authority, and the claims of modern knowledge.

Born in 1835 in Nottinghamshire, Butler grew up in a clerical dynasty that typified Anglican authority in the provinces. His father, the Reverend Thomas Butler, was rector of Langar-cum-Barnstone; his grandfather, Dr. Samuel Butler, had been the formidable headmaster of Shrewsbury School (1798–1836) and later Bishop of Lichfield. Such lineage exemplified the era's expectation that sons inherit vocations, values, and social standing from fathers. Parsonage life - ordered, literate, and hierarchical - offered security alongside constant moral surveillance. The novel draws on this milieu to examine how domestic piety and patriarchal certainty could produce both public respectability and private strain in mid-Victorian households.

Butler's education followed a conventional path for a clergyman's son. He attended Shrewsbury School, one of the leading English public schools, where classical curricula, chapel routines, and corporal discipline aimed to form Christian gentlemen. At St John's College, Cambridge, in the 1850s, he read for a degree while preparing for Anglican ordination, reflecting the close tie between university life and the established church. Before the Universities Tests Act of 1871, religious tests limited many academic posts to Anglicans, reinforcing conformity. This educational world, with its examinations, sermonizing, and deference to authority, supplies the novel's institutional backdrop and informs its probing of youthful conscience.

The Church of England's nineteenth-century landscape was riven by movements that unsettled inherited certainties. The Oxford Movement (from 1833) promoted sacramental and liturgical renewal; Evangelicals pressed for heartfelt conversion and strict conduct; biblical criticism advanced through controversies such as Essays and Reviews (1860) and Bishop John William Colenso's writings on the Pentateuch. Meanwhile, Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species (1859) intensified disputes over revelation and scientific explanation. Clergy families and university circles wrestled with doctrine, doubt, and professional identity. Butler situates his narrative in precisely these tensions, using clerical conversations and private devotions to illuminate the era's confident, yet contested, religiosity.

Victorian social change forms another crucial context. Industrial urbanization swelled cities like London, where philanthropic missions, slum districts, and new professions coexisted uneasily. The Poor Law system, charitable societies, and moral reform campaigns prescribed conduct for both rich and poor. Legal reforms altered domestic life: the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) created a civil divorce

court; the Contagious Diseases Acts (1864–1869) and their repeal campaign exposed double standards around sexuality and respectability. Reputation, marriage, and livelihood were tightly interconnected. Butler draws on this climate to examine how ideals of purity and self-help could mask coercion, and how social surveillance shaped personal choices.

From 1859 to 1864 Butler lived in Canterbury, New Zealand, working as a sheep farmer on the upper Rangitata River before returning to London. His colonial years occurred during Britain's wider imperial expansion and the settlement of the South Island's pastoral districts. Distance from English conventions, a frontier economy demanding practical independence, and encounters with new landscapes informed his later skepticism toward inherited authority. Although the novel's action is centered in England, the author's experience of leaving, remaking himself, and observing metropolitan respectability from afar reinforces the book's scrutiny of status, habit, and the gap between professions of faith and lived conduct.

Butler's intellectual trajectory also shaped the novel's critique. After Erewhon (1872), he pursued heterodox reflections on evolution and mind in Life and Habit (1877), Evolution, Old and New (1879), Unconscious Memory (1880), and Luck, or Cunning? (1887). He challenged aspects of Darwinian natural selection and emphasized habit, memory, and purpose, aligning with strands of Lamarckian thought then circulating in British debate. This independent, contrarian stance paralleled his resistance to pious formulas in theology and ethics. The Way of All Flesh channels that disputatious energy into satire of cant and moral automaticity, aligning literary method with a broader late-Victorian critique of orthodoxies.

Butler withheld publication of The Way of All Flesh during his lifetime, aware that its candid portrait of family, schooling, and clergy would provoke controversy. Issued posthumously in 1903, it arrived as Edwardian Britain reassessed Victorian proprieties in light of new psychology, biblical criticism, and social reform. Readers recognized its unsparing view of domestic authority and religious respectability as a key document in that transition. By embedding a life history within concrete institutions and public debates, the book turns private experience into social diagnosis. Its enduring force lies in the way it anatomizes a culture confident in duty yet uncertain about truth.

The Way of All Flesh (Autobiographical Novel)

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CHAPTER I

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When I was a small boy at the beginning of the century I remember an old man who wore knee-breeches[1] and worsted stockings, and who used to hobble about the street of our village with the help of a stick. He must have been getting on for eighty in the year 1807, earlier than which date I suppose I can hardly remember him, for I was born in 1802. A few white locks hung about his ears, his shoulders were bent and his knees feeble, but he was still hale, and was much respected in our little world of Paleham. His name was Pontifex.

His wife was said to be his master; I have been told she brought him a little money, but it cannot have been much. She was a tall, square-shouldered person (I have heard my father call her a Gothic woman) who had insisted on being married to Mr. Pontifex when he was young and too good-natured to say nay to any woman who wooed him. The pair had lived not unhappily together, for Mr. Pontifex's temper was easy and he soon learned to bow before his wife's more stormy moods.

Mr. Pontifex was a carpenter by trade; he was also at one time parish clerk; when I remember him, however, he had so far risen in life as to be no longer compelled to work with his own hands. In his earlier days he had taught himself to draw. I do not say he drew well, but it was surprising he should draw as well as he did. My father, who took the living

of Paleham about the year 1797, became possessed of a good many of old Mr. Pontifex's drawings, which were always of local subjects, and so unaffectedly painstaking that they might have passed for the work of some good early master. I remember them as hanging up framed and glazed in the study at the Rectory, and tinted, as all else in the room was tinted, with the green reflected from the fringe of ivy leaves that grew around the windows. I wonder how they will actually cease and come to an end as drawings, and into what new phases of being they will then enter.

Not content with being an artist, Mr. Pontifex must needs also be a musician. He built the organ in the church with his own hands, and made a smaller one which he kept in his own house. He could play as much as he could draw, not very well according to professional standards, but much better than could have been expected. I myself showed a taste for music at an early age, and old Mr. Pontifex on finding it out, as he soon did, became partial to me in consequence.

It may be thought that with so many irons in the fire he could hardly be a very thriving man, but this was not the case. His father had been a day labourer, and he had himself begun life with no other capital than his good sense and good constitution; now, however, there was a goodly show of timber about his yard, and a look of solid comfort over his whole establishment. Towards the close of the eighteenth century and not long before my father came to Paleham, he had taken a farm of about ninety acres, thus making a considerable rise in life. Along with the farm there

went an old-fashioned but comfortable house with a charming garden and an orchard. The carpenter's business was now carried on in one of the outhouses that had once been part of some conventual buildings, the remains of which could be seen in what was called the Abbey Close. The house itself, embosomed in honeysuckles and creeping roses, was an ornament to the whole village, nor were its internal arrangements less exemplary than its outside was ornamental. Report said that Mrs. Pontifex starched the sheets for her best bed, and I can well believe it.

How well do I remember her parlour half filled with the organ which her husband had built, and scented with a withered apple or two from the *pyrus japonica* that grew outside the house; the picture of the prize ox over the chimney-piece, which Mr. Pontifex himself had painted; the transparency of the man coming to show light to a coach upon a snowy night, also by Mr. Pontifex; the little old man and little old woman who told the weather; the china shepherd and shepherdess; the jars of feathery flowering grasses with a peacock's feather or two among them to set them off, and the china bowls full of dead rose leaves dried with bay salt. All has long since vanished and become a memory, faded but still fragrant to myself.

Nay, but her kitchen—and the glimpses into a cavernous cellar beyond it, wherefrom came gleams from the pale surfaces of milk cans, or it may be of the arms and face of a milkmaid skimming the cream; or again her storeroom, where among other treasures she kept the famous lipsalve which was one of her especial glories, and of which she would present a shape yearly to those whom she delighted

to honour. She wrote out the recipe for this and gave it to my mother a year or two before she died, but we could never make it as she did. When we were children she used sometimes to send her respects to my mother, and ask leave for us to come and take tea with her. Right well she used to ply us. As for her temper, we never met such a delightful old lady in our lives; whatever Mr. Pontifex may have had to put up with, we had no cause for complaint, and then Mr. Pontifex would play to us upon the organ, and we would stand round him open-mouthed and think him the most wonderfully clever man that ever was born, except of course our papa.

Mrs. Pontifex had no sense of humour, at least I can call to mind no signs of this, but her husband had plenty of fun in him, though few would have guessed it from his appearance. I remember my father once sent me down to his workship to get some glue, and I happened to come when old Pontifex was in the act of scolding his boy. He had got the lad—a pudding-headed fellow—by the ear and was saying, “What? Lost again—smothered o’ wit.” (I believe it was the boy who was himself supposed to be a wandering soul, and who was thus addressed as lost.) “Now, look here, my lad,” he continued, “some boys are born stupid, and thou art one of them; some achieve stupidity—that’s thee again, Jim—thou wast both born stupid and hast greatly increased thy birthright—and some” (and here came a climax during which the boy’s head and ear were swayed from side to side) “have stupidity thrust upon them, which, if it please the Lord, shall not be thy case, my lad, for I will thrust stupidity from thee, though I have to box thine ears in

doing so," but I did not see that the old man really did box Jim's ears, or do more than pretend to frighten him, for the two understood one another perfectly well. Another time I remember hearing him call the village rat-catcher by saying, "Come hither, thou three-days-and-three-nights, thou," alluding, as I afterwards learned, to the rat-catcher's periods of intoxication; but I will tell no more of such trifles. My father's face would always brighten when old Pontifex's name was mentioned. "I tell you, Edward," he would say to me, "old Pontifex was not only an able man, but he was one of the very ablest men that ever I knew."

This was more than I as a young man was prepared to stand. "My dear father," I answered, "what did he do? He could draw a little, but could he to save his life have got a picture into the Royal Academy exhibition? He built two organs and could play the Minuet in *Samson* on one and the March in *Scipio* on the other; he was a good carpenter and a bit of a wag; he was a good old fellow enough, but why make him out so much abler than he was?"

"My boy," returned my father, "you must not judge by the work, but by the work in connection with the surroundings. Could Giotto or Filippo Lippi, think you, have got a picture into the Exhibition? Would a single one of those frescoes we went to see when we were at Padua have the remotest chance of being hung, if it were sent in for exhibition now? Why, the Academy people would be so outraged that they would not even write to poor Giotto to tell him to come and take his fresco away. Phew!" continued he, waxing warm, "if old Pontifex had had Cromwell's chances he would have done all that Cromwell did, and have

done it better; if he had had Giotto's chances he would have done all that Giotto did, and done it no worse; as it was, he was a village carpenter, and I will undertake to say he never scamped a job in the whole course of his life."

"But," said I, "we cannot judge people with so many 'ifs.' If old Pontifex had lived in Giotto's time he might have been another Giotto, but he did not live in Giotto's time."

"I tell you, Edward," said my father with some severity, "we must judge men not so much by what they do, as by what they make us feel that they have it in them to do. If a man has done enough either in painting, music or the affairs of life, to make me feel that I might trust him in an emergency he has done enough. It is not by what a man has actually put upon his canvas, nor yet by the acts which he has set down, so to speak, upon the canvas of his life that I will judge him, but by what he makes me feel that he felt and aimed at. If he has made me feel that he felt those things to be loveable which I hold loveable myself I ask no more; his grammar may have been imperfect, but still I have understood him; he and I are *en rapport*; and I say again, Edward, that old Pontifex was not only an able man, but one of the very ablest men I ever knew."

Against this there was no more to be said, and my sisters eyed me to silence. Somehow or other my sisters always did eye me to silence when I differed from my father.

"Talk of his successful son," snorted my father, whom I had fairly roused. "He is not fit to black his father's boots. He has his thousands of pounds a year, while his father had perhaps three thousand shillings a year towards the end of his life. He *is* a successful man; but his father, hobbling

about Paleham Street in his grey worsted stockings, broad brimmed hat and brown swallow-tailed coat was worth a hundred of George Pontifexes, for all his carriages and horses and the airs he gives himself."

"But yet," he added, "George Pontifex is no fool either." And this brings us to the second generation of the Pontifex family with whom we need concern ourselves.

CHAPTER II

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Old Mr. Pontifex had married in the year 1750, but for fifteen years his wife bore no children. At the end of that time Mrs. Pontifex astonished the whole village by showing unmistakable signs of a disposition to present her husband with an heir or heiress. Hers had long ago been considered a hopeless case, and when on consulting the doctor concerning the meaning of certain symptoms she was informed of their significance, she became very angry and abused the doctor roundly for talking nonsense. She refused to put so much as a piece of thread into a needle in anticipation of her confinement and would have been absolutely unprepared, if her neighbours had not been better judges of her condition than she was, and got things ready without telling her anything about it. Perhaps she feared Nemesis, though assuredly she knew not who or what Nemesis was; perhaps she feared the doctor had made a mistake and she should be laughed at; from whatever cause, however, her refusal to recognise the obvious arose, she certainly refused to recognise it, until one snowy night in January the doctor was sent for with all urgent speed across the rough country roads. When he arrived he found two patients, not one, in need of his assistance, for a boy had been born who was in due time christened George, in honour of his then reigning majesty.

58 Followers of John Wesley and early Methodists; in 18th–19th century Britain ‘Wesleyans’ typically belonged to organised societies and ‘class’ meetings that enforced communal moral discipline and mutual oversight.

59 Refers to William Paley (1743–1805), an English Anglican clergyman whose works—notably The Evidences of Christianity (1794) and Natural Theology (1802)—argued for God’s existence from design; these arguments were commonly taught and debated in Britain in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

60 Refers to the work of Henry Alford (1810–1871), an English Anglican clergyman and biblical scholar who published influential mid-19th-century commentaries on the New Testament and discussed attempts to harmonize the four Gospels’ accounts of the Resurrection.

61 A figure in the Hebrew Bible (1 Kings 17): during a famine the prophet Elijah is sent to a widow at Zarephath who provides him food and is miraculously sustained; the episode was a common biblical reference in 19th-century sermons and literature.

62 A New Testament reference (Luke 13:1–5) to a tower in Jerusalem that fell and killed people; in 19th-century and earlier writing the phrase is used figuratively for an unexpected calamity or disaster befalling people.

63 Coldbath Fields refers to Coldbath Fields Prison (also called the House of Correction or Clerkenwell Prison), a noted London prison/house of correction in the Clerkenwell area used in the 18th–19th centuries where convicted offenders served short terms.

64 Likely refers to Henry Alford (1810–1871), an English Anglican priest and New Testament scholar who served as

Dean of Canterbury and published influential critical work on the New Testament.

65 An informal written acknowledgment of debt meaning “I owe you,” used as a promise to repay; it is not a formal negotiable instrument like a promissory note, though commonly relied on in the 19th century.

66 Reference to an ancient Greek myth in which Antæus, a giant who drew strength from contact with the earth (his mother, Gaia), was defeated by Hercules when the hero lifted him off the ground; the episode is often invoked as a metaphor for the necessity of ‘kissing the soil’ or remaining grounded.

67 Shillings were units of British pre-decimal currency (1 shilling = 12 pence; 20 shillings = 1 pound sterling); 'six or seven shillings a day' refers to a modest daily wage in 19th-century Britain, roughly typical pay for manual trades such as tailoring.

68 An older British spelling of 'jail' commonly used in 19th-century texts; here 'the governor of the gaol' refers to the official in charge of a prison (modern term: prison governor or warden).

69 A 'bloater' is a type of herring that has been salted and lightly smoked whole; it was a common and inexpensive street-food fish in Britain during the 18th–19th centuries, often sold hot or cold by vendors.

70 A Latin phrase meaning "without a day," used to indicate that a meeting, event, or appointment is adjourned indefinitely with no future date set; it is commonly found in legal or parliamentary contexts.

71 A historic locality and road junction in South London named after a coaching inn; by the 19th century it was a growing commercial area and landmark on the south side of the Thames.

72 A 19th-century British slang term for a builder or contractor who constructs cheaply and carelessly, producing shoddy or flimsy workmanship.

73 A Latin maxim associated with St. Vincent of Lérins (a 5th-century Christian monk) meaning ‘what has been believed always, everywhere, and by all’; it was used as a rule for judging orthodox doctrine in early Christianity.

74 A 19th-century term for sudden episodes of extreme emotional agitation, crying, fainting, or convulsive behavior; it was commonly applied to women and reflected contemporary (and now outdated) medical ideas about female physiology.

75 A medical term for a severe form of alcohol withdrawal marked by confusion, tremors, vivid hallucinations, and risk of seizures; historically cited in the 19th century for acute episodes following heavy drinking, typically beginning within a few days of cessation.

76 Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) was a leading Victorian poet and long-serving Poet Laureate; the line alluded to comes from his elegy 'In Memoriam A.H.H.' (commonly quoted as, ''Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all').

77 Refers to the ordinary (equity) shares of the Midland Railway Company, a major British railway formed in the 1840s; in mid-19th-century financial reporting share prices were commonly quoted per £100 of nominal value.

78 Latin for gold; in 19th-century homeopathy ‘aurum’ (Aurum metallicum) was used as a remedy derived from gold, typically administered in highly diluted doses and cited for certain physical and mental symptoms.

79 Consols were British government bonds (consolidated annuities) widely traded from the 18th century into the 20th; they were considered a safe, income-producing investment and are often referred to in period writing as the holdings of conservative ‘fund-holders.’

80 A term from Western classical harmony meaning an enlarged sixth interval that produces strong dissonant tension and in common-practice (18th–19th century) music typically resolves in a characteristic way toward the dominant or an octave; the narrator uses it metaphorically for expressive effect.

81 A Post Office order was a money-order service offered by the British Post Office in the 19th and early 20th centuries, allowing someone to send a pre-paid voucher that could be cashed at a post office rather than carrying cash or using a bank transfer.

82 A French-derived noun meaning the restoration of friendly relations or reconciliation; here it refers to the possibility of making up between two estranged people.

83 A French phrase literally meaning ‘from high to low,’ used to describe a condescending or patronising manner toward someone.

84 An Anglican evening service of prayer and music, typically held around sunset and often sung or chanted, consisting of psalms, canticles and prayers.