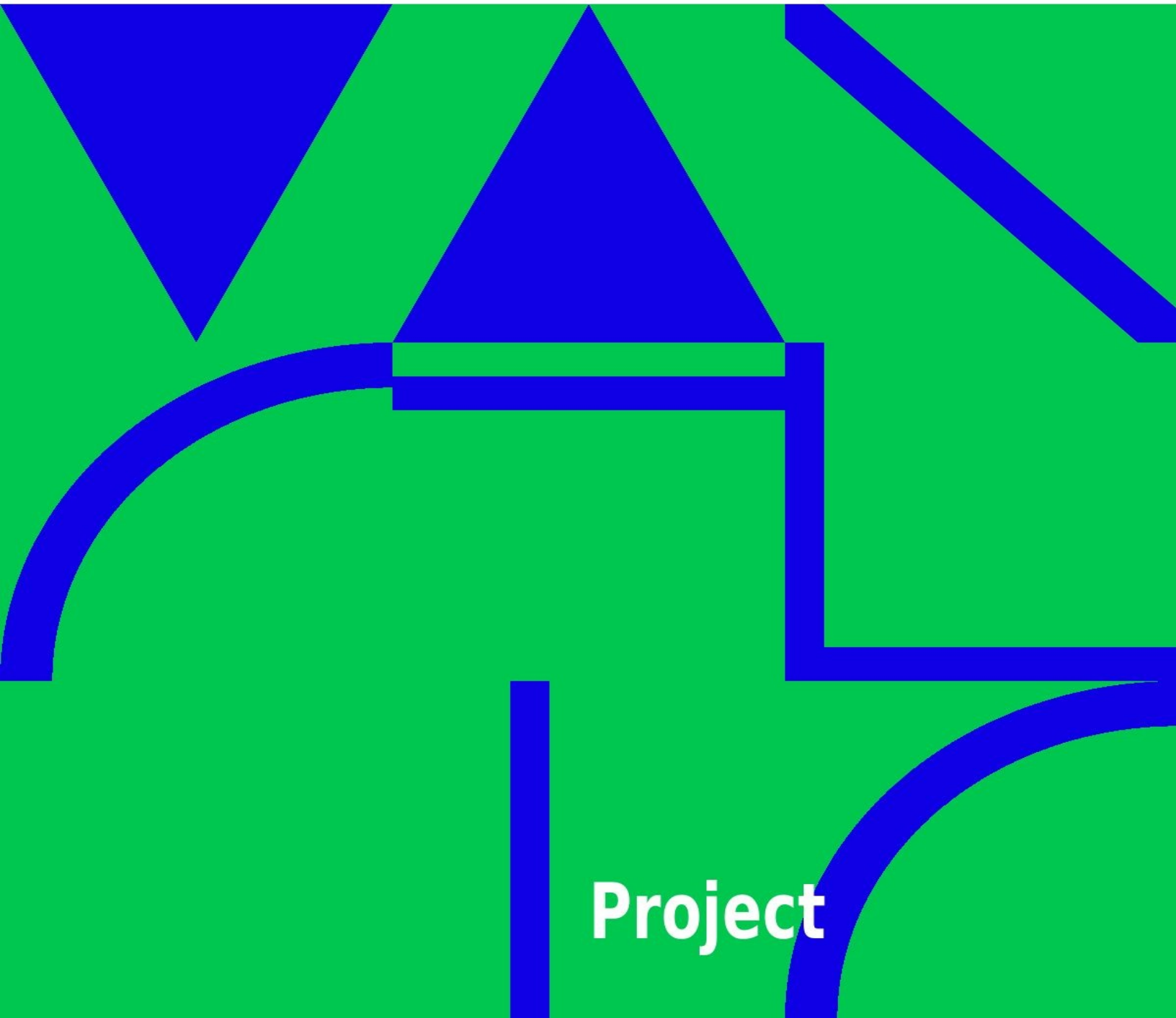
Samuel Butler

A Sketch

Henry Festing Jones



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SAMUEL BUTLER:
A Sketch, by Henry Festing Jones

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Samuel Butler: A Sketch

Samuel Butler was born on the 4th December, 1835, at the Rectory, Langar, near Bingham, in Nottinghamshire. His father was the Rev. Thomas Butler, then Rector of Langar, afterwards one of the canons of Lincoln Cathedral, and his mother was Fanny Worsley, daughter of John Philip Worsley of Arno's Vale, Bristol, sugar-refiner. His grandfather was Dr. Samuel Butler, the famous headmaster of Shrewsbury School, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield. The Butlers are not related either to the author of *Hudibras*, or to the author of the *Analogy*, or to the present Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Butler's father, after being at school at Shrewsbury under Dr. Butler, went up to St. John's College, Cambridge; he took his degree in 1829, being seventh classic and twentieth senior optime; he was ordained and returned to Shrewsbury, where he was for some time assistant master at the school under Dr. Butler. He married in 1832 and left Shrewsbury for Langar. He was a learned botanist, and made a collection of dried plants which he gave to the Town Museum of Shrewsbury.

Butler's childhood and early life were spent at Langar among the surroundings of an English country rectory, and his education was begun by his father. In 1843, when he was only eight years old, the first great event in his life occurred; the family, consisting of his father and mother, his two sisters, his brother and himself, went to Italy. The South-Eastern Railway stopped at Ashford, whence they travelled to Dover in their own carriage; the carnage was put on board the steamboat, they crossed the Channel, and proceeded to Cologne, up the Rhine to Basle and on through Switzerland into Italy, through Parma, where Napoleon's widow was still reigning, Modena, Bologna, Florence, and so to Rome. They had to drive where there was no railway, and there was then none in all Italy except between Naples and Castellamare. They seemed to pass a fresh custom-house every day, but, by tipping the searchers, generally got through without inconvenience. The bread was sour and the Italian butter rank and cheesy—often uneatable. Beggars ran after the carriage all day long, and when they got nothing jeered at the travellers and called them heretics. They spent half the winter in Rome, and the children were taken up to the top of St. Peter's as a treat

to celebrate their father's birthday. In the Sistine Chapel they saw the cardinals kiss the toe of Pope Gregory XVI., and in the Corso, in broad daylight, they saw a monk come rolling down a staircase like a sack of potatoes, bundled into the street by a man and his wife. The second half of the winter was spent in Naples. This early introduction to the land which he always thought of and often referred to as his second country made an ineffaceable impression upon him.

In January, 1846, he went to school at Allesley, near Coventry, under the Rev. E. Gibson. He seldom referred to his life there, though sometimes he would say something that showed he had not forgotten all about it. For instance, in 1900, Mr. Sydney C. Cockerell, now the Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, showed him a medieval missal, laboriously illuminated. He found that it fatigued him to look at it, and said that such books ought never to be made. Cockerell replied that such books relieved the tedium of divine service, on which Butler made a note ending thus:

> Give me rather a robin or a peripatetic cat like the one whose loss the parishioners of St. Clement Danes are still deploring. When I was at school at Allesley the boy who knelt opposite me at morning prayers, with his face not more than a yard away from mine, used to blow pretty little bubbles with his saliva which he would send sailing off the tip of his tongue like miniature soap bubbles; they very soon broke, but they had a career of a foot or two. I never saw anyone else able to get saliva bubbles right away from him and, though I have endeavoured for some fifty years and more to acquire the art, I never yet could start the bubble off my tongue without its bursting. Now things like this really do relieve the tedium of church, but no missal that I have ever seen will do anything except increase it.

In 1848 he left Allesley and went to Shrewsbury under the Rev. B. H. Kennedy. Many of the recollections of his school life at Shrewsbury are reproduced for the school life of Ernest Pontifex at Roughborough in *The Way of All Flesh*, Dr. Skinner being Dr. Kennedy.

During these years he first heard the music of Handel; it went straight to his heart and satisfied a longing which the music of other composers had only awakened and intensified. He became as one of the listening brethren who stood around "when Jubal struck the chorded shell" in the *Song for Saint Cecilia's Day*:

> Less than a god, they thought, there could not dwell

Within the hollow of that shell
That spoke so sweetly and so well.

This was the second great event in his life, and henceforward Italy and Handel were always present at the bottom of his mind as a kind of double pedal to every thought, word, and deed. Almost the last thing he ever asked me to do for him, within a few days of his death, was to bring *Solomon* that he might refresh his memory as to the harmonies of "With thee th' unsheltered moor I'd trace." He often tried to like the music of Bach and Beethoven, but found himself compelled to give them up—they bored him too much. Nor was he more successful with the other great composers; Haydn, for instance, was a sort of Horace, an agreeable, facile man of the world, while Mozart, who must have loved Handel, for he wrote additional accompaniments to the *Messiah*, failed to move him. It was not that he disputed the greatness of these composers, but he was out of sympathy with them, and never could forgive the last two for having led music astray from the Handel tradition, and paved the road from Bach to Beethoven. Everything connected with Handel interested him. He remembered old Mr. Brooke, Rector of Gamston, North Notts, who had been present at the Handel Commemoration in 1784, and his great-aunt, Miss Susannah Apthorp, of Cambridge, had known a lady who had sat upon Handel's knee. He often regretted that these were his only links with "the greatest of all composers."

Besides his love for Handel he had a strong liking for drawing, and, during the winter of 1853-4, his family again took him to Italy, where, being now eighteen, he looked on the works of the old masters with intelligence.

In October, 1854, he went into residence at St. John's College, Cambridge. He showed no aptitude for any particular branch of academic study, nevertheless he impressed his friends as being likely to make his mark. Just as he used reminiscences of his own schooldays at Shrewsbury for Ernest's life at Roughborough, so he used reminiscences of his own Cambridge days for those of Ernest. When the Simeonites, in *The Way of All Flesh*, "distributed tracts, dropping them at night in good men's letter boxes while they slept, their tracts got burnt or met with even worse contumely." Ernest Pontifex went so far as to parody one of these tracts and to get a copy of the parody "dropped into each of the Simeonites' boxes." Ernest did this in the novel because Butler had done it in real life. Mr. A. T. Bartholomew, of the University Library, has found, among the Cambridge papers of the late J. Willis Clark's collection, three printed pieces belonging to the year 1855 bearing on the subject. He speaks of them in an

article headed “Samuel Butler and the Simeonites,” and signed A. T. B. in the *Cambridge Magazine,* 1st March, 1913; the first is “a genuine Simeonite tract; the other two are parodies. All three are anonymous. At the top of the second parody is written ‘By S. Butler, March 31.’” The article gives extracts from the genuine tract and the whole of Butler’s parody.

Besides parodying Simeonite tracts, Butler wrote various other papers during his undergraduate days, some of which, preserved by one of his contemporaries, who remained a lifelong friend, the Rev. Canon Joseph M’Cormick, now Rector of St. James’s, Piccadilly, are reproduced in *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler* (1912).

He also steered the Lady Margaret first boat, and Canon M’Cormick told me of a mishap that occurred on the last night of the races in 1857. Lady Margaret had been head of the river since 1854, Canon M’Cormick was rowing 5, Philip Pennant Pearson (afterwards P. Pennant) was 7, Canon Kynaston, of Durham (whose name formerly was Snow), was stroke, and Butler was cox. When the cox let go of the bung at starting, the rope caught in his rudder lines, and Lady Margaret was nearly bumped by Second Trinity. They escaped, however, and their pursuers were so much exhausted by their efforts to catch them that they were themselves bumped by First Trinity at the next corner. Butler wrote home about it:

> 11 March, 1857. Dear Mamma: My foreboding about steering was on the last day nearly verified by an accident which was more deplorable than culpable the effects of which would have been ruinous had not the presence of mind of No. 7 in the boat rescued us from the very jaws of defeat. The scene is one which never can fade from my remembrance and will be connected always with the gentlemanly conduct of the crew in neither using opprobrious language nor gesture towards your unfortunate son but treating him with the most graceful forbearance; for in most cases when an accident happens which in itself is but slight, but is visited with serious consequences, most people get carried away with the impression created by the last so as to entirely forget the accidental nature of the cause and if we had been quite bumped I should have been ruined, as it is I get praise for coolness and good steering as much as and more than blame for my accident and the crew are so delighted at having rowed a race such as never was seen before that they are satisfied completely. All the spectators saw the race and were delighted; another inch and I should never have held up

> my head again. One thing is safe, it will never happen again.

The *Eagle*, "a magazine supported by members of St. John's College," issued its first number in the Lent term of 1858; it contains an article by Butler "On English Composition and Other Matters," signed "Cellarius":

> Most readers will have anticipated me in admitting that a man should be clear of his meaning before he endeavours to give it any kind of utterance, and that, having made up his mind what to say, the less thought he takes how to say it, more than briefly, pointedly and plainly, the better.

From this it appears that, when only just over twenty-two, Butler had already discovered and adopted those principles of writing from which he never departed.

In the fifth number of the *Eagle* is an article, "Our Tour," also signed "Cellarius"; it is an account of a tour made in June, 1857, with a friend whose name he Italianized into Giuseppe Verdi, through France into North Italy, and was written, so he says, to show how they got so much into three weeks and spent only £25; they did not, however, spend quite so much, for the article goes on, after bringing them back to England, "Next day came safely home to dear old St. John's, cash in hand 7d." [1]

Butler worked hard with Shilleto, an old pupil of his grandfather, and was bracketed 12th in the Classical Tripos of 1858. Canon M'Cormick told me that he would no doubt have been higher but for the fact that he at first intended to go out in mathematics; it was only during the last year of his time that he returned to the classics, and his being so high as he was spoke well for the classical education of Shrewsbury.

It had always been an understood thing that he was to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and become a clergyman; accordingly, after taking his degree, he went to London and began to prepare for ordination, living and working among the poor as lay assistant under the Rev. Philip Perring, Curate of St. James's, Piccadilly, an old pupil of Dr. Butler at Shrewsbury. [2] Placed among such surroundings, he felt bound to think out for himself many theological questions which at this time were first presented to him, and, the conclusion being forced upon him that he could not believe in the efficacy of infant baptism, he declined to be ordained.

It was now his desire to become an artist; this, however, did not meet with the approval of his family, and he returned to Cambridge to try for pupils and, if possible, to get a fellowship. He liked being at Cambridge, but there were few pupils and, as there seemed to be little chance of a fellowship, his father wished him to come down and adopt some profession. A long correspondence took place in the course of which many alternatives were considered. There are letters about his becoming a farmer in England, a tutor, a homoepathic doctor, an artist, or a publisher, and the possibilities of the army, the bar, and diplomacy. Finally it was decided that he should emigrate to New Zealand. His passage was paid, and he was to sail in the *Burmah*, but a cousin of his received information about this vessel which caused him, much against his will, to get back his passage money and take a berth in the *Roman Emperor*, which sailed from Gravesend on one of the last days of September, 1859. On that night, for the first time in his life, he did not say his prayers. "I suppose the sense of change was so great that it shook them quietly off. I was not then a sceptic; I had got as far as disbelief in infant baptism, but no further. I felt no compunction of conscience, however, about leaving off my morning and evening prayers—simply I could no longer say them."

The *Roman Emperor*, after a voyage every incident of which interested him deeply, arrived outside Port Lyttelton. The captain shouted to the pilot who came to take them in:

"Has the *Robert Small* arrived?"

"No," replied the pilot, "nor yet the *Burmah*."

And Butler, writing home to his people, adds the comment: "You may imagine what I felt."

The *Burmah* was never heard of again.

He spent some time looking round, considering what to do and how to employ the money with which his father was ready to supply him, and determined upon sheep-farming. He made several excursions looking for country, and ultimately took up a run which is still called Mesopotamia, the name he gave it because it is situated among the head-waters of the Rangitata.

It was necessary to have a horse, and he bought one for £55, which was not considered dear. He wrote home that the horse's name was "Doctor": "I hope he is a Homoeopathist." From this, and from the fact that he had already

contemplated becoming a homoeopathic doctor himself, I conclude that he had made the acquaintance of Dr. Robert Ellis Dudgeon, the eminent homoeopathist, while he was doing parish work in London. After his return to England Dr. Dudgeon was his medical adviser, and remained one of his most intimate friends until the end of his life. Doctor, the horse, is introduced into *Erewhon Revisited*; the shepherd in Chapter XXVI tells John Hicks that Doctor "would pick fords better than that gentleman could, I know, and if the gentleman fell off him he would just stay stock still."

Butler carried on his run for about four and a half years, and the open-air life agreed with him; he ascribed to this the good health he afterwards enjoyed. The following, taken from a notebook he kept in the colony and destroyed, gives a glimpse of one side of his life there; he preserved the note because it recalled New Zealand so vividly.

> April, 1861. It is Sunday. We rose later than usual. There are five of us sleeping in the hut. I sleep in a bunk on one side of the fire; Mr. Haast, [3] a German who is making a geological survey of the province, sleeps upon the opposite one; my bullock-driver and hut-keeper have two bunks at the far end of the hut, along the wall, while my shepherd lies in the loft among the tea and sugar and flour. It was a fine morning, and we turned out about seven o'clock.
>
> The usual mutton and bread for breakfast with a pudding made of flour and water baked in the camp oven after a joint of meat—Yorkshire pudding, but without eggs. While we were at breakfast a robin perched on the table and sat there a good while pecking at the sugar. We went on breakfasting with little heed to the robin, and the robin went on pecking with little heed to us. After breakfast Pey, my bullock-driver, went to fetch the horses up from a spot about two miles down the river, where they often run; we wanted to go pig-hunting.
>
> I go into the garden and gather a few peascods for seed till the horses should come up. Then Cook, the shepherd, says that a fire has sprung up on the other side of the river. Who could have lit it? Probably someone who had intended coming to my place on the preceding evening and has missed his way, for there is no track of any sort between here and Phillips's. In a quarter of an hour he lit another fire lower down, and by that time, the horses having come up, Haast and myself—remembering how Dr. Sinclair had just been drowned so near the same spot—think it safer to ride over to

> him and put him across the river. The river was very low and so clear that we could see every stone. On getting to the river-bed we lit a fire and did the same on leaving it; our tracks would guide anyone over the intervening ground.

Besides his occupation with the sheep, he found time to play the piano, to read and to write. In the library of St. John's College, Cambridge, are two copies of the Greek Testament, very fully annotated by him at the University and in the colony. He also read the *Origin of Species*, which, as everyone knows, was published in 1859. He became "one of Mr. Darwin's many enthusiastic admirers, and wrote a philosophic dialogue (the most offensive form, except poetry and books of travel into supposed unknown countries, that even literature can assume) upon the *Origin of Species*" (*Unconscious Memory*, close of Chapter I). This dialogue, unsigned, was printed in the *Press*, Canterbury, New Zealand, on 20th December, 1862. A copy of the paper was sent to Charles Darwin, who forwarded it to a, presumably, English editor with a letter, now in the Canterbury Museum, New Zealand, speaking of the dialogue as "remarkable from its spirit and from giving so clear and accurate an account of Mr. D's theory." It is possible that Butler himself sent the newspaper containing his dialogue to Mr. Darwin; if so he did not disclose his name, for Darwin says in his letter that he does not know who the author was. Butler was closely connected with the *Press*, which was founded by James Edward FitzGerald, the first Superintendent of the Province, in May, 1861; he frequently contributed to its pages, and once, during FitzGerald's absence, had charge of it for a short time, though he was never its actual editor. The *Press* reprinted the dialogue and the correspondence which followed its original appearance on 8th June, 1912.

On 13th June, 1863, the *Press* printed a letter by Butler signed "Cellarius" and headed "Darwin among the Machines," reprinted in *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler* (1912). The letter begins:

"Sir: There are few things of which the present generation is more justly proud than of the wonderful improvements which are daily taking place in all sorts of mechanical appliances"; and goes on to say that, as the vegetable kingdom was developed from the mineral, and as the animal kingdom supervened upon the vegetable, "so now, in the last few ages, an entirely new kingdom has sprung up of which we as yet have only seen what will one day be considered the antediluvian types of the race." He then speaks of the minute members which compose the beautiful and intelligent little animal which we call the watch, and

of how it has gradually been evolved from the clumsy brass clocks of the thirteenth century. Then comes the question: Who will be man's successor? To which the answer is: We are ourselves creating our own successors. Man will become to the machine what the horse and the dog are to man; the conclusion being that machines are, or are becoming, animate.

In 1863 Butler's family published in his name *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*, which, as the preface states, was compiled from his letters home, his journal and extracts from two papers contributed to the *Eagle*. These two papers had appeared in the *Eagle* as three articles entitled "Our Emigrant" and signed "Cellarius." The proof-sheets of the book went out to New Zealand for correction and were sent back in the Colombo, which was as unfortunate as the *Burmah*, for she was wrecked. The proofs, however, were fished up, though so nearly washed out as to be almost undecipherable. Butler would have been just as well pleased if they had remained at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, for he never liked the book and always spoke of it as being full of youthful priggishness; but I think he was a little hard upon it. Years afterwards, in one of his later books, after quoting two passages from Mr. Grant Allen and pointing out why he considered the second to be a recantation of the first, he wrote: "When Mr. Allen does make stepping-stones of his dead selves he jumps upon them to some tune." And he was perhaps a little inclined to treat his own dead self too much in the same spirit.

Butler did very well with the sheep, sold out in 1864, and returned via Callao to England. He travelled with three friends whose acquaintance he had made in the colony; one was Charles Paine Pauli, to whom he dedicated *Life and Habit*. He arrived in August, 1864, in London, where he took chambers consisting of a sitting-room, a bedroom, a painting-room and a pantry, at 15, Clifford's Inn, second floor (north). The net financial result of the sheep-farming and the selling out was that he practically doubled his capital, that is to say he had about £8,000. This he left in New Zealand, invested on mortgage at 10 per cent., the then current rate in the colony; it produced more than enough for him to live upon in the very simple way that suited him best, and life in the Inns of Court resembles life at Cambridge in that it reduces the cares of housekeeping to a minimum; it suited him so well that he never changed his rooms, remaining there thirty-eight years till his death.

He was now his own master and able at last to turn to painting. He studied at the art school in Streatham Street, Bloomsbury, which had formerly been managed by Henry Sass, but, in Butler's time, was being carried on by Francis Stephen

Cary, son of the Rev. Henry Francis Cary, who had been a school-fellow of Dr. Butler at Rugby, and is well known as the translator of Dante and the friend of Charles Lamb. Among his fellow-students was Mr. H. R. Robertson, who told me that the young artists got hold of the legend, which is in some of the books about Lamb, that when Francis Stephen Cary was a boy and there was a talk at his father's house as to what profession he should take up, Lamb, who was present, said:

"I should make him an apo-po-pothe-Cary."

They used to repeat this story freely among themselves, being, no doubt, amused by the Lamb-like pun, but also enjoying the malicious pleasure of hinting that it might have been as well for their art education if the advice of the gentle humorist had been followed. Anyone who wants to know what kind of an artist F. S. Cary was can see his picture of Charles and Mary Lamb in the National Portrait Gallery.

In 1865 Butler sent from London to New Zealand an article entitled "Lucubratio Ebria," which was published in the *Press* of 29th July, 1865. It treated machines from a point of view different from that adopted in "Darwin among the Machines," and was one of the steps that led to *Erewhon* and ultimately to *Life and Habit*. The article is reproduced in *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler* (1912).

Butler also studied art at South Kensington, but by 1867 he had begun to go to Heatherley's School of Art in Newman Street, where he continued going for many years. He made a number of friends at Heatherley's, and among them Miss Eliza Mary Anne Savage. There also he first met Charles Gogin, who, in 1896, painted the portrait of Butler which is now in the National Portrait Gallery. He described himself as an artist in the Post Office Directory, and between 1868 and 1876 exhibited at the Royal Academy about a dozen pictures, of which the most important was "Mr. Heatherley's Holiday," hung on the line in 1874. He left it by his will to his college friend Jason Smith, whose representatives, after his death, in 1910, gave it to the nation, and it is now in the National Gallery of British Art. Mr. Heatherley never went away for a holiday; he once had to go out of town on business and did not return till the next day; one of the students asked him how he had got on, saying no doubt he had enjoyed the change and that he must have found it refreshing to sleep for once out of London.

“No,” said Heatherley, “I did not like it. Country air has no body.”

The consequence was that, whenever there was a holiday and the school was shut, Heatherley employed the time in mending the skeleton; Butler’s picture represents him so engaged in a corner of the studio. In this way he got his model for nothing. Sometimes he hung up a looking-glass near one of his windows and painted his own portrait. Many of these he painted out, but after his death we found a little store of them in his rooms, some of the early ones very curious. Of the best of them one is now at Canterbury, New Zealand, one at St. John’s College, Cambridge, and one at the Schools, Shrewsbury.

This is Butler’s own account of himself, taken from a letter to Sir Julius von Haast; although written in 1865 it is true of his mode of life for many years:

> I have been taking lessons in painting ever since I arrived. I was always very fond of it and mean to stick to it; it suits me and I am not without hopes that I shall do well at it. I live almost the life of a recluse, seeing very few people and going nowhere that I can help—I mean in the way of parties and so forth; if my friends had their way they would fritter away my time without any remorse; but I made a regular stand against it from the beginning and so, having my time pretty much in my own hands, work hard; I find, as I am sure you must find, that it is next to impossible to combine what is commonly called society and work.

But the time saved from society was not all devoted to painting. He modified his letter to the *Press* about “Darwin among the Machines” and, so modified, it appeared in 1865 as “The Mechanical Creation” in the *Reasoner*, a paper then published in London by Mr. G. J. Holyoake. And his mind returned to the considerations which had determined him to decline to be ordained. In 1865 he printed anonymously a pamphlet which he had begun in New Zealand, the result of his study of the Greek Testament, entitled *The Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as given by the Four Evangelists critically examined*. After weighing this evidence and comparing one account with another, he came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ did not die upon the cross. It is improbable that a man officially executed should escape death, but the alternative, that a man actually dead should return to life, seemed to Butler more improbable still and unsupported by such evidence as he found in the gospels. From this evidence he concluded that Christ swooned and recovered consciousness after his body had passed into the keeping of Joseph of Arimathæa. He did not suppose fraud on the part of the first preachers of Christianity; they sincerely believed that Christ

died and rose again. Joseph and Nicodemus probably knew the truth but kept silence. The idea of what might follow from belief in one single supposed miracle was never hereafter absent from Butler's mind.

In 1869, having been working too hard, he went abroad for a long change. On his way back, at the Albergo La Luna, in Venice, he met an elderly Russian lady in whose company he spent most of his time there. She was no doubt impressed by his versatility and charmed, as everyone always was, by his conversation and original views on the many subjects that interested him. We may be sure he told her all about himself and what he had done and was intending to do. At the end of his stay, when he was taking leave of her, she said:

"Et maintenant, Monsieur, vous allez créer," meaning, as he understood her, that he had been looking long enough at the work of others and should now do something of his own.

This sank into him and pained him. He was nearly thirty-five, and hitherto all had been admiration, vague aspiration and despair; he had produced in painting nothing but a few sketches and studies, and in literature only a few ephemeral articles, a collection of youthful letters and a pamphlet on the Resurrection; moreover, to none of his work had anyone paid the slightest attention. This was a poor return for all the money which had been spent upon his education, as Theobald would have said in *The Way of All Flesh*. He returned home dejected, but resolved that things should be different in the future. While in this frame of mind he received a visit from one of his New Zealand friends, the late Sir F. Napier Broome, afterwards Governor of Western Australia, who incidentally suggested his rewriting his New Zealand articles. The idea pleased him; it might not be creating, but at least it would be doing something. So he set to work on Sundays and in the evenings, as relaxation from his profession of painting, and, taking his New Zealand article, "Darwin among the Machines," and another, "The World of the Unborn," as a starting-point and helping himself with a few sentences from *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement,* he gradually formed *Erewhon*. He sent the MS. bit by bit, as it was written, to Miss Savage for her criticism and approval. He had the usual difficulty about finding a publisher. Chapman and Hall refused the book on the advice of George Meredith, who was then their reader, and in the end he published it at his own expense through Messrs. Trübner.

Mr. Sydney C. Cockerell told me that in 1912 Mr. Bertram Dobell, second-hand bookseller of Charing Cross Road, offered a copy of *Erewhon* for £1 10s.; it was

thus described in his catalogue: “Unique copy with the following note in the author’s handwriting on the half-title: ‘To Miss E. M. A. Savage this first copy of *Erewhon* with the author’s best thanks for many invaluable suggestions and corrections.’” When Mr. Cockerell inquired for the book it was sold. After Miss Savage’s death in 1885 all Butler’s letters to her were returned to him, including the letter he wrote when he sent her this copy of *Erewhon*. He gave her the first copy issued of all his books that were published in her lifetime, and, no doubt, wrote an inscription in each. If the present possessors of any of them should happen to read this sketch I hope they will communicate with me, as I should like to see these books. I should also like to see some numbers of the *Drawing-Room Gazette*, which about this time belonged to or was edited by a Mrs. Briggs. Miss Savage wrote a review of *Erewhon*, which appeared in the number for 8th June, 1872, and Butler quoted a sentence from her review among the press notices in the second edition. She persuaded him to write for Mrs. Briggs notices of concerts at which Handel’s music was performed. In 1901 he made a note on one of his letters that he was thankful there were no copies of the *Drawing-Room Gazette* in the British Museum, meaning that he did not want people to read his musical criticisms; nevertheless, I hope some day to come across back numbers containing his articles.

The opening of *Erewhon* is based upon Butler’s colonial experiences; some of the descriptions remind one of passages in *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*, where he speaks of the excursions he made with Doctor when looking for sheep-country. The walk over the range as far as the statues is taken from the Upper Rangitata district, with some alterations; but the walk down from the statues into Erewhon is reminiscent of the Leventina Valley in the Canton Ticino. The great chords, which are like the music moaned by the statues are from the prelude to the first of Handel’s *Trois Leçons*; he used to say:

“One feels them in the diaphragm—they are, as it were, the groaning and labouring of all creation travailing together until now.”

There is a place in New Zealand named Erewhon, after the book; it is marked on the large maps, a township about fifty miles west of Napier in the Hawke Bay Province (North Island). I am told that people in New Zealand sometimes call their houses Erewhon and occasionally spell the word Erehwon which Butler did not intend; he treated wh as a single letter, as one would treat th. Among other traces of Erewhon now existing in real life are Butler’s Stones on the Hokitika Pass, so called because of a legend that they were in his mind when he described the statues.

The book was translated into Dutch in 1873 and into German in 1897.

Butler wrote to Charles Darwin to explain what he meant by the "Book of the Machines": "I am sincerely sorry that some of the critics should have thought I was laughing at your theory, a thing which I never meant to do and should be shocked at having done." Soon after this Butler was invited to Down and paid two visits to Mr. Darwin there; he thus became acquainted with all the family and for some years was on intimate terms with Mr. (now Sir) Francis Darwin.

It is easy to see by the light of subsequent events that we should probably have had something not unlike *Erewhon* sooner or later, even without the Russian lady and Sir F. N. Broome, to whose promptings, owing to a certain diffidence which never left him, he was perhaps inclined to attribute too much importance. But he would not have agreed with this view at the time; he looked upon himself as a painter and upon *Erewhon* as an interruption. It had come, like one of those creatures from the Land of the Unborn, pestering him and refusing to leave him at peace until he consented to give it bodily shape. It was only a little one, and he saw no likelihood of its having any successors. So he satisfied its demands and then, supposing that he had written himself out, looked forward to a future in which nothing should interfere with the painting. Nevertheless, when another of the unborn came teasing him he yielded to its importunities and allowed himself to become the author of *The Fair Haven*, which is his pamphlet on the Resurrection, enlarged and preceded by a realistic memoir of the pseudonymous author, John Pickard Owen. In the library of St. John's College, Cambridge, are two copies of the pamphlet with pages cut out; he used these pages in forming the MS. of *The Fair Haven*. To have published this book as by the author of *Erewhon* would have been to give away the irony and satire. And he had another reason for not disclosing his name; he remembered that as soon as curiosity about the authorship of *Erewhon* was satisfied, the weekly sales fell from fifty down to only two or three. But, as he always talked openly of whatever was in his mind, he soon let out the secret of the authorship of *The Fair Haven*, and it became advisable to put his name to a second edition.

One result of his submitting the MS. of *Erewhon* to Miss Savage was that she thought he ought to write a novel, and urged him to do so. I have no doubt that he wrote the memoir of John Pickard Owen with the idea of quieting Miss Savage and also as an experiment to ascertain whether he was likely to succeed with a novel. The result seems to have satisfied him, for, not long after *The Fair Haven*, he began *The Way of All Flesh*, sending the MS. to Miss Savage, as he did everything he wrote, for her approval and putting her into the book as

Ernest's Aunt Alethea. He continued writing it in the intervals of other work until her death in February, 1885, after which he did not touch it. It was published in 1903 by Mr. R. A. Streatfeild, his literary executor.

Soon after *The Fair Haven* Butler began to be aware that his letter in the *Press*, "Darwin among the Machines," was descending with further modifications and developing in his mind into a theory about evolution which took shape as *Life and Habit*; but the writing of this very remarkable and suggestive book was delayed and the painting interrupted by absence from England on business in Canada. He had been persuaded by a college friend, a member of one of the great banking families, to call in his colonial mortgages and to put the money into several new companies. He was going to make thirty or forty per cent, instead of only ten. One of these companies was a Canadian undertaking, of which he became a director; it was necessary for someone to go to headquarters and investigate its affairs; he went, and was much occupied by the business for two or three years. By the beginning of 1876 he had returned finally to London, but most of his money was lost and his financial position for the next ten years caused him very serious anxiety. His personal expenditure was already so low that it was hardly possible to reduce it, and he set to work at his profession more industriously than ever, hoping to paint something that he could sell, his spare time being occupied with *Life and Habit*, which was the subject that really interested him more deeply than any other.

Following his letter in the *Press*, wherein he had seen machines as in process of becoming animate, he went on to regard them as living organs and limbs which we had made outside ourselves. What would follow if we reversed this and regarded our limbs and organs as machines which we had manufactured as parts of our bodies? In the first place, how did we come to make them without knowing anything about it? But then, how comes anybody to do anything unconsciously? The answer usually would be: By habit. But can a man be said to do a thing by habit when he has never done it before? His ancestors have done it, but not he. Can the habit have been acquired by them for his benefit? Not unless he and his ancestors are the same person. Perhaps, then, they are the same person.

In February, 1876, partly to clear his mind and partly to tell someone, he wrote down his thoughts in a letter to his namesake, Thomas William Gale Butler, a fellow art-student who was then in New Zealand; so much of the letter as concerns the growth of his theory is given in *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler* (1912).

In September, 1877, when *Life and Habit* was on the eve of publication, Mr. Francis Darwin came to lunch with him in Clifford's Inn and, in course of conversation, told him that Professor Ray Lankester had written something in *Nature* about a lecture by Dr. Ewald Hering of Prague, delivered so long ago as 1870, "On Memory as a Universal Function of Organized Matter." This rather alarmed Butler, but he deferred looking up the reference until after December, 1877, when his book was out, and then, to his relief, he found that Hering's theory was very similar to his own, so that, instead of having something sprung upon him which would have caused him to want to alter his book, he was supported. He at once wrote to the *Athenæum*, calling attention to Hering's lecture, and then pursued his studies in evolution.

Life and Habit was followed in 1879 by *Evolution Old and New*, wherein he compared the teleological or purposive view of evolution taken by Buffon, Dr. Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck with the view taken by Charles Darwin, and came to the conclusion that the old was better. But while agreeing with the earlier writers in thinking that the variations whose accumulation results in species were originally due to intelligence, he could not take the view that the intelligence resided in an external personal God. He had done with all that when he gave up the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He proposed to place the intelligence inside the creature ("The Deadlock in Darwinism," *post*).

In 1880 he continued the subject by publishing *Unconscious Memory*. Chapter IV of this book is concerned with a personal quarrel between himself and Charles Darwin which arose out of the publication by Charles Darwin of Dr. Krause's *Life of Erasmus Darwin*. We need not enter into particulars here, the matter is fully dealt with in a pamphlet, *Charles Darwin and Samuel Butler*: *A Step towards Reconciliation*, which I wrote in 1911, the result of a correspondence between Mr. Francis Darwin and myself. Before this correspondence took place Mr. Francis Darwin had made several public allusions to *Life and Habit*; and in September, 1908, in his inaugural address to the British Association at Dublin, he did Butler the posthumous honour of quoting from his translation of Hering's lecture "On Memory," which is in *Unconscious Memory*, and of mentioning Butler as having enunciated the theory contained in *Life and Habit*.

In 1886 Butler published his last book on evolution, *Luck or Cunning as the Main Means of Organic Modification*? His other contributions to the subject are some essays, written for the *Examiner* in 1879, "God the Known and God the Unknown," which were republished by Mr. Fifield in 1909, and the articles "The

Deadlock in Darwinism" which appeared in the *Universal Review* in 1890 and some further notes on evolution will be found in *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler* (1912).

It was while he was writing *Life and Habit* that I first met him. For several years he had been in the habit of spending six or eight weeks of the summer in Italy and the Canton Ticino, generally making Faido his headquarters. Many a page of his books was written while resting by the fountain of some subalpine village or waiting in the shade of the chestnuts till the light came so that he could continue a sketch. Every year he returned home by a different route, and thus gradually became acquainted with every part of the Canton and North Italy. There is scarcely a town or village, a point of view, a building, statue or picture in all this country with which he was not familiar. In 1878 he happened to be on the Sacro Monte above Varese at the time I took my holiday; there I joined him, and nearly every year afterwards we were in Italy together.

He was always a delightful companion, and perhaps at his gayest on these occasions. "A man's holiday," he would say, "is his garden," and he set out to enjoy himself and to make everyone about him enjoy themselves too. I told him the old schoolboy muddle about Sir Walter Raleigh introducing tobacco and saying: "We shall this day light up such a fire in England as I trust shall never be put out." He had not heard it before and, though amused, appeared preoccupied, and perhaps a little jealous, during the rest of the evening. Next morning, while he was pouring out his coffee, his eyes twinkled and he said, with assumed carelessness:

"By the by, do you remember?—wasn't it Columbus who bashed the egg down on the table and said 'Eppur non si muove'?"

He was welcome wherever he went, full of fun and ready to play while doing the honours of the country. Many of the peasants were old friends, and every day we were sure to meet someone who remembered him. Perhaps it would be an old woman labouring along under a burden; she would smile and stop, take his hand and tell him how happy she was to meet him again and repeat her thanks for the empty wine bottle he had given her after an out-of-door luncheon in her neighbourhood four or five years before. There was another who had rowed him many times across the Lago di Orta and had never been in a train but once in her life, when she went to Novara to her son's wedding. He always remembered all about these people and asked how the potatoes were doing this year and whether the grandchildren were growing up into fine boys and girls, and he never forgot

to inquire after the son who had gone to be a waiter in New York. At Civiasco there is a restaurant which used to be kept by a jolly old lady, known for miles round as La Martina; we always lunched with her on our way over the Colma to and from Varallo-Sesia. On one occasion we were accompanied by two English ladies and, one being a teetotaller, Butler maliciously instructed La Martina to make the *sabbaglione* so that it should be *forte* and *abbondante*, and to say that the Marsala, with which it was more than flavoured, was nothing but vinegar. La Martina never forgot that when she looked in to see how things were going, he was pretending to lick the dish clean. These journeys provided the material for a book which he thought of calling "Verdi Prati," after one of Handel's most beautiful songs; but he changed his mind, and it appeared at the end of 1881 as *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino* with more than eighty illustrations, nearly all by Butler. Charles Gogin made an etching for the frontispiece, drew some of the pictures, and put figures into others; half a dozen are mine. They were all redrawn in ink from sketches made on the spot, in oil, water-colour, and pencil. There were also many illustrations of another kind—extracts from Handel's music, each chosen because Butler thought it suitable to the spirit of the scene he wished to bring before the reader. The introduction concludes with these words: "I have chosen Italy as my second country, and would dedicate this book to her as a thank-offering for the happiness she has afforded me."

In the spring of 1883 he began to compose music, and in 1885 we published together an album of minuets, gavottes, and fugues. This led to our writing *Narcissus*, which is an Oratorio Buffo in the Handelian manner—that is as nearly so as we could make it. It is a mistake to suppose that all Handel's oratorios are upon sacred subjects; some of them are secular. And not only so, but, whatever the subject, Handel was never at a loss in treating anything that came into his words by way of allusion or illustration. As Butler puts it in one of his sonnets:

> He who gave eyes to ears and showed in sound
> All thoughts and things in earth or heaven above—
> From fire and hailstones running along the ground
> To Galatea grieving for her love—
> He who could show to all unseeing eyes
> Glad shepherds watching o'er their flocks by night,
> Or Iphis angel-wafted to the skies,
> Or Jordan standing as an heap upright—

And so on. But there is one subject which Handel never treated—I mean the Money Market. Perhaps he avoided it intentionally; he was twice bankrupt, and Mr. R. A. Streatfeild tells me that the British Museum possesses a MS. letter from him giving instructions as to the payment of the dividends on £500 South Sea Stock. Let us hope he sold out before the bubble burst; if so, he was more fortunate than Butler, who was at this time of his life in great anxiety about his own financial affairs. It seemed a pity that Dr. Morell had never offered Handel some such words as these:

> The steadfast funds maintain their wonted state
> While all the other markets fluctuate.

Butler wondered whether Handel would have sent the steadfast funds up above par and maintained them on an inverted pedal with all the other markets fluctuating iniquitously round them like the sheep that turn every one to his own way in the *Messiah*. He thought something of the kind ought to have been done, and in the absence of Handel and Dr. Morell we determined to write an oratorio that should attempt to supply the want. In order to make our libretto as plausible as possible, we adopted the dictum of Monsieur Jourdain's Maître à danser: "Lorsqu'on a des personnes à faire parler en musique, il faut bien que, pour la vraisemblance, on donne dans la bergerie." Narcissus is accordingly a shepherd in love with Amaryllis; they come to London with other shepherds and lose their money in imprudent speculations on the Stock Exchange. In the second part the aunt and godmother of Narcissus, having died at an advanced age worth one hundred thousand pounds, all of which she has bequeathed to her nephew and godson, the obstacle to his union with Amaryllis is removed. The money is invested in consols and all ends happily.

In December, 1886, Butler's father died, and his financial difficulties ceased. He engaged Alfred Emery Cathie as clerk, but made no other change, except that he bought a pair of new hair brushes and a larger wash-hand basin. Any change in his mode of life was an event. When in London he got up at 6.30 in the summer and 7.30 in the winter, went into his sitting-room, lighted the fire, put the kettle on and returned to bed. In half an hour he got up again, fetched the kettle of hot water, emptied it into the cold water that was already in his bath, refilled the kettle and put it back on the fire. After dressing, he came into his sitting-room, made tea and cooked, in his Dutch oven, something he had bought the day before. His laundress was an elderly woman, and he could not trouble her to come to his rooms so early in the morning; on the other hand, he could not stay

in bed until he thought it right for her to go out; so it ended in his doing a great deal for himself. He then got his breakfast and read the Times. At 9.30 Alfred came, with whom he discussed anything requiring attention, and soon afterwards his laundress arrived. Then he started to walk to the British Museum, where he arrived about 10.30, every alternate morning calling at the butcher's in Fetter Lane to order his meat. In the Reading Room at the Museum he sat at Block B ("B for Butler") and spent an hour "posting his notes"—that is reconsidering, rewriting, amplifying, shortening, and indexing the contents of the little note-book he always carried in his pocket. After the notes he went on till 1.30 with whatever book he happened to be writing.

On three days of the week he dined in a restaurant on his way home, and on the other days he dined in his chambers where his laundress had cooked his dinner. At two o'clock Alfred returned (having been home to dinner with his wife and children) and got tea ready for him. He then wrote letters and attended to his accounts till 3.45, when he smoked his first cigarette. He used to smoke a great deal, but, believing it to be bad for him, took to cigarettes instead of pipes, and gradually smoked less and less, making it a rule not to begin till some particular hour, and pushing this hour later and later in the day, till it settled itself at 3.45. There was no water laid on in his rooms, and every day he fetched one can full from the tap in the court, Alfred fetching the rest. When anyone expostulated with him about cooking his own breakfast and fetching his own water, he replied that it was good for him to have a change of occupation. This was partly the fact, but the real reason, which he could not tell everyone, was that he shrank from inconveniencing anybody; he always paid more than was necessary when anything was done for him, and was not happy then unless he did some of the work himself.

At 5.30 he got his evening meal, he called it his tea, and it was little more than a facsimile of breakfast. Alfred left in time to post the letters before six. Butler then wrote music till about 8, when he came to see me in Staple Inn, returning to Clifford's Inn by about 10. After a light supper, latterly not more than a piece of toast and a glass of milk, he played one game of his own particular kind of Patience, prepared his breakfast things and fire ready for the next morning, smoked his seventh and last cigarette, and went to bed at eleven o'clock.

He was fond of the theatre, but avoided serious pieces. He preferred to take his Shakespeare from the book, finding that the spirit of the plays rather evaporated under modern theatrical treatment. In one of his books he brightens up the old illustration of *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark by putting it thus: "If the

character of Hamlet be entirely omitted, the play must suffer, even though Henry Irving himself be cast for the title-rôle." Anyone going to the theatre in this spirit would be likely to be less disappointed by performances that were comic or even frankly farcical. Latterly, when he grew slightly deaf, listening to any kind of piece became too much of an effort; nevertheless, he continued to the last the habit of going to one pantomime every winter.

There were about twenty houses where he visited, but he seldom accepted an invitation to dinner—it upset the regularity of his life; besides, he belonged to no club and had no means of returning hospitality. When two colonial friends called unexpectedly about noon one day, soon after he settled in London, he went to the nearest cook-shop in Fetter Lane and returned carrying a dish of hot roast pork and greens. This was all very well once in a way, but not the sort of thing to be repeated indefinitely.

On Thursdays, instead of going to the Museum, he often took a day off, going into the country sketching or walking, and on Sundays, whatever the weather, he nearly always went into the country walking; his map of the district for thirty miles round London is covered all over with red lines showing where he had been. He sometimes went out of town from Saturday to Monday, and for over twenty years spent Christmas at Boulogne-sur-Mer.

There is a Sacro Monte at Varallo-Sesia with many chapels, each containing life-sized statues and frescoes illustrating the life of Christ. Butler had visited this sanctuary repeatedly, and was a great favourite with the townspeople, who knew that he was studying the statues and frescoes in the chapels, and who remembered that in the preface to *Alps and Sanctuaries* he had declared his intention of writing about them. In August, 1887, the Varallesi brought matters to a head by giving him a civic dinner on the Mountain. Everyone was present, there were several speeches and, when we were coming down the slippery mountain path after it was all over, he said to me:

"You know, there's nothing for it now but to write that book about the Sacro Monte at once. It must be the next thing I do."

Accordingly, on returning home, he took up photography and, immediately after Christmas, went back to Varallo to photograph the statues and collect material. Much research was necessary and many visits to out-of-the-way sanctuaries which might have contained work by the sculptor Tabachetti, whom he was rescuing from oblivion and identifying with the Flemish Jean de Wespin. One of

these visits, made after his book was published, forms the subject of "The Sanctuary of Montrigone." *Ex Voto*, the book about Varallo, appeared in 1888, and an Italian translation by Cavaliere Angelo Rizzetti was published at Novara in 1894.

"Quis Desiderio . . . ?" (*The Humour of Homer and Other Essays*) was developed in 1888 from something in a letter from Miss Savage nearly ten years earlier. On the 15th of December, 1878, in acknowledging this letter, Butler wrote:

> I am sure that any tree or flower nursed by Miss Cobbe would be the *very* first to fade away and that her gazelles would die long before they ever came to know her *well*. The sight of the brass buttons on her pea-jacket would settle them out of hand.

There was an enclosure in Miss Savage's letter, but it is unfortunately lost; I suppose it must have been a newspaper cutting with an allusion to Moore's poem and perhaps a portrait of Miss Frances Power Cobbe—pea-jacket, brass buttons, and all.

On the 10th November, 1879, Miss Savage, having been ill, wrote to Butler:

> I have been dipping into the books of Moses, being sometimes at a loss for something to read while shut up in my apartment. You know that I have never read the Bible much, consequently there is generally something of a novelty that I hit on. As you do know your Bible well, perhaps you can tell me what became of Aaron. The account given of his end in Numbers xx. is extremely ambiguous and unsatisfactory. Evidently he did not come by his death fairly, but whether he was murdered secretly for the furtherance of some private ends, or publicly in a State sacrifice, I can't make out. I myself rather incline to the former opinion, but I should like to know what the experts say about it. A very nice, exciting little tale might be made out of it in the style of the police stories in *All the rear Round* called "The Mystery of Mount Hor or What became of Aaron?" Don't forget to write to me.

Butler's people had been suggesting that he should try to earn money by writing in magazines, and Miss Savage was falling in with the idea and offering a practical suggestion. I do not find that he had anything to tell her about the death of Aaron. On 23rd March, 1880, she wrote:

> Dear Mr. Butler: Read the subjoined poem of Wordsworth and let me know what you understand its meaning to be. Of course I have my opinion, which I think of communicating to the Wordsworth Society. You can belong to that Society for the small sum of 2/6 per annum. I think of joining because it is cheap.

"The subjoined poem" was the one beginning: "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," and Butler made this note on the letter:

To the foregoing letter I answered that I concluded Miss Savage meant to imply that Wordsworth had murdered Lucy in order to escape a prosecution for breach of promise.

> *Miss Savage to Butler*.
>
> 2nd April, 1880: My dear Mr. Butler: I don't think you see all that I do in the poem, and I am afraid that the suggestion of a DARK SECRET in the poet's life is not so very obvious after all. I was hoping you would propose to devote yourself for a few months to reading the *Excursion*, his letters, &c., with a view to following up the clue, and I am disappointed though, to say the truth, the idea of a *crime* had not flashed upon me when I wrote to you. How well the works of *great* men repay attention and study! But you, who know your Bible so well, how was it that you did not detect the plagiarism in the last verse? Just refer to the account of the disappearance of Aaron (I have not a Bible at hand, we want one sadly in the club) but I am sure that the words are identical [I cannot see what Miss Savage meant. 1901. S. B.] *Cassell's Magazine* have offered a prize for setting the poem to music, and I fell to thinking how it could be treated musically, and so came to a right comprehension of it.

Although Butler, when editing Miss Savage's letters in 1901, could not see the resemblance between Wordsworth's poem and Numbers xx., he at once saw a strong likeness between Lucy and Moore's heroine whom he had been keeping in an accessible pigeon-hole of his memory ever since his letter about Miss Frances Power Cobbe. He now sent Lucy to keep her company and often spoke of the pair of them as probably the two most disagreeable young women in English literature—an opinion which he must have expressed to Miss Savage and with which I have no doubt she agreed.

In the spring of 1888, on his return from photographing the statues at Varallo, he

found, to his disgust, that the authorities of the British Museum had removed Frost's *Lives of Eminent Christians* from its accustomed shelf in the Reading Room. Soon afterwards Harry Quilter asked him to write for the *Universal Review* and he responded with "Quis Desiderio . . . ?" In this essay he compares himself to Wordsworth and dwells on the points of resemblance between Lucy and the book of whose assistance he had now been deprived in a passage which echoes the opening of Chapter V of *Ex Voto*, where he points out the resemblances between Varallo and Jerusalem.

Early in 1888 the leading members of the Shrewsbury Archæological Society asked Butler to write a memoir of his grandfather and of his father for their Quarterly Journal. This he undertook to do when he should have finished *Ex Voto*. In December, 1888, his sisters, with the idea of helping him to write the memoir, gave him his grandfather's correspondence, which extended from 1790 to 1839. On looking over these very voluminous papers he became penetrated with an almost Chinese reverence for his ancestor and, after getting the Archæological Society to absolve him from his promise to write the memoir, set about a full life of Dr. Butler, which was not published till 1896. The delay was caused partly by the immense quantity of documents he had to sift and digest, the number of people he had to consult, and the many letters he had to write, and partly by something that arose out of *Narcissus*, which we published in June, 1888.

Butler was not satisfied with having written only half of this work; he wanted it to have a successor, so that by adding his two halves together, he could say he had written a whole Handelian oratorio. While staying with his sisters at Shrewsbury with this idea in his mind, he casually took up a book by Alfred Ainger about Charles Lamb and therein stumbled upon something about the *Odyssey*. It was years since he had looked at the poem, but, from what he remembered, he thought it might provide a suitable subject for musical treatment. He did not, however, want to put Dr. Butler aside, so I undertook to investigate. It is stated on the title-page of both *Narcissus* and *Ulysses* that the words were written and the music composed by both of us. As to the music, each piece bears the initials of the one who actually composed it. As to the words, it was necessary first to settle some general scheme and this, in the case of *Narcissus*, grew in the course of conversation. The scheme of *Ulysses* was constructed in a more formal way and Butler had perhaps rather less to do with it. We were bound by the *Odyssey*, which is, of course, too long to be treated fully, and I selected incidents that attracted me and settled the order of the songs

and choruses. For this purpose, as I out-Shakespeare Shakespeare in the smallness of my Greek, I used *The Adventures of Ulysses* by Charles Lamb, which we should have known nothing about but for Ainger's book. Butler acquiesced in my proposals, but, when it came to the words themselves, he wrote practically all the libretto, as he had done in the case of *Narcissus*; I did no more than suggest a few phrases and a few lines here and there.

We had sent *Narcissus* for review to the papers, and, as a consequence, about this time, made the acquaintance of Mr. J. A. Fuller Maitland, then musical critic of the *Times*; he introduced us to that learned musician William Smith Rockstro, under whom we studied medieval counterpoint while composing *Ulysses*. We had already made some progress with it when it occurred to Butler that it would not take long and might, perhaps, be safer if he were to look at the original poem, just to make sure that Lamb had not misled me. Not having forgotten all his Greek, he bought a copy of the *Odyssey* and was so fascinated by it that he could not put it down. When he came to the Phoeacian episode of Ulysses at Scheria he felt he must be reading the description of a real place and that something in the personality of the author was eluding him. For months he was puzzled, and, to help in clearing up the mystery, set about translating the poem. In August, 1891, he had preceded me to Chiavenna, and on a letter I wrote him, telling him when to expect me, he made this note:

> It was during the few days that I was at Chiavenna (at the Hotel Grotta Crimée) that I hit upon the feminine authorship of the *Odyssey*. I did not find out its having been written at Trapani till January, 1892.

He suspected that the authoress in describing both Scheria and Ithaca was drawing from her native country and searched on the Admiralty charts for the features enumerated in the poem; this led him to the conclusion that the country could only be Trapani, Mount Eryx, and the Ægadean Islands. As soon as he could after this discovery he went to Sicily to study the locality and found it in all respects suitable for his theory; indeed, it was astonishing how things kept turning up to support his view. It is all in his book *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, published in 1897 and dedicated to his friend Cavaliere Biagio Ingroja of Calatafimi.

His first visit to Sicily was in 1892, in August—a hot time of the year, but it was his custom to go abroad in the autumn. He returned to Sicily every year (except one), but latterly went in the spring. He made many friends all over the island, and after his death the people of Calatafimi called a street by his name, the Via

Samuel Butler, “thus,” as Ingroja wrote when he announced the event to me, “honouring a great man’s memory, handing down his name to posterity, and doing homage to the friendly English nation.” Besides showing that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman in Sicily and translating the poem into English prose, he also translated the *Iliad*, and, in March, 1895, went to Greece and the Troad to see the country therein described, where he found nothing to cause him to disagree with the received theories.

It has been said of him in a general way that the fact of an opinion being commonly held was enough to make him profess the opposite. It was enough to make him examine the opinion for himself, when it affected any of the many subjects which interested him, and if, after giving it his best attention, he found it did not hold water, then no weight of authority could make him say that it did. This matter of the geography of the *Iliad* is only one among many commonly received opinions which he examined for himself and found no reason to dispute; on these he considered it unnecessary to write.

It is characteristic of his passion for doing things thoroughly that he learnt nearly the whole of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* by heart. He had a Pickering copy of each poem, which he carried in his pocket and referred to in railway trains, both in England and Italy, when saying the poems over to himself. These two little books are now in the library of St. John’s College, Cambridge. He was, however, disappointed to find that he could not retain more than a book or two at a time and that, on learning more, he forgot what he had learnt first; but he was about sixty at the time. Shakespeare’s Sonnets, on which he published a book in 1899, gave him less trouble in this respect; he knew them all by heart, and also their order, and one consequence of this was that he wrote some sonnets in the Shakespearian form. He found this intimate knowledge of the poet’s work more useful for his purpose than reading commentaries by those who are less familiar with it. “A commentary on a poem,” he would say, “may be useful as material on which to form an estimate of the commentator, but the poem itself is the most important document you can consult, and it is impossible to know it too intimately if you want to form an opinion about it and its author.”

It was always the author, the work of God, that interested him more than the book—the work of man; the painter more than the picture; the composer more than the music. “If a writer, a painter, or a musician makes me feel that he held those things to be lovable which I myself hold to be lovable I am satisfied; art is only interesting in so far as it reveals the personality of the artist.” Handel was, of course, “the greatest of all musicians.” Among the painters he chiefly loved

Giovanni Bellini, Carpaccio, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Rembrandt, Holbein, Velasquez, and De Hooghe; in poetry Shakespeare, Homer, and the Authoress of the *Odyssey*; and in architecture the man, whoever he was, who designed the Temple of Neptune at Paestum. Life being short, he did not see why he should waste any of it in the company of inferior people when he had these. And he treated those he met in daily life in the same spirit: it was what he found them to be that attracted or repelled him; what others thought about them was of little or no consequence.

And now, at the end of his life, his thoughts reverted to the two subjects which had occupied him more than thirty years previously—namely, *Erewhon* and the evidence for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The idea of what might follow from belief in one single supposed miracle had been slumbering during all those years and at last rose again in the form of a sequel to *Erewhon*. In *Erewhon Revisited* Mr. Higgs returns to find that the Erewhonians now believe in him as a god in consequence of the supposed miracle of his going up in a balloon to induce his heavenly father to send the rain. Mr. Higgs and the reader know that there was no miracle in the case, but Butler wanted to show that whether it was a miracle or not did not signify provided that the people believed it be one. And so Mr. Higgs is present in the temple which is being dedicated to him and his worship.

The existence of his son George was an afterthought and gave occasion for the second leading idea of the book—the story of a father trying to win the love of a hitherto unknown son by risking his life in order to show himself worthy of it—and succeeding.

Butler's health had already begun to fail, and when he started for Sicily on Good Friday, 1902, it was for the last time: he knew he was unfit to travel, but was determined to go, and was looking forward to meeting Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Fuller Maitland, whom he was to accompany over the Odyssean scenes at Trapani and Mount Eryx. But he did not get beyond Palermo; there he was so much worse that he could not leave his room. In a few weeks he was well enough to be removed to Naples, and Alfred went out and brought him home to London. He was taken to a nursing home in St. John's Wood where he lay for a month, attended by his old friend Dr. Dudgeon, and where he died on the 18th June, 1902.

There was a great deal he still wanted to do. He had intended to revise *The Way of All Flesh*, to write a book about Tabachetti, and to publish a new edition of *Ex*

Voto with the mistakes corrected. Also he wished to reconsider the articles reprinted in *The Humour of Homer*, and was looking forward to painting more sketches and composing more music. While lying ill and very feeble within a few days of the end, and not knowing whether it was to be the end or not, he said to me:

"I am much better to-day. I don't feel at all as though I were going to die. Of course, it will be all wrong if I do get well, for there is my literary position to be considered. First I write *Erewhon*—that is my opening subject; then, after modulating freely through all my other books and the music and so on, I return gracefully to my original key and write *Erewhon Revisited*. Obviously, now is the proper moment to come to a full close, make my bow and retire; but I believe I am getting well, after all. It's very inartistic, but I cannot help it."

Some of his readers complain that they often do not know whether he is serious or jesting. He wrote of Lord Beaconsfield: "Earnestness was his greatest danger, but if he did not quite overcome it (as indeed who can? it is the last enemy that shall be subdued), he managed to veil it with a fair amount of success." To veil his own earnestness he turned most naturally to humour, employing it in a spirit of reverence, as all the great humorists have done, to express his deepest and most serious convictions. He was aware that he ran the risk of being misunderstood by some, but he also knew that it is useless to try to please all, and, like Mozart, he wrote to please himself and a few intimate friends.

I cannot speak at length of his kindness, consideration, and sympathy; nor of his generosity, the extent of which was very great and can never be known—it was sometimes exercised in unexpected ways, as when he gave my laundress a shilling because it was "such a beastly foggy morning"; nor of his slightly archaic courtliness—unless among people he knew well he usually left the room backwards, bowing to the company; nor of his punctiliousness, industry, and painstaking attention to detail—he kept accurate accounts not only of all his property by double entry but also of his daily expenditure, which he balanced to a halfpenny every evening, and his handwriting, always beautiful and legible, was more so at sixty-six than at twenty-six; nor of his patience and cheerfulness during years of anxiety when he had few to sympathize with him; nor of the strange mixture of simplicity and shrewdness that caused one who knew him well to say: "Il sait tout; il ne sait rien; il est poète."

Epitaphs always fascinated him, and formerly he used to say he should like to be buried at Langar and to have on his tombstone the subject of the last of Handel's *Six Great Fugues*. He called this "The Old Man Fugue," and said it was like an epitaph composed for himself by one who was very old and tired and sorry for things; and he made young Ernest Pontifex in *The Way of All Flesh* offer it to Edward Overton as an epitaph for his Aunt Alethea. Butler, however, left off wanting any tombstone long before he died. In accordance with his wish his body was cremated, and a week later Alfred and I returned to Woking and buried his ashes under the shrubs in the garden of the crematorium, with nothing to mark the spot.

Footnotes:

[1] I am indebted to one of Butler's contemporaries at Cambridge, the Rev. Dr. T. G. Bonney, F.R.S., and also to Mr. John F. Harris, both of St. John's College, for help in finding and dating Butler's youthful contributions to the *Eagle*.

[2] This gentleman, on the death of his father in 1866, became the Rev. Sir Philip Perring, Bart.

[3] The late Sir Julius von Haast, K.C.M.G., appointed Provincial Geologist in 1860, was ennobled by the Austrian Government and knighted by the British. He died in 1887.

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