



# **The Way of All Flesh (Centaur Classics) [The 100 greatest novels of all time - #74]**

*Samuel Butler*

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"A great book because it gives an honest picture of the relationship between father and son, and it could do that because Butler was a truly independent observer, and above all because he was courageous. He would say things that other people knew but didn't dare to say. And finally there was his clear, simple, straightforward way of writing, never using a long word where a short one will do." —George Orwell

"If the house caught on fire, the Victorian novel I would rescue from the flames would be 'The Way of All Flesh'". —William Maxwell

"'The Way of All Flesh' is one of the time-bombs of literature. One thinks of it lying in Samuel Butler's desk for thirty years, waiting to blow up the Victorian family and with it the whole great pillared and balustraded edifice of the Victorian novel." —V. S. Pritchett

"One of the summits of human achievement." —George Bernard Shaw

"The Way of All Flesh" (1903) exploded like a bomb in Edwardian drawing rooms. Based on Samuel Butler's own life and published posthumously, it offers a scathing indictment of Victorian bourgeois values as personified in five generations of the Pontifex family.

Butler's satire centers on Ernest Pontifex, an orthodox young man who suddenly sees the falseness of the rules and expectations forced on him by parents and teachers, an epiphany which leads him to renounce the moral, religious, and social values he once held.

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