

# The Way of All Flesh



**Samuel Butler**

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## **PREFACE**

Samuel Butler began to write "The Way of All Flesh" about the year 1872, and was engaged upon it intermittently until 1884. It is therefore, to a great extent, contemporaneous with "Life and Habit," and may be taken as a practical illustration of the theory of heredity embodied in that book. He did not work at it after 1884, but for various reasons he postponed its publication. He was occupied in other ways, and he professed himself dissatisfied with it as a whole, and always intended to rewrite or at any rate to revise it. His death in 1902 prevented him from doing this, and on his death-bed he gave me clearly to understand that he wished it to be published in its present form. I found that the MS. of the fourth and fifth chapters had disappeared, but by consulting and comparing various notes and sketches, which remained among his papers, I have been able to supply the missing chapters in a form which I believe does not differ materially from that which he finally adopted. With regard to the chronology of the events recorded, the reader will do well to bear in mind that the main body of the novel is supposed to have been written in the year 1867, and the last chapter added as a postscript in 1882.

R. A. STREATFEILD.

## CHAPTER I

When I was a small boy at the beginning of the century I remember an old man who wore knee-breeches 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 workshop 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

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.

To the best of my belief George Pontifex got the greater part of his nature from this obstinate old lady, his mother—a mother who though she loved no one else in the world except her husband (and him only after a fashion) was most tenderly attached to the unexpected child of her old age; nevertheless she showed it little.

The boy grew up into a sturdy bright-eyed little fellow, with plenty of intelligence, and perhaps a trifle too great readiness at book learning. Being kindly treated at home, he was as fond of his father and mother as it was in his nature to be of anyone, but he was fond of no one else. He had a good healthy sense of *meum*, and as little of *tuum* as he could help. Brought up much in the open air in one of the best situated and healthiest villages in England, his little limbs had fair play, and in those days children's brains were not overtaken as they now are; perhaps it was for this very reason that the boy showed an avidity to learn. At seven or eight years old he could read, write and sum better than any other boy of his age in the village. My father was not yet rector of Paleham, and did not remember George Pontifex's childhood, but I have heard neighbours tell him that the boy was looked upon as unusually quick and forward. His father and mother were naturally proud of their

offspring, and his mother was determined that he should one day become one of the kings and councillors of the earth.

It is one thing however to resolve that one's son shall win some of life's larger prizes, and another to square matters with fortune in this respect. George Pontifex might have been brought up as a carpenter and succeeded in no other way than as succeeding his father as one of the minor magnates of Paleham, and yet have been a more truly successful man than he actually was—for I take it there is not much more solid success in this world than what fell to the lot of old Mr and Mrs Pontifex; it happened, however, that about the year 1780, when George was a boy of fifteen, a sister of Mrs Pontifex's, who had married a Mr Fairlie, came to pay a few days' visit at Paleham. Mr Fairlie was a publisher, chiefly of religious works, and had an establishment in Paternoster Row; he had risen in life, and his wife had risen with him. No very close relations had been maintained between the sisters for some years, and I forget exactly how it came about that Mr and Mrs Fairlie were guests in the quiet but exceedingly comfortable house of their sister and brother-in-law; but for some reason or other the visit was paid, and little George soon succeeded in making his way into his uncle and aunt's good graces. A quick, intelligent boy with a good address, a sound constitution, and coming of respectable parents, has a potential value which a practised business man who has need of many subordinates is little likely to overlook. Before his visit was over Mr Fairlie proposed to the lad's father and mother that he should put him into his own business, at the same time promising that if the boy did well he should not want some one to bring him forward. Mrs Pontifex had her son's interest too much at heart to refuse such an offer, so the matter was soon arranged, and about a fortnight after the Fairlies had left, George was sent up by coach to London, where he was met by his uncle and aunt, with whom it was arranged that he should live.

This was George's great start in life. He now wore more fashionable clothes than he had yet been accustomed to, and any little rusticity of gait or pronunciation which he had brought from Paleham, was so quickly and completely lost that it was ere long impossible to detect that he had not been born and bred among people of what is commonly called education. The boy paid great attention to his work, and more than justified the favourable opinion which Mr Fairlie had formed concerning him. Sometimes Mr Fairlie would send him down to Paleham for a few days' holiday, and ere long his parents perceived that he had acquired an air and manner of talking different from any that he had taken with him from Paleham. They were proud of him, and soon fell into their proper places, resigning all appearance of a parental control, for which indeed there was no kind of necessity. In return, George was always kindly to them, and to the end of his life retained a more

affectionate feeling towards his father and mother than I imagine him ever to have felt again for man, woman, or child.

George's visits to Paleham were never long, for the distance from London was under fifty miles and there was a direct coach, so that the journey was easy; there was not time, therefore, for the novelty to wear off either on the part of the young man or of his parents. George liked the fresh country air and green fields after the darkness to which he had been so long accustomed in Paternoster Row, which then, as now, was a narrow gloomy lane rather than a street. Independently of the pleasure of seeing the familiar faces of the farmers and villagers, he liked also being seen and being congratulated on growing up such a fine-looking and fortunate young fellow, for he was not the youth to hide his light under a bushel. His uncle had had him taught Latin and Greek of an evening; he had taken kindly to these languages and had rapidly and easily mastered what many boys take years in acquiring. I suppose his knowledge gave him a self-confidence which made itself felt whether he intended it or not; at any rate, he soon began to pose as a judge of literature, and from this to being a judge of art, architecture, music and everything else, the path was easy. Like his father, he knew the value of money, but he was at once more ostentatious and less liberal than his father; while yet a boy he was a thorough little man of the world, and did well rather upon principles which he had tested by personal experiment, and recognised as principles, than from those profounder convictions which in his father were so instinctive that he could give no account concerning them.

His father, as I have said, wondered at him and let him alone. His son had fairly distanced him, and in an inarticulate way the father knew it perfectly well. After a few years he took to wearing his best clothes whenever his son came to stay with him, nor would he discard them for his ordinary ones till the young man had returned to London. I believe old Mr Pontifex, along with his pride and affection, felt also a certain fear of his son, as though of something which he could not thoroughly understand, and whose ways, notwithstanding outward agreement, were nevertheless not as his ways. Mrs Pontifex felt nothing of this; to her George was pure and absolute perfection, and she saw, or thought she saw, with pleasure, that he resembled her and her family in feature as well as in disposition rather than her husband and his.

When George was about twenty-five years old his uncle took him into partnership on very liberal terms. He had little cause to regret this step. The young man infused fresh vigour into a concern that was already vigorous, and by the time he was thirty found himself in the receipt of not less than £1500 a year as his share of the profits. Two years later he married a lady about seven years younger than himself, who brought him a handsome dowry. She died in 1805, when her youngest child Alethea was born, and her husband did not marry again.

### CHAPTER III

In the early years of the century five little children and a couple of nurses began to make periodical visits to Paleham. It is needless to say they were a rising generation of Pontifexes, towards whom the old couple, their grandparents, were as tenderly deferential as they would have been to the children of the Lord Lieutenant of the County. Their names were Eliza, Maria, John, Theobald (who like myself was born in 1802), and Alethea. Mr Pontifex always put the prefix "master" or "miss" before the names of his grandchildren, except in the case of Alethea, who was his favourite. To have resisted his grandchildren would have been as impossible for him as to have resisted his wife; even old Mrs Pontifex yielded before her son's children, and gave them all manner of licence which she would never have allowed even to my sisters and myself, who stood next in her regard. Two regulations only they must attend to; they must wipe their shoes well on coming into the house, and they must not overfeed Mr Pontifex's organ with wind, nor take the pipes out.

By us at the Rectory there was no time so much looked forward to as the annual visit of the little Pontifexes to Paleham. We came in for some of the prevailing licence; we went to tea with Mrs Pontifex to meet her grandchildren, and then our young friends were asked to the Rectory to have tea with us, and we had what we considered great times. I fell desperately in love with Alethea, indeed we all fell in love with each other, plurality and exchange whether of wives or husbands being openly and unblushingly advocated in the very presence of our nurses. We were very merry, but it is so long ago that I have forgotten nearly everything save that we were very merry. Almost the only thing that remains with me as a permanent impression was the fact that Theobald one day beat his nurse and teased her, and when she said she should go away cried out, "You shan't go away—I'll keep you on purpose to torment you."

One winter's morning, however, in the year 1811, we heard the church bell tolling while we were dressing in the back nursery and were told it was for old Mrs Pontifex. Our man-servant John told us and added with grim levity that they were ringing the bell to come and take her away. She had had a fit of paralysis which had carried her off quite suddenly. It was very shocking, the more so because our nurse assured us that if God chose we might all have fits of paralysis ourselves that very day and be taken straight off to the Day of Judgement. The Day of Judgement indeed, according to the opinion of those who were most likely to know,

would not under any circumstances be delayed more than a few years longer, and then the whole world would be burned, and we ourselves be consigned to an eternity of torture, unless we mended our ways more than we at present seemed at all likely to do. All this was so alarming that we fell to screaming and made such a hullabaloo that the nurse was obliged for her own peace to reassure us. Then we wept, but more composedly, as we remembered that there would be no more tea and cakes for us now at old Mrs Pontifex's.

On the day of the funeral, however, we had a great excitement; old Mr Pontifex sent round a penny loaf to every inhabitant of the village according to a custom still not uncommon at the beginning of the century; the loaf was called a dole. We had never heard of this custom before, besides, though we had often heard of penny loaves, we had never before seen one; moreover, they were presents to us as inhabitants of the village, and we were treated as grown up people, for our father and mother and the servants had each one loaf sent them, but only one. We had never yet suspected that we were inhabitants at all; finally, the little loaves were new, and we were passionately fond of new bread, which we were seldom or never allowed to have, as it was supposed not to be good for us. Our affection, therefore, for our old friend had to stand against the combined attacks of archæological interest, the rights of citizenship and property, the pleasantness to the eye and goodness for food of the little loaves themselves, and the sense of importance which was given us by our having been intimate with someone who had actually died. It seemed upon further inquiry that there was little reason to anticipate an early death for anyone of ourselves, and this being so, we rather liked the idea of someone else's being put away into the churchyard; we passed, therefore, in a short time from extreme depression to a no less extreme exultation; a new heaven and a new earth had been revealed to us in our perception of the possibility of benefiting by the death of our friends, and I fear that for some time we took an interest in the health of everyone in the village whose position rendered a repetition of the dole in the least likely.

Those were the days in which all great things seemed far off, and we were astonished to find that Napoleon Buonaparte was an actually living person. We had thought such a great man could only have lived a very long time ago, and here he was after all almost as it were at our own doors. This lent colour to the view that the Day of Judgement might indeed be nearer than we had thought, but nurse said that was all right now, and she knew. In those days the snow lay longer and drifted deeper in the lanes than it does now, and the milk was sometimes brought in frozen in winter, and we were taken down into the back kitchen to see it. I suppose there are rectories up and down the country now where the milk comes in frozen sometimes in winter, and the children go down to

wonder at it, but I never see any frozen milk in London, so I suppose the winters are warmer than they used to be.

About one year after his wife's death Mr Pontifex also was gathered to his fathers. My father saw him the day before he died. The old man had a theory about sunsets, and had had two steps built up against a wall in the kitchen garden on which he used to stand and watch the sun go down whenever it was clear. My father came on him in the afternoon, just as the sun was setting, and saw him with his arms resting on the top of the wall looking towards the sun over a field through which there was a path on which my father was. My father heard him say "Good-bye, sun; good-bye, sun," as the sun sank, and saw by his tone and manner that he was feeling very feeble. Before the next sunset he was gone.

There was no dole. Some of his grandchildren were brought to the funeral and we remonstrated with them, but did not take much by doing so. John Pontifex, who was a year older than I was, sneered at penny loaves, and intimated that if I wanted one it must be because my papa and mamma could not afford to buy me one, whereon I believe we did something like fighting, and I rather think John Pontifex got the worst of it, but it may have been the other way. I remember my sister's nurse, for I was just outgrowing nurses myself, reported the matter to higher quarters, and we were all of us put to some ignominy, but we had been thoroughly awakened from our dream, and it was long enough before we could hear the words "penny loaf" mentioned without our ears tingling with shame. If there had been a dozen doles afterwards we should not have deigned to touch one of them.

George Pontifex put up a monument to his parents, a plain slab in Paleham church, inscribed with the following epitaph:—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
JOHN PONTIFEX  
WHO WAS BORN AUGUST 16TH,  
1727, AND DIED FEBRUARY 8, 1812,  
IN HIS 85TH YEAR,  
AND OF  
RUTH PONTIFEX, HIS WIFE,  
WHO WAS BORN OCTOBER 13, 1727, AND DIED JANUARY 10, 1811,  
IN HER 84TH YEAR.  
THEY WERE UNOSTENTATIOUS BUT EXEMPLARY  
IN THE DISCHARGE OF THEIR  
RELIGIOUS, MORAL, AND SOCIAL DUTIES.  
THIS MONUMENT WAS PLACED  
BY THEIR ONLY SON.

## CHAPTER IV

In a year or two more came Waterloo and the European peace. Then Mr George Pontifex went abroad more than once. I remember seeing at Battersby in after years the diary which he kept on the first of these occasions. It is a characteristic document. I felt as I read it that the author before starting had made up his mind to admire only what he thought it would be creditable in him to admire, to look at nature and art only through the spectacles that had been handed down to him by generation after generation of prigs and impostors. The first glimpse of Mont Blanc threw Mr Pontifex into a conventional ecstasy. "My feelings I cannot express. I gasped, yet hardly dared to breathe, as I viewed for the first time the monarch of the mountains. I seemed to fancy the genius seated on his stupendous throne far above his aspiring brethren and in his solitary might defying the universe. I was so overcome by my feelings that I was almost bereft of my faculties, and would not for worlds have spoken after my first exclamation till I found some relief in a gush of tears. With pain I tore myself from contemplating for the first time 'at distance dimly seen' (though I felt as if I had sent my soul and eyes after it), this sublime spectacle." After a nearer view of the Alps from above Geneva he walked nine out of the twelve miles of the descent: "My mind and heart were too full to sit still, and I found some relief by exhausting my feelings through exercise." In the course of time he reached Chamonix and went on a Sunday to the Montanvert to see the Mer de Glace. There he wrote the following verses for the visitors' book, which he considered, so he says, "suitable to the day and scene":—

Lord, while these wonders of thy hand I see,  
My soul in holy reverence bends to thee.  
These awful solitudes, this dread repose,  
Yon pyramid sublime of spotless snows,  
These spiry pinnacles, those smiling plains,  
This sea where one eternal winter reigns,  
These are thy works, and while on them I gaze  
I hear a silent tongue that speaks thy praise.

Some poets always begin to get groggy about the knees after running for seven or eight lines. Mr Pontifex's last couplet gave him a lot of trouble, and nearly every word has been erased and rewritten once at least. In the visitors' book at the Montanvert, however, he must have been obliged to commit himself definitely to one reading or another. Taking the verses all round, I should say that Mr Pontifex was right in considering them suitable to the day; I don't like being too hard even on

the Mer de Glace, so will give no opinion as to whether they are suitable to the scene also.

Mr Pontifex went on to the Great St Bernard and there he wrote some more verses, this time I am afraid in Latin. He also took good care to be properly impressed by the Hospice and its situation. "The whole of this most extraordinary journey seemed like a dream, its conclusion especially, in gentlemanly society, with every comfort and accommodation amidst the rudest rocks and in the region of perpetual snow. The thought that I was sleeping in a convent and occupied the bed of no less a person than Napoleon, that I was in the highest inhabited spot in the old world and in a place celebrated in every part of it, kept me awake some time." As a contrast to this, I may quote here an extract from a letter written to me last year by his grandson Ernest, of whom the reader will hear more presently. The passage runs: "I went up to the Great St Bernard and saw the dogs." In due course Mr Pontifex found his way into Italy, where the pictures and other works of art—those, at least, which were fashionable at that time—threw him into genteel paroxysms of admiration. Of the Uffizi Gallery at Florence he writes: "I have spent three hours this morning in the gallery and I have made up my mind that if of all the treasures I have seen in Italy I were to choose one room it would be the Tribune of this gallery. It contains the Venus de' Medici, the Explorator, the Pancratist, the Dancing Faun and a fine Apollo. These more than outweigh the Laocoon and the Belvedere Apollo at Rome. It contains, besides, the St John of Raphael and many other *chefs-d'œuvre* of the greatest masters in the world." It is interesting to compare Mr Pontifex's effusions with the rhapsodies of critics in our own times. Not long ago a much esteemed writer informed the world that he felt "disposed to cry out with delight" before a figure by Michael Angelo. I wonder whether he would feel disposed to cry out before a real Michael Angelo, if the critics had decided that it was not genuine, or before a reputed Michael Angelo which was really by someone else. But I suppose that a prig with more money than brains was much the same sixty or seventy years ago as he is now.

Look at Mendelssohn again about this same Tribune on which Mr Pontifex felt so safe in staking his reputation as a man of taste and culture. He feels no less safe and writes, "I then went to the Tribune. This room is so delightfully small you can traverse it in fifteen paces, yet it contains a world of art. I again sought out my favourite arm chair which stands under the statue of the 'Slave whetting his knife' (L'Arrotino), and taking possession of it I enjoyed myself for a couple of hours; for here at one glance I had the 'Madonna del Cardellino,' Pope Julius II., a female portrait by Raphael, and above it a lovely Holy Family by Perugino; and so close to me that I could have touched it with my hand the Venus de' Medici; beyond, that of Titian . . . The space between is occupied by other pictures of Raphael's, a portrait by Titian, a

Domenichino, etc., etc., all these within the circumference of a small semi-circle no larger than one of your own rooms. This is a spot where a man feels his own insignificance and may well learn to be humble." The Tribune is a slippery place for people like Mendelssohn to study humility in. They generally take two steps away from it for one they take towards it. I wonder how many chinks Mendelssohn gave himself for having sat two hours on that chair. I wonder how often he looked at his watch to see if his two hours were up. I wonder how often he told himself that he was quite as big a gun, if the truth were known, as any of the men whose works he saw before him, how often he wondered whether any of the visitors were recognizing him and admiring him for sitting such a long time in the same chair, and how often he was vexed at seeing them pass him by and take no notice of him. But perhaps if the truth were known his two hours was not quite two hours.

Returning to Mr Pontifex, whether he liked what he believed to be the masterpieces of Greek and Italian art or no he brought back some copies by Italian artists, which I have no doubt he satisfied himself would bear the strictest examination with the originals. Two of these copies fell to Theobald's share on the division of his father's furniture, and I have often seen them at Battersby on my visits to Theobald and his wife. The one was a Madonna by Sassoferrato with a blue hood over her head which threw it half into shadow. The other was a Magdalen by Carlo Dolci with a very fine head of hair and a marble vase in her hands. When I was a young man I used to think these pictures were beautiful, but with each successive visit to Battersby I got to dislike them more and more and to see "George Pontifex" written all over both of them. In the end I ventured after a tentative fashion to blow on them a little, but Theobald and his wife were up in arms at once. They did not like their father and father-in-law, but there could be no question about his power and general ability, nor about his having been a man of consummate taste both in literature and art—indeed the diary he kept during his foreign tour was enough to prove this. With one more short extract I will leave this diary and proceed with my story. During his stay in Florence Mr Pontifex wrote: "I have just seen the Grand Duke and his family pass by in two carriages and six, but little more notice is taken of them than if I, who am utterly unknown here, were to pass by." I don't think that he half believed in his being utterly unknown in Florence or anywhere else!

## CHAPTER V

Fortune, we are told, is a blind and fickle foster-mother, who showers her gifts at random upon her nurslings. But we do her a grave injustice if we believe such an accusation. Trace a man's career from his cradle to his grave and mark how Fortune has treated him. You will find that when he is once dead she can for the most part be vindicated from the charge of any but very superficial fickleness. Her blindness is the merest fable; she can espy her favourites long before they are born. We are as days and have had our parents for our yesterdays, but through all the fair weather of a clear parental sky the eye of Fortune can discern the coming storm, and she laughs as she places her favourites it may be in a London alley or those whom she is resolved to ruin in kings' palaces. Seldom does she relent towards those whom she has suckled unkindly and seldom does she completely fail a favoured nursling.

Was George Pontifex one of Fortune's favoured nurslings or not? On the whole I should say that he was not, for he did not consider himself so; he was too religious to consider Fortune a deity at all; he took whatever she gave and never thanked her, being firmly convinced that whatever he got to his own advantage was of his own getting. And so it was, after Fortune had made him able to get it.

"Nos te, nos facimus, Fortuna, deam," exclaimed the poet. "It is we who make thee, Fortune, a goddess"; and so it is, after Fortune has made us able to make her. The poet says nothing as to the making of the "nos." Perhaps some men are independent of antecedents and surroundings and have an initial force within themselves which is in no way due to causation; but this is supposed to be a difficult question and it may be as well to avoid it. Let it suffice that George Pontifex did not consider himself fortunate, and he who does not consider himself fortunate is unfortunate.

True, he was rich, universally respected and of an excellent natural constitution. If he had eaten and drunk less he would never have known a day's indisposition. Perhaps his main strength lay in the fact that though his capacity was a little above the average, it was not too much so. It is on this rock that so many clever people split. The successful man will see just so much more than his neighbours as they will be able to see too when it is shown them, but not enough to puzzle them. It is far safer to know too little than too much. People will condemn the one, though they will resent being called upon to exert themselves to follow the other.

The best example of Mr Pontifex's good sense in matters connected with his business which I can think of at this moment is the revolution which he effected in the style of advertising works published by the firm. When he first became a partner one of the firm's advertisements ran thus:—

“Books proper to be given away at this Season.—

“The Pious Country Parishioner, being directions how a Christian may manage every day in the course of his whole life with safety and success; how to spend the Sabbath Day; what books of the Holy Scripture ought to be read first; the whole method of education; collects for the most important virtues that adorn the soul; a discourse on the Lord's Supper; rules to set the soul right in sickness; so that in this treatise are contained all the rules requisite for salvation. The 8th edition with additions. Price 10d.

\*\*\* An allowance will be made to those who give them away.”

Before he had been many years a partner the advertisement stood as follows:—

“The Pious Country Parishioner. A complete manual of Christian Devotion. Price 10d.

A reduction will be made to purchasers for gratuitous distribution.”

What a stride is made in the foregoing towards the modern standard, and what intelligence is involved in the perception of the unseemliness of the old style, when others did not perceive it!

Where then was the weak place in George Pontifex's armour? I suppose in the fact that he had risen too rapidly. It would almost seem as if a transmitted education of some generations is necessary for the due enjoyment of great wealth. Adversity, if a man is set down to it by degrees, is more supportable with equanimity by most people than any great prosperity arrived at in a single lifetime. Nevertheless a certain kind of good fortune generally attends self-made men to the last. It is their children of the first, or first and second, generation who are in greater danger, for the race can no more repeat its most successful performances suddenly and without its ebbings and flowings of success than the individual can do so, and the more brilliant the success in any one generation, the greater as a general rule the subsequent exhaustion until time has been allowed for recovery. Hence it oftens happens that the grandson of a successful man will be more successful than the son—the spirit that actuated the grandfather having lain fallow in the son and being refreshed by repose so as to be ready for fresh exertion in the grandson. A very successful man, moreover, has something of the hybrid in him; he is a new animal, arising from the coming together of many unfamiliar elements and it is well known that the reproduction of abnormal growths, whether animal or vegetable, is irregular and not to be depended upon, even when they are not absolutely sterile.

And certainly Mr Pontifex's success was exceedingly rapid. Only a few years after he had become a partner his uncle and aunt both died within a few months of one another. It was then found that they had made him their heir. He was thus not only sole partner in the business but found himself with a fortune of some £30,000 into the bargain, and this was a large sum in those days. Money came pouring in upon him, and the faster it came the fonder he became of it, though, as he frequently said, he valued it not for its own sake, but only as a means of providing for his dear children.

Yet when a man is very fond of his money it is not easy for him at all times to be very fond of his children also. The two are like God and Mammon. Lord Macaulay has a passage in which he contrasts the pleasures which a man may derive from books with the inconveniences to which he may be put by his acquaintances. "Plato," he says, "is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet." I dare say I might differ from Lord Macaulay in my estimate of some of the writers he has named, but there can be no disputing his main proposition, namely, that we need have no more trouble from any of them than we have a mind to, whereas our friends are not always so easily disposed of. George Pontifex felt this as regards his children and his money. His money was never naughty; his money never made noise or litter, and did not spill things on the tablecloth at meal times, or leave the door open when it went out. His dividends did not quarrel among themselves, nor was he under any uneasiness lest his mortgages should become extravagant on reaching manhood and run him up debts which sooner or later he should have to pay. There were tendencies in John which made him very uneasy, and Theobald, his second son, was idle and at times far from truthful. His children might, perhaps, have answered, had they known what was in their father's mind, that he did not knock his money about as he not infrequently knocked his children. He never dealt hastily or pettishly with his money, and that was perhaps why he and it got on so well together.

It must be remembered that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the relations between parents and children were still far from satisfactory. The violent type of father, as described by Fielding, Richardson, Smollett and Sheridan, is now hardly more likely to find a place in literature than the original advertisement of Messrs. Fairlie & Pontifex's "Pious Country Parishioner," but the type was much too persistent not to have been drawn from nature closely. The parents in Miss Austen's novels are less like savage wild beasts than those of her predecessors, but she evidently looks upon them with suspicion, and an uneasy feeling that *le père de famille est capable de tout* makes itself sufficiently apparent throughout the greater part of her writings. In the

Elizabethan time the relations between parents and children seem on the whole to have been more kindly. The fathers and the sons are for the most part friends in Shakespeare, nor does the evil appear to have reached its full abomination till a long course of Puritanism had familiarised men's minds with Jewish ideals as those which we should endeavour to reproduce in our everyday life. What precedents did not Abraham, Jephthah and Jonadab the son of Rechab offer? How easy was it to quote and follow them in an age when few reasonable men or women doubted that every syllable of the Old Testament was taken down *verbatim* from the mouth of God. Moreover, Puritanism restricted natural pleasures; it substituted the Jeremiad for the Pæan, and it forgot that the poor abuses of all times want countenance.

Mr Pontifex may have been a little sterner with his children than some of his neighbours, but not much. He thrashed his boys two or three times a week and some weeks a good deal oftener, but in those days fathers were always thrashing their boys. It is easy to have juster views when everyone else has them, but fortunately or unfortunately results have nothing whatever to do with the moral guilt or blamelessness of him who brings them about; they depend solely upon the thing done, whatever it may happen to be. The moral guilt or blamelessness in like manner has nothing to do with the result; it turns upon the question whether a sufficient number of reasonable people placed as the actor was placed would have done as the actor has done. At that time it was universally admitted that to spare the rod was to spoil the child, and St Paul had placed disobedience to parents in very ugly company. If his children did anything which Mr Pontifex disliked they were clearly disobedient to their father. In this case there was obviously only one course for a sensible man to take. It consisted in checking the first signs of self-will while his children were too young to offer serious resistance. If their wills were "well broken" in childhood, to use an expression then much in vogue, they would acquire habits of obedience which they would not venture to break through till they were over twenty-one years old. Then they might please themselves; he should know how to protect himself; till then he and his money were more at their mercy than he liked.

How little do we know our thoughts—our reflex actions indeed, yes; but our reflex reflections! Man, forsooth, prides himself on his consciousness! We boast that we differ from the winds and waves and falling stones and plants, which grow they know not why, and from the wandering creatures which go up and down after their prey, as we are pleased to say without the help of reason. We know so well what we are doing ourselves and why we do it, do we not? I fancy that there is some truth in the view which is being put forward nowadays, that it is our less conscious thoughts and our less conscious actions which mainly mould our lives and the lives of those who spring from us.

## CHAPTER VI

Mr Pontifex was not the man to trouble himself much about his motives. People were not so introspective then as we are now; they lived more according to a rule of thumb. Dr Arnold had not yet sown that crop of earnest thinkers which we are now harvesting, and men did not see why they should not have their own way if no evil consequences to themselves seemed likely to follow upon their doing so. Then as now, however, they sometimes let themselves in for more evil consequences than they had bargained for.

Like other rich men at the beginning of this century he ate and drank a good deal more than was enough to keep him in health. Even his excellent constitution was not proof against a prolonged course of overfeeding and what we should now consider overdrinking. His liver would not unfrequently get out of order, and he would come down to breakfast looking yellow about the eyes. Then the young people knew that they had better look out. It is not as a general rule the eating of sour grapes that causes the children's teeth to be set on edge. Well-to-do parents seldom eat many sour grapes; the danger to the children lies in the parents eating too many sweet ones.

I grant that at first sight it seems very unjust, that the parents should have the fun and the children be punished for it, but young people should remember that for many years they were part and parcel of their parents and therefore had a good deal of the fun in the person of their parents. If they have forgotten the fun now, that is no more than people do who have a headache after having been tipsy overnight. The man with a headache does not pretend to be a different person from the man who got drunk, and claim that it is his self of the preceding night and not his self of this morning who should be punished; no more should offspring complain of the headache which it has earned when in the person of its parents, for the continuation of identity, though not so immediately apparent, is just as real in one case as in the other. What is really hard is when the parents have the fun after the children have been born, and the children are punished for this.

On these, his black days, he would take very gloomy views of things and say to himself that in spite of all his goodness to them his children did not love him. But who can love any man whose liver is out of order? How base, he would exclaim to himself, was such ingratitude! How especially hard upon himself, who had been such a model son, and always honoured and obeyed his parents though they had not spent one hundredth part of the money upon him which he had lavished upon his

own children. "It is always the same story," he would say to himself, "the more young people have the more they want, and the less thanks one gets; I have made a great mistake; I have been far too lenient with my children; never mind, I have done my duty by them, and more; if they fail in theirs to me it is a matter between God and them. I, at any rate, am guiltless. Why, I might have married again and become the father of a second and perhaps more affectionate family, etc., etc." He pitied himself for the expensive education which he was giving his children; he did not see that the education cost the children far more than it cost him, inasmuch as it cost them the power of earning their living easily rather than helped them towards it, and ensured their being at the mercy of their father for years after they had come to an age when they should be independent. A public school education cuts off a boy's retreat; he can no longer become a labourer or a mechanic, and these are the only people whose tenure of independence is not precarious—with the exception of course of those who are born inheritors of money or who are placed young in some safe and deep groove. Mr Pontifex saw nothing of this; all he saw was that he was spending much more money upon his children than the law would have compelled him to do, and what more could you have? Might he not have apprenticed both his sons to greengrocers? Might he not even yet do so to-morrow morning if he were so minded? The possibility of this course being adopted was a favourite topic with him when he was out of temper; true, he never did apprentice either of his sons to greengrocers, but his boys comparing notes together had sometimes come to the conclusion that they wished he would.

At other times when not quite well he would have them in for the fun of shaking his will at them. He would in his imagination cut them all out one after another and leave his money to found almshouses, till at last he was obliged to put them back, so that he might have the pleasure of cutting them out again the next time he was in a passion.

Of course if young people allow their conduct to be in any way influenced by regard to the wills of living persons they are doing very wrong and must expect to be sufferers in the end, nevertheless the powers of will-dangling and will-shaking are so liable to abuse and are continually made so great an engine of torture that I would pass a law, if I could, to incapacitate any man from making a will for three months from the date of each offence in either of the above respects and let the bench of magistrates or judge, before whom he has been convicted, dispose of his property as they shall think right and reasonable if he dies during the time that his will-making power is suspended.

Mr Pontifex would have the boys into the dining-room. "My dear John, my dear Theobald," he would say, "look at me. I began life with nothing but the clothes with which my father and mother sent me up to London. My father gave me ten shillings and my mother five for pocket money

and I thought them munificent. I never asked my father for a shilling in the whole course of my life, nor took aught from him beyond the small sum he used to allow me monthly till I was in receipt of a salary. I made my own way and I shall expect my sons to do the same. Pray don't take it into your heads that I am going to wear my life out making money that my sons may spend it for me. If you want money you must make it for yourselves as I did, for I give you my word I will not leave a penny to either of you unless you show that you deserve it. Young people seem nowadays to expect all kinds of luxuries and indulgences which were never heard of when I was a boy. Why, my father was a common carpenter, and here you are both of you at public schools, costing me ever so many hundreds a year, while I at your age was plodding away behind a desk in my Uncle Fairlie's counting house. What should I not have done if I had had one half of your advantages? You should become dukes or found new empires in undiscovered countries, and even then I doubt whether you would have done proportionately so much as I have done. No, no, I shall see you through school and college and then, if you please, you will make your own way in the world."

In this manner he would work himself up into such a state of virtuous indignation that he would sometimes thrash the boys then and there upon some pretext invented at the moment.

And yet, as children went, the young Pontifexes were fortunate; there would be ten families of young people worse off for one better; they ate and drank good wholesome food, slept in comfortable beds, had the best doctors to attend them when they were ill and the best education that could be had for money. The want of fresh air does not seem much to affect the happiness of children in a London alley: the greater part of them sing and play as though they were on a moor in Scotland. So the absence of a genial mental atmosphere is not commonly recognised by children who have never known it. Young people have a marvellous faculty of either dying or adapting themselves to circumstances. Even if they are unhappy—very unhappy—it is astonishing how easily they can be prevented from finding it out, or at any rate from attributing it to any other cause than their own sinfulness.

To parents who wish to lead a quiet life I would say: Tell your children that they are very naughty—much naughtier than most children. Point to the young people of some acquaintances as models of perfection and impress your own children with a deep sense of their own inferiority. You carry so many more guns than they do that they cannot fight you. This is called moral influence, and it will enable you to bounce them as much as you please. They think you know and they will not have yet caught you lying often enough to suspect that you are not the unworldly and scrupulously truthful person which you represent yourself to be; nor yet will they know how great a coward you are, nor how soon you will run away, if they fight you with persistency and judgement. You

keep the dice and throw them both for your children and yourself. Load them then, for you can easily manage to stop your children from examining them. Tell them how singularly indulgent you are; insist on the incalculable benefit you conferred upon them, firstly in bringing them into the world at all, but more particularly in bringing them into it as your own children rather than anyone else's. Say that you have their highest interests at stake whenever you are out of temper and wish to make yourself unpleasant by way of balm to your soul. Harp much upon these highest interests. Feed them spiritually upon such brimstone and treacle as the late Bishop of Winchester's Sunday stories. You hold all the trump cards, or if you do not you can filch them; if you play them with anything like judgement you will find yourselves heads of happy, united, God-fearing families, even as did my old friend Mr Pontifex. True, your children will probably find out all about it some day, but not until too late to be of much service to them or inconvenience to yourself.

Some satirists have complained of life inasmuch as all the pleasures belong to the fore part of it and we must see them dwindle till we are left, it may be, with the miseries of a decrepit old age.

To me it seems that youth is like spring, an overpraised season—delightful if it happen to be a favoured one, but in practice very rarely favoured and more remarkable, as a general rule, for biting east winds than genial breezes. Autumn is the mellower season, and what we lose in flowers we more than gain in fruits. Fontenelle at the age of ninety, being asked what was the happiest time of his life, said he did not know that he had ever been much happier than he then was, but that perhaps his best years had been those when he was between fifty-five and seventy-five, and Dr Johnson placed the pleasures of old age far higher than those of youth. True, in old age we live under the shadow of Death, which, like a sword of Damocles, may descend at any moment, but we have so long found life to be an affair of being rather frightened than hurt that we have become like the people who live under Vesuvius, and chance it without much misgiving.

## CHAPTER VII

A few words may suffice for the greater number of the young people to whom I have been alluding in the foregoing chapter. Eliza and Maria, the two elder girls, were neither exactly pretty nor exactly plain, and were in all respects model young ladies, but Alethea was exceedingly pretty and of a lively, affectionate disposition, which was in sharp contrast with those of her brothers and sisters. There was a trace of her grandfather, not only in her face, but in her love of fun, of which her father had none, though not without a certain boisterous and rather coarse quasi-humour which passed for wit with many.

John grew up to be a good-looking, gentlemanly fellow, with features a trifle too regular and finely chiselled. He dressed himself so nicely, had such good address, and stuck so steadily to his books that he became a favourite with his masters; he had, however, an instinct for diplomacy, and was less popular with the boys. His father, in spite of the lectures he would at times read him, was in a way proud of him as he grew older; he saw in him, moreover, one who would probably develop into a good man of business, and in whose hands the prospects of his house would not be likely to decline. John knew how to humour his father, and was at a comparatively early age admitted to as much of his confidence as it was in his nature to bestow on anyone.

His brother Theobald was no match for him, knew it, and accepted his fate. He was not so good-looking as his brother, nor was his address so good; as a child he had been violently passionate; now, however, he was reserved and shy, and, I should say, indolent in mind and body. He was less tidy than John, less well able to assert himself, and less skilful in humouring the caprices of his father. I do not think he could have loved anyone heartily, but there was no one in his family circle who did not repress, rather than invite his affection, with the exception of his sister Alethea, and she was too quick and lively for his somewhat morose temper. He was always the scapegoat, and I have sometimes thought he had two fathers to contend against—his father and his brother John; a third and fourth also might almost be added in his sisters Eliza and Maria. Perhaps if he had felt his bondage very acutely he would not have put up with it, but he was constitutionally timid, and the strong hand of his father knitted him into the closest outward harmony with his brother and sisters.

The boys were of use to their father in one respect. I mean that he played them off against each other. He kept them but poorly supplied with pocket money, and to Theobald would urge that the claims of his

elder brother were naturally paramount, while he insisted to John upon the fact that he had a numerous family, and would affirm solemnly that his expenses were so heavy that at his death there would be very little to divide. He did not care whether they compared notes or no, provided they did not do so in his presence. Theobald did not complain even behind his father's back. I knew him as intimately as anyone was likely to know him as a child, at school, and again at Cambridge, but he very rarely mentioned his father's name even while his father was alive, and never once in my hearing afterwards. At school he was not actively disliked as his brother was, but he was too dull and deficient in animal spirits to be popular.

Before he was well out of his frocks it was settled that he was to be a clergyman. It was seemly that Mr Pontifex, the well-known publisher of religious books, should devote at least one of his sons to the Church; this might tend to bring business, or at any rate to keep it in the firm; besides, Mr Pontifex had more or less interest with bishops and Church dignitaries and might hope that some preferment would be offered to his son through his influence. The boy's future destiny was kept well before his eyes from his earliest childhood and was treated as a matter which he had already virtually settled by his acquiescence. Nevertheless a certain show of freedom was allowed him. Mr Pontifex would say it was only right to give a boy his option, and was much too equitable to grudge his son whatever benefit he could derive from this. He had the greatest horror, he would exclaim, of driving any young man into a profession which he did not like. Far be it from him to put pressure upon a son of his as regards any profession and much less when so sacred a calling as the ministry was concerned. He would talk in this way when there were visitors in the house and when his son was in the room. He spoke so wisely and so well that his listening guests considered him a paragon of right-mindedness. He spoke, too, with such emphasis and his rosy gills and bald head looked so benevolent that it was difficult not to be carried away by his discourse. I believe two or three heads of families in the neighbourhood gave their sons absolute liberty of choice in the matter of their professions—and am not sure that they had not afterwards considerable cause to regret having done so. The visitors, seeing Theobald look shy and wholly unmoved by the exhibition of so much consideration for his wishes, would remark to themselves that the boy seemed hardly likely to be equal to his father and would set him down as an unenthusiastic youth, who ought to have more life in him and be more sensible of his advantages than he appeared to be.

No one believed in the righteousness of the whole transaction more firmly than the boy himself; a sense of being ill at ease kept him silent, but it was too profound and too much without break for him to become fully alive to it, and come to an understanding with himself. He feared the dark scowl which would come over his father's face upon the

slightest opposition. His father's violent threats, or coarse sneers, would not have been taken *au sérieux* by a stronger boy, but Theobald was not a strong boy, and rightly or wrongly, gave his father credit for being quite ready to carry his threats into execution. Opposition had never got him anything he wanted yet, nor indeed had yielding, for the matter of that, unless he happened to want exactly what his father wanted for him. If he had ever entertained thoughts of resistance, he had none now, and the power to oppose was so completely lost for want of exercise that hardly did the wish remain; there was nothing left save dull acquiescence as of an ass crouched between two burdens. He may have had an ill-defined sense of ideals that were not his actuals; he might occasionally dream of himself as a soldier or a sailor far away in foreign lands, or even as a farmer's boy upon the wolds, but there was not enough in him for there to be any chance of his turning his dreams into realities, and he drifted on with his stream, which was a slow, and, I am afraid, a muddy one.

I think the Church Catechism has a good deal to do with the unhappy relations which commonly even now exist between parents and children. That work was written too exclusively from the parental point of view; the person who composed it did not get a few children to come in and help him; he was clearly not young himself, nor should I say it was the work of one who liked children—in spite of the words “my good child” which, if I remember rightly, are once put into the mouth of the catechist and, after all, carry a harsh sound with them. The general impression it leaves upon the mind of the young is that their wickedness at birth was but very imperfectly wiped out at baptism, and that the mere fact of being young at all has something with it that savours more or less distinctly of the nature of sin.

If a new edition of the work is ever required I should like to introduce a few words insisting on the duty of seeking all reasonable pleasure and avoiding all pain that can be honourably avoided. I should like to see children taught that they should not say they like things which they do not like, merely because certain other people say they like them, and how foolish it is to say they believe this or that when they understand nothing about it. If it be urged that these additions would make the Catechism too long I would curtail the remarks upon our duty towards our neighbour and upon the sacraments. In the place of the paragraph beginning “I desire my Lord God our Heavenly Father” I would—but perhaps I had better return to Theobald, and leave the recasting of the Catechism to abler hands.

## CHAPTER VIII

Mr Pontifex had set his heart on his son's becoming a fellow of a college before he became a clergyman. This would provide for him at once and would ensure his getting a living if none of his father's ecclesiastical friends gave him one. The boy had done just well enough at school to render this possible, so he was sent to one of the smaller colleges at Cambridge and was at once set to read with the best private tutors that could be found. A system of examination had been adopted a year or so before Theobald took his degree which had improved his chances of a fellowship, for whatever ability he had was classical rather than mathematical, and this system gave more encouragement to classical studies than had been given hitherto.

Theobald had the sense to see that he had a chance of independence if he worked hard, and he liked the notion of becoming a fellow. He therefore applied himself, and in the end took a degree which made his getting a fellowship in all probability a mere question of time. For a while Mr Pontifex senior was really pleased, and told his son he would present him with the works of any standard writer whom he might select. The young man chose the works of Bacon, and Bacon accordingly made his appearance in ten nicely bound volumes. A little inspection, however, showed that the copy was a second hand one.

Now that he had taken his degree the next thing to look forward to was ordination—about which Theobald had thought little hitherto beyond acquiescing in it as something that would come as a matter of course some day. Now, however, it had actually come and was asserting itself as a thing which should be only a few months off, and this rather frightened him inasmuch as there would be no way out of it when he was once in it. He did not like the near view of ordination as well as the distant one, and even made some feeble efforts to escape, as may be perceived by the following correspondence which his son Ernest found among his father's papers written on gilt-edged paper, in faded ink and tied neatly round with a piece of tape, but without any note or comment. I have altered nothing. The letters are as follows:—

“My dear Father,—I do not like opening up a question which has been considered settled, but as the time approaches I begin to be very doubtful how far I am fitted to be a clergyman. Not, I am thankful to say, that I have the faintest doubts about the Church of England, and I could subscribe cordially to every one of the thirty-nine articles which do indeed appear to me to be the *ne plus ultra* of human wisdom, and Paley, too, leaves no loop-hole for an opponent; but I am sure I should be

running counter to your wishes if I were to conceal from you that I do not feel the inward call to be a minister of the gospel that I shall have to say I have felt when the Bishop ordains me. I try to get this feeling, I pray for it earnestly, and sometimes half think that I have got it, but in a little time it wears off, and though I have no absolute repugnance to being a clergyman and trust that if I am one I shall endeavour to live to the Glory of God and to advance His interests upon earth, yet I feel that something more than this is wanted before I am fully justified in going into the Church. I am aware that I have been a great expense to you in spite of my scholarships, but you have ever taught me that I should obey my conscience, and my conscience tells me I should do wrong if I became a clergyman. God may yet give me the spirit for which I assure you I have been and am continually praying, but He may not, and in that case would it not be better for me to try and look out for something else? I know that neither you nor John wish me to go into your business, nor do I understand anything about money matters, but is there nothing else that I can do? I do not like to ask you to maintain me while I go in for medicine or the bar; but when I get my fellowship, which should not be long first, I will endeavour to cost you nothing further, and I might make a little money by writing or taking pupils. I trust you will not think this letter improper; nothing is further from my wish than to cause you any uneasiness. I hope you will make allowance for my present feelings which, indeed, spring from nothing but from that respect for my conscience which no one has so often instilled into me as yourself. Pray let me have a few lines shortly. I hope your cold is better. With love to Eliza and Maria, I am, your affectionate son,

“THEOBALD PONTIFEX.”

“Dear Theobald,—I can enter into your feelings and have no wish to quarrel with your expression of them. It is quite right and natural that you should feel as you do except as regards one passage, the impropriety of which you will yourself doubtless feel upon reflection, and to which I will not further allude than to say that it has wounded me. You should not have said ‘in spite of my scholarships.’ It was only proper that if you could do anything to assist me in bearing the heavy burden of your education, the money should be, as it was, made over to myself. Every line in your letter convinces me that you are under the influence of a morbid sensitiveness which is one of the devil’s favourite devices for luring people to their destruction. I have, as you say, been at great expense with your education. Nothing has been spared by me to give you the advantages, which, as an English gentleman, I was anxious to afford my son, but I am not prepared to see that expense thrown away and to have to begin again from the beginning, merely because you have taken some foolish scruples into your head, which you should resist as no less unjust to yourself than to me.