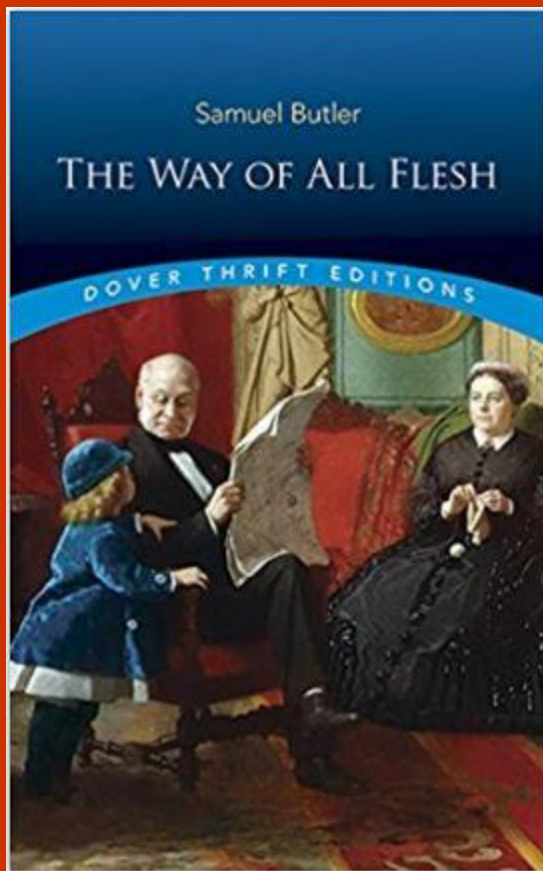


Written between 1873 and 1884 and published posthumously in 1903, *The Way of All Flesh* is regarded by some as the first



twentieth-century novel. Samuel Butler's autobiographical account of a harsh upbringing and troubled adulthood shines an iconoclastic light on the hypocrisy of a Victorian clerical family's domestic life. It also foreshadows the crumbling of nineteenth-century bourgeois ideals in the aftermath of the First World War, as well as the ways in which succeeding generations have questioned conventional values.

Hailed by George Bernard Shaw as "one of the summits of human achievement," this chronicle of the life and loves of Ernest Pontifex spans four generations, focusing

chiefly on the relationship between Ernest and his father, Theobald. Written in the wake of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, it reflects the dawning consciousness of heredity and environment as determinants of character. Along the way, it offers a powerfully satirical indictment of Victorian England's major institutions—the family, the church, and the rigidly hierarchical class structure.