

DOVER · THRIFT · EDITIONS

SAMUEL BUTLER EREWTHON



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Erewhon

SAMUEL BUTLER



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GENERAL EDITOR: PAUL NEGRI

EDITOR OF THIS VOLUME: KATHY CASEY

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Erewhon

Note

Erewhon, a satirical Utopian novel, first was published in 1872. This volume reproduces the expanded and altered edition issued in 1901, on which its author commented that the considerable additions were made “to secure a new lease of life—at least for the copyright.”

The son of a clergyman and the grandson of a well-known scholarly bishop, Samuel Butler (1835–1902) was expected to become an Anglican priest, but declined that career because doubts about Church doctrines grew in his mind, and he wanted to be an artist. He graduated from Cambridge in 1858 and soon went to New Zealand, where he prospered as a sheep farmer. During this time he wrote “Darwin Among the Machines” (1863), in which the seed of *Erewhon* can be detected. Returning to London in 1864, he painted (exhibiting his work regularly at the Royal Academy for several years) and composed music, as well as writing on varied subjects. A receptive but critical appraiser of Darwin’s theory of evolution (*The Origin of Species* was published when Butler was 24), he wrote four books on evolution during the decade from 1877 to 1886. He visited Darwin twice in 1872, and maintained a friendship with him and with his son, Francis Darwin.

Butler never married, though for two decades his closest friend was Eliza Mary Anne Savage. The two corresponded warmly until her death in 1885.

An accomplished scholar, a brilliant thinker, and a versatile writer, Butler published in his later years *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897), in which he expressed his opinion that the epic poem was written by a woman from Sicily, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets Reconsidered* (1899), and

Erewhon Revisited (1901). He also translated both the *Iliad* (1898) and the *Odyssey* (1900) into colloquial English. The semi-autobiographical novel *The Way of All Flesh*, which satirizes middle-class English life in the mid-Victorian era and perhaps still is his best-known work, was published in 1903, after his death, though he began writing it three decades earlier.

Preface to the First Edition

The Author wishes it to be understood that Erewhon is pronounced as a word of three syllables, all short—thus, Ě-rě-whŏn.

Preface to the Second Edition

Having been enabled by the kindness of the public to get through an unusually large edition of *Erewhon* in a very short time, I have taken the opportunity of a second edition to make some necessary corrections, and to add a few passages where it struck me that they would be appropriately introduced; the passages are few, and it is my fixed intention never to touch the work again.

I may perhaps be allowed to say a word or two here in reference to *The Coming Race*, to the success of which book *Erewhon* has been very generally set down as due. This is a mistake, though a perfectly natural one. The fact is that *Erewhon* was finished, with the exception of the last twenty pages and a sentence or two inserted from time to time here and there throughout the book, before the first advertisement of *The Coming Race* appeared. A friend having called my attention to one of the first of these advertisements, and suggesting that it probably referred to a work of similar character to my own, I took *Erewhon* to a well-known firm of publishers on the 1st of May 1871, and left it in their hands for consideration. I then went abroad, and on learning that the publishers alluded to declined the MS., I let it alone for six or seven months, and, being in an out-of-the-way part of Italy, never saw a single review of *The Coming Race*, nor a copy of the work. On my return, I purposely avoided looking into it until I had sent back my last revises to the printer. Then I had much pleasure in reading it, but was indeed surprised at the many little points of similarity between the two books, in spite of their entire independence of one another.

I regret that reviewers have in some cases been inclined to treat the chapters on Machines as an attempt to reduce Mr. Darwin's theory to

an absurdity. Nothing could be further from my intention, and few things would be more distasteful to me than any attempt to laugh at Mr. Darwin; but I must own that I have myself to thank for the misconception, for I felt sure that my intention would be missed, but preferred not to weaken the chapters by explanation, and knew very well that Mr. Darwin's theory would take no harm. The only question in my mind was how far *I* could afford to be misrepresented as laughing at that for which I have the most profound admiration. I am surprised, however, that the book at which such an example of the specious misuse of analogy would seem most naturally levelled should have occurred to no reviewer; neither shall I mention the name of the book here, though I should fancy that the hint given will suffice.

I have been held by some whose opinions I respect to have denied men's responsibility for their actions. He who does this is an enemy who deserves no quarter. I should have imagined that I had been sufficiently explicit, but have made a few additions to the chapter on Malcontents, which will, I think, serve to render further mistake impossible.

An anonymous correspondent (by the handwriting presumably a clergyman) tells me that in quoting from the Latin grammar I should at any rate have done so correctly, and that I should have written "*agricolas*" instead of "*agricolae*." He added something about any boy in the fourth form, &c., &c., which I shall not quote, but which made me very uncomfortable. It may be said that I must have misquoted from design, from ignorance, or by a slip of the pen; but surely in these days it will be recognised as harsh to assign limits to the all-embracing boundlessness of truth, and it will be more reasonably assumed that *each* of the three possible causes of misquotation must have had its share in the apparent blunder. The art of writing things that shall sound right and yet be wrong has made so many reputations, and affords comfort to such a large number of readers, that I could not venture to neglect it; the Latin grammar, however, is a subject on which some of the younger members of the community feel strongly, so I have now written "*agricolas*." I have also parted with the word "*infortuniam*" (though not without regret), but have not dared to meddle with other similar inaccuracies.

For the inconsistencies in the book, and I am aware that there are not a few, I must ask the indulgence of the reader. The blame, however, lies chiefly with the Erewhonians themselves, for they were really a very difficult people to understand. The most glaring anomalies seemed to afford them no intellectual inconvenience; neither, provided they did not actually see the money dropping out of their pockets, nor suffer immediate physical pain, would they listen to any arguments as to the

waste of money and happiness which their folly caused them. But this had an effect of which I have little reason to complain, for I was allowed almost to call them lifelong self-deceivers to their faces, and they said it was quite true, but that it did not matter.

I must not conclude without expressing my most sincere thanks to my critics and to the public for the leniency and consideration with which they have treated my adventures.

June 9, 1872

Preface

Mr. Grant Richards wishes me to say a few words about the genesis of the work, a revised and enlarged edition of which he is herewith laying before the public. I therefore place on record as much as I can remember on this head after a lapse of more than thirty years.

The first part of *Erewhon* written was an article headed “Darwin among the Machines,” and signed Cellarius. It was written in the Upper Rangitata district of the Canterbury Province (as it then was) of New Zealand, and appeared at Christchurch in the *Press* newspaper, June 13, 1863. A copy of this article is indexed under my books in the British Museum catalogue. In passing, I may say that the opening chapters of *Erewhon* were also drawn from the Upper Rangitata district, with such modifications as I found convenient.

A second article on the same subject as the one just referred to appeared in the *Press* shortly after the first, but I have no copy. It treated Machines from a different point of view, and was the basis of pp. 270–274 of the present edition* of “*Erewhon*.” This view ultimately led me to the theory I put forward in *Life and Habit*, published in November 1877. I have put a bare outline of this theory (which I believe to be quite sound) into the mouth of an Erewhonian philosopher in Chapter XXVII of this book.

In 1865 I rewrote and enlarged “Darwin among the Machines” for the *Reasoner*, a paper published in London by Mr. G. J. Holyoake. It

*Editor’s note: The reference is to the 1901 revised and expanded edition. The pages are 136–138 in the 2002 edition.

appeared July 1, 1865, under the heading, "The Mechanical Creation," and can be seen in the British Museum. I again rewrote and enlarged it, till it assumed the form in which it appeared in the first edition of *Erewhon*.

The next part of *Erewhon* that I wrote was the "World of the Unborn," a preliminary form of which was sent to Mr. Holyoake's paper, but as I cannot find it among those copies of the *Reasoner* that are in the British Museum, I conclude that it was not accepted. I have, however, rather a strong fancy that it appeared in some London paper of the same character as the *Reasoner*, not very long after July 1, 1865, but I have no copy.

I also wrote about this time the substance of what ultimately became the Musical Banks, and the trial of a man for being in a consumption. These four detached papers were, I believe, all that was written of *Erewhon* before 1870. Between 1865 and 1870 I wrote hardly anything, being hopeful of attaining that success as a painter which it has not been vouchsafed me to attain, but in the autumn of 1870, just as I was beginning to get occasionally hung at Royal Academy exhibitions, my friend, the late Sir F. N. (then Mr.) Broome, suggested to me that I should add somewhat to the articles I had already written, and string them together into a book. I was rather fired by the idea, but as I only worked at the MS. on Sundays it was some months before I had completed it.

I see from my second Preface that I took the book to Messrs. Chapman & Hall May 1, 1871, and on their rejection of it, under the advice of one who has attained the highest rank among living writers, I let it sleep, till I took it to Mr. Trübner early in 1872. As regards its rejection by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, I believe their reader advised them quite wisely. They told me he reported that it was a philosophical work, little likely to be popular with a large circle of readers. I hope that if I had been their reader, and the book had been submitted to myself, I should have advised them to the same effect.

Erewhon appeared with the last day or two of March 1872. I attribute its unlooked-for success mainly to two early favourable reviews—the first in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of April 12, and the second in the *Spectator* of April 20. There was also another cause. I was complaining once to a friend that though *Erewhon* had met with such a warm reception, my subsequent books had been all of them practically still-born. He said, "You forget one charm that *Erewhon* had, but which none of your other books can have." I asked what? and was answered, "The sound of a new voice, and of an unknown voice."

The first edition of *Erewhon* sold in about three weeks; I had not taken moulds, and as the demand was strong, it was set up again

immediately. I made a few unimportant alterations and additions, and added a Preface, of which I cannot say that I am particularly proud, but an inexperienced writer with a head somewhat turned by unexpected success is not to be trusted with a preface. I made a few further very trifling alterations before moulds were taken, but since the summer of 1872, as new editions were from time to time wanted, they have been printed from stereos then made.

Having now, I fear, at too great length done what Mr. Richards wished, I should like to add a few words on my own account. I am still fairly well satisfied with those parts of *Erewhon* that were repeatedly rewritten, but from those that had only a single writing I would gladly cut out some forty or fifty pages if I could.

This, however, may not be, for the copyright will probably expire in a little over twelve years. It was necessary, therefore, to revise the book throughout for literary inelegancies—of which I found many more than I had expected—and also to make such substantial additions as should secure a new lease of life—at any rate for the copyright. If, then, instead of cutting out, say fifty pages, I have been compelled to add about sixty *invitâ Minervâ*—the blame rests neither with Mr. Richards nor with me, but with the copyright laws. Nevertheless I can assure the reader that, though I have found it an irksome task to take up work which I thought I had got rid of thirty years ago, and much of which I am ashamed of, I have done my best to make the new matter savour so much of the better portions of the old, that none but the best critics shall perceive at what places the gaps of between thirty and forty years occur.

Lastly, if my readers note a considerable difference between the literary *technique* of *Erewhon* and that of *Erewhon Revisited*, I would remind them that, as I have just shown, *Erewhon* took something like ten years in writing, and even so was written with great difficulty, while *Erewhon Revisited* was written easily between November 1900 and the end of April 1901. There is no central idea underlying *Erewhon*, whereas the attempt to realise the effect of a single supposed great miracle dominates the whole of its successor. In *Erewhon* there was hardly any story, and little attempt to give life and individuality to the characters; I hope that in *Erewhon Revisited* both these defects have been in great measure avoided. *Erewhon* was not an organic whole, *Erewhon Revisited* may fairly claim to be one. Nevertheless, though in literary workmanship I do not doubt that this last-named book is an improvement on the first, I shall be agreeably surprised if I am not told that *Erewhon*, with all its faults, is the better reading of the two.

Samuel Butler.

August 7, 1901

Contents

I. Waste Lands	1
II. In the Wool-Shed	5
III. Up the River	8
IV. The Saddle	12
V. The River and the Range	17
VI. Into Erewhon	24
VII. First Impressions	30
VIII. In Prison	35
IX. To the Metropolis	40
X. Current Opinions	47
XI. Some Erewhonian Trials	54
XII. Malcontents	59
XIII. The Views of the Erewhonians Concerning Death	65
XIV. Mahaina	70
XV. The Musical Banks	73
XVI. Arowhena	81
XVII. Ydgrun and the Ydgrunites	87
XVIII. Birth Formulæ	92
XIX. The World of the Unborn	95
XX. What They Mean by It	101

XXI.	The Colleges of Unreason	106
XXII.	The Colleges of Unreason—(continued)	111
XXIII.	The Book of the Machines	118
XXIV.	The Book of the Machines—(continued)	122
XXV.	The Book of the Machines—(concluded)	129
XXVI.	The Views of an Erewhonian Prophet Concerning the Rights of Animals	138
XXVII.	The Views of an Erewhonian Philosopher Concerning the Rights of Vegetables	144
XXVIII.	Escape	150
XXIX.	Conclusion	157

Chapter I

Waste Lands

IF THE reader will excuse me, I will say nothing of my antecedents, nor of the circumstances which led me to leave my native country; the narrative would be tedious to him and painful to myself. Suffice it, that when I left home it was with the intention of going to some new colony, and either finding, or even perhaps purchasing, waste crown-land suitable for cattle or sheep farming, by which means I thought that I could better my fortunes more rapidly than in England.

It will be seen that I did not succeed in my design, and that however much I may have met with what was new and strange, I have been unable to reap any pecuniary advantage.

It is true, I imagine myself to have made a discovery which, if I can be the first to profit by it, will bring me a recompense beyond all money computation, and secure me a position such as has not been attained by more than some fifteen or sixteen persons, since the creation of the universe. But to this end I must possess myself of a considerable sum of money: neither do I know how to get it, except by interesting the public in my story, and inducing the charitable to come forward and assist me. With this hope I now publish my adventures; but I do so with great reluctance, for I fear that my story will be doubted unless I tell the whole of it; and yet I dare not do so, lest others with more means than mine should get the start of me. I prefer the risk of being doubted to that of being anticipated, and have therefore concealed my destination on leaving England, as also the point from which I began my more serious and difficult journey.

My chief consolation lies in the fact that truth bears its own impress, and that my story will carry conviction by reason of the internal

evidences for its accuracy. No one who is himself honest will doubt my being so.

I reached my destination in one of the last months of 1868, but I dare not mention the season, lest the reader should gather in which hemisphere I was. The colony was one which had not been opened up even to the most adventurous settlers for more than eight or nine years, having been previously uninhabited, save by a few tribes of savages who frequented the seaboard. The part known to Europeans consisted of a coast-line about eight hundred miles in length (affording three or four good harbours), and a tract of country extending inland for a space varying from two to three hundred miles, until it reached the offshoots of an exceedingly lofty range of mountains, which could be seen from far out upon the plains, and were covered with perpetual snow. The coast was perfectly well known both north and south of the tract to which I have alluded, but in neither direction was there a single harbour for five hundred miles, and the mountains, which descended almost into the sea, were covered with thick timber, so that none would think of settling.

With this bay of land, however, the case was different. The harbours were sufficient; the country was timbered, but not too heavily; it was admirably suited for agriculture; it also contained millions on millions of acres of the most beautifully grassed country in the world, and of the best suited for all manner of sheep and cattle. The climate was temperate, and very healthy; there were no wild animals, nor were the natives dangerous, being few in number and of an intelligent tractable disposition.

It may be readily understood that when once Europeans set foot upon this territory they were not slow to take advantage of its capabilities. Sheep and cattle were introduced, and bred with extreme rapidity; men took up their 50,000 or 100,000 acres of country, going inland one behind the other, till in a few years there was not an acre between the sea and the front ranges which was not taken up, and stations either for sheep or cattle were spotted about at intervals of some twenty or thirty miles over the whole country. The front ranges stopped the tide of squatters for some little time; it was thought that there was too much snow upon them for too many months in the year,—that the sheep would get lost, the ground being too difficult for shepherding,—that the expense of getting wool down to the ship's side would eat up the farmer's profits,—and that the grass was too rough and sour for sheep to thrive upon; but one after another determined to try the experiment, and it was wonderful how successfully it turned out. Men pushed farther and farther into the mountains, and found a very considerable