

SAMUEL BUTLER; A CRITICAL STUDY

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Samuel Butler; a critical study by Gilbert Canna

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A CRITICAL STUDY**

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I

THE MAKING OF A SATIRIST

OUTSIDE art there is little in human life or institutions to show that men need more than cunning to maintain their ascendancy in the universal struggle. Imagination is so rare that it would seem to be merely a surplus of mental energy in individuals, of no immediate social value, and in the long run no more than a balm to leaven the lump. So long as men can satisfy their natural necessities and keep up appearances before their neighbours they are content, and, if they are bored, they will avenge themselves in quarrels and cruelty. The few individuals who are gifted with imagination are, by the gift, removed from the common life and incapacitated for it. The very few pursue their creative desire regardless of it and take the surface happenings of life (even love) as they come. Others escape from the ordinary stupid egoism of the human animal into a pride of intellect which is a more ruthless and a nobler egoism. Others again, often by some accident, are brought into conflict with the life of common men and spend