

## PREFACE

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It may appear as though all this labour of destroying, preserving, copying, editing, indexing, and dating was undertaken by Butler as a methodical preparation for his own biography. It was not so. Here is a passage from the published selection of Notes (p. 374) :

People sometimes give me to understand that it is a piece of ridiculous conceit on my part to jot down so many notes about myself, since it implies a confidence that I shall one day be regarded as an interesting person. I answer that neither I nor they can form any idea as to whether I shall be wanted when I am gone or no. The chances are that I shall not. I am quite aware of it. So the chances are that I shall not live to be 85; but I have no right to settle it so . . . I prefer the modest insurance of keeping up my notes which others may burn or no as they please.

He was not contemplating publication; but neither was he contemplating oblivion, as will appear from another passage which occurs in the preface to vol. II. of the manuscript Note-Books, and is reproduced on pp. 215 and 216 of the published selection. After saying that many of his notes ought to have been destroyed, he proceeds :

I know it, and I know that many a one of those who look over this book—for that it will be looked over by not a few I doubt not—will think me to have been a greater fool than I probably was. I cannot help it.

It was the same with his letters. He was naturally tidy, and liked feeling that he was not dependent upon some one else, possibly some one in whom he had no confidence, for knowing what he had written. There was also the possibility of fire. So he bought a copying press and acquired the habit of writing in copying ink and pressing copies of his notes and of any letters he thought he might want to refer to. He also pressed a copy of whatever book he happened to be writing, and these pressed copies he kept in my chambers until it appeared proper to destroy them. But he did not keep copies of his letters to Miss Savage or to intimate friends, unless in the exceptional case of a letter containing an account of something he was likely to want. Such a letter might never be wanted; on the other hand it might, in which