

**GEORGE
GISSING**

BORN IN EXILE

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Part I

CHAPTER I

The summer day in 1874 which closed the annual session of Whitelaw College was marked by a special ceremony, preceding the wonted distribution of academic rewards. At eleven in the morning (just as a heavy shower fell from the smoke-canopy above the roaring streets) the municipal authorities, educational dignitaries, and prominent burgesses of Kingsmill assembled on an open space before the College to unveil a statue of Sir Job Whitelaw. The honoured baronet had been six months dead. Living, he opposed the desire of his fellow-citizens to exhibit even on canvas his gnarled features and bald crown; but when his modesty ceased to have a voice in the matter, no time was lost in raising a memorial of the great manufacturer, the self-made millionaire, the borough member in three Parliaments, the enlightened and benevolent founder of an institute which had conferred humane distinction on the money-making Midland town. Beneath such a sky, orations were necessarily curtailed; but Sir Job had always been impatient of much talk. An interval of two or three hours dispersed the rain-clouds and bestowed such grace of sunshine as Kingsmill might at this season temperately desire; then, whilst the marble figure was getting dried,—with soot-stains which already foretold its negritude of a year hence,—again streamed towards the College a varied multitude, official, parental, pupillary. The students had nothing distinctive in their garb, but here and there flitted the cap and gown of Professor or lecturer, signal for doffing of beavers along the line of its progress.

Among the more deliberate of the throng was a slender, upright, ruddy-cheeked gentleman of middle age, accompanied by his wife and a daughter of sixteen. On alighting from a carriage, they first of all directed their steps towards the statue, conversing together with pleasant animation. The father (Martin Warricombe, Esq. of Thornhaw, a small estate some five miles from Kingsmill,) had a countenance suggestive of engaging qualities—genial humour, mildness, a turn for meditation, perhaps for study. His attire was informal, as if he disliked abandoning the freedom of the country even when summoned to urban ceremonies. He wore a grey felt hat, and a light jacket which displayed the straightness of his shoulders. Mrs. Warricombe and her daughter were more fashionably equipped, with taste which proclaimed their social standing. Save her fresh yet delicate complexion the lady had no particular personal charm. Of the young girl it could only be said that she exhibited a graceful immaturity, with perchance a little more earnestness than is common at her age; her voice, even when she spoke gaily, was seldom audible save by the person addressed.

Coming to a pause before Sir Job, Mr. Warricombe put on a pair of eyeglasses which had dangled against his waistcoat, and began to scrutinise carefully the sculptured lineaments. He was addressing certain critical remarks to his companions when an interruption appeared in the form of a young man whose first words announced his relation to the group.

'I say, you're very late! There'll be no getting a decent seat, if you don't mind. Leave Sir Job till afterwards.'

'The statue somehow disappoints me,' observed his father, placidly.

'Oh, it isn't bad, I think,' returned the youth, in a voice not unlike his father's, save for a note of excessive self-confidence. He looked about eighteen; his comely countenance, with its air of robust health and habitual exhilaration, told of a boyhood passed amid free and joyous circumstances. It

was the face of a young English plutocrat, with more of intellect than such visages are wont to betray; the native vigour of his temperament had probably assimilated something of the modern spirit. 'I'm glad,' he continued, 'that they haven't stuck him in a toga, or any humbug of that sort. The old fellow looks baggy, but so he was. They ought to have kept his chimney-pot, though. Better than giving him those scraps of hair, when everyone knows he was as bald as a beetle.'

'Sir Job should have been granted Caesar's privilege,' said Mr. Warricombe, with a pleasant twinkle in his eyes.

'What was that?' came from the son, with abrupt indifference.

'For shame, Buckland!'

'What do I care for Caesar's privileges? We can't burden our minds with that antiquated rubbish nowadays. You would despise it yourself, father, if it hadn't got packed into your head when you were young.'

The parent raised his eyebrows in a bantering smile.

'I have lived to hear classical learning called antiquated rubbish. Well, well!—Ha! there is Professor Gale.'

The Professor of Geology, a tall man, who strode over the pavement as if he were among granite hills, caught sight of the party and approached. His greeting was that of a familiar friend; he addressed young Warricombe and his sister by their Christian names, and inquired after certain younger members of the household. Mr Warricombe, regarding him with a look of repressed eagerness, laid a hand on his arm, and spoke in the subdued voice of one who has important news to communicate.

'If I am not much mistaken, I have chanced on a new species of *homalonotus*!'

'Indeed!—not in your kitchen garden, I presume?'

'Hardly. Dr Pollock sent me a box of specimens the other day!—'

Buckland saw with annoyance the likelihood of prolonged discussion.

'I don't know whether you care to remain standing all the afternoon,' he said to his mother. 'At this rate we certainly shan't get seats.'

'We will walk on, Martin,' said the lady, glancing at her husband.

'We come! we come!' cried the Professor, with a wave of his arm.

The palaeontological talk continued as far as the entrance of the assembly hall. The zest with which Mr. Warricombe spoke of his discovery never led him to raise his voice above the suave, mellow note, touched with humour, which expressed a modest assurance. Mr Gale was distinguished by a blunter mode of speech; he discoursed with open-air vigour, making use now and then of a racy colloquialism which the other would hardly have permitted himself.

As young Warricombe had foreseen, the seats obtainable were none too advantageous; only on one of the highest rows of the amphitheatre could they at length establish themselves.

'Buckland will enjoy the more attention when he marches down to take his prizes,' observed the father. 'He must sit at the end here, that he mayn't have a struggle to get out.'

'Don't, Martin, don't!' urged his wife, considerately.

'Oh, it doesn't affect me,' said Buckland, with a laugh.

'I feel pretty sure I have got the Logic and the Chemistry, and those are what I care most about. I dare say Peak has beaten me in Geology.'

The appearance in the lower part of the hall of a dark-robed procession, headed by the tall figure of the Principal, imposed a moment's silence, broken by outbursts of welcoming applause. The Professors of Whitelaw College were highly popular, not alone with the members of their classes, but with all the educated inhabitants of Kingsmill; and deservedly, for several of them bore names of wide recognition, and as a body they did honour to the institution which had won their services. With becoming formality they seated themselves in face of the public. On tables before them were exposed a considerable number of well-bound books, shortly to be distributed among the collegians, who gazed in that direction with speculative eyes.

Among the general concourse might have been discovered two or three representatives of the wage-earning multitude which Kingsmill depended upon for its prosperity, but their presence was due to exceptional circumstances; the College provided for proletarian education by a system of evening classes, a curriculum necessarily quite apart from that followed by the regular students. Kingsmill, to be sure, was no nurse of Toryism; the robust employers of labour who sent their sons to Whitelaw—either to complete a training deemed sufficient for an active career, or by way of transition-stage between school and university—were for the most part avowed Radicals, in theory scornful of privilege, practically supporters of that mode of freedom which regards life as a remorseless conflict. Not a few of the young men (some of these the hardest and most successful workers) came from poor, middle-class homes, whence, but for Sir Job's foundation, they must have set forth into the world with no better equipment of knowledge than was supplied by some 'academy' of the old type: a glance distinguished such students from the well-dressed and well-fed offspring of Kingsmill plutocracy. The note of the assembly was something other than refinement; rather, its high standard of health, spirits, and comfort—the characteristic of Capitalism. Decent reverence for learning, keen appreciation of scientific power, warm liberality of thought and sentiment within appreciable limits, enthusiasm for economic, civic, national ideals,—such attributes were abundantly discoverable in each serried row. From the expanse of countenances beamed a boundless self-satisfaction. To be connected in any way with Whitelaw formed a subject of pride, seeing that here was the sturdy outcome of the most modern educational endeavour, a noteworthy instance of what Englishmen can do for themselves, unaided by bureaucratic machinery. Every student who achieved distinction in to-day's class lists was felt to bestow a share of his honour upon each spectator who applauded him.

With occasional adjustment of his eye-glasses, and smiling his smile of modest tolerance, Mr. Warricombe surveyed the crowded hall. His connection with the town was not intimate, and he could discover few faces that were familiar to him. A native and, till of late, an inhabitant of Devon, he had come to reside on his property near Kingsmill because it seemed to him that the education of his children would be favoured by a removal thither. Two of his oldest friends held professorships at Whitelaw; here, accordingly, his eldest son was making preparation for Cambridge, whilst his daughter attended classes at the admirable High School, of which Kingsmill was only less proud than of its College.

Seated between his father and his sister, Buckland drew their attention to such persons or personages as interested his very selective mind.

'Admire the elegant languor of Wotherspoon,' he remarked, indicating the Professor of Greek. 'Watch him for a moment, and you'll see him glance contemptuously at old Plummer. He can't help it; they hate each other.'

'But why?' whispered the girl, with timid eagerness.

'Oh, it began, they say, when Plummer once had to take one of Wotherspoon's classes; some foolery about a second aorist. Thank goodness, I don't understand the profound dispute.—Oh, do look at that fatuous idiot Chilvers!'

The young gentleman of whom he spoke, a student of Buckland's own standing, had just attracted general notice. Rising from his seat in the lower part of the amphitheatre, at the moment when all were hushed in anticipation of the Principal's address, Mr. Chilvers was beckoning to someone whom his eye had descried at great distance, and for whom, as he indicated by gesture, he had preserved a place.

'See how it delights him to make an exhibition of himself!' pursued the censorious youth. 'I'd bet a sovereign he's arranged it all. Look how he brandishes his arm to display his cuffs and gold links. Now he touches his hair, to point out how light and exquisite it is, and how beautifully he parts it!'

'What a graceful figure!' murmured Mrs. Warricombe, with genuine admiration.

'There, that's just what he hopes everyone is saying,' replied her son, in a tone of laughing disgust.

'But he certainly is graceful, Buckland,' persisted the lady.

'And in the meantime,' remarked Mr. Warricombe, drily, 'we are all awaiting the young gentleman's pleasure.'

'Of course; he enjoys it. Almost all the people on that row belong to him—father, mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, and cousins to the fourth degree. Look at their eyes fondly fixed upon him! Now he pretends to loosen his collar at the throat, just for a change of attitude—the puppy!'

'My dear!' remonstrated his mother, with apprehensive glance at her neighbours.

'But he is really clever, isn't he, Buckland?' asked the sister, her name was Sidwell.

'After a fashion. I shouldn't wonder if he takes a dozen or two prizes. It's all a knack, you know.'

'Where is your friend Peak?' Mr. Warricombe made inquiry.

But at this moment Mr. Chilvers abandoned his endeavour and became seated, allowing the Principal to rise, manuscript in hand. Buckland leaned back with an air of resignation to boredom; his father bent slightly forward, with lips close pressed and brows wrinkled; Mrs Warricombe widened her eyes, as if hearing were performed with those organs, and assumed the smile she would have worn had the speaker been addressing her in particular. Sidwell's blue eyes imitated the movement of her mother's, with a look of profound gravity which showed that she had wholly forgotten herself in reverential listening; only when five minutes' strict attention induced a sense of weariness did she allow a glance to stray first along the professorial rank, then towards the place where the golden head of young Chilvers was easily distinguishable.

Nothing could be more satisfactory than the annual report summarised by Principal Nares, whose mellifluous voice and daintily pedantic utterance fell upon expectant hearing with the impressiveness of personal compliment. So delivered, statistics partook of the grace of culture; details of academic organisation acquired something more than secular significance. In this the ninth year of its existence, Whitelaw College was flourishing in every possible way. Private beneficence had endowed it with new scholarships and exhibitions; the scheme of lectures had been extended; the number of its students steadily increased, and their successes in the field of examination had been noteworthy beyond precedent. Truly, the heart of their founder, to whom honour had this day been rendered, must have gladdened if he could but have listened to the story of dignified progress! Applause, loud and long, greeted the close of the address. Buckland Warricombe was probably the only collegian who disdained to manifest approval in any way.

'Why don't you clap?' asked his sister, who, girl-like, was excited to warmth of cheek and brightness of eye by the enthusiasm about her.

'That kind of thing is out of date,' replied the young man, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets.

As Professor of Logic and Moral Philosophy, Dr Nares began the distribution of prizes. Buckland, in spite of his resolve to exhibit no weakness, waited with unmistakable tremor for the announcement of the leading name, which might possibly be his own. A few words of comment prefaced the declaration:—never had it been the Professor's lot to review more admirable papers than those to which he had awarded the first prize. The name of the student called upon to come forward was—Godwin Peak.

'Beaten!' escaped from Buckland's lips.

Mrs. Warricombe glanced at her son with smiling sympathy; Sidwell, whose cheek had paled as her nerves quivered under the stress of expectancy, murmured a syllable of disappointment; Mr. Warricombe set his brows and did not venture to look aside. A moment, and all eyes were directed upon the successful student, who rose from a seat half-way down the hall and descended the middle passage towards the row of Professors. He was a young man of spare figure and unhealthy complexion, his age not easily conjectured. Embarrassment no doubt accounted for much of the awkwardness of his demeanour; but, under any circumstances, he must have appeared ungainly, for his long arms and legs had outgrown their garments, which were no fashionable specimens of

tailoring. The nervous gravity of his countenance had a peculiar sternness; one might have imagined that he was fortifying his self-control with scorn of the elegantly clad people through whom he passed. Amid plaudits, he received from the hands of the Principal a couple of solid volumes, probably some standard work of philosophy, and, thus burdened, returned with hurried step to his place.

'No one expected that,' remarked Buckland to his father. 'He must have crammed furiously for the exam. It's outside his work for the First B.A.'

'What a shame!' Sidwell whispered to her mother; and the reply was a look which eloquently expressed Mrs. Warricombe's lack of sympathy with the victor.

But a second prize had been awarded. As soon as silence was restored, the Principal's gracious voice delivered a summons to 'Buckland Martin Warricombe.' A burst of acclamation, coming especially from that part of the amphitheatre where Whitelaw's nurslings had gathered in greatest numbers, seemed to declare the second prizeman distinctly more popular than the first. Preferences of this kind are always to be remarked on such occasions.

'Second prize be hanged!' growled the young man, as, with a flush of shame on his ruddy countenance, he set forth to receive the honour, leaving Mr. Warricombe convulsed with silent laughter.

'He would far rather have had nothing at all,' murmured Sidwell, who shared her brother's pique and humiliation.

'Oh, it'll do him good,' was her father's reply. 'Buckland has got into a way of swaggering.'

Undeniable was the swagger with which the good-looking, breezy lad went and returned.

'What is the book?' inquired Mr. Warricombe.

'I don't know.—Oh, Mill's *Logic*. Idiotic choice! They might have known I had it already.'

'They clap him far more than they did Mr. Peak,' Sidwell whispered to her mother, with satisfaction.

Buckland kept silence for a few minutes, then muttered:

'There's nothing I care about now till Chemistry and Geology. Here comes old Wotherspoon. Now we shall know who is strongest in second aorists. I shouldn't wonder if Peak takes both Senior Greek and Latin. I heartily hope he'll beat that ass Chilvers.'

But the name so offensive to young Warricombe was the first that issued from the Professor's lips. Beginning with the competition for a special classical prize, Professor Wotherspoon announced that the honours had fallen to 'Bruno Leathwaite Chilvers.'

'That young man is not badly supplied with brains, say what you will,' remarked Mr. Warricombe.

Upon Bruno Leathwaite Chilvers keen attention was directed; every pair of female eyes studied his graces, and female hands had a great part in the applause that greeted his arising. Applause different in kind from that hitherto bestowed; less noisy, but implying, one felt, a more delicate spirit of commendation. With perfect self-command, with singular facial decorum, with a walk which betokened elegant athleticism and safely skirted the bounds of foppery, Mr. Chilvers discharged the duty he was conscious of owing to a multitude of kinsfolk, friends, admirers. You would have detected something clerical in the young man's air. It became the son of a popular clergyman, and gave promise of notable aptitude for the sacred career to which Bruno Leathwaite, as was well understood, already had designed himself. In matters sartorial he presented a high ideal to his fellow-students; this seemly attention to externals, and the delicate glow of health discernible through the golden down of his cheeks, testified the compatibility of hard study and social observances. Bruno had been heard to say that the one thing it behoved Whitelaw to keep carefully in mind was the preservation of 'tone', a quality far less easy to cultivate than mere academic excellence.

'How clever he must be!' purred Mrs. Warricombe. 'If he lives, he will some day be an archbishop.'

Buckland was leaning back with his eyes closed, disgusted at the spectacle. Nor did he move when Professor Wotherspoon's voice made the next announcement.

'In Senior Greek, the first prize is taken by—Bruno Leathwaite Chilvers.'

'Then I suppose Peak comes second,' muttered Buckland.

So it proved. Summoned to receive the inferior prize, Godwin Peak, his countenance harsher than before, his eyes cast down, moved ungracefully to the estrade. And during the next half-hour this twofold exhibition was several times repeated. In Senior Latin, in Modern and Ancient History, in English Language and Literature, in French, first sounded the name of Chilvers, whilst to the second award was invariably attached that of Peak. Mrs. Warricombe's delight expressed itself in every permissible way: on each occasion she exclaimed, 'How clever he is!' Sidwell cast frequent glances at her brother, in whom a shrewder eye could have divined conflict of feelings—disgust at the glorification of Chilvers and involuntary pleasure in the successive defeats of his own conqueror in Philosophy. Buckland's was by no means an ignoble face; venial malice did not ultimately prevail in him.

'It's Peak's own fault,' he declared at length, with vexation. 'Chilvers stuck to the subjects of his course. Peak has been taking up half-a-dozen extras, and they've done for him. I shouldn't wonder if he went in for the Poem and the Essay: I know he was thinking about both.'

Whether Godwin Peak had or had not endeavoured for these two prizes remained uncertain. When, presently, the results of the competition were made known, it was found that in each case the honour had fallen to a young man hitherto undistinguished. His name was John Edward Earwaker. Externally he bore a sort of generic resemblance to Peak, for his face was thin and the fashion of his clothing indicated narrow means.

'I never heard you mention him,' said Mr. Warricombe, turning to his son with an air of surprise.

'I scarcely know him at all; he's only in one or two of my classes. Peak is thick with him.'

The subject of the prize poem was 'Alaric'; that of the essay, 'Trades Unionism'. So it was probable that John Edward Earwaker did not lack versatility of intellect.

On the rising of the Professor of Chemistry, Buckland had once more to subdue signs of expectancy. He knew he had done good papers, but his confidence in the result was now clouded by a dread of the second prize—which indeed fell to him, the first being taken by a student of no account save in this very special subject. Keen was his mortification; he growled, muttered, shrugged his shoulders nervously.

'If I had foreseen this, you'd never have caught me here,' was his reply, when Sidwell whispered consolation.

There still remained a chance for him, signalled by the familiar form of Professor Gale. Geology had been a lifelong study with Martin Warricombe, and his son pursued it with hereditary aptitude. Sidwell and her mother exchanged a look of courageous hope; each felt convinced that the genial Professor could not so far disregard private feeling as to place Buckland anywhere but at the head of the class.

'The results of the examination are fairly good; I'm afraid I can't say more than that,' thus rang out Mr. Gale's hearty voice. 'As for the first two names on my list, I haven't felt justified in placing either before the other. I have bracketed them, and there will be two prizes. The names are—Godwin Peak and Buckland Martin Warricombe.'

'He might have mentioned Buckland first,' murmured Mrs. Warricombe, resentfully.

'He of course gave them out in alphabetical order,' answered her husband.

'Still, it isn't right that Buckland should come second.'

'That's absurd,' was the good-natured reply.

The lady of course remained unconvinced, and for years she nourished a pique against Professor Gale, not so much owing to his having bracketed her son as because the letter P has alphabetical precedence of W.

In what remained of the proceedings the Warricombes had no personal interest. For a special reason, however, their attention was excited by the rising of Professor Walsh, who represented the science of Physics. Early in the present year had been published a speculative treatise which, owing to its supposed incompatibility with Christian dogmas, provoked much controversy and was largely discussed in all educated circles. The work was anonymous, but a rumour which gained general currency attributed it to Professor Walsh. In the year 1874 an imputation of religious heresy was not lightly to be incurred by a Professor—even Professor of Physics—at an English college. There were many people in Kingsmill who considered that Mr. Walsh's delay in repudiating so grave a charge rendered very doubtful the propriety of his retaining the chair at Whitelaw. Significant was the dispersed applause which followed slowly upon his stepping forward to-day; on the Professor's face was perchance legible something like a hint of amused defiance. Ladies had ceased to beam; they glanced meaningly at one another, and then from under their eyelids at the supposed heretic.

'A fine fellow, Walsh!' exclaimed Buckland, clapping vigorously.

His father smiled, but with some uneasiness. Mrs. Warricombe whispered to Sidwell:

'What a very disagreeable face! The only one of the Professors who doesn't seem a gentleman.'

The girl was aware of dark reports affecting Mr. Walsh's reputation. She hazarded only a brief examination of his features, and looked at the applauding Buckland with alarm.

'His lectures are splendid,' said her brother, emphatically. 'If I were going to be here next session, I should take them.'

For some minutes after the Professor's return to his seat a susurrantion was audible throughout the hall; bonnets bent together, and beards exchanged curt comments.

The ceremony, as is usual with all ceremonies, grew wearisome before its end. Buckland was deep in one of the chapters of his geologic prize when the last speaker closed the last report and left the assembly free to disperse. Then followed the season of congratulations: Professors, students, and the friendly public mingled in a *conversazione*. A nucleus of vivacious intercourse formed at the spot where young Mr. Chilvers stood amid trophies of examinational prowess. When his numerous relatives had all shaken hands with him, and laughed, smiled, or smirked their felicitations, they made way for the press of eager acquaintances. His prize library was reverently surveyed, and many were the sportive sallies elicited by the victor's obvious inability to carry away what he had won. Suavely exultant, ready with his reply to every flattering address, Bruno Chilvers exhibited a social tact in advance of his years: it was easy to imagine what he would become when Oxford terms and the seal of ordination had matured his youthful promise.

At no great distance stood his competitor, Godwin Peak embarrassed, he also, with wealth of spoils; but about this young man was no concourse of admiring kinsfolk. No lady offered him her hand or shaped compliments for him with gracious lips. Half-a-dozen fellow-students, among them John Earwaker, talked in his vicinity of the day's results. Peak's part in the gossip was small, and when he smiled it was in a forced, anxious way, with brief raising of his eyes. For a moment only was the notice of a wider circle directed upon him when Dr Nares, moving past with a train of colloquial attendants, turned aside to repeat his praise of the young man's achievements in Philosophy: he bestowed a kindly shake of the hand, and moved on.

The Warricombe group descended, in purposeless fashion, towards the spot where Chilvers held his court. Their personal acquaintance with Bruno and his family was slight, and though Mrs. Warricombe would gladly have pushed forward to claim recognition, natural diffidence restrained her. Sidwell kept in the rear, risking now and then a glance of vivid curiosity on either hand. Buckland, striving not to look petulant or sullen, allowed himself to be led on; but when he became aware of the tendency Bruno-wards, a protest broke from him.

'There's no need to swell that fellow's conceit. Here, father, come and have a word with Peak; he looks rather down in the mouth among his second prizes.'

Mr. Warricombe having beckoned his companions, they reluctantly followed to the more open part of the hall.

'It's very generous of Buckland,' fell from the lady's lips, and she at length resolved to show an equal magnanimity. Peak and Earwaker were conversing together when Buckland broke in upon them with genial outburst.

'Confound it, Peak! what do you mean by getting me stuck into a bracket?'

'I had the same question to ask *you*,' returned the other, with a grim smile.

Mr. Warricombe came up with extended hand.

'A species of bracket,' he remarked, smiling benevolently, 'which no algebraic process will remove. Let us hope it signifies that you and Buckland will work through life shoulder to shoulder in the field of geology. What did Professor Gale give you?'

Before he could reply, Peak had to exchange greetings with Mrs Warricombe and her daughter. Only once hitherto had he met them. Six months ago he had gone out with Buckland to the country-house and passed an afternoon there, making at the time no very favourable impression on his hostess. He was not of the young men who easily insinuate themselves into ladies' affections: his exterior was against him, and he seemed too conscious of his disadvantages in that particular. Mrs. Warricombe found it difficult to shape a few civil phrases for the acceptance of the saturnine student. Sidwell, repelled and in a measure alarmed by his bilious countenance, could do no more than grant him her delicately gloved fingers. Peak, for his part, had nothing to say. He did not even affect an interest in these persons, and turned his eyes to follow the withdrawing Earwaker. Mr. Warricombe, however, had found topic for discourse in the prize volume; he began to comment on the excellence of certain sections of the book.

'Do you go home?' interrupted Buckland, addressing the question to his rival. 'Or do you stay in Kingsmill until the First B.A.?''

'I shall go home,' replied Peak, moving uneasily.

'Perhaps we may have the pleasure of seeing you at Thornhaw when you are up again for the examination?' said Mrs. Warricombe, with faltering tongue.

'I'm afraid I shan't be able to come, thank you,' was the awkward response.

Buckland's voice came to the relief.

'I daresay I may look in upon you at your torture. Good luck, old fellow! If we don't see each other again, write to me at Trinity before the end of the year.'

As soon as she was sufficiently remote, Mrs. Warricombe ejaculated in a subdued voice of irritation:

'Such a very unprepossessing young man I never met! He seems to have no breeding whatever.'

'Overweighted with brains,' replied her husband; adding to himself, 'and by no means so with money, I fear.'

Opportunity at length offering, Mrs. Warricombe stepped into the circle irradiated by Bruno Chilvers; her husband and Sidwell pressed after. Buckland, with an exclamation of disgust, went off to criticise the hero among a group of his particular friends.

Godwin Peak stood alone. On the bench where he had sat were heaped the prize volumes (eleven in all, some of them massive), and his wish was to make arrangements for their removal. Gazing about him, he became aware of the College librarian, with whom he was on friendly terms.

'Mr. Poppleton, who would pack and send these books away for me?'

'An *embarras de richesse*!' laughed the librarian. 'If you like to tell the porter to take care of them for the present, I shall be glad to see that they are sent wherever you like.'

Peak answered with a warmth of acknowledgment which seemed to imply that he did not often receive kindnesses. Before long he was free to leave the College, and at the exit he overtook Earwaker, who carried a brown paper parcel.

'Come and have some tea with me across the way, will you?' said the literary prizeman. 'I have a couple of hours to wait for my train.'

'All right. I envy you that five-volume Spenser.'

'I wish they had given me five authors I don't possess instead. I think I shall sell this.'

Earwaker laughed as he said it—a strange chuckle from deep down in his throat. A comparison of the young men, as they walked side by side, showed that Peak was of better physical type than his comrade. Earwaker had a slight, unshapely body and an ill-fitting head; he walked with excessive strides and swung his thin arm nervously. Probably he was the elder of the two, and he looked twenty. For Peak's disadvantages of person, his studious bashfulness and poverty of attire were mainly responsible. With improvement in general health even his features might have a tolerable comeliness, or at all events would not be disagreeable. Earwaker's visage was homely, and seemed the more so for his sprouting moustache and beard.

'Have you heard any talk about Walsh?' the latter inquired, as they walked on.

Peak shrugged his shoulders, with a laugh.

'No. Have you?'

'Some women in front of me just now were-evidently discussing him. I heard "How shocking!" and "Disgraceful!"'

Peak's eyes flashed, and he exclaimed in a voice of wrath:

'Besotted idiots! How I wish I were in Walsh's position! How I should enjoy standing up before the crowd of fools and seeing their fear of me! But I couldn't keep it to myself; I should give in to the temptation to call them blockheads and jackasses.'

Earwaker was amused at his friend's vehemence. He sympathised with it, but had an unyouthful sobriety in the expression of his feelings.

'Most likely he despises them far too much to be disturbed by what they think of him. But, I say, isn't it desperately comical that one human being can hate and revile another because they think differently about the origin of the universe? Couldn't you roar with laughter when you've thought over it for a moment? "You be damned for your theory of irregular verbs!" is nothing to it.' And he uttered his croak of mirth, whilst Peak, with distorted features, laughed in rage and scorn.

They had crossed the open space in front of the College buildings, and were issuing into the highway, when a voice very unlike those that were wont to sound within the academic precincts (or indeed in the streets of Kingsmill) made sudden demand upon Peak's attention.

'Thet you, Godwin? Thoughts I, it must be 'im! 'Ow goes it, my bo-oy? You 'ardly reckonise me, I dessay, and I couldn't be sure as it was you till I'd 'ed a good squint at yer. I've jest called round at your lodgin's, and they towld me as you was at the Collige.'

He who thus accosted the student, with the most offensive purity of Cockney accent, was a man of five-and-forty, dressed in a new suit of ready-made tweeds, the folding crease strongly marked down the front of the trousers and the coat sleeves rather too long. His face bore a strong impress of vulgarity, but at the same time had a certain ingenuousness, a self-absorbed energy and simplicity, which saved it from being wholly repellent; the brow was narrow, the eyes small and bright, and the coarse lips half hid themselves under a struggling reddish growth. In these lineaments lurked a family resemblance to Godwin Peak, sufficient to support a claim of kindred which at this moment might have seemed improbable. At the summons of recognition Godwin stood transfixed; his arms fell straight, and his head drew back as if to avoid a blow. For an instant he was clay colour, then a hot flush broke upon his cheeks.

'I shan't be able to go with you,' he said, in a thick, abrupt voice, addressing Earwaker but not regarding him. 'Good-bye!'

The other offered his hand and, without speaking, walked away.

'Prize-dye at the Collige, they tell me,' pursued Godwin's relative, looking at a cluster of people that passed. 'What 'ave you took?'

'One or two class-prizes,' replied the student, his eyes on the ground. 'Shall we walk to my lodgings?'

'I thought you might like to walk me over the show. But pr'aps you're in a 'urry?'

'No, no. But there's nothing particular to see. I think the lecture-rooms are closed by now.'

'Oo's the gent as stands there?—the figger, I mean.'

'Sir Job Whitelaw, founder of the College.'

'Job, eh? And was you a-goin' 'ome to yer tea, Godwin?'

'Yes.'

'Well, then, look 'ere, 'spose we go to the little shop opposyte—nice little plyce it looks. I could do a cup o' tea myself, and we can 'ev a quite confab. It's a long time since we'd a talk together. I come over from Twybridge this mornin'; slep' there last night, and saw yer mother an' Oliver. They couldn't give me a bed, but that didn't mike no matter; I put up at the Norfolk Harms—five-an-six for bed an' breakfast. Come along, my bo-oy; I stand treat.'

Godwin glanced about him. From the College was approaching what seemed to be a formal procession; it consisted of Bruno Chilvers, supported on either hand by ladies and followed by an admiring train.

'You had better come to my lodgings with me, uncle,' said the young man hurriedly, moving forward.

'No, no; I won't be no expense to you, Godwin, bo-oy. And I 'ave a reason for wantin' to go to the little shop opposyte.'

Already several collegians had passed, giving Peak a nod and scanning his companion; a moment's delay and Chilvers would be upon him. Without another word, Godwin moved across the broad street to the place of refreshment which his uncle had indicated, and whither Earwaker had preceded them. It was a pastry-cook's, occasionally visited by the alumni of Whitelaw. In the rear of the shop a little room offered seats and tables, and here, Godwin knew, Earwaker would be found.

'Let us go up-stairs,' he said, leading to a side entrance. 'There's a quieter room.'

'Right you are!'

The uncle—his name was Andrew Peak—paused to make a survey of the premises. When he entered, his scrutiny of the establishment was close, and he seemed to reflect with interest upon all he saw. The upper room was empty; a long table exhibited knives and forks, but there were no signs of active business. Andrew pulled a bell-rope; the summons was answered by an asthmatic woman, who received an order for tea, toast, 'watercreases', and sundry other constituents of a modest meal.

'Come 'ere often, Godwin?' inquired Andrew, as he stood by the window and mused.

'Now and then, for a bun.'

'Much custom from your show over the wye?'

'Not so much as a better place would have.'

'Young gents don't live at the Collige, they tell me?'

'No, there's no residence.'

'So naturally they want a plyce where they can 'ev a nibble, somewheres 'andy?'

'Yes. We have to go further into the town for a decent dinner.'

'Jest what I thought!' exclaimed Andrew, slapping his leg. 'With a establishment like that opposyte, there'd ought to be a medium-sized Spiers & Pond at this 'ere street corner for any man as knows 'is wye about. That's *my* idea, Godwin—see?'

Peak had as yet given but half an ear to his relative's discourse; he had answered mechanically, and only now was constrained to serious attention by a note of meaning in the last interrogative. He looked at the speaker; and Andrew, in the manner of one accustomed to regard life as a game of cunning, first winked with each eye, then extended one cheek with the pressure of his tongue. Sickened with disgust, Godwin turned suddenly away,—a movement entirely lost upon his uncle, who imagined the young man to be pondering a fruitful suggestion.

'I don't mind tellin' you, Godwin,' pursued Andrew presently, in a cautious voice, laying an open hand against his trousers-pocket, 'as I've been a-doin' pretty good business lytely. Been growin' a bit—see? I'm runnin' round an' keepin' my heyes open understand? Thoughts I, now, if I could come acrosst a nicet little openin', somethink in the rest'rant line, *that's* what 'ud sewt me jest about down to the ground. I'm cut out for it—see? I've got the practical experience, and I've got the capital; and as soon as I got a squint of this little corner shop—understand what I mean?'

His eyes gleamed with eagerness which was too candid for the typically vulgar mind. In his self-satisfaction he exhibited a gross cordiality which might have made rather an agreeable impression on a person otherwise disinterested.

At this point the asthmatic woman reappeared, carrying a laden tray. Andrew at once entered into conversation with her, framing his remarks and queries so as to learn all he could concerning the state of the business and the disposition of its proprietors. His nephew, meanwhile, stung to the core with shame, kept apart, as if amusing himself with the prospect from the window, until summoned to partake of the meal. His uncle expressed contempt of everything laid before them.

'*This* ain't no wye of caterin' for young gents at Collige!' he exclaimed. 'If there ain't a openin' 'ere, then I never see one. Godwin, bo-oy, 'ow much longer'll it be before you're out of you're time over there?'

'It's uncertain—I can't say.'

'But ain't it understood as you stay till you've passed the top standard, or whatever it's called?'

'I really haven't made up my mind what to do.'

'But you'll be studyin' 'ere for another twelve months, I dessay?'

'Why do you ask?'

'Why? cos s'posin' I got 'old o' this 'ere little shop, or another like it close by, me an' you might come to an understandin'—see? It might be worth your while to give a 'int to the young gents as you're in with—eh?'

Godwin was endeavouring to masticate a piece of toast, but it turned to sawdust upon his palate. Of a sudden, when the bilious gloom of his countenance foretold anything but mirth, he burst into hard laughter. Andrew smote him jovially on the back.

'Tickles you, eh, bo-oy? "Peak's Refreshment an' Dinin' Rooms!" Everything tip-top, mind; respectable business, Godwin; nothing for nobody to be ashamed of—*that* wouldn't do, of course.'

The young man's laughter ended as abruptly as it had begun, but his visage was no longer clouded with bitter misery. A strange indifference seemed to have come upon him, and whilst the speculative uncle talked away with increasing excitement, he ate and drank heedlessly.

'Mother expects you to-morrow, she tells me,' said Andrew, when his companion's taciturnity had suggested a change of topic. 'Shouldn't wonder if you see me over at Twybridge again before long. I was to remember your awnt and your cousin Jowey to you. You wouldn't know Jowey? the sharpest lad of his age as ever I knowed, is Jowey. Your father 'ud a' took a delight in 'im, if 'e'd lived, that 'e would.'

For a quarter of an hour or so the dialogue was concerned with domestic history. Godwin gave brief reply to many questions, but asked none, not even such as civility required. The elder man, however, was unaffected by this reticence, and when at length his nephew pleaded an engagement as excuse for leave-taking he shook hands with much warmth. The two parted close by the shop, and Godwin, casting a glance at the now silent College, walked hastily towards his lodgings.

CHAPTER II

In the prosperous year of 1856, incomes of between a hundred and a hundred and fifty pounds were chargeable with a tax of elevenpence halfpenny in the pound: persons who enjoyed a revenue of a hundred and fifty or more had the honour of paying one and fourpence. Abatements there were none, and families supporting life on two pounds a week might in some cases, perchance, be reconciled to the mulct by considering how equitably its incidence was graduated.

Some, on the other hand, were less philosophical; for instance, the household consisting of Nicholas Peak, his wife, their three-year-old daughter, their newly-born son, and a blind sister of Nicholas, dependent upon him for sustenance. Mr. Peak, aged thirty and now four years wedded, had a small cottage on the outskirts of Greenwich. He was employed as dispenser, at a salary of thirty-five shillings a week, by a medical man with a large practice. His income, therefore, fell considerably within the hundred pound limit; and, all things considered, it was not unreasonable that he should be allowed to expend the whole of this sum on domestic necessities. But it came to pass that Nicholas, in his greed of wealth, obtained supplementary employment, which benefited him to the extent of a yearly ten pounds. Called upon to render his statement to the surveyor of income-tax, he declared himself in possession of a hundred and one pounds per annum; consequently, he stood indebted to the Exchequer in the sum of four pounds, sixteen shillings, and ninepence. His countenance darkened, as also did that of Mrs. Peak.

'This is wrong and cruel—dreadfully cruel!' cried the latter, with tears in her eyes.

'It is; but that's no new thing,' was the bitter reply.

'I think it's wrong of *you*, Nicholas. What need is there to say anything about that ten pounds? It's taking the food out of our mouths.'

Knowing only the letter of the law, Mr. Peak answered sternly:

'My income is a hundred and one pounds. I can't sign my name to a lie.'

Picture the man. Tall, gaunt, with sharp intellectual features, and eyes of singular beauty, the face of an enthusiast—under given circumstances, of a hero. Poorly clad, of course, but with rigorous self-respect; his boots polished, *propria manu*, to the point of perfection; his linen washed and ironed by the indefatigable wife. Of simplest tastes, of most frugal habits, a few books the only luxury which he deemed indispensable; yet a most difficult man to live with, for to him applied precisely the description which Robert Burns gave of his own father; he was 'of stubborn, ungainly integrity and headlong irascibility'.

Ungainly, for his strong impulses towards culture were powerless to obliterate the traces of his rude origin. Born in a London alley, the son of a labourer burdened with a large family, he had made his way by sheer force of character to a position which would have seemed proud success but for the difficulty with which he kept himself alive. His parents were dead. Of his brothers, two had disappeared in the abyss, and one, Andrew, earned a hard livelihood as a journeyman baker; the elder of his sisters had married poorly, and the younger was his blind pensioner. Nicholas had found a wife of better birth than his own, a young woman with country kindred in decent circumstances, though she herself served as nursemaid in the house of the medical man who employed her future husband. He had taught himself the English language, so far as grammar went, but could not cast off the London accent; Mrs. Peak was fortunate enough to speak with nothing worse than the note of the Midlands.

His bent led him to the study of history, politics, economics, and in that time of military outbreak he was frenzied by the conflict of his ideals with the state of things about him. A book frequently in his hands was Godwin's *Political Justice*, and when a son had been born to him he decided to name the child after that favourite author. In this way, at all events, he could find some expression for his hot defiance of iniquity.

He paid his income-tax, and felt a savage joy in the privation thus imposed upon his family. Mrs. Peak could not forgive her husband, and in this case, though she had but dim appreciation of the point of honour involved, her censures doubtless fell on Nicholas's vulnerable spot; it was the perversity of arrogance, at least as much as honesty, that impelled him to incur taxation. His wife's perseverance in complaint drove him to stern impatience, and for a long time the peace of the household suffered.

When the boy Godwin was five years old, the death of his blind aunt came as a relief to means which were in every sense overtaxed. Twelve months later, a piece of unprecedented good fortune seemed to place the Peaks beyond fear of want, and at the same time to supply Nicholas with a fulfilment of hopeless desires. By the death of Mrs Peak's brother, they came into possession of a freehold house and about nine hundred pounds. The property was situated some twelve miles from the Midland town of Twybridge, and thither they at once removed. At Twybridge lived Mrs. Peak's elder sister, Miss Cadman; but between this lady and her nearest kinsfolk there had been but slight correspondence—the deceased Cadman left her only a couple of hundred pounds. With capital at command, Nicholas Peak took a lease of certain fields near his house, and turned farmer. The study of chemistry had given a special bent to his economic speculations; he fancied himself endowed with exceptional aptitude for agriculture, and the scent of the furrow brought all his energies into feverish activity—activity which soon impoverished him: that was in the order of things. 'Ungainly integrity' and 'headlong irascibility' wrought the same results for the ex-dispenser as for the Ayrshire husbandman. His farming came to a chaotic end; and when the struggling man died, worn out at forty-three, his wife and children (there was now a younger boy, Oliver, named after the Protector) had no very bright prospects.

Things went better with them than might have been anticipated. To Mrs. Peak her husband's death was not an occasion of unmingled mourning. For the last few years she had suffered severely from domestic discord, and when left at peace by bereavement she turned with a sense of liberation to the task of caring for her children's future. Godwin was just thirteen, Oliver was eleven; both had been well schooled, and with the help of friends they might soon be put in the way of self-support. The daughter, Charlotte, sixteen years of age, had accomplishments which would perhaps be profitable. The widow decided to make a home in Twybridge, where Miss Cadman kept a millinery shop. By means of this connection, Charlotte presently found employment for her skill in fine needlework. Mrs. Peak was incapable of earning money, but the experiences of her early married life enabled her to make more than the most of the pittance at her disposal.

Miss Cadman was a woman of active mind, something of a busy-body—dogmatic, punctilious in her claims to respect, proud of the acknowledgment by her acquaintances that she was not as other tradespeople; her chief weakness was a fanatical ecclesiasticism, the common blight of English womanhood. Circumstances had allowed her a better education than generally falls to women of that standing, and in spite of her shop she succeeded in retaining the friendship of certain ladies long ago her schoolfellows. Among these were the Misses Lumb—middle-aged sisters, who lived at Twybridge on a small independence, their time chiefly devoted to the support of the Anglican Church. An eldest Miss Lumb had been fortunate enough to marry that growing potentate of the Midlands, Mr. Job Whitelaw. Now Lady Whitelaw, she dwelt at Kingsmill, but her sisters frequently enjoyed the honour of entertaining her, and even Miss Cadman the milliner occasionally held converse with the baronet's wife. In this way it came to pass that the Widow Peak and her children were brought under the notice of persons who sooner or later might be of assistance to them.

Abounding in emphatic advice, Miss Cadman easily persuaded her sister that Godwin must go to school for at least two years longer. The boys had been at a boarding-school twenty miles away from their country home; it would be better for them now to be put under the care of some Twybridge teacher—such an one as Miss Cadman's acquaintances could recommend. For her own credit, the milliner was anxious that these nephews of hers should not be running about the town as errand-boys or the like, and with prudence there was no necessity for such degradation. An uncommon lad like

Godwin (she imagined him named after the historic earl) must not be robbed of his fair chance in life; she would gladly spare a little money for his benefit; he was a boy to repay such expenditure.

Indeed it seemed probable. Godwin devoured books, and had a remarkable faculty for gaining solid information on any subject that took his fancy. What might be the special bent of his mind one could not yet discover. He read poetry with precocious gusto, but at the same time his aptitude for scientific pursuits was strongly marked. In botany, chemistry, physics, he made progress which the people about him, including his schoolmaster, were incapable of appreciating; and already the collection of books left by his father, most of them out of date, failed to satisfy his curiosity. It might be feared that tastes so discursive would be disadvantageous to a lad who must needs pursue some definite bread-study, and the strain of self-consciousness which grew strong in him was again a matter for concern. He cared nothing for boyish games and companionship; in the society of strangers especially of females—he behaved with an excessive shyness which was easily mistaken for a surly temper. Reproof, correction, he could not endure, and it was fortunate that the decorum of his habits made remonstrance seldom needful.

Ludicrous as the project would have appeared to any unbiassed observer of character, Miss Cadman conceived a hope that Godwin might become a clergyman. From her point of view it was natural to assume that uncommon talents must be devoted to the service of the Church, and she would have gladly done her utmost for the practical furthering of such an end. Mrs. Peak, though well aware that her son had imbibed the paternal prejudices, was disposed to entertain the same hope, despite solid obstacles. For several years she had nourished a secret antagonism to her husband's spirit of political, social, and religious rebellion, and in her widowhood she speedily became a pattern of the conservative female. It would have gratified her to discern any possibility of Godwin's assuming the priestly garb. And not alone on the ground of conscience. Long ago she had repented the marriage which connected her with such a family as that of the Peaks, and she ardently desired that the children, now exclusively her own, might enter life on a plane superior to their father's.

'Godwin, how would you like to go to College and be a clergyman?' she asked one Sunday afternoon, when an hour or two of congenial reading seemed to have put the boy into a gentle humour.

'To go to College' was all very well (diplomacy had prompted this preface), but the words that followed fell so alarmingly on Godwin's ear that he looked up with a resentful expression, unable to reply otherwise.

'You never thought of it, I suppose?' his mother faltered; for she often stood in awe of her son, who, though yet but fourteen, had much of his father's commanding severity.

'I don't want to be a parson,' came at length, bluntly.

'Don't use that word, Godwin.'

'Why not? It's quite a proper word. It comes from the Latin *persona*.'

The mother had enough discretion to keep silence, and Godwin, after in vain trying to settle to his book again, left the room with disturbed countenance.

He had now been attending the day-school for about a year, and was distinctly ahead of his coevals. A Christmas examination was on the point of being held, and it happened that a singular test of the lad's moral character coincided with the proof of his intellectual progress. In a neighbouring house lived an old man named Rawmarsh, kindly but rather eccentric; he had once done a good business as a printer, and now supported himself by such chance typographic work of a small kind as friends might put in his way. He conceived an affection for Godwin; often had the boy to talk with him of an evening. On one such occasion, Mr. Rawmarsh opened a desk, took forth a packet of newly printed leaves, and with a mysterious air silently spread them before the boy's eyes. In an instant Godwin became aware that he was looking at the examination papers which a day or two hence would be set before him at school; he saw and recognised a passage from the book of Virgil which his class had been reading.

'That is *sub rosa*, you know,' whispered the old printer, with half averted face.

Godwin shrank away, and could not resume the conversation thus interrupted. On the following day he went about with a feeling of guilt. He avoided the sight of Mr. Rawmarsh, for whom he had suddenly lost all respect, and suffered torments in the thought that he enjoyed an unfair advantage over his class-mates. The Latin passage happened to be one which he knew thoroughly well; there was no need, even had he desired, to 'look it up'; but in sitting down to the examination, he experienced a sense of shame and self-rebuke. So strong were the effects of this, that he voluntarily omitted the answer to a certain important question which he could have 'done' better than any of the other boys, thus endeavouring to adjust in his conscience the terms of competition, though in fact no such sacrifice was called for. He came out at the head of the class, but the triumph had no savour for him, and for many a year he was subject to a flush of mortification whenever this incident came back to his mind.

Mr. Rawmarsh was not the only intelligent man who took an interest in Godwin. In a house which the boy sometimes visited with a school-fellow, lodged a notable couple named Gunnery the husband about seventy, the wife five years older; they lived on a pension from a railway company. Mr. Gunnery was a dabbler in many sciences, but had a special enthusiasm for geology. Two cabinets of stones and fossils gave evidence of his zealous travels about the British isles; he had even written a little hand-book of petrology which was for sale at certain booksellers' in Twybridge, and probably nowhere else. To him, about this time, Godwin began to resort, always sure of a welcome; and in the little uncarpeted room where Mr. Gunnery pursued his investigations many a fateful lesson was given and received. The teacher understood the intelligence he had to deal with, and was delighted to convey, by the mode of suggested inference, sundry results of knowledge which it perhaps would not have been prudent to declare in plain, popular words.

Their intercourse was not invariably placid. The geologist had an irritable temper, and in certain states of the atmosphere his rheumatic twinges made it advisable to shun argument with him. Godwin, moreover, was distinguished by an instability of mood peculiarly trying to an old man's testy humour. Of a sudden, to Mr Gunnery's surprise and annoyance, he would lose all interest in this or that science. Thus, one day the lad declared himself unable to name two stones set before him, felspar and quartz, and when his instructor broke into angry impatience he turned sullenly away, exclaiming that he was tired of geology.

'Tired of geology?' cried Mr. Gunnery, with flaming eyes. 'Then *I* am tired of *you*, Master Peak! Be off, and don't come again till I send for you!'

Godwin retired without a word. On the second day he was summoned back again, but his resentment of the dismissal rankled in him for a long time; injury to his pride was the wrong he found it hardest to forgive.

His schoolmaster, aware of the unusual pursuits which he added to the routine of lessons, gave him as a prize the English translation of a book by Figuier—*The World before the Deluge*. Strongly interested by the illustrations of the volume (fanciful scenes from the successive geologic periods), Godwin at once carried it to his scientific friend. 'Deluge?' growled Mr. Gunnery. 'What deluge? Which deluge?' But he restrained himself, handed the book coldly back, and began to talk of something else. All this was highly significant to Godwin, who of course began the perusal of his prize in a suspicious mood. Nor was he long before he sympathised with Mr Gunnery's distaste. Though too young to grasp the arguments at issue, his prejudices were strongly excited by the conventional Theism which pervades Figuier's work. Already it was the habit of his mind to associate popular dogma with intellectual shallowness; herein, as at every other point which fell within his scope, he had begun to scorn average people, and to pride himself intensely on views which he found generally condemned. Day by day he grew into a clearer understanding of the memories bequeathed to him by his father; he began to interpret remarks, details of behaviour, instances of wrath, which, though they had stamped themselves on his recollection, conveyed at the time no precise significance. The issue was that he hardened himself against the influence of his mother and his aunt, regarding them as in league against the free progress of his education.

As women, again, he despised these relatives. It is almost impossible for a bright-witted lad born in the lower middle class to escape this stage of development. The brutally healthy boy contemns the female sex because he sees it incapable of his own athletic sports, but Godwin was one of those upon whose awaking intellect is forced a perception of the brain-defect so general in women when they are taught few of life's graces and none of its serious concerns,—their paltry prepossessions, their vulgar sequaciousness, their invincible ignorance, their absorption in a petty self. And especially is this phase of thought to be expected in a boy whose heart blindly nourishes the seeds of poetical passion. It was Godwin's sincere belief that he held girls, as girls, in abhorrence. This meant that he dreaded their personal criticism, and that the spectacle of female beauty sometimes overcame him with a despair which he could not analyse. Matrons and elderly unmarried women were truly the objects of his disdain; in them he saw nothing but their shortcomings. Towards his mother he was conscious of no tenderness; of as little towards his sister, who often censured him with trenchant tongue; as for his aunt, whose admiration of him was modified by reticences, he could never be at ease in her company, so strong a dislike had he for her look, her voice, her ways of speech.

He would soon be fifteen years old. Mrs. Peak was growing anxious, for she could no longer consent to draw upon her sister for a portion of the school fees, and no pertinent suggestion for the lad's future was made by any of the people who admired his cleverness. Miss Cadman still clung in a fitful way to the idea of making her nephew a cleric; she had often talked it over with the Misses Lumb, who of course held that 'any sacrifice' was justifiable with such a motive, and who suggested a hope that, by the instrumentality of Lady Whitelaw, a curacy might easily be obtained as soon as Godwin was old enough. But several years must pass before that Levitical stage could be reached; and then, after all, perhaps the younger boy, Oliver, placid of temper and notably pliant in mind, was better suited for the dignity of Orders. It was lamentable that Godwin should have become so intimate with that earth-burrowing Mr. Gunnery, who certainly never attended either church or chapel, and who seemed to have imbued his pupil with immoral theories concerning the date of creation. Godwin held more decidedly aloof from his aunt, and had been heard by Charlotte to speak very disrespectfully of the Misses Lumb. In short, there was no choice but to discover an opening for him in some secular pursuit. Could he, perhaps, become an assistant teacher? Or must he 'go into an office'?

No common lad. A youth whose brain glowed like a furnace, whose heart throbbed with tumult of high ambitions, of inchoate desires; endowed with knowledge altogether exceptional for his years; a nature essentially militant, displaying itself in innumerable forms of callow intolerance—apt, assuredly, for some vigorous part in life, but as likely as not to rush headlong on traverse roads if no judicious mind assumed control of him. What is to be done with the boy?

All very well, if the question signified, in what way to provide for the healthy development of his manhood. Of course it meant nothing of the sort, but merely: What work can be found for him whereby he may earn his daily bread? We—his kinsfolk even, not to think of the world at large—can have no concern with his growth as an intellectual being; we are hard pressed to supply our own mouths with food; and now that we have done our recognised duty by him, it is high time that he learnt to fight for his own share of provender. Happily, he is of the robust sex; he can hit out right and left, and make standing-room. We have armed him with serviceable weapons, and now he must use them against the enemy—that is to say, against all mankind, who will quickly enough deprive him of sustenance if he fail in the conflict. We neither know, nor in great measure care, for what employment he is naturally marked. Obviously he cannot heave coals or sell dogs' meat, but with negative certainty not much else can be resolved, seeing how desperate is the competition for minimum salaries. He has been born, and he must eat. By what licensed channel may he procure the necessary viands?

Paternal relatives Godwin had as good as none. In quitting London, Nicholas Peak had ceased to hold communication with any of his own stock save the younger brother Andrew. With him he occasionally exchanged a letter, but Andrew's share in the correspondence was limited to ungrammatical and often unintelligible hints of numerous projects for money-making. Just after the

removal of the bereaved family to Twybridge, they were surprised by a visit from Andrew, in answer to one of whose letters Mrs. Peak had sent news of her husband's death. Though her dislike of the man amounted to loathing, the widow could not refuse him hospitality; she did her best, however, to prevent his coming in contact with anyone she knew. Andrew declared that he was at length prospering; he had started a coffee-shop at Dalston, in north-east London, and positively urged a proposal (well-meant, beyond doubt) that Godwin should be allowed to come to him and learn the business. Since then the Londoner had once again visited Twybridge, towards the end of Godwin's last school-year. This time he spoke of himself less hopefully, and declared a wish to transfer his business to some provincial town, where he thought his metropolitan experience might be of great value, in the absence of serious competition. It was not difficult to discover a family likeness between Andrew's instability and the idealism which had proved the ruin of Nicholas.

On this second occasion Godwin tried to escape a meeting with his uncle. Unable to do so, he sat mute, replying to questions monosyllabically. Mrs. Peak's shame and annoyance, in face of this London-branded vulgarian, were but feeble emotions compared with those of her son. Godwin hated the man, and was in dread lest any school-fellow should come to know of such a connection. Yet delicacy prevented his uttering a word on the subject to his mother. Mrs. Peak's silence after Andrew's departure made it uncertain how she regarded the obligation of kindred, and in any such matter as this the boy was far too sensitive to risk giving pain. But to his brother Oliver he spoke.

'What is the brute to us? When I'm a man, let him venture to come near me, and see what sort of a reception he'll get! I hate low, uneducated people! I hate them worse than the filthiest vermin!—don't you?'

Oliver, aged but thirteen, assented, as he habitually did to any question which seemed to await an affirmative.

'They ought to be swept off the face of the earth!' pursued Godwin, sitting up in bed—for the dialogue took place about eleven o'clock at night. 'All the grown-up creatures, who can't speak proper English and don't know how to behave themselves, I'd transport them to the Falkland Islands,'—this geographic precision was a note of the boy's mind,—'and let them die off as soon as possible. The children should be sent to school and purified, if possible; if not, they too should be got rid of.'

'You're an aristocrat, Godwin,' remarked Oliver, simply; for the elder brother had of late been telling him fearful stories from the French Revolution, with something of an anti-popular bias.

'I hope I am. I mean to be, that's certain. There's nothing I hate like vulgarity. That's why I can't stand Roper. When he beat me in mathematics last midsummer, I felt so ashamed I could hardly bear myself. I'm working like a nigger at algebra and Euclid this half, just because I think it would almost kill me to be beaten again by a low cad.'

This was perhaps the first time that Godwin found expression for the prejudice which affected all his thoughts and feelings. It relieved him to have spoken thus; henceforth he had become clear as to his point of view. By dubbing him aristocrat, Oliver had flattered him in the subtlest way. If indeed the title were justly his, as he instantly felt it was, the inference was plain that he must be an aristocrat of nature's own making—one of the few highly favoured beings who, in despite of circumstance, are pinnacled above mankind. In his ignorance of life, the boy visioned a triumphant career; an aristocrat *de jure* might possibly become one even in the common sense did he but pursue that end with sufficient zeal. And in his power of persistent endeavour he had no lack of faith.

The next day he walked with exalted head. Encountering the objectionable Roper, he smiled upon him contemptuously tolerant.

There being no hope of effective assistance from relatives, Mrs. Peak turned for counsel to a man of business, with whom her husband had made acquaintance in his farming days, and who held a position of influence at Twybridge. This was Mr. Moxey, manufacturing chemist, famous in the Midlands for his 'sheep and cattle dressings', and sundry other products of agricultural enterprise. His ill-scented, but lucrative, works were situated a mile out of the town; and within sight of the reeking

chimneys stood a large, plain house, uncomfortably like an 'institution' of some kind, in which he dwelt with his five daughters. Thither, one evening, Mrs. Peak betook herself, having learnt that Mr. Moxey dined at five o'clock, and that he was generally to be found digging in his garden until sunset. Her reception was civil. The manufacturer—sparing of words, but with no unkindly face—requested that Godwin should be sent to see him, and promised to do his best to be of use. A talk with the boy strengthened his interest. He was surprised at Godwin's knowledge of chemistry, pleased with his general intelligence, and in the end offered to make a place for him at the works, where, though for a year or two his earnings must be small, he would gain experience likely to be of substantial use to him. Godwin did not find the proposal distasteful; it brought a change into his life, and the excitement of novelty; it flattered him with the show of release from pupilage. To Mr. Moxey's he went.

The hours were not long, and it was understood that his theoretical studies should continue in the evening. Godwin's home was a very small house in a monotonous little street; a garret served as bedroom for the two boys, also as the elder one's laboratory. Servant Mrs. Peak had none. She managed everything herself, as in the old Greenwich days, leaving Charlotte free to work at her embroidery. Godwin took turns with Oliver at blacking the shoes.

As a matter of course the boys accompanied their mother each Sunday morning to the parish church, and this ceremony was becoming an insufferable tax on Godwin's patience. It was not only that he hated the name of religion, and scorned with much fierceness all who came in sympathetic contact therewith; the loss of time seemed to him an oppressive injury, especially now that he began to suffer from restricted leisure. He would not refuse to obey his mother's wish, but the sullenness of his Sabbath demeanour made the whole family uncomfortable. As often as possible he feigned illness. He tried the effect of dolorous sighs and groans; but Mrs. Peak could not dream of conceding a point which would have seemed to her the condonation of deadly sin. 'When I am a man!' muttered Godwin. 'Ah! when I am a man!'

A year had gone by, and the routine to which he was bound began to have a servile flavour. His mind chafed at subjugation to commercial interests. Sick of 'sheep and cattle dressings', he grew tired of chemistry altogether, and presently of physical science in general. His evenings were given to poetry and history; he took up the classical schoolbooks again, and found a charm in Latin syntax hitherto unperceived. It was plain to him now how he had been wronged by the necessity of leaving school when his education had but just begun.

Discontent becoming ripe for utterance, he unbosomed himself to Mr Gunnery. It happened that the old man had just returned from a visit to Kingsmill, where he had spent a week in the museum, then newly enriched with geologic specimens. After listening in silence to the boy's complaints, and pondering for a long time, he began to talk of Whitelaw College.

'Does it cost much to study there?' Godwin asked, gloomily.

'No great sum, I think. There are scholarships to be had.'

Mr. Gunnery threw out the suggestion carelessly. Knowing the hazards of life, he could not quite justify himself in encouraging Godwin's restiveness.

'Scholarships? For free study?'

'Yes; but that wouldn't mean free living, you know. Students don't live at the College.'

'How do you go in for a scholarship?'

The old man replied, meditatively, 'If you were to pass the Cambridge Local Examination, and to get the first place in the Kingsmill district, you would have three years of free study at Whitelaw.'

'Three years?' shouted Godwin, springing up from his chair.

'But how could you live, my boy?'

Godwin sat down again, and let his head fall forward.

How to keep oneself alive during a few years of intellectual growth?—a question often asked by men of mature age, but seldom by a lad of sixteen. No matter. He resolved that he would study for this Cambridge Local Examination, and have a try for the scholarship. His attainments were already

up to the standard required for average success in such competitions. On obtaining a set of 'papers', he found that they looked easy enough. Could he not come out first in the Kingsmill district?

He worked vigorously at special subjects; aid was needless, but he wished for more leisure. Not a word to any member of his household. When his mother discovered that he was reading in the bedroom till long past midnight, she made serious objection on the score of health and on that of gas bills. Godwin quietly asserted that work he must, and that if necessary he would buy candles out of his pocket-money. He had unexpectedly become more grave, more restrained; he even ceased to grumble about going to church, having found that service time could be utilised for committing to memory lists of dates and the like, jotted down on a slip of paper. When the time for the examination drew near, he at length told his mother to what end he had been labouring, and asked her to grant him the assistance necessary for his journey and the sojourn at Kingsmill; the small sum he had been able to save, after purchase of books, would not suffice. Mrs. Peak knew not whether to approve her son's ambition or to try to repress it. She would welcome an improval in his prospects, but, granting success, how was he to live whilst profiting by a scholarship? And again, what did he propose to make of himself when he had spent three years in study?

'In any case,' was Godwin's reply, 'I should be sure of a good place as a teacher. But I think I might try for something in the Civil Service; there are all sorts of positions to be got.'

It was idle to discuss the future whilst the first step was still speculative. Mrs. Peak consented to favour the attempt, and what was more, to keep it a secret until the issue should be known. It was needful to obtain leave of absence from Mr. Moxey, and Godwin, when making the request, stated for what purpose he was going to Kingsmill, though without explaining the hope which had encouraged his studies. The project seemed laudable, and his employer made no difficulties.

Godwin just missed the scholarship; of candidates in the prescribed district, he came out second.

Grievous was the disappointment. To come so near success exasperated his impatient temper, and for a few days his bondage at the chemical works seemed intolerable; he was ready for almost any venture that promised release and new scope for his fretting energies. But at the moment when nervous irritation was most acute, a remarkable act of kindness suddenly restored to him all the hopes he had abandoned. One Saturday afternoon he was summoned from his surly retreat in the garret, to speak with a visitor. On entering the sitting-room, he found his mother in company with Miss Cadman and the Misses Lumb, and from the last-mentioned ladies, who spoke with amiable alternation, he learnt that they were commissioned by Sir Job Whitelaw to offer for his acceptance a three-years' studentship at Whitelaw College. Affected by her son's chagrin, Mrs. Peak had disclosed the story to her sister, who had repeated it to the Misses Lumb, who in turn had made it the subject of a letter to Lady Whitelaw. It was an annual practice with Sir Job to discover some promising lad whom he could benefit by the payment of his fees for a longer or shorter period of college study. The hint from Twybridge came to him just at the suitable time, and, on further inquiry, he decided to make proffer of this advantage to Godwin Peak. The only condition was that arrangements should be made by the student's relatives for his support during the proposed period.

This generosity took away Godwin's breath. The expenditure it represented was trifling, but from a stranger in Sir Job's position it had something which recalled to so fervent a mind the poetry of Medicean patronage. For the moment no faintest doubt gave warning to his self-respect; he was eager to accept nobly a benefaction nobly intended.

Miss Cadman, flattered by Sir Job's attention to her nephew, now came forward with an offer to contribute towards Godwin's livelihood. Her supplement would eke into adequacy such slender allowance as the widow's purse could afford. Details were privately discussed, resolves were taken. Mr. Moxey, when it was made known to him, without explanation, that Godwin was to be sent to Whitelaw College, behaved with kindness; he at once released the lad, and added a present to the salary that was due. Proper acknowledgment of the Baronet's kindness was made by the beneficiary

himself, who wrote a letter giving truer testimony of his mental calibre than would have been offered had he expressed himself by word of mouth. A genial reply summoned him to an interview as soon as he should have found an abode in Kingsmill. The lodging he had occupied during the examination was permanently secured, and a new period of Godwin's life began.

For two years, that is to say until his age drew towards nineteen, Peak pursued the Arts curriculum at Whitelaw. His mood on entering decided his choice, which was left free to him. Experience of utilitarian chemistry had for the present made his liberal tastes predominant, and neither the splendid laboratories of Whitelaw nor the repute of its scientific Professors tempted him to what had once seemed his natural direction. In the second year, however, he enlarged his course by the addition of one or two classes not included in Sir Job's design; these were paid for out of a present made to him by Mr. Gunnery.

It being customary for the regular students of Whitelaw to graduate at London University, Peak passed his matriculation, and worked on for the preliminary test then known as First B.A. In the meanwhile he rose steadily, achieving distinction in the College. The more observant of his teachers remarked him even where he fell short of academic triumph, and among his fellow-students he had the name of a stern 'sweater', one not easily beaten where he had set his mind on excelling. He was not generally liked, for his mood appeared unsocial, and a repelling arrogance was sometimes felt in his talk. No doubt—said the more fortunate young men—he came from a very poor home, and suffered from the narrowness of his means. They noticed that he did not subscribe to the College Union, and that he could never join in talk regarding the diversions of the town. His two or three intimates were chosen from among those contemporaries who read hard and dressed poorly.

The details of Godwin's private life were noteworthy. Accustomed hitherto to a domestic circle, at Kingsmill he found himself isolated, and it was not easy for him to surrender all at once the comforts of home. For a time he felt as though his ambition were a delinquency which entailed the punishment of loneliness. Nor did his relations with Sir Job Whitelaw tend to mitigate this feeling. In his first interview with the Baronet, Godwin showed to little advantage. A deadly bashfulness forbade him to be natural either in attitude or speech. He felt his dependence in a way he had not foreseen; the very clothes he wore, then fresh from the tailor's, seemed to be the gift of charity, and their stiffness shamed him. A man of the world, Sir Job could make allowance for these defects. He understood that the truest kindness would be to leave a youth such as this to the forming influences of the College. So Godwin barely had a glimpse of Lady Whitelaw in her husband's study, and thereafter for many months he saw nothing of his benefactors. Subsequently he was twice invited to interviews with Sir Job, who talked with kindness and commendation. Then came the Baronet's death. Godwin received an assurance that this event would be no check upon his career, but he neither saw nor heard directly from Lady Whitelaw.

Not a house in Kingsmill opened hospitable doors to the lonely student; nor was anyone to blame for this. With no family had he friendly acquaintance. When, towards the end of his second year, he grew sufficiently intimate with Buckland Warricombe to walk out with him to Thornhaw, it could be nothing more than a scarcely welcome exception to the rule of solitude. Impossible for him to cultivate the friendship of such people as the Warricombes, with their large and joyous scheme of life. Only at a hearth where homeliness and cordiality united to unthaw his proud reserve could Godwin perchance have found the companionship he needed. Many such homes existed in Kingsmill, but no kindly fortune led the young man within the sphere of their warmth.

His lodgings were in a very ugly street in the ugliest outskirts of the town; he had to take a long walk through desolate districts (brick-yard, sordid pasture, degenerate village) before he could refresh his eyes with the rural scenery which was so great a joy to him as almost to be a necessity. The immediate vicinage offered nothing but monotone of grimy, lower middle-class dwellings, occasionally relieved by a public-house. He occupied two rooms, not unreasonably clean, and was seldom disturbed by the attentions of his landlady.

An impartial observer might have wondered at the negligence which left him to arrange his life as best he could, notwithstanding youth and utter inexperience. It looked indeed as if there were no one in the world who cared what became of him. Yet this was merely the result of his mother's circumstances, and of his own character. Mrs Peak could do no more than make her small remittances, and therewith send an occasional admonition regarding his health. She did not, in fact, conceive the state of things, imagining that the authority and supervisal of the College extended over her son's daily existence, whereas it was possible for Godwin to frequent lectures or not, to study or to waste his time, pretty much as he chose, subject only to official inquiry if his attendance became frequently irregular. His independent temper, and the seeming maturity of his mind, supplied another excuse for the imprudent confidence which left him to his own resources. Yet the perils of the situation were great indeed. A youth of less concentrated purpose, more at the mercy of casual allurements, would probably have gone to wreck amid trials so exceptional.

Trials not only of his moral nature. The sums of money with which he was furnished fell short of a reasonable total for bare necessities. In the calculation made by Mrs. Peak and her sister, outlay on books had practically been lost sight of; it was presumed that ten shillings a term would cover this item. But Godwin could not consent to be at a disadvantage in his armoury for academic contest. The first month saw him compelled to contract his diet, that he might purchase books; thenceforth he rarely had enough to eat. His landlady supplied him with breakfast, tea, and supper—each repast of the very simplest kind; for dinner it was understood that he repaired to some public table, where meat and vegetables, with perchance a supplementary sweet when nature demanded it, might be had for about a shilling. That shilling was not often at his disposal. Dinner as it is understood by the comfortably clad, the 'regular meal' which is a part of English respectability, came to be represented by a small pork-pie, or even a couple of buns, eaten at the little shop over against the College. After a long morning of mental application this was poor refreshment; the long afternoon which followed, again spent in rigorous study, could not but reduce a growing frame to ravenous hunger. Tea and buttered bread were the means of appeasing it, until another four hours' work called for reward in the shape of bread and cheese. Even yet the day's toil was not ended. Godwin sometimes read long after midnight, with the result that, when at length he tried to sleep, exhaustion of mind and body kept him for a long time feverishly wakeful.

These hardships he concealed from the people at Twybridge. Complaint, it seemed to him, would be ungrateful, for sacrifices were already made on his behalf. His father, as he well remembered, was wont to relate, with a kind of angry satisfaction, the miseries through which he had fought his way to education and the income-tax. Old enough now to reflect with compassionate understanding upon that life of conflict, Godwin resolved that he too would bear the burdens inseparable from poverty, and in some moods was even glad to suffer as his father had done. Fortunately he had a sound basis of health, and hunger and vigils would not easily affect his constitution. If, thus hampered, he could outstrip competitors who had every advantage of circumstance, the more glorious his triumph.

Sunday was an interval of leisure. Rejoicing in deliverance from Sabbatarianism, he generally spent the morning in a long walk, and the rest of the day was devoted to non-collegiate reading. He had subscribed to a circulating library, and thus obtained new publications recommended to him in the literary paper which again taxed his stomach. Mere class-work did not satisfy him. He was possessed with throes of spiritual desire, impelling him towards that world of unfettered speculation which he had long indistinctly imagined. It was a great thing to learn what the past could teach, to set himself on the common level of intellectual men; but he understood that college learning could not be an end in itself, that the Professors to whom he listened either did not speak out all that was in their minds, or, if they did, were far from representing the advanced guard of modern thought. With eagerness he at length betook himself to the teachers of philosophy and of geology. Having paid for these lectures out of his own pocket, he felt as if he had won a privilege beyond the conventional course of study,

an initiation to a higher sphere of intellect. The result was disillusion. Not even in these class-rooms could he hear the word for which he waited, the bold annunciation of newly discovered law, the science which had completely broken with tradition. He came away unsatisfied, and brooded upon the possibilities which would open for him when he was no longer dependent.

His evening work at home was subject to a disturbance which would have led him to seek other lodgings, could he have hoped to find any so cheap as these. The landlady's son, a lank youth of the clerk species, was wont to amuse himself from eight to ten with practice on a piano. By dint of perseverance he had learned to strum two or three hymnal melodies popularised by American evangelists; occasionally he even added the charm of his voice, which had a pietistic nasality not easily endured by an ear of any refinement. Not only was Godwin harassed by the recurrence of these performances; the tunes worked themselves into his brain, and sometimes throughout a whole day their burden clanged and squalled incessantly on his mental hearing. He longed to entreat forbearance from the musician, but an excess of delicacy—which always ruled his behaviour—kept him silent. Certain passages in the classics, and many an elaborate mathematical formula, long retained for him an association with the cadences of revivalist hymnody.

Like all proud natures condemned to solitude, he tried to convince himself that he had no need of society, that he despised its attractions, and could be self-sufficing. So far was this from the truth that he often regarded with bitter envy those of his fellow-students who had the social air, who conversed freely among their equals, and showed that the pursuits of the College were only a part of their existence. These young men were either preparing for the University, or would pass from Whitelaw to business, profession, official training; in any case, a track was marked out for them by the zealous care of relatives and friends, and their efforts would always be aided, applauded, by a kindly circle. Some of them Godwin could not but admire, so healthful were they, so bright of intellect, and courteous in manner,—a type distinct from any he had formerly observed. Others were antipathetic to him. Their aggressive gentility conflicted with the wariness of his self-esteem; such a one, for instance, as Bruno Chilvers, the sound of whose mincing voice, as he read in the class, so irritated him that at times he had to cover his ears. Yet, did it chance that one of these offensive youths addressed a civil word to him, on the instant his prejudice was disarmed, and his emotions flowed forth in a response to which he would gladly have given free expression. When he was invited to meet the relatives of Buckland Warricombe, shyness prepossessed him against them; but the frank kindness of his reception moved him, and on going away he was ashamed to have replied so boorishly to attentions so amiably meant. The same note of character sounded in what personal intercourse he had with the Professors. Though his spirit of criticism was at times busy with these gentlemen, he had for most of them a profound regard; and to be elected by one or other for a word of commendation, a little private assistance, a well-phrased inquiry as to his progress, always made his heart beat high with gratitude. They were his first exemplars of finished courtesy, of delicate culture; and he could never sufficiently regret that no one of them was aware how thankfully he recognised his debt.

In longing for the intimacy of refined people, he began to modify his sentiments with regard to the female sex. His first prize-day at Whitelaw was the first occasion on which he sat in an assembly where ladies (as he understood the title) could be seen and heard. The impression he received was deep and lasting. On the seat behind him were two girls whose intermittent talk held him with irresistible charm throughout the whole ceremony. He had not imagined that girls could display such intelligence, and the sweet clearness of their intonation, the purity of their accent, the grace of their habitual phrases, were things altogether beyond his experience. This was not the English he had been wont to hear on female lips. His mother and his aunt spoke with propriety; their associates were soft-tongued; but here was something quite different from inoffensiveness of tone and diction. Godwin appreciated the differentiating cause. These young ladies behind him had been trained from the cradle to speak for the delight of fastidious ears; that they should be grammatical was not enough—they

must excel in the art of conversational music. Of course there existed a world where only such speech was interchanged, and how inestimably happy those men to whom the sphere was native!

When the proceedings were over, he drew aside and watched the two girls as they mingled with acquaintances; he kept them in view until they left the College. An emotion such as this he had never known; for the first time in his life he was humiliated without embitterment.

The bitterness came when he had returned to his home in the back street of Twybridge, and was endeavouring to spend the holidays in a hard 'grind'. He loathed the penurious simplicity to which his life was condemned; all familiar circumstances were become petty, coarse, vulgar, in his eyes; the contrast with the idealised world of his ambition plunged him into despair: Even Mr. Gunnery seemed an ignoble figure when compared with the Professors of Whitelaw, and his authority in the sciences was now subjected to doubt. However much or little might result from the three years at College, it was clear to Godwin that his former existence had passed into infinite remoteness; he was no longer fit for Twybridge, no longer a companion for his kindred. Oliver, whose dulness as a schoolboy gave no promise of future achievements, was now learning the business of a seedsman; his brother felt ashamed when he saw him at work in the shop, and had small patience with the comrades to whom Oliver dedicated his leisure. Charlotte was estranged by religious differences. Only for his mother did the young man show increased consideration. To his aunt he endeavoured to be grateful, but his behaviour in her presence was elaborate hypocrisy. Hating the necessity for this, he laid the blame on fortune, which had decreed his birth in a social sphere where he must ever be an alien.

CHAPTER III

With the growth of his militant egoism, there had developed in Godwin Peak an excess of nervous sensibility which threatened to deprive his character of the initiative rightly belonging to it. Self-assertion is the practical complement of self-esteem. To be largely endowed with the latter quality, yet constrained by a coward delicacy to repress it, is to suffer martyrdom at the pleasure of every robust assailant, and in the end be driven to the refuge of a moody solitude. That encounter with his objectionable uncle after the prize distribution at Whitelaw showed how much Godwin had lost of the natural vigour which declared itself at Andrew Peak's second visit to Twybridge, when the boy certainly would not have endured his uncle's presence but for hospitable considerations and the respect due to his mother. The decision with which he then unbosomed himself to Oliver, still characterised his thoughts, but he had not courage to elude the dialogue forced upon him, still less to make known his resentment of the man's offensive vulgarity. He endured in silence, his heart afire with scornful wrath.

The affliction could not have befallen him at a time when he was less capable of supporting it resignedly. Notwithstanding his noteworthy success in two classes, it seemed to him that he had lost everything—that the day was one of signal and disgraceful defeat. In any case that sequence of second prizes must have filled him with chagrin, but to be beaten thus repeatedly by such a fellow as Bruno Chilvers was humiliation intolerable. A fopling, a mincer of effeminate English, a rote-repeater of academic catchwords—bah! The by-examinations of the year had whispered presage, but Peak always felt that he was not putting forth his strength; when the serious trial came he would show what was really in him. Too late he recognised his error, though he tried not to admit it. The extra subjects had exacted too much of him; there was a limit to his powers. Within the College this would be well enough understood, but to explain a disagreeable fact is not to change it; his name was written in pitiful subordination. And as for the public assembly—he would have sacrificed some years of his life to have stepped forward in facile supremacy, beneath the eyes of those clustered ladies. Instead of that, they had looked upon his shame; they had interchanged glances of amusement at each repetition of his defeat; had murmured comments in their melodious speech; had ended by losing all interest in him—as intuition apprised him was the wont of women.

As soon as he had escaped from his uncle, he relapsed into musing upon the position to which he was condemned when the new session came round. Again Chilvers would be in the same classes with him, and, as likely as not, with the same result. In the meantime, they were both 'going in' for the First B.A.; he had no fear of failure, but it might easily happen that Chilvers would achieve higher distinction. With an eye to awards that might be won—substantial cash-annuities—he was reading for Honours; but it seemed doubtful whether he could present himself, as the second examination was held only in London. Chilvers would of course be an Honours candidate. He would smile—confound him!—at an objection on the score of the necessary journey to London. Better to refrain altogether than again to see Chilvers come out ahead. General surprise would naturally be excited, questions asked on all hands. How would it sound: 'I simply couldn't afford to go up'—?

At this point of the meditation he had reached his lodgings; he admitted himself with a latch-key, turned into his murky sitting-room, and sat down.

The table was laid for tea, as usual. Though he might have gone to Twybridge this evening, he had preferred to stay overnight, for an odd reason. At a theatre in Kingsmill a London company, headed by an actress of some distinction, was to perform *Romeo and Juliet*, and he purposed granting himself this indulgence before leaving the town. The plan was made when his eye fell upon the advertisement, a few days ago. He then believed it probable that an evening at the theatre would appropriately follow upon a day of victory. His interest in the performance had collapsed, but he did not care to alter his arrangements.

The landlady came in bearing the tea-pot. He wanted nothing, yet could not exert himself to say so.

But he was losing sight of a menace more formidable than defeat by Chilvers. What was it his blackguard uncle had said? Had the fellow really threatened to start an eating-house opposite the College, and flare his name upon a placard? 'Peak's Dining and Refreshment Rooms'—merciful heavens!

Again the mood of laughter came upon him. Why, here was a solution of all difficulties, as simple as unanticipated. If indeed that awful thing came to pass, farewell to Whitelaw! What possibility of pursuing his studies when every class-companion, every Professor,—nay, the very porters,—had become aware that he was nephew to the man who supplied meals over the way? Moral philosophy had no prophylactic against an ordeal such as this. Could the most insignificant lad attending lectures afford to disregard such an occasion of ridicule and contempt?

But the scheme would not be realised; it sounded too unlikely. Andrew Peak was merely a loose-minded vagabond, who might talk of this and that project for making money, but would certainly never quit his dirty haunts in London. Godwin asked himself angrily why he had submitted to the fellow's companionship. This absurd delicacy must be corrected before it became his tyrant. The idea of scrupling to hurt the sensibilities of Andrew Peak! The man was coarse-hided enough to undergo kicking, and then take sixpence in compensation,—not a doubt of it. This detestable tie of kindred must no longer be recognised. He would speak gravely to his mother about it. If Andrew again presented himself at the house he should be given plainly to understand that his visits were something less than welcome,—if necessary, a downright blunt word must effect their liberation. Godwin felt strong enough for that, musing here alone. And, student-like, he passed on to debate the theory of the problem. Andrew was his father's brother, but what is a mere tie of blood if nature has alienated two persons by a subtler distinction? By the dead man, Andrew had never been loved or esteemed; memory supplied proof of this. The widow shrank from him. No obligation of any kind lay upon them to tolerate the London ruffian.—Enough; he should be got rid of!

Alternating his causes of misery, which—he could not quite forget—might blend for the sudden transformation of his life, Godwin let the tea grow cold upon the table, until it was time, if he still meant to visit the theatre, for setting forth. He had no mind to go, but as little to sit here and indulge harassing reflection. With an effort, he made ready and left the house.

The cost of his seat at the theatre was two shillings. So nicely had he adjusted the expenses of these last days that, after paying the landlady's bill to-morrow morning, there would remain to him but a few pence more than the money needed for his journey home. Walking into the town, he debated with himself whether it were not better to save this florin. But as he approached the pit door, the spirit of pleasure revived in him; he had seen but one of Shakespeare's plays, and he believed (naturally at his age) that to see a drama acted was necessary for its full appreciation. Sidling with affected indifference, he added himself to the crowd.

To stand thus, expectant of the opening doors, troubled him with a sense of shame. To be sure, he was in the spiritual company of Charles Lamb, and of many another man of brains who has waited under the lamp. But contact with the pittites of Kingsmill offended his instincts; he resented this appearance of inferiority to people who came at their leisure, and took seats in the better parts of the house. When a neighbour addressed him with a meaningless joke which defied grammar, he tried to grin a friendly answer, but inwardly shrank. The events of the day had increased his sensibility to such impressions. Had he triumphed over Bruno Chilvers, he could have behaved this evening with a larger humanity.

The fight for entrance—honest British stupidity, crushing ribs and rending garments in preference to seemly order of progress—enlivened him somewhat, and sent him laughing to his conquered place; but before the curtain rose he was again depressed by the sight of a familiar figure in the stalls, a fellow-student who sat there with mother and sister, black-uniformed, looking very much

a gentleman. 'I, of course, am not a gentleman,' he said to himself, gloomily. Was there any chance that he might some day take his ease in that orthodox fashion? Inasmuch as it was conventionality, he scorned it; but the privileges which it represented had strong control of his imagination. That lady and her daughter would follow the play with intelligence. To exchange comments with them would be a keen delight. As for him—he had a shop-boy on one hand and a grocer's wife on the other.

By the end he had fallen into fatigue. Amid clamour of easily-won applause he made his way into the street, to find himself in a heavy downpour of rain. Having no umbrella, he looked about for a sheltered station, and the glare of a neighbouring public-house caught his eye; he was thirsty, and might as well refresh body and spirit with a glass of beer, an unwonted indulgence which had the pleasant semblance of dissipation. Arrived at the bar he came upon two acquaintances, who, to judge by their flushed cheeks and excited voices, had been celebrating jovially the close of their academic labours. They hailed him.

'Hollo, Peak! Come and help us to get sober before bedtime!'

They were not exactly studious youths, but neither did they belong to the class that Godwin despised, and he had a comrade-like feeling for them. In a few minutes his demeanour was wholly changed. A glass of hot whisky acted promptly upon his nervous system, enabled him to forget vexations, and attuned him to kindred sprightliness. He entered merrily into the talk of a time of life which is independent of morality—talk distinct from that of the blackguard, but equally so from that of the reflective man. His first glass had several successors. The trio rambled arm in arm from one place of refreshment to another, and presently sat down in hearty fellowship to a supper of such viands as recommend themselves at bibulous midnight. Peak was drawing recklessly upon the few coins that remained to him; he must leave his landlady's claim undischarged, and send the money from home. Prudence be hanged! If one cannot taste amusement once in a twelvemonth, why live at all?

He reached his lodgings, at something after one o'clock, drenched with rain, gloriously indifferent to that and all other chances of life. Pooh! his system had been radically wrong. He should have allowed himself recreation once a week or so; he would have been all the better for it, body and mind. Books and that kind of thing are all very well in their way, but one must live; he had wasted too much of his youth in solitude. *O mihi proeteritos referat si Jupiter annos!* Next session he would arrange things better. Success in examinations—what trivial fuss when one looked at it from the right point of view! And he had fretted himself into misery, because Chilvers had got more 'marks',—ha, ha, ha!

The morrow's waking was lugubrious enough. Headache and nausea weighed upon him. Worse still, a scrutiny of his pockets showed that he had only the shamefaced change of half-a-crown wherewith to transport himself and his belongings to Twybridge. Now, the railway fare alone was three shillings; the needful cab demanded eighteenpence. O idiot!

And he hated the thought of leaving his bill unpaid; the more so because it was a trifling sum, a week's settlement. To put himself under however brief an obligation to a woman such as the landlady gnawed at his pride. Not that only. He had no business to make a demand upon his mother for this additional sum. But there was no way of raising the money; no one of whom he could borrow it; nothing he could afford to sell—even if courage had supported him through such a transaction. Triple idiot!

Bread turned to bran upon his hot palate; he could only swallow cups of coffee. With trembling hands he finished the packing of his box and portmanteau, then braced himself to the dreaded interview. Of course, it involved no difficulty, the words once uttered; but, when he was left alone again, he paced the room for a few minutes in flush of mortification. It had made his headache worse.

The mode of his homeward journey he had easily arranged. His baggage having been labelled for Twybridge, he himself would book as far as his money allowed, then proceed on foot for the remaining distance. With the elevenpence now in his pocket he could purchase a ticket to a little town called Dent, and by a calculation from the railway tariff he concluded that from Dent to Twybridge

was some five-and-twenty miles. Well and good. At the rate of four miles an hour it would take him from half-past eleven to about six o'clock. He could certainly reach home in time for supper.

At Dent station, ashamed to ask (like a tramp) the way to so remote a place as Twybridge, he jotted down a list of intervening railway stoppages, and thus was enabled to support the semblance of one who strolls on for his pleasure. A small handbag he was obliged to carry, and the clouded sky made his umbrella a requisite. On he trudged steadily, for the most part by muddy ways, now through a pleasant village, now in rural solitude. He had had the precaution, at breakfast time, to store some pieces of bread in his pocket, and after two or three hours this resource was welcome. Happily the air and exercise helped him to get rid of his headache. A burst of sunshine in the afternoon would have made him reasonably cheerful, but for the wretched meditations surviving from yesterday.

He pondered frequently on his spasmodic debauch, repeating, as well as memory permitted, all his absurdities of speech and action. Defiant self-justification was now far to seek. On the other hand, he perceived very clearly how easy it would be for him to lapse by degrees of weakened will into a ruinous dissoluteness. Anything of that kind would mean, of course, the abandonment of his ambitions. All he had to fight the world with was his brain; and only by incessant strenuousness in its exercise had he achieved the moderate prominence declared in yesterday's ceremony. By birth, by station, he was of no account; if he chose to sink, no influential voice would deplore his falling off or remind him of what he owed to himself. Chilvers, now—what a wide-spreading outcry, what calling upon gods and men, would be excited by any defection of that brilliant youth! Godwin Peak must make his own career, and that he would hardly do save by efforts greater than the ordinary man can put forth. The ordinary man?—Was he in any respect extraordinary? were his powers noteworthy? It was the first time that he had deliberately posed this question to himself, and for answer came a rush of confident blood, pulsing through all the mechanism of his being.

The train of thought which occupied him during this long trudge was to remain fixed in his memory; in any survey of the years of pupilage this recollection would stand prominently forth, associated, moreover, with one slight incident which at the time seemed a mere interruption of his musing. From a point on the high-road he observed a small quarry, so excavated as to present an interesting section; though weary, he could not but turn aside to examine these strata. He knew enough of the geology of the county to recognise the rocks and reflect with understanding upon their position; a fragment in his hand, he sat down to rest for a moment. Then a strange fit of brooding came over him. Escaping from the influences of personality, his imagination wrought back through eras of geologic time, held him in a vision of the infinitely remote, shrivelled into insignificance all but the one fact of inconceivable duration. Often as he had lost himself in such reveries, never yet had he passed so wholly under the dominion of that awe which attends a sudden triumph of the pure intellect. When at length he rose, it was with wide, blank eyes, and limbs partly numbed. These needed half-an-hour's walking before he could recover his mood of practical self-search.

Until the last moment he could not decide whether to let his mother know how he had reached Twybridge. His arrival corresponded pretty well with that of a train by which he might have come. But when the door opened to him, and the familiar faces smiled their welcome, he felt that he must have nothing to do with paltry deceit; he told of his walk, explaining it by the simple fact that this morning he had found himself short of money. How that came to pass, no one inquired. Mrs. Peak, shocked at such martyrdom, tended him with all motherly care; for once, Godwin felt that it was good to have a home, however simple.

This amiable frame of mind was not likely to last beyond the first day. Matter of irritation soon enough offered itself, as was invariably the case at Twybridge. It was pleasant enough to be feted as the hero of the family, to pull out a Kingsmill newspaper and exhibit the full report of prize-day at Whitelaw, with his own name, in very small type, demanding the world's attention, and finally to exhibit the volumes in tree-calf which his friend the librarian had forwarded to him. But domestic circumstances soon made assault upon his nerves, and trial of his brief patience.

First of all, there came an unexpected disclosure. His sister Charlotte had affianced herself to a young man of Twybridge, one Mr Cusse, whose prospects were as slender as his present means. Mrs Peak spoke of the affair in hushed privacy, with shaking of the head and frequent sighs, for to her mind Mr. Cusse had few even personal recommendations. He was a draper's assistant. Charlotte had made his acquaintance on occasions of church festivity, and urged the fact of his zeal in Sunday-school tuition as sufficient reply to all doubts. As he listened, Godwin bit his lips.

'Does he come here, then?' was his inquiry.

'Once or twice a week. I haven't felt able to say anything against it, Godwin. I suppose it will be a very long engagement.'

Charlotte was just twenty-two, and it seemed probable that she knew her own mind; in any case, she was of a character which would only be driven to obstinacy by adverse criticism. Godwin learnt that his aunt Emily (Miss Cadman) regarded this connection with serious disapproval. Herself a shopkeeper, she might have been expected to show indulgence to a draper's assistant, but, so far from this, her view of Mr. Cusse was severely scornful. She had nourished far other hopes for Charlotte, who surely at her age (Miss Cadman looked from the eminence of five-and-forty) should have been less precipitate. No undue harshness had been exhibited by her relatives, but Charlotte took a stand which sufficiently declared her kindred with Godwin. She held her head higher than formerly, spoke with habitual decision which bordered on snappishness, and at times displayed the absentmindedness of one who in silence suffers wrong.

There passed but a day or two before Godwin was brought face to face with Mr. Cusse, who answered too well to the idea Charlotte's brother had formed of him. He had a very smooth and shiny forehead, crowned by sleek chestnut hair; his chin was deferential; the bend of his body signified a modest hope that he did his duty in the station to which Providence had summoned him. Godwin he sought to flatter with looks of admiring interest; also, by entering upon a conversation which was meant to prove that he did not altogether lack worldly knowledge, of however little moment that might be in comparison with spiritual concerns. Examining, volume by volume and with painful minuteness, the prizes Godwin had carried off, he remarked fervently, in each instance, 'I can see how very interesting that is! So thorough, so thorough!' Even Charlotte was at length annoyed, when Mr. Cusse had exclaimed upon the 'thoroughness' of Ben Jonson's works; she asked an abrupt question about some town affair, and so gave her brother an opportunity of taking the books away. There was no flagrant offence in the man. He spoke with passable accent, and manifested a high degree of amiability; but one could not dissociate him from the counter. At the thought that his sister might become Mrs. Cusse, Godwin ground his teeth. Now that he came to reflect on the subject, he found in himself a sort of unreasoned supposition that Charlotte would always remain single; it seemed so unlikely that she would be sought by a man of liberal standing, and at the same time so impossible for her to accept any one less than a gentleman. Yet he remembered that to outsiders such fastidiousness must show in a ridiculous light. What claim to gentility had they, the Peaks? Was it not all a figment of his own self-conceit? Even in education Charlotte could barely assert a superiority to Mr. Cusse, for her formal schooling had ended when she was twelve, and she had never cared to read beyond the strait track clerical inspiration.

There were other circumstances which helped to depress his estimate of the family dignity. His brother Oliver, now seventeen, was developing into a type of young man as objectionable as it is easily recognised. The slow, compliant boy had grown more flesh and muscle than once seemed likely, and his wits had begun to display that kind of vivaciousness which is only compatible with a nature moulded in common clay. He saw much company, and all of low intellectual order; he had purchased a bicycle, and regarded it as a source of distinction, a means of displaying himself before shopkeepers' daughters; he believed himself a modest tenor, and sang verses of sentimental imbecility; he took in several weekly papers of unpromising title, for the chief purpose of deciphering cryptograms, in

which pursuit he had singular success. Add to these characteristics a penchant for cheap jewellery, and Oliver Peak stands confessed.

It appeared to Godwin that his brother had leapt in a few months to these heights of vulgar accomplishment; each separate revelation struck unexpectedly upon his nerves and severely tried his temper. When at length Oliver, waiting for supper, began to dance grotesquely to an air which local talent had somehow caught from the London music-halls, Godwin's self-control gave way.

'Is it your ambition,' he asked, with fiery sarcasm, 'to join a troupe of nigger minstrels?'

Oliver was startled into the military posture of attention. He answered, with some embarrassment:

'I can't say it is.'

'Yet anyone would suppose so,' went on Godwin, hotly. 'Though you are employed in a shop, I should have thought you might still aim at behaving like a gentleman.'

Indisposed to quarrel, and possessed of small skill in verbal fence, Oliver drew aside with shadowed brow. As the brothers still had to share one bedroom, they were presently alone together, and their muteness, as they lay down to sleep, showed the estrangement that had at length come between them. When all had been dark and still for half-an-hour, Godwin spoke.

'Are you awake?'

'Yes.'

'There was something about Uncle Andrew. I didn't mention. He talks of opening an eating-house just opposite Whitelaw.'

'Oh.'

The tone of this signified nothing more than curiosity.

'You don't see any reason why he shouldn't?'

Oliver delayed a little before replying.

'I suppose it wouldn't be very nice for you.'

'That's rather a mild way of putting it. It would mean that I should have to leave the College, and give up all my hopes.'

'I see,' returned the other, with slow apprehension.

There followed several minutes of silence. Then Godwin sat up in bed, as had always been his wont when he talked with earnestness at night.

'If you think I lost my temper without cause at suppertime, just remember that I had that blackguard before my mind, and that it isn't very pleasant to see you taking after that branch of our family.'

'Do you mean to say I am like uncle?'

'I mean to say that, if you are not careful, you won't be the kind of man I should like to see you. Do you know what is meant by inherited tendencies? Scientific men are giving a great deal of attention to such things nowadays. Children don't always take after their parents; very often they show a much stronger likeness to a grandfather, or an uncle, or even more distant relatives. Just think over this, and make up your mind to resist any danger of that sort. I tell you plainly that the habits you are getting into, and the people you make friends of, are detestable. For heaven's sake, spend more of your time in a rational way, and learn to despise the things that shopkeepers admire. Read! Force yourself to stick hard at solid books for two or three hours every day. If you don't, it's all up with you. I am speaking for your own good. Read, read, read!'

Quietness ensued. Then Oliver began to move uneasily in his bed, and at length his protest became audible.

'I can't see what harm I do.'

'No!' burst from his brother's lips, scornfully. 'And that's just your danger. Do you suppose I could sing nigger songs, and run about the town with shopboys, and waste hours over idiotic puzzles?'

'We're not all alike, and it wouldn't do for us to be.'

'It would do very well for us all to have brains and to use them. The life you lead is a brainless life, brainless and vulgar.'

'Well, if I haven't got brains, I can't help it,' replied Oliver, with sullen resignation.

'You have enough to teach you to live respectably, if only you look to the right kind of example.'

There followed a vehement exhortation, now angry, now in strain of natural kindness. To this Oliver made only a few brief and muttered replies; when it was all over, he fell asleep. But Godwin was wakeful for hours.

The next morning he attempted to work for his approaching examination, but with small result. It had begun to be very doubtful to him whether he should 'go up' at all, and this uncertainty involved so great a change in all his prospects that he could not command the mental calm necessary for study. After dinner he went out with unsettled purpose. He would gladly have conversed with Mr Gunnery, but the old people were just now on a stay with relatives in Bedfordshire, and their return might be delayed for another week. Perhaps it behoved him to go and see Mr. Moxey, but he was indisposed to visit the works, and if he went to the house this evening he would encounter the five daughters, who, like all women who did not inspire him with admiration, excited his bashful dislike. At length he struck off into the country and indulged restless thoughts in places where no one could observe him.

A result of the family's removal first from London to the farm, and then into Twybridge, was that Godwin had no friends of old standing. At Greenwich, Nicholas Peak formed no intimacies, nor did a single associate remain to him from the years of his growth and struggle; his wife, until the renewal of intercourse with her sister at Twybridge, had no society whatever beyond her home. A boy reaps advantage from the half parental kindness of men and women who have watched his growth from infancy; in general it affects him as a steadying influence, keeping before his mind the social bonds to which his behaviour owes allegiance. The only person whom Godwin regarded with feeling akin to this was Mr. Gunnery, but the geologist found no favour with Mrs. Peak, and thus he involuntarily helped to widen the gap between the young man and his relatives. Nor had the intimacies of school time supplied Godwin with friendships for the years to come; his Twybridge class-fellows no longer interested him, nor did they care to continue his acquaintance. One was articled to a solicitor; one was learning the drug-trade in his father's shop; another had begun to deal in corn; the rest were scattered about England, as students or salary-earners. The dominion of the commonplace had absorbed them, all and sundry; they were the stuff which destiny uses for its every-day purposes, to keep the world a-rolling.

So that Godwin had no ties which bound him strongly to any district. He could not call himself a Londoner; for, though born in Westminster, he had grown to consciousness on the outskirts of Greenwich, and remembered but dimly some of the London streets, and a few places of public interest to which his father had taken him. Yet, as a matter of course, it was to London that his ambition pointed, when he forecast the future. Where else could he hope for opportunity of notable advancement? At Twybridge? Impossible to find more than means of subsistence; his soul loathed such a prospect. At Kingsmill? There was a slender hope that he might establish a connection with Whitelaw College, if he devoted himself to laboratory work; but what could come of that—at all events for many years? London, then? The only acceptable plan for supporting himself there was to succeed in a Civil Service competition. That, indeed, seemed the most hopeful direction for his efforts; a government office might afford him scope, and, he had heard, would allow him abundant leisure.

Or to go abroad? To enter for the Indian clerkships, and possibly cleave a wider way than could be hoped in England? There was allurements in the suggestion; travel had always tempted his fancy. In that case he would be safely severed from the humble origin which in his native country might long be an annoyance, or even an obstacle; no Uncle Andrew could spring up at inconvenient moments in the middle of his path. Yes; this indeed might be best of all. He must send for papers, and give attention to the matter.

Musing in this way, he had come within sight of the familiar chemical works. It was near the hour at which Mr. Moxey was about to go home for his afternoon dinner; why not interrupt his walk, and have a word with him? That duty would be over.

He pushed on, and, as he approached the buildings, was aware of Mr Moxey stepping into the road, unaccompanied. Greetings speedily followed. The manufacturer, who was growing stout in his mellow years and looking more leisurely than when Godwin first knew him, beamed with smiles of approbation.

'Glad to see you; glad to see you! I have heard of your doings at College.'

'Nothing to boast of, Mr. Moxey.'

'Why, what would satisfy you? A nephew of mine was there last Friday, and tells me you carried off half a hundredweight of prizes. Here he comes, I see.'

There drew near a young man of about four-and-twenty, well-dressed, sauntering with a cane in his hand. His name was Christian Moxey.

'Much pleasure in meeting you, Mr. Peak,' he said, with a winning smile. 'I was at Whitelaw the other day, when you distinguished yourself, and if I had known then that you were an acquaintance of my uncle's I should have been tempted to offer a word of congratulation. Very glad indeed to meet you.'

Godwin, grateful as always for the show of kindness and flattered by such a reception, at once felt a liking for Christian Moxey. Most people would have admitted the young man's attractiveness. He had a thin and sallow face, and seemed to be of weak constitution. In talking he leant upon his cane, and his movements were languid; none the less, his person was distinguished by an air of graceful manhood. His features, separately considered, were ordinary enough; together they made a countenance of peculiar charm, vividly illumined, full of appeal to whosoever could appreciate emotional capabilities. The interest he excited in Peak appeared to be reciprocal, for his eyes dwelt as often and as long as possible on Godwin's features.

'Come along, and have something to eat with us,' said Mr. Moxey, in a tone of genial invitation. 'I daresay you had dinner long enough ago to have picked up a new appetite.'

Godwin had a perturbing vision of the five Miss Moxeys and of a dinner table, such as he was not used to sit at; he wished to decline, yet knew not how to do so with civility.

'Yes, yes; come along!' added his friend, heartily. 'Tell us something about your chemistry paper. Any posers this time? My nephew won't be out of it; he belongs to the firm of Bates Brothers—the Rotherhithe people, you know.'

This information was a surprise to Godwin. He had imagined Christian Moxey either a gentleman at large, or at all events connected with some liberal profession. Glancing at the attractive face, he met a singular look, a smile which suggested vague doubts. But Christian made no remark, and Mr. Moxey renewed his inquiries about the examination in chemistry.

The five daughters—all assembled in a homely sitting-room—were nothing less than formidable. Plain, soft-spoken, not ill educated, they seemed to live in perfect harmony, and to derive satisfaction from pursuits independent of external society. In the town they were seldom seen; few families called upon them; and only the most inveterate gossips found matter for small-talk in their retired lives. It had never been heard that any one of them was sought in marriage. Godwin, superfluously troubled about his attire, met them with grim endeavour at politeness; their gravity, a result of shyness, he misinterpreted, supposing them to hold aloof from a young man who had been in their father's employ. But before he could suffer much from the necessity of formal conversation the door opened to admit yet another young lady, a perfect stranger to him. Her age was about seventeen, but she had nothing of the sprightly grace proverbially connected with that time of life in girls; her pale and freckled visage expressed a haughty reserve, intensified as soon as her eye fell upon the visitor. She had a slight but well-proportioned figure, and a mass of auburn hair carelessly arranged.

'My sister,' said Christian, glancing at Godwin. 'Marcella, you recognise Mr. Peak.'

'Oh yes,' the girl replied, as she came forward, and made a sudden offer of her hand.

She too had been present the other day at Whitelaw. Her 'Oh yes' sounded offensive to Godwin, yet in shaking hands with her he felt a warm pressure, and it flattered him when he became aware that Marcella regarded him from time to time with furtive interest. Presently he learnt that Christian and his sister were on a short visit at the house of their relatives; their home was in London. Marcella had seated herself stiffly by a window, and seemed to pay more attention to the view without than to the talk which went on, until dinner was announced.

Speculating on all he saw, Godwin noticed that Christian Moxey showed a marked preference for the youngest of his cousins, a girl of eighteen, whose plain features were frequently brightened with a happy and very pleasant smile. When he addressed her (by the name of Janet) his voice had a playful kindness which must have been significant to everyone who heard it. At dinner, his place was by her side, and he attended to her with more than courtesy. This astonished Peak. He deemed it incredible that any man should conceive a tender feeling for a girl so far from beautiful. Constantly occupied with thought of sexual attachments, he had never imagined anything of the kind apart from loveliness of feature in the chosen object; his instincts were, in fact, revolted by the idea of love for such a person as Janet Moxey. Christian seemed to be degraded by such a suggestion. In his endeavour to solve the mystery, Godwin grew half unconscious of the other people about him.

Such play of the imaginative and speculative faculties accounts for the common awkwardness of intelligent young men in society that is strange to them. Only the cultivation of a double consciousness puts them finally at ease. Impossible to converse with suavity, and to heed the forms of ordinary good-breeding, when the brain is absorbed in all manner of new problems: one must learn to act a part, to control the facial mechanism, to observe and anticipate, even whilst the intellect is spending its sincere energy on subjects unavowed. The perfectly graceful man will always be he who has no strong apprehension either of his own personality or of that of others, who lives on the surface of things, who can be interested without emotion, and surprised without contemplative impulse. Never yet had Godwin Peak uttered a word that was worth listening to, or made a remark that declared his mental powers, save in most familiar colloquy. He was beginning to understand the various reasons of his seeming clownishness, but this very process of self-study opposed an obstacle to improvement.

When he found himself obliged to take part in conversation about Whitelaw College, Godwin was disturbed by an uncertainty which had never left his mind at rest during the past two years;—was it, or was it not, generally known to his Twybridge acquaintances that he studied as the pensioner of Sir Job Whitelaw? To outward seeming all delicacy had been exercised in the bestowal of Sir Job's benefaction. At the beginning of each academic session Mrs. Peak had privately received a cheque which represented the exact outlay in fees for the course her son was pursuing; payment was then made to the registrar as if from Peak himself. But Lady Whitelaw's sisters were in the secret, and was it likely that they maintained absolute discretion in talking with their Twybridge friends? There seemed, in the first instance, to be a tacit understanding that the whole affair should remain strictly private, and to Godwin himself, sensible enough of such refinements, it was by no means inconceivable that silence had been strictly preserved. He found no difficulty in imagining that Sir Job's right hand knew nothing of what the left performed, and it might be that the authorities of Whitelaw had no hint of his peculiar position. Still, he was perchance mistaken. The Professors perhaps regarded him as a sort of charity-boy, and Twybridge possibly saw him in the same light. The doubt flashed upon his mind while he was trying to eat and converse with becoming self-possession. He dug his heel into the carpet and silently cursed the burden of his servitude.

When the meal was over, Mr. Moxey led the way out into the garden. Christian walked apart with Janet: Godwin strolled about between his host and the eldest Miss Moxey, talking of he knew not what. In a short half-hour he screwed up his courage to the point of leave-taking. Marcella and three of her cousins had disappeared, so that the awkwardness of departure was reduced. Christian, who seemed to be in a very contented mood, accompanied the guest as far as the garden gate.

'What will be your special line of work when you leave Whitelaw?' he inquired. 'Your tastes seem about equally divided between science and literature.'

'I haven't the least idea what I shall do,' was Peak's reply.

'Very much my own state of mind when I came home from Zurich a year ago. But it had been taken for granted that I was preparing for business, so into business I went.' He laughed good-humouredly. 'Perhaps you will be drawn to London?'

'Yes—I think it likely,' Godwin answered, with an absent glance this way and that.

'In any case,' pursued the other, 'you'll be there presently for First B.A. Honours. Try to look in at my rooms, will you? I should be delighted to see you. Most of my day is spent in the romantic locality of Rotherhithe, but I get home about five o'clock, as a rule. Let me give you a card.'

'Thank you.'

'I daresay we shall meet somewhere about here before then. Of course you are reading hard, and haven't much leisure. I'm an idle dog, unfortunately. I should like to work, but I don't quite know what at. I suppose this is a transition time with me.'

Godwin tried to discover the implication of this remark. Had it any reference to Miss Janet Moxey? Whilst he stood in embarrassed silence, Christian looked about with a peculiar smile, and seemed on the point of indulging in further self-revelation; but Godwin of a sudden held out his hand for good-bye, and with friendly smiles they parted.

Peak was older than his years, and he saw in Christian one who might prove a very congenial associate, did but circumstances favour their intercourse. That was not very likely to happen, but the meeting at all events turned his thoughts to London once more.

His attempts to 'read' were still unfruitful. For one thing, the stress and excitement of the Whitelaw examinations had wearied him; it was characteristic of the educational system in which he had become involved that studious effort should be called for immediately after that frenzy of college competition. He ought now to have been 'sweating' at his London subjects. Instead of that, he procured works of general literature from a Twybridge library, and shut himself up with them in the garret bedroom.

A letter from Mr. Gunnery informed him that the writer would be home in a day or two. This return took place late one evening, and on the morrow Godwin set forth to visit his friend. On reaching the house, he learnt that Mr. Gunnery had suffered an accident which threatened serious results. Walking barefoot in his bedroom the night before, he had stepped upon the point of a large nail, and was now prostrate, enduring much pain. Two days elapsed before Godwin could be admitted; he then found the old man a mere shadow of his familiar self—bloodless, hollow-eyed.

'This is the kind of practical joke that Fate likes to play upon us!' the sufferer growled in a harsh, quaking voice, his countenance divided between genial welcome and surly wrath. 'It'll be the end of me. Pooh! who doesn't know that such a thing is fatal at my age? Blood-poisoning has fairly begun. I'd a good deal rather have broken my neck among honest lumps of old red sandstone. A nail! A damned Brummagem nail!—So you collared the first prize in geology, eh? I take that as a kindness, Godwin. You've got a bit beyond Figuiet and his *Deluge*, eh? His *Deluge*, bah!'

And he laughed discordantly. On the other side of the bed sat Mrs Gunnery, grizzled and feeble dame. Shaken into the last stage of senility by this alarm, she wiped tears from her flaccid cheeks, and moaned a few unintelligible words.

The geologist's forecast of doom was speedily justified. Another day bereft him of consciousness, and when, for a short while, he had rambled among memories of his youth, the end came. It was found that he had made a will, bequeathing his collections and scientific instruments to Godwin Peak: his books were to be sold for the benefit of the widow, who would enjoy an annuity purchased out of her husband's savings. The poor old woman, as it proved, had little need of income; on the thirteenth day after Mr. Gunnery's funeral, she too was borne forth from the house, and the faithful couple slept together.

To inherit from the dead was an impressive experience to Godwin. At the present stage of his development, every circumstance affecting him started his mind upon the quest of reasons, symbolisms, principles; the 'natural supernatural' had hold upon him, and ruled his thought whenever it was free from the spur of arrogant instinct. This tendency had been strengthened by the influence of his friend Earwaker, a young man of singularly complex personality, positive and analytic in a far higher degree than Peak, yet with a vein of imaginative vigour which seemed to befit quite a different order of mind. Godwin was not distinguished by originality in thinking, but his strongly featured character converted to uses of his own the intellectual suggestions he so rapidly caught from others. Earwaker's habit of reflection had much to do with the strange feelings awakened in Godwin when he transferred to his mother's house the cabinets which had been Mr. Gunnery's pride for thirty or forty years. Joy of possession was subdued in him by the conflict of metaphysical questionings.

Days went on, and nothing was heard of Uncle Andrew. Godwin tried to assure himself that he had been needlessly terrified; the eating-house project would never be carried out. Practically dismissing that anxiety, he brooded over his defeat by Chilvers, and thought with extreme reluctance of the year still to be spent at Whitelaw, probably a year of humiliation. In the meantime, should he or should he not present himself for his First B.A.? The five pound fee would be a most serious demand upon his mother's resources, and did the profit warrant it, was it really of importance to him to take a degree?

He lived as much as possible alone, generally avoiding the society of his relatives, save at meal times. A careless remark (not intentionally offensive) with reference to Mr. Cusse had so affronted Charlotte that she never spoke to him save in reply to a question. Godwin regretted the pain he had given, but could not bring himself to express this feeling, for a discussion would inevitably have disclosed all his mind concerning the draper's assistant. Oliver seemed to have forgiven his brother's reproaches, but no longer behaved with freedom when Godwin was present. For all this, the elder's irritation was often aroused by things he saw and heard; and at length—on a memorable Saturday afternoon—debate revived between them. Oliver, as his custom was, had attired himself sprucely for a visit to acquaintances, and a silk hat of the very newest fashion lay together with his gloves upon the table.

'What is this thing?' inquired Godwin, with ominous calm, as he pointed to the piece of head-gear.

'A hat, I suppose,' replied his brother.

'You mean to say you are going to wear that in the street?'

'And why not?'

Oliver, not venturing to raise his eyes, stared at the table-cloth indignantly.

'Can't you feel,' burst from the other, 'that it's a disgrace to buy and wear such a thing?'

'Disgrace! what's the matter with the hat? It's the fashionable shape.'

Godwin mastered his wrath, and turned contemptuously away. But Oliver had been touched in a sensitive place; he was eager to defend himself.

'I can't see what you're finding fault with,' he exclaimed. 'Everybody wears this shape.'

'And isn't that quite sufficient reason why anyone who respects himself should choose something as different as possible? Everybody! That is to say, all the fools in the kingdom. It's bad enough to follow when you can't help it, but to imitate asses gratuitously is the lowest depth of degradation. Don't you know that that is the meaning of vulgarity? How you can offer such an excuse passes my comprehension. Have you no self? Are you made, like this hat, on a pattern with a hundred thousand others?'

'You and I are different,' said Oliver, impatiently. 'I am content to be like other people.'

'And I would poison myself with vermin-killer if I felt any risk of such contentment! Like other people? Heaven forbid and forbend! Like other people? Oh, what a noble ambition!'

The loud passionate voice summoned Mrs. Peak from an adjacent room.

'Godwin! Godwin!' she remonstrated. 'Whatever is it? Why should you put yourself out so?'

She was a short and slender woman, with an air of gentility, independent of her badly made and long worn widow's dress. Self-possession marked her manner, and the even tones in which she spoke gave indication of a mild, perhaps an unemotional, temperament.

Oliver began to represent his grievance.

'What harm is there, if I choose to wear a hat that's in fashion? I pay for it out of my own'—

But he was interrupted by a loud visitor's knock at the front door, distant only a few paces. Mrs. Peak turned with a startled look. Godwin, dreading contact with friends of the family, strode upstairs. When the door was opened, there appeared the smiling countenance of Andrew Peak; he wore the costume of a traveller, and by his side stood a boy of ten, too plainly his son.

'Well, Grace!' was his familiar greeting, as the widow drew back. 'I told you you'd 'ev the pleasure of seem' me again before so very long. Godwin at 'ome with you, I s'pose? Thet you, Noll? 'Ow do, my bo-oy? 'Ere's yer cousin Jowey. Shike 'ands, Jowey bo-oy! Sorry I couldn't bring my old lady over this time, Grace; she sends her respects, as usual. 'Ow's Charlotte? Bloomin', I 'ope?'

He had made his way into the front parlour, dragging the youngster after him. Having deposited his handbag and umbrella on the sofa, he seated himself in the easy-chair, and began to blow his nose with vigour.

'Set down, Jowey; set down, bo-oy! Down't be afride of your awnt.'

'Oi ain't afride!' cried the youth, in a tone which supported his assertion.

Mrs. Peak trembled with annoyance and indecision. Andrew evidently meant to stay for some time, and she could not bring herself to treat him with plain discourtesy; but she saw that Oliver, after shaking hands in a very strained way, had abruptly left the room, and Godwin would be anything but willing to meet his uncle. When the name of her elder son was again mentioned she withdrew on the pretence of summoning him, and went up to his room. Godwin had heard the hateful voice, and was in profound disturbance.

'What does he say, mother?' he inquired anxiously. 'Anything about Kingsmill?'

'Not yet. Oh, I *do* so wish we could bring this connection to an end!'

It was the first time Mrs. Peak had uttered her sentiments so unreservedly.

'Then, shall I see him in private,' said Godwin, 'and simply let him know the truth?'

'I dread the thought of that, Godwin. He would very likely be coarse and violent. I must try to show him by my manner. Oliver has gone out, and when Charlotte comes home I'll tell her to keep out of sight. He has brought his boy. Suppose you don't come down at all? I might say you are too busy.'

'No, no; you shan't have to do it all alone. I'll come down with you. I must hear what he has to say.'

They descended. As soon as his nephew appeared, Andrew sprang up, and shouted joyfully:

'Well, Godwin, bo-oy! It's all settled! Got the bloomin' shop from next quarter dye! "Peak's Dinin' and Refreshment Rooms!" Jowey an' me was over there all yisterday—wasn't us, Jowey? Oh, it's immense!'

Godwin felt the blood buzz in his ears, and a hot choking clutch at his throat. He took his stand by the mantelpiece, and began to turn a little glass ornament round and round. Fate had spoken. On the instant, all his College life was far behind him, all his uneasiness regarding the next session was dispelled, and he had no more connection with Kingsmill.

Mrs. Peak had heard from Oliver of her brother-in-law's proposed undertaking. She had spoken of it with anxiety to Godwin, who merely shrugged his shoulders and avoided the topic, ashamed to dwell on the particulars of his shame. In hearing Andrew's announcement she had much ado to repress tears of vexation; silently she seated herself, and looked with pained countenance from uncle to nephew.

'Shall you make any changes in the place?' Godwin asked, carelessly.

'Shan't I, jest! It'll take a month to refit them eatin' rooms. I'm agoin' to do it proper—up to Dick! and I want your 'elp, my bo-oy. You an' me 'II jest write a bit of a circular—see? to send round to the big pots of the Collige, an' all the parents of the young fellers as we can get the addresses of—see?'

Even amid his pangs of mortification Godwin found himself pondering an intellectual question. Was his uncle wholly unconscious of the misery he was causing? Had it never occurred to him that the public proximity of an uneducated shopkeeping relative must be unwelcome to a lad who was distinguishing himself at Whitelaw College? Were that truly the case, then it would be unjust to regard Andrew resentfully; destiny alone was to blame. And, after all, the man might be so absorbed in his own interest, so strictly confined to the views of his own class, as never to have dreamt of the sensibilities he wounded. In fact, the shame excited by this prospect was artificial. Godwin had already felt that it was unworthy alike of a philosopher and of a high-minded man of the world. The doubt as to Andrew's state of mind, and this moral problem, had a restraining effect upon the young man's temper. A practical person justifies himself in wrath as soon as his judgment is at one with that of the multitude. Godwin, though his passions were of exceptional force, must needs refine, debate with himself points of abstract justice.

'I've been tellin' Jowey, Grace, as I 'ope he may turn out such another as Godwin 'ere. 'E'll go to Collige, will Jowey. Godwin, jest arst the bo-oy a question or two, will you? 'E ain't been doin' bad at 'is school. Jest put 'im through 'is pyces, as yer may sye. Stend up, Jowey, bo-oy.'

Godwin looked askance at his cousin, who stood with pert face, ready for any test.

'What's the date of William the Conqueror?' he asked, mechanically.

'Ow!' shouted the youth. 'Down't mike me larff! Zif I didn't know thet! Tensixsixtenightysivn, of course!'

The father turned round with an expression of such sincere pride that Godwin, for all his loathing, was obliged to smile.

'Jowey, jest sye a few verses of poitry; them as you learnt larst. 'E's good at poitry, is Jowey.'

The boy broke into fearsome recitation:

'The silly buckits *on* the deck That 'ed so long rem'ined, I dreamt as they was filled with jew, End when I awowk, it r'ined.'

Half-a-dozen verses were thus massacred, and the reciter stopped with the sudden jerk of a machine.

'Goes str'ight on, don't 'e, Grace?' cried the father, exultantly. 'Jowey ain't no fool. Know what he towld me the other day? Somethin' as I never knew, and shouldn't never 'ave thought of s'long as I lived. We was talkin' about jewellery, an' Jowey, 'e pops up all at wunst. "It's called jewellery," says 'e, "'cos it's mostly the Jews as sell it." Now, oo'd a thought o' that? But you see it's right as soon as you're towld, eh? Now ain't it right, Godwin?'

'No doubt,' was the dry answer.

'It never struck me,' murmured Mrs. Peak, who took her son's assent seriously, and felt that it was impossible to preserve an obstinate silence.

'E ain't no fool, ain't Jowey!' cried the parent. 'Wite till 'e gits to Collige. Godwin'll put us up to all the ins and outs. Plenty o' time for that; 'e'll often run over an' 'ev a bit o' dinner, and no need to talk about p'yment.'

'Do you stay in Twybridge to-night?' inquired Godwin, who had changed in look and manner, so that he appeared all but cheerful.

'No, we're on our w'y 'ome, is Jowey an' me. Jest thought we'd break the journey 'ere. We shall ketch the six-fifty hup.'

'Then you will have a cup of tea with us,' said Mrs. Peak, surprised at Godwin's transformation, but seeing that hospitality was now unavoidable.

Charlotte presently entered the house, and, after a private conversation with her mother, went to greet Andrew. If only to signify her contempt for Godwin's prejudices, Charlotte would have behaved civilly to the London uncle. In the end, Andrew took his leave in the friendliest possible way, repeating often that he would soon have the pleasure of entertaining Mrs. Peak and all her family at his new dining-rooms over against Whitelaw College.

CHAPTER IV

Immediately upon his uncle's departure, Godwin disappeared; Mrs. Peak caught only a glimpse of him as he went by the parlour window. In a short time Oliver came home, and, having learned what had happened, joined his mother and sister in a dull, intermittent conversation on the subject of Godwin's future difficulties.

'He won't go back to Whitelaw,' declared the lad. 'He said he wouldn't.'

'People must be above such false shame,' was Charlotte's opinion. 'I can't see that it will make the slightest difference in his position or his prospects.'

Whereupon her mother's patience gave way.

'Don't talk such nonsense, Charlotte! You understand perfectly well how serious it will be. I never knew anything so cruel.'

'I was never taught,' persisted the girl, with calm obstinacy, 'that one ought to be ashamed of one's relatives just because they are in a humble position.'

Oliver brought the tedious discussion to an end by clamouring for supper. The table was laid, and all were about to sit down when Godwin presented himself. To the general astonishment, he seemed in excellent spirits, and ate more heartily than usual. Not a word was spoken of Uncle Andrew, until Mrs. Peak and her elder son were left alone together; then Godwin remarked in a tone of satisfied decision:

'Of course, this is the end of my work at Whitelaw. We must make new plans, mother.'

'But how can we, dear? What will Lady Whitelaw say?'

'I have to think it out yet. In a day or two I shall very likely write a letter to Lady Whitelaw. There's no need, you know, to go talking about this in Twybridge. Just leave it to me, will you?'

'It's not a subject I care to talk about, you may be sure. But I do hope you won't do anything rash, Godwin.'

'Not I. To tell you the truth, I'm not at all sorry to leave. It was a mistake that I went in for the Arts course—Greek, and Latin, and so on, you know; I ought to have stuck to science. I shall go back to it now. Don't be afraid. I'll make a position for myself before long. I'll repay all you have spent on me.'

To this conclusion had he come. The process of mind was favoured by his defeat in all the Arts subjects; in that direction he could see only the triumphant Chilvers, a figure which disgusted him with Greeks, Romans, and all the ways of literature. As to his future efforts he was by no means clear, but it eased him greatly to have cast off a burden of doubt; his theorising intellect loved the sensation of life thrown open to new, however vague, possibilities. At present he was convinced that Andrew Peak had done him a service. In this there was an indication of moral cowardice, such as commonly connects itself with intense pride of individuality. He desired to shirk the combat with Chilvers, and welcomed as an excuse for doing so the shame which another temper would have stubbornly defied.

Now he would abandon his B.A. examination,—a clear saving of money. Presently it might suit him to take the B.Sc. instead; time enough to think of that. Had he but pursued the Science course from the first, who at Whitelaw could have come out ahead of him? He had wasted a couple of years which might have been most profitably applied: by this time he might have been ready to obtain a position as demonstrator in some laboratory, on his way perhaps to a professorship. How had he thus been led astray? Not only had his boyish instincts moved strongly towards science, but was not the tendency of the age in the same direction? Buckland Warricombe, who habitually declaimed against classical study, was perfectly right; the world had learned all it could from those hoary teachers, and must now turn to Nature. On every hand, the future was with students of the laws of matter. Often, it was true, he had been tempted by the thought of a literary career; he had written in verse and prose, but with small success. An attempt to compose the Prize Poem was soon abandoned in

discouragement; the essay he sent in had not been mentioned. These honours had fallen to Earwaker, with whom it was not easy to compete on such ground. No, he was not born a man of letters. But in science, granted fair opportunity, he might make a name. He might, and he would!

On the morrow, splendour of sunshine drew him forth to some distance from the town. He went along the lanes singing; now it was holiday with him, and for the first time he could enjoy the broad golden daylight, the genial warmth. In a hollow of grassy fields, where he least expected to encounter an acquaintance, it was his chance to come upon Christian Moxey, stretched at full length in the company of nibbling sheep. Since the dinner at Mr. Moxey's, he had neither seen nor heard of Christian, who, it seemed probable, was back at his work in Rotherhithe. As their looks met, both laughed.

'I won't get up,' said Christian; 'the effort would be too great. Sit down and let us have a talk.'

'I disturb your thoughts,' answered Godwin.

'A most welcome disturbance; they weren't very pleasant just then. In fact, I have come as far as this in the hope of escaping them. I'm not much of a walker, are you?'

'Well, yes, I enjoy a good walk.'

'You are of an energetic type,' said Christian, musingly. 'You will do something in life. When do you go up for Honours?'

'I have decided not to go in at all.'

'Indeed; I'm sorry to hear that.'

'I have half made up my mind not to return to Whitelaw.'

Observing his hearer's look of surprise, Godwin asked himself whether it signified a knowledge of his footing at Whitelaw. The possibility of this galled him; but it was such a great step to have declared, as it were in public, an intention of freeing himself, that he was able to talk on with something of aggressive confidence.

'I think I shall go in for some practical work of a scientific kind. It was a mistake for me to pursue the Arts course.'

Christian looked at him earnestly.

'Are you sure of that?'

'Yes, I feel sure of it.'

There was silence. Christian beat the ground with his stick.

'Your state of mind, then,' he said at length, 'is more like my own than I imagined. I, too, have wavered for a long time between literature and science, and now at last I have quite decided—quite—that scientific study is the only safe line for me. The fact is, a man must concentrate himself. Not only for the sake of practical success, but—well, for his own sake.'

He spoke lazily, dreamily, propped upon his elbow, seeming to watch the sheep which panted at a few yards from him.

'I have no right,' he pursued, with a shadow of kindly anxiety on his features, 'to offer you advice, but—well, if you will let me insist on what I have learned from my own experience. There's nothing like having a special line of work and sticking to it vigorously. I, unfortunately, shall never do anything of any account,—but I know so well the conflict between diverging tastes. It has played the deuce with me, in all sorts of ways. At Zurich I utterly wasted my time, and I've done no better since I came back to England. Don't think me presumptuous. I only mean—well, it is so important to—to go ahead in one line.'

His air of laughing apology was very pleasant. Godwin felt his heart open to the kind fellow.

'No one needs the advice more than I,' he replied. 'I am going back to the line I took naturally when I first began to study at all.'

'But why leave Whitelaw?' asked Christian, gently.

'Because I dislike it—I can't tell you why.'

With ready tact Moxey led away from a subject which he saw was painful.

'Of course there are many other places where one can study just as well.'

'Do you know anything of the School of Mines in London?' Godwin inquired, abruptly.

'I worked there myself for a short time.'

'Then you could tell me about the—the fees, and so on?'

Christian readily gave the desired information, and the listener mused over it.

'Have you any friends in London?' Moxey asked, at length.

'No. But I don't think that matters. I shall work all the harder.' 'Perhaps so,' said the other, with some hesitation. And he added thoughtfully, 'It depends on one's temperament. Doesn't answer to be too much alone—I speak for myself at all events. I know very few people in London—very few that I care anything about. That, in fact, is one reason why I am staying here longer than I intended.' He seemed to speak rather to himself than to Godwin; the half-smile on his lips expressed a wish to disclose circumstances and motives which were yet hardly a suitable topic in a dialogue such as this. 'I like the atmosphere of a—of a comfortable home. No doubt I should get on better—with things in general—if I had a home of my own. I live in lodgings, you know; my sister lives with friends. Of course one has a sense of freedom, but then'—

His voice murmured off into silence, and again he beat the ground with his cane. Godwin was strongly interested in this broken revelation; he found it difficult to understand Moxey's yearning for domesticity, all his own impulses leading towards quite a contrary ideal. To him, life in London lodgings made rich promise; that indeed would be freedom, and full of all manner of high possibilities!

Each communed with his thoughts. Happening to glance at Christian, Godwin was struck with the graceful attitude in which the young man reclined; he himself squatted awkwardly on the grass, unable to abandon himself in natural repose, even as he found it impossible to talk with the ease of unconsciousness. The contrast, too, between his garments, his boots, and those of the Londoner was painful enough to him. Without being a dandy, Christian, it was evident, gave a good deal of thought to costume. That kind of thing had always excited Godwin's contempt, but now he confessed himself envious; doubtless, to be well dressed was a great step towards the finished ease of what is called a gentlemanly demeanour, which he knew he was very far from having attained.

'Well,' exclaimed Christian, unexpectedly, 'if I can be of ever so little use to you, pray let me. I must get back to town in a few days, but you know my address. Write to me, I beg, if you wish for any more information.'

The talk turned to less difficult topics. Godwin made inquiries about Zurich, then about Switzerland in general.

'Did you see much of the Alps?'

'Not as a climber sees them. That sort of thing isn't in my way; I haven't the energy—more's the pity. Would you like to see a lot of good photographs I brought back? I have them here; brought them to show the girls.'

In spite of the five Miss Moxeys and Christian's sister, Peak accepted the invitation to walk back with his companion, and presently they began to stroll towards Twybridge.

'I have an absurd tendency to dream—to lose myself amid ideals—I don't quite know how to express it,' Christian resumed, when both had been silent for some minutes. 'That's why I mean to go in earnestly for science—as a corrective. Fortunately, I have to work for my living; otherwise, I should moon my life away—no doubt. My sister has ten times as much energy—she knows much more than I do already. What a splendid thing it is to be of an independent character! I had rather be a self-reliant coal-heaver than a millionaire of uncertain will. My uncle—there's a man who knows his own mind. I respect those strong practical natures. Don't be misled by ideals. Make the most of your circumstances. Don't aim at—but I beg your pardon; I don't know what right I have to lecture you in this way.' And he broke off with his pleasant, kind-hearted laugh, colouring a little.

They reached Mr. Moxey's house. In a garden chair on the lawn sat Miss Janet, occupied with a book. She rose to meet them, shook hands with Godwin, and said to her cousin:

'The postman has just left a letter for you—forwarded from London.'

'Indeed? I'm going to show Mr. Peak my Swiss photographs. You wouldn't care to come and help me in the toil of turning them over?'

'O lazy man!'

Her laugh was joyous. Any one less prejudiced than Peak would have recognised the beauty which transformed her homely features as she met Christian's look.

On the hall table lay the letter of which Janet had spoken. Christian took it up, and Godwin, happening at that moment to observe him, caught the tremor of a sudden emotion on lip and eyelid. Instantly, prompted by he knew not what perception, he turned his gaze to Janet, and in time to see that she also was aware of her cousin's strong interest in the letter, which was at once put away in Christian's pocket.

They passed into the sitting-room, where a large portfolio stood against the back of a chair. The half-hour which ensued was to Godwin a time of uneasiness. His pleasure in the photographs suffered disturbance from a subtle stress on his nerves, due to something indeterminable in the situation, of which he formed a part. Janet's merry humour seemed to be subdued. Christian was obviously forcing himself to entertain the guest whilst his thoughts were elsewhere. As soon as possible, Godwin rose to depart. He was just saying good-bye to Janet, when Marcella entered the room. She stood still, and Christian said, hurriedly:

'It's possible, Marcella, that Mr. Peak will be coming to London before long. We may have the pleasure of seeing him there.'

'You will be glad, I'm sure,' answered his sister. Then, as if forcing herself to address Peak directly, she faced to him and added, 'It isn't easy to find sympathetic companions.'

'I, at all events, haven't found very many,' Godwin replied, meaning to speak in a tone only half-serious, but conscious at once that he had made what might seem an appeal for sympathy. Thereupon his pride revolted, and in a moment drove him from the room.

Christian followed, and at the front door shook hands with him. Nervous impatience was unmistakable in the young man's look and words. Again Godwin speculated on the meaning of this, and wondered, in connection therewith, what were the characteristics which Marcella Moxey looked for in a 'sympathetic companion'.

CHAPTER V

In the course of the afternoon, Godwin sat down to pen the rough draft of a letter to Lady Whitelaw. When the first difficulties were surmounted, he wrote rapidly, and at considerable length. It was not easy, at his time of life, to compress into the limits of an ordinary epistle all he wished to say to the widow of his benefactor. His purpose was, with all possible respect yet as firmly as might be, to inform Lady Whitelaw that he could not spend the last of his proposed three years at the College in Kingsmill, and furthermore to request of her that she would permit his using the promised sum of money as a student at the Royal School of Mines. This had to be done without confession of the reasons for his change of plan; he could not even hint at them. Yet cause must be assigned, and the best form of words he could excogitate ran thus: 'Family circumstances render it desirable—almost necessary—that I should spend the next twelve months in London. In spite of sincere reluctance to leave Whitelaw College, I am compelled to take this step.' The lady must interpret that as best she might. Very hard indeed was the task of begging a continuance of her bounty under these changed conditions. Could he but have resigned the money, all had been well; his tone might then have been dignified without effort. But such disinterestedness he could not afford. His mother might grant him money enough barely to live upon until he discovered means of support—for his education she was unable to pay. After more than an hour's work he had moderately satisfied himself; indeed, several portions of the letter struck him as well composed, and he felt that they must heighten the reader's interest in him. With an author's pleasure (though at the same time with much uneasiness) he perused the appeal again and again.

Late in the evening, when he was alone with his mother, he told her what he had done, and read the letter for her opinion. Mrs. Peak was gravely troubled.

'Lady Whitelaw will ask her sisters for an explanation,' she said.

'I have thought of that,' Godwin replied, with the confident, cheerful air he had assumed from the first. 'If the Miss Lumbs go to aunt, she must be prepared to put them off in some way. But look here, mother, when uncle has opened his shop, it's pretty certain that some one or other will hit on the true explanation of my disappearance. Let them. Then Lady Whitelaw will understand and forgive me.'

After much musing, the mother ventured a timid question, the result of her anxieties rather than of her judgment on the point at issue.

'Godwin, dear, are you quite sure that his shop would make so much difference?'

The young man gave a passionate start.

'What! To have the fellows going there to eat, and hearing his talk, and—? Not for a day could I bear it! Not for an hour!'

He was red with anticipated shame, and his voice shook with indignation at the suggested martyrdom. Mrs. Peak dried a tear.

'You would be so alone in London, Godwin.'

'Not a bit of it. Young Mr. Moxey will be a useful friend, I am convinced he will. To tell you the whole truth, I aim at getting a place at the works in Rotherhithe, where he no doubt has influence. You see, mother, I might manage it even before the end of the year. Our Mr. Moxey will be disposed to help me with his recommendation.'

'But, my dear, wouldn't it come to the same thing, then, if you went back to Mr. Moxey's?'

He made a gesture of impatience.

'No, no, no! I couldn't live at Twybridge. I have my way to make, mother, and the place for that is London. You know I am ambitious. Trust me for a year or two, and see the result. I depend upon your help in this whole affair. Don't refuse it me. I have done with Whitelaw, and I have done with Twybridge: now comes London. You can't regard me as a boy, you know.'

'No—but'—

'But me no buts!' he cried, laughing excitedly. 'The thing is settled. As soon as possible in the morning I post this letter. I feel it will be successful. See aunt to-morrow, and get her support. Mind that Charlotte and Oliver don't talk to people. If you all use discretion, there's no need for any curiosity to be excited.'

When Godwin had taken a resolve, there was no domestic influence strong enough to prevent his acting upon it. Mrs. Peak's ignorance of the world, her mild passivity, and the faith she had in her son's intellectual resources, made her useless as a counsellor, and from no one else—now that Mr. Gunnery was dead—would the young man have dreamt of seeking guidance. Whatever Lady Whitelaw's reply, he had made up his mind to go to London. Should his subsidy be refused, then he would live on what his mother could allow him until—probably with the aid of Christian Moxey—he might obtain a salaried position. The letter was despatched, and with feverish impatience he awaited a reply.

Nine days passed, and he heard nothing. Half that delay sufficed to bring out all the self-tormenting capacities of a nature such as his. To his mother's conjectural explanations he could lend no ear. Doubtless Lady Whitelaw (against whom, for subtle reasons, he was already prejudiced) had taken offence; either she would not reply at all, or presently there would come a few lines of polite displeasure, intimating her disinclination to aid his project. He silently raged against 'the woman'. Her neglect was insolence. Had she not delicacy enough to divine the anxiety natural to one in his dependent position? Did she take him for an every-day writer of mendicant appeals? His pride fed upon the outrage and became fierce.

Then arrived a small glossy envelope, containing a tiny sheet of very thick note-paper, whereon it was written that Lady Whitelaw regretted her tardiness in replying to him (caused by her absence from home), and hoped he would be able to call upon her, at ten o'clock next morning, at the house of her sisters, the Misses Lumb, where she was stopping for a day—she remained his sincerely.

Having duly contorted this note into all manner of painful meanings, Godwin occupied an hour in making himself presentable (scornful that he should deem such trouble necessary), and with furiously beating heart set out to walk through Twybridge. Arrived at the house, he was led by a servant into the front room on the ground floor, where Lady Whitelaw, alone, sat reading a newspaper. Her features were of a very common order, and nothing distinguished her from middle-aged women of average refinement; she had chubby hands, rather broad shoulders, and no visible waist. The scrutiny she bestowed upon her visitor was close. To Godwin's feelings it too much resembled that with which she would have received an applicant for the post of footman. Yet her smile was friendly enough, and no lack of civility appeared in the repetition of her excuses for having replied so late.

'Let us talk about this,' she began, when Godwin was uneasily seated. (She spoke with an excess of precision, as though it had at one time been needful for her to premeditate polished phrases.) 'I am very sorry you should have to think of quitting the College; very sorry indeed. You are one of the students who do honour to the institution.'

This was pleasant, and Godwin felt a regret of the constraint that was upon him. In his endeavour not to display a purring smile, he looked grim, as if the compliment were beneath his notice.

'Pray don't think,' she pursued, 'that I wish you to speak more fully about the private circumstances you refer to in your letter. But do let me ask you: Is your decision final? Are you sure that when the vacations are over you will see things just as you do now?'

'I am quite sure of it,' he replied.

The emphasis was merely natural to him. He could not so govern his voice as to convey the respectful regret which at this moment he felt. A younger lady, one who had heightened the charm of her compliment with subtle harmony of tones and strongly feminine gaze, would perhaps have elicited from him a free confession. Gratitude and admiration would have made him capable of such frankness. But in the face of this newspaper-reading woman (yes, he had unaccountably felt it jar

upon him that a lady should be reading a newspaper), under her matronly smile, he could do no more than plump out his 'quite sure'. To Lady Whitelaw it sounded altogether too curt; she was conscious of her position as patroness, and had in fact thought it likely that the young man would be disposed to gratify her curiosity in some measure.

'I can only say that I am sorry to hear it,' fell from her tightened lips, after a moment's pause.

Instantly Godwin's pride expelled the softer emotion. He pressed hard with his feet upon the floor, every nerve in his body tense with that distressing passion peculiar to the shyly arrogant. Regard him, and you had imagined he was submitting to rebuke for an offence he could not deny.

Lady Whitelaw waited. A minute, almost, and Peak gave no sign of opening his mouth.

'It is certainly much to be regretted,' she said at length, coolly. 'Of course, I don't know what prospects you may have in London, but, if you had remained at the College, something advantageous would no doubt have offered before long.'

There went small tact to the wording of this admonition. Impossible for Lady Whitelaw to understand the complexities of a character such as Godwin's, even had she enjoyed opportunities of studying it; but many a woman of the world would have directed herself more cautiously after reading that letter of his. Peak's impulse was to thank her for the past, and declare that henceforth he would dispense with aid; only the choking in his throat obstructed some such utterance. He resented profoundly her supposition (natural enough) that his chief aim was to establish himself in a self-supporting career. What? Am I to be grateful for a mere chance of earning my living? Have I not shown that I am capable of something more than the ordinary lot in life? From the heights of her assured independence, does she look down upon me as a young man seeking a 'place'? He was filled with wrath, and all because a good, commonplace woman could not divine that he dreamt of European fame.

'I am very sorry that I can't take that into account,' he managed to say. 'I wish to give this next year exclusively to scientific study, and after that I shall see what course is open to me.'

He was not of the men who can benefit by patronage, and be simply grateful for it. His position was a false one: to be begging with awkward show of thankfulness for a benefaction which in his heart he detested. He knew himself for an undesigning hypocrite, and felt that he might as well have been a rascal complete. Gratitude! No man capable of it in fuller measure than he; but not to such persons as Lady Whitelaw. Before old Sir Job he could more easily have bowed himself. But this woman represented the superiority of mere brute wealth, against which his soul rebelled.

There was another disagreeable silence, during which Lady Whitelaw commented on her protege very much as Mrs. Warricombe had done.

'Will you allow me to ask,' she said at length, with cold politeness, 'whether you have acquaintances in London?'

'Yes. I know some one who studied at the School of Mines.'

'Well, Mr. Peak, I see that your mind is made up. And no doubt you are the best judge of your private circumstances. I must ask you to let me think over the matter for a day or two. I will write to you.'

'And I to you,' thought Godwin; a resolve which enabled him to rise with something like a conventional smile, and thus put an end to a very brief and quite unsatisfactory interview.

He strode homewards in a state of feverish excitement. His own behaviour had been wretchedly clownish; he was only too well aware of that. He ought to have put aside all the grosser aspects of his case, and have exhibited the purely intellectual motives which made such a change as he purposed seem desirable to him. That would have been to act with dignity; that would have been the very best form of gratitude for the kindness he had received. But no, his accursed lack of self-possession had ruined all. 'The woman was now offended in good earnest; he saw it in her face at parting. The fault was admittedly on his side, but what right had she to talk about 'something advantageous'? She would write to him, to be sure; that meant, she could not yet make up her mind whether to grant the money

or not. Pluto take the money! Long before sitting down to her glossy note-paper she should have received a letter from *him*.

Composed already. Now he was up in the garret bedroom, scribbling as fast as pen could fly over paper. He had been guilty of a mistake—so ran the epistle; having decided to leave Whitelaw, he ought never to have requested a continuance of the pension. He begged Lady Whitelaw would forgive this thoughtless impropriety; she had made him understand the full extent of his error. Of course he could not accept anything more from her. As for the past, it would be idle for him to attempt an expression of his indebtedness. But for Sir Job's munificence, he must now have been struggling to complete a radically imperfect education,—'instead of going into the world to make a place for myself among the scientific investigators of our time'.

One's claims to respectful treatment must be put forward unmistakably, especially in dealing with such people as Lady Whitelaw. Now, perhaps, she would understand what his reserve concealed. The satisfaction of declining further assistance was enormous. He read his letter several times aloud. This was the great style; he could imagine this incident forming a landmark in the biography of a notable man. Now for a fair copy, and in a hand, mind you, that gave no hint of his care for caligraphic seemliness: bold, forthright.

The letter in his pocket, he went downstairs. His mother had been out all the morning; now she was just returned, and Godwin saw trouble on her forehead. Anxiously she inquired concerning the result of his interview.

Now that it was necessary to make an intelligible report of what had happened, Godwin found his tongue falter. How could he convey to another the intangible sense of wounded dignity which had impelled his pen? Instead of producing the letter with a flourish, he answered with affected carelessness:

'I am to hear in a day or two.'

'Did she seem to take it—in the right way?'

'She evidently thinks of me too much as a schoolboy.'

And he began to pace the room. Mrs. Peak sat still, with an air of anxious brooding.

'You don't think she will refuse, Godwin?' fell from her presently.

His hand closed on the letter.

'Why? Well, in that case I should go to London and find some occupation as soon as possible. You could still let me have the same money as before?'

'Yes.'

It was said absently, and did not satisfy Godwin. In the course of the conversation it appeared that Mrs. Peak had that morning been to see the legal friend who looked after her small concerns, and though she would not admit that she had any special cause for uneasiness, her son recalled similar occasions when an interview with Mr. Dutch had been followed by several days' gloom. The truth was that Mrs. Peak could not live strictly within the income at her disposal, and on being from time to time reminded of this, she was oppressed by passing worry. If Godwin and Oliver 'got on well,' things would come all right in the end, but in the meantime she could not face additional expenditure. Godwin did not like to be reminded of the razor's edge on which the affairs of the household were balanced. At present it brought about a very sudden change in his state of mind; he went upstairs again, and sat with the letter before him, sunk in misery. The reaction had given him a headache.

A fortnight, and no word from Lady Whitelaw. But neither was Godwin's letter posted.

Was he at liberty to indulge the self-respect which urged him to write? In a moment of heated confidence it was all very well to talk of 'getting some occupation' in London, but he knew that this might prove no easy matter. A year's work at the School of Mines would decidedly facilitate his endeavour; and, seeing that his mother's peace depended upon his being speedily self-supporting, was it not a form of selfishness to reject help from one who could well afford it? From a distance, he regarded Lady Whitelaw with more charity; a longer talk with her might have led to better mutual

apprehension. And, after all, it was not she but her husband to whom he would stand indebted. Sir Job was a very kind-hearted old fellow; he had meant thoroughly well. Why, clearly, the bestower of this third year's allowance would not be Lady Whitelaw at all.

If it were granted. Godwin began to suffer a troublesome misgiving; perchance he had gone too far, and was now, in fact, abandoned to his own resources.

Three weeks. Then came the expected letter, and, as he opened it, his heart leaped at the sight of a cheque—talisman of unrivalled power over the emotions of the moneyless! Lady Whitelaw wrote briefly and formally. Having considered Godwin's request, she had no reason for doubting that he would make a good use of the proposed year at the School of Mines, and accordingly she sent him the sum which Sir Job had intended for his final session at Whitelaw College. She wished him all benefit from his studies, and prosperity henceforth.

Rejoicing, though shame-smitten, Godwin exhibited this remittance to his mother, from whom it drew a deep sigh of relief. And forthwith he sat down to write quite a different letter from that which still lay in his private drawer,—a letter which he strove to make the justification (to his own mind) of this descent to humility. At considerable length he dwelt upon the change of tastes of which he had been conscious lately, and did not fail to make obvious the superiority of his ambition to all thought of material advancement. He offered his thanks, and promised to give an account of himself (as in duty bound) at the close of the twelvemonths' study he was about to undertake: a letter in which the discerning would have read much sincerity, and some pathos; after all, not a letter to be ashamed of. Lady Whitelaw would not understand it; but then, how many people are capable of even faintly apprehending the phenomena of mental growth?

And now to plan seriously his mode of life in London. With Christian Moxey he was so slightly acquainted that it was impossible to seek his advice with regard to lodgings; besides, the lodgings must be of a character far too modest to come within Mr. Moxey's sphere of observation. Other acquaintance he had none in the capital, so it was clear that he must enter boldly upon the unknown world, and find a home for himself as best he might. Mrs. Peak could offer suggestions as to likely localities, and this was of course useful help. In the meantime (for it would be waste of money to go up till near the end of the holiday season) he made schemes of study and completed his information concerning the School of Mines. So far from lamenting the interruption of his promising career at Whitelaw, he persuaded himself that Uncle Andrew had in truth done him a very good turn: now at length he was fixed in the right course. The only thing he regretted was losing sight of his two or three student-friends, especially Earwaker and Buckland Warricombe. They, to be sure, would soon guess the reason of his disappearance. Would they join in the laughter certain to be excited by 'Peak's Dining and Refreshment Rooms'? Probably; how could they help it? Earwaker might be superior to a prejudice of that kind; his own connections were of humble standing. But Warricombe must wince and shrug his shoulders. Perhaps even some of the Professors would have their attention directed to the ludicrous mishap: they were gentlemen, and, even though they smiled, must certainly sympathise with him.

Wait a little. Whitelaw College should yet remember the student who seemed to have vanished amid the world's obscure tumult.

Resolved that he was about to turn his back on Twybridge for ever, he found the conditions of life there quite supportable through this last month or two; the family reaped benefit from his improved temper. Even to Mr. Cusse he behaved with modified contempt. Oliver was judicious enough to suppress his nigger minstrelsy and kindred demonstrations of spirit in his brother's presence, and Charlotte, though steadily resentful, did her best to avoid conflict.

Through the Misses Lumb, Godwin's change of purpose had of course become known to his aunt, who for a time took it ill that these debates had been concealed from her. When Mrs. Peak, in confidence, apprised her of the disturbing cause, Miss Cadman's indignation knew no bounds. What! That low fellow had been allowed to interfere with the progress of Godwin Peak's education, and

not a protest uttered? He should have been *forbidden* to establish himself in Kingsmill! Why had they not taken *her* into council? She would have faced the man, and have overawed him; he should have been made to understand the gross selfishness of his behaviour. Never had she heard of such a monstrous case—

Godwin spent much time in quiet examination of the cabinets bequeathed to him by Mr. Gunnery. He used a pound or two of Lady Whitelaw's money for the purchase of scientific books, and set to work upon them with freshened zeal. The early morning and late evening were given to country walks, from which he always returned with brain excited by the forecast of great achievements.

When the time of his departure approached, he decided to pay a farewell visit to Mr. Moxey. He chose an hour when the family would probably be taking their ease in the garden. Three of the ladies were, in fact, amusing themselves with croquet, while their father, pipe in mouth, bent over a bed of calceolarias.

'What's this that I hear?' exclaimed Mr. Moxey, as he shook hands. 'You are not going back to Whitelaw?'

The story had of course spread among all Twybridge people who knew anything of the Peaks, and it was generally felt that some mystery was involved. Godwin had reasonably feared that his obligations to Sir Job Whitelaw must become known; impossible for such a matter to be kept secret; all who took any interest in the young man had long been privately acquainted with the facts of his position. Now that discussion was rife, it would have been prudent in the Misses Lumb to divulge as much of the truth as they knew, but (in accordance with the law of natural perversity) they maintained a provoking silence. Hence whispers and suspicious questions, all wide of the mark. No one had as yet heard of Andrew Peak, and it seemed but too likely that Lady Whitelaw, for some good reason, had declined to discharge the expenses of Godwin's last year at the College.

Mr. Moxey himself felt that an explanation was desirable, but he listened with his usual friendly air to Godwin's account of the matter—which of course included no mention of Lady Whitelaw.

'Have you friends in London?' he inquired—like everyone else.

'No. Except that your nephew was so kind as to ask me to call on him, if ever I happened to be there.'

There passed over Mr. Moxey's countenance a curious shadow. Godwin noticed it, and at once concluded that the manufacturer condemned Christian for undue advances to one below his own station. The result of this surmise was of course a sudden coldness on Godwin's part, increased when he found that Mr. Moxey turned to another subject, without a word about his nephew.

In less than ten minutes he offered to take leave, and no one urged him to stay longer. Mr. Moxey made sober expression of good wishes, and hoped he might hear that the removal to London had proved 'advantageous'. This word sufficed to convert Godwin's irritation into wrath; he said an abrupt 'good-evening', raised his hat as awkwardly as usual, and stalked away.

A few paces from the garden gate, he encountered Miss Janet Moxey, just coming home from walk or visit. Another grab at his hat, and he would have passed without a word, but the girl stopped him.

'We hear that you are going to London, Mr. Peak.'

'Yes, I am, Miss Moxey.'

She examined his face, and seemed to hesitate.

'Perhaps you have just been to say good-bye to father?'

'Yes.'

Janet paused, looked away, again turned her eyes upon him.

'You have friends there, I hope?' she ventured.

'No, I have none.'

'My cousin—Christian, you remember—would, I am sure, be very glad to help you in any way.' Her voice sank, and at the same time she coloured just perceptibly under Godwin's gaze.

'So he assured me,' was the reply. 'But I must learn to be independent, Miss Moxey.'

Whereupon Godwin performed a salute, and marched forward.

His boxes were packed, and now he had but one more evening in the old home. It was made less pleasant than it might have been by a piece of information upon which he by chance alighted in a newspaper. The result of the Honours examination for the First B.A. at London had just been made known, and in two subjects a high place was assigned to Bruno Leathwaite Chilvers—not the first place happily, but it was disagreeable enough.

Pooh! what matter? What are academic successes? Ten years hence, which name would have wider recognition—Bruno Chilvers or Godwin Peak? He laughed with scornful superiority.

No one was to accompany him to the station; on that he insisted. He had decided for as early a train as possible, that the dolours of leave-taking might be abridged. At a quarter to eight the cab drove up to the door. Out with the trunks labelled 'London'!

'Take care of the cabinets!' were his last words to his mother. 'I may want to have them sent before long.'

He implied, what he had not ventured to say plainly, that he was leaving Twybridge for good, and henceforth would not think of it as home. In these moments of parting, he resented the natural feeling which brought moisture to his eyes. He hardened himself against the ties of blood, and kept repeating to himself a phrase in which of late he had summed his miseries: 'I was born in exile—born in exile.' Now at length had he set forth on a voyage of discovery, to end perchance in some unknown land among his spiritual kith and kin.

Part II

CHAPTER I

In the spring of 1882 Mr. Jarvis Runcorn, editor and co-proprietor of the London *Weekly Post*, was looking about for a young man of journalistic promise whom he might associate with himself in the conduct of that long established Radical paper. The tale of his years warned him that he could not hope to support much longer a burden which necessarily increased with the growing range and complexity of public affairs. Hitherto he had been the autocrat of the office, but competing Sunday papers exacted an alertness, a versatile vigour, such as only youth can supply; for there was felt to be a danger that the *Weekly Post* might lose its prestige in democratic journalism. Thus on the watch, Mr. Runcorn—a wary man of business, who had gone through many trades before he reached that of weekly literature—took counsel one day with a fellow-campaigner, Malkin by name, who owned two or three country newspapers, and had reaped from them a considerable fortune; in consequence, his attention was directed to one John Earwaker, then editing the *Wattleborough Courier*. Mr. Malkin's eldest son had recently stood as Liberal candidate for Wattleborough, and though defeated was loud in his praise of the *Courier*; with its editor he had come to be on terms of intimate friendship. Earwaker was well acquainted with journalistic life in the provinces. He sprang from a humble family living at Kingsmill, had studied at Whitelaw College, and was now but nine-and-twenty: the style of his 'leaders' seemed to mark him for a wider sphere of work. It was decided to invite him to London, and the young man readily accepted Mr. Runcorn's proposals. A few months later he exchanged temporary lodgings for chambers in Staple Inn, where he surrounded himself with plain furniture and many books.

In personal appearance he had changed a good deal since that prize-day at Whitelaw when his success as versifier and essayist foretold a literary career. His figure was no longer ungainly; the big head seemed to fit better upon the narrow shoulders. He neither walked with extravagant paces, nor waved his arms like a windmill. A sufficiency of good food, and the habit of intercourse with active men; had given him an every-day aspect; perhaps the sole peculiarity he retained from student times was his hollow chuckle of mirth, a laugh which struggled vainly for enlargement. He dressed with conventional decency, even submitting to the chimney-pot hat. His features betrayed connection with a physically coarse stock; but to converse with him was to discover the man of original vigour and wide intellectual scope. With ordinary companions, it was a rare thing for him to speak of his professional interests. But for his position on *The Weekly Post* it would not have been easy to surmise how he stood with regard to politics, and he appeared to lean as often towards the conservative as to the revolutionary view of abstract questions.

The newspaper left him time for other literary work, and it was known to a few people that he wrote with some regularity for reviews, but all the products of his pen were anonymous. A fact which remained his own secret was that he provided for the subsistence of his parents, old people domiciled in a quiet corner of their native Kingsmill. The strict sobriety of life which is indispensable to success in such a career as this cost him no effort. He smoked moderately, ate and drank as little as might be, could keep his health on six hours of sleep, and for an occasional holiday liked to walk his twenty or thirty miles. Earwaker was naturally marked for survival among the fittest.

On an evening of June in the year '84, he was interrupted whilst equipping himself for dinner abroad, by a thunderous rat-tat-tat.

'You must wait, my friend, whoever you are,' he murmured placidly, as he began to struggle with the stiff button-holes of his shirt.

The knock was repeated, and more violently.

'Now there's only one man of my acquaintance who knocks like that,' he mused, elaborating the bow of his white tie. 'He, I should imagine, is in Brazil; but there's no knowing. Perhaps our office is on fire.—Anon, anon!'

He made haste to don waistcoat and swallow-tail, then crossed his sitting-room and flung open the door of the chambers.

'Ha! Then it *is* you! I was reminded of your patient habits.'

A tall man, in a light overcoat and a straw hat of spacious brim, had seized both his hands, with shouts of excited greeting.

'Confound you! Why did you keep me waiting? I thought I had missed you for the evening. How the deuce are you? And why the devil have you left me without a line from you for more than six months?'

Earwaker drew aside, and allowed his tumultuous friend to rush into the nearest room.

'Why haven't you written?—confound you!' was again vociferated, amid bursts of boyish laughter. 'Why hasn't anybody written?'

'If everybody was as well informed of your movements as I, I don't wonder,' replied the journalist. 'Since you left Buenos Ayres, I have had two letters, each containing twenty words, which gave me to understand that no answer could by possibility reach you.'

'Humbug! You could have written to half-a-dozen likely places. Did I really say that? Ha, ha, ha!—Shake hands again, confound you! How do you do? Do I look well? Have I a tropical colour? I say, what a blessed thing it was that I got beaten down at Wattleborough! All this time I should have been sitting in the fog at Westminster. What a time I've had! What a time I've had!'

It was more than twelve months since Malkin's departure from England. Though sun and sea had doubtless contributed to his robustness, he must always have been a fair example of the vigorous Briton. His broad shoulders, upright bearing, open countenance, and frank resonant voice, declared a youth passed amid the wholesome conditions which wealth alone can command. The hearty extravagance of his friendliness was only possible in a man who has never been humiliated by circumstances, never restricted in his natural needs of body and mind. Yet he had more than the heartiness of a contented Englishman. The vivacity which made a whirlwind about him probably indicated some ancestral mingling with the blood of a more ardent race. Earwaker examined him with a smile of pleasure.

'It's unfortunate,' he said, 'that I have to go out to dinner.'

'Dinner! Pooh! we can get dinner anywhere.'

'No doubt, but I am engaged.'

'The devil you are! Who is she? Why didn't you write to tell me?'

'The word has a less specific meaning, my dear fellow,' replied Earwaker, laughing. 'Only you of all men would have rushed at the wrong one. I mean to say—if your excitement can take in so common a fact—that I have promised to dine with some people at Notting Hill, and mustn't disappoint them.'

Malkin laughed at his mistake, then shouted:

'Notting Hill! Isn't that somewhere near Fulham? We'll take a cab, and I can drop you on my way.'

'It wouldn't be on the way at all.'

The journalist's quiet explanation was cut short by a petulant outcry.

'Oh, very well! Of course if you want to get rid of me! I should have thought after sixteen months'—

'Don't be idiotic,' broke in the other. 'There's a strong feminine element in you, Malkin; that's exactly the kind of talk with which women drive men to frenzy.'

'Feminine element!' shouted the traveller with hot face. 'What do you mean? I propose to take a cab with you, and you'—

Earwaker turned away laughing. 'Time and distance are nothing to you, and I shall be very glad of your company. Come by all means.'

His friend was instantly appeased.

'Don't let me make you late, Earwaker. Must we start this moment? Come along, then. Can I carry anything for you? Lord! if you could only see a tropical forest! How do you get on with old Runcorn? *Write*? What the devil was the use of my writing, when words are powerless to describe—? What a rum old place this seems, after experiences like mine; how the deuce can you live here? I say, I've brought you a ton of curiosities; will make your rooms look like a museum. Confound it! I've broken my shin against the turn in the staircase! Whew! Who are you going to dine with?—Moxey? Never heard the name.'

In Holborn a hansom was hailed, and the friends continued their dialogue as they drove westward. Having at length effervesced, Malkin began to exchange question and answer with something of the calm needful for mutual intelligibility.

'And how do you get on with old Runcorn?'

'As well as can be expected where there is not a single subject of agreement,' Earwaker replied. 'I have hopes of reducing our circulation.'

'What the deuce do you mean?'

'In other words, of improving the paper. Runcorn is strong on the side of blackguardism. We had a great fight the other day over a leader offered by Kenyon,—a true effusion of the political gutter-snipe. I refused point-blank to let it go in; Runcorn swore that, if I did not, *I* should go *out*. I offered to retire that moment. "We must write for our public," he bellowed. "True," said I, "but not necessarily for the basest among them. The standard at the best is low enough." "Do you call yourself a Radical?" "Not if this be Radicalism." "You ought to be on the *Morning* instead of the *Weekly Post*." I had my way, and probably shall end by sending Mr Kenyon back to his tinker's work shop. If not, I must look out for cleaner occupation.'

'Go it, my boy! Go it!' cried Malkin, slapping his companion's knee violently. 'Raise the tone! To the devil with mercenary considerations! Help the proletariat out of its grovelling position.'

They approached the street where Earwaker had to alight. The other declared his intention of driving on to Fulham in the hope of finding a friend who lived there.

'But I must see you again. When shall you be home to-night?'

'About half-past eleven, I dare say.'

'Right! If I am free I'll come out to Staple Inn, and we'll talk till three or four.'

The house at which the journalist presented himself was such as might be inhabited by a small family of easy means. As he was taking off his overcoat, a door opened and Christian Moxey came forward to greet him. They shook hands like men who stood on friendly, but not exactly on intimate, terms.

'Will you come up to the laboratory for a moment?' said Moxey. 'I should like to show you something I have under the microscope.'

The room he spoke of was at the top of the house; two chambers had been made into one, and the fittings were those required by a student of physical science. Various odours distressed the air. A stranger to the pursuits represented might have thought that the general disorder and encumberment indicated great activity, but the experienced eye perceived at once that no methodical work was here in progress. Mineralogy, botany, biology, physics, and probably many other sciences, were suggested by the specimens and apparatus that lay confusedly on tables, shelves, or floor.

Moxey looked very slim and elegant in his evening costume. When he touched any object, his long, translucent fingers seemed soft and sensitive as a girl's. He stepped with peculiar lightness, and the harmonious notes of his voice were in keeping with these other characteristics. Ten years had developed in him that graceful languor which at four-and-twenty was only beginning to get mastery over the energies of a well-built frame.

'This stuff here,' he said, pointing to an open box full of mud, 'is silt from down the Thames. It's positively loaded with *diatomaceoe*,—you remember our talking about them when you were last here? I am working at the fabric of the valves. Now, just look!'

Earwaker, with attentive smile, followed the demonstration.

'Peak is busy with them as well,' said Christian, presently. 'Has he told you his theory of their locomotion? Nobody has found out yet how the little beggars move about. Peak has a bright idea.'

They spent ten minutes in the laboratory, then went downstairs. Two other guests had meanwhile arrived, and were conversing with the hostess, Miss Moxey. The shy, awkward, hard-featured girl was grown into a woman whose face made such declaration of intellect and character that, after the first moment, one became indifferent to its lack of feminine beauty. As if with the idea of compensating for personal disadvantages, she was ornately dressed; her abundant tawny hair had submitted to much manipulation, and showed the gleam of jewels; expense and finished craft were manifest in every detail of her garb. Though slightly round-shouldered, her form was well-proportioned and suggested natural vigour. Like Christian, she had delicate hands.

'Do you know a distinguished clergyman, named Chilvers?' she asked of Earwaker, with a laugh, when he had taken a place by her.

'Chilvers?—Is it Bruno Chilvers, I wonder?'

'That's the name!' exclaimed one of the guests, a young married lady of eager face and fidgety manners.

'Then I knew him at College, but I had no idea he was become distinguished.'

Miss Moxey again laughed.

'Isn't it amusing, the narrowness of a great clerical reputation? Mrs. Morton was astonished that I had never heard his name.'

'Please don't think,' appealed the lady, looking anxiously at Earwaker, 'that I consider it shameful not to know him. I only happened to mention a very ridiculous sermon of his, that was forced upon me by a distressingly orthodox friend of mine. They tell me, he is one of the newest lights of the Church.'

Earwaker listened with amusement, and then related anecdotes of Bruno Chilvers. Whilst he was talking, the door opened to admit another arrival, and a servant's voice announced 'Mr. Peak'. Miss Moxey rose, and moved a step or two forward; a change was visible on her countenance, which had softened and lightened.

'I am very sorry to be late,' said the new-comer, in a dull and rather husky voice, which made strong contrast with the humorous tones his entrance had interrupted.

He shook hands in silence with the rest of the company, giving merely a nod and a smile as reply to some gracious commonplace from Mrs. Morton.

'Has it come to your knowledge,' Earwaker asked of him, 'that Bruno Chilvers is exciting the orthodox world by his defence of Christianity against neo-heathenism?'

'Chilvers?—No.'

'Mrs. Morton tells us that all the Church newspapers ring with his name.'

'Please don't think,' cried Mrs. Morton, with the same anxious look as before, 'that I read such papers. We never have such a thing in our house, Mr. Peak. I have only been told about it.'

Peak smiled gravely, but made no other answer. Then he turned to Earwaker.

'Where is he?'

'I can't say. Perhaps Mrs. Morton'—

'They tell me he is somewhere in Norfolk,' replied the lady. 'I forget the town.'

A summons to dinner broke off the conversation. Moxey offered his arm to the one lady present as guest, and Earwaker did the same courtesy to the hostess. Mr. Morton, a meditative young man who had been listening with a smile of indifference, sauntered along in the rear with Godwin Peak.

At the dinner-table Peak was taciturn, and seemed to be musing on a disagreeable subject. To remarks, he answered briefly and absently. As Moxey, Earwaker, and Mrs. Morton kept up lively general talk, this muteness was not much noticed, but when the ladies had left the room, and Peak still frowned over his wineglass, the journalist rebuked him.

'What's the matter with you? Don't depress us.'

The other laughed impatiently, and emptied his glass.

'Malkin has come back,' pursued Earwaker. 'He burst in upon me, just as I was leaving home—as mad as a March hare. You must come and meet him some evening.'

'As you please.'

Returned to the upper room, Peak seated himself in a shadowy corner, crossed his legs, thrust his hands into his pockets, and leaned back to regard a picture on the wall opposite. This attitude gave sufficient proof of the change that had been wrought in him by the years between nineteen and nine-and-twenty; even in a drawing-room, he could take his ease unconcernedly. His face would have led one to suppose him an older man; it was set in an expression of stern, if not morose, thoughtfulness.

He had small, hard lips, indifferent teeth (seldom exhibited), a prominent chin, a long neck; his body was of firm, not ungraceful build. Society's evening uniform does not allow a man much scope in the matter of adornments; it was plain, however, that Godwin no longer scorned the tailor and haberdasher. He wore a suit which confidently challenged the criticism of experts, and the silk socks visible above his shoes might have been selected by the most fastidious of worldlings.

When he had sat there for some minutes, his eyes happened to stray towards Miss Moxey, who was just then without a companion. Her glance answered to his, and a smile of invitation left him no choice but to rise and go to a seat beside her.

'You are meditative this evening,' she said, in a voice subdued below its ordinary note.

'Not very fit for society, to tell the truth,' Godwin answered, carelessly. 'One has such moods, you know. But how would you take it if, at the last moment, I sent a telegram, "Please excuse me. Don't feel able to talk"?''

'You don't suppose I should be offended?'

'Certainly you would.'

'Then you know less of me than I thought.'

Her eyes wandered about the room, their smile betokening an uneasy self-consciousness.

'Christian tells me,' she continued, 'that you are going to take your holiday in Cornwall.'

'I thought of it. But perhaps I shan't leave town at all. It wouldn't be worth while, if I go abroad at the end of the year.'

'Abroad?' Marcella glanced at him. 'What scheme is that?'

'Haven't I mentioned it? I want to go to South America and the Pacific islands. Earwaker has a friend, who has just come back from travel in the tropics; the talk about it has half decided me to leave England. I have been saving money for years to that end.'

'You never spoke of it—to me,' Marcella replied, turning a bracelet on her wrist. 'Should you go alone?'

'Of course. I couldn't travel in company. You know how impossible it would be for me to put up with the moods and idiosyncrasies of other men.'

There was a quiet arrogance in his tone. The listener still smiled, but her fingers worked nervously.

'You are not so unsocial as you pretend,' she remarked, without looking at him.

'Pretend! I make no pretences of any kind,' was his scornful answer.

'You are ungracious this evening.'

'Yes—and can't hide it.'

'Don't try to, I beg. But at least tell me what troubles you.'

'That's impossible,' Peak replied, drily.

'Then friendship goes for nothing,' said Marcella, with a little forced laugh.

'Yes—in all but a very few human concerns. How often could *you* tell *me* what it is that prevents your taking life cheerfully?'

He glanced at her, and Marcella's eyes fell; a moment after, there was a suspicion of colour in her cheek.

'What are you reading?' Peak asked abruptly, but in a voice of more conventional note.

'Still Hafiz.'

'I envy your power of abstraction.'

'Yet I hear that you are deeply concerned about the locomotive powers of the *diatomaceae*?'

Their eyes met, and they laughed—not very mirthfully.

'It preserves me from worse follies,' said Peak. 'After all, there are ways more or less dignified of consuming time'—

As he spoke, his ear caught a familiar name, uttered by Christian Moxey, and he turned to listen. Moxey and Earwaker were again talking of the Rev. Bruno Chilvers. Straightway disregarding Marcella, Peak gave attention to the men's dialogue, and his forehead wrinkled into scornful amusement.

'It's very interesting,' he exclaimed, at a moment when there was silence throughout the company, 'to hear that Chilvers is really coming to the front. At Whitelaw it used to be prophesied that he would be a bishop, and now I suppose he's fairly on the way to that. Shall we write letters of congratulation to him, Earwaker?'

'A joint epistle, if you like.'

Mr. Morton, who had brightened since dinner, began to speak caustically of the form of intellect necessary nowadays in a popular clergyman.

'He must write a good deal,' put in Earwaker, 'and that in a style which would have scandalised the orthodox of the last century. Rationalised dogma is vastly in demand.'

Peak's voice drew attention.

'Two kinds of books dealing with religion are now greatly popular, and will be for a long time. On the one hand there is that growing body of people who, for whatever reason, tend to agnosticism, but desire to be convinced that agnosticism is respectable; they are eager for anti-dogmatic books, written by men of mark. They couldn't endure to be classed with Bradlaugh, but they rank themselves confidently with Darwin and Huxley. Arguments matter little or nothing to them. They take their rationalism as they do a fashion in dress, anxious only that it shall be "good form". Then there's the other lot of people—a much larger class—who won't give up dogma, but have learnt that bishops, priests, and deacons no longer hold it with the old rigour, and that one must be "broad"; these are clamorous for treatises which pretend to reconcile revelation and science. It's quite pathetic to watch the enthusiasm with which they hail any man who distinguishes himself by this kind of apologetic skill, this pious jugglery. Never mind how washy the book from a scientific point of view. Only let it obtain vogue, and it will be glorified as the new evangel. The day has gone by for downright assaults on science; to be marketable, you must prove that *The Origin of Species* was approvingly foreseen in the first chapter of Genesis, and that the Apostles' Creed conflicts in no single point with the latest results of biblical criticism. Both classes seek to avoid ridicule, and to adapt themselves to a standard of respectability. If Chilvers goes in for the newest apologetics, he is bound to be enormously successful. The man has brains, and really there are so few such men who still care to go into the Church.'

There was a murmur of laughing approval. The speaker had worked himself into eloquent nervousness; he leaned forward with his hands straining together, and the muscles of his face quivering.

'And isn't it surprising,' said Marcella, 'in how short a time this apologetic attitude has become necessary?'

Peak flashed a triumphant look at her.

'I often rejoice to think of it!' he cried. 'How magnificent it is that so many of the solemn jackasses who brayed against Darwin from ten to twenty years ago should live to be regarded as beneath contempt! I say it earnestly: this thought is one of the things that make life tolerable to me!'

'You have need of charity, friend Peak,' interposed Earwaker. 'This is the spirit of the persecutor.'

'Nothing of the kind! It is the spirit of justified reason. You may say that those people were honestly mistaken;—such honesty is the brand of a brainless obstructive. *They* would have persecuted, but too gladly! There were, and are, men who would have committed Darwin to penal servitude, if they had had the power. Men like Lyell, who were able to develop a new convolution in their brains, I respect heartily. I only speak of the squalling mass, the obscene herd of idiot mockers.'

'Who assuredly,' remarked Earwaker, 'feel no shame whatever in the retrospect of their idiocy. To convert a *mind* is a subject for high rejoicing; to confute a *temper* isn't worth the doing.'

'That is philosophy,' said Marcella, 'but I suspect you of often feeling as Mr. Peak does. I am sure *I* do.'

Peak, meeting an amused glance from the journalist, left his seat and took up a volume that lay on one of the tables. It was easy to see that his hands shook, and that there was perspiration on his forehead. With pleasant tact, Moxey struck into a new subject, and for the next quarter of an hour Peak sat apart in the same attitude as before his outburst of satire and invective. Then he advanced to Miss Moxey again, for the purpose of taking leave. This was the signal for Earwaker's rising, and in a few minutes both men had left the house.

'I'll go by train with you,' said Earwaker, as they walked away. 'Farringdon Street will suit me well enough.'

Peak vouchsafed no reply, but, when they had proceeded a little distance, he exclaimed harshly: 'I hate emancipated women!'

His companion stopped and laughed loudly.

'Yes, I hate emancipated women,' the other repeated, with deliberation. 'Women ought neither to be enlightened nor dogmatic. They ought to be sexual.'

'That's unusual brutality on your part.'

'Well, you know what I mean.'

'I know what you think you mean,' said Earwaker. 'But the woman who is neither enlightened nor dogmatic is only too common in society. They are fools, and troublesome fools.'

Peak again kept silence.

'The emancipated woman,' pursued his friend, 'needn't be a Miss Moxey, nor yet a Mrs. Morton.'

'Miss Moxey is intolerable,' said Peak. 'I can't quite say why I dislike her so, but she grows more antipathetic to me the better I know her. She has not a single feminine charm—not one. I often feel very sorry for her, but dislike her all the same.'

'Sorry for her,' mused Earwaker. 'Yes, so do I. I can't like her either. She is certainly an incomplete woman. But her mind is of no low order. I had rather talk with her than with one of the imbecile prettinesses. I half believe you have a sneaking sympathy with the men who can't stand education in a wife.'

'It's possible. In some moods.'

'In no mood can I conceive such a prejudice. I have no great attraction to women of any kind, but the uneducated woman I detest.'

'Well, so do I,' muttered Peak. 'Do you know what?' he added, abruptly. 'I shall be off to the Pacific. Yes, I shall go this next winter. My mind is made up.'

'I shan't try to dissuade you, old fellow, though I had rather have you in sight. Come and see Malkin. I'll drop you a note with an appointment.'

'Do.'

They soon reached the station, and exchanged but few more words before Earwaker's leaving the train at Farringdon Street. Peak pursued his journey towards the south-east of London.

On reaching home, the journalist flung aside his foolish coat of ceremony, indued a comfortable jacket, lit a pipe with long stem, and began to glance over an evening newspaper. He had not long reposed in his arm-chair when the familiar appeal thundered from without. Malkin once more shook his hand effusively.

'Had my journey to Fulham for nothing. Didn't matter; I ran over to Putney and looked up my old landlady. The rooms are occupied by a married couple, but I think we shall succeed in persuading them to make way for me. I promised to find them lodgings every bit as good in two days' time.'

'If that is so easy, why not take the new quarters yourself?'

'Why, to tell you the truth, I didn't think of it!—Oh, I had rather have the old crib; I can do as I like there, you know. Confound it! Now I shall have to spend all to-morrow lodging-hunting for other people. Couldn't I pay a man to do it? Some confidential agent—private police—you know what I mean?'

'A man of any delicacy,' replied Earwaker, with grave countenance, 'would feel bound by such a promise to personal exertion.'

'Right; quite right! I didn't mean it; of course I shall hunt conscientiously. Oh, I say; I have brought over a couple of armadilloes. Would you like one?'

'Stuffed, do you mean?'

'Pooh! Alive, man, alive! They only need a little care. I should think you might keep the creature in your kitchen; they become quite affectionate.'

The offer was unhesitatingly declined, and Malkin looked hurt. There needed a good deal of genial explanation before Earwaker could restore him to his sprightly mood.

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