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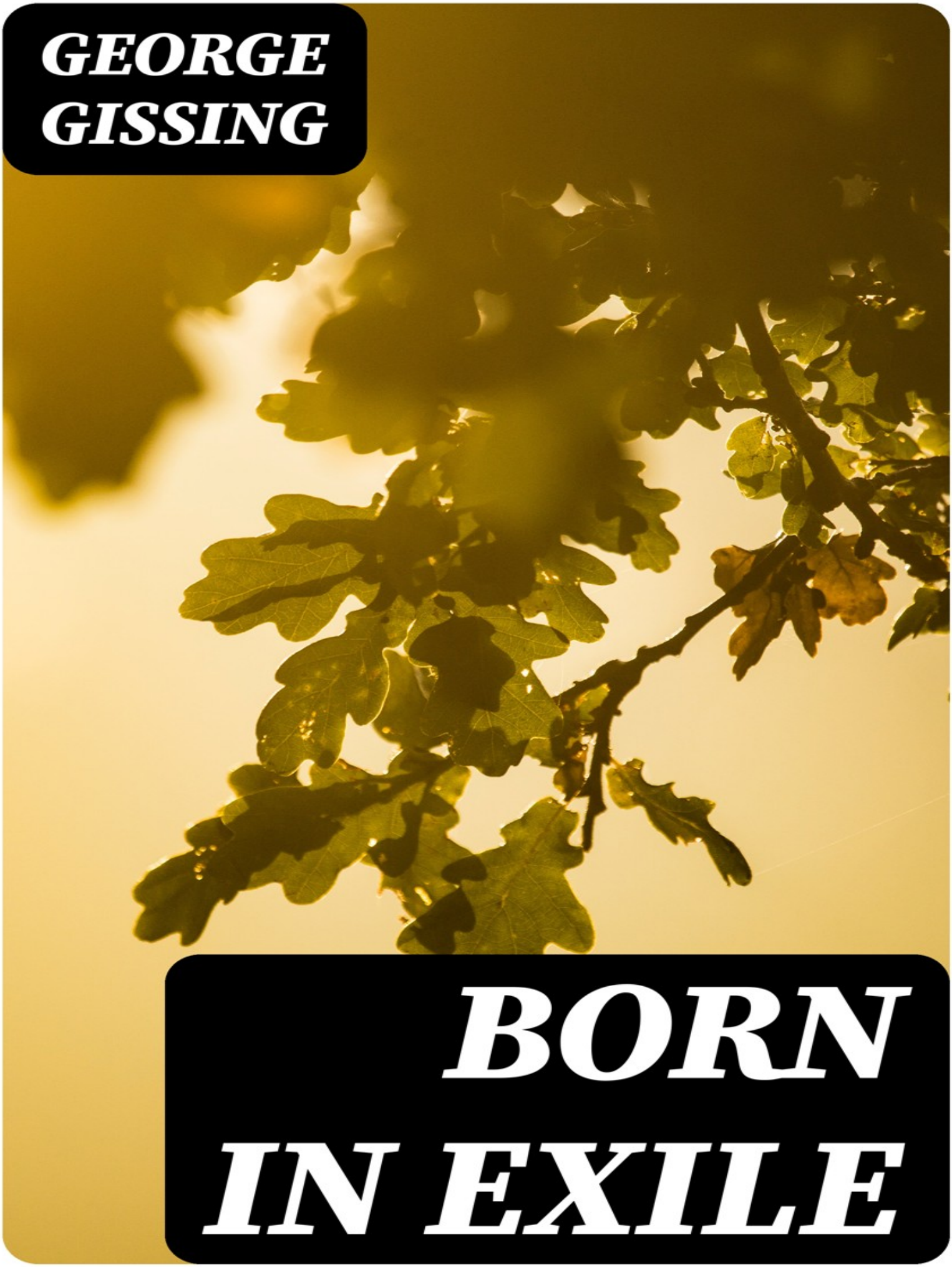

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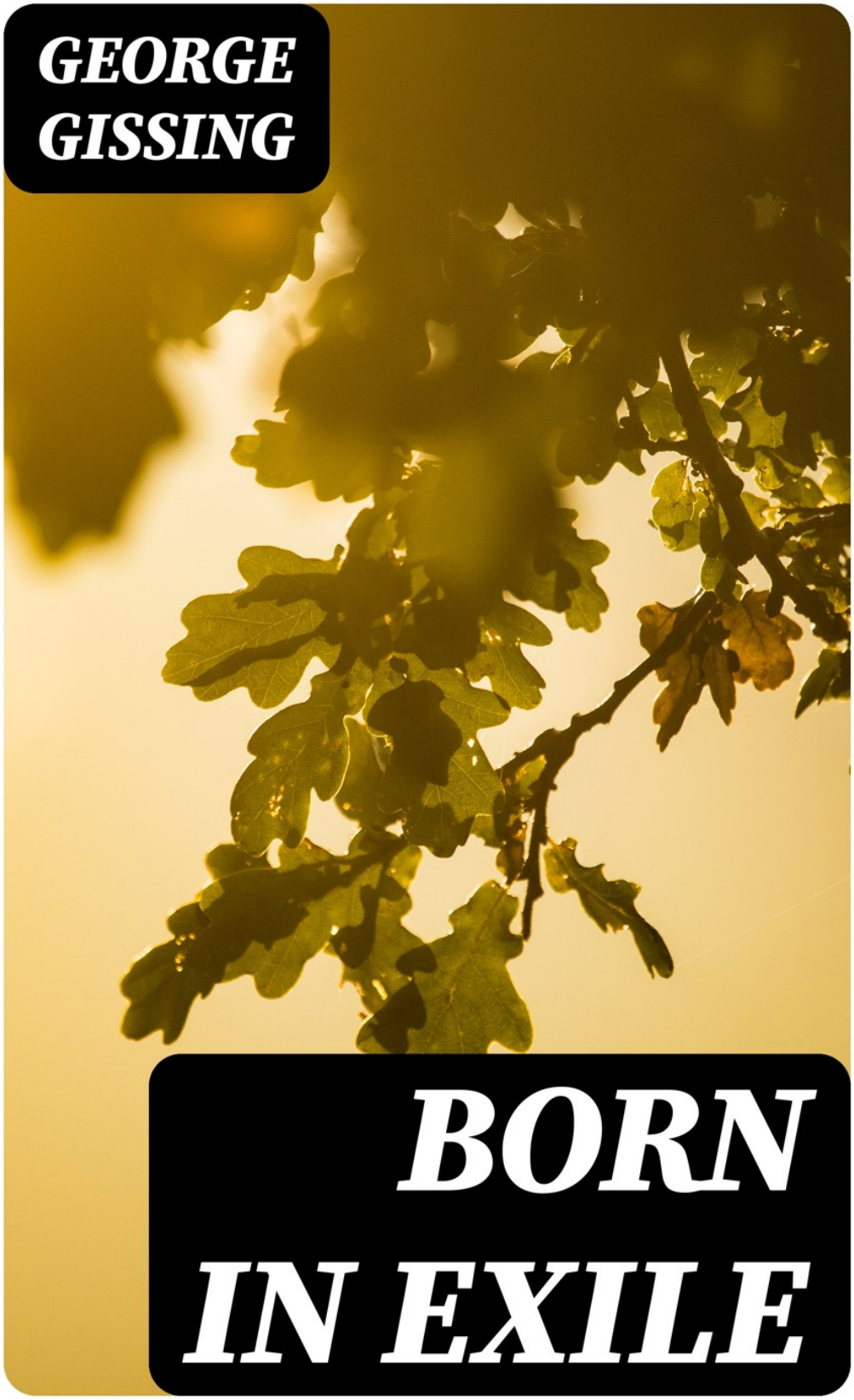
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Born in Exile

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CHAPTER I

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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 susurration 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 as *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'ed 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?'