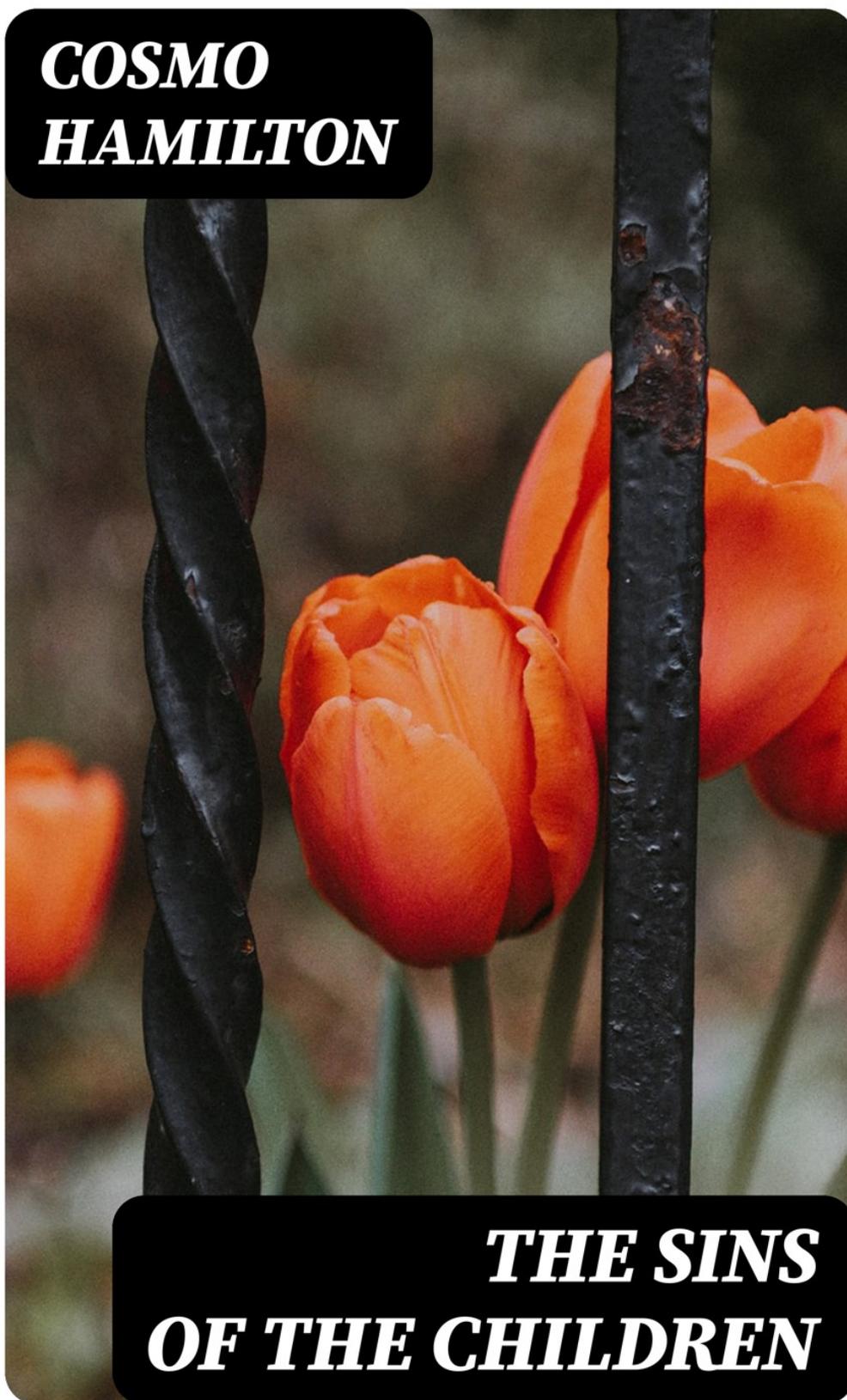


***COSMO
HAMILTON***

A photograph of several bright orange tulips in bloom, partially obscured by a black metal fence. The fence consists of a twisted vertical bar on the left and a straight vertical bar on the right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and brown, suggesting a garden setting.

***THE SINS
OF THE CHILDREN***

***COSMO
HAMILTON***



***THE SINS
OF THE CHILDREN***

Cosmo Hamilton

The Sins of the Children

A Novel

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YOUTH

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When Peter Guthrie laughed the rooks stirred on the old trees behind the Bodleian and the bored cab-drivers who lolled in uncomfortable attitudes on their cabs in St. Giles perked up their heads.

He threw open his door one morning and leaving one of these laughs of his rolling round the quad of St. John's College found the recumbent form of Nicholas Kenyon all among his cushions as usual, and as usual smoking his cigarettes and reading his magazines. The words "as usual" seemed to be stamped on his forehead.

"What d'you think?" cried Peter, filling the room like a thirty-mile gale.

"You ought to know that I don't think. It's a form of exercise that I never indulge in." Kenyon lit a fresh cigarette from the one which he had half-smoked and with peculiar expertness flicked the end out of the window into St. Giles Street, which ran past the great gates of the college. He hoped that it might have fallen on somebody's head, but he didn't get up to see.

"Well," said Peter, "I was coming down the High just now and an awful pretty girl passed with a Univ. man. She looked at me—thereby very nearly laying me flat on my face—and I heard her ask, 'Who's that?' It was the man's answer that makes me laugh. He said: 'Oh, he's only a Rhodes scholar!'" And off he went again.

Nicholas Kenyon raised his immaculate person a few inches and looked round at his friend. The Harvard man, with his six-foot-one of excellent muscles and sinews, his square shoulders and deep chest, and his fine, honest, alert and healthy face, made most people ask who he was. "If I'd been you," said Kenyon, "I should have made a mental note of that Univ. blighter in order to land him one the next time you saw him, that he wouldn't easily forget."

"Why? I liked it, from a man of his type. I've been 'only a damned Rhodes scholar' to all the little pussy purr-purrs ever since I first walked the High in my American-made clothes. I owe that fellow no grudge; and if I meet that girl again—which I shall make a point of doing—I bet you anything you like that his scoffing remark will lend a touch of romance to me which will be worth a lot."

"Was she something out of the ordinary?"

"Quite," said Peter.

He hung his straw hat on the electric bulb, threw off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and started to tidy up his rooms with more energy and deftness than is possessed by the average housemaid. He flicked the little pile of cigarette ash, which Kenyon had dropped on the floor, into a corner. He gathered the weekly illustrated papers which Kenyon had flung aside and put them on a back shelf, and then he picked up the man Kenyon in his arms, deposited him in a wide arm-chair in front of the fireplace and started punching all the cushions.

Kenyon looked ineffably bored. "Good God!" he said. "What's all this energy? You shatter my nervous system."

"My dear chap," said Peter, "you seem to forget that this is Commem. and that my people have come three thousand miles to see their little Peter in his little rooms. I'm therefore polishing up the knocker of the big front door. My mother has a tidy mind and I want my father to gain the impression that I'm methodical and responsible. He has a quick eye. They wired me from London last night to say that they'll be here at five o'clock to tea. I dashed round to the Randolph early this morning to book rooms for them. Gee, it's a big party, too! I can't make out why they want so many rooms. It'll be like my sister to have brought over one of her school friends. I guess I shall be darned glad to see them, anyway."

There was a touch of excitement in the boy's voice, and his sun-tanned, excellent face showed the delight that he felt. He had not seen his mother, brother and sister for two years, having spent his vacations in England.

Nicholas Kenyon got up slowly. He did everything slowly. "Well," he said, "I thank God that my people don't bother me on these festive occasions. To my way of thinking the influx of fathers and mothers into Oxford makes the whole place provincial. However, I can understand your childish glee. You are pretty badly dipped, I understand, and with the true psychology of the rasping undergraduate you are first going to throw the glamour of the city of spires over your untravelled parent and then touch him for a fairly considerable cheque."

Peter gave a sort of laugh. "Touch my father!" he said. "Not much. I shall put my case up to my mother. She's the one who does these little things."

Kenyon was faintly interested. Being perennially impecunious himself and unable to raise money even from the loan sharks, he looked to the advent of Peter's parents to bring him at least fifty pounds. He always borrowed from Peter.

"Oh, I see," he said. "It's the old lady who carries the money-bags, is it?"

"No, it isn't," said Peter; "but as a matter of fact I never have gone to my father for anything and I don't think I ever shall. I don't know why it is, but none of us have ever been able to screw up courage to say more than 'Good-morning' and 'Good-night' to the Governor, although of course we all think he is a very wonderful person."

Kenyon yawned. "I see," he said. "Bad luck. I should hate to have such a disagreeable devil for a father—one of the martinet type, who says *don't* all the time when he ought to say *do*, and makes home a sort of pocket-hell for everybody."

Peter twisted round and spoke quickly and rather warmly. "So should I," he said, "but luckily I haven't. I didn't want to suggest that my father was that type of man. He's one of the very best—one of the men who count for something in my country. He's worked like a dog to give us a chance in life and his generosity makes me personally sometimes feel almost indecent. I mean that I feel that I have taken advantage of him,—but—but, somehow or other,—oh, I don't know,—we don't seem to know each other—that's all. He hasn't the knack of winning our confidence—or something. So it comes to this: when we want anything we ask mother and she gets it for us. That's all there's to it. And

look here, Nick, I want you to be frightfully nice to the Governor. Get out of your ice-box and warm up to the old man. I can't, you see; but as he has come all this way to look me up I want somebody to show some appreciation."

With his eyes to the small relief which the visit of Dr. Hunter Guthrie, of New York City, might bring him, Nicholas Kenyon nodded. "Rely on me," he said. "Butter shan't melt in my mouth; and before your father leaves Oxford I'll make him feel that he's been created a Baronet and appointed Physician in Ordinary to His Majesty the King. Well, so long, Peter! I'm lunching with Lascelles at the House this morning. I'll drop in to tea and hand cakes round to your beloved family."

"Right-o," said Peter. "That'll be great!" And when the door closed and he found himself alone he arranged a certain number of silver cups which he had won in athletics all along his mantel-piece, for his father to see, gazed at them for a moment with a half-smile of rather self-conscious pride, finished tidying his room, gazed affectionately for a few moments at the familiar sight of Pusey House through the leaf-crowded trees that lined the sunny street, and then sat down to his piano and played a rag-time with all that perfect excellence and sense of rhythm which had opened the most insular doors to him during his first days as a fresher.



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This fine big fellow, Peter Murray Guthrie, who had done immensely well at Harvard in athletics and was by no means a fool intellectually, could afford to be amused at the fact that he had been scoffingly referred to as "only a Rhodes scholar." He had been born under a lucky star and he had that wonderful gymnastic faculty of always falling on his feet. If with all his suspicions aroused he had gone up to Oxford in the same rather timid, self-conscious, on-the-defensive manner of the average Rhodes scholar who expected to be treated as a creature quite different from the English undergraduate, he would have found his way to the American Club and stayed there more or less permanently, taking very little part in the glorious multitudinous life of the freshmen of his college, and remained a sort of pariah of his own making. Freshmen themselves, the Lord knows, are forlorn enough. Everything is strange to them, too,—society, rules, customs, unwritten laws and faces. They are solitary creatures in the midst of a bustling crowd. If they do not come from one of the great public schools and meet again the men they knew there their chance of making friends is small and for many dull disappointing weeks they must mope and look-on and envy and find their feet alone, suffering, poor devils, from a hideous sheepishness and wondering, with a sort of morbid self-consciousness, what others are thinking of them. But Peter was unafraid. He stalked into Oxford prepared to find it the finest place on

earth—with his imagination stirred at the sight of those old colleges whose quadrangles echoed with the feet of the great dead and rang with those of the younger generation to whom life was a great adventure and who might spring from those old stones into everlasting fame. He strode through the gate of St. John's with his chin high, prepared to serve her with all his strength and all the best of his youth and leave her finally unsullied by his name. He didn't give a single whoop for all this talk about the snobbishness and insularity of English undergraduates. He didn't believe that he would find a college divided and sub-divided into sets; and if the statement proved to be true—well, he intended to break all the barriers down.

Therefore, with such a spirit added to his fine frank, manly personality, irresistible laugh, great big friendly hand and the rumours that came with him of his bull-like rushes on the football field, he became at once a marked man. Second-year and even third-year men nudged each other when he passed. "By Jove!" they said. "That's a useful looking cove! We must get him down to the river." Or, "I wonder if that American can be taught to play cricket?" As for the freshers—all as frightened as a lot of rabbits far away from their warren—they gazed with shy admiration and respect at Peter, who, expecting no rebuffs, received none.

Finding that he could not live in college until he was a second-year man, Peter had looked about him among the freshers for a likely person with whom to share rooms. He had come up in the train with Nicholas Kenyon, whose shell he had insisted upon opening. He, too, was entered at St.

John's and was very ready—being impecunious—to share lodgings with the American whose allowance he might share and whose personality was distinctly unusual. These two then gravitated to Beaumont Street, captured a large sitting-room and two bed-rooms on the ground floor, and from the first evening of their arrival were perfectly at home. Peter at once hired a piano from a music shop in the High which he quickly discovered, bought several bottles of whiskey and a thousand cigarettes, besides several pounds of pipe tobacco, threw open his window, and as soon as dinner was over started playing rag-times.

Kenyon had been interested and amused. He had not expected to find himself "herding," as he put it, with a damned Rhodes scholar. He took it for granted that these "foreigners" would live apart from the ordinary undergraduate, as uncouth people should. He had been quick to notice, however,—psychology being his principal stock in trade,—that Peter had made an instant impression; and as he sat on the window-sill listening with what he had to confess to himself was keen pleasure to Peter's masterly manipulation of the piano and saw all the windows within near range of their house open and heads poke out to listen, he was able—without any propheticism—to say that Peter would quickly be the centre of a set. He would certainly not be sulking in the American Club.

Very quickly P. M. Guthrie, of St. John's, became "Peter" to the whole college—and stroke in the freshers' boat. The other Rhodes scholars owed everything that was good to him. He stood by them loyally, made his rooms their headquarters, and all who wanted to know him were obliged

to know them. He introduced swipes at the first freshers' concert in the Hall, with enormous success, selecting Forbes Nicholl, of Brasenose; Watson Frick, of Wadham; Baldwin Colgate, of Worcester; and Madison Smith, of Merton, all good Americans, for the purpose. Even Dons stayed to listen on that epoch-making occasion and the fame of their curious and delightful method of singing spread all over the university. It was easy. There was nothing else like it.

Quite unconsciously Peter was for a little while the whole topic of conversation at Dons' dinners. These hide-bound professors were really quite surprised at the remarkable way in which, at one fell swoop, this man Peter Guthrie had managed to weld together the English and American undergraduates for the first time in their knowledge. Some of them put it all down to his piano playing—and were very nearly right. Others conceived his great laugh to be mainly responsible—and were not far short of the mark. But it was Nicholas Kenyon, the psychologist, who put his finger on the whole truth of this swift and unbelievable success. He said that it was Peter's humanity which had conquered Oxford, and in so doing proved—impecunious only son of an absolutely broke peer as he was—that he would be able to make a very fair living in the future on his wits. It may be said that he never intended to work.

It was part of Peter's honesty and simplicity to remain American. He made no effort to ape the Oxford manner of speech. He would see himself shot before he got into the rather effeminate clothes affected by the Oxford man. He continued to be natural, to remain himself, and not to take on the colors chameleon-wise of those about him. His

Stetson hat was the standing joke of St. John's. Nevertheless, there was not one man in the college who would not have hit hard if any derogatory remarks had been thrown at the head inside it. His padded shoulders, upholstered ties and narrow belt were all frequently caricatured, but the sound of Peter's laugh gathered men together like the music of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. It was just that this man Peter Guthrie was a *man* that made him not only accepted in a place seething with quaint and foolish habits, out-of-date shibboleths and curious unwritten laws, but loved and respected. Here was one to whom merely to live was a joy. To the despondent he came therefore as a tonic. He exuded breeziness filled with ozone. His continuous high spirits infected even those foolish boys who were encrusted with affectation and stuccoed with the petty side and insolence of Eton. He worked hard and played hard and slept like a dog, ate hearty and drank like a thirsty plant. Also he smoked like a factory chimney. He had no crankish views—no tolerance for "isms," and was not ashamed to stride into chapel and say his prayers like a simple boy. In short, "unashamed" was his watchword, and he had been endowed with the rare gift of saying "No," and sticking to it. And to Nicholas Kenyon, who frequented the rooms of the so-called intellectuals—those "little dreadful clever people" who parroted and perverted other men's thoughts and possessed no originality of their own—it was a stroke of genius on Peter's part to have nothing but the photographs of his family all over his rooms. He must be a big man, Nicholas said to himself, who could afford, among the very young, to dispense with the female form divine in

his frames—the nudes so generally placed in them—in order to convey the impression of being devilish wise and bad. Also it showed, according to this human merchant, a peculiar strength of character on Peter's part to bolt his door regularly one evening a week so that he might sit down uninterrupted and write a tremendous screed to his mother. However, that was Peter the man-boy—Peter the Rhodes scholar—Peter the Oxford man—who always wound up his musical evenings with the "Star Spangled Banner." And there was just one other side to this big, simple fellow's character which puzzled and annoyed the bloodless, clever parasite who lived with him and upon him,—women.

Now, Nicholas Kenyon—the Honourable Nicholas Augustus Fitzhugh Kenyon—was a patron of the drama. That is to say, he had the right somehow to enter the stage door of the Theatre Royal at all times, and did so whenever the theatre was visited by a musical comedy company. He was known to innumerable chorus girls as "Boy-dear," and made a point of entertaining them at luncheon and supper during their visits to the university town. He brought choice specimens of this breed to Beaumont Street for tea and tittle-tattle and introduced them to Peter, who liked them very much and would have staked his life upon their being angels. But when it came to driving out to small unnoticeable inns, Peter squared his shoulders and stayed at home.

"The devil take it!" said Nicholas one night, with frightful frankness which was devoid of any intentional insolence. "What's this cursed provincialism that hangs to you? I

suppose it comes from the fact that you were born in a shack to the tinkle of the trolley-car!"

Peter's howl of laughter made the piano play an immaculate tune. "Wrong," he said. "Gee! but you're absolutely wrong. The whole thing comes to this, Nick: One of these fine days I'm going to be married. The girl I marry is going to be clean. I believe in fairness. *I'm* going to be clean. That's all there is to it."

So that, one way and another, Dr. Hunter G. Guthrie, of New York, as well as St. John's College, Oxford, had several reasons to be rather proud of this man Peter.



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One o'clock that afternoon found Peter still hammering on his piano, not only to the intense delight of three snub-nosed tradesmen's boys who delayed delivery of mutton-chops and soles, which were only plaice, but also of five people who had come quietly into the room. They stood together watching and listening and waiting for him suddenly to discover that he was not alone. One was a tall, rather angular, clean-shaven, noticeably intellectual man whose thin hair was grey and who wore very large glasses with tortoise-shell frames, through which he looked with pale, short-sighted eyes. He held a grey hat in his thin hand and stood watching the boy—who made his piano do the work of a full band—with a smile of infinite pride on his lips. Another was a little lady, all soft and sweet, with a bird-like face and a curious bird-like appearance. All about her there was a sort of perennial youthfulness, and the goodness of her kind heart gleamed so openly in her eyes that they asked beggars and cripples, itinerant musicians, ragamuffins, street dogs and all humbugs to come and be helped. At that moment they were full of tears, although little lines of laughter were all about them. Another was a slight, exceedingly good-looking young man whose hair went into a series of small waves and was brushed away from his forehead. He was grinning like a Cheshire cat and showing two rows of teeth which would make a dentist both envious and annoyed. There was a slight air of precocity

about his clothes. Two girls made up the rest of the party. Both were young and slim and of average height. Both were unmistakably American in their fearless independence and cleanness of cut. One was dark, with almost black eyebrows which just failed to meet in the middle. Her eyes were amazing and as full of danger as a maxim,—large and blue—the most astonishing blueness. They were framed with long, thick, black lashes. Her lips were rather full and red, and her skin white. She might have been an Italian or a Spaniard. The other girl was blonde and slim, with large grey eyes set widely apart, a small patrician nose and a lovely little mouth turning up at the corners.

How long all these people would have stayed watching and listening no man can say. Suddenly, in the middle of a bar, Peter sprang up and turned round. His cry of joy and the way in which he plunged forward and picked up the little bird-like woman in his arms was very good to see.

"Mother!" he cried. "Mother! Oh, Gee! This is great!" and he kissed her cheeks and her hands, and then her cheeks again, all the while making strange, small, fond noises like a little boy who comes back home after the holidays.

"Oh, dear, dear Peter!" said the little woman, between tears and laughter. "How splendidly rough you are! You shake me to pieces! Where *shall* I be able to tidy my hair?"

Then, with a rather constrained air and a touch of nervous cordiality, Peter turned to his father and took his hand. "How are you, father?" he asked. "You look fine."

Dr. Hunter Guthrie swallowed something and gave a murmur which remained incoherent. Before he could pull himself together, Peter was hugging his sister, who

squealed like a pig from the tightness of this man's mighty grasp. And then the brother came in for it and winced with pain and pleasure as his hand was taken in a vise-like grip.

"Hello, Graham!"

"Hello, Peter!"

And then everybody except Peter burst out laughing. He stood in front of the fair girl, with his mouth wide open, and held out his hand and said: "I was going to hunt the whole place for you,—I beg your pardon." It was when he drew back, with his face and neck the color of a beet root, that the laughter reached its climax.

Belle Guthrie was the first to find her voice. "Well, Peter," she said, "that's going some. Is an introduction superfluous in Oxford? Where did you meet Betty Townsend?"

"I haven't met her," said Peter. "I saw her this morning in the High for a second—" He ran his finger round his collar and moved from one foot to the other and shifted his great shoulders. No man on this earth had ever looked so uncomfortable.

And then, with consummate coolness, Betty Townsend came to the rescue. "Just after we arrived this morning," she said, "and you were all buying picture post-cards, I passed Mr. Guthrie when I was walking along the High Street with Graham's friend. I recognized him from the photographs that you have at home, and I think he must have heard me ask, 'Who's that?' I naturally gave him a friendly look. That's all."

"I didn't catch the friendly look," said Peter. But he did catch the friendly tone and stored it up among his treasures. Then he suddenly stirred himself, being host, picked up his

mother and placed her on his elaborate sofa; gave his best arm-chair to his father; waved his sister into the window-seat with her friend, and tilted Graham into a deck chair.

Standing in the middle of the room, beaming with pride, he said: "How in thunder did you get here so soon? Your wire said that you were coming to tea, and I was going to meet the train leaving Paddington at three-thirty. Gee! This is the best thing that ever happened! Will you lunch here?"

"Oh, no, dear!" said Mrs. Guthrie. "So many of us will worry your landlady."

Then out came one of Peter's huge laughs. "Worry my landlady? One look at Mrs. Brownstack would show you that she got over being worried before the great wind. Why she's kept lodgings for undergraduates for twenty years. It's the same thing as saying that she's spent the greater part of her life sitting on the top of Vesuvius. I can give you beer, beef, pickles, biscuits, cake, swipes they call coffee, some corking Nougat and three brands of cigarettes."

"I think," said Dr. Guthrie, with a suggestion of haste, "it might be better if you lunched with us at the hotel." Like all doctors, his first thoughts were of digestion.

"Right-o!" said Peter, and he dived into his bedroom for a more respectable coat. His brother followed him in and the two stood facing each other for a moment, eye to eye. They had not met for two years. Instinctively they grasped hands again and the minds of both were filled with most affectionate things—a very flood of words—but one said "Old man!" and the other "Peter!" And while Graham brushed his kinky hair with a temporary suggestion of

throatiness, Peter hauled out his best coat and whistled to show how utterly unmoved he was.

They returned to the sitting-room together. Dr. Guthrie was examining the conglomeration of books that loaded the shelves. The plays of Bernard Shaw rubbed shoulders with "Masterton on Land Taxes." Stevenson's "Treasure Island" leaned up against Webster's Dictionary. "Tono-Bungay" had for a companion a slushy novel by Garvice—and on them all was dust.

The little mother, all a-flutter like a thrush, was at the window looking through the trees at the warm old buildings opposite. The two girls were peering into a cupboard as into the "Blue Room," where they found nothing but a few whiskey bottles, several packs of cards, a box of chess-men, a couple of mortar-boards with all their corners gone, and a large collection of white shoes in all grades of dilapidation.

"Are you all ready?" asked Dr. Guthrie, with a curious gayety. Among all this youth even he felt young.

"Rather," said Peter. "I could eat an ox."

He opened the door, touched his mother's soft cheek with his finger as she passed, tweaked his sister's hair, refrained from catching Betty Townsend's eyes, winked at his brother and drew back for his father.

Once in the quad Mrs. Guthrie whispered to Graham and went quickly out into St. Giles, beckoning to the two girls to follow. She was very anxious that Peter should walk with his father, and this—rather pleased with himself—Peter did. He would have taken his father's arm if he had dared, he was so mighty glad to see him. Several times the Doctor seemed about to do the same thing, but his hand hesitated and

dropped. And so these two fell in step and walked silently along towards the Randolph Hotel, passed by men in twos or threes, many of whom, to the Doctor's inward delight, cried out, "Hullo, Peter!" with tremendous cordiality. It was not until they turned the corner that the Doctor spoke.

"It gives me real pleasure to see you again, Peter," he said, with a quick self-conscious glance at the young giant at his elbow.

"Thank you, father," said Peter, looking straight ahead and getting as red as a peony.

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Nicholas Kenyon more than lived up to his promise. In clothes into which he seemed to have been poured in liquid form, he handed hot toast and cakes to Peter's family at tea-time with that air of deferential impertinence which was his peculiar property. He had the same effect on the Doctor and Mrs. Guthrie and the two girls as he had on Peter when he first saw him on the train. His complete self-control, his indolent assurance, his greyhound look of thoroughbredness and the decorative way in which he phrased his sentences all charmed and amused them. For Peter's sake he came right out of his shell at once and behaved like a man who had been a favorite in that family circle for years. In the most subtle manner he implied to the Doctor that his fame as a bacteriologist had spread all over Oxford, and even England. He refused to believe that Mrs. Guthrie was the mother of her children and not her own eldest daughter. He asked Graham almost at once to do him the favor of giving him the name of his tailor, and told Betty that he had shot with her father, Lord Townsend, many times, well-knowing that he was a portrait painter in New York. With consummate ease and tact he put everybody on the best of terms with one another and themselves, thereby winning still more of Peter's admiration and liking. With great pleasure he accepted the Doctor's invitation to dine at the Randolph Hotel, and in return invited all present to be his guests at the Open Air Performance of "Twelfth Night," later

in the week, by the O.U.D.S., in the beautiful gardens of Worcester. In a word, he played with these people as a cat plays with a mouse and as he had always played with Peter. He used all his brain not only to win their confidence and friendship but to make an impression which might afterwards be of use to himself.

Nicholas Kenyon was one of those men who are born and not made. He opened his eyes to find himself in an atmosphere of aristocratic roguery. The beautiful old house in which his father lived was mortgaged to the very tops of the chimneys. It was maintained on money borrowed from the loan sharks at an exorbitant interest. It was filled with men and women who, like his own parents, were clever and intellectual enough to work for their livelihood, but who preferred to live on their wits and cling to society by the skin of their teeth. In this atmosphere of expert parasites—an atmosphere as false as it was light-hearted—Nicholas was brought up. He was a complete man of the world at fourteen. Even at that age he gambled, raced and borrowed money; and in order to provide himself with the necessities of life he ran a roulette table in secret at Eton and made a book for the racing bets of the little boys of his own kidney. Highly gifted and endowed with a most likable personality, with the art of eluding punishment for misdeeds brought to a masterly completeness, he could have been shaped, under different circumstances, into a man whose name would stand high in his country. With the proper training and discipline and the right sense of duty which is given to those lucky lads whose parents are responsible and honorable he had it in his power to become a famous diplomat. As it was,

he entered Oxford as a parasite and would leave the university for the world in the same capacity. He was entirely unscrupulous. He had no code of honor. He quietly used the men about him to provide him with amusement, money, hospitality, and to insure him against having to work. He turned his personality into a sort of business asset—a kind of limited liability company—which brought him in regular dividends. His breeding and good form, his well-known name and his inherent ability to slide comfortably into any set or society, made him wholly irresistible. No one suspected him, because his frankness disarmed suspicion. His knowledge of human nature told him that the paradox of his being poor lent him a sort of romance, and he always began by telling new acquaintances that he was broke to the wide. In this way he struck the honest note of the men who disdain to convey false impressions. He was poor, but proud, and made himself so attractive and companionable that men were delighted to be put to great expense in order to entertain him,—and he wanted everything of the very best. His clothes were immaculate. His cigarettes were freshly rolled. When he drove a car it had to be of the best known make. He was a most fastidious reader and had once read a paper on modern poetry which had startled the Dons of his college. He contributed short satirical articles to the *Isis* from time to time which tickled the intellect of the more discriminating; and as a fresher had given a performance of *Puck* in one of the productions of the O.U.D.S., over which undergraduate critics went raving mad. Even in his dealings with his friends, the chorus girls, there was a certain touch

of humour which made it impossible even for the most straightlaced to say hard things of him.

In a word, Nicholas Kenyon was a very dangerous man. His influence was as subtly bad and pernicious as a beautifully made cigarette heavily charged with dope; and he would at any time if necessary have stolen his mother's toilet set in order to provide himself with caviar, plover's eggs and a small bottle of champagne.

And this was the man who had shared rooms with Peter Guthrie during his terms at Oxford, and of whom the Doctor spoke that first night of his stay at the Randolph Hotel as an unusually charming person whom it was a pleasure to meet.

In fact, he was the sole topic of conversation in all the bedrooms of Peter's family party before the lights were turned out. Mrs. Guthrie said, as she sat in front of the dressing-table combing her hair: "How lucky it is, dear, that Peter has found such a wonderful friend here! He is so English and so refined—in every sense of the word a gentleman." The Doctor thoroughly agreed with her and made a mental note to invite Kenyon to his house in New York in the autumn.

Belle Guthrie took her brushes into Betty's room, which was next to her own, and looking extremely attractive in a pale pink kimono, with her dark hair all about her shoulders and her naked feet in pink, heel-less slippers, gave a ripple of excited laughter and confided to her friend that she was going to have a more bully time even than she had hoped. "I love St. John's College," she said, "and these wonderful old streets and all the church bells which strike so frequently—but I'm perfectly crazy about Nicholas Kenyon. He is so,—so

different—so witty—says such perfectly wonderful things—and oh, my dear! *did* you see the way he looked at me when he said 'good-night'?"

Betty shook her head—her little golden head—her rather wise little head. "I didn't look," she said. "The light was shining on Peter's face, and that was good enough for me."

What Graham thought of Kenyon came out in Peter's rooms, to which he had gone back with his brother when the family were left at the hotel after their return from a jaunt on the river in the moonlight after dinner,—the quiet, soothing, narrow stream on which they had floated in punts all among cushions and listened with keen appreciation to the throbbing song of the nightingale and the deep voice of an undergraduate singing "Annie Laurie" in the back water to the thrumming accompaniment of a mandolin.

Kenyon himself had gone round to the rooms of some friends of his to play bridge, so the two brothers were able to talk undisturbed. The night was deliciously warm and Peter's old windows, with their numerous leaded panes, were wide open. It was eleven o'clock and the life of the town had almost ceased, although from time to time little parties of undergraduates passed along St. Giles and their high-spirited laughter drifted up.

After having put cigarettes in front of his brother, Peter flung himself full stretch upon his sofa, with a pipe between his teeth. "Now for your news, old man!" he said. "I'm glad you like Nick. He certainly is one of the best. What seems perfectly amazing to me is that while I'm still a sort of schoolboy, rowing and reading, you're a full-blown man earning your living. I'd give something to see you buzzing

about Wall Street with your head full of stocks and shares and the rise and fall of prices. How do you do it?"

Graham ran his hand rather nervously over his mouth. "It's great!" he said excitedly. "That's what I call life. Gee! You've no idea how fascinating it is to gamble on the tape and get a thrill every time you hear it tick. It's like living among earthquakes. I love it!"

"Gamble!" Peter echoed the word with a touch of fright. "Good Lord; but you don't gamble surely? I thought you were a broker and looked after other people's concerns!"

Graham shot out a short laugh. "Other people's concerns? Why, yes; but we're not in Wall Street for other people. I've had the luck of the devil lately though,—everything I've touched has gone wrong. However, don't let's talk about that. I'm here for a holiday and a rest, and I need 'em. I believe I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown before I came away. When I get back I shall have to straighten things out. At the present moment I'm out about twenty thousand dollars."

It was his young brother who said these things—the boy who two years ago was only just out of Harvard. Peter sat up—in two senses. "You? Twenty thousand dollars! Have you told father?"

"My God, no!" said Graham. "I shall get it all back of course; otherwise,—Phut! As to telling father,—well—well, do you ever tell father anything? I'd rather face electrocution than go into father's room with such a tale. Once before—about six months ago—when I had to meet a bill for five thousand dollars, I had a little talk with mother, and after she had a fit she gave me a handful of her jewels