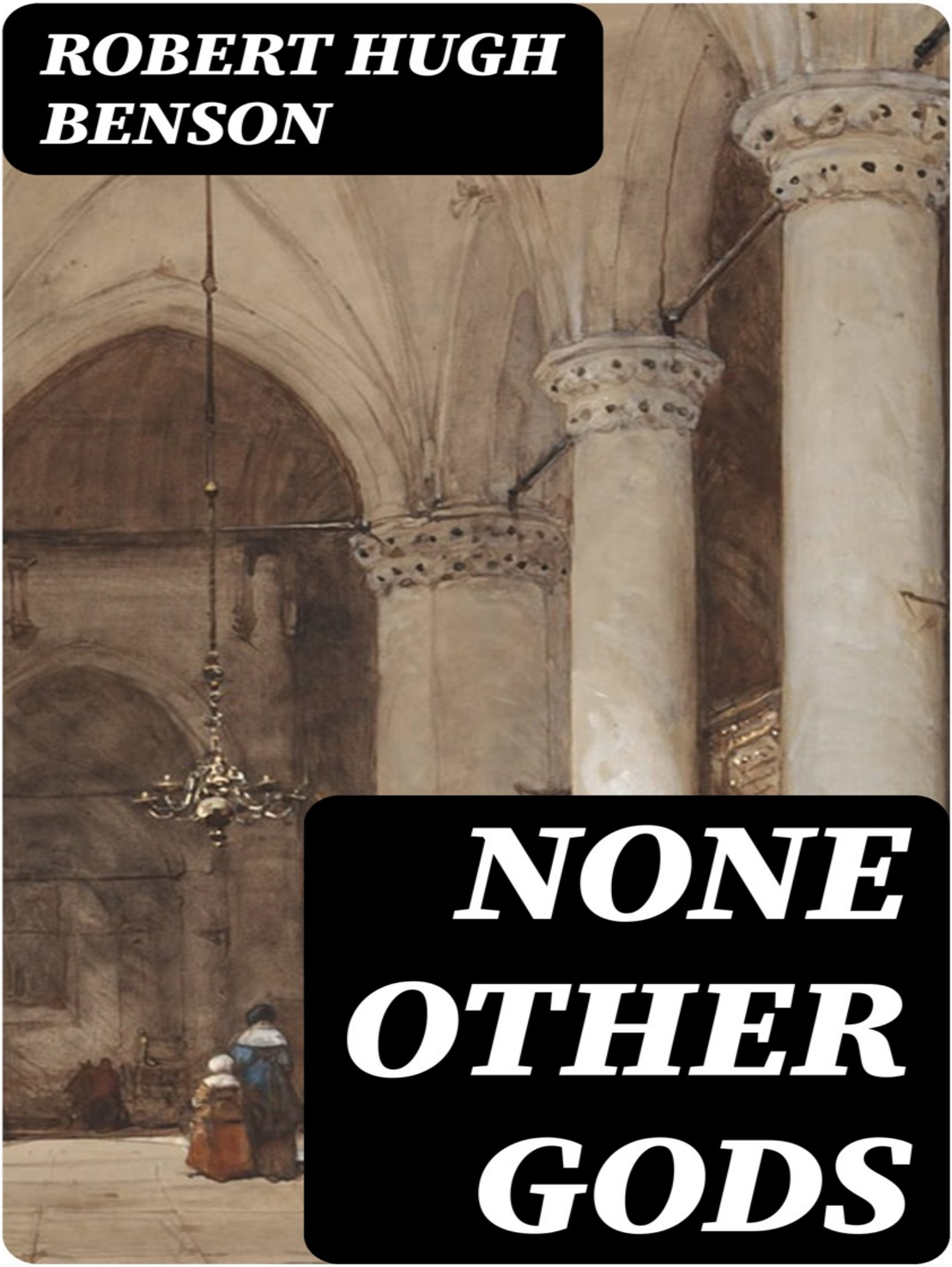
ROBERT HUGH BENSON



NONE OTHER GODS

Robert Hugh Benson

None Other Gods

EAN 8596547383895

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PART I

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

(I)

Table of Contents

"I think you're behaving like an absolute idiot," said Jack Kirkby indignantly.

Frank grinned pleasantly, and added his left foot to his right one in the broad window-seat.

These two young men were sitting in one of the most pleasant places in all the world in which to sit on a summer evening—in a ground-floor room looking out upon the Great Court of Trinity College, Cambridge. It was in that short space of time, between six and seven, during which the Great Court is largely deserted. The athletes and the dawdlers have not yet returned from field and river; and Fellows and other persons, young enough to know better, who think that a summer evening was created for the reading of books, have not yet emerged from their retreats. A white-aproned cook or two moves across the cobbled spaces with trays upon their heads; a tradesman's boy comes out of the corner entrance from the hostel; a cat or two stretches himself on the grass; but, for the rest, the court lies in broad sunshine; the shadows slope eastwards, and the fitful splash and trickle of the fountain asserts itself clearly above the gentle rumble of Trinity Street.

Within, the room in which these two sat was much like other rooms of the same standing; only, in this one case the walls were paneled with white-painted deal. Three doors led

out of it—two into a tiny bedroom and a tinier dining-room respectively; the third on to the passage leading to the lecture-rooms. Frank found it very convenient, since he thus was enabled, at every hour of the morning when the lectures broke up, to have the best possible excuse for conversing with his friends through the window.

The room was furnished really well. Above the mantelpiece, where rested an array of smoking-materials and a large silver cigarette-box, hung an ancestral-looking portrait, in a dull gilded frame, of an aged man, with a ruff round his neck, purchased for one guinea; there was a sofa and a set of chairs upholstered in a good damask: a black piano by Broadwood; a large oval gate-leg table; a bureau; shelves filled with very indiscriminate literature—law books, novels, Badminton, magazines and ancient school editions of the classics; a mahogany glass-fronted bookcase packed with volumes of esthetic appearance—green-backed poetry books with white labels; old leather tomes, and all the rest of the specimens usual to a man who has once thought himself literary. Then there were engravings, well framed, round the walls; a black iron-work lamp, fitted for electric light, hung from the ceiling; there were a couple of oak chests, curiously carved. On the stained floor lay three or four mellow rugs, and the window-boxes outside blazed with geraniums. The débris of tea rested on the window-seat nearest the outer door.

Frank Guiseley, too, lolling in the window-seat in a white silk shirt, unbuttoned at the throat, and gray flannel trousers, and one white shoe, was very pleasant to look upon. His hair was as black and curly as a Neapolitan's; he

had a smiling, humorous mouth, and black eyes—of an extraordinary twinkling alertness. His clean-shaven face, brown in its proper complexion as well as with healthy sunburning (he had played very vigorous lawn-tennis for the last two months), looked like a boy's, except for the very determined mouth and the short, straight nose. He was a little below middle height—well-knit and active; and though, properly speaking, he was not exactly handsome, he was quite exceptionally delightful to look at.

Jack Kirkby, sitting in an arm-chair a yard away, and in the same sort of costume—except that he wore both his shoes and a Third Trinity blazer—was a complete contrast in appearance. The other had something of a Southern Europe look; Jack was obviously English—wholesome red cheeks, fair hair and a small mustache resembling spun silk. He was, also, closely on six feet in height.

He was anxious just now, and, therefore, looked rather cross, fingering the very minute hairs of his mustache whenever he could spare the time from smoking, and looking determinedly away from Frank upon the floor. For the last week he had talked over this affair, ever since the amazing announcement; and had come to the conclusion that once more, in this preposterous scheme, Frank really meant what he said.

Frank had a terrible way of meaning what he said—he reflected with dismay. There was the affair of the bread and butter three years ago, before either of them had learned manners. This had consisted in the fastening up in separate brown-paper parcels innumerable pieces of bread and butter, addressing each with the name of the Reverend

Junior Dean (who had annoyed Frank in some way), and the leaving of the parcels about in every corner of Cambridge, in hansom cabs, on seats, on shop-counters and on the pavements—with the result that for the next two or three days the dean's staircase was crowded with messenger boys and unemployables, anxious to return apparently lost property.

Then there had been the matter of the flagging of a fast Northern train in the middle of the fens with a red pocket-handkerchief, to find out if it were really true that the train would stop, followed by a rapid retreat on bicycles so soon as it had been ascertained that it was true; the Affair of the German Prince traveling incognito, into which the Mayor himself had been drawn; and the Affair of the Nun who smoked a short black pipe in the Great Court shortly before midnight, before gathering up her skirts and vanishing on noiseless india-rubber-shod feet round the kitchen quarters into the gloom of Neville's Court, as the horrified porter descended from his signal-box.

Now many minds could have conceived these things; a smaller number of people would have announced their intention of doing them: but there were very few persons who would actually carry them all out to the very end: in fact, Jack reflected, Frank Guiseley was about the only man of his acquaintance who could possibly have done them. And he had done them all on his own sole responsibility.

He had remembered, too, during the past week, certain incidents of the same nature at Eton. There was the master who had rashly inquired, with deep sarcasm, on the fourth or fifth occasion in one week when Frank had come in a little

late for five-o'clock school, whether "Guiseley would not like to have tea before pursuing his studies." Frank, with a radiant smile of gratitude, and extraordinary rapidity, had answered that he would like it very much indeed, and had vanished through the still half-open door before another word could be uttered, returning with a look of childlike innocence at about five-and-twenty minutes to six.

"Please, sir," he had said, "I thought you said I might go?"

"And have you had tea?"

"Why, certainly, sir; at Webber's."

Now all this kind of thing was a little disconcerting to remember now. Truly, the things in themselves had been admirably conceived and faithfully executed, but they seemed to show that Frank was the kind of person who really carried through what other people only talked about—and especially if he announced beforehand that he intended to do it.

It was a little dismaying, therefore, for his friend to reflect that upon the arrival of the famous letter from Lord Talgarth—Frank's father—six days previously, in which all the well-worn phrases occurred as to "darkening doors" and "roof" and "disgrace to the family," Frank had announced that he proposed to take his father at his word, sell up his property and set out like a prince in a fairy-tale to make his fortune.

Jack had argued till he was sick of it, and to no avail. Frank had a parry for every thrust. Why wouldn't he wait a bit until the governor had had time to cool down? Because the governor must learn, sooner or later, that words really

meant something, and that he—Frank—was not going to stand it for one instant.

Why wouldn't he come and stay at Barham till further notice? They'd all be delighted to have him: It was only ten miles off Merefield, and perhaps—Because Frank was not going to sponge upon his friends. Neither was he going to skulk about near home. Well, if he was so damned obstinate, why didn't he go into the City—or even to the Bar? Because (1) he hadn't any money; and (2) he would infinitely sooner go on the tramp than sit on a stool. Well, why didn't he enlist, like a gentleman? Frank dared say he would some time, but he wanted to stand by himself a bit first and see the world.

"Let's see the letter again," said Jack at last. "Where is it?"

Frank reflected.

"I think it's in that tobacco-jar just behind your head," he said. "No, it isn't; it's in the pouch on the floor. I know I associated it somehow with smoking. And, by the way, give me a cigarette."

Jack tossed him his case, opened the pouch, took out the letter, and read it slowly through again.

> "Merefield Court,
> "near Harrogate.
> "May 28th, *Thursday*.

"I am ashamed of you, sir. When you first told me of your intention, I warned you what would happen if you persisted, and I repeat it now. Since you have deliberately chosen, in spite of all that I have said, to go your own way, and to

become a Papist, I will have no more to do with you. From this moment you cease to be my son. You shall not, while I live, darken my doors again, or sleep under my roof. I say nothing of what you have had from me in the past—your education and all the rest. And, since I do not wish to be unduly hard upon you, you can keep the remainder of your allowance up to July and the furniture of your rooms. But, after that, not one penny shall you have from me. You can go to your priests and get them to support you.

"I am only thankful that your poor mother has been spared this blow.

"T."

Jack made a small murmurous sound as he finished. Frank chuckled aloud.

"Pitches it in all right, doesn't he?" he observed dispassionately.

"If it had been my governor—" began Jack slowly.

"My dear man, it isn't your governor; it's mine. And I'm dashed if there's another man in the world who'd write such a letter as that nowadays. It's—it's too early-Victorian. They'd hardly stand it at the Adelphi! I could have put it so much better myself.... Poor old governor!"

"Have you answered it?"

"I ... I forget. I know I meant to.... No, I haven't. I remember now. And I shan't till I'm just off."

"Well, I shall," remarked Jack.

Frank turned a swift face upon him.

"If you do," he said, with sudden fierce gravity, "I'll never speak to you again. I mean it. It's my affair, and I shall run it

my own way."

"But—"

"I mean it. Now! give me your word of honor—"

"I—"

"Your word of honor, this instant, or get out of my room!"

There was a pause. Then:

"All right," said Jack.

Then there fell a silence once more.

(II)

Table of Contents

The news began to be rumored about, soon after the auction that Frank held of his effects a couple of days later. He carried out the scene admirably, entirely unassisted, even by Jack.

First, there appeared suddenly all over Cambridge, the evening before the sale, just as the crowds of undergraduates and female relations began to circulate about after tea and iced strawberries, a quantity of sandwich-men, bearing the following announcement, back and front:

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE. The Hon. Frank Guiseley
has pleasure in announcing that on
June 7th (Saturday)
at half-past ten a.m. precisely
in Rooms 1, Letter J, Great Court, Trinity College,
he will positively offer for
SALE BY AUCTION

The household effects, furniture, books, etc., of the Hon. Frank Guiseley, including—

A piano by Broadwood (slightly out of tune); a magnificent suite of drawing-room furniture, upholstered in damask, the sofa only slightly stained with tea; one oak table and another; a bed; a chest of drawers (imitation walnut, and not a very good imitation); a mahogany glass-fronted bookcase, containing a set of suggestive-looking volumes bound in faint colors, with white labels; four oriental mats; a portrait of a gentleman (warranted a perfectly respectable ancestor); dining-room suite (odd chairs); numerous engravings of places of interest and noblemen's seats; a *Silver Cigarette-box and fifteen Cigarettes in it (Melachrino and Mixed American*); a cuckoo-clock (without cuckoo); five walking-sticks; numerous suits of clothes (one lot suitable for Charitable Purposes); some books—all VERY CURIOUS indeed—comprising the works of an Eminent Cambridge Professor, and other scholastic luminaries, as well as many other articles.

At Half-past Ten a.m. Precisely
All friends, and strangers, cordially invited.
No Reserve Price.

It served its purpose admirably, for by soon after ten o'clock quite a considerable crowd had begun to assemble; and it was only after a very serious conversation with the Dean that the sale was allowed to proceed. But it proceeded, with the distinct understanding that a college porter be present; that no riotous behavior should be allowed; that the sale was a genuine one, and that Mr.

Guiseley would call upon the Dean with further explanations before leaving Cambridge.

The scene itself was most impressive.

Frank, in a structure resembling an auctioneer's box, erected on the hearth-rug, presided, with extraordinary gravity, hammer in hand, robed in a bachelor's gown and hood. Beneath him the room seethed with the company, male and female, all in an excellent humor, and quite tolerable prices were obtained. No public explanations were given of the need for the sale, and Jack, in the deepest dismay, looked in again that afternoon, about lunch-time, to find the room completely stripped, and Frank, very cheerful, still in his hood and gown, smoking a cigarette in the window-seat.

"Come in," he said. "And kindly ask me to lunch. The last porter's just gone."

Jack looked at him.

He seemed amazingly genial and natural, though just a little flushed, and such an air of drama as there was about him was obviously deliberate.

"Very well; come to lunch," said Jack. "Where are you going to dine and sleep?"

"I'm dining in hall, and I'm sleeping in a hammock. Go and look at my bedroom."

Jack went across the bare floor and looked in. A hammock was slung across from a couple of pegs, and there lay a small carpet-bag beneath it. A basin on an upturned box and a bath completed the furniture.

"You mad ass!" said Jack. "And is that all you have left?"

"Certainly. I'm going to leave the clothes I've got on to you, and you can fetch the hammock when I've gone."

"When do you start?"

"Mr. Guiseley will have his last interview and obtain his *exeat* from the Dean at half-past six this evening. He proposes to leave Cambridge in the early hours of to-morrow morning."

"You don't mean that!"

"Certainly I do."

"What are you going to wear?"

Frank extended two flanneled legs, ending in solid boots.

"These—a flannel shirt, no tie, a cap, a gray jacket."

Jack stood again in silence, looking at him.

"How much money did your sale make?"

"That's immaterial. Besides, I forget. The important fact is that when I've paid all my bills I shall have thirteen pounds eleven shillings and eightpence."

"What?"

"Thirteen pounds eleven shillings and eightpence."

Jack burst into a mirthless laugh.

"Well, come along to lunch," he said.

It seemed to Jack that he moved in a dreary kind of dream that afternoon as he went about with Frank from shop to shop, paying bills. Frank's trouser-pockets bulged and jingled a good deal as they started—he had drawn all his remaining money in gold from the bank—and they bulged and jingled considerably less as the two returned to tea in Jesus Lane. There, on the table, he spread out the coins. He had bought some tobacco, and two or three other

things that afternoon, and the total amounted now but to twelve pounds nineteen shillings and fourpence.

"Call it thirteen pounds," said Frank. "There's many a poor man—"

"Don't be a damned fool!" said Jack.

"I'm being simply prudent," said Frank. "A contented heart—"

Jack thrust a cup of tea and the buttered buns before him.

These two were as nearly brothers as possible, in everything but blood. Their homes lay within ten miles of one another. They had gone to a private school together, to Eton, and to Trinity. They had ridden together in the holidays, shot, dawdled, bathed, skated, and all the rest. They were considerably more brothers to one another than were Frank and Archie, his actual elder brother, known to the world as Viscount Merefield. Jack did not particularly approve of Archie; he thought him a pompous ass, and occasionally said so.

For Frank he had quite an extraordinary affection, though he would not have expressed it so, to himself, for all the world, and a very real admiration of a quite indefinable kind. It was impossible to say why he admired him. Frank did nothing very well, but everything rather well; he played Rugby football just not well enough to represent his college; he had been in the Lower Boats at Eton, and the Lent Boat of his first year at Cambridge; then he had given up rowing and played lawn-tennis in the summer and fives in the Lent Term just well enough to make a brisk and interesting game.

He was not at all learned; he had reached the First Hundred at Eton, and had read Law at Cambridge—that convenient branch of study which for the most part fills the vacuum for intelligent persons who have no particular bent and are heartily sick of classics; and he had taken a Third Class and his degree a day or two before. He was remarkably averaged, therefore; and yet, somehow or another, there was that in him which compelled Jack's admiration. I suppose it was that which is conveniently labeled "character." Certainly, nearly everybody who came into contact with him felt the same in some degree.

His becoming a Catholic had been an amazing shock to Jack, who had always supposed that Frank, like himself, took the ordinary sensible English view of religion. To be a professed unbeliever was bad form—it was like being a Little Englander or a Radical; to be pious was equally bad form—it resembled a violent devotion to the Union Jack. No; religion to Jack (and he had always hitherto supposed, to Frank) was a department of life in which one did not express any particular views: one did not say one's prayers; one attended chapel at the proper times; if one was musical, one occasionally went to King's on Sunday afternoon; in the country one went to church on Sunday morning as one went to the stables in the afternoon, and that was about all.

Frank had been, too, so extremely secretive about the whole thing. He had marched into Jack's rooms in Jesus Lane one morning nearly a fortnight ago.

"Come to mass at the Catholic Church," he said.

"Why, the—" began Jack.

"I've got to go. I'm a Catholic."

"*What!*"

"I became one last week."

Jack had stared at him, suddenly convinced that someone was mad. When he had verified that it was really a fact; that Frank had placed himself under instruction three months before, and had made his confession—(his confession!)—on Friday, and had been conditionally baptized; when he had certified himself of all these things, and had begun to find coherent language once more, he had demanded why Frank had done this.

"Because it's the true religion," said Frank. "Are you coming to mass or are you not?"

Jack had gone then, and had come away more bewildered than ever as to what it was all about. He had attempted to make a few inquiries, but Frank had waved his hands at him, and repeated that obviously the Catholic religion was the true one, and that he couldn't be bothered. And now here they were at tea in Jesus Lane for the last time.

Of course, there was a little suppressed excitement about Frank. He drank three cups of tea and took the last (and the under) piece of buttered bun without apologies, and he talked a good deal, rather fast. It seemed that he had really no particular plans as to what he was going to do after he had walked out of Cambridge with his carpet-bag early next morning. He just meant, he said, to go along and see what happened. He had had a belt made, which pleased him exceedingly, into which his money could be put (it lay on the table between them during tea), and he proposed,

naturally, to spend as little of that money as possible.... No; he would not take one penny piece from Jack; it would be simply scandalous if he—a public-school boy and an University man—couldn't keep body and soul together by his own labor. There would be hay-making presently, he supposed, and fruit-picking, and small jobs on farms. He would just go along and see what happened. Besides there were always casual wards, weren't there? if the worst came to the worst; and he'd meet other men, he supposed, who'd put him in the way of things. Oh! he'd get on all right.

Would he ever come to Barham? Well, if it came in the day's work he would. Yes: certainly he'd be most obliged if his letters might be sent there, and he could write for them when he wanted, or even call for them, if, as he said, it came in the day's work.

What was he going to do in the winter? He hadn't the slightest idea. He supposed, what other people did in the winter. Perhaps he'd have got a place by then—gamekeeper, perhaps—he'd like to be a gamekeeper.

At this Jack, mentally, threw up the sponge.

"You really mean to go on at this rotten idea of yours?"

Frank opened his eyes wide.

"Why, of course. Good Lord! did you think I was bluffing?"

"But ... but it's perfectly mad. Why on earth don't you get a proper situation somewhere—land-agent or something?"

"My dear man," said Frank, "if you will have it, it's because I want to do exactly what I'm going to do. No—I'm being perfectly serious. I've thought for ages that we're all wrong somehow. We're all so beastly artificial. I don't want to preach, but I want to test things for myself. My religion

tells me—" He broke off. "No; this is fooling. I'm going to do it because I'm going to do it. And I'm really going to do it. I'm not going to be an amateur—like slumming. I'm going to find out things for myself."

"But on the roads—" expostulated Jack.

"Exactly. That's the very point. Back to the land."

Jack sat up.

"Good Lord!" he said. "Why, I never thought of it."

"What?"

"It's your old grandmother coming out."

Frank stared.

"Grandmother?"

"Yes—old Mrs. Kelly."

Frank laughed suddenly and loudly.

"By George!" he said, "I daresay it is. Old Grandmamma Kelly! She was a gipsy—so she was. I believe you've hit it, Jack. Let's see: she was my grandfather's second wife, wasn't she?"

Jack nodded.

"And he picked her up off the roads on his own estate. Wasn't she trespassing, or something?"

Jack nodded again.

"Yes," he said, "and he was a magistrate and ought to have committed her: And he married her instead. She was a girl, traveling with her parents."

Frank sat smiling genially.

"That's it," he said. "Then I'm bound to make a success of it."

And he took another cigarette.

Then one more thought came to Jack: he had determined already to make use of it if necessary, and somehow this seemed to be the moment.

"And Jenny Launton," he said "I suppose you've thought of her?"

A curious look came into Frank's eyes—a look of great gravity and tenderness—and the humor died out. He said nothing for an instant. Then he drew out of his breast-pocket a letter in an envelope, and tossed it gently over to Jack.

"I'm telling her in that," he said. "I'm going to post it to-night, after I've seen the Dean."

Jack glanced down at it.

"Miss Launton,
"The Rectory,
"Merefield, Yorks."

ran the inscription. He turned it over; it was fastened and sealed.

"I've told her we must wait a bit," said Frank, "and that I'll write again in a few weeks."

Jack was silent.

"And you think it's fair on her?" he asked deliberately.

Frank's face broke up into humor.

"That's for her to say," he observed. "And, to tell the truth, I'm not at all afraid."

"But a gamekeeper's wife! And you a Catholic!"

"Ah! you don't know Jenny," smiled Frank. "Jenny and I quite understand one another, thank you very much."

"But is it quite fair?"

"Good Lord!" shouted Frank, suddenly roused. "Fair! What the devil does it matter? Don't you know that all's fair—under certain circumstances? I do bar that rotten conventionalism. We're all rotten—rotten, I tell you; and I'm going to start fresh. So's Jenny. Kindly don't talk of what you don't understand."

He stood up, stretching. Then he threw the end of his cigarette away.

"I must go to the Dean," he said. "It's close on the half-hour."

(III)

Table of Contents

The Reverend James Mackintosh was an excellent official of his college, and performed his duties with care and punctilium. He rose about half-past seven o'clock every morning, drank a cup of tea and went to chapel. After chapel he breakfasted, on Tuesdays and Thursdays with two undergraduates in their first year, selected in alphabetical order, seated at his table; on the other days of the week in solitude. At ten o'clock he lectured, usually on one of St. Paul's Epistles, on which subjects he possessed note-books filled with every conceivable piece of information that could be gathered together—grammatical, philological, topographical, industrial, social, biographical—with a few remarks on the fauna, flora, imports, characteristics and geological features of those countries to which those epistles were written, and in which they were composed. These notes, guaranteed to guide any student who really mastered them to success, and even distinction, in his

examinations, were the result of a lifetime of loving labor, and some day, no doubt, will be issued in the neat blue covers of the "Cambridge Bible for Schools." From eleven to twelve he lectured on Church history of the first five centuries—after which period, it will be remembered by all historical students, Church history practically ceased. At one he lunched; from two to four he walked rapidly (sometimes again in company with a serious theological student), along the course known as the Grantchester Grind, or to Coton and back. At four he had tea; at five he settled down to administer discipline to the college, by summoning and remonstrating with such undergraduates as had failed to comply with the various regulations; at half-past seven he dined in hall—a meek figure, clean shaven and spectacled, seated between an infidel philosopher and a socialist: he drank a single glass of wine afterwards in the Combination Room, smoked one cigarette, and retired again to his rooms to write letters to parents (if necessary), and to run over his notes for next day.

And he did this, with the usual mild variations of a University life, every weekday, for two-thirds of the year. Of the other third, he spent part in Switzerland, dressed in a neat gray Norfolk suit with knickerbockers, and the rest with clerical friends of the scholastic type. It was a very solemn thought to him how great were his responsibilities, and what a privilege it was to live in the whirl and stir of one of the intellectual centers of England!

Frank Guiseley was to Mr. Mackintosh a very great puzzle. He had certainly been insubordinate in his first year (Mr.

Mackintosh gravely suspected him of the Bread-and-Butter affair, which had so annoyed his colleague), but he certainly had been very steady and even deferential ever since. (He always took off his hat, for example, to Mr. Mackintosh, with great politeness.) Certainly he was not very regular at chapel, and he did not dine in hall nearly so often as Mr. Mackintosh would have wished (for was it not part of the University idea that men of all grades of society should meet as equals under the college roof?). But, then, he had never been summoned for any very grave or disgraceful breach of the rules, and was never insolent or offensive to any of the Fellows. Finally, he came of a very distinguished family; and Mr. Mackintosh had the keenest remembrance still of his own single interview, three years ago, with the Earl of Talgarth.

Mr. Mackintosh wondered, then, exactly what he would have to say to Mr. Guiseley, and what Mr. Guiseley would have to say to him. He thought, if the young man were really going down for good, as he had understood this morning, it was only his plain duty to say a few tactful words about responsibility and steadiness. That ridiculous auction would serve as his text.

Mr. Mackintosh paused an instant, as he always did, before saying "Come in!" to the knock on the door (I think he thought it helped to create a little impression of importance). Then he said it; and Frank walked in.

"Good evening, Mr. Guiseley.... Yes; please sit down. I understood from you this morning that you wished for your *exeat*."

"Please," said Frank.

"Just so," said Mr. Mackintosh, drawing the *exeat* book—resembling the butt of a check-book—towards him. "And you are going down to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"Going home?" murmured the Dean, inscribing Frank's name in his neat little handwriting.

"No," said Frank.

"Not?... To London, perhaps?"

"Well, not exactly," said Frank; "at least, not just yet."

Mr. Mackintosh blotted the book carefully, and extracted the *exeat*. He pushed it gently towards Frank.

"About that auction!" he said, smiling indulgently; "I did want to have a word with you about that. It was very unusual; and I wondered.... But I am happy to think that there was no disturbance.... But can you tell me exactly why you chose that form of ... of ..."

"I wanted to make as much money as ever I could," said Frank.

"Indeed!... Yes.... And ... and you were successful?"

"I cleared all my debts, anyhow," said Frank serenely. "I thought that very important."

Mr. Mackintosh smiled again. Certainly this young man was very well behaved and deferential.

"Well, that's satisfactory. And you are going to read at the Bar now? If you will let me say so, Mr. Guiseley, even at this late hour, I must say that I think that a Third Class might have been bettered. But no doubt your tutor has said all that?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, then, a little more application and energy now may perhaps make up for lost time. I suppose you will go to the Temple in October?"

Frank looked at him pensively a moment.

"No, Mr. Mackintosh," he said suddenly; "I'm going on the roads. I mean it, quite seriously. My father's disowned me. I'm starting out to-morrow to make my own living."

There was dead silence for an instant. The Dean's face was stricken, as though by horror. Yet Frank saw he had not in the least taken it in.

"Yes; that's really so," he said. "Please don't argue with me about it. I'm perfectly determined."

"Your father ... Lord Talgarth ... the roads ... your own living ... the college authorities ... responsibility!"

Words of this sort burst from Mr. Mackintosh's mouth.

"Yes ... it's because I've become a Catholic! I expect you've heard that, sir."

Mr. Mackintosh threw himself back (if so fierce a word may be used of so mild a manner)—threw himself back in his chair.

"Mr. Guiseley, kindly tell me all about it. I had not heard one word—not one word."

Frank made a great effort, and told the story, quite fairly and quite politely. He described his convictions as well as he could, the various steps he had taken, and the climax of the letter from his father. Then he braced himself, to hear what would be said; or, rather, he retired within himself, and, so to speak, shut the door and pulled down the blinds.

It was all said exactly as he knew it would be. Mr. Mackintosh touched upon a loving father's impatience, the son's youth and impetuosity, the shock to an ancient family, the responsibilities of membership in that family, the dangers of rash decisions, and, finally, the obvious errors of the Church of Rome. He began several sentences with the phrase: "No thinking man at the present day ..."

In fact, Mr. Mackintosh was, so soon as he had recovered from the first shock, extraordinarily sensible and reasonable. He said all the proper things, all the sensible and reasonable and common-sense things, and he said them, not offensively or contemptuously, but tactfully and persuasively. And he put into it the whole of his personality, such as it was. He even quoted St. Paul.

He perspired a little, gently, towards the end: so he took off his glasses and wiped them, looking, still with a smile, through kind, short-sighted eyes, at this young man who sat so still. For Frank was so quiet that the Dean thought him already half persuaded. Then once more he summed up, when his glasses were fixed again; he ran through his arguments lightly and efficiently, and ended by a quiet little assumption that Frank was going to be reasonable, to write to his father once more, and to wait at least a week. He even called him "my dear boy!"

"Thanks very much," said Frank.

"Then you'll think it over quietly, my dear boy. Come and talk to me again. I've given you your *exeat*, but you needn't use it. Come in to-morrow evening after hall."

Frank stood up.