

FORREST REID



***THE GARDEN
GOD: A TALE
OF TWO BOYS***

Forrest Reid

The Garden God: A Tale of Two Boys

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Lucas Finch

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‘My dear Allingham,’ he wrote, ‘it is very charming of you to think of venturing into this remote corner of the world for no other reason than to renew our friendship, and I must beg of you to let as little time as possible elapse between your promise and its fulfilment. Not only do I consider your idea a delightful one, but also I venture to find it really courageous, since to look me up again, after so many years, must be to take something remarkably like a leap in the dark. Well! at all events I hope—perhaps I should say fear—that you may not discover in me any extraordinary change. Indeed, from this moment I throw myself entirely upon your mercy, plead guilty to all the charges you bring against me in your letter. It is perfectly true that in living here the life of a hermit—a hermit, I hasten to add, with a taste for the philosophy of Epicurus and Anatole France^[1]—I have not in the least fulfilled my duties as a good citizen. Doubtless I am not a good citizen. Doubtless, as you so kindly hint, I ought to have married; but I suppose even *you* will admit that it is now too late—too late for me to think of following your excellent example. I

cannot, alas! even pretend that I want to follow it, want to forsake my wilderness. Ah, my dear fellow, I am incorrigible, and you need not expect to find in the middle-aged Graham Iddesleigh an any more satisfactory person than him you found so *unsatisfactory* at Oxford. Do you remember all that I used to be in the old days?—unreasonable, impractical, quite a worthless fellow! Do you ever remember the old days at all? But of course you must, or you would not have desired to renew them. For myself, you know, it is the one great privilege, the one great occupation of my life—I mean remembering [1q]. You will scarce be pleased to learn this, I suppose;—that is, unless you are, with increasing years, grown more tolerant of idleness—a weakness which I confess I do not exactly gather from your letter. But you must forgive me for this and countless other faults. Yes—I remember! Sometimes I remember too much!—remember, in other words, what never really *was*; what, alas! only might have been. You see, the dividing line is so apt to shift a little, grow dimmer, as the years pass.... And after all, it is only a kind of feline habit that was born in me, and that keeps me, like a cat, quiet in the sun, or before my fire, dreaming, wandering in the endless woods of Persephone. Over those woods a gentle twilight broods, and the soft shady paths wind about, meet and cross one another, and lose themselves again in cool leafy distances.