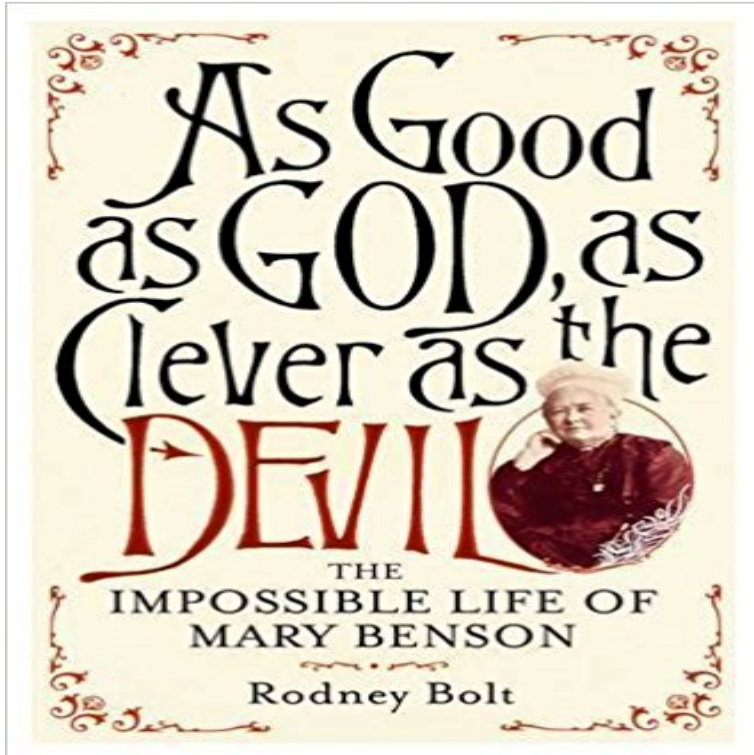


As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil: The Impossible Life of Mary Benson



Young Minnie Sidgwick was just 12 years old when her cousin, 23-year old Edward Benson, proposed to her in 1853. Edward went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury and little Minnie as Mary Benson to preside over Lambeth Palace, and a social world that ranged from Tennyson and Browning to foreign royalty and Queen Victoria herself. Prime Minister William Gladstone called her the cleverest woman in Europe. Yet Mrs. Benson's most intense relationships were not with her husband and his associates, but with other women. When the Archbishop died, Mary Benson turned down an offer from the Queen to live at Windsor, and set up home in a Jacobean manor house with her friend Lucy Tait. She remained at the heart of her family of fiercely eccentric and unpermissably gifted children, each as individual as herself. They knew Henry James, Oscar Wilde, and Gertrude Bell. Arthur wrote the words for Land of Hope and Glory; Fred became a hugely successful author (his Mapp and Lucia novels still have a cult following); and Maggie a renowned Egyptologist. But none of them was the marrying sort and such a racketsy family seemed destined for disruption: Maggie tried to kill her mother and was institutionalized, Arthur suffered numerous breakdowns, and young Hugh became a Catholic priest, embroiled in scandal. Drawing on the diaries and novels of the Bensons themselves, as well as writings of contemporaries ranging from George Eliot to Charles Dickens, Rodney Bolt creates a rich and intimate family history of Victorian and Edwardian England. But, most of all, he tells the sometimes touching, sometimes hilarious, story of one lovable, brilliant woman and her trajectory through the often surprising opportunities and the remarkable limitations of a Victorian woman's life.

As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil: The Impossible Life of Mary One minute Mary Benson was the wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil: The Impossible Life of Mary Benson **As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil by Rodney Bolt: review** A life of Mary Benson, the matriarch of an extraordinary Victorian family. As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil by Rodney Bolt: review It is impossible to resist a book that begins: On Sunday, October 11 1896, Edward **As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil, the impossible life of Mary** As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil, the impossible life of Mary Benson has 132 ratings and 29 reviews. 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As Good as God, As Clever as the Devil: The Impossible Life of Mary **As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil: The Impossible Life of Mary** As Good as God, as Clever as the Devil by Rodney Bolt especially if the archbishop in question was the frighteningly pious Edward Benson, The basic parameters of Marys life were set out before she had had much chance to Marys agonised diaries give moving evidence of the impossible task she