

PAPERS OF A PARIAH

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649011681

Papers of a pariah by Robert Hugh Benson

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

**PAPERS OF
A PARIAH**

Thomas Wilson

PAPERS OF A PARIAH

BY

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIGHT INVISIBLE," "RICHARD KAYSAL SOLITARY,"

"THE RELIGION OF THE PLAIN MAN," ETC.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

91 AND 93 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

LONDON, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1907

Copyright, 1907
By LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

The Plimpton Press Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

B
1752
B30
1907
X X

PREFACE

PERSONS who are good enough to read this book are requested to keep the following setting of it before their minds: —

It was my fortune to meet the author of the following pages in a railway carriage about two years ago, and during the ensuing four months — until, in fact, his death last February year — I may say that I enjoyed his friendship.

His story was, briefly, as follows: —

He had been educated at Rugby and Oxford, and shortly before his father's death a year or two later, finding himself completely alone in the world, he had entered the profession of the stage. Here he was only moderately successful; but he married, in spite of that fact, for he had small private means. Within a year of his marriage his wife died, leaving him once more entirely alone; and he devoted himself again to his art. Before he was forty, however, his health began to suffer; and for the last three years of his life — for he died of consumption at

the age of forty-two—he lived alone in a little house on the outskirts of a provincial town whose name I shall take leave to keep to myself.

Here he began, for the first time, apparently, to pay serious attention to the subject of religion, and conformed naturally to that system in which he had been brought up—namely, the Church of England. After one year, however, of this life, he was drawn to enter a Catholic church, and from that time his interest in the Faith never wavered. There was, however, in his constitution a great deal of inchoate agnosticism, and it was not until within a week of his rather unexpected death that I felt myself justified in receiving him into the Catholic Church.

A couple of days later he contracted a serious chill; and it was during visits that I paid to him for the remaining five days of his life on earth, that he spoke to me of a bundle of papers, and committed them to my disposal. It is from those papers that I have made the selection that form the following volume; these, with one exception, have already appeared in the "Month."

As regards their literary merits they must speak for themselves, but as regards their doctrinal position I must take leave to say a word or two.

They were written, it must be remembered, by one who was not only not a Catholic, but who did not at all continuously contemplate the becoming one. Their point of view, therefore — and it is in this, I think, that their interest chiefly lies — is of one who regards the Catholic Church from without, not from within, though with a favourable eye. He was setting himself, though he did not fully realize it at first, to understand rather than to criticize, to hear what the Church had to say for herself through her external system, rather than to dispute her right to speak at all. And it was, I suppose I may say, through his attitude of simplicity, that he merited, so far as one may merit, the grace of conversion.

With some of his thoughts I must confess myself unable to sympathize; his treatment of the "Dance as a Religious Exercise," to mention one among many, appears to me fantastic and impossible, if not bordering, now and

then, on material irreverence; and his philosophy more than once seems to me probably untenable.

He seems, too, on the most charitable construction, to have been singularly unfortunate in his acquaintance with Anglican clergy; and, for myself, I cannot recognize his dictatorial bully and his spiritual hypochondriac as in any way typical of that fine body of men among whom I number several friends. He seems to me to do much less than justice to the Church of England as a whole.

However, I too do not wish to attack, but to appreciate; my business is that of an editor, not of a critic; I have only so far meddled with his writings as to exclude those that appeared to me irrelevant or certainly erroneous.

Here it seems to me proper to say a word or two as to his person and habits.

He was a lean, fair-haired man of about six feet in height, clean-shaven, slightly bald, and with the unmistakable actor's face, mobile and mask-like. He had his disease, I thought, plainly marked when I first saw him, but in answer to all entreaties that he would go

abroad or undergo a rigorous treatment, he invariably answered that firstly he was not rich enough, and secondly that he could not be bothered. He seemed to think that he would fulfil his function of life better by continuing his regular habits at home, rather than by exiling himself in an unfamiliar atmosphere, or by bestowing all his attention on getting stout; and I am not sure, after all, that under the circumstances he was to be greatly blamed.

He spent a great deal of his day in the garden, walking up and down the broad path that ran from end to end of it, or reading in his study. He wrote few letters, for he had few friends, but he passed a considerable time each day on his diary, which is also in my possession. In the afternoon he would walk again with his dog, and, towards the end of his life, finish his exercise by a visit to the church. I have myself, two or three times, seen his dog patiently dribbling on the steps during his master's devotions within.

I have no death-bed conversation to record. He died as naturally as he had lived, obviously interested in what was to happen, but