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MONSIGNOR HUGH BENSON.

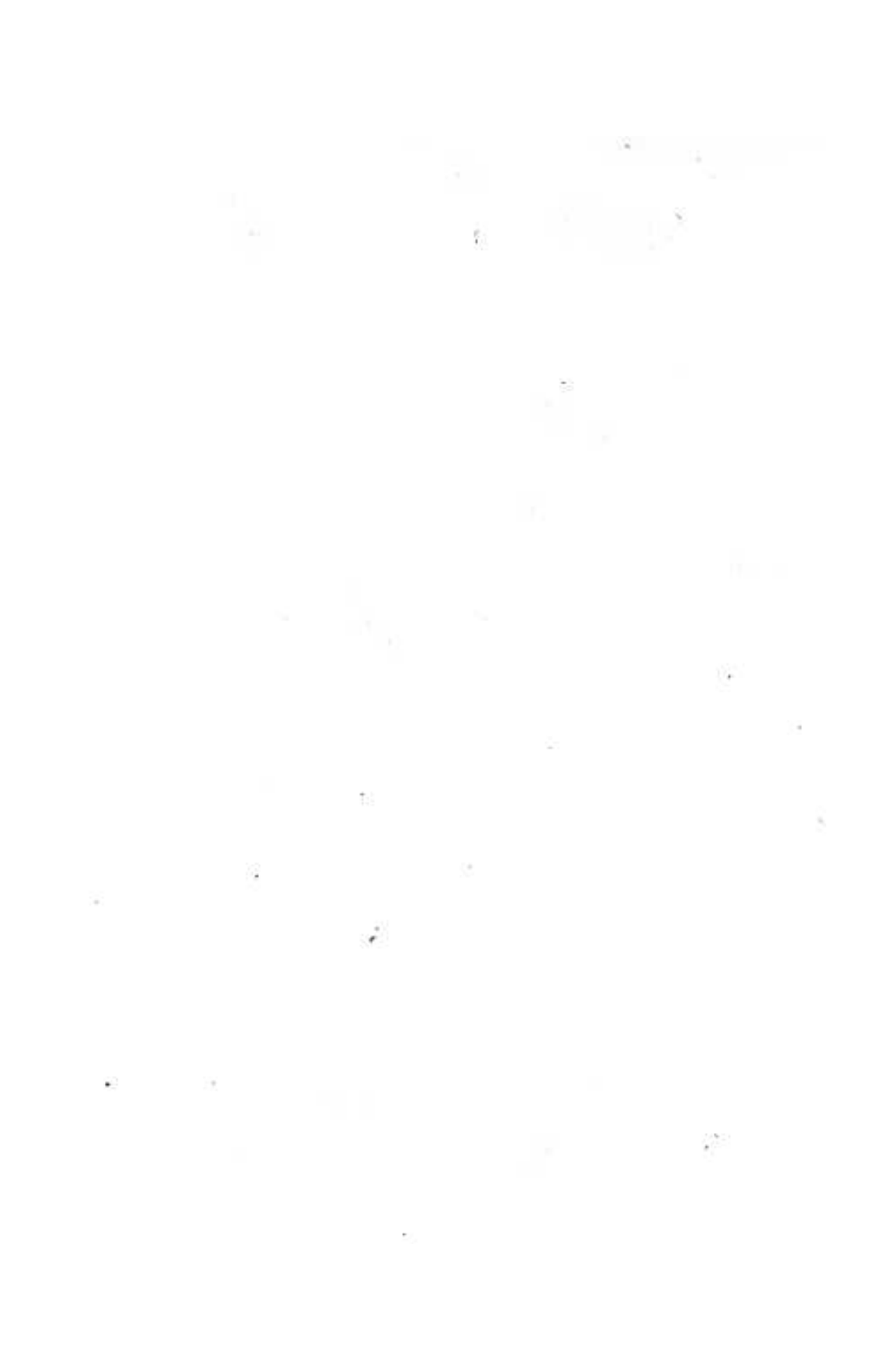
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# MONSIGNOR HUGH BENSON

(1871-1914)

BY ALLAN ROSS  
*(Priest of the London Oratory)*

"Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."  
WISDOM iv. 13.

## INTRODUCTION

IT would be impossible in the limited space available to do justice to the subject of this brief biography. He managed to accomplish so much in so short a time, he was so many-sided in his activities, he was so well known among the men of this generation, there is so much that might be said about him and which must perforce be left unsaid, that it will only be possible to give a brief outline of his life, and then describe some of its outstanding features. The object, therefore, of this brief appreciation of one who passed meteor-like across the horizon of the Church, will be to interest its readers in Hugh Benson, priest of the Catholic Church, in the hope that it will draw them to study his interesting personality more fully in the official biography<sup>1</sup> which will be issued in due course, and above all in the many writings which his versatile genius has bequeathed to posterity.

The reader will find the personality of the writer stamped upon their pages—his sincerity, his dis-

like of cant and conventionalism, his mistrust of the feelings as a reliable guide of human conduct, his marvellous imaginative power and dramatic instinct, his keen powers of observation, his hatred of display, his zeal for souls. And he will find, too, in these books the impress of the man of prayer, who recognizes that union with God is the supreme work of man in this life—whether that union be obtained by the faithful discharge of the duties of one's state of life, with its background of prayer, or whether it be obtained—as in the case of those who have the call—by a life of contemplation. Hugh Benson was a man of prayer, inasmuch as prayer formed the background to his life of strenuous activity, and helped him to go forth with the heart of an apostle, and proclaim the Catholic Church as the authentic interpreter of God's revelation to men and as the divinely appointed means of healing the breach between God and His creatures.

Perhaps it may not be out of place to make here a few remarks on mysticism, because it is very conspicuous in Hugh Benson's writings, and also because it is a subject concerning which there is a good deal of misapprehension.

It is a commonly received opinion that a mystic is a useless dreamer, ever wrapped away from earth, and incapable of taking any practical interest in earthly things. But such is not the Catholic Church's view. She recognizes in mysticism a motive power which impels to real activities, as in the case of such typical mystics as St. Francis de Sales, St. Teresa, and St. Catherine of Siena, whose lives were so very strenuous because of their conscious perception of the Divine presence. She does not teach that