

LOURDES

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Lourdes by Robert Hugh Benson

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ROBERT HUGH BENSON

LOURDES



THE BASILICA. FRONT VIEW

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LOURDES

BY
THE VERY REV. MONSIGNOR
ROBERT HUGH BENSON

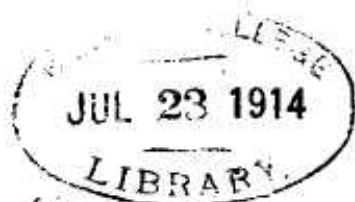
WITH EIGHT FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE.

SINCE writing the following pages six years ago, I have had the privilege of meeting a famous French scientist—to whom we owe one of the greatest discoveries of recent years—who has made a special study of Lourdes and its phenomena, and of hearing him comment upon what takes place there. He is, himself, at present, not a practising Catholic; and this fact lends peculiar interest to his opinions. His conclusions, so far as he has formulated them, are as follows:

(1) That no scientific hypothesis up to the present accounts satisfactorily for the phenomena. Upon his saying this to me I breathed the word "suggestion"; and his answer was to laugh in my face, and to tell me, practically, that this is the most ludicrous hypothesis of all.

(2) That, so far as he can see, the one thing necessary for such cures as he himself has witnessed or verified, is the atmosphere of prayer. Where this rises to intensity the number of cures rises with it; where this sinks, the cures sink too.

(3) That he is inclined to think that there is a transference of vitalizing force either from the energetic faith of the sufferer, or from that of the bystanders. He instanced an example in which his wife, herself a qualified physician, took part. She held in her arms a child, aged two and a half years, blind from birth, during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. As the monstrance came opposite, tears began to stream from the child's eyes, hitherto closed. When it had passed, the child's eyes were open and seeing. This Mme. — tested by dangling her bracelet before the child, who immediately clutched at it, but, from the fact that she had never learned to calculate distance, at first failed to seize it. At the close of the procession Mme. —, who herself related to me the story, was conscious of an extraordinary exhaustion for which there was no ordinary explanation. I give this suggestion as the scientist gave it to me — the suggestion of some kind of *transference* of vitality; and make no comment upon it, beyond saying that, superficially at any rate, it does not appear to me to conflict with the various accounts of miracles given in the Gospel in which the faith of the bystanders, as well as of sufferers, appeared to be as integral an element in the miracle as the virtue which worked it.

Owing to the time that has elapsed since the

following pages were written for the *Ave Maria*—by the kindness of whose editor they are reprinted now—it is impossible for me to verify the spelling of all the names that occur in the course of the narrative. I made notes while at Lourdes, and from those notes wrote my account; it is therefore extremely probable that small errors of spelling may have crept in, which I am now unable to correct.

ROBERT HUGH BENSON.

*Church of our Lady of Lourdes,
New York,
Lent, 1914*

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

· THE BASILICA. FRONT VIEW . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
· DR. BOISSARIE	<i>to face p. 16</i>
· BUREAU DES CONSTATATIONS	” 26
· THE GROTTO IN 1858	” 36
· THE GROTTO IN 1914	” 46
· THE BLESSING OF THE SICK	” 56
· THE BASILICA. SIDE VIEW	” 66
· BERNADETTE	” 78