FROM MANGER TO CROSS

The story of the world-famous Film
of the Life of Jesus

BY

ROBERT HENDERSON BLAND

Who represented "The Christus"

With

A MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP OF LONDON

and

AN APPRECIATION: J. M. BULLOCH, LL.D.

Editor of "The Graphic"

Electronic version produced by Robert David Hyde
(A nephew of Henderson Bland)
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To
MY WIFE

Maud Henderson-Bland (nee Hyde)
1872 - 1952

A Message

I thought that the Film "From Manger to Cross" most touching – nothing could exceed the reverence with which it was produced. I hope that the message it contains will go home to the hearts of many thousands.

Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram
Fulham Palace, S.W.6,
October 1922.

CAPT. H. BLAND

Death Of A Famous British Actor 22/8/41

Captain Robert Henderson-Bland, whose death in London was announced yesterday, was associated with some of the greatest actors and actresses on the British stage.

He acted with Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree during the great days at Her Majesty's Theatre; accompanied Lily Langtry on her tour of South Africa, and acted with Mrs. Brown Potter, a noted beauty of the period.

Captain Henderson-Bland played "Christ" in the film "From the Manger to the Cross," a film he regarded as the greatest work of his life.

It was Beerbohm-Tree who recommended him to play the part, saying that the only man who could play "Christ" was a poet.

Note: I found this newspaper clipping in the book I purchased which appears to have originated from the library of the O.L.A. Convent, Castlemacgarrett, Claremorris - Ireland. I assume that the one of the nuns working in the library pasted it in. (David Hyde Oct 2006).

AN APPRECIATION BY J.M. BULLOCH, LLD.

Appreciation by J M. Bulloch, LL.D.
Editor of "The Graphic."

One summer evening long ago -- for so it seems, although as a matter of fact it is only five-and-twenty years -- a tall, handsome youth strolled into the old-world chambers of a rising young bacteriologist whom I was visiting in the New Inn. It seems so long ago because the New Inn was anything but new. Tucked away amid a maze of tortuous little streets, the place had an old-world air, with its old fashioned, tall-hatted porter at the gate, and its crazy winding staircases : and it seems further off than ever to-day, for it has been swept away out of existence, Holywell Street with its furtive bookshops, and Wych Street, where it stood, giving place to the broad highway of Aldwych, and to towering new buildings, which spell business, and have wholly expelled the private resident.

I shall never forget the meeting, because of the striking contrast between the dreamy young visitor, Robert Henderson Bland, and our host, whose long, white laboratory overall, his microscope and piles of little slides seemed quite out of keeping with the low-roofed old chambers where one could image generations of lawyers literally burning the midnight oil over their Justinian or Blackstone. There was, of course, nothing aggressive in the conflict, or supposed conflict, between science -- which was also represented by a young anatomist, who has since become world famous -- and what is beautifully called the humanities; but the implied contrast and the obvious setting made the meeting memorable, though our ways have lain far apart since then. We had a fellow-feeling, for we were all strangers in London, three of us from the distant north, and Mr. Bland from Brighton.

With no histrionic antecedents, though he happens to bear a name of a famous theatrical family, immortalized by Mrs. Jordan, Henderson Bland had just taken to the stage, for it represented in an articulate way his sense of sound. One afternoon shortly before that, he had walked into His Majesty's Theatre without an introduction, and Tree, with his inevitable flair for a likely player, had engaged him on the spot. After some work at His Majesty's, Mr. Bland turned for further experience, on his discerning chief's advice, to the repertory company of Mrs. Bandmann Palmer, where he got the chance of appearing in a round of plays that mark our greatest literature.

The strolling player's life in a repertory company is an arduous one, but it did not absorb Mr. Bland's entire energies, for he continued writing verse, and in 1904 he published a little volume of high intent, which showed that he had thought on things that really matter. It was followed by a similar little book three years later, and by a good deal of verse, which lies scattered in many magazines, no doubt waiting for the time when the printing of poetry will not be the luxury that war has made it to-day.

Mr. Bland also occupied his useful leisure by writing plays of his own, and then in 1912 he veered into a new activity, for he was selected by an enterprising American manager to create the part of Christ in a series of marvelous pictures taken in the Holy Land, where he spent three memorable months. That manager's choice was wiser perhaps than he knew, for not only was Mr. Bland peculiarly well fitted for the part physically, but all the idealisms which had made him a poet were but echoes of the Greatest Story of the World. His training as a player, supplemented by his artistic aptitudes, made thousands of people in two continents thrill to the "Manger to Cross," and when later Mr. Bland went to America, it was to find himself widely known across the vast continent, which had watched him in the flowing garments of the East.

And then from representing the Prince of Peace, he had, by an ironic twist of fortune, to turn to the tight-fitting khaki of war, for while he was playing in America, Germany, jettisoning the Christian creed, threw down the gauntlet to an astonished world. The call found Mr. Bland ready, though he was no longer a boy: and, although my earliest recollections of him were associated with anything but a soldier's life -- which several of his brothers had adopted -- he hurried across the Atlantic, joined up and soon found himself a subaltern in a battalion of the Gloucesters.It was a lucky choice, for the regiment had immortalized itself in 1801, almost in the same part of the world where Mr. Bland had won distinction, for, having fought back to back in Alexandria in 1801, the Gloucesters bear a badge both in front and at the back of their caps to this day, which justifies the sobriquet the " Fore-and-Afts."

For three long weary years the player, turned praetorian, saw war in France as no Roman praetorian had ever seen it, and as I followed his wanderings on far-off stricken fields, I could not help feeling how the tables had turned : how he by force of circumstance had to become the materialist, and his bacteriological host of the New Inn -- which was so old that it would have cracked at the mere explosion of a bomb -- should be spending his life in mending what Bland's new role had broken. But the soldier; now turned captain -- he is still in the Reserve of Officers -- amid all the gross materialism he had to face, turned inevitably to his art, indeed all the more so, for very sanctuary ; producing some striking verse, of which the best known was his sonnet "The Heroic Stand," commemorating a deathless adventure of the Scots Guards against overwhelming odds. How often he must have felt the contrast between his quiet days in Palestine -- in Bethlehem and Nazareth -- and those grim fields which the Fifth Army had to face: though they indeed realized the agony of the Christian epic, "Manger to Cross," in the representation of which his name will long be remembered by thousands of spectators all over the world, for whom he has made it live again.

J. M. BULLOCH.

A Night by the Sea of Galilee

Night is upon thy hills,
  And peace on thy bosom, O sea,
As I walk by thy waters and think
  On One who has hallowed thee.

Here where the Syrian boy
  Casts a net, and plays with his mate,
The sound of His voice has been heard,
  And the place is consecrate.

About the ramparts of thought
  The thinkers struggle, and climb,
But over them all is the Christ
  With His words in the heart of Time.

R.H.B

HENDERSON BLAND Painting: Herbert Hampton

A Tribute

I HAVE no intention of writing a Preface to this book, but I cannot let it go to Press without paying a tribute, however small, to the disinterested spirit displayed by Sir Trustram Eve in securing the film "From Manger to Cross" for public exhibition in this country. Sir Trustram Eve was present at a private view a few months ago, and was so impressed with its beauty and immense potentialities for good, that he made an offer for the rights in this country five minutes after seeing the film. All lovers of good must appreciate his fine enthusiasm, and genuine public-spirited action in securing the film for public presentation.

I should also like to acknowledge my sense of indebtedness to my old friend, Dr. J. M. Bulloch, not only for his valued "Appreciation," but for the inspiration of his friendship during all my working life.
R. H. B.

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The Annunciation

Chapter I

Unconscious Preparation

I INTEND the opening chapters of this book to be something in the nature of a confession; I write "in the nature of" because I am very sensible of the difficulty of writing about one's self.

It was Heine who, when writing his "Confessions," wrote, "It is an embarrassing, even an impossible task. I should be a conceited coxcomb to obtrude the good I might be able to say of myself, and I should be a great fool to proclaim to the whole world the defects of which I might also be conscious. And even with the most honest desire to be sincere, one cannot tell the truth about oneself." What I have to say about myself will be set down here with one object in view, viz., to explain my state of mind when I made the momentous decision that led me to portray the Greatest Figure in the history of mankind for the cinematograph.

At a very early age, out of my multifarious reading, three writers impressed themselves very deeply on my youthful mind. They were Goethe, Carlyle, and Tolstoy. I read and re-read most of their writings; I acquainted myself with facts about their lives; and I knew their portraits.

Goethe taught me the great facts of life; Carlyle cleared vapours from my brain; and Tolstoy revealed to me a man struggling like Prometheus, and endeavouring to show mankind how Christianity, according to his fierce and stark understanding of it, should be interpreted in this world.

These three men had powerful intellects and arresting personalities, and had no reason to hide from their readers, yet I, a mere stripling, dared to judge them.

Adoration of the Magi

In Goethe I recognised the supreme artist, but his pantheism left me cold; instinctively I felt it could only lead to indifferentism. There was light but no heat. Carlyle gave me a certain vision, but I came to the conclusion that his heady flights into the fogs of German metaphysics would land me, if I held too long to his coat-tails, into a miasma of despair; yet he gave me one sentence that has remained like a burr in my mind for over twenty-five years: "Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into conduct." Tolstoy! must I confess it? I loved him most. Here was a man who said: "I have found truth and I must go out into the highways and byways, and interpret it to my fellow-men even if it leads me into the Valley of Death !"

Imagine it! I had the temerity to lecture on Tolstoy at the age of twenty. I can see that audience in the little hall now. Some present were amazed at my enthusiasm; a few told me they were deeply stirred.

My enthusiasm for Tolstoy lasted for some time after my lecture, but somehow or other, the conviction was borne in upon me that he had set himself an impossible task, and that he was a dangerous guide. Although Tolstoy was treading the paths of greatness, I feared that his career might end in madness.

Nietzsche, whose writings I read at this time, impressed me greatly, but I dismissed him as a leader because he was eventually brought to madness. True greatness is not to madness too nearly allied. I still think my youthful test of greatness was sane and healthy.

Dr. Steiner, the eminent Theosophist, who wrote a treatise on the author of "Zarathustra," at the invitation of Madame Foerster-Nietzsche's sister-went to Naumburg, where he saw Nietzsche "lying on a couch in a comatose condition, inert, stupefied." He was so overcome by the melancholy sight, of such "a tragic

instance of the ruin of a mighty intellect which madly destroys itself in breaking away from spiritual intelligence" that he withstood Madame Foerster's repeated offers to become the editor and commentator of her brother's works and took himself off altogether.

Mazzini once said: "History is not the biography of great men." He might have added "or of supermen."

In the writings of Ernst Haeckel, with which I wrestled later, I came to see something comical. It seemed to me that this dreadful iconoclast was in reality rather a timid person afraid of the devastation he was dealing out, and so fearful that if his ideas were generally accepted "man's inhumanity to man" would make the world such a dreadful place to live in that he babbled of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good -- but leading nowhere, if we needs must accept his premises and logic.

No, Haeckel did not wreck my idealism. I had been warned not to read Haeckel's "Riddle of the Universe" by a kind friend who thought it might upset my views. I read that book three times, and still dared to believe in more than he or I could prove.

Ruskin I could never accept very seriously, much as I admired his style, by reason of the fact that he suffered from repeated mental breakdowns. I feel that I shall have Blake flung at me, but I can only say that, much as I admired him, he was no use to me as a guide when I was looking for a star whereto I had hoped to do some hitching. I can hear some say: But what has all this to do with what these authors have set down in print? It's a man's job to take an author, and tear the heart out of his book -- to weigh and consider. Quite so; but I had a curious way of thinking that if an author's career ended in madness, or an author was brought to madness at repeated intervals, there was something wrong, and I could not "grapple him to my heart with hoops of steel."

Renan, Lamennais, Tissot, and Farrar interested me at this period, and Georg Brandes with his wonderful work, " The Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature," fascinated me, because I recognised in him one who was in the direct line with the great critics of the past, the Schlegel brothers, Lessing, and Winckelmann.

UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATION: Chapter I

I wrote a sonnet to Georg Brandes :

A strong apostle of fair liberty,
Thou lookest o'er the world for such as preach
That of all tasks the noblest is to reach
Where man puts on his godhead, being free.
Has not brave Poland cause to honour thee,
For words that did most solemnly impeach
The brutish fools which time has yet to teach
That truth by force can never conquered be?
A judge of judgment, thou with vision keen
Hast well appraised the written words of men
Who stirred the world, and took the ways of fame.
So many who in market place have been
The noisiest, have fallen 'neath thy pen,
And those that smothered were have burst to flame

.

I received the following letter from Copenhagen, dated Aug. 4, 1914.

"DEAR SIR,

"You have honoured me in writing a charming poem to me. -- I think, no one will print it in the times through which we pass. Now the individual loses all interest. What we shall see will be so grand in its horror that no one in the history of Europe has been witness to something equal.

"Yours sincerely,

"GEORG BRANDES."

This letter interested the editor of The Boston Transcript so much that he asked me for permission to reprint it in facsimile. It appeared in The Transcript beside one of my poems.

The Flight into Egypt

UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATION: Chapter I

The books of Henry George, which so many politicians read diligently in their libraries, and never mentioned in public, had to be reckoned with and absorbed. Tribunes of the people like Lassalle and Gambetta always seemed to me so busy with promising "cakes and ale" to the masses that they lost sight of the spiritual kingdom. A little humbling of the spirit -- less pride in their powers and achievements might have served them well. Mazzini was nearer the truth than either of them.

For some time I devoted myself to the study of various religions as set forth in books on Theosophy, but growing dissatisfied with many of the dogmatic statements contained in certain of the books, I determined to write to Mrs. Annie Besant. I enclosed a list of the books on Theosophy which I had read to prove to her that I was no mere tyro in the study of the science of which she was the arch-priestess. Mrs. Besant honoured me with a reply in her own handwriting, which left me more dissatisfied than ever, and I dropped the actual study of Theosophy from that day, though I still read some of the famous authors, one of the most remarkable being Edouard Schure. His book, "The Great Initiates," is a most profound work, but I cannot subscribe to his view of the Christ. Curiously enough, my letter to Mrs. Besant dealt with the Theosophic view of the Christus. I could never think that there was value in a conviction which could not stand the assaults of arguments however powerful, hence my endeavour to read authors with ideas and convictions directly opposed to mine.

When quite a youth I made excursions into the realms of Spiritualism and attended a great many seances, without earning the label of a spiritualist, and although I am not prepared to deny that some of the phenomena impressed me, I gave it up because I saw so much humbug in it all. As to the visions of heaven as unfolded by a certain well-known clergyman, they are not nearly so illuminating as those unfolded by Swedenborg, whose doctrine of "Correspondences" influenced so many people, including the Brownings and Rossetti.

One of the reasons why Swedenborg has influenced so many men is, I think, because he wrote for so many years in a masterly manner on natural philosophy, and had his feet more firmly set on the earth than a mystic like Jakob Boehme, for instance.
Swedenborg was by no means a recluse, and once said: "In order that a man may receive the life of heaven, it is necessary that he should live in the world and engage in its business and its employments, and then by moral and civil life receive spiritual life."

I owe no small debt to Emerson, but he did not satisfy me, and the splendours of Plato satisfied me less. One day two books reached me from Oxford. They were two volumes of Walter Pater's "Marius, the Epicurean." Here was English prose at its height, and a wise philosopher splendidly equipped and adapted to guide and check the ardent mind of a youth avid of knowledge, and eagerly seeking the meaning of life.

UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATION: Chapter I

Pater supplied the warning to Tolstoy that I had already thought out in my mind but had not clothed in words.

When I published my first volume of verse in 1904, the following lines from Pater's "Marius, the Epicurean," appeared on the title page: "Surely, the aim of a true philosophy must lie not in futile efforts towards the complete accommodation of a man to the circumstances in which he chances to find himself, but in the maintenance of a candid discontent in the face of the very highest achievement."

ENDEAVOUR

In richest natures thought must ever wake
  A sadness, and a hope of higher aims,
Though beautiful and lofty all result;
  For surely none could stand and say in truth
  "We reach the summit here-we touch the verge
  Of uttermost endeavour, knowing all."

When I published my second volume of verse, entitled "Moods and Memories," in 1907, it contained a poem entitled "A Reply," which was an answer to the critic of The Morning Leader, who wrote of my first book: "Mr. Bland's poems show study of the poets and appreciation of poetry, but do not convince one that the author has himself any message for the world."

The first stanza in my poem entitled "A Reply," which did not appear till three years had elapsed, was as follows:-

Tis true my songs tell no new truths to men
  Ah, who am I, that I as yet should dare
To give the world a message with my pen?
   grope as others grope who seek the stair
Which leads to heights where Latmos shows less fair,
  And grieve not finding Hope's great flag unfurled.
Let it suffice that I do not despair,
  But steadfast do believe that all upcurled
Lies ultimate perfection sleeping in the world.

I am setting all this down to show that I was at this time deliberately trying to beat my music out. I have said nothing about the poets, "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind" as Shelley calls them.

UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATION: Chapter I

TO SHELLEY

What stricken lute could yield a note so sweet
As sung of thee.? What mind had fairer dreams?
Thine was the pain of yearning for extremes
In beauty, and in truth. How thou didst beat
About the unapparent ways with heat
And eager questioning, and yet no gleams
Of truth could save thee from the touch and screams
Of misery, where fools and wise must meet.

With wild exultance, and with grief thy days
Were passed, in scorn for confines of a creed :
Yet thou didst deem the spirit's noblest need
A hope to pierce with thought, in wide surveys,
The veil of things unknown. Surely the Spring
Were fairer now if thou wert here to sing?

The Carpenters Shop

But of course I owe a great deal to the poets. I must confess I was always more attracted to them when they had on their singing robes and were not too full of the urgency of their messages. But now I am going to venture on a message myself. I went into the war wishing to put things to the test. I wanted to test myself, and most of all I wanted to test my ideas about Christianity. None of these things were proclaimed by me, and I should not proclaim them now but for the fact that I am identified with the film "From Manger to Cross."

A famous author in one of his recent articles said that men went into the late war to end war. I venture to think that the author in question was wrong in his surmise.

I never met a single man in the line who led me to believe that such an idea influenced him. I am convinced that most men -- I am speaking of the volunteers

and not the conscripts -- went into the war because they thought that the country was threatened, and because they knew that the best of British manhood was fighting, suffering, and dying. Consciously or unconsciously men were obeying the urge of the spirit of self-giving which is manifested in the highest degree in the Christian faith; and although religion was not on their lips, their hearts were full of the great impulses that have swayed the world.

I have three letters by me from three men killed in the war. One from Arthur Scott-Craven, poet and actor; one from my own brother; and one from Alan Seeger, the poet. One writes to say that he has asked to be relieved of a staff appointment so as to enable him to come in contact with the real thing; another writes from hospital while recovering from a serious wound to say that he must get back to the "front" as soon as possible, because they are doing big things out there; and Alan Seeger speaks of the love he feels for the men with whom his lot is cast, and those men were men of the Foreign Legion.

Numbers of people have wondered why so many soldiers wrote poetry. I think I can supply an answer.

I was the first to see Alan Seeger's MSS. I met him in Paris in 1913, and after a long conversation I abruptly said, "You have written poetry." He blushed and replied, "Yes, but no one has seen any of it." I said, "You are going to let me see it." He brought to my hotel in the morning his poems set up and ready for publication.

I was immensely impressed with the poems, and tried to get a well-known publisher in London to print Seeger's book, but it was turned down.

After Seeger's death, Messrs. Constable published his poems with an introduction by William Archer, who refers to him as a very rare spirit, and adds that Shelley, Byron, and Keats "would not have disdained his gift of song." The book was received with enthusiasm, and the manager of Brentano's shop in Paris told me that it was the biggest seller of its year.

Well, before the war Seeger was ashamed to admit that he wrote poetry; when he was at the "front" he proclaimed his passion for that great art. Julian Grenfell, another rare spirit, did the same, and fell with a verse on his lips. Ridicule could not touch and wither the spirits of men who were fighting, and any charge of effeminacy passed them by.

> "Whoso can look on Death will start at no shadows."

Were not Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Dante soldiers? No! men who fought in the war did not fight to end war, but they might have hoped, as the survivors have hoped, that the tiresome old heaven known before the war might be broken up. Is it broken up? No. The same old gods are enthroned, and they smile benignly upon us and disarm us with the crumbs they drop.

UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATION: Chapter I

The theory of Malthus, that war is a necessity because "there is a tendency in populations to increase beyond the means of subsistence," is terrible in its cynicism and not true; and if it was true then we ought to devise better means of "thinning down redundant populations."

The war has taught me one thing in particular among many things, and that one thing is that idealism is going to save the world. Only two days ago I listened to someone lecturing on "The League of Nations," and the speaker said there were two roads to choose -- Law and Force, but he never once dwelt on the way of Love, the necessity for idealism.

I know it is the common cry that Christianity has failed; but has it failed? It was negation, lack of vision and of faith, that brought about the last war, and it will bring about another war unless disinterestedness prevails among our leaders and is through them communicated to the people.

Law and Force! Have we not too long relied on these broken reeds? They have failed us and will continue to fail us unless we can add a dominating partner -- Love. The great characters are the great lovers, and the greatest character-builder is the Christian faith. St. Francis of Assisi was a great lover. "The omnivorous biped that wears breeches; -- the forked radish" -- Man, was loved by him even when loathsome with disease and mean in character.

I am sure that this degree of love was known by Alan Seeger and many soldiers at the "front."

Dr. Arnold of Rugby, the great maker of men rather than of scholars, once said in reply to some praise lavished on one of his clever pupils by whom he was not impressed : "Mere intellectual acuteness divested, as it is in too many cases, of all that is great, comprehensive, and good seems to me the very spirit of Mephistopheles."

Our training generally leads us to be pickers and choosers; and our insistence on humour at all costs often leads us to wound where we should love. I have met people who divided society into two classes -- the washed and the unwashed. For such as have very sensitive olfactory nerves it certainly must be pleasanter to walk with the washed; but as I and many others have proved during the war, the olfactory nerve can be led to endure and treat of no account that which at one time would have been particularly nauseating, and almost unendurable. I am a believer in, and a lover of, the common man; but do not misunderstand me, and imagine that I accept the doctrines of Karl Marx as the only or the best weapons to be used in the fight for progress. "Freedom broadens slowly down from precedent to precedent." The common man has much to learn, and the privileged classes much to unlearn: and our common need is to learn to love one another.

Foreboding of the Cross

Chapter II

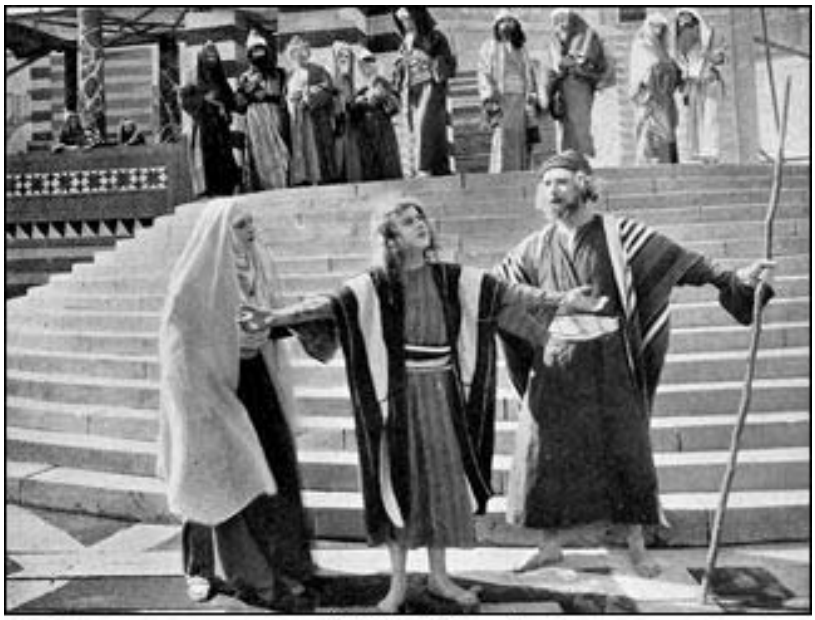
The Call

ON April 26, 1912, I was rung up on the telephone and asked if I was prepared to accept an engagement to go to Jerusalem; that was surprising enough, but when, on inquiring what I was expected to do there, I was told that I was to portray the Central Figure in a series of pictures dealing with the life of Christ to be made in the actual environment of the .immortal story, I was astounded and appalled. I immediately determined to refuse such an offer, but on second thoughts consented to meet the producer to enable me to learn more of the project. I hurried to Blackmore's well-known offices in Garrick Street, and there I was introduced to Sidney Olcott, a Canadian who had spent many years in America. Sidney Olcott, who made the film "From Manger to Cross," impressed and interested me immediately. His earnestness and thoroughness appealed to me, and when I saw some of the photographs of "The Flight into Egypt," scenes of which had already been filmed, I realised that no ordinary man was handling this tremendous enterprise. Olcott was one of a band of keen men who had graduated in the Bioscope Studio, New York, and when he left to join the Kalem Company D. W. Griffith got his first chance. Olcott showed me a letter from the Department of Foreign Affairs at The White House, Washington, to the Governor of Palestine asking him to afford the company every assistance in his power, and he talked to me a long time about what he intended to do, and talked with infectious

enthusiasm. I remembered old Isaac Disraeli's words: "Solitude is the nurse of enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is the nurse of genius," and I caught myself wondering if this man had the genius to make a great film of this colossal subject. I decided that he had.

I had to make a swift decision because Olcott was returning to Jerusalem within forty-eight hours. I consulted my wife and we both came to the conclusion that if this enterprise was carried through by a man of great earnestness, ability, and imagination it might have very far-reaching results and do incalculable good. I decided to accept. The question of salary did not trouble me. Contrary to many preconceived ideas about my being tempted by a large sum of money to undertake this grave responsibility, I portrayed my part for a nominal sum, despite the fact that twenty thousand pounds was spent on the production. If I had thought for one moment that the film "From Manger to Cross" would not ultimately make for good, no monetary consideration would have reconciled me to the task. I thought that I was afforded the highest privilege ever afforded to an actor, and I think the same to-day. Through letters, conversations, and articles in the Press I have evidence more than sufficient to convince me that this particular film has made and is making all over the world a great appeal to the best instincts in human nature. I signed a contract with a mental reservation. I had determined that, if matters were not conducted in a seemly spirit when making the film, I would return to London, and risk any action that the Kalem Company might take against me. That my fears were entirely groundless will be proved by what I set down later.

Before leaving London I got together every photograph that I could secure of the paintings representing the Christ, many of which I had seen in different galleries in Europe. Fortunately for me, I was very conversant with many authors who have dealt with the historical Jesus, and rightly or wrongly I dared to have definite opinions of my own. I had talked with men in many parts of the world and had come to the conclusion that the majority of men were deterred from interesting themselves in Christianity because artists, many of the clergy, and numbers of professed Christians emphasised the gentle side of Jesus to such an extent that the character bordered on the effeminate. When I agreed to accept the *rôle* I determined I would endeavour to bring out the force of His personality, His keen intellectuality, rather than dwell exclusively on His tenderness and humility. I meant to try to present Jesus as the *Lion of Judah* rather than as the gentle shepherd. Jesus often rebuked his disciples and feared not the face of any man. Effeminate men do not indulge in rebukes; they go with the tide and smile acquiescence often when they disapprove. Needless to say, I intended to portray the character of Jesus with real tenderness in the scenes demanding it, for what so natural as the tenderness of the strong?



"Wist Ye Not —"

At no time in the history of the world were there so many men and women anxious to devote themselves to the service of humanity, and at no time was religion at a greater discount. A large number of serious minded men and women to-day refuse to identify themselves with any religious body because they think religion namby-pamby. And who can deny that there is some truth in the charge? Only a few weeks ago I met a man I know, on a Sunday evening, and he told me that he had been to church for the first time for ten years, and added : "It was your film that did it." I inquired if he liked the service and he replied: "No; I couldn't stick the sermon. It meant nothing to me." Wild horses will not drag from me the name of the church to which he referred.

Olcott knew that I had had no experience in front of a camera, but this did not trouble him in the least. He told me that he was not looking for an experienced cinema actor; he could have got anyone he wanted in that direction. He was looking for the man with what he thought was the right mentality. What made him think that I had this mentality is a mystery to me to this day. I only talked with him for a short time, mainly about the project in hand, and Blackmore's knew absolutely nothing about my inner history; even my family and friends knew very little, because a curious reticence has always governed me. Anyhow, he never saw anyone else, and well within the forty-eight hours mentioned by Olcott as the time for my departure to the East I set out on my strange pilgrimage. What a task to undertake! At times I must confess that I felt overwhelmed and shrank from the responsibility. Had it not been for the understanding and sympathy extended to me by Olcott I could never have completed the film; but there is little doubt in my own mind that I was prepared for the task by an unconscious initiation. I had known the travail of the spirit as experienced by Newman, and expressed by him in his "Apologia." For months on end I lived

a solitary life, devoting eight hours a day to reading and five hours to writing. So strong was the feeling upon me in my early years that I should be called upon to do some definite task that I deliberately trained my will and kept myself in good physical condition.

In my poem "A Reply" from which I have already quoted, I have a stanza, part of which is as follows:-

> To all lone souls aspiring I would say,
> Strengthen the will through little acts though slight;
> Impose some task that is fulfilled each day,
> And then when God imposes one thou canst obey.

When I embarked on my work in Palestine I was under the deep impression that the task was imposed upon me, and so unreservedly did I yield myself to certain influences that when I had finished the work I was in a wretched state of health and felt as if the physical envelope, my body, had been thrown aside like a thing that had fulfilled its purpose.

Chapter III

En Route

WE travelled *viâ* Flushing to Trieste, where we boarded "The Wien," one of the Austrian-Lloyd boats. It was a fine ship and as luxurious as any liner crossing the Atlantic.

The journey down the Adriatic fascinated me. Who can forget his first view of Ragusa, surrounded by old walls, flanked with strange towers and bastions, and commanded by the adjacent hills? It is of very early origin and is supposed to have been founded by the Greeks. Boscovich, the mathematician, was born here and lies buried in the strange and beautiful cathedral.

I could have thrown an orange on the shore of Ithaca, the birthplace and patrimonial kingdom of Ulysses. The scenery is bold and striking with many promontories and bays, and narrow valleys opening to the sea, some richly wooded with olive, orange, or almond trees and others covered with vineyards. I remember asking the chief engineer, who was standing by me, what coast it was, and in a very bored tone he said: "Ithaca"; and on my exclaiming, "What, Ulysses' country?" he answered in the affirmative, and hurried away.
Poor fellow! I suppose he had listened to dithyrambics about Homer and Ulysses till he wanted to strike any man who mentioned their names.

After dinner one evening Olcott came to my cabin and said he would like to have a talk with me about the work in hand. We talked for hours, and I was surprised and deeply impressed by the enthusiasm displayed by Olcott, and his very evident, grasp of the subject with which he was dealing. I soon learnt what I had already suspected, that Olcott was a man of vivid imagination and keen intellect. After that conversation all doubts about the success of the enterprise left me. I was free to immerse myself with an untrammeled mind in thoughts of the great work in front of me. Olcott seemed to understand me, and I felt I understood him. Never have I worked with a man with whom I was in more complete accord. He told me, among other things, of the ramifications of the cinematograph business, and of the possible number of people who would see the film when released to the world. I remembered that part of his conversation when the Managing Director of the Kalem Company told me in New York, a year after the release of the film, that they had worked out some figures relative to the number of people who had seen the film. One computation was that four millions of people were witnessing the film simultaneously when it was released to the world at Christmas in 1912.

We arrived at Alexandria, but did not linger as we were anxious to get to Jerusalem. "The Flight into Egypt" had already been filmed, the company having made Luxor their headquarters during the taking of the scenes wherein the "Pyramids" and "The Sphinx" are seen. Alexandria to-day is by no means the beautiful city which claimed such

admiration from the Romans that they ranked it next to their own capital, but anyone with the smallest knowledge of its history cannot fail to be impressed when setting foot within its gates. Was not the Pharos, built by Ptolemy Philadelphus, one of the seven wonders of the world? Here the first of two of the most famous libraries in the world was established by Ptolemy Soter. The first library was accidentally destroyed by fire during the war with Julius Caesar, and the second by Caliph Omar, who, when ordering the destruction of the library, said that if the books agreed with the Koran they were useless and need not be preserved; if they did not they were pernicious and ought to be destroyed. This crime of bigotry is deplored by the learned to this day. It was in Alexandria that the Greek translation of the Old Testament under the name of the Septuagint was made by the Hellenists by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus.

Calling of Peter and Andrew

The famous obelisks known as Cleopatra's Needles and the Catacombs, now in a ruinous state, are still impressive. The fragments of columns, vestiges of public baths, and beautiful specimens of architecture all bear witness to the grandeur and magnificence which once characterised this great city of the East.

From Alexandria we proceeded to Port Said, a town that did not interest me to any great extent. The coaling of the liner was a sight I shall long remember, and despite the fact that I was warned to go ashore while this was happening, I remained on deck and watched the scene. I have set down my impressions in the accompanying poem, which originally appeared in The Graphic.

EN ROUTE: Chapter III

THE COALING AT PORT SAID

The tug steams up, and in its wake
  A huge barge swings, and pulls,
Like some brave fish that tries to break
  The line that so befools ;
And black as the coal whereon they sit
  The toilers laugh and jest,
As well they may for the salt of wit
  Will dampen soon in the best.

Two planks are laid on the liner's side
  Where portholes are fast despite the sun,
And up those planks, not over-wide,
  The human ants go one by one.
And I above stand looking on
  And ask what strange chance made these men
The carriers of coal and such,
  And me the urger of a pen?

It was early dawn when I first looked on Jaffa, the gateway of the Holy Land. Seemingly about fifteen miles from the shore a long range of hills, bathed in a purplish haze so common in the East, was discernible.

So this was the country of Jacob, of David, of Rachel, and of Ruth! Those hills in the distance had known the prophets of Israel, and the Saviour of all men had lived and died among them. Perched above ragged rocks and a whitening surf were nestled tier on tier of curious houses with dark walls flanked on either side by clumps of trees. This was Jaffa, the Joppa of the Scriptures, where St. Peter sojourned, and Dorcas bought fruit and drew water. In my youth I always associated Jaffa with one event. It was here in 1799 that Napoleon poisoned a number of sick soldiers, on the plea that it was to keep them from falling alive into the hands of a cruel enemy. Fervent admirer as I was of the Emperor in those days, I found this story difficult to accept or to explain away.

I was aroused from my reveries by a commotion on deck. An Arab boatman from Jaffa, plying for hire, had resented a warning a Cairene merchant had given to a European relative to his charges. He stabbed the merchant viciously with his knife, scuttled over the side of the ship into his boat, and pulled hard for shore. None of his fellow-boatmen attempted to do anything beyond grin in a fatalistic manner. The poor merchant, who was very seriously wounded, was praying fervently and offering to give a sum of money to a certain shrine if he recovered. My dragoman assured me that the money would be paid in any case. This little scene gave me my first impression of the value of human life to some of the Syrians.

After breakfast we stepped into a large boat and, oared by six men, we set out for a narrow slit in the rocks. The Arab oarsmen drew with an easy, confident stroke and chanted an ancient boat-song while they pulled. It is a dangerous coast and at times it is quite impossible to land passengers.

EN ROUTE: Chapter III

Jaffa is the genuine East. Although it has been destroyed in war and rebuilt it has remained in many ways what it must have been in the days of Solomon, Pompey, Saladin, and Napoleon. It is approached by a tricky and dangerous roadstead. Behind the town is a really magnificent orange grove. Through a single gateway called the Jerusalem Gate, which is barred at night (as is the custom in most towns in the Holy Land), the tides of life and commerce ebb and flow. It was through this gate that St. Peterwalked in from Lydda, and Pompey, Saladin, and Napoleon rode in all their glory. The Water Gate faces the sea and is hardly more than a window in a wall, about six feet square and about five feet higher than the sea-line when the water is calm. A breeze from the west will soon fret the water and prevent the porters from either loading or unloading. The porters are capable of carrying immense weights on their backs. I saw one old man with a band round his forehead carrying a piano on his back.

The famous orange grove at the back of the town delighted me. Never have I seen such oranges, or such citrons. In this part of the world they can make a lemon-squash more delicious and refreshing than any to be obtained elsewhere. The secret, I was informed, was to gather fresh fruit from the trees and to use it immediately. There is much that I could write about Jaffa, but insomuch as I did none of my work there I will pass on.

The First Miracle

Chapter IV

En Route

JERUSALEM! There is no word so familiar to us, and none that conjures up such scenes. Jerusalem is a disappointment to the traveller when seen at a distance. True, it is throned on hills like that other eternal city – Rome - but to me, my imagination aflame with the significance of its history, the impression of grandeur came not when I saw the city for the first time afar off, and I said no word albeit many babbled round me. The first feeling of disappointment is soon dispelled, however, by a walk through the streets of the city, where one finds stories in stones and history in everything.

The principal street in Jerusalem is not much more than fourteen feet wide, and is vaulted over. At one end of the street, by the Jaffa Gate, are large iron bars to prevent camels from entering the street. Donkeys are allowed to wander about freely but camels never. The shops are just like boxes, with openings from fourteen to sixteen feet wide and twenty feet high.

The narrow streets, in which two people could not walk abreast, and where the shoulders of a tall man were all the time knocking against articles hung up for sale, delighted me by reason of their picturesqueness. Then, too, there were the tables of the moneychangers, the tops covered with web wire underneath which the money was displayed. Among the most interesting figures were those of the public scribes, some sitting in the courtyards under the shade of the fig-trees waiting for clients and others busily writing in doorways, but all displaying the same imperturbable gravity whether the subject was a love-letter or a petition to the Sarai. Next to these my interest was intrigued by the engravers plying a trade of much importance in a country where seals take the place of signatures.

For six métalliques an engraver will cut your name in Turkish or Arabic upon a seal of brass.

Not the least picturesque aspect of the streets is furnished by the fruit-sellers. Arab girls with baskets of mulberry leaves, which are a favourite dish in the East; and men sitting by apricots piled up in thousands side by side with dusky mounds of mulberries and plums flanked by scarlet masses of tomatoes. All the time passing up and down the streets, the Jews; some stately, some squalid, but all in gaberdines of plush in every hue, their heads covered with curious caps fringed with fur. One of the strangest things about the Jews of Palestine is that they all, men and boys, wear a huge curl on each side of the face. Into the midst of them a Bedouin from the desert, with a Zannar full of weapons, will shoulder his way with insolent carelessness, for the sons of the desert have a large contempt for the dwellers in the city. No conveyance on wheels goes about the streets of Jerusalem, but you can hire a carriage at the Bethlehem Gate and be taken at a gallop to Bethany, to Bethlehem, or to Colonia.

And then there are the dogs, the inevitable dogs, roaming the streets at night and making it necessary for those walking to carry lanterns. I have often seen a Jew, with staff in one hand and lantern in the other, wearing his long gaberdine and curious cap, who would have made a far finer figure of Shylock than anything I have ever seen.

One of the first things I did on arriving in Jerusalem was to meet the company, all the members of which received me with the utmost cordiality. From beginning to end my relations with them were most happy. They were an interesting group, keen and full of enthusiasm. Jack Clark, who played John, told me he had hoped that he would be allowed to portray the Christ, but congratulated me warmly on the honour afforded to me. He said that he would gladly have given five years' salary for such a privilege. Such was the spirit pervading the company. I was taken to see the studio. This had been built on a plot of ground acquired by Olcott. Here a number of men were busy completing one of the Temple scenes modelled on the plans left by the late Dr. Schick, who had spent nearly all his life in Palestine in an endeavour to make a model of the Temple. His widow gave us every assistance and was often at the studio to consult the brilliant young architect who had accompanied Olcott from America and was responsible to him for the building of all necessary sets. This young architect was a charming fellow, modest and capable. I regret that his name has escaped my memory.

Olcott told me it would be a week before he started taking any of my scenes, so I had a chance to look round Jerusalem, to study the scenario -- and meditate on the colossal task in front of me. One of my first visits was to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Constantine built a church over the Holy Sepulchre, but it was destroyed by the Persians and then restored by Heraclius in or about 628. Constantine was always associated in my mind with the frescoes of Raphael, but now he took on another aspect.

More than once has the Church of the Holy Sepulchre been razed to the ground by Oriental sects, but always there have been hands to build it up again. When I visited the church Turkish soldiers were on guard just inside the low doorway, and it took one a little time to become reconciled to such a strange anomaly.

Under the great dome twenty different religionists worship. Each sect has a right to its turn of service before the shrine, and strange services they are with their candles, chants, clouds of incense and incantations in ancient and mystic tongues. The Copts were just finishing their service when I arrived, and the Armenians had gathered in numbers round the choir humming airs and hissing the Coptic priests, who retaliated with frowns. As the time approached for the Copts to leave, the Armenians began to push and jostle: the one side trying to remain a minute beyond the prescribed time, the other elbowing them away a second before they were bound to retire. I thought that the priests and worshippers would come to blows, but nothing serious happened because, I suppose, the Turkish guard was not quite forgotten.

The pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre presented a very different picture. Their devoutness and fervour were really impressive. Access to the shrine of shrines under the great dome is so low that all men and women have to stoop to enter; an idea possibly borrowed by the architect who designed the tomb of Napoleon, where everyone must bow his head if he wishes to look on the resting place of the Emperor.

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Grave pilgrims from all places of the world
  Have sought this shrine, and seek it every day
With nought of riches but a hope upcurled
  In their strong hearts to feed them on the way.
Have I not seen them stand with streaming eyes
  With minds aflame with thoughts of paradise,
Before the holiest of holy shrines among?

Yes, I have seen them, and have wondered much,
  Seeing how strong the spirit is if faith,
As with a finger, some faint heart but touch.

I struck up a friendship with an antiquarian named Hilpern, whose knowledge of Jerusalem and Syria in general was very extensive indeed. He had known General Gordon, of whom he told me most interesting stories, and had also met Lord Kitchener when he was making his survey of Palestine. Holman Hunt he knew very well indeed, and was instrumental in finding models for that artist during his sojourn in Jerusalem. He had a shop where he sold antiques, many of which he told me had found their way to the British Museum. One afternoon a caravan came in from Damascus, and two merchants arrived at Hilpern's place with a collection of antiques. The doors of the shop were locked; Hilpern got me some coffee and a nargileh, and I sat and watched with keen interest the transactions between those three men. Near the end of the proceedings one of the merchants who was sitting

on the floor produced a soft leathern bag and emptied in his lap a collection of uncut gems. It was like a scene from the Arabian Nights. Not a word of English was spoken, and the great gravity of manner displayed by these Eastern merchants was matched by their grave tones. Laughter as we understand it is very seldom heard in Syria. I cannot recall one instance of hearing a Syrian laughing heartily.

At night I often went with Hilpern to a roof by the Damascus Gate to smoke and chat. We were frequently joined by several blind sheiks who would sit and propound the Koran at great length.

THE DAMASCUS GATE

I would that I were sitting
By the old Damascus Gate;
On the roof where boys are flitting
With nargilehs soon, and late
With you, old friend, to tell
The stories of the place,
While your charcoal glowing well
Keeps the smoke about your face.

If the smoking and the joking
I knew 'neath Syrian stars
Could happen through invoking
The spirit thought unbars,
Would I not call the night through?
Or in dreams those hours renew?

Calling of James and John

Chapter V

The Task

AFTER dinner one night Olcott asked me to dress in the character of the Christus.

How was I going to present the Christ? Leonardo da Vinci's conception was noble in the extreme, but to my mind approximated more to the character of John than to that of the Messiah. Hoffman's paintings did not satisfy me, and Guido Reni's were too definitely Italian in type. Michael Angelo's conceptions were powerful, but Luini interested me more. Rubens did not appeal strongly to me; I always thought the "Descent from the Cross," which I had seen in Antwerp, appealed more by reason of its composition and colouring than through its spirituality. Anyhow, I had definite views of my own and I decided to act on them, and took more than an hour putting them into practice.

Olcott was not present and I did not consult him. When I got as near to satisfying myself as I thought I could ever get I sent for Olcott. When he came into the room he looked hard at me for more than a minute without speaking. He then expressed himself as more than satisfied with my conception. It was obvious that he was very impressed. He then told me he was going to assemble the company to see me.

He left the room and ten minutes later the company began to file in.It was a large room, and I stood at one end. I did not greet one of them, nor did they speak to me. After looking at me in silence for a few moments they all went out

as quietly as they had come. Olcott told me later that after they had seen me they went in a body to his room, and told him they knew now I was the man for the part, and pledged themselves to stand by me in every possible manner, and they did, displaying a singular loyalty. My robes, which are in my possession now, having been given to me by the Kalem Company, were designed by an expert on Eastern costume in Cairo. The wearing of the Essene robe did not seem in any way strange to me, because I had worn a toga which had been draped by Alma Tadema when at His Majesty's Theatre. I got so used to the costume, it seemed so much a part of me, that I felt a certain strangeness when I put on my modern clothes.

The Magdelene

The day after Olcott had seen me in the character of the Christus he told me that we were starting out for the Sea of Galilee, where my first scenes were to be taken.

Our party started for Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, about 140 miles from Jerusalem. In Syria the number of miles is not referred to when considering the length of a journey: the distance is decided by the number of hours it takes to do the trip. Several members of the company rode, and others used what looked to me like Dutch carts similar to some I had seen in South Africa, drawn by three horses abreast. We stopped at Sychar for luncheon, and visited Jacob's Well, where Jesus spoke to the woman of Samaria. I was tremendously stirred and impressed when standing by this place where He had rested, and that scene recorded in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. John was enacted, which by its delicate charm and deep spiritual meaning will hold and satisfy the mind of man throughout the ages.

The attitude of Jesus towards women was truly remarkable when one remembers that women of His own race had to sit behind a screen, as His

own mother was in the habit of doing, when visiting the synagogue. There is never any note of condescension and none of harshness. He reveals himself for the first time to a light woman of the Samaritans to whom no ordinary Jew would be seen speaking. Did He realise that women had a finer intuition than men? or was it that He realised the great part they were to play in the world?

It was about this time that the great significance of my task was borne in upon me. A man would have been less than human if he had not felt his soul draw nearer to God when on such a pilgrimage as mine.

A little rest, and we set out for Nablus [Shechem of the Scriptures], the holy city of the Samaritans. It is about forty-eight miles from Jerusalem, and is one of the most ancient towns in Syria. It lies almost under the shadow of Mount Tabor, and boasts of being one of the most fertile towns in Palestine. Mulberries, figs, tomatoes, and apricots abound, while the sides of the hills are covered with cactus bearing the fruit known as prickly pears. In this beautifully situated town Ahab and Jezebel once dwelt in their unholy splendour; and it was in a field hard by that the notorious queen was hurled to the dogs.

SHECHEM (NABLUS)

(The tomb of Joseph is in Nablus)

When first thy gates I won
  Tired, on a tired horse
Soaked with the Syrian sun,
  Day had sped its course
And Night its reign begun
  With Eastern suddenness.

Adown the very road
  That Joseph went of yore
A youthful shepherd strode
  By a hundred goats, or more;
And a camel with its load
  Was padding softly on.

What fairer in Palestine
  Than the gardens by Gerizim,
Where fig-tree, and the vine,
  Grow near the tomb of him
Who was once a fair son of thine,
  Old Shechem of the plains?

The night was spent at Nablus, the holy city of the Samaritans. In the morning at seven o'clock the party set out to Djenin, where it arrived at midday, when luncheon was served at one of the hotels. I remember one thing in particular that happened in this little town which gave me an idea of the primitiveness of the people. George Hollister, our camera man, relieved the pain of a boy who had pricked himself severely with a cactus plant, by rubbing a little oil on the affected part; and later, to amuse a small crowd, lit his cigar by the aid of a magnifying glass and the sun's rays. The cigar-lighting absolutely amazed them, and some of the

elders of the village asked Olcott to leave Hollister behind to act, as the dragoman explained, as a sort of medicine man. Hollister often jokingly referred to this incident, and said if all else failed he would some day accept that offer.

Chapter VI

The Task

AFTER luncheon we set out for Nazareth and drove for miles through fields of wheat, which is much more bearded than ours. Fringing the road, which was one of the most execrable I have ever been over, were large numbers of mustard plants, which interested me very much. We reached Nazareth on the evening of May 13. Is it not curious that in the Bible, in the Talmud, and in the writing of Josephus we come across no records of this sacred place?

Nazareth is a lovely village, and even to-day seems to be pervaded by a spirit of peace. The little houses seem to hang on the hill-side, and the slopes are lined and planted like the sides of mountains in the Alpes Maritimes.

THE MULE-PATH TO GORBIO,
IN
THE ALPES-MARITIMES

O the mule-path up the mountain,
  With the olive trees wherethrough
The sun poured from its fountain
  Beams kissing me, and you
And the little plots whereon
  A peasant labouring paused to smile,
And greet us with an orison
  As we went by the while,
Is a path to tread for ever
  In the mind's untrodden ways;
And one that we shall never
  Forget in all our days.
'Twas like a path of Dante seen;
  Like one his exiled feet had trod,
Which led him with his vision keen
  Up to the very face of God.

On the lower ground were fields of barley and wheat, and gardens with low stone walls (reminiscent of the fields in Yorkshire and Lancashire), in which figs, citrons, and pomegranates were ripening in the sun.

At the fountain where Jesus as a boy often drew water was enacted the first scene shown in the film “Mary at the Fountain.” Later in the day the boy Jesus, beautifully portrayed by Master Percy Dyer, was shown going up to Jerusalem with his parents.

It was quite usual to see as many as twenty women standing round a spring gossiping, and drawing water. The habit of carrying heavy pitchers filled with water on their heads certainly has the effect of giving the Syrian women a remarkable carriage.

After taking scenes in Nazareth, we left for Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, which Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, intended for a Syrian Syracuse. In its day

THE TASK: Chapter VI

Tiberias was one of the most beautiful cities in Palestine, for he inherited from his father, Herod the Great, a love of magnificence in architecture. It was before this Herod, the husband of Herodias, visiting Jerusalem at the Passover, that Jesus was sent for examination by Pilate. He it was who had sent one of his officers to find out Jesus and invite Him to the Golden House in Tiberias when he was haunted with fears after the assassination of John the Baptist: but Jesus did not obey the call.

The Bethany Home

Although Jesus lived within sight of Tiberias, there is no evidence to prove that He ever set foot within its walls. His avoidance of this new city is not easily explained, because He brought salvation to Jew and Gentile. There are many reasons why an austere Jew should look with disfavour on this city of pleasure with its Golden House ruled over by a man who had taken his brother's wife as a consort; but we must look for other reasons where the Saviour of all men is concerned.

Tiberias in the days of Herod must have been a singularly beautiful city, with its Roman forum, stadium, and magnificent water-front. On the Golden House Herod Antipas had lavished his wealth and care. Its roof of gold gleaming in that tropic sun must have been visible for miles round. He brought artists and craftsmen from all parts and encouraged people of all sects and nations to settle in the city, which soon became so famous that it gave its name to the sea on which it stood. From a mint in the city were issued coins that are a delight to the collectors of to-day.

What surprised me very much was the deserted appearance of the Sea of Galilee; it looks like an unknown lake. There is hardly a felucca to be seen, and there are but few houses to be found on its shores.

THE TASK: Chapter VI

The morning after our arrival at Tiberias we set off at six o'clock in huge boats, each oared by six men, to a distant part of the sea-shore; the journey taking us an hour and a half. It was here that I started my work in the scenes depicting "The Calling of the Disciples." Here John the Baptist with his shaggy locks through which no comb had passed, clothed in an abba of camel's-hair, is preaching with fiery eloquence when suddenly he sees Jesus in the distance coming down the hill-side to the sea, and turning with a gesture, John exclaims: "Behold the Lamb of God."

Blind Bartimaeus

In the next scene, Andrew and Peter are seen casting their nets into the sea. The two actors playing these parts had practised throwing these nets during the morning. The net is in the form of a huge bag with lead sinkers at the bottom. It is laid on the right arm and then cast. It opens out and sinks and closes as it is drawn up. I come upon them and tell them that if they will follow me I will make them fishers of men.

By this time the various members had settled down to their parts, whilst for me, the modern Englishman had passed away, and for the time the centuries had rolled back. In more than a mere histrionic sense we "lived our parts." St. Paul's words had been with me more and more the nearer I got to my work and each scene burned their meaning deeper into my consciousness: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." In the simplest scenes, alien thoughts were banished and vagrant moods controlled. I knew that wrong thoughts would reveal themselves in the most casual gesture. Rightly to portray Jesus without gross offence to the holiest instincts and feelings of millions, it was not sufficient that one should control facial muscles and bodily movement -- it meant such a surrender of soul, a submerging of personality, as to make my normal life seem strange to me and my immediate memories alien. I think all true Christians will understand me

when I say that there can be few more searching and cleansing spiritual exercises than thus to body forth in one's own actions and bearing one's conception of Jesus of Nazareth. Even in this narrative I find it difficult sometimes merely to record and not to speak from the standpoint of complete identification. My sole aim is reverently to enable the reader to walk the way I had to go.

"And He Beheld the City"

Later I called "James and John," who were quietly mending their nets in a boat. Here I had to do something more than just speak to them, so after arresting their attention I made a gesture of appealing invitation, and wonderingly they came to me. Simple as these scenes were they made me realise the difficulties before me, and I prayed for inspiration. That every attitude, gesture, and movement of Jesus would be, noted and criticised, I knew only too well. I also realised that no mere acting would save me: it was question of mood, of getting under the right influence. So much did Olcott realise this that he did not rehearse me in my scenes although he spent a long time in preparing the other scenes. After rehearsing a scene Olcott would send for me and I would walk into it and play it almost as if I was in a dream. Of course I had studied and meditated on the scene during the night. I cannot remember where the camera was situated; I forgot when playing scenes that such a thing existed.

After taking the scenes on the shores of the Sea of Galilee we returned to Tiberias, had luncheon, and set out on our return journey, arriving at Djenin at eight o'clock. We spent the night in this little town and at seven o'clock next morning set out for Nablus, where we arrived at nine. At seven the following morning we set out for Jerusalem, arriving at half-past six in the evening. Our dragoman assured me that we had established a record; anyhow it was a record for Olcott, whose energy was simply amazing.

THE TASK: Chapter VI

From the time of our return to Jerusalem until the film was finished a spirit of exaltation took possession of me. Earthly things seemed to slip away. It would be blasphemous on my part were I to try to set down all that I felt. I did not communicate to any of the company, or even to Olcott, the strange impressions that were crowding upon me. Somehow I think the company guessed that I was undergoing strange experiences, because they treated me with a curious courtesy. When I was in the character of Jesus they never smoked in my presence, and never made jokes of any description, although neither Olcott nor myself ever suggested anything to them. It was a spontaneous tribute of reverence to the Character that has moved the world. It is well at all times for a man to examine his soul, but it is a dreadful and a harrowing thing, though yet ennobling, to try, even for a little space, to take to yourself the soul of the God of Love.

"Behold He Cometh!"

I have never participated in anything that impressed me more, and Heaven knows some of the incidents in France were impressive enough. I was filled with a sense of man's unworthiness and deep need, and with a profound realisation of the wonderful sacrifice and redemptive suffering of the great Captain of our Salvation.

After my return to Jerusalem I had a few days to myself because Olcott was busy on some scenes in which I did not appear.

The caravan scene was made at this time, and more than forty camels and a greater number of donkeys were employed. Olcott had a lot of trouble with this scene and was on it for a whole day. To manœuvre forty camels is no light thing. I have seen thirteen camels in a string get hopelessly tangled in the

middle of a street because they were alarmed at the noise of an approaching cart. Twenty minutes was spent in disentangling them.

The scene with The Wise Men was completed at this period. It was an imaginative touch of Olcott's to have them arriving from different points of the compass.

A beautiful scene, “The Shepherds with their Flocks,” was photographed at Bethlehem on the ground that tradition points out as the spot where the great tidings were communicated to them. It will be noticed that they do not carry crooks. The shepherds in the East carry stout sticks to beat off any marauding animals at night, and a crook is never seen. I never carried anything in my hands when engaged on scenes in the film. Their method of carrying sheep is peculiar. They put them round their necks as a woman might wear a stole.

And They Laid Him On The Cross

Chapter VII

The Task

THE first miracle, "The Changing the Water into Wine," was one of the first scenes enacted by me on my return to Jerusalem. I gave much thought to this scene, and it was of paramount importance that I should have distinct views about it to enable me to convey the right feeling.

I saw in this first miracle, which He performed in the presence of His mother and brethren, His rejection of the ascetic teaching of John the Baptist and the Essenes. Jesus being bidden to the feast went, not as many holy men would have gone in those days, with a sour spirit, refusing wine and finding no gladness in the general mirth.

No, He began His ministry by showing that nature is innocent, joy lawful, and that the use of all things is good. He loved to sit at meat with men of the world, and many of His most beautiful discourses were made at the table. Did He not rebuke the Pharisees who murmured against His disciples, saying:

"Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"
And Jesus answering said unto them,
"They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."
"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Was not His Holy Sacrament founded at a supper, and were not bread and wine the symbols of His own flesh and blood?

THE TASK: Chapter VII

There were schools in Palestine that looked upon marriage as an evil thing; not so Jesus. He knew that a nation could not prosper without family ties, and was He not the legislator for the world?

A Hebrew wedding is a social act and has nothing to do with religious forms. The tables are set with viands of every description, and huge stone ewers are set out where guests wash their hands before sitting down to meat. At sundown the bridegroom and his friends, attended by singers and men with torches, would go to fetch the bride. The bride, enveloped in a long white veil, would await the procession, and the bridegroom, without lifting her veil, would take her in his arms, put her under a canopy, and return with her to his house and lead her to the bride's seat at the table surrounded by guests.

It is a curious thing to me to remember the wonderful, uplifting sensation I had when portraying the miracles. When I was taking the scene in the house at Capernaum and heard them removing the roof that they might let down him who was sick of the palsy, it seemed to me the most natural thing in the world for me to be there and doing what I was doing.

When, slung with four ropes fastened to the corners of a rush rug bed, he who was sick was lowered before me, I felt at least something of the redeeming power of One who could say in His own right: “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee ;” and who, turning to the scribes who were sitting there, reasoning in their hearts:

“Why does this man thus speak blasphemies?”

and who could challenge them: “Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk?

“But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins,” Jesus turned to the man sick of a palsy and said
“I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way unto thine house,” and he arose.

The meeting with blind Bartimæus outside Jericho was a truly pathetic scene. Bartimæus is sitting by a wall at the roadside and he calls on Jesus with a loud voice. The part of the blind Bartimæus was played by Sidney Olcott himself, and he played it splendidly. He actually wore the rags of a beggar seen by him one day in one of the villages, and those rags had possibly been worn for over twenty years. I talked with a man who had worn one camel's-hair abba for a score of years. I halted by the blind man, spoke a few words to John, bent down and touched his eyes in the deliberate manner of a surgeon. Bartimæus looked on me and, mumbling with joy, kissed my robe. During that short scene a surge of emotion rushed over me.

It was, however, "The Raising of Lazarus" that stirred me most of all the "miracle" scenes. The overwhelming mystery and power of that scene will never be forgotten by me. We went out to the little hamlet two miles from Jerusalem called Bethany (Beth-anyah, House of the Poor), a place of poverty to this day. The abandoned air of the place, the character of the inhabitants, and the abjectness of their poverty reminded me irresistibly of Eze, the
little antique town set on a hill and one of the most picturesque places of the Riviera.

Bethany stands on a ledge of rock and has magnificent views over the Cedron chasm to Abu Dis and the hills that drop down to the Dead Sea. It is a commanding situation, and I have the pleasantest recollections of taking tea with a Russian priest on the terrace of a small convent one afternoon. I can see the small Greek boy carrying in a huge samovar and inclining his head gravely to me as he set it down before his master. To the Arabs Bethany to this day is called El Azariyeh, from the name of Lazarus, who, according to tradition, was the village sheik. There is every reason to believe that Lazarus was a man of some consequence. He dwelt in a moderately large house, was in the habit of receiving friends, and the costly unguents used by his sister Mary excited the cupidity of Judas. He also possessed a rock-hewn sepulchre, and that shown to-day and used by us in the scene may have been the self-same tomb.

This scene was of such singular beauty and power and impressed me so much, that the note of authority in my voice when I cried: "Lazarus, come forth," startled some of the company.

I think it is one of the most powerful scenes in the film.

The Annointing

Chapter VIII

The Task

ANOTHER beautiful scene, and one that satisfied me as much as any, was that in the house of Lazarus six days before the Passover where Mary anointed the feet of Jesus.

In the scene Jesus is shown a little apart from the others on a divan meditating, and eating a little bread. It may be that He is thinking of His impending doom, in any case He is in a reverie from which He is awakened by Mary, who has poured some costly ointment on His head. Jesus smiles upon her and, refreshed by the odour of the ointment which fills the house, leans on one arm and watches Mary anoint His feet.

Judas, who has been watching the scene, snatches up the vessel that contains the ointment and, turning to the company, says: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ?"

And Jesus says

"Let her alone: against the day of My burying bath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you: but Me ye have not always."

Judas, smarting under the rebuke, with an angry gesture takes up his cloak and goes out. Jesus slowly bows his head, sorrowing over him as the scene fades out.

As the days drew near to the time when I should be called upon to employ my highest powers I grew feeble with anxiety, but all the time I was withdrawing myself more and more from my immediate environment. I felt as if I was being

enveloped by some strange power and being led gently on. I had determined on one thing, that I would strip of mere convention many of the scenes I was about to play. How often I had seen paintings depicting Jesus on the way to Calvary walking with the serenity and dignity of a God, His manhood put from him. I thought that if this film was to make any appeal to the people it must be through the insistence on the human side of the Christ. A labourer from the North of England once wrote to me after seeing the film. He said that the film had made him realise for the first time that Christ was human and had worked and suffered in the world as a human being, refusing to avail himself of his Divinity, or shall we not say, therein revealing it!

The Last Supper

I shall never forget the scene of "The Last Supper." This scene as shown on the screen is perhaps nearer to the truth than that arrived at by any artist or author in the past. Leonardo da Vinci's picture of "The Last Supper," though magnificent and superb, is too Italian in conception. I have a great admiration for this picture, a copy of which is before me as I write, but we were not influenced by it. We were aiming to get as near the truth as humanly possible. The furniture was made to resemble the furniture of the period. A horseshoe-shaped table, and divans whereon the disciples reclined with their sandals by them on the floor, and the correct Passover decorations were used. Antique vessels were used during the supper. I shall never forget this scene when the agony of approaching death comes upon Jesus. The man who took the part of Judas was a magnificent actor, and when Jesus says : "But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goeth as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!" I looked as I spoke to where he, nervous and afraid, clutched his legs closer to him as he sprawled on the long couch.

And when John asks the question: "Lord, who is it?" and Jesus replies, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it," with great gravity I dipped the sop and passed it to Judas, who ate it eagerly and then hesitated. I rose slowly and, looking gravely at Judas, said

"That thou doest, do quickly."

Judas got up from the couch, picked up his sandals, and went out into the night. Although that scene took but a few minutes to play, it made such an impression on me that I can never forget any incident connected with it. There was such concentration of thought and tense emotion that it never fails to impress itself on the minds of the spectators with insistent power.

The First Communion

About this time General Abdul Hamid Pascha, Military Commander and Governor per interim of Palestine, visited the studio with his staff, among others being Nouri Effendi, Religious Judge of Jerusalem; Mr. Haecht, American Vice-consul; Bechara Effendi Habib, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Jerusalem; Issa Effendi El Kaudousi,
Chief Clerk of the Correspondence Department of the Government of Jerusalem; Yussel Zia Effendi, Correspondence Secretary; and Abdun Naf'h Effendi, Director of the Police of Jerusalem.

The General was a dignified, soldierly figure with grave manners. We were all photographed together.

Now swift came and went the days of the tragedy, days to me of pain and suffering. In the Garden of Gethsemane was enacted again that bitter scene which remains for ever the type of uttermost baseness, the lowest in man facing the highest in God. Man betraying, God bestowing.

I have always thought that these few moments before the betrayal are the most poignant in history. Then was He most utterly alone though in the very midst of those He had chosen. The disciples, to whom He turned, failed Him; they slept -- He prayed, and for them.

Dauntless, with His soul strengthened by communion, He awaits the moment of His betrayal. Soon He hears the noise of men murmuring, and turning sees Judas at the head of a great multitude with swords and staves.

Waking the sleeping disciples, He says to them "Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me," and motionless He awaits the approach of Judas, who comes to Him and says, "Hail, Master," and slowly kisses Him. Jesus, looking very gravely at Judas, says : "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

Judas shrinks beneath the gaze of Christ and answers nothing. The drama of this scene was helped in my opinion by the fact that the man who played Judas was shorter than myself, and had to raise himself on his toes when in the act of kissing me. During the scenes in the Garden of Gethsemane, which is owned by the Franciscans, several monks stood by and watched and afterwards congratulated us on the power of the interpretation of incidents in the contemplation of which half their lives had been spent.

The Kiss of Judas

Now came the days that proved the greatest trial to me. I was asked to suffer things that made my soul revolt, but I had committed myself so far, was so deeply under the influence of the great Tragedy, that I cared little about what they did to me. I only know that gradually I became physically weaker, and day by day I seemed to enter into a larger and deeper understanding of the Passion.

THE TASK: Chapter VIII

Jesus is hurried before Pilate -- that scarlet figure of history. Pilate alone among the throng of His accusers seemed to have a something of sanity and of justice, that explains the power of the Roman Empire. He sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who was staying in Bezetha for the feast. Herod began to question Jesus but He remained dumb before him and refused to speak one word to the husband of Herodias -- the murderer of John the Baptist.

Angered at this silence, "Herod with his men of war set Jesus at nought, and mocked Him and sent Him again to Pilate" to be dealt with according to Roman Law. This exchange of courtesies had the effect of making the Jewish prince and the Roman procurator friends. What a stroke of irony in this fact!

No longer was it the timid Pilate Jesus saw, but a man consumed with self-interest, fearsome and afraid that the Jewish citizens would accuse him to his imperial master of allowing a claimant to the throne of Judæa to live. Here Jesus was scourged, the scourging being done by the Syrian soldiers. The thongs of the cruel whips cut into the naked flesh and Jesus writhed in bitterness of anguish.

Yet all the while Jesus is sustained and bears Himself as a King. Just for a moment the real Pilate creeps out again, the honest man who would not wrong a child if he could help it. Still does the great Consul protest that he could find no wrong in Him, and ere he handed Jesus over to the raging populace he calls for the basin and the urn of water and dips his hands deep in the bowl, the while a soldier cleanses his hands and wrists from any responsibility for the murder.

Now was coming the time to make an end. The cross was secured, a huge timber cross fifteen feet long, ten inches wide, and five inches thick. This was the cross which I was to bear up the steepnesses of the Via Dolorosa. Before this, however, the crowning act of sacrifice, came the derision. This scourged my soul as the thongs of the whips had scourged my flesh. In high contempt the soldiery and the people surged around me, reviling and abusing me, fighting among themselves that they might come near enough to strike me down. A crown of thorns was twisted, put on my head and pressed down cruelly tight by two men who, passing a stick over my head on top of the crown, forced this diadem of derision upon me.

After all this I was so exhausted that Olcott thought I should never be able to complete the film; and one evening he came to my room and suggested that he should have a dummy cross made to lighten my burden when called upon to toil up the Via Dolorosa.

I refused to hear of this, because I thought that it would absolutely destroy my sense of the reality of the scene-would conflict with the mood that was upon me and make me theatrical.

When I did carry that cross the skin on my shoulder was rubbed off.

THE TASK: Chapter VIII

Weep not for Me

Then came the last sorrow of all. In the scorching, glaring sunlight I took the cross upon my shoulder and slowly and wearily toiled forward to the Hill of Doom. I felt my heart was filled with the sadness which must forever be unquenchable.

Five times we halted on our staggering procession. Once on the Via Dolorosa, and again, when exhausted, blinded by the glare of the sun, I stumbled and nearly fell just by the Convent of St. Veronica. This is the spot where, nineteen hundred years ago, so tradition says, the blessed St. Veronica brought the napkin wherewith to wipe His face, which, when He pressed it unto Himself, received the imprint of His features, to be a wonder to the saint and all the world.

It was at this point that the nuns of the Convent of St. Veronica were looking on the dolorous scene. The Reverend Mother was so overcome by the sight that she rushed out with a glass of wine and offered it to me. I gratefully accepted it, but the film, of course, had to be cut at this point. The Reverend Mother told me that one of the nuns was so overcome with emotion that she fainted.

At last our journey is ended, and the scene is strange and weirdly impressive. All Jerusalem has come out to the hill of travail, and never shall I forget the awful cries and moanings that greeted me as, in the midst of the Roman soldiery, I stepped into the eyes and hearts of the waiting multitude.

From now to the end events moved swiftly. The cross was laid flat upon the ground, and while I stood and watched, the board on which was written the mocking title, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," was nailed to the great transverse arm of the cross.
Before me swayed and wailed the great multitude. High against the sky-line stood nakedly a strange and cruel-shaped gibbet. This was made of two great upright

poles set solidly in the ground, with a great crossbar running from one to the other of them. Upon this crossbar thick strips of wood were fixed, a little space between each two, so that grooves were formed. The purpose of these grooves I was to learn. Midway between the two uprights a deep socket set in the ground awaited my cross.

Now the board was firmly set upon the crucifix, and the soldiery, seizing me, hurried forward to throw me on the cross. Of a sudden the wailing of the crowd ceased. A great sob caught at their breath and seemed to freeze upon their lips, so that they stood there watching silently the solemn tragedy.

Swiftly my hands were lashed and fastened to the cross. My legs were placed so that my ankles rested one above the other, my right foot and leg being straight down upon the timber, with my left leg, bent, fastened above it. Ropes were bound tightly round my chest. So for quite a minute I lay, while the men drew off as if they feared themselves the next stage of their dreadful task.

To the ends of the cross ropes were now fixed, one at each end. These ropes were thrown over the big crossbar which I have mentioned and dropped into the grooves made thereon. Then all men drew away from me and I was alone in the world. I lost all consciousness of the crowd, all sense of time, all sense of life.

Suddenly the sharp voice of the centurion stabbed my ears. He called an order to the soldiers, who now held the other end of the ropes fastened close to my hands. As he spoke the men commenced to pull, and the cross, awkwardly and jerkily, was hoisted upright. Strange and dim appeared the crowd, as seen first from the horizontal position in which I had been lying, but gradually they came into my field of vision as the cross rose higher and higher.

When near the vertical it took a lurch forward and so came right off the ground. For an agonising moment or two it hung there swinging with never a finger to steady it, and a loathsome feeling of vertigo came over me.

There was a rattle of the ropes on one side, then a similar noise on the other, a little jockeying first to the right and then to the left, and then suddenly, with a crash, the great cross which is the symbol of mercy throughout the ages dropped into the socket provided for it.

The shock was awful; I seemed to lose consciousness for the moment. Every bone in my body seemed to start through my skin. As the cross fell the wailing of the people started again, as if the sob which had been suspended a few minutes before was suddenly set free. Tears began to pour down the cheeks of the nuns of St. Veronica, and all the while the scorching sun beat down upon me.

Hurriedly the two malefactors were fastened upon the two uprights and the cross-beam over which I had been drawn. Swiftly this big beam was cut through and the uprights turned round, so that two crosses were formed, and. the men of

evil lives, massacred to make perfect the Jewish holiday, were each facing me. I felt rather than knew what had been done, for I could not turn my head, but remained hanging before the people.

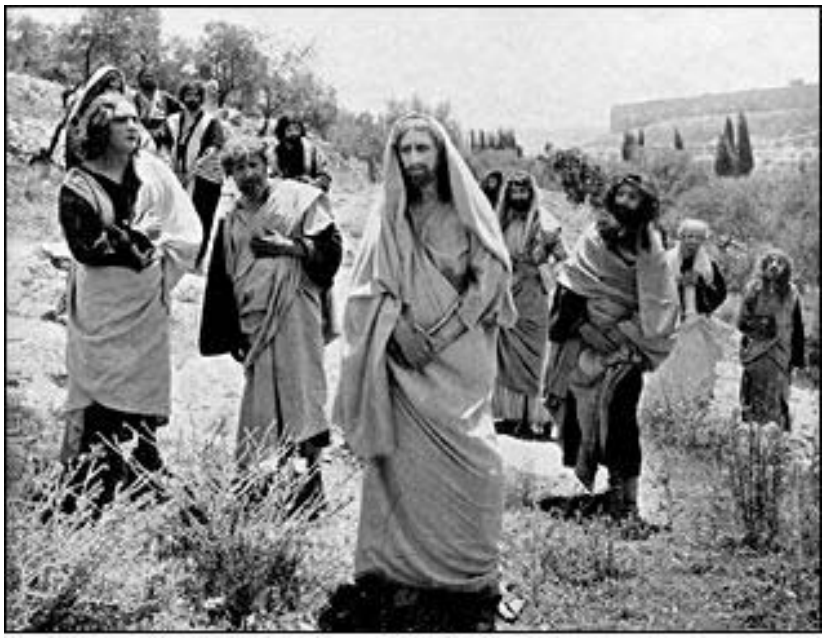
My emotions at this moment? I must not, dare not, attempt to define them. Even now I shudder when an echo of the thoughts which surged through my brain comes back to me. This I may say, but it is as far as I can go. I knew then, as few men could ever have known, what "God so loved the world" must mean!

"It is finished!"

Like a man come back from the grave I go again unto my own place and, dazed with the wonderful beauty and horror of it all, I sit apart and see no man!

It is bathos to come back to the ordinary recital again, and strange as it may seem, I feel that I shall never be able to pick up my life where I dropped it on the Hill of the World's Redemption. I do not believe that any man ever had such an awe-inspiring experience. I do not want to think that any man should have such a time again. All that I know is that my life has taken on a new memory, and I walk in a clearer light.

It is Finished



Unto a Place Called Gethsemane

Chapter IX

A Tribute

IN this chapter I shall confine myself to a few facts about the company, and stories about the film.

Gene Gauntier, who conceived the idea of making the film "From Manger to Cross" and portrayed the Virgin Mary in that film, was born in Texas. She influenced the American Biograph Company to engage the world-famous director, D. W. Griffith.
Miss Gauntier was leaving the Biograph studio to join the Kalem Company, but before her departure she earned the gratitude of Henry N. Marvin because of her plea to give Griffith a directorship.

After spending a year with the Biograph Company as its scenario editor she made a big success in the leading part in a film entitled "Texas" in 1907.

She accepted the position of leading lady with the Kalem Company and wrote the scenarios for the first film organisation to leave New York.

Following this European tour of film producing, Miss Gauntier proceeded to the Orient, where, under the direction of Sidney Olcott, the Kalem Company produced "From Manger to Cross."

Miss Gauntier was married to Jack J. Clark in Jerusalem in 1912.

Master Percy Dyer, who gave such an excellent and sympathetic performance of the boy Christ, was a charming boy, and a great favourite with the company.

Miss Alice Hollister, who portrayed the Magdalene, was a beautiful woman rather oriental in type. She has starred in many pictures since her visit to Palestine.

Miss Lindroth was a charming woman, who gave an excellent performance of Martha. I have often during the last few years seen her in pictures in this country.

Jack J. Clark, who played John, helped his wife, Gene Gauntier, with her company in New York for some years.

J. McGowan, who played Andrew, has, been a director of repute in America for some time now and has produced some fine pictures.

Robert Vignola, the Judas of the film, was a really magnificent actor. Before he portrayed Judas he had played a number of parts in a masterly fashion, and in the part of the great Betrayer he surpassed himself. I remember Mr. Gerald Maxwell, the well known critic, telling me about the Judas at OberAmmergau : how he got laughs from the crowd. He was very much impressed with Vignola's performance. Vignola is now one of the most important directors in America, and has made some fine pictures for the “Famous Players.” His latest production “When Knighthood was in Flower,” in which my friend, Mr. Lyn Harding, played Henry VIII, has lately been released for exhibition in this country. Incidentally, Vignola is a man of singular charm, and a favourite with everyone.

Mr. S. Baber, who played Lazarus in such an admirable manner, was well known in cinema circles, which he has now left. On his return from Palestine he was appointed London manager to the " Famous Players " films.

George Hollister, the camera man, who had a great reputation in America, where camera men command big salaries, was a splendid fellow, never ruffled and never overridden by Olcott in matters appertaining to his own department. If he thought that the light was not good nothing would get him to “take.” He was chosen to photograph scenes in the Boer War in South Africa, and the Boxer campaign in China.

There are many other names I should like to mention, but unfortunately, they have escaped me, for all engaged on the making of the film gave of their best.

I salute all those old colleagues of mine, and wish them God-speed.

“From Manger to Cross” was the first picture in America to be accorded double pages in the Press. This tribute was genuine, and the publicity department of the Kalem Company did not take the initiative in this. I have by me many of those double pages now. The Hearst combine of newspapers had double pages in about twenty papers simultaneously all over the country and it was repeated till

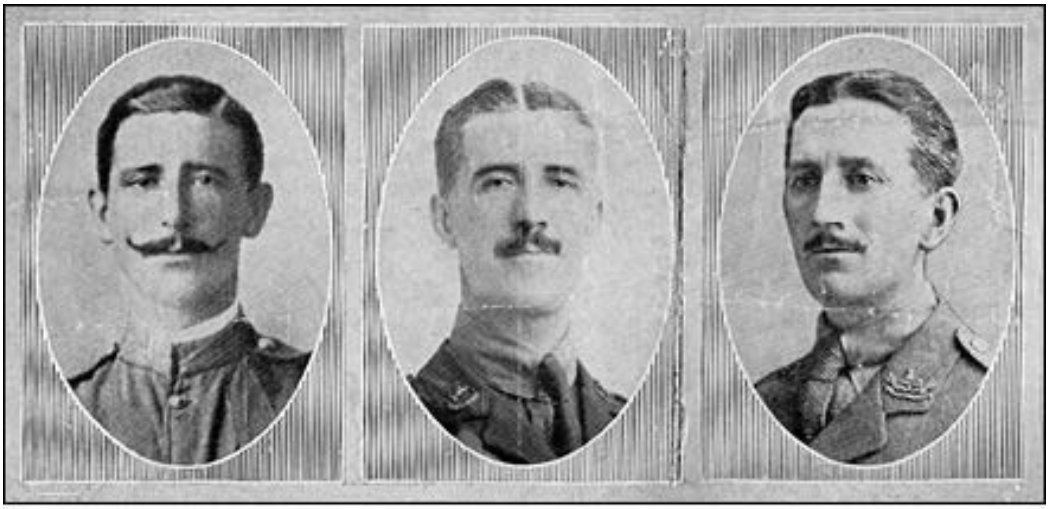
photographs of the seventy-eight episodes were exhausted. Over a thousand columns were written about the film in this country, most of them being in my possession.

Mr. S. L. Rothapfel, Manager of the Capitol in New York, the finest picture theatre in the world, told me when I was in New York in 1914 that his presentation of the film in Minneapolis had made him famous and secured his invitation to New York to take over the management of the Strand Theatre. He told me that thirty thousand paid for admission to see the film in three days. Mr. Rothapfel is the greatest exhibitor of motion pictures that has appeared up to the present.

In his book, entitled, "The Theatre of Science," Robert Grau, the well-known dramatic critic of New York, has a lot to say about what he terms "the epochal" film "From Manger to Cross." On the night of my arrival in New York Olcott brought me an autographed copy of this book; one of the many acts of thoughtfulness and courtesy that he is never tired of doing.

I could tell many extraordinary stories about the influence of this film, but the printer's devils are calling, and they will wait for no man, and so farewell.

LT. COL. LEOPOLD GROSVENOR BLAND
of the Midland Mounted Rifles, South Africa.



SERGEANT SPENCER WILLIAM BLAND
6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons.

CAPTAIN RICHARD BLAND
Kings (Liverpool) Regiment

2nd LIEUT. R. HENDERSON BLAND
11th Gloucester Regiment.

"Actors have done very well in the war, the Green Room Club alone having contributed more than fifty of its members. But that is not surprising, for there is a close connection between the art of acting and the art of soldiering, if only in the power to give a word of command with force. Among the many actors who have joined the colours is Mr. R. Henderson bland, whose stirring sonnet on the Scots Guards at Festubert, which appeared in one of our recent issues, has attracted so much attention. Mr. Bland, however, has lived in an atmosphere of soldiering, for his brothers have already shown him the way. Three of them are now wearing the khaki, ranging from a lieut.-colonel to a sergeant. Mr. Bland himself is a second lieutenant in the 11th Gloucesters, a regiment that holds the greatest number of honours in the British Army after the Royal Rifle Corps, which, however has four regular battalions, while the Gloucesters normally have two."

(Possibly from the "The Graphic" in the last quarter of 1915 – David Hyde)

A Sheaf of Verse

A few poems reprinted by the courtesy of the Editors of The Graphic and The Pall Mall Gazette.

THE HEROIC STAND.

" Two officers and eighty men of the Scots Guards fought to the last cartridge, and were found dead in the Rue du Bois, surrounded by heaps of German corpses."-**DAILY PAPER.**

O WOULD that I had seen them lying there,
A dauntless few amid the German dead,
With twisted bayonets, and rifles spread
Among long grass that surely looked more fair
Seeing it kept a vigil, unaware
Of all the glory hovering o'er the bed
Of brave, proud men who fought as they were led
While thinking on the fame the Scots Guards bear.

Let someone mark the place whereat they fell,
And hedge it round, for in the aftertime
Their fame will draw the many who would dwell
Upon those deeds that made an hour sublime.
I hear them shouting there – "Surrender! Never!
Take the last cartridge here -- Scotland for ever!"

(Printed in The Graphic, August, 1915; quoted by Mr. Stephen Graham in his book, " A Private in the Guards," published by Macmillan.)

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

(November 11, 1920.)

WHAT mother's son is this that they bring here
With such high honour that in all its ways
A nation halts, and dreams of fateful days
The while deep thoughts now beat about the bier?
The son of every mother, far and near,
Who lost a lad in war, and gently prays.
This is the boy brought home-this hour repays
The mothers comforted though falls the tear.

O bring him on with music-bring him on
While we recapture for a little time
The glory of the hours when first we flung
Our banners high with hope the world upon.
He speaks of bloody sweat in every clime,
And strong love known the fighting men among.

(Printed in The Graphic, November 13, 1920.)

A SHEAF OF VERSE

THE LAST POST

A British cemetery near Festubert, where the names of most of our famous regiments are to be seen. -- Written in France, August 1916.

THEY will not take the village ways again,
Nor streets of towns made splendid in their dreams;
They will not wander by the Highland streams,
Nor see loved shores encircled by the main.
Yet will they live, and living ease the pain
Of those that loved them-knew the fitful gleams
From proud, unbending wills for happy beams
And portents of the strength in noble strain.
Near where they rest guns stab the sullen night,
And o'er their beds the shells go screeching past
While bearers bring from van of latest fight
A stricken comrade sleeping long, and fast.
Let them sleep on while England gathers might
To make her future great.The die is cast.
(Printed in The Graphic.)

CAPTAIN M. A. JAMES, V.C., M.C.

Though wounded, he refused to leave his company, and repulsed three onslaughts. He made a stand, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. Ordered to hold on to the last, he led his company forward in a local counter-attack, and was again wounded. He was last seen working a machinegun single-handed, after being thrice wounded.

The Goucesters wear badges back and front of the headdress. The regiment has thirty-four battle honours.

DID your mind see, when you stood battling there,
“The Old Braggs” back to back while Egypt's sun
So haply shone on deeds that nobly won
Them fame, and that lone
Emblem they now wear?
Does not the earth of grim Givenchy bear
The Gloucesters' dead-remembering what was done
In hours all dark with fate, till night begun,
And West to East called : “These men do and dare”?

We know not whether death shut out your life,
But this we know, that you have linked your name
With England's story -- stirred with pride and strife
The hearts of men who wear the badge you wore.
An honour like “Corunna” shares its fame
With such as you, and three and thirty more.

(Captain James first learned that he had been awarded the coveted decoration, the V.C., through receiving a copy of this poem from his mother when he was a prisoner of war in Germany. -- Printed in The Graphic.)

A SHEAF OF VERSE

POPE INNOCENT X

Written after seeing a portrait by Velasquez at the exhibition of the Spanish Old Masters at the Grafton Galleries, 1913.

DESPITE the written word that said of him
That humbleness, and holiness were free
Of all the ways his heart and mind could see,
The Holy Father sits revealed, and grim;
As if he dared the man who came to limn
His features masterful, to find a key
That would unlock his soul's repository,
And paint the truth that time may not bedim.

The crafty, cruel eyes, half pitiless,
Gaze under brows that oft were wont to frown;
And close lips speak of words he could repress.
The chin that helped him grasp the Triple Crown
Gleams through the beard like buttress ivy-bound,
And lends the face that look of strength profound.

(Printed in The Pall Mall Gazette, January 24, 1914.)

A SPANISH GENTLEMAN

Written on a famous Velasquez Portrait, supposed to be the artist himself, in the possession of His Grace, the Duke of Wellington.

SUPERBLY proud, in mould heroic cast,
This sallow, dark unknown, with cheek-bones high,
Looks on the world like one who gives the lie
To such as said the might of Spain had passed.
The painter with his vision held him fast,
And with sure rightness made his paint outvie
The very flesh he sought to glorify
What time he worked a wild enthusiast.

Well might some think Velasquez' self is here,
For genius broods about the eyes and brow,
And lifts the face to that high plane and sphere
Where men put on the strength that must endow
The mighty shapers of all godlike aims,
That play the soul about, and break to flames.

(Printed in The Graphic, November 29, 1919.)

A SHEAF OF VERSE

EUGÉNE CARRIERE

Written after seeing a picture of a woman with a child, and the Verlaine portrait in the Luxembourg.

How he looked through the flesh that clothes the soul,
  This youthful painter, on whose humble head
  The chrism of genius was surely shed.
Never for him the bare facts that control
Some painters with the vision of the mole.
  See how the yearning spirit has o'erspread
  The face of this fair mother who has fed
The babe she fondles! Where the aureole?

Now stand with me before this picture here,
  And on the face silenus-like discern
  The glory of the spirit that could light
The brutish features when the poet-seer
  Caught glimpses of the splendid stars that burn,
Where poesy illumes the nether night.

(Printed in Town Topics during Verlaine week.)

LIFE AND DEATH

"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep."-- PROVERBS v. 6.

A LITTLE blindness when 'tis needed most;
  A little kindness in a troublous time;
A little waiting at a wayside post;
  A little lie when truth were half a crime.

A little anger that we should have quelled;
  A little bitterness that writes its tale;
A little word unsaid-too long withheld;
  A little courage when we nearly fail.

A little meeting of the lips in love;
  A little sorrow, and an hour to weep;
A little holding of the hands of friends;
  "A little folding of the hands to sleep."

(From Poems, published by Gay and Bird, 1904.)

"Nevertheless -- Not What I Will ----"

Letters

20, PORTMAN SQUARE, W.1.
29th May, 1922.

From LORD ISLINGTON.

DEAR CAPTAIN BLAND,

I am grateful to you for enabling me to see the film "From Manger to Cross" on Saturday evening. I was deeply impressed by the rendering of the story -- its dignity and reverence throughout were quite remarkable. I hope an opportunity will be given to people in all parts of the world to see it.

Believe me,
Yours truly,
ISLINGTON.

CAPT. R. HENDERSON BLAND.
From YEEND KING, V.P.R.I., the famous artist.
219, MAIDA VALE, W.
April 15th, 1922.

MY DEAR HENDERSON BLAND,

I had but small opportunity of speaking to you yesterday afternoon, so should like to give you my opinion of "From Manger to Cross." I must admit that I went with very mixed feelings to see it; having great regard for you as a friend, and respect for your long experience of the stage, I still felt that the subject of which the film treated was one of insuperable difficulty, and that, despite the fact of your being an earnest worker, capable of carrying out any task entrusted to you, this sacred subject was too complex.

As an artist, I thought of the Great Masters of Painting in the past. How they were hampered by tradition, and bound by convention, and how in the present day film producers were only too likely to crowd the scene with superfluous and distracting crowds, and to spoil by over-ornamenting. My position in the audience was that of a friendly critic hoping almost against hope that you personally would get through a difficult task with moderate success, and that the whole thing would be passable and not give offence. I was astounded!

The production was a marvel that disarmed all criticism -- everything was in proportion, and beautiful; never for a moment was there loss of dignity or the slightest fear of approaching the line that separates the sublime from the ridiculous; the wonderful reserve and direct simplicity of treatment marked the master mind throughout, but more notably in three of the important scenes, viz., "The Marriage Feast," "The Last Supper," and the great and final scene of all, "The Crucifixion."

I am sure, my dear Henderson Bland, that you will value this my sincere assurance that the work was absolutely flawless, reflecting the greatest credit upon everyone associated with it, and calculated to do lasting good.

Ever yours sincerely,
YEEND KING.

From DR. J. CATO WORSFOLD, M.P., the greatest authority on the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play in this country.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.
23rd May, 1922.

DEAR SIR,

On Saturday last I attended a presentation of the Film "From the Manger to the Cross" at 7 o'clock, and think it is only right that I should now place on record my keen appreciation of the representation from beginning to end. Everything was done in perfect taste and in a most reverent spirit. I have specialised to some considerable extent in the study of Mystery Plays, particularly with regard to the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau (as you will see from the enclosed pamphlet). This latter, however, is of course the traditional representation of the life and passion of Our Lord, whilst yours must of necessity approximate far more closely to what actually took place as so many of your scenes are taken in the actual surroundings of Our Lord's Ministry.

Trusting that this wonderful Film will receive from the public the attention it deserves,
I am,
Yours very truly,
J. CATO WORSFOLD.

LETTERS

SIR TRUSTRAM EVE, K.B.E.,
2, The Sanctuary,
Westminster, S.W.

From GERALD MAXWELL, the well-known dramatic critic, late of The Daily Mail.

60, KING'S ROAD,
RICHMOND, SURREY.
24th June, 1922.

MY DEAR HENDERSON BLAND,

I was so much impressed by the beauty of your picture that I must write to congratulate you on so artistic and noble an effort. It was with more than the usual hesitation one feels where sacred subjects are concerned that I came to the Clergy House to see "From the Manger to the Cross," while there was yet time. The fear that this picture might seem irreverent to those who are more religious than oneself, however, vanished almost as soon as the solemn organ prelude began in that dim-lit hall. And one was quickly carried far beyond the timid, personal point of view by the wave of universal sympathy this marvellous spectacle created. For the onlookers were absolutely spellbound by the touching story, so picturesquely unfolded and pictorially richer than the most brilliantly illuminated Bible, even when illustrated by a Doré or a Tissot.

The passion of the Saviour, indeed, did not appear so much to be enacted as to be lived again before one's eyes. To the enrapt spectators, perhaps for the first time, the exalted purpose as well as the divine love of Christ became clear. Thus the supreme sacrifice seemed inevitable and the triumph over death likewise.

The mystery and simple grandeur of the East gave the true atmosphere, while the minor personages, no less than the commanding central figure, had a natural dignity. All this actually happened, one tells oneself, and in exactly this setting. Then only the untrammelled screen could embrace the vast and varied scenes that here depict the childhood and ministry and betrayal of Our Lord. Even the fierce enmity of Mosaic priestcraft is not made so ugly as to be ludicrous; nor does the remorse of Judas here evoke laughter, as it does at Ober-Ammergau. But, like the cathedral of Milan, this picture surpasses the imagination. To be appreciated, therefore, in however small a degree, it must be seen; and it may be seen many times before it has been completely comprehended.

With all good wishes, I am,
Ever sincerely yours,
GERALD MAXWELL.

LETTERS

From GILBERT FRANKAU, the well-known novelist.
9, LANCASTER GATE TERRACE,
HYDE PARK.
21st June, 1922.

MY DEAR HENDERSON BLAND,

I feel I must write and congratulate not only you personally but your producer and your fellow-actors and actresses on the extraordinary results achieved in "From Manger to Cross." Quite apart from the technical excellence of the production, it seems to me imbued with a spirit of reverence which lifts it altogether out of the ruck.

If only the average motion-picture could live up to the standard which you have set, the cinema should become the greatest educative force in all history.

Sincerely yours,
GILBERT FRANKAU.
CAPTAIN R. HENDERSON BLAND.

In the Garden of Gethsemane

Press Opinions

The Times, April 15, 1922.

... It remains a surprisingly efficient piece of work. It was no light matter to endeavour to. make a film based on events in the life of Christ, and, what ever its faults, this attempt was carried through with extreme reverence. It is never vulgar, and yet never monotonous. It takes the events of the Gospels and makes them into a coherent narrative. There is no attempt at underlining or exaggeration.Perhaps the film occasionally errs just a little in the other direction, but there is no doubt that with such a theme under-emphasis is far better than over-emphasis....

The film is an excellent example of the reverent treatment of a religious subject and a good object-lesson to those who have come to think that films ten years ago were crudely made and badly photographed. Apart from purely technical detail, this film is as good a production as most of our so-called "super" films to-day.

Daily Telegraph, December 26, 1912.

The great test was, of course, the Supreme Tragedy, and there were those who felt that this might be lacking in those elements of reverence and awe with which the Christian mind surrounds it. But it did not fail. The Last Supper, the Agony of Gethsemane, the Great Betrayal, were sternly grave, and were stripped, indeed, of much that has become conventional in regard to their delineation. Pilate, cold and judicial, the excited populace, the mockings and scourgings and the via dolorosa to

Calvary, these drove home the meaning of that most utter self renunciation that even the least imaginative could understand it better.

Daily Telegraph, April 15, 1922.
. . . What, however, makes the film what it is and has enabled it to survive is the truly remarkable manner in which Captain Henderson Bland impersonates the dominating central figure round which everything turns. There is a simple dignity in every gesture that seems as satisfying to-day as when the film was first made. In several scenes, notably those representing the miracles, the slightest mistake or exaggeration would have proved fatal. As it is, we feel that the actor is himself profoundly imbued with the reality of what is going on around him, and, as spectators, we yield unhesitatingly to the spell.

The Christian World, October 24, 1912.
Not one banality spoils the essential reverential spirit of this film life of Jesus. There is no exaggerated acting. The figure of Christ is dignified and devout. A severe restraint governs the whole representation. . . . so much of true reverence is conserved, that the tenderest susceptibilities go undistressed.

Lloyd's, April 16, 1922.
Most appropriately, that very beautiful picture which created a sensation, and the usual controversy, first shown some years has been "revived," and can be seen at the Queen's Hall, before it goes "on tour."

It bears revival-it was never "dead." If a picture can live for ever, this one certainly should; and it will live because Mr. Henderson Bland gave such a beautiful conception of "Christ" and because the producer treated the story with love and respect.

If there are any who have not seen " From Manger to Cross " let them on no account miss this opportunity.

Stage, April 20, 1922.
It is a pleasure to see a really fine picture. "From Manger to Cross" was taken nearly ten years ago, and it is an artistic joy to view it once more. This picture was done by the hands of artists -- its producer had imagination -- and Henderson Bland, whose Christus is a thing of such subdued intensity that often the spectators, taken out of their lives, sit in awed silence viewing the great religious tragedy unfolding itself before them. A million spectators saw this wonderful picture a decade ago, and now it should be appreciated by as many or even by more when it starts on its provincial tour.

Bishop of London, Good Friday, 1922.
"Nothing, not even the Passion Play of OberAmmergau, brought home to my mind the realities of the Life and Work of Jesus as did this great film."

Dean of St. Paul's (Dr. William Inge).
"I thought the exhibition reverent and beautiful, I shall certainly recommend others to see it,"

PRESS OPINIONS

From Dr. J. K. Dixon, U.S.A.

"Ever since the time I saw 'From Manger to Cross' in pictures, at the Wanamaker Auditorium, it has been in my heart to write you.

"Let me tell you, without the use of hyperbole, the pictures are marvels of photographic quality. They are a wonderful delineation of the New Testament Story of the Man of Galilee. They are splendid examples of historic reality.

The settings are dignified, the action graceful. The devotion, both to the letter and the spirit, of the one Supreme Life lived on this earth passes before you without a suggestion of the outside world."