

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

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.



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, LL.D.

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.

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

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

A TRIBUTE



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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