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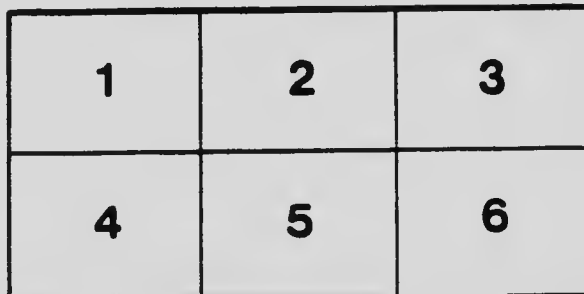
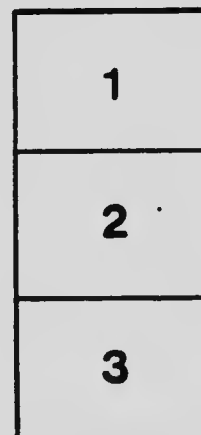
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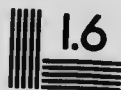
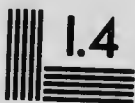
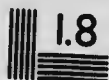
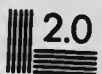
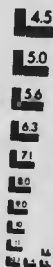
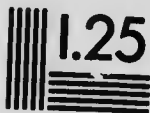
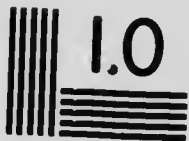
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# Our Lady of Colours

A CHRISTMAS  
MESSAGE



BY

ALLAN PEARSON SHATFORD

# Our Lady of Colours

A CHRISTMAS  
MESSAGE



BY

ALLAN PEARSON SHATFORD

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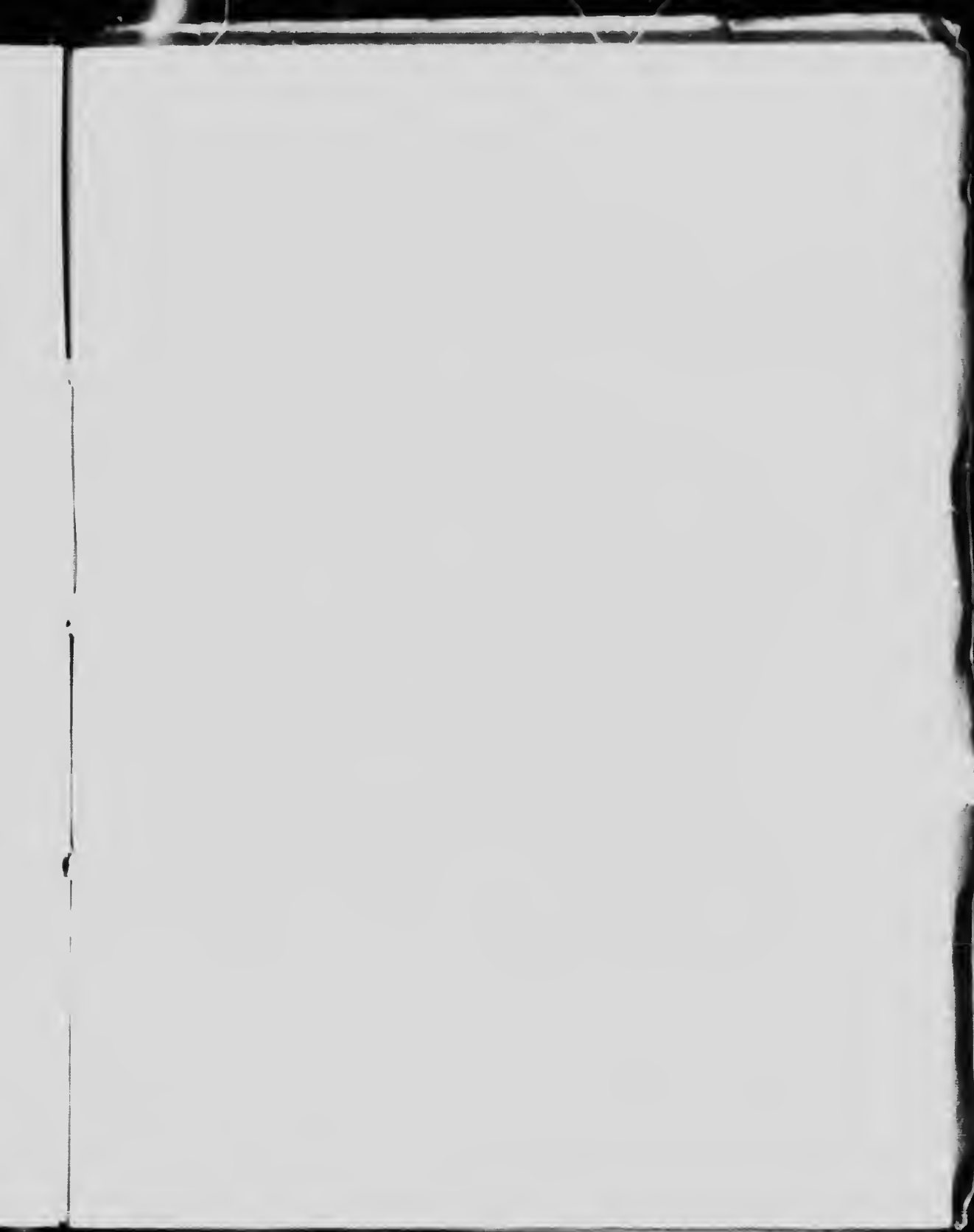
Bernard Lubiano, 1919-67, B-200

**To my wife and daughter**

1103203







*"Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."*

Isaiah vii : 14

## Our Lady of White

**L**ONG ago, in the springtime of the year when lilies were in bloom, a Maiden sat alone in devout meditation. On her knees rested the scroll of the prophets, and her finger reverently touched a text that had been the hope of her sex for centuries.

*"Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."*

Perhaps it would be given to her to fulfil this wonderful prophecy. All her days had been schooled in the sweet anticipation of motherhood. In her veins flowed the purest strains of national heritage: she was in direct line from the House to which the promise had first been vouchsafed. Every sign pointed to her as the chosen vessel of the Lord for this great honour. The more she dreamed about it the stronger became her conviction that it would be her gracious privilege to bear the flower of her Nation's long growth. She reached forth her hand and gathered a lily from the vase beside her, lifting its white chalice to her lips as a symbol of the purity of her soul. And

then there came to her a promise so certain that she fancied the words were breathed into her ear: "Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus." She was thrilled and exalted by the annunciation ! At last the age-old prophecy was to be fulfilled, and she was ordained for the unique dignity. The voice within her silenced all doubts and cleared away every difficulty, so she bowed herself in reverent humility and said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word."

She hastened away to visit her cousin Elizabeth in order to share the overwhelming secret with one who would readily understand. What was her surprise to discover that the news had been anticipated, and already honour awaited her arrival. She found the evidence that confirmed her faith. It transfigured her, filling her heart with melody and her mind with inspiration. Forthwith she sang the song of the ages:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour !  
For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden,  
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me  
blessed."

Months after, when the world was white, she journeyed up to her city, accompanied by her

husband. It was a festival time of the year and the roads were thronged with pilgrims. A light mantle of snow covered the fields and hills, and when the sun fell upon it the earth was a dazzling glory of purity. Flocks of sheep herded together on the upward slopes, seeking shelter from the biting winds. When the stars came out at night and the candles twinkled in a thousand homes, Mary and Joseph crept within the shelter of a rude shed, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there, among the cattle, happened the event for which the world had long waited, and before which it has stood in adoration and joy for twenty centuries. The Babe was swathed in bands of white and laid in the manger. The mother, clothed in spotless purity, slept the dreamless sleep of perfect joy. She was the world's Woman in White !

The Story of Christmas teaches us the mystery and dignity of human birth. Every birth is a miracle and every child divine. Whatever else may be included in the doctrine of the Incarnation, let us be sure that it emphasizes the sanctity of birth, and the divinity of man. Motherhood is holy, childhood is sacred, and man begins his life in purity and innocence. The Nativity is

a solemn protest against every unworthy conception of man's nature and origin.

"Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God Who is our home,"

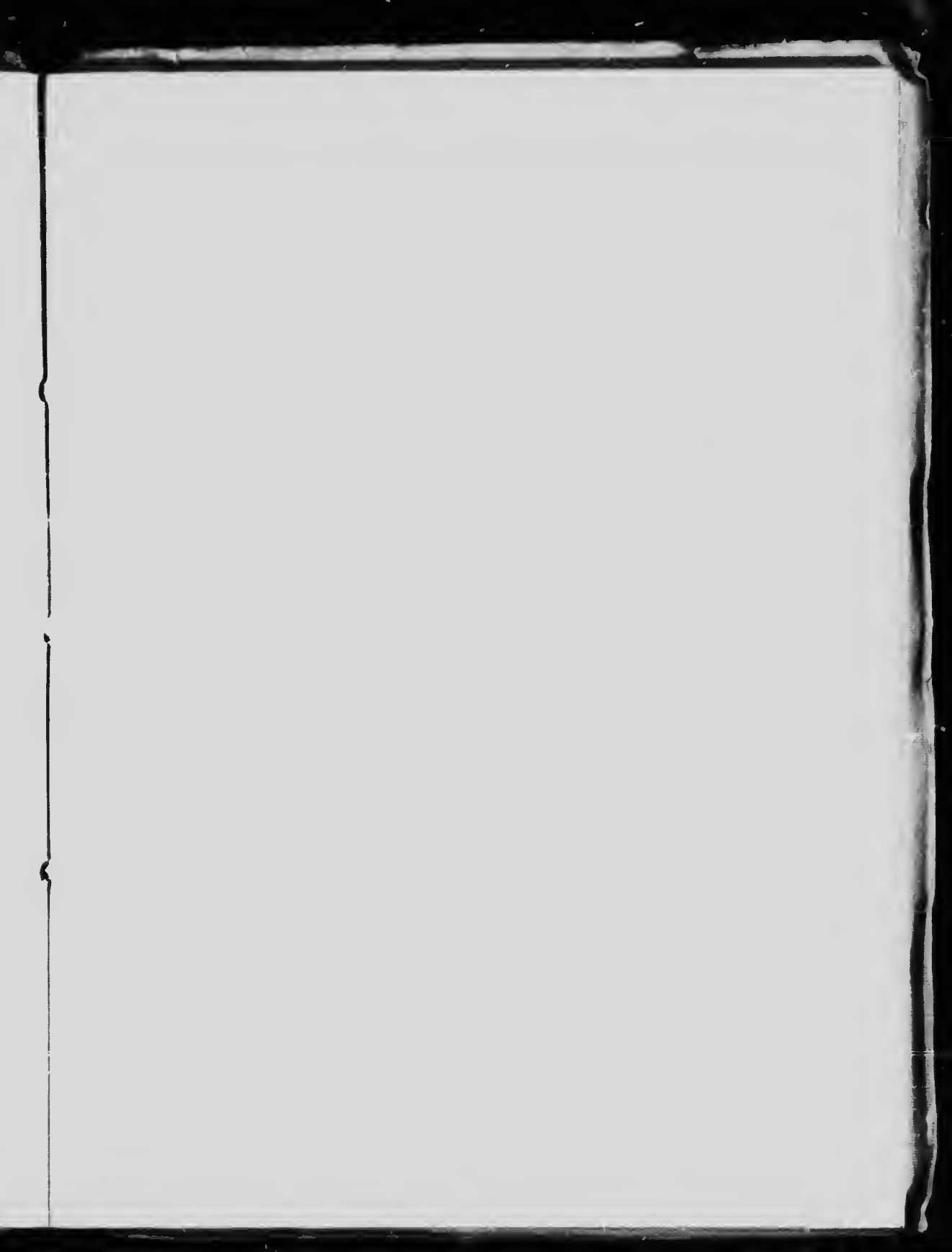
The days are happily gone when the doctrine of total human depravity was preached. But there are certain survivals of its pernicious influence which need to be corrected. The idea that man is conceived in sin and born the child of wrath belongs to a pre-christian age. Against so unworthy an idea of our humanity, the Christmas Story lifts its voice in words that can never be forgotten. The Incarnation was not the introduction into humanity of something foreign to it: it was the glorious declaration that man had always been God's child. It was a rescue of humanity from the pit into which it had fallen. It was the recovery of the jewel from the dark and foul dungeon in order that its true nature might be made manifest in the sun's splendour. Jesus reclaimed our humanity and declared its oneness with God. We must not be afraid to claim for every son of man the full dignity and glory of the Christmas truth. And we begin by declaring that man's entrance into the world is unaccompanied

by any guilt or shame of sin. No stain rests upon the nature of a new-born babe. He is God's child, bearing the nature of his Father, as free from defilement as the fresh-fallen snow.

There is another aspect of this matter which needs a word. Because human generation and birth are essentially holy, we must set our faces against the loose and unhealthy ideas of our time concerning maternity. There is much of prudery and false modesty among women regarding childbirth. If we contrast for a moment the joyous anticipation of Mary in her approaching motherhood with the half-shame of many women to-day, we will see at once how greatly we need our ideas uplifted. Because people take a light view of the matter we have many sad results in family life. It is shocking to hear idle and silly jests about maternity, coarse and vulgar references to the holiest occasions of life, and to learn that a considerable number of married women refuse the responsibility of motherhood. One would like to paint a picture of Our Lady in white, with the rapt joy upon her face, and hang it in every new home. One would like to teach the song of motherhood to every maiden and persuade her that the holiest privilege of life is her dower of children. Divine men are always born of women with virgin



souls. It is the sullied view and the gross sensuality, the cheap estimate of marriage, and the utter selfishness of modern life which eat the joy out of the home and mar the fair beauty of domestic life. We have a few customs that still remain beautiful, and teach us the purity of life's beginnings. We bring our babies to the font clothed in a white christening robe, sweet symbol of the purity and innocence which belong to children of God. When our daughters are confirmed they are robed in white in order to remind them of their high calling and lofty privilege. In the early days of the Church, both male and female wore the chrisom or robe of white. The bride wears white at her marriage, an emblem of her virgin purity, and a pledge of her sacred, stainless life as wife and mother. Too often, alas! these are only symbols; our modern levity has robbed them of their reality and turned them into occasions of rude mirth and vulgar jest. Perhaps it will correct the flippant word and give seriousness to the shallow minds of our time, if we lift the White Mary up for admiration and example. One can readily fancy her appeal to all women, urging them to a sober realization of their inestimable privilege and holy responsibility. To all true mothers the mother of our Lord gives promise: "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."



*"Son, why hast Thou dealt thus with us?"*

St. Luke ii : 48

## Our Lady of Gray

**I**T was a gray day in the Holy City. The Festival was over, and all the pilgrims were on their way home. The glamour and music, the crowds of happy country-people, the joy and laughter, had all faded out of the streets. Even the sun in the sky withdrew his wonted favour, and the growing clouds cast a sombreness upon the city. The citizens were tired and weary after the many hours of rejoicing, and for the most part, they were quietly resting at home. There was a subdued air about the temple courts that contrasted strongly with the activity of the past week. Priests went quietly about their duties, again taking up the tasks of the teacher and instructing the new "sons of the law."

An anxious couple wended their way up the broad steps of the temple, glancing to right and left as though in search of somebody. Voices came through an open doorway, which told them that a catechising was in process. Eager question and answer followed each other, when suddenly a boyish treble fell upon the mother's ears and

she knew that her search was at an end. Hurrying through the open doorway, Our Lady looked upon a strange scene. Her Son was seated in the very centre of the Rabbis, and He was eagerly plying them with questions ! This was unheard of among the customs of her people. The teachers appeared confused and half angry, whilst her Boy was calm and in deadly earnest. Something told the mother that the days of her control over the life of her Son were drawing to an end. She had received intimations of it before, but this scene seemed to strike fear into her heart. Mother-love does not surrender its claim very easily, so she now hastened forward to assert her right.

"Son, why hast Thou dealt thus with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."

Very calmly, but with surprise, He replied, "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be concerned about the things of My Father?" The phrasing of His answer disturbed even more seriously still the soul of His mother. Was it possible that she must give place to some higher claim ? Must this Son of her love and care sometimes stand apart from her ? Had He a mission that would occasionally shut her out of His life? Was she going to lose her wonderful

Boy? Her mind was a boiling sea of doubt: her heart was torn with foreboding. All things about her grew dim and uncertain; she seemed to be in a thick, gray mist. She discovered that she was wearing a Garment of Gray.

Life begins in purity but passes quickly into perplexity. We begin our journey in a fair world where everything seems good and true, where we hold tightly our simplicity and wonder. No clouds are in our sky. The earth is a glorious Fairyland and all the sons of men are trustworthy. No suspicion haunts our dreams, nor does any mistrust befog our vision. But we soon learn that our child-like innocence must give place to a reasonable faith. Doubts begin to assail us, sad experiences shake our confidence, and our grip upon our first possessions begins to loosen. The robe of white loses its shining purity as we come into contact with a soiled world and by and by we realize that we are clothed in a garment of gray.

Both Mary and her Son quickly came to know this. Jesus' consciousness of His mission was a gradual process. He grew in wisdom as did all other lads, except that His progress was more rapid. All tales of miracles recorded by the Gospel of the Infancy have long ago been discarded. His intellectual development kept pace with His phy-

sical and spiritual growth. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. The story of His temptation was the gray period of His life when He was faced with questionings of His own soul. He had His limitations; otherwise He could never have been the representative Man.

"He fought his doubts and gathered strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectre of his mind  
And laid them: thus he came at length  
To have a stronger faith than was his own."

Our Lady, too, was schooled into a clearer faith by pain and misgiving. Gradually she came to learn that there were higher duties for her Boy than filial obedience to her. It was not an easy thing for her to discover that she must take second place. The wedding feast in Cana of Galilee was an unforgettable memory. Though she was greatly honoured that day she would always remember with a pang the gentle reproof of Jesus. And how well she recalled the occasion of her journey to take Him home because the neighbors thought He had gone mad. The Master replied to her entreaty that He had nearer relatives than even a mother. "He that doeth the will of My Father, the same is My mother, and sister, and brother." How that must have wounded her

mother-heart ! It almost seemed to justify the accusation that He was insane. So for many troubled years, she walked the road of life wearing her long cloak of gray.

The second period of life is a painful experience. We find that our first thoughts and ideals won't fit this sorry scheme of things. There must come inevitably the time of readjustment. The development of the mind and soul is very much like that of the body. Every young lad knows what growing pains are; and doubts have been aptly called the "growing pains" of the soul. Our first faith is the child's, and whilst it contains elements that survive all changes, we must be prepared for the uncertain days when everything seems insecure. If we can discern between the permanent and passing elements, then shall we issue out of the transition period with a stronger, surer faith. The difficulty seems to be that we confuse the symbol with the reality. The boy or girl may find it a gray day when the belief in the fairy tale must go, but if the inner truth has been grasped, then the outer form may be surrendered. It is a strange fact that even "children of a larger growth" can never distinguish between truth and its forms. This process of adjustment and enlargement never really passes. We are always



"stepping upon our dead selves to higher things." Every period is in some measure a transition period. If that fact were more surely grasped, how much agony would be saved !

All souls must experience something of Our Lady's wonder and puzzlement when things that are dear to them seem to be taken out of their keeping. The mother, whose son feels the call of duty to country, and must wound her heart by going to war; the teacher, whose pupil has come to a larger understanding, and must take his life out of her guidance; the champion, whose cause has developed elements which he cannot control; the patriot, whose country has entered into relations which he cannot approve; these and many others are illustrations of the truth set forth in the Christmas Story of Our Lady and her growing Son.

Many a ship has been wrecked in a fog; many a soul has foundered when days were gray and misty. What is needed is the larger faith in God's government. We hinge too much upon our own share and part in the control of the world. Mary must learn that her Boy's life is under wiser and more loving direction than hers. She did gradually grow into that perfect faith and submission which glorified her life. The gray days passed;

doubt became a surer confidence, and she rested at last upon a firm faith in the divine mission of Jesus. Not otherwise must it be with us! Through doubt we come to clearer faith, and learn that through all ages and changing circumstances

“God’s increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the  
suns.”

*"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."*

St. Luke ii: 35.

## Our Lady of Red

**T**HE court of women in the temple was crowded. All day long the visitors had come and gone, for this was the Feast of Purification. Women of various rank in society had made their offerings and departed. Some had brought rich gifts, others very simple sacrifices, according to their station in life. They paused in the court for a few moments to greet friends and then went on their way. It was a time of great happiness, for all these women had come up to present their babes for dedication to God, and to make the customary sacrifices. They were proud in their motherhood. Doubtless there were comparisons and congratulations, prophecies and felicitations, as each mother exhibited her child for admiration. The age old question must have been often asked that day: "What manner of child shall this be?"

There was one woman there who stood apart. It was not that she was less proud or happy than the others, but she had kept many things and pondered them in her heart, and they seemed too

deep and sacred for expression. She was a poor woman and could therefore only bring the simplest offering allowed by the law. "A pair of turtle doves and two young pigeons" was the extent of her sacrifice, but it represented more than many of the costly gifts made that day. When she watched the priest sprinkle the blood upon the altar, a sharp pain smote her heart. It seemed a symbol of her own anguish. Everything assumed a crimson colour during the service. There were the dancing flames of the candles, the stains of blood about the altar, and the red line which ran around the sacred place. She shuddered, and hurried out as soon as the service was over. Her little son was folded closely to her heart as though she feared to lose him.

Just as she was emerging into the outer court an aged priest was entering. He was bent with years, and his long white beard flowed to his waist. Suddenly stopping, he looked long and earnestly at the Child and then at the mother. His eyes glowed with a great joy and a serenity of peace spread over his face. Reaching forth his arms, he gently took the Child and raised Him breast-high. Simeon, the oldest priest of the temple, was transfigured. He chanted the requiem of all souls whose hopes are fulfilled. He stood that

day on the mountain-heights of prophetic vision and saw the rising beams of the sun fall upon the isles of the Gentiles and then grow into the full glory of Israel's new day.

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,  
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation  
Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people:  
A light to lighten the Gentiles,  
And to be the glory of Thy people Israel."

Then he turned to the exalted mother and solemnly said: "Your Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." It was a confirmation of her fears! She already felt the prick of the sword against her breast. It seemed to her that her very life-blood was flowing out of her wounds and dyeing her clothes. Her imagination was inflamed until she believed that she was wearing Raiment of Red.

Life begins in purity, passes through perplexity and continues in pain. We do not win our way without struggle and sacrifice. All too quickly we learn that life is a battle, and victory is not gained without the shedding of blood. Our doubts involve conflict, our experiences with the world

necessitate a strenuous contest, and the sword of the enemy makes red gaping wounds. Our fight is accompanied by "confused noises and garments rolled in blood."

How very quickly was the prophecy of Simcon fulfilled for Our Lady! When the babes were massacred by the brutal and fearful Herod, it was a blow aimed at her own heart. She felt the thrust of the sword, and all the days of her flight into Egypt she hugged closely the Boy to her breast in order to sooth the tumult of her pain. Deeper and deeper went the steel into her life until at last it touched her soul. When she stood by the Cross of Jesus and heard His cries of agony the sword was driven home to the hilt, and the prophecy of the old priest had complete fulfilment. The colour of her raiment was one rich scarlet flame.

For her Son the same experience was ordained. He passed up to the height of His glory on a ladder of swords. Every day witnessed a fresh wound. "They ploughed upon His back and made long furrows; they pierced His hands and feet"; they plunged the spear into His side; they broke His heart and nailed Him to the tree. They clad Him in a scarlet robe, fit symbol of the pain and agony which made Him a world's King.

Character is developed by wrestling "against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We must contend earnestly for the faith, we must engage battle with the serpent, and the victory will leave us with a wounded heel. There is no prize gained without a long and bitter struggle. Yet how great is the joy of conquest! It enables us to scorn the pain and to share in the happiness of Jesus, Who "for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame." The world has been set forward by the martyrs. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" The Conqueror is splashed with the blood of His enemies, as well as stained with His own blood.

There is no growth or advancement without sacrifice, and often the greatest pain we have to bear is the wounding of our loved ones. Jesus must have recoiled more at the pain His mission inflicted on His mother than at any hurt to Himself. There were multitudes of men in the late war whose hearts bled profusely over the anguish



that their enlistment meant to relatives, but who minded little their own wounds and sufferings.

In order to be true to our cause we must often be content to be wounded in the house of our friends. Mary must have suffered that agony intensely as she saw her friends fall away in the hour of trial. To endure the loss of friends is frequently the most bitter sacrifice that we have to make. It seems to drain the heart of its last drops of blood.

One sometimes wonders if we are not forgetting the lesson of sacrifice learned in the war. The soul is once again "putting on too much flesh," and we are becoming enervated with all the ease and luxury of our present life. A little blood-letting might serve the purpose of relieving the stupor and sluggishness which weigh upon our souls. It is not good to see our young men emasculated by all the flabby indulgences of our modern conditions, nor to see our young women made feeble in character by the vanity and excess which are all too prevalent. A little more tussle with hard conditions would work fibre into the morale of our nation.

"Then welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting which bids nor sit, nor stand, but go !  
Be our joy three parts pain,  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain,  
Learn, never count the pang; dare, never grudge the throe !"

Let the world see and understand Jesus of the  
Crimson Cloak and Our Lady of the Red Rai-  
ment; then let us go and gird ourselves for the  
battle, fully persuaded that the way to the Crown  
lies by the Hill of the Cross.

*"Weeping for her children, . . . because they are not."*

St. Matt. ii : 18.

## Our Lady of Black

**T**HERE was darkness in the little town of Bethlehem and its borders. The light had died out of the sky and a heavy pall of black settled upon the streets and houses. The noise and confusion accompanying the dreadful mission of the soldiers gave place to the wailing and lamentations of bereaved mothers. Within a score of homes women sat with a dead child upon their knees, and wailed their sorrow all through the hours of the night. On yonder roadway leading down to Egypt, a woman hugs her Boy to her heart and urges her husband to quicken their flight in order to insure safety for the Child. For she had been warned of the desperate order of Herod, and barely escaped from the town as the soldiers entered upon their monstrous murder of the innocents. She had caught the first shriek of the agonized mothers and it froze her heart with unspeakable dread. Never would she forget the weeping of Rachel for her children, because there were tears in her own heart. All the days of

her sojourn in Egypt she pondered over the escape of her Boy and wondered if God would always be so good to her. It must have been with a measure of alarm that she received the order to return, even though the cruel King was dead. How was she to know that his successor might not attempt the life of her Child? It brought her comfort to learn that they were not to go back to Bethlehem, so departing another way, they came to the village of Nazareth. Perhaps in its obscurity she would find a refuge from the tyrant's sword. But one can well understand that every tramp of soldiers' feet and rattle of a sword would grip her soul with deadly fear. Something must have told her that she would not always be able to ward off the end. She too, must pass down the dark valley in company with all souls. Gradually the truth became clear to her that Jesus must die.

"Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother." That was the fulfilment of the warning cry raised in Ramah long years before. Mary mingled her weeping with the tears of her sorrowing sisters. It was the blackest day of life for her. Nature seemed to express its sympathy. "Now there was darkness over all the land." Heavy clouds lowered over the Hill upon which the Cross was upraised. Thunder rolled across the sky, and

the groans of the stricken and frightened multitude sobbed upon the air. Our Lady was wrapped in the Bondage of Black !

Life is woven of many experiences. Beginning in purity it is developed by doubt and perplexity, and ennobled by pain and sacrifice. And sacrifice often plunges a man into the blackness of bereavement, and sometimes into the deeps of despair. We must all come to the Place of Mourning. It is not so much the loss of loved ones by death, though that is a hard and terrible experience; the surrenders which are spiritual are the most difficult to bear. There are many to-day who would gladly exchange death for the griefs which gnaw at the heart all through the weary years. They must go on and on for what seems an endless time, carrying a sorrow that finds no relief. There are times when one comes to believe that the mere death of the body is the least of all bereavements. But whatever the occasion, we are soon compelled to give black a place among the colours that make up the garment of life.

Jesus shared this experience with His mother. There were many dark days in His history. He knew the loss of friends by death, as witness His tears at the grave of Lazarus. There is no comforter in all the world like "the Man of Sorrows

and acquainted with grief." He knew the deeper bereavements of false friends and failing disciples. It must have been a black hour for Him when Peter denied, and Judas betrayed. There is a pathos in His cry, "Will ye also go away?" as though He hungered to cling to the few who were left. He was the most lonely soul in history. His love for humanity was so great that it bereaved Him all the more terribly to have His friends forsake Him. It was a gloomy day for Him when He realized that the Holy City had rejected Him. Little wonder that He wept on that first Palm Sunday. But the blackest of all hours was when He hung upon the Cross and sent forth His despairing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was terrible to have His disciples leave the Hill one by one, until He was all alone. "Behold, all ye that pass by and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow!" But what broke His heart was the withdrawal of His Father's face. It plunged Him into the blackest waters; in that moment He plumbed the deepest depths of human grief.

There are sorrows in life that ennoble character. Indeed, the world would be a hard and unsympathetic place without loss and bereavement. There are pains that polish perfection, and

those that make us most tender and human are the griefs caused by death. It is so often said of some brilliant soul: "All he needs is the experience of a great sorrow to give him the last necessary element of greatness." There can be no really great artists, poets, leaders, without this quality of sympathy. It softens, mellows, richens, as no other gift can. It is one of the few things that a man can gain by experience only. Poets and musicians and painters are born, not made, but a truly sympathetic soul is created by suffering.

Many are the kinds of bereavement and loss. Of these, the surrender of loved ones in death is not the most intolerable. It was not the dying of Jesus on the Cross that made the darkness for Our Lady. It was the apparent failure of His cause, the seeming triumph of His enemies, the defeat of hope, the cruel disappointment of her pride, the fading of a splendid vision. She learned afterwards that it was all a glorious triumph, but that day at the Cross she descended into a Stygian gloom. Even so, we taste the bitterness of unfulfilled dreams, of unsuccessful causes, of disappointing friends, and our hearts are bowed down in unrelieved woe. What is needed for our comfort is the realization that there is victory for every noble purpose. An apparent defeat may



later on turn into a most complete triumph. Causes, whose failure at the time crushed the spirit of the advocates, afterwards won a signal victory. There is no such thing as irretrievable loss. Somewhere, sometime, the harvest will come. Its delay may wring our hearts and weigh down our souls, but let us be sure that it is only delay. Have we not often sighed and longed for dear friends to come back that they might behold the success of their efforts? It will surely console us to feel that in some other clearer, brighter sphere their eyes are opened to see the fulfilment of God's purpose in them.

It is hardly worth while to speak of the lesser bereavements of life, such as the loss of wealth, comforts, safety, health, and a hundred others, but these are sometimes the very things over which people chiefly mourn. If we can only keep tight hold of the indestructible possessions, then we can surrender without a tear the merely temporary things. "For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."



*"Woman, behold thy Son!"*

St. John, xix : 26

## Our Lady of Blue

**T**HE scene was tender and full of loyalty. John, the beloved disciple, had gone into the city in order to bring Our Lady to the Cross for a final farewell. They drew quite near, so that Jesus might see them, as the darkness was growing heavy, and the eyes of the Master were growing dim. Then there was spoken the last word that passed between mother and Son. It was a most touching word of love. Jesus found another son for His heart-broken mother; and He bequeathed His mother to His best friend. "Woman, behold thy Son ! Son, behold Thy mother !"

We are told that "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Away from the pain and torture of that dreadful scene to the sweet shelter of his cottage at Bethany. They passed down the Hill of Sorrow through the garden to welcome together the sweet friendship and healing duties of life. As they entered the simple home, the clouds rolled back from the sky, and the blue heavens sent a benediction upon them. It was a sign to them that grief must not

sap the mind, because high tasks were waiting to be undertaken.

Mary is not found in any of the Resurrection scenes. It is probable that her strength had been so exhausted by the strain of those last days that she was unequal to the excitement of the Easter victory. There was healing to be done before she could enter upon her new life. We find her in the company of the disciples at the Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was outpoured. In the Upper Room she knelt with the little band of faithful followers waiting for power from on high. Her sorrow had given place to duty, "stern daughter of the Voice of God." She had discarded the robes of mourning and was now clothed in the Beauty of Blue, the colour that has been especially associated with her name.

Life fulfils itself in loyalty. It is the final stage in the development of character. We are not to surrender ourselves utterly to grief. Sorrow becomes sinful when it unfits us for duty. "I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." There is here no callousness nor indifference, but a high and holy sense of duty. There is healing power in work. The crown of life is fidelity. We round out our days and complete

our existence in faithfulness to our appointed tasks. Blue is the badge of attainment; it is the arching heaven of our life.

Jesus is the best illustration of this crowning quality of loyalty. "I do always the work of Him that sent Me." No temptation could ever turn His feet aside from the accomplishment of His mission. He left no tasks undone. There is a ring of victory in His cry from the Cross, "It is finished." When He said that He was then able to quietly resign Himself into the hands of His Father.

There is much need of loyalty in the world today. It would almost appear from present indications that the main thought is the avoidance of duty. People are reaching out for the prizes of life, but they are not so keen about the tasks of life. On all sides is the cry for shorter hours and larger pay. It is admitted everywhere that men are not giving the same faithful attention to work that marked the labour of a decade ago. There is not the substantiality and durability to manufactured articles that there used to be. Things are made for exhibition rather than for use. We live at such high pressure that there is not time for really solid work. And we are so ephemeral in our tastes and so swift in our changes, that we

do not demand the same quality of workmanship that we did a few years ago. This apparent dislike of work, and this lack of thoroughness are both signs of a waning sense of loyalty in the character of our people.

When we ponder upon authority to-day, we find an alarming growth of infidelity. There is so little respect for government, constituted authorities, law and order. The world is seething with disloyalty. It has become the commonest of experiences to hear sedition and treason proclaimed, to see statutes ignored and ridiculed, to witness disregard for the holiest institutions of society. Tolerance and liberty are sacred things, but they so easily degenerate into indifference and license. It is not healthy for a nation to permit too much latitude in the matter of liberty. The very foundations of society are being shaken by the present lawlessness.

If we pass from the state to the church, we do not discover a very hopeful condition of things. One regrets to see the looseness of opinion regarding organized religion, but that is not the most serious matter. It is the disregard of religion itself. Will anyone claim that the moral law has any more allegiance given it than is allowed the civil law? There is a flaunting of God which can

only be described as perilous. Some one said the other day that "no one feared God nowadays." That seems to sum up the popular attitude towards the Almighty.

No one desires to see the old slavish fear of the Deity return again, but life is impoverished when we lose our sense of awe and reverence. There is a flippancy and levity in our religious talk which give evidence of poverty of soul. Our present conception of God as a Father ought to increase our loyalty and enlarge our respect, for will not a son be more faithful than a slave, and a child more reverential than a subject? An exalted God means an exalted people. Jesus brought God nearer to us, but He did not lessen the feeling of reverence nor in any way impair the idea of loyalty. There was in Him the utmost humility as He approached God, and the most unfaltering faithfulness.

There is also to-day a serious lack of deep conviction. Men are not loyal to religious truth because they do not hold it profoundly. The world is full of opinions, but these change with the changing winds. Breadth is often confused with shallowness. We spread our ideas over so wide a space that thinness becomes a conspicuous character of prevailing religious views. "We do not



so much need broad churchmen to-day as we need deep churchmen." If our convictions were more profound, perhaps there would be more loyalty, as we should then have something worth our faithfulness. Men will not die for opinions, but they have gladly suffered death for convictions which held their very souls.

So our plea is for a greater loyalty. "True blue" in all the tasks and beliefs of life. A following in the footsteps of Him whose loyalty led Him to the Cross; an imitation of her whose loyalty rescued her out of her grief, and upheld her forever "blessed among women."

The Garment of Life is woven of many colours. Its warp and woof are threaded through with differing qualities. The Hand of the Master Weaver is at the loom, and by and by the unity and beauty of the design will stand revealed. Purity, Perplexity, Pain, Bereavement, Loyalty—these are the experiences which make up the pattern of our character. Only he who has on this wedding garment will be allowed to remain at the Feast when the King comes in. "And they shall come from the East and from the West, and from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God."



