

By Way of Explanation

The present publication has been accorded the title *Tears of Our Lady*, yet it would be unfortunate indeed should this designation mislead any of its readers into mistaking it for the original publication which also bears this name. No copies of that publication, issued more than sixty years ago by the Order of Our Lady, are known to exist at the present time. The present editor has undertaken an extensive search for surviving copies but has yet to locate even one. Indeed, he has no personal knowledge of anyone who claims to have set eyes on a copy.

It may be recalled that the original publication took the form of a tastefully produced, privately printed volume with a white cover that featured the image of the linked serpent. The flowing text was composed in the French language, but it is assumed that the text was thereafter translated and editions were printed in a number of European and Asian languages. Distribution of the original publication was strictly limited. Its circulation was confined to aspirants of the Order of Our Lady. It is unknown whether or not any copies ever fell into the hands of non-aspirants, but it is assumed none ever had.

After extensive research, conducted in private and public and institutional archives and repositories, no copies were located; indeed, no copies were ever registered for purposes of copyright. No notes of scholars were found that were based on the original text. The

present editor has drawn a blank on references to the original edition, other than those that flowed from the pen of a certain mystery story writer (of whom, more later). The present editor is of the opinion that no true edition of *Tears of Our Lady* is every likely to surface. With that thought in mind, he has resolved to collect all the known utterances of Our Lady Sumuru in order to offer them to the readers of this publication in light of the absence of the text of the original publication.

This is not the place to rehearse what little is known of the ancestry and adventures of Sumuru. Nor will information be imparted about the Order of Our Lady, which she founded and which oversaw the operation of schools, colleges, and chapters in countries around the world. It is assumed that readers of the present publication already possesses some knowledge of this woman's history and of the purposes of her Order and that they cherish some facts or fictions about her and its identity, history, and destiny. Instead, here will be found some thoughts and impressions gleaned from the printed record concerning the woman's philosophy and code of conduct.

First, a few words about the title of this volume. There are two associations here. The words "Tears of Our Lady" may sound poetic, even pietistic; they are quite familiar in Christian circles. Adherents of Eastern Orthodoxy know them to refer to the beads of the rosary, specifically to those beads that are formed of tassels or flowers. To adherents of Roman Catholicism, the words bring to mind the tears that are observed to course down the cheeks of the Blessed Virgin Mary who in visions and in works of art has been depicted as the Sorrowful Virgin. Christians of other denominations consult prayer books and devotional manuals which make use of the motif of the flow of tears, and they

offer one meditation for each tear.

It is meaningful to insist on a distinction between Our Lady Sumuru and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sumuru was alive in the early Twentieth Century and perhaps earlier and later; Mary lived in New Testament times. The two women are no more to be equated with Madame Eva Peron of Argentina than she is with either of them! Yet the author of the novels about Sumuru made much of the fact that postulants to her sodality would be familiar with the devotional overtones and underpinnings of these words. Indeed, during her lifetime members of the Order would at times address her as Madonna. (They may still do so; who is foolish enough to declare that this remarkable woman is no longer alive and active in the world today?)

It must be borne in mind that the information that appears in these pages has been gleaned not from fact but from fiction, since chance decreed it that it would be a fiction writer – not a present-day historian or newspaper correspondent but the writer of mystery novels – who would preserve the words of Our Lady. That fiction writer was Arthur Sarsfield Ward (1883-1959). He was born in Birmingham, England; he published seventy-six or so books; he died in White Plains, N.Y. He was known internationally by his pen name: Sax Rohmer. Among his highly imaginative crime, detective, mystery, and occult “thrillers,” there are five that are relevant here. Here are their titles (with alternate titles): *Sins of Sumuru* (aka *Nude in Mink*), *Slaves of Sumuru* (*Sumuru*), *Virgin in Flames* (*The Fire Goddess*), *Sand and Satin* (*Return of Sumuru*), *Sinister Madonna* (*Sinister Madonna*). They were first published in America and Britain between 1950 and 1956 and have been intermittently reprinted since then.

Not much is known about the woman who in these

pages is called Sumuru, but what is known is tantalizing. Here are the words of secret agent Dr. Steel Maitland who recorded them in the first account to be kept of this woman's adventures:

I confess myself to be on uncertain ground. She was the subject of an unfinished sonnet left by Romain Ravillac, the young French poet who jumped overboard from a liner two years after the war. In it, among other things, he refers to her hair as "*clarté du soleil entrelacée,*" which I take to mean woven sunshine. On the other hand, a stolid Russian diplomat, who met her in Paris, speaks of her as dark, sombre, and also as "a deep, secret well." That she is a woman of unusual personal beauty seems to be established. In all other respects, accounts differ. But if you can imagine one possessing the arts of Circe and the allurements of Calypso, the brains of Winston Churchill and the soul of a Himmler, you will have formed a rough impression of the Marquise Sumuru.

The pages of this publication do not offer the occasion to discuss the woman or her mission, other than to offer the following particulars. If space permitted, more details would be offered to the reader. Much has been made of her allure, her poise, her taste, her wealth, and her linguistic and histrionic abilities. Instead, what will be offered here are some details as to Sumuru's philosophy and code of conduct and to her "wonder-book."

There are multiple references to *Tears of Our Lady* in the writings of this author, though from them it may be deduced that the chronicler himself was not privileged to read that publication or even set eyes on it. In one account the impressionable young woman Claudette Duquesne recalls the conversation she had with the even more impressionable postulant named Jean Barlow:

"She would read to me at night from a book called *Tears of Our Lady*. At first I thought it was a religious work of some kind. Then I found that 'Our Lady' was the name by which the author was known, and, at first, what she had to write about really shocked me. Yes. I began to be horrified; then, in some way, I became fascinated. It was an evil book. I am quite sure of that, now. But it was dangerously clever.

"In a sense it was about sex; but there was nothing really objectionable in it as far as this was concerned. It was entirely different from any book I had ever read. Even now, I can't explain in what way. But it conveyed the idea that women, as what Our Lady called 'the vessels of the soul,' had been degraded for generations to the place of – oh, mere implements. And, somehow, it made the fact quite clear that men, really, should take that place, if humanity was to become sane, and that women must direct them "

Jean told her that the new world, now in the throes of fiery birth, called for women of talent, women of beauty and of character whose horizon was not bounded by marriage to some man or other. Jean had enjoyed the supreme honour meeting Our Lady – "the greatest woman ever born."

She promised to present Claudette; but Claudette was unwilling, indeed afraid, to meet the writer of that strange book.

At first Claudette kept her distance. Then she moved closer, as she admitted to a friend:

"You told me, not so long ago, that the book called *Tears of Our Lady* was evil."

"Perhaps I did. But, then, I had not met Our Lady."

"Does that mean that you believe in her? That you condone her killings? That you approve of her aims?"

Claudette looked up.

"I believe in her implicitly. She is the most wonderful woman in the world. And I approve of her aims."

In subsequent chronicles more impressions were offered to the reader. Witness the observations of Nursing Sister Mary Glen in conversation with Dr. Kyrle (Curly) Bowden:

“She’s brilliantly clever. Linda lent me a wonderful book she has written. At first, it rather frightened me. The ideas were so utterly revolutionary – I don’t mean quite in a political sense – and so frankly stated.”

Curly became interested, and suspicious. “Sex, I suppose?”

“Yes. Her theory is that there can be no peace in the world until all that is ugly has been destroyed – ugly philosophies, ugly art, ugly people. She says that only highly trained women can bring this about.” ...

Curly stared at her, hard.

“I should like to read this remarkable book.”

“I had to return it, Curly.”

Further details were supplied:

As Mary rejoined him in the big chair:

“Can you remember,” he asked her, “the name of that remarkable book Mrs. De Castro wrote?”

“It’s called *Tears of Our Lady*.” Mary spoke absently.

“Sounds religious.”

“I assure you it isn’t. ‘Our Lady’ of the title, according to Inez de Castro, is head of a society with branches all over the world. She must really be a genius. Because her theories are absolutely fool-proof – if they could be carried out.”

“What are her theories?”

Mary spoke with sudden animation. “They all rest on the premise that woman holds in her hands the power of life or death. To put it crudely – if all women decided to bear no more children, human life would end on the planet. Our lady believes, according to the book, that woman’s failure to recognize her power is responsible for the present mess.”

“What should woman have done?” Curly asked, smiling.

“Declined to bring children into the world to be slaughtered on battlefields – until man has realized that war can

never win peace."

"The nature of man would have to undergo a radical change."

"Our Lady would bring this about by selective mating. Undesirable types wouldn't be permitted to become parents at all."

"I suppose she'd disapprove of us?" Curly murmured drowsily.

Mary brushed her cheek against his face and snuggled closer.

"No, she wouldn't. Inez assures me she would recognize ideal mates at a glance, and she's completely in Our Lady's confidence. They believe in reincarnation, and Inez dreamed a most vivid dream in which she saw us together in some place that sounds like ancient Egypt. She made it so real to me that I almost seemed to see it all, too."

The attentive reader is able to glean further particulars from the following conversation in which Celie Artz informed Lew Kerrigan of the initiation of Sally Obershaw into the Order:

"I lent her *Tears of Our Lady*. It's the first text-book. Then, when the time came, Madonna met her here, and was satisfied that she was suitable."

As well, the reader was informed of the subject of the book's Chapter Ten. It seems it is concerned with "desire." Drake Roscoe went on record as saying that he had read that book and that there were things he "learned from that vaguely repellent yet brilliant book."

Further information is supplied about references to initiation and private property in Chapter Twelve. The following brief exchange was recorded between one postulant and Sumuru:

"That is in accordance with the rules of the Order, Melisande. It is dealt with in Chapter Twelve of *Tears of Our*

Lady.”

Melisande is quick to reply: “I know every line of the book, Madonna, from cover to cover.”

In the same chronicle, Marie compared the book to “the Catechism” of the Roman Catholic church. This conversation took place between Dr. Derry Kenealy and Joan Marie Glade.

“I understand the place of desire in the scheme of things. It’s one of the chapters in *Tears of Our Lady* that horrified me at first. But I came to see that it was true. That was when I began to understand.”

In all of the chronicles there is but one brief description of the book’s appearance. It seems its cover is quite unusual.

Ahead, she saw a massive door above which was a carved figure of a twined serpent.

She pulled up suddenly. She knew that figure.

It was embossed on the cover of *Tears of Our Lady*, the wonder-book which Marie had given to her!

The twined serpent or linked serpent, the snake or dragon that swallows its own tail, is a symbol of Ancient Wisdom. It has been called the *ouroboros*, and it was found throughout the antique world. It makes an appearance as part of the seal of the Theosophical Society. In the chronicles of Sumuru, it decorates the wall above a doorway of one of the convents of the Order, but more importantly, it appears as a faint marking (a tattoo) that circles the ankle of every female member of the Order, including the ankle of the Order’s founder.

That the founder is a woman with a vision and a mission of her own, that she has many followers, all of

whom are women of beauty or men of power, is self-evident. Less known are her peculiar purposes. These were well described by Dr. Worthington to the secret agent Mark Donovan:

“Humanity is faced with only two alternatives, you see. Complete, and speedy, destruction, or complete, and speedy, reconstruction. Our Lady plans to reconstruct mankind.”

Dr. Worthington continued, referring to one of Sumuru’s foes:

“This man imagines that he has a sacred mission to destroy the work of Our Lady Sumuru. Others have thought this, Mr. Donovan ... They might as well attempt to destroy the Himalayas.”

Unknown to the secret agent was the fact that Dr. Worthington was in reality Ariosto, Sumuru’s personal physician, in disguise! Donovan began to understand what he was facing, as he later affirmed to a fellow agent: “Sumuru employed the beauty of women to secure the serfdom of men!”

As mentioned above, it is unlikely that the chronicler ever held a copy of the original publication in his hands. He certainly never met the woman who wrote it, though it has been suggested by his biographer that he had once met just such an amazing and alluring woman. Whatever the nature of their encounter, his novels made their appearances during the first half of the 1950s, and by so doing offered his readers a remarkable if not always accurate collection of Sumuru’s thoughts and utterances, some of them her sayings, her remarks, her passing observations, her instructions, her maxims, her precepts, her axioms, some three hundred of them, many presumably para-

phrases of those that had found print in the pages of the original volume.

Her *obiter dicta* are here collected and presented under a series of subject-headings, arranged alphabetically for ease of reference. It should be noted that no reference has been made to derivative works of little validity or worth, such as the scripts of popular radio dramas, television series, comic books, or motion-picture screenplays, as these have never been part of the canon *per se*.

It has been stressed that no copies of *Tears of Our Lady* are known to exist at the present time; yet at one time copies were extant. The same conditions pertain to yet another publication, a volume that may be even rarer. No one has reported seeing a copy of this publication. There is but one reference to it in the canon, the writings devoted to Sumuru.

The attentive reader of the final account of the woman's adventures will come upon this solitary reference to this volume in the following passage, which refers to the woman as Madonna and to her effect on the impressionable Camille de Paris, the brilliant sculptor who has been commissioned to create a life-sized statue of this remarkable woman. In the act of doing so, he falls in love with her.

Madonna (as he had learned to call her) had opened to him visions of a world of peace and beauty which enthralled his artistic soul. He had begged to become a member of the Order of Our Lady, and she had agreed to accept him. She had given him a strange text-book, *Paradise of Love*, which defined the part chosen men would play in the world of beautiful women

Should some day there be discovered a copy of *Tears of Our Lady*, it is hoped that it will be discovered alongside a copy of *Paradise of Love*.