JAMES THE SON OF ZEBEDEE

UPON a day in the spring of the year Jesus stood in the market-place of Jerusalem and He spoke to the multitudes of the kingdom of heaven.

And He accused the scribes and the Pharisees of setting snares and digging pitfalls in the path of those who long after the kingdom; and He denounced them.

Now amongst the crowd was a company of men who defended the Pharisees and the scribes, and they sought to lay hands upon Jesus and upon us also.

But He avoided them and turned aside from them, and walked towards the north gate of the city.

And He said to us: “My hour has not yet come. Many are the things I have still to say unto you, and many are the deeds I shall yet perform ere I deliver myself up to the world.”

Then He said, and there was joy and laughter in His voice: “Let us go into the North Country and meet the spring. Come with me to the hills, for winter is past and the snows of Lebanon are descending to the valleys to sing with the brooks.

“The fields and the vineyards have banished sleep and are awake to greet the sun with their green figs and tender grapes.”
And He walked before us and we followed Him, that day and the next.

And upon the afternoon of the third day we reached the summit of Mount Hermon, and there He stood looking down upon the cities of the plains.

And His face shone like molten gold, and He outstretched His arms and He said to us: "Behold the earth in her green raiment, and see how the streams have hemmed the edges of her garments with silver.

"In truth the earth is fair and all that is upon her is fair.

"But there is a kingdom beyond all that you behold, and therein I shall rule. And if it is your choice, and if it is indeed your desire, you too shall come and rule with me.

"My face and your faces shall not be masked; our hands shall hold neither sword nor sceptre, and our subjects shall love us in peace and shall not be in fear of us."

Thus spoke Jesus, and unto all the kingdoms of the earth I was blinded, and unto all the cities of walls and towers; and it was in my heart to follow the Master to His kingdom.

Then just at that moment Judas of Iscariot stepped forth. And he walked close up to Jesus, and spoke and said: "Behold, the kingdoms of the world are vast, and behold the cities of David and Solomon shall prevail against the Romans. If you will be the king of the Jews we shall stand beside you with sword and shield and we shall overcome the alien."

But when Jesus heard this He turned upon Judas,
and His face was filled with wrath. And He spoke in a voice terrible as the thunder of the sky and He said: "Get you behind me, Satan. Think you that I came down the years to rule an ant-hill for a day?

"My throne is a throne beyond your vision. Shall he whose wings encircle the earth seek shelter in a nest abandoned and forgotten?

"Shall the living be honoured and exalted by the wearer of shrouds?

"My kingdom is not of this earth, and my seat is not builded upon the skulls of your ancestors.

"If you seek aught save the kingdom of the spirit, then it were better for you to leave me here, and go down to the caves of your dead, where the crownèd heads of yore hold court in their tombs and may still be bestowing honours upon the bones of your fore-fathers.

"Dare you tempt me with a crown of dross, when my forehead seeks the Pleiades, or else your thorns?

"Were it not for a dream dreamed by a forgotten race I would not suffer your sun to rise upon my patience, nor your moon to throw my shadow across your path.

"Were it not for a mother's desire I would have stripped me of the swaddling-clothes and escaped back to space.

"And were it not for sorrow in all of you I would not have stayed to weep.

"Who are you and what are you, Judas Iscariot? And why do you tempt me?

"Have you in truth weighed me in the scale and
found me one to lead legions of pygmies, and to
direct chariots of the shapeless against an enemy that
encamps only in your hatred and marches nowhere
but in your fear?

"Too many are the worms that crawl about my
feet, and I will give them no battle. I am weary of
the jest, and weary of pitying the creepers who deem
me coward because I will not move among their
guarded walls and towers.

"Pity it is that I must needs pity to the very end.
Would that I could turn my steps towards a larger
world where larger men dwell. But how shall I?

"Your priest and your emperor would have my
blood. They shall be satisfied ere I go hence. I would
not change the course of the law. And I would not
govern folly.

"Let ignorance reproduce itself until it is weary
of its own offspring.

"Let the blind lead the blind to the pitfall.

"And let the dead bury the dead till the earth be
choked with its own bitter fruit.

"My kingdom is not of the earth. My kingdom
shall be where two or three of you shall meet in love,
and in wonder at the loveliness of life, and in good
cheer, and in remembrance of me."

Then of a sudden He turned to Judas, and He said:
"Get you behind me, man. Your kingdoms shall
never be in my kingdom."
And now it was twilight, and He turned to us and said: “Let us go down. The night is upon us. Let us walk in light while the light is with us.”

Then He went down from the hills and we followed Him. And Judas followed afar off.

And when we reached the lowlands it was night.

And Thomas, the son of Diophanes, said unto Him: “Master, it is dark now, and we can no longer see the way. If it is in your will, lead us to the lights of yonder village where we may find meat and shelter.”

And Jesus answered Thomas, and He said: “I have led you to the heights when you were hungry, and I have brought you down to the plains with a greater hunger. But I cannot stay with you this night. I would be alone.”

Then Simon Peter stepped forth, and said: “Master, suffer us not to go alone in the dark. Grant that we may stay with you even here on this byway. The night and the shadows of the night will not linger, and the morning shall soon find us if you will but stay with us.”

And Jesus answered: “This night the foxes shall have their holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has not where on earth to lay His head. And indeed I would now be alone. Should you desire me you will find me again by the lake where I found you.”

Then we walked away from Him with heavy hearts, for it was not in our will to leave Him.

Many times did we stop and turn our face towards
Him, and we saw Him in lonely majesty, moving westward.

The only man among us who did not turn to behold Him in His aloneness was Judas Iscariot.

And from that day Judas became sullen and distant. And methought there was danger in the sockets of his eyes.
ANNA THE MOTHER OF MARY

JESUS, the son of my daughter, was born here in Nazareth in the month of January. And the night that Jesus was born we were visited by men from the East. They were Persians who came to Esdraelon with the caravans of the Midianites on their way to Egypt. And because they did not find rooms at the inn they sought shelter in our house.

And I welcomed them and I said: “My daughter has given birth to a son this night. Surely you will forgive me if I do not serve you as it behooves a hostess.”

Then they thanked me for giving them shelter. And after they had supped they said to me: “We would see the new-born.”

Now the Son of Mary was beautiful to behold, and she too was comely.

And when the Persians beheld Mary and her babe, they took gold and silver from their bags, and myrrh and frankincense, and laid them all at the feet of the child.

Then they fell down and prayed in a strange tongue which we did not understand.

And when I led them to the bedchamber prepared for them they walked as if they were in awe at what they had seen.
When morning was come they left us and followed the road to Egypt.

But at parting they spoke to me and said: “The child is but a day old, yet we have seen the light of our God in His eyes and the smile of our God upon His mouth.

“We bid you protect Him, that He may protect you all.”

And, so saying, they mounted their camels and we saw them no more.

Now Mary seemed not so much joyous in her first-born, as full of wonder and surprise.

She would look long upon her babe, and then turn her face to the window and gaze far away into the sky as if she saw visions.

And there were valleys between her heart and mine.

And the child grew in body and spirit, and He was different from other children. He was aloof and hard to govern, and I could not lay my hand upon Him.

But He was beloved by everyone in Nazareth, and in my heart I knew why.

Oftentimes He would take away our food to give to the passer-by. And He would give other children the sweetmeat I had given Him, before He had tasted it with His own mouth.

He would climb trees of my orchard to get the fruits, but never to eat them Himself.

And He would race with other boys, and sometimes, because He was swifter of foot, He would
delay so that they might pass the stake ere He should reach it.

And sometimes when I led Him to His bed He would say: “Tell my mother and the others that only my body will sleep. My mind will be with them till their minds come to my morning.”

And many other wondrous words He said when He was a boy, but I am too old to remember.

Now they tell me I shall see him no more. But how shall I believe what they say?

I still hear His laughter, and the sound of His running about my house. And whenever I kiss the cheek of my daughter His fragrance returns to my heart, and His body seems to fill my arms.

But is it not passing strange that my daughter does not speak of her first-born to me?

Sometimes it seems that my longing for Him is greater than hers. She stands as firm before the day as if she were a bronzen image, while my heart melts and runs into streams.

Perhaps she knows what I do not know. Would that she might tell me also.
WHAT shall I say of His speech? Perhaps something about His person lent power to His words and swayed those who heard Him. For He was comely, and the sheen of the day was upon His countenance.

Men and women gazed at Him more than they listened to His argument. But at times He spoke with the power of a spirit, and that spirit had authority over those who heard Him.

In my youth I had heard the orators of Rome and Athens and Alexandria. The young Nazarene was unlike them all.

They assembled their words with an art to enthrall the ear, but when you heard Him your heart would leave you and go wandering into regions not yet visited.

He would tell a story or relate a parable, and the like of His stories and parables had never been heard in Syria. He seemed to spin them out of the seasons, even as time spins the years and the generations.

He would begin a story thus: “The ploughman went forth to the field to sow his seeds.”

Or: “Once there was a rich man who had many vineyards.”
Or: "A shepherd counted his sheep at eventide and found that one sheep was missing."

And such words would carry His listeners into their simpler selves, and into the ancient of their days. At heart we are all ploughmen, and we all love the vineyard. And in the pastures of our memory there is a shepherd and a flock and the lost sheep;

And there is the plough-share and the wine-press and the threshing-floor.

He knew the source of our older self, and the persistent thread of which we are woven.

The Greek and the Roman orators spoke to their listeners of life as it seemed to the mind. The Nazarene spoke of a longing that lodged in the heart.

They saw life with eyes only a little clearer than yours and mine. He saw life in the light of God.

I often think that He spoke to the crowds as a mountain would speak to the plain.

And in His speech there was a power that was not commanded by the orators of Athens or of Rome.
MARY MAGDALEN

IT was in the month of June when I saw Him for the first time. He was walking in the wheat-field when I passed by with my handmaidens, and He was alone.

The rhythm of His step was different from other men's, and the movement of His body was like naught I had seen before.

Men do not pace the earth in that manner. And even now I do not know whether He walked fast or slow.

My handmaidens pointed their fingers at Him and spoke in shy whispers to one another. And I stayed my steps for a moment, and raised my hand to hail Him. But He did not turn His face, and He did not look at me. And I hated Him. I was swept back into myself, and I was as cold as if I had been in a snow-drift. And I shivered.

That night I beheld Him in my dreaming; and they told me afterward that I screamed in my sleep and was restless upon my bed.

It was in the month of August that I saw Him again, through my window. He was sitting in the shadow of the cypress tree across my garden, and He was as still as if He had been carved out of stone, like the statues in Antioch and other cities of the North Country.
And my slave, the Egyptian, came to me and said: "That man is here again. He is sitting there across your garden."

And I gazed at Him, and my soul quivered within me, for He was beautiful.

His body was single and each part seemed to love every other part.

Then I clothed myself with raiment of Damascus, and I left my house and walked towards Him.

Was it my aloneness, or was it His fragrance, that drew me to Him? Was it a hunger in my eyes that desired comeliness, or was it His beauty that sought the light of my eyes?

Even now I do not know.

I walked to Him with my scented garments and my golden sandals, the sandals the Roman captain had given me, even these sandals. When I reached Him, I said: "Good morrow to you."

And He said: "Good morrow to you, Miriam."

And He looked at me, and His night-eyes saw me as no man had seen me. And suddenly I was as if naked, and I was shy.

Yet He had only said: "Good morrow to you."

And then I said to Him: "Will you not come to my house?"

And He said: "Am I not already in your house?"

I did not know what He meant then, but I know now.

And I said: "Will you not have wine and bread with me?"

And He said: "Yes, Miriam, but not now."
Not now, not now, He said. And the voice of the sea was in those two words, and the voice of the wind and the trees. And when He said them unto me, life spoke to death.

For mind you, my friend, I was dead. I was a woman who had divorced her soul. I was living apart from this self which you now see. I belonged to all men, and to none. They called me harlot, and a woman possessed of seven Devils. I was cursed, and I was envied.

But when His dawn-eyes looked into my eyes all the stars of my night faded away, and I became Miriam, only Miriam, a woman lost to the earth she had known, and finding herself in new places.

And now again I said to Him: “Come into my house and share bread and wine with me.”

And He said: “Why do you bid me to be your guest?”

And I said: “I beg you to come into my house.” And it was all that was sod in me and all that was sky in me calling unto Him.

Then He looked at me, and the noontide of His eyes was upon me, and He said: “You have many lovers, and yet I alone love you. Other men love themselves in your nearness. I love you in your self. Other men see a beauty in you that shall fade away sooner than their own years. But I see in you a beauty that shall not fade away, and in the autumn of your days that beauty shall not be afraid to gaze at itself in the mirror, and it shall not be offended.

“I alone love the unseen in you.”
Then He said in a low voice: “Go away now. If this cypress tree is yours and you would not have me sit in its shadow, I will walk my way.”

And I cried to Him and I said: “Master, come to my house. I have incense to burn for you, and a silver basin for your feet. You are a stranger and yet not a stranger. I entreat you, come to my house.”

Then He stood up and looked at me even as the seasons might look down upon the fields, and He smiled. And He said again: “All men love you for themselves. I love you for yourself.”

And then He walked away.

But no other man ever walked the way He walked. Was it a breath born in my garden that moved to the east? Or was it a storm that would shake all things to their foundations?

I knew not, but on that day the sunset of His eyes slew the dragon in me, and I became a woman, I became Miriam, Miriam of Mijdel.
THE Nazarene was the Master Physician of His people. No other man knew so much of our bodies and their elements and properties.

He made whole those who were afflicted with diseases unknown to the Greeks and the Egyptians. They say He even called back the dead to life. And whether this be true or not true, it declares His power; for only to him who has wrought great things is the greatest ever attributed.

They say also that Jesus visited India and the Country between the Two Rivers, and that there the priests revealed to Him the knowledge of all that is hidden in the recesses of our flesh.

Yet that knowledge may have been given Him direct by the gods, and not through the priests. For that which has remained unknown to all men for an æon may be disclosed to one man in but a moment. And Apollo may lay his hand on the heart of the obscure and make it wise.

Many doors were open to the Tyrians and the Thebans, and to this man also certain sealed doors were opened. He entered the temple of the soul, which is the body; and He beheld the evil spirits that conspire against our sinews, and also the good spirits that spin the threads thereof.
Methinks it was by the power of opposition and resistance that He healed the sick, but in a manner unknown to our philosophers. He astonished fever with His snow-like touch and it retreated; and He surprised the hardened limbs with His own calm and they yielded to Him and were at peace.

He knew the ebbing sap within the furrowed bark—but how he reached the sap with His fingers I do not know. He knew the sound steel underneath the rust—but how He freed the sword and made it shine no man can tell.

Sometimes it seems to me that He heard the murmuring pain of all things that grow in the sun, and that then He lifted them up and supported them, not only by His own knowledge, but also by disclosing to them their own power to rise and become whole.

Yet He was not much concerned with Himself as a physician. He was rather preoccupied with the religion and politics of this land. And this I regret, for first of all things we must needs be sound of body.

But these Syrians, when they are visited by an illness, seek an argument rather than medicine.

And pity it is that the greatest of all their physicians chose rather to be but a maker of speeches in the market-place.
I WAS on the shore of the Lake of Galilee when I first beheld Jesus my Lord and my Master.

My brother Andrew was with me and we were casting our net into the waters.

The waves were rough and high and we caught but few fish. And our hearts were heavy.

Suddenly Jesus stood near us, as if He had taken form that very moment, for we had not seen Him approaching.

He called us by our names, and He said: “If you will follow me I will lead you to an inlet where the fishes are swarming.”

And as I looked at His face the net fell from my hands, for a flame kindled within me and I recognised Him.

And my brother Andrew spoke and said: “We know all the inlets upon these shores, and we know also that on a windy day like this the fish seek a depth beyond our nets.”

And Jesus answered: “Follow me to the shores of a greater sea. I shall make you fishers of men. And your net shall never be empty.”

And we abandoned our boat and our net and followed Him.
I myself was drawn by power, viewless, that walked beside His person.

I walked near Him, breathless and full of wonder, and my brother Andrew was behind us, bewildered and amazed.

And as we walked on the sand I made bold and said unto Him: “Sir, I and my brother will follow your footsteps, and where you go we too will go. But if it please you to come to our house this night, we shall be graced by your visit. Our house is not large and our ceiling not high, and you will sit at but a frugal meal. Yet if you will abide in our hovel it will be to us a palace. And would you break bread with us, we in your presence were to be envied by the princes of the land.”

And He said: “Yea, I will be your guest this night.”

And I rejoiced in my heart. And we walked behind Him in silence until we reached our house.

And as we stood at the threshold Jesus said: “Peace be to this house, and to those who dwell in it.”

Then He entered and we followed Him.

My wife and my wife’s mother and my daughter stood before Him and they worshipped Him; then they knelt before Him and kissed the hem of His sleeve.

They were astonished that He, the chosen and the well belovéd, had come to be our guest; for they had already seen Him by the River Jordan when John the Baptist had proclaimed Him before the people.
And straightway my wife and my wife’s mother began to prepare the supper.

My brother Andrew was a shy man, but his faith in Jesus was deeper than my faith.

And my daughter, who was then but twelve years old, stood by Him and held His garment as if she were in fear He would leave us and go out again into the night. She clung to Him like a lost sheep that has found its shepherd.

Then we sat at the board, and He broke the bread and poured the wine; and He turned to us, saying: “My friends, grace me now in sharing this food with me, even as the Father has graced us in giving it unto us.”

These words He said ere He touched a morsel, for He wished to follow an ancient custom that the honoured guest becomes the host.

And as we sat with Him around the board we felt as if we were sitting at the feast of the great King.

My daughter Petronelah, who was young and unknowing, gazed at His face and followed the movements of His hands. And I saw a veil of tears in her eyes.

When He left the board we followed Him and sat about Him in the vine-arbour.

And He spoke to us and we listened, and our hearts fluttered within us like birds.

He spoke of the second birth of man, and of the opening of the gates of the heavens; and of angels descending and bringing peace and good cheer to
all men, and of angels ascending to the throne bearing the longings of men to the Lord God.

Then He looked into my eyes and gazed into the depths of my heart. And He said: "I have chosen you and your brother, and you must needs come with me. You have laboured and you have been heavy-laden. Now I shall give you rest. Take up my yoke and learn of me, for in my heart is peace, and your soul shall find abundance and a home-coming."

When He spoke thus I and my brother stood up before Him, and I said to Him: "Master, we will follow you to the ends of earth. And if our burden were as heavy as the mountain we would bear it with you in gladness. And should we fall by the wayside we shall know that we have fallen on the way to heaven, and we shall be satisfied."

And my brother Andrew spoke and said: "Master, we would be threads between your hands and your loom. Weave us into the cloth if you will, for we would be in the raiment of the Most High."

And my wife raised her face, and the tears were upon her cheeks and she spoke with joy, and she said: "Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the womb that carried you, and the breast that gave you milk."

And my daughter, who was but twelve years old, sat at His feet and she nestled close to Him.

And the mother of my wife, who sat at the threshold, said not a word. She only wept in silence and her shawl was wet with her tears.
Then Jesus walked over to her and He raised her face to His face and He said to her: "You are the mother of all these. You weep for joy, and I will keep your tears in my memory."

And now the old moon rose above the horizon. And Jesus gazed upon it for a moment, and then He turned to us and said: "It is late. Seek your beds, and may God visit your repose. I will be here in this arbour until dawn. I have cast my net this day and I have caught two men; I am satisfied, now I bid you good night."

Then my wife's mother said: "But we have laid your bed in the house, I pray you enter and rest."

And He answered her saying: "I would indeed rest, but not under a roof. Suffer me to lie this night under the canopy of the grapes and the stars."

And she made haste and brought out the mattress and the pillows and the coverings. And He smiled on her and He said: "Behold, I shall lie down upon a bed twice made."

Then we left Him and entered into the house, and my daughter was the last one to enter. And her eyes were upon Him until I had closed the door.

Thus for the first time I knew my Lord and Master.

And though it was many years ago, it still seems but today.
CAIAPHAS THE HIGH PRIEST

IN speaking of that man Jesus and of His death let us consider two salient facts: the Torah must needs be held in safety by us, and this kingdom must needs be protected by Rome.

Now that man was defiant to us and to Rome. He poisoned the mind of the simple people, and He led them as if by magic against us and against Cæsar.

My own slaves, both men and women, after hearing Him speak in the market-place, turned sullen and rebellious. Some of them left my house and escaped to the desert from whence they came.

Forget not that the Torah is our foundation and our tower of strength. No man shall undermine us while we have this power to restrain his hand, and no man shall overthrow Jerusalem so long as its walls stand upon the ancient stone that David laid.

If the seed of Abraham is indeed to live and thrive this soil must remain undefiled.

And that man Jesus was a defiler and a corrupter. We slew Him with a conscience both deliberate and clean. And we shall slay all those who would debâse the laws of Moses or seek to befoul our sacred heritage.

We and Pontius Pilatus knew the danger in that man, and that it was wise to bring Him to an end.
I shall see that His followers come to the same end, and the echo of His words to the same silence.

If Judea is to live, all men who oppose her must be brought down to the dust. And ere Judea shall die I will cover my grey head with ashes even as did Samuel the prophet, and I will tear off this garment of Aaron and clothe me in sackcloth until I go hence for ever.
JOANNA THE WIFE OF HEROD'S STEWARD

Jesus was never married but He was a friend of women, and He knew them as they would be known in sweet comradeship.

And He loved children as they would be loved in faith and understanding.

In the light of His eyes there was a father and a brother and a son.

He would hold a child upon His knees and say: "Of such is your might and your freedom; and of such is the kingdom of the spirit."

They say that Jesus heeded not the law of Moses, and that He was over-forgiving to the prostitutes of Jerusalem and the countryside.

I myself at that time was deemed a prostitute, for I loved a man who was not my husband, and he was a Sadducee.

And on a day the Sadducees came upon me in my house when my lover was with me, and they seized me and held me, and my lover walked away and left me.

Then they led me to the market-place where Jesus was teaching.

It was their desire to hold me up before Him as a test and a trap for Him.
But Jesus judged me not. He laid shame upon those who would have had me shamed, and He reproached them.

And He bade me go my way.

And after that all the tasteless fruit of life turned sweet to my mouth, and the scentless blossoms breathed fragrance into my nostrils. I became a woman without a tainted memory, and I was free, and my head was no longer bowed down.
RAFCA THE BRIDE OF CANA

THIS happened before He was known to the people.

I was in my mother's garden tending the rosebushes, when He stopped at our gate.

And He said: "I am thirsty. Will you give me water from your well?"

And I ran and brought the silver cup, and filled it with water; and I poured into it a few drops from the jasmine vial.

And He drank deep and was pleased.

Then He looked in my eyes and said: "My blessing shall be upon you."

When He said that I felt as it were a gust of wind rushing through my body. And I was no longer shy; and I said: "Sir, I am betrothed to a man of Cana in Galilee. And I shall be married on the fourth day of the coming week. Will you not come to my wedding and grace my marriage with your presence?"

And He answered: "I will come, my child."

Mind you, He said: "My child," yet He was but a youth, and I was nearly twenty.

Then He walked on down the road.

And I stood at the gate of our garden until my mother called me into the house.
On the fourth day of the following week I was taken to the house of my bridegroom and given in marriage.

And Jesus came, and with Him His mother and His brother James.

And they sat around the wedding-board with our guests whilst my maiden comrades sang the wedding-songs of Solomon the King. And Jesus ate our food and drank our wine and smiled upon me and upon the others.

And He heeded all the songs of the lover bringing his belovèd into his tent; and of the young vineyard-keeper who loved the daughter of the lord of the vineyard and led her to his mother’s house; and of the prince who met the beggar maiden and bore her to his realm and crowned her with the crown of his fathers.

And it seemed as if He were listening to yet other songs also, which I could not hear.

At sundown the father of my bridegroom came to the mother of Jesus and whispered saying: “We have no more wine for our guests. And the day is not yet over.”

And Jesus heard the whispering, and He said: “The cup-bearer knows that there is still more wine.”

And so it was indeed—and as long as the guests remained there was fine wine for all who would drink.

Presently Jesus began to speak with us. He spoke of the wonders of earth and heaven; of sky flowers that bloom when night is upon the earth, and of
earth flowers that blossom when the day hides the stars.

And He told us stories and parables, and His voice enchanted us so that we gazed upon Him as if seeing visions, and we forgot the cup and the plate.

And as I listened to Him it seemed as if I were in a land distant and unknown.

After a while one of the guests said to the father of my bridegroom: “You have kept the best wine till the end of the feast. Other hosts do not so.”

And all believed that Jesus had wrought a miracle, that they should have more wine and better at the end of the wedding-feast than at the beginning.

I too thought that Jesus had poured the wine, but I was not astonished; for in His voice I had already listened to miracles.

And afterwards, indeed, His voice remained close to my heart, even until I had been delivered of my first-born child.

And now even to this day in our village and in the villages near-by the word of our guest is still remembered. And they say: “The spirit of Jesus of Nazareth is the best and the oldest wine.”
A PERSIAN PHILOSOPHER IN DAMASCUS

I CANNOT tell the fate of this Man, nor can I say what shall befall His disciples.

A seed hidden in the heart of an apple is an orchard invisible. Yet should that seed fall upon a rock, it will come to naught.

But this I say: The ancient God of Israel is harsh and relentless. Israel should have another God; one who is gentle and forgiving, who would look down upon them with pity; one who would descend with the rays of the sun and walk on the path of their limitations, rather than sit for ever in the judgment seat to weigh their faults and measure their wrongdoings.

Israel should bring forth a God whose heart is not a jealous heart, and whose memory of their shortcomings is brief; one who would not avenge Himself upon them even to the third and the fourth generation.

Man here in Syria is like man in all lands. He would look into the mirror of his own understanding and therein find his deity. He would fashion the gods after his own likeness, and worship that which reflects his own image.

In truth man prays to his deeper longing, that it may rise and fulfil the sum of his desires.
There is no depth beyond the soul of man, and the soul is the deep that calls unto itself; for there is no other voice to speak and there are no other ears to hear.

Even we in Persia would see our faces in the disc of the sun and our bodies dancing in the fire that we kindle upon the altars.

Now the God of Jesus, whom He called Father, would not be a stranger unto the people of Jesus, and He would fulfil their desires.

The gods of Egypt have cast off their burden of stones and fled to the Nubian desert, to be free among those who are still free from knowing.

The gods of Greece and Rome are vanishing into their own sunset. They were too much like men to live in the ecstasy of men. The groves in which their magic was born have been cut down by the axes of the Athenians and the Alexandrians.

And in this land also the high places are made low by the lawyers of Beirut and the young hermits of Antioch.

Only the old women and the weary men seek the temples of their forefathers; only the exhausted at the end of the road seek its beginning.

But this man Jesus, this Nazarene, He has spoken of a God too vast to be unlike the soul of any man, too knowing to punish, too loving to remember the sins of His creatures. And this God of the Nazarene shall pass over the threshold of the children of the earth, and He shall sit at their hearth, and He shall be a blessing within their walls and a light upon their path.
But my God is the God of Zoroaster, the God who is the sun in the sky and fire upon the earth and light in the bosom of man. And I am content. I need no other God.
DAVID, ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS

I did not know the meaning of His discourses or His parables until He was no longer among us. Nay, I did not understand until His words took living forms before my eyes and fashioned themselves into bodies that walk in the procession of my own day.

Let me tell you this: On a night as I sat in my house pondering, and remembering His words and His deeds that I might inscribe them in a book, three thieves entered my house. And though I knew they came to rob me of my goods, I was too mindful of what I was doing to meet them with the sword, or even to say: "What do you here?"

But I continued writing my remembrances of the Master.

And when the thieves had gone, then I remembered His saying: "He who would take your cloak, let him take your other cloak also."

And I understood.

As I sat recording His words no man could have stopped me even were he to have carried away all my possessions.

For though I would guard my possessions and also my person, I know where lies the greater treasure.
LUKE

JESUS despised and scorned the hypocrites, and His wrath was like a tempest that scourged them. His voice was thunder in their ears and He cowed them.

In their fear of Him they sought His death; and like moles in the dark earth they worked to undermine His footsteps. But He fell not into their snares.

He laughed at them, for well He knew that the spirit shall not be mocked, nor shall it be taken in the pitfall.

He held a mirror in His hand and therein He saw the sluggard and the limping and those who stagger and fall by the roadside on the way to the summit.

And He pitied them all. He would even have raised them to His stature and He would have carried their burden. Nay, He would have bid their weakness lean on His strength.

He did not utterly condemn the liar or the thief or the murderer, but He did utterly condemn the hypocrite whose face is masked and whose hand is gloved.

Often have I pondered on the heart that shelters all who come from the wasteland to its sanctuary, yet against the hypocrite is closed and sealed.

On a day as we rested with Him in the Garden of
Pomegranates, I said to Him: "Master, you forgive and console the sinner and all the weak and the infirm save only the hypocrite alone."

And He said: "You have chosen your words well when you called sinners weak and infirm. I do forgive them their weakness of body and their infirmity of spirit. For their failings have been laid upon them by their forefathers, or by the greed of their neighbours.

"But I tolerate not the hypocrite, because he himself lays a yoke upon the guileless and the yielding.

"Weaklings, whom you call sinners, are like the featherless young that fall from the nest. The hypocrite is the vulture waiting upon a rock for the death of the prey.

"Weaklings are men lost in a desert. But the hypocrite is not lost. He knows the way, yet he laughs between the sand and the wind.

"For this cause I do not receive him."

Thus our Master spoke, and I did not understand. But I understand now.

Then the hypocrites of the land laid hands upon Him and they judged Him; and in so doing they deemed themselves justified. For they cited the law of Moses in the Sanhedrin in witness and evidence against Him.

And they who break the law at the rise of every dawn, and break it again at sunset, brought about His death.
ONE harvest day Jesus called us and His other friends to the hills. The earth was fragrant, and like the daughter of a king at her wedding-feast she wore all her jewels. And the sky was her bridegroom.

When we reached the heights Jesus stood still in the grove of laurels, and He said: "Rest here, quiet your mind and tune your heart, for I have much to tell you."

Then we reclined on the grass, and the summer flowers were all about us, and Jesus sat in our midst.

And Jesus said:
"Blessed are the serene in spirit.
"Blessed are they who are not held by possessions, for they shall be free.
"Blessed are they who remember their pain, and in their pain await their joy.
"Blessed are they who hunger after truth and beauty, for their hunger shall bring bread, and their thirst cool water.
"Blessed are the kindly, for they shall be consoled by their own kindliness.
"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall be one with God.
“Blessed are the merciful, for mercy shall be in their portion.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for their spirit shall dwell above the battle, and they shall turn the potter’s field into a garden.

“Blessed are they who are hunted, for they shall be swift of foot and they shall be wingèd.

“Rejoice and be joyful, for you have found the kingdom of heaven within you. The singers of old were persecuted when they sang of that kingdom. You too shall be persecuted, and therein lies your honour, and therein your reward.

“You are the salt of the earth; should the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall the food of man’s heart be salted?

“You are the light of the world. Put not that light under a bushel. Let it shine rather from the summit, to those who seek the City of God.

“Think not I came to destroy the laws of the scribes and the Pharisees; for my days among you are numbered and my words are counted, and I have but hours in which to fulfil another law and reveal a new covenant.

“You have been told that you shall not kill, but I say unto you, you shall not be angry without a cause.

“You have been charged by the ancients to bring your calf and your lamb and your dove to the temple, and to slay them upon the altar, that the nostrils of God may feed upon the odour of their fat, and that you may be forgiven your failings.
"But I say unto you, would you give God that which was His own from the beginning; and would you appease Him whose throne is above the silent deep and whose arms encircle space?

"Rather, seek out your brother and be reconciled unto him ere you seek the temple; and be a loving giver unto your neighbour. For in the soul of these God has builded a temple that shall not be destroyed, and in their heart He has raised an altar that shall never perish.

"You have been told, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you: Resist not evil, for resistance is food unto evil and makes it strong. And only the weak would revenge themselves. The strong of soul forgive, and it is honour in the injured to forgive.

"Only the fruitful tree is shaken or stoned for food.

"Be not heedful of the morrow, but rather gaze upon today, for sufficient for today is the miracle thereof.

"Be not over-mindful of yourself when you give, but be mindful of the necessity. For every giver himself receives from the Father, and that much more abundantly.

"And give to each according to his need; for the Father gives not salt to the thirsty, nor a stone to the hungry, nor milk to the weaned.

"And give not that which is holy to dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine. For with such gifts you mock them; and they also shall mock your gift, and in their hate would fain destroy you."
“Lay not up for yourselves treasures that corrupt or that thieves may steal away. Lay up rather treasure which shall not corrupt nor be stolen, and whose loveliness increases when many eyes behold it. For where your treasure is, your heart is also.

“You have been told that the murderer shall be put to the sword, that the thief shall be crucified, and the harlot stoned. But I say unto you that you are not free from the wrongdoing of the murderer and the thief and the harlot, and when they are punished in the body your own spirit is darkened.

“Verily no crime is committed by one man or one woman. All crimes are committed by all. And he who pays the penalty may be breaking a link in the chain that hangs upon your own ankles. Perhaps he is paying with his sorrow the price for your passing joy.”

Thus spake Jesus, and it was in my desire to kneel down and worship Him, yet in my shyness I could not move nor speak a word.

But at last I spoke; and I said: “I would pray this moment, yet my tongue is heavy. Teach me to pray.”

And Jesus said: “When you would pray, let your longing pronounce the words. It is in my longing now to pray thus:

“Our Father in earth and heaven, sacred is Thy name.
Thy will be done with us, even as in space.
Give us of Thy bread sufficient for the day.

41
In Thy compassion forgive us and enlarge us to forgive one another.
Guide us towards Thee and stretch down Thy hand to us in darkness.
For Thine is the kingdom, and in Thee is our power and our fulfilment.”

And it was now evening, and Jesus walked down from the hills, and all of us followed Him. And as I followed I was repeating His prayer, and remembering all that He had said; for I knew that the words that had fallen like flakes that day must set and grow firm like crystals, and that the wings that had fluttered above our heads were to beat the earth like iron hoofs.
YOU have remarked that some of us call Jesus the Christ, and some the Word, and others call Him the Nazarene, and still others the Son of Man.

I will try to make these names clear in the light that is given me.

The Christ, He who was in the ancient of days, is the flame of God that dwells in the spirit of man. He is the breath of life that visits us, and takes unto Himself a body like our bodies.

He is the will of the Lord.

He is the first Word, which would speak with our voice and live in our ear that we may heed and understand.

And the Word of the Lord our God builded a house of flesh and bones, and was man like unto you and myself.

For we could not hear the song of the bodiless wind nor see our greater self walking in the mist.

Many times the Christ has come to the world, and He has walked many lands. And always He has been deemed a stranger and a madman.

Yet the sound of His voice descended never to emptiness, for the memory of man keeps that which his mind takes no care to keep.
This is the Christ, the innermost and the height, who walks with man towards eternity.

Have you not heard of Him at the cross-roads of India? And in the land of the Magi, and upon the sands of Egypt?

And here in your North Country your bards of old sang of Prometheus, the fire-bringer, he who was the desire of man fulfilled, the caged hope made free; and of Orpheus, who came with a voice and a lyre to quicken the spirit in beast and man.

And know you not of Mithra the king, and of Zoroaster the prophet of the Persians, who woke from man’s ancient sleep and stood at the bed of our dreaming?

We ourselves become man anointed when we meet in the Temple Invisible, once every thousand years. Then comes one forth embodied, and at His coming our silence turns to singing.

Yet our ears turn not always to listening nor our eyes to seeing.

Jesus the Nazarene was born and reared like ourselves; His mother and father were like our parents, and He was a man.

But the Christ, the Word, who was in the beginning, the Spirit who would have us live our fuller life, came unto Jesus and was with Him.

And the Spirit was the versèd hand of the Lord, and Jesus was the harp.

The Spirit was the psalm, and Jesus was the tune thereof.

And Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, was the host and
the mouthpiece of the Christ, who walked with us in the sun and who called us His friends.

In those days the hills of Galilee and her valleys heard naught but His voice. And I was a youth then, and trod in His path and pursued His footprints.

I pursued His footprints and trod in His path, to hear the words of the Christ from the lips of Jesus of Galilee.

Now you would know why some of us call Him the Son of Man.

He Himself desired to be called by that name, for He knew the hunger and the thirst of man, and He beheld man seeking after His greater self.

The Son of Man was Christ the Gracious, who would be with us all.

He was Jesus the Nazarene who would lead all His brothers to the Anointed One, even to the Word which was in the beginning with God.

In my heart dwells Jesus of Galilee, the Man above men, the Poet who makes poets of us all, the Spirit who knocks at our door that we may wake and rise and walk out to meet truth naked and unencumbered.
A YOUNG PRIEST OF CAPERNAUM

He was a magician, warp and woof, and a sorcerer, a man who bewildered the simple by charms and incantations. And He juggled with the words of our prophets and with the sanctities of our forefathers.

Aye, He even bade the dead be His witnesses, and the voiceless graves His forerunners and authority.

He sought the women of Jerusalem and the women of the countryside with the cunning of the spider that seeks the fly; and they were caught in His web.

For women are weak and empty-headed, and they follow the man who would comfort their unspent passion with soft and tender words. Were it not for these women, infirm and possessed by His evil spirit, His name would have been erased from the memory of man.

And who were the men who followed Him?

They were of the horde that are yoked and trodden down. In their ignorance and fear they would never have rebelled against their rightful masters. But when He promised them high stations in His kingdom of mirage, they yielded to His fantasy as clay yields to the potter.

Know you not, the slave in his dreaming would
always be master; and the weakling would be a lion?

The Galilean was a conjuror and a deceiver, a man who forgave the sins of all the sinners that He might hear *Hail* and *Hosanna* from their unclean mouths; and who fed the faint heart of the hopeless and the wretched that He might have ears for His voice and a retinue at His command.

He broke the sabbath with those who break that He might gain the support of the lawless; and He spoke ill of our priests that He might win attention in the Sanhedrin, and by opposition increase His fame.

I have said often that I hated that man. Aye, I hate Him more than I hate the Romans who govern our country. Even His coming was from Nazareth, a town cursed by our prophets, a dunghill of the Gentiles, from which no good shall ever proceed.
A rich Levite in the neighbourhood of Nazareth

He was a good carpenter. The doors he fashioned were never unlocked by thieves, and the windows he made were always ready to open to the east wind and to the west.

And He made chests of cedar wood, polished and enduring, and ploughs and pitchforks strong and yielding to the hand.

And He carved lecterns for our synagogues. He carved them out of the golden mulberry; and on both sides of the support, where the sacred book lies, He chiselled wings outspreading; and under the support, heads of bulls and doves, and large-eyed deer.

All this He wrought in the manner of the Chaldeans and the Greeks. But there was that in His skill which was neither Chaldean nor Greek.

Now this my house was builded by many hands thirty years ago. I sought builders and carpenters in all the towns of Galilee. They had each the skill and the art of building, and I was pleased and satisfied with all that they did.

But come now and behold two doors and a window that were fashioned by Jesus of Nazareth. They in their stability mock at all else in my house.
See you not that these two doors are different from all other doors? And this window opening to the east, is it not different from other windows?

All my doors and windows are yielding to the years save these which He made. They alone stand strong against the elements.

And see those cross-beams, how He placed them; and these nails, how they are driven from one side of the board, and then caught and fastened so firmly upon the other side.

And what is passing strange is that that labourer who was worthy the wages of two men received but the wage of one man; and that same labourer now is deemed a prophet in Israel.

Had I known then that this youth with saw and plane was a prophet, I would have begged Him to speak rather than work, and then I would have overpaid Him for His words.

And now I still have many men working in my house and fields. How shall I know the man whose own hand is upon his tool, from the man upon whose hand God lays His hand?

Yea, how shall I know God’s hand?
A SHEPHERD IN SOUTH LEBANON

IT was late summer when He and three other men first walked upon that road yonder. It was evening, and He stopped and stood there at the end of the pasture.

I was playing upon my flute, and my flock was grazing all around me. When He stopped I rose and walked over and stood before Him.

And He asked me: “Where is the grave of Elijah? Is it not somewhere near this place?”

And I answered Him: “It is there, Sir, underneath that great heap of stones. Even unto this day every passer-by brings a stone and places it upon the heap.”

And He thanked me and walked away, and His friends walked behind Him.

And after three days Gamaliel, who was also a shepherd, said to me that the man who had passed by was a prophet in Judea; but I did not believe him. Yet I thought of that man for many a moon.

When spring came, Jesus passed once more by this pasture, and this time He was alone.

I was not playing on my flute that day, for I had lost a sheep and I was bereaved, and my heart was downcast within me.

And I walked towards Him and stood still before Him, for I desired to be comforted.
And He looked at me and said: "You do not play upon your flute this day. Whence is the sorrow in your eyes?"

And I answered: "A sheep from among my sheep is lost. I have sought her everywhere, but I find her not. And I know not what to do."

And He was silent for a moment. Then He smiled upon me and said: "Wait here a while and I will find your sheep." And He walked away and disappeared among the hills.

After an hour He returned, and my sheep was close beside Him. And as He stood before me, the sheep looked up into His face even as I was looking. Then I embraced her in gladness.

And He put His hand upon my shoulder and said: "From this day you shall love this sheep more than any other in your flock, for she was lost and now she is found."

And again I embraced my sheep in gladness, and she came close to me, and I was silent.

But when I raised my head to thank Jesus, He was already walking afar off, and I had not the courage to follow Him.
JOHN THE BAPTIST,
TO ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES

I am not silent in this foul hole while the voice of Jesus is heard on the battlefield. I am not to be held nor confined while He is free.

They tell me the vipers are coiling round His loins, but I answer: The vipers shall awaken His strength, and He shall crush them with His heel.

I am only the thunder of His lightning. Though I spoke first, His was the word and the purpose.

They caught me unwarned. Perhaps they will lay hands on Him also. Yet not before He has pronounced His word in full. And He shall overcome them.

His chariot shall pass over them, and the hoofs of His horses shall trample them, and He shall be triumphant.

They shall go forth with lance and sword, but He shall meet them with the power of the Spirit.

His blood shall run upon the earth, but they themselves shall know the wounds and the pain thereof, and they shall be baptised in their tears until they are cleansed of their sins.

Their legions shall march towards His cities with rams of iron, but on their way they shall be drowned in the River Jordan.
And His walls and His towers shall rise higher, and the shields of His warriors shall shine brighter in the sun.

They say I am in league with Him, and that our design is to urge the people to rise and revolt against the kingdom of Judea.

I answer, and would that I had flames for words: if they deem this pit of iniquity a kingdom, let it then fall into destruction and be no more. Let it go the way of Sodom and Gomorrah, and let this race be forgotten by God, and this land be turned to ashes.

Aye, behind these prison walls I am indeed an ally to Jesus of Nazareth, and He shall lead my armies, horse and foot. And I myself, though a captain, am not worthy to loose the strings of His sandals.

Go to Him and repeat my words, and then in my name beg Him for comfort and blessing.

I shall not be here long. At night 'twixt waking and waking I feel slow feet with measured steps treading above this body. And then I hearken, I hear the rain falling upon my grave.

Go to Jesus, and say that John of Kedron, whose soul is filled with shadows and then emptied again, prays for Him, while the grave-digger stands close by, and the swordsman outstretches his hand for his wages.
YOU would know the primal aim of Jesus, and I
would fain tell you. But none can touch with
fingers the life of the blessed vine, nor see the sap
that feeds the branches.

And though I have eaten of the grapes and have
tasted the new vintage at the wine-press, I cannot tell
you all.

I can only relate what I know of Him.

Our Master and our Beloved lived but three
prophet’s seasons. They were the spring of His
song, the summer of His ecstasy, and the autumn
of His passion; and each season was a thousand
years.

The spring of His song was spent in Galilee. It
was there that He gathered His lovers about Him,
and it was on the shores of the blue lake that He
first spoke of the Father, and of our release and our
freedom.

By the Lake of Galilee we lost ourselves to find
our way to the Father; and oh, the little, little loss
that turned to such gain.

It was there the angels sang in our ears and bade
us leave the arid land for the garden of heart’s
desire.

He spoke of fields and green pastures; of the slopes
of Lebanon where the white lilies are heedless of the caravans passing in the dust of the valley.

He spoke of the wild brier that smiles in the sun and yields its incense to the passing breeze.

And He would say: “The lilies and the brier live but a day, yet that day is eternity spent in freedom.”

And one evening as we sat beside the stream He said: “Behold the brook and listen to its music. For ever shall it seek the sea, and though it is for ever seeking, it sings its mystery from noon to noon.

“Would that you seek the Father as the brook seeks the sea.”

Then came the summer of His ecstasy, and the June of His love was upon us. He spoke of nought then but the other man—the neighbour, the road-fellow, the stranger, and our childhood’s playmates.

He spoke of the traveller journeying from the east to Egypt, of the ploughman coming home with his oxen at eventide, of the chance guest led by dusk to our door.

And He would say: “Your neighbour is your unknown self made visible. His face shall be reflected in your still waters, and if you gaze therein you shall behold your own countenance.

“Should you listen in the night, you shall hear him speak, and his words shall be the throbbing of your own heart.

“Be unto him that which you would have him be unto you.
“This is my law, and I shall say it unto you, and unto your children, and they unto their children until time is spent and generations are no more.”

And on another day He said: “You shall not be yourself alone. You are in the deeds of other men, and they though unknowing are with you all your days.

“They shall not commit a crime and your hand not be with their hand.

“They shall not fall down but that you shall also fall down; and they shall not rise but that you shall rise with them.

“Their road to the sanctuary is your road, and when they seek the wasteland you too seek with them.

“You and your neighbour are two seeds sown in the field. Together you grow and together you shall sway in the wind. And neither of you shall claim the field. For a seed on its way to growth claims not even its own ecstasy.

“Today I am with you. Tomorrow I go westward; but ere I go, I say unto you that your neighbour is your unknown self made visible. Seek him in love that you may know yourself, for only in that knowledge shall you become my brothers.”

Then came the autumn of His passion.

And He spoke to us of freedom, even as He had spoken in Galilee in the spring of His song; but now His words sought our deeper understanding.
He spoke of leaves that sing only when blown upon the wind; and of man as a cup filled by the ministering angel of the day to quench the thirst of another angel. Yet whether that cup is full or empty it shall stand crystalline upon the board of the Most High.

He said: “You are the cup and you are the wine. Drink of yourselves to the dregs; or else remember me and you shall be quenched.”

And on our way to the southward He said: “Jerusalem, which stands in pride upon the height, shall descend to the depth of Jahannum the dark valley, and in the midst of her desolation I shall stand alone.

“The temple shall fall to dust, and around the portico you shall hear the cry of widows and orphans; and men in their haste to escape shall not know the faces of their brothers, for fear shall be upon them all.

“But even there, if two of you shall meet and utter any name and look to the west, you shall see me, and these my words shall again visit your ears.”

And when we reached the hill of Bethany, He said: “Let us go to Jerusalem. The city awaits us. I will enter the gate riding upon a colt, and I will speak to the multitude.

“Many are there who would chain me, and many who would put out my flame, but in my death you shall find life and you shall be free.

“They shall seek the breath that hovers betwixt heart and mind as the swallow hovers between the
field and his nest. But my breath has already escaped
them, and they shall not overcome me.

"The walls that my Father has built around me
shall not fall down, and the acre He has made holy
shall not be profaned.

"When the dawn shall come, the sun will crown
my head and I shall be with you to face the day. And
that day shall be long, and the world shall not see its
eventide.

"The scribes and the Pharisees say the earth is
thirsty for my blood. I would quench the thirst of
the earth with my blood. But the drops shall rise
oak trees and maple, and the east wind shall carry the
acorns to other lands."

And then He said: "Judea would have a king, and
she would march against the legions of Rome.

"I shall not be her king. The diadems of Zion were
fashioned for lesser brows. And the ring of Solomon
is small for this finger.

"Behold my hand. See you not that it is over-
strong to hold a sceptre, and over-sinewed to wield
a common sword?

"Nay, I shall not command Syrian flesh against
Roman. But you with my words shall wake that
city, and my spirit shall speak to her second dawn.

"My words shall be an invisible army with horses
and chariots, and without axe or spear I shall conquer
the priests of Jerusalem, and the Caesars.

"I shall not sit upon a throne where slaves have sat
and ruled other slaves. Nor will I rebel against the
sons of Italy."
"But I shall be a tempest in their sky, and a song in their soul.
"And I shall be remembered.
"They shall call me Jesus the Anointed."
These things He said outside the walls of Jerusalem before He entered the city.
And His words are graven as with chisels.
NATHANIEL

THEY say that Jesus of Nazareth was humble and meek.

They say that though He was a just man and righteous, He was a weakling, and was often confounded by the strong and the powerful; and that when He stood before men of authority He was but a lamb among lions.

But I say that Jesus had authority over men, and that He knew His power and proclaimed it among the hills of Galilee, and in the cities of Judea and Phoenicia.

What man yielding and soft would say: “I am life, and I am the way to truth”?

What man meek and lowly would say: “I am in God, our Father; and our God, the Father, is in me”?

What man unmindful of His own strength would say: “He who believes not in me believes not in this life nor in the life everlasting”?

What man uncertain of tomorrow would proclaim: “Your world shall pass away and be naught but scattered ashes ere my words shall pass away”?

Was He doubtful of Himself when He said to those who would confound Him with a harlot: “He who is without sin, let him cast a stone”?

61
Did He fear authority when He drove the money-changers from the court of the temple, though they were licensed by the priests?

Were His wings shorn when He cried aloud: "My kingdom is above your earthly kingdoms"?

Was He seeking shelter in words when He repeated again and yet again: "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days"?

Was it a coward who shook His hand in the face of the authorities and pronounced them "liars, low, filthy, and degenerate"?

Shall a man bold enough to say these things to those who ruled Judea be deemed meek and humble?

Nay. The eagle builds not his nest in the weeping willow. And the lion seeks not his den among the ferns.

I am sickened and the bowels within me stir and rise when I hear the faint-hearted call Jesus humble and meek, that they may justify their own faint-heartedness; and when the downtrodden, for comfort and companionship, speak of Jesus as a worm shining by their side.

Yea, my heart is sickened by such men. It is the mighty hunter I would preach, and the mountainous spirit unconquerable.
THIS day I heard Saul of Tarsus preaching the Christ unto the Jews of this city.

He calls himself Paul now, the apostle to the Gentiles.

I knew him in my youth, and in those days he persecuted the friends of the Nazarene. Well do I remember his satisfaction when his fellows stoned the radiant youth called Stephen.

This Paul is indeed a strange man. His soul is not the soul of a free man.

At times he seems like an animal in the forest, hunted and wounded, seeking a cave wherein he would hide his pain from the world.

He speaks not of Jesus, nor does he repeat His words. He preaches the Messiah whom the prophets of old had foretold.

And though he himself is a learned Jew, he addresses his fellow Jews in Greek; and his Greek is halting, and he ill chooses his words.

But he is a man of hidden powers and his presence is affirmed by those who gather around him. And at times he assures them of what he himself is not assured.
We who knew Jesus and heard His discourses say that He taught man how to break the chains of his bondage that he might be free from his yesterdays.

But Paul is forging chains for the man of tomorrow. He would strike with his own hammer upon the anvil in the name of one whom he does not know.

The Nazarene would have us live the hour in passion and ecstasy.

The man of Tarsus would have us be mindful of laws recorded in the ancient books.

Jesus gave His breath to the breathless dead. And in my lone nights I believe and I understand.

When He sat at the board, He told stories that gave happiness to the feasters, and spiced with His joy the meat and the wine.

But Paul would prescribe our loaf and our cup.

Suffer me now to turn my eyes the other way.
SALOME, TO A WOMAN FRIEND

He was like poplars shimmering in the sun;
And like a lake among the lonely hills,
Shining in the sun;
And like snow upon the mountain heights,
White, white in the sun.

Yea, He was like unto all these,
And I loved Him.
Yet I feared His presence
And my feet would not carry my burden of love
That I might girdle His feet with my arms.

I would have said to Him:
"I have slain your friend in an hour of passion.
Will you forgive me my sin?
And will you not in mercy release my youth
From its blind deed,
That it may walk in your light?"

I know He would have forgiven my dancing
For the saintly head of His friend.
I know He would have seen in me
An object of His own teaching.
For there was no valley of hunger He could not bridge,
And no desert of thirst He could not cross.

Yea, He was even as the poplars,
And as the lakes among the hills,
And like the snow upon Lebanon.
And I would have cooled my lips in the folds of His garment.

But He was far from me,
And I was ashamed.
And my mother held me back
When the desire to seek Him was upon me.

Whenever He passed by, my heart ached for His loveliness,
But my mother frowned at Him in contempt,
And would hasten me from the window
To my bedchamber.
And she would cry aloud, saying:
"Who is He but another locust-eater from the desert?

"What is He but a scoffer and a renegade,
A seditious riot-monger, who would rob us of sceptre and crown,
And bid the foxes and the jackals of His accursèd land
Howl in our halls and sit upon our throne?"
Go hide your face from this day,
And await the day when His head shall fall down,
But not upon your platter.”

These things my mother said.
But my heart would not keep her words.
I loved Him in secret,
And my sleep was girdled with flames.

He is gone now.
And something that was in me is gone also.
Perhaps it was my youth
That would not tarry here,
Since the God of youth was slain.