UPON an evening Jesus passed by a prison that was in the Tower of David. And we were walking after Him.

Of a sudden He tarried and laid His cheek against the stones of the prison wall. And thus He spoke:

"Brothers of my ancient day, my heart beats with your hearts behind the bars. Would that you could be free in my freedom and walk with me and my comrades.

"You are confined, but not alone. Many are the prisoners who walk the open streets. Their wings are not shorn, but like the peacock they flutter yet cannot fly.

"Brothers of my second day, I shall soon visit you in your cells and yield my shoulder to your burden. For the innocent and the guilty are not parted, and like the two bones of the forearm they shall never be cleaved.

"Brothers of this day, which is my day, you swim against the current of their reasoning and you were caught. They say I too swim against that current. Perhaps I shall soon be with you, a law-breaker among law-breakers.

"Brothers of a day not yet come, these walls shall fall down, and out of the stones other shapes shall be
fashioned by Him whose mallet is light, and whose chisel is the wind, and you shall stand free in the freedom of my new day.”

Thus spoke Jesus, and He walked on, and His hand was upon the prison wall until He passed by the Tower of David.
ANDREW

THE bitterness of death is less bitter than life without Him. The days were hushed and made still when He was silenced. Only the echo in my memory repeats His words. But not His voice.

Once I heard Him say: "Go forth in your longing to the fields, and sit by the lilies, and you shall hear them humming in the sun. They weave not cloth for raiment, nor do they raise wood or stone for shelter; yet they sing.

"He who works in the night fulfils their needs and the dew of His grace is upon their petals.

"And are not you also His care who never wearies nor rests?"

And once I heard Him say: "The birds of the sky are counted and enrolled by your Father even as the hairs of your head are numbered. Not a bird shall lie at the archer’s feet, neither shall a hair of your head turn grey or fall into the emptiness of age without His will."

And once again He said: "I have heard you murmur in your hearts: 'Our God shall be more merciful unto us, children of Abraham, than unto those who knew Him not in the beginning'.

"But I say unto you that the owner of the vineyard
who calls a labourer in the morning to reap, and calls
another at sundown, and yet renders wages to the
last even as to the first, that man is indeed justified.
Does he not pay out of his own purse and with his
own will?

“So shall my Father open the gate of His mansion
at the knocking of the Gentiles even as at your
knocking. For His ear heeds the new melody with
the same love that it feels for the oft-heard song.
And with a special welcome because it is the youngest
string of His heart.”

And once again I heard Him say: “Remember
this: a thief is a man in need, a liar is a man in fear;
the hunter who is hunted by the watchman of your
night is also hunted by the watchman of his own
darkness.

“I would have you pity them all.

“Should they seek your house, see that you open
your door and bid them sit at your board. If you
do not accept them you shall not be free from
whatever they have committed.”

And on a day I followed Him to the market-place
of Jerusalem as the others followed Him. And He
told us the parable of the prodigal son, and the parable
of the merchant who sold all his possessions that he
might buy a pearl.

But as He was speaking the Pharisees brought
into the midst of the crowd a woman whom they
called a harlot. And they confronted Jesus and said
to Him: “She defiled her marriage vow, and she was
taken in the act.”
And He gazed at her; and He placed His hand upon her forehead and looked deep into her eyes.

Then He turned to the men who had brought her to Him, and He looked long at them; and He leaned down and with His finger He began to write upon the earth.

He wrote the name of every man, and beside the name He wrote the sin that every man had committed.

And as He wrote they escaped in shame into the streets.

And ere He had finished writing only that woman and ourselves stood before Him.

And again He looked into her eyes, and He said: "You have loved overmuch. They who brought you here loved but little. But they brought you as a snare for my ensnaring.

"And now go in peace.

"None of them is here to judge you. And if it is in your desire to be wise even as you are loving, then seek me; for the Son of Man will not judge you."

And I wondered then whether He said this to her because He Himself was not without sin.

But since that day I have pondered long, and I know now that only the pure of heart forgive the thirst that leads to dead waters.

And only the sure of foot can give a hand to him who stumbles.

And again and yet again I say, the bitterness of death is less bitter than life without Him.
A RICH MAN

He spoke ill of rich men. And upon a day I questioned Him saying: “Sir, what shall I do to attain the peace of the spirit?”

And He bade me give my possessions to the poor and follow Him.

But He possessed nothing; therefore He knew not the assurance and the freedom of possessions, nor the dignity and the self-respect that lie within.

In my household there are seven score slaves and stewards; some labour in my groves and vineyards, and some direct my ships to distant isles.

Now had I heeded Him and given my possessions to the poor, what would have befallen my slaves and my servants and their wives and children? They too would have become beggars at the gate of the city or the portico of the temple.

Nay, that good man did not fathom the secret of possessions. Because He and His followers lived on the bounty of others He thought all men should live likewise.

Behold a contradiction and a riddle: Should rich men bestow their riches upon the poor, and must the poor have the cup and the loaf of a rich man ere they welcome him to their board?

And must needs the holder of the tower be host
to his tenants ere he calls himself lord of his own land?

The ant that stores food for the winter is wiser than a grasshopper that sings one day and hungers another.

Last sabbath one of His followers said in the market-place: “At the threshold of heaven where Jesus may leave His sandals, no other man is worthy to lay his head.”

But I ask, at the threshold of whose house that honest vagabond could have left His sandals? He Himself never had a house nor a threshold; and often He went without sandals.
ONCE more I would speak of Him.
   God gave me the voice and the burning lips
   though not the speech.
   And unworthy am I for the fuller word, yet I
   would summon my heart to my lips.
   Jesus loved me and I knew not why.
   And I loved Him because He quickened my spirit
   to heights beyond my stature, and to depths beyond
   my sounding.
   Love is a sacred mystery.
   To those who love, it remains for ever wordless;
   But to those who do not love, it may be but a
   heartless jest.
   Jesus called me and my brother when we were
   labouring in the field.
   I was young then and only the voice of dawn had
   visited my ears.
   But His voice and the trumpet of His voice was
   the end of my labour and the beginning of my
   passion.
   And there was naught for me then but to walk in
   the sun and worship the loveliness of the hour.
   Could you conceive a majesty too kind to be
   majestic? And a beauty too radiant to seem
   beautiful?
Could you hear in your dreams a voice shy of its own rapture?
He called me and I followed Him.
That evening I returned to my father’s house to get my other cloak.
And I said to my mother: “Jesus of Nazareth would have me in His company.”
And she said: “Go His way, my son, even like your brother.”
And I accompanied Him.
His fragrance called me and commanded me, but only to release me.
Love is a gracious host to his guests though to the unbidden his house is a mirage and a mockery.

Now you would have me explain the miracles of Jesus.
We are all the miraculous gesture of the moment; our Lord and Master was the centre of that moment.
Yet it was not in His desire that His gestures be known.
I have heard Him say to the lame: “Rise and go home, but say not to the priest that I have made you whole.”
And Jesus’ mind was not with the cripple; it was rather with the strong and the upright.

I 54
His mind sought and held other minds and His complete spirit visited other spirits.
And in so doing His spirit changed these minds and these spirits.
It seemed miraculous, but with our Lord and Master it was simply like breathing the air of every day.

And now let me speak of other things.
On a day when He and I were alone walking in a field, we were both hungry, and we came to a wild apple tree.
There were only two apples hanging on the bough. And He held the trunk of the tree with His arm and shook it, and the two apples fell down.
He picked them both up and gave one to me. The other He held in His hand.
In my hunger I ate the apple, and I ate it fast.
Then I looked at Him and I saw that He still held the other apple in His hand.
And He gave it to me saying: "Eat this also."
And I took the apple, and in my shameless hunger I ate it.
And as we walked on I looked upon His face.
But how shall I tell you of what I saw?
A night where candles burn in space;
A dream beyond our reaching;
A noon where all shepherds are at peace and happy
that their flocks are grazing;
An eventide, and a stillness, and a homecoming;
Then a sleep and a dream.
All these things I saw in His face.
He had given me the two apples. And I knew He
was hungry even as I was hungry.
But I now know that in giving them to me He had
been satisfied. He Himself ate of other fruit from
another tree.
I would tell you more of Him, but how shall I?
When love becomes vast, love becomes wordless.
And when memory is overladen it seeks the silent
deep.
ONCE in Capernaum my Lord and Master spoke thus:

"Your neighbour is your other self dwelling behind a wall. In understanding, all walls shall fall down.

"Who knows but that your neighbour is your better self wearing another body? See that you love him as you would love yourself.

"He too is a manifestation of the Most High, whom you do not know.

"Your neighbour is a field where the springs of your hope walk in their green garments, and where the winters of your desire dream of snowy heights.

"Your neighbour is a mirror wherein you shall behold your countenance made beautiful by a joy which you yourself did not know, and by a sorrow you yourself did not share.

"I would have you love your neighbour even as I have loved you."

Then I asked Him, saying: "How can I love a neighbour who loves me not, and who covets my property? One who would steal my possessions?"

And He answered: "When you are ploughing and your manservant is sowing the seed behind you, would you stop and look backward and put to flight
a sparrow feeding upon a few of your seeds? Should you do this, you were not worthy of the riches of your harvest.”

When Jesus had said this, I was ashamed and I was silent. But I was not in fear, for He smiled upon me.
A COBBLER IN JERUSALEM

I LOVED Him not, yet I did not hate Him. I listened to Him not to hear His words but rather the sound of His voice; for His voice pleased me.

All that He said was vague to my mind, but the music thereof was clear to my ear.

Indeed were it not for what others have said to me of His teaching, I should not have known even so much as whether He was with Judea or against it.
SUSANNAH OF NAZARETH,
A NEIGHBOUR OF MARY

I knew Mary the mother of Jesus, before she became the wife of Joseph the carpenter, when we were both still unwedded.

In those days Mary would behold visions and hear voices, and she would speak of heavenly ministers who visited her dreams.

And the people of Nazareth were mindful of her, and they observed her going and her coming. And they gazed upon her with kindly eyes, for there were heights in her brows and spaces in her steps.

But some said she was possessed. They said this because she would go only upon her own errands.

I deemed her old while she was young, for there was a harvest in her blossoming and ripe fruit in her spring.

She was born and reared amongst us, yet she was like an alien from the North Country. In her eyes there was always the astonishment of one not yet familiar with our faces.

And she was as haughty as Miriam of old who marched with her brothers from the Nile to the wilderness.

Then Mary was betrothed to Joseph the carpenter.
When Mary was big with Jesus she would walk among the hills and return at eventide with loveliness and pain in her eyes.

And when Jesus was born I was told that Mary said to her mother: "I am but a tree unpruned. See you to this fruit." Martha the midwife heard her.

After three days I visited her. And there was wonder in her eyes, and her breasts heaved, and her arm was around her first-born like the shell that holds the pearl.

We all loved Mary's babe and we watched Him, for there was a warmth in His being and He throbbed with the pace of His life.

The seasons passed, and He became a boy full of laughter and little wanderings. None of us knew what He would do, for He seemed always outside of our race. But He was never rebuked, though He was venturous and overdaring.

He played with the other children rather than they with Him.

When He was twelve years old, one day He led a blind man across the brook to the safety of the open road.

And in gratitude the blind man asked Him: "Little boy, who are you?"

And He answered: "I am not a little boy. I am Jesus."

And the blind man said: "Who is your father?"

And He answered: "God is my Father."

And the blind man laughed and replied: "Well said, my little boy. But who is your mother?"
And Jesus answered: "I am not your little boy. And my mother is the earth."

And the blind man said: "Then, behold, I was led by the Son of God and the earth across the stream."

And Jesus answered: "I will lead you wherever you would go, and my eyes will accompany your feet."

And He grew like a precious palm tree in our gardens.

When He was nineteen He was as comely as a hart, and His eyes were like honey and full of the surprise of day.

And upon His mouth there was the thirst of the desert flock for the lake.

He would walk the fields alone and our eyes would follow Him, and the eyes of all the maidens of Nazareth. But we were shy of Him.

Love is forever shy of beauty, yet beauty shall forever be pursued by love.

Then the years bade Him speak in the temple and in the gardens of Galilee.

And at times Mary followed Him to listen to His words and to hear the sound of her own heart. But when He and those who loved Him went down to Jerusalem she would not go.

For we of the North Country are often mocked in the streets of Jerusalem, even when we go carrying our offerings to the temple.
And Mary was too proud to yield to the South Country.

And Jesus visited other lands in the east and in the west. We knew not what lands He visited, yet our hearts followed Him.

But Mary awaited Him upon her threshold, and every eventide her eyes sought the road for His home-coming.

Yet upon His return she would say to us: "He is too vast to be my Son, too eloquent for my silent heart. How shall I claim Him?"

It seemed to us that Mary could not believe that the plain had given birth to the mountain; in the whiteness of her heart she did not see that the ridge is a pathway to the summit.

She knew the man, but because He was her Son she dared not know Him.

And on a day when Jesus went to the lake to be with the fishermen she said to me: "What is man but this restless being that would rise from the earth, and who is man but a longing that desires the stars?

"My son is a longing. He is all of us longing for the stars.

"Did I say my son? May God forgive me. Yet in my heart I would be His mother."
Now, it is hard to tell more of Mary and her Son, but though there shall be husks in my throat, and my words shall reach you like cripples on crutches, I must needs relate what I have seen and heard.

It was in the youth of the year when the red anemones were upon the hills that Jesus called His disciples saying to them: "Come with me to Jerusalem and witness the slaying of the lamb for the passover."

Upon that selfsame day Mary came to my door and said: "He is seeking the Holy City. Will you come and follow Him with me and the other women?"

And we walked the long road behind Mary and her son till we reached Jerusalem. And there a company of men and women hailed us at the gate, for coming had been heralded to those who loved Him.

But upon that very night Jesus left the city with His men.

We were told that He had gone to Bethany.

And Mary stayed with us in the inn, awaiting His return.

Upon the eve of the following Thursday He was caught without the walls, and was held prisoner.

And when we heard He was a prisoner, Mary uttered not a word, but there appeared in her eyes the fulfilment of that promised pain and joy which we had beheld when she was but a bride in Nazareth.

She did not weep. She only moved among us like the ghost of a mother who would not bewail the ghost of her son.
We sat low upon the floor but she was erect, walking up and down the room.

She would stand beside the window and gaze eastward, and then with the fingers of her two hands brush back her hair.

At dawn she was still standing among us, like a lone banner in the wilderness wherein there are no hosts.

We wept because we knew the morrow of her son; but she did not weep, for she knew also what would befall Him.

Her bones were of bronze and her sinews of the ancient elms, and her eyes were like the sky, wide and daring.

Have you heard a thrush sing while its nest burns in the wind?

Have you seen a woman whose sorrow is too much for tears, or a wounded heart that would rise beyond its own pain?

You have not seen such a woman, for you have not stood in the presence of Mary; and you have not been enfolded by the Mother Invisible.

In that still moment when the muffled hoofs of silence beat upon the breasts of the sleepless, John, the young son of Zebedee, came and said: "Mary Mother, Jesus is going forth. Come, let us follow Him."

And Mary laid her hand upon John’s shoulder and they went out, and we followed them.

When we came to the Tower of David we saw Jesus carrying His cross. And there was a great crowd about him.
And two other men were also carrying their crosses.

And Mary's head was held high, and she walked with us after her son. And her step was firm.

And behind her walked Zion and Rome, aye, the whole world, to revenge itself upon one free Man.

When we reached the hill, He was raised high upon the cross.

And I looked at Mary. And her face was not the face of a woman bereaved. It was the countenance of the fertile earth, for ever giving birth, for ever burying children.

Then to her eyes came the remembrance of His childhood, and she said aloud: "My son, who is not my son; man who once visited my womb, I glory in your power. I know that every drop of blood that runs down from your hands shall be the well-stream of a nation.

"You die in this tempest even as my heart once died in the sunset, and I shall not sorrow."

At that moment I desired to cover my face with my cloak and run away to the North Country. But of a sudden I heard Mary say: "My son, who is not my son, what have you said to the man at your right hand that has made him happy in his agony? The shadow of death is light upon his face, and he cannot turn his eyes from you.

"Now you smile upon me, and because you smile I know you have conquered."

And Jesus looked upon His mother and said: "Mary, from this hour be you the mother of John."
And to John He said: "Be a loving son unto this woman. Go to her house and let your shadow cross the threshold where I once stood. Do this in remembrance of me."

And Mary raised her right hand towards Him, and she was like a tree with one branch. And again, she cried: "My son, who is not my son, if this be of God, may God give us patience and the knowledge thereof. And if it be of man, may God forgive him for evermore.

"If it be of God, the snow of Lebanon shall be your shroud; and if it be only of these priests and soldiers, then I have this garment for your nakedness.

"My son, who is not my son, that which God builds here shall not perish; and that which man would destroy shall remain builded, but not in his sight."

And at that moment the heavens yielded Him to the earth, a cry and a breath.

And Mary yielded Him also unto man, a wound and a balsam.

And Mary said: "Now behold, He is gone. The battle is over. The star has shone forth. The ship has reached the harbour. He who once lay against my heart is throbbing in space."

And we came close to her, and she said to us: "Even in death He smiles. He has conquered. I would indeed be the mother of a conqueror."

And Mary returned to Jerusalem leaning upon John, the young disciple.

And she was a woman fulfilled.
And when we reached the gate of the city, I gazed upon her face, and I was astonished, for on that day the head of Jesus was the highest among men, yet Mary’s head was not less high.

All this came to pass in the spring of the year.

And now it is autumn. And Mary the mother of Jesus has come again to her dwelling-place, and she is alone.

Two sabbaths ago my heart was as a stone in my breast, for my son had left me for a ship in Tyre. He would be a sailor.

And he said he would return no more.

And upon an evening I sought Mary.

When I entered her house she was sitting at her loom, but she was not weaving. She was looking into the sky beyond Nazareth.

And I said to her: “Hail, Mary.”

And she stretched out her arm to me, and said: “Come and sit beside me, and let us watch the sun pour its blood upon the hills.”

And I sat beside her on the bench and we gazed into the west through the window.

And after a moment Mary said: “I wonder who is crucifying the sun this eventide.”

Then I said: “I came to you for comfort. My son has left me for the sea and I am alone in the home across the way.”

Then Mary said: “I would comfort you, but how shall I?”

And I said: “If you will only speak of your son I shall be comforted.”
And Mary smiled upon me, and she laid her hand about my shoulder and she said: "I will speak of Him. That which will console you will give me consolation."

Then she spoke of Jesus, and she spoke long of all that was in the beginning.

And it seemed to me that in her speech she would have no difference between her son and mine.

For she said to me: "My son is also a seafarer. Why would you not trust your son to the waves even as I have trusted Him?

"Women shall be forever the womb and the cradle, but never the tomb. We die that we may give life unto life even as our fingers spin the thread for the raiment that we shall never wear.

"And we cast the net for the fish that we shall never taste.

"And for this we sorrow, yet in all this is our joy."

Thus spoke Mary to me.

And I left her and came to my house, and though the light of the day was spent, I sat at my loom to weave more of the cloth.
JOSEPH SURNAMED JUSTUS

THEY say He was vulgar, the common offspring of common seed, a man uncouth and violent. They say that only the wind combed His hair, and only the rain brought His clothes and His body together. They deem Him mad, and they attribute His words to demons. Yet behold, the Man despised sounded a challenge and the sound thereof shall never cease.

He sang a song and none shall arrest that melody. It shall hover from generation to generation and it shall rise from sphere to sphere remembering the lips that gave it birth and the ears that cradled it.

He was a stranger. Aye, He was a stranger, a way-farer on His way to a shrine, a visitor who knocked at our door, a guest from a far country.

And because He found not a gracious host, He has returned to His own place.
WHEN our Beloved died, all mankind died and all things for a space were still and grey. Then the east was darkened, and a tempest rushed out of it and swept the land. The eyes of the sky opened and shut, and the rain came down in torrents and carried away the blood that streamed from His hands and His feet.

I too died. But in the depth of my oblivion I heard Him speak and say: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

And His voice sought my drownèd spirit and I was brought back to the shore.

And I opened my eyes and I saw His white body hanging against the cloud, and His words that I had heard took shape within me and became a new man. And I sorrowed no more.

Who would sorrow for a sea that is unveiling its face, or for a mountain that laughs in the sun?

Was it ever in the heart of man, when that heart was pierced, to say such words?

What other judge of men has released His judges? And did ever love challenge hate with power more certain of itself?

Was ever such a trumpet heard ’twixt heaven and earth?
Was it known before that the murdered had compassion on his murderers? Or that the meteor stayed his footsteps for the mole?

The seasons shall tire and the years grow old, ere they exhaust these words: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And you and I, though born again and again, shall keep them.

And now I would go into my house, and stand, an exalted beggar, at His door.
BIRBÀRAH OF YAMMOUNI

Jesus was patient with the dullard and the stupid, even as the winter awaits the spring.
He was patient like a mountain in the wind.
He answered with kindliness the harsh questionings of His foes.
He could even be silent to cavil and dispute, for He was strong, and the strong can be forbearing.
But Jesus was also impatient.
He spared not the hypocrite.
He yielded not to men of cunning nor to the jugglers of words.
And he would not be governed.
He was impatient with those who believed not in light because they themselves dwelt in shadow; and with those who sought after signs in the sky rather than in their own hearts.
He was impatient with those who weighed and measured the day and the night before they would trust their dreams to dawn or eventide.
Jesus was patient.
Yet He was the most impatient of men.
He would have you weave the cloth though you spend years between the loom and the linen.
But He would have none tear an inch off the woven fabric.
PILATE'S WIFE,
TO A ROMAN LADY

I WAS walking with my maidens in the groves outside of Jerusalem when I saw Him with a few men and women sitting about Him; and He was speaking to them in a language which I only half understood.

But one needs not a language to perceive a pillar of light or a mountain of crystal. The heart knows what the tongue may never utter and the ears may never hear.

He was speaking to His friends of love and strength. I know He spoke of love, because there was melody in His voice; and I know He spoke of strength, because there were armies in His gestures. And He was tender, though even my husband could not have spoken with such authority.

When He saw me passing by, He stopped speaking for a moment and looked kindly upon me. And I was humbled; and in my soul I knew I had passed by a god.

After that day His image visited my privacy when I would not be visited by man or woman; and His eyes searched my soul when my own eyes were closed. And His voice governs the stillness of my nights.
I am held gast for evermore; and there is peace in my pain, and freedom in my tears.
Belovèd friend, you have never seen that man, and you will never see Him.
He is gone beyond our senses, but of all men He is now the nearest to me.
A MAN OUTSIDE OF JERUSALEM

JUDAS came to my house that Friday, upon the eve of the passover; and he knocked at my door with force.

When he entered I looked at him, and his face was ashen. His hands trembled like dry twigs in the wind, and his clothes were as wet as if he had stepped out from a river; for on that evening there were great tempests.

He looked at me, and the sockets of his eyes were like dark caves and his eyes were blood-sodden.

And he said: “I have delivered Jesus of Nazareth to His enemies and to my enemies.”

Then Judas wrung his hands and he said: “Jesus declared that He would overcome all His foes and the foes of our people. And I believed, and I followed Him.

“When first He called us to Him He promised us a kingdom mighty and vast, and in our faith we sought His favour that we might have honourable stations in His court.

“We beheld ourselves princes dealing with these Romans as they have dealt with us. And Jesus said much about His kingdom, and I thought He had chosen me a captain of His chariots, and a chief man
of His warriors. And I followed His footsteps willingly.

"But I found it was not a kingdom that Jesus sought, nor was it from the Romans He would have had us free. His kingdom was but the kingdom of the heart. I heard Him talk of love and charity and forgiveness, and the wayside women listened gladly, but my heart grew bitter and I was hardened.

"My promised king of Judea seemed suddenly to have turned flute-player, to soothe the mind of wanderers and vagabonds.

"I had loved Him as others of my tribe had loved Him. I had beheld in Him a hope and a deliverance from the yoke of the aliens. But when He would not utter a word or move a hand to free us from that yoke, and when He would even have rendered unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, then despair filled me and my hopes died. And I said: 'He who murders my hopes shall be murdered, for my hopes and expectations are more precious than the life of any man'"

Then Judas gnashed his teeth; and he bent down his head. And when he spoke again, he said: "I have delivered Him up. And He was crucified this day. . . . Yet when He died upon the cross, He died a king. He died in the tempest as deliverers die, like vast men who live beyond the shroud and the stone.

"And all the while He was dying, He was gracious, and He was kindly; and His heart was full of
pity. He felt pity even for me who had delivered Him up."

And I said: "Judas, you have committed a grave wrong."

And Judas answered: "But He died a king. Why did He not live a king?"

And I said again: "You have committed a grave crime."

And he sat down there, upon that bench, and he was as still as a stone.

But I walked to and fro in the room, and once more I said: "You have committed a great sin."

But Judas said not a word. He remained as silent as the earth.

And after a while he stood up and faced me, and he seemed taller, and when he spoke his voice was like the sound of a cracked vessel; and he said: "Sin was not in my heart. This very night I shall seek His kingdom, and I shall stand in His presence and beg His forgiveness.

"He died a king, and I shall die a felon. But in my heart I know He will forgive me."

After saying these words he folded his wet cloak around him and he said: "It was good that I came to you this night even though I have brought you trouble. Will you also forgive me?"

"Say to your sons and to your sons' sons: 'Judas Iscariot delivered Jesus of Nazareth to His enemies because he believed Jesus was an enemy to His own race.'

"And say also that Judas upon the self-same day
of his great error followed the King to the steps of His throne to deliver up his own soul and to be judged.

"I shall tell Him that my blood also was impatient for the sod, and my crippled spirit would be free."

Then Judas leaned his head back against the wall and he cried out: "O God whose dreaded name no man shall utter ere his lips are touched by the fingers of death, why did you burn me with a fire that had no light?

"Why did you give the Galilean a passion for a land unknown and burden me with desire that would not escape kin or hearth? And who is this man Judas, whose hands are dipped in blood?

"Lend me a hand to cast him off, an old garment and a tattered harness.

"Help me to do this tonight.

"And let me stand again outside of these walls.

"I am weary of this wingless liberty. I would a larger dungeon.

"I would flow a stream of tears to the bitter sea. I would be a man of your mercy rather than one knocking at the gate of his own heart."

Thus Judas spoke, and thereupon he opened the door and went out again into the tempest.

Three days afterwards I visited Jerusalem and heard of all that had come to pass. And I also heard that Judas had flung himself from the summit of the High Rock.

I have pondered long since that day, and I understand Judas. He fulfilled his little life, which hovered
like a mist on this land enslaved by the Romans, while the great prophet was ascending the heights.

One man longed for a kingdom in which he was to be a prince.

Another man desired a kingdom in which all men shall be princes.
SARKIS, AN OLD GREEK SHEPHERD, CALLED THE MADMAN

In a dream I saw Jesus and my god Pan sitting together in the heart of the forest.

They laughed at each other's speech, with the brook that ran near them, and the laughter of Jesus was the merrier. And they conversed long.

Pan spoke of earth and her secrets, and of his hoofed brothers and his horned sisters; and of dreams. And he spoke of roots and their nestlings, and of the sap that wakes and rises and sings to summer.

And Jesus told of the young shoots in the forest, and of flowers and fruit, and the seed that they shall bear in a season not yet come.

He spoke of birds in space and their singing in the upper world.

And He told of white harts in the desert wherein God shepherds them.

And Pan was pleased with the speech of the new God, and his nostrils quivered.

And in the same dream I beheld Pan and Jesus grow quiet and still in the stillness of the green shadows.

And then Pan took his reeds and played to Jesus. The trees were shaken and the ferns trembled, and there was a fear upon me.
And Jesus said: "Good brother, you have the glade and the rocky height in your reeds."

Then Pan gave the reeds to Jesus and said: "You play now. It is your turn."

And Jesus said: "These reeds are too many for my mouth. I have this flute."

And He took His flute and He played.

And I heard the sound of rain in the leaves, and the singing of streams among the hills, and the falling of snow on the mountain-top.

The pulse of my heart, that had once beaten with the wind, was restored again to the wind, and all the waves of my yesterdays were upon my shore, and I was again Sarkis the shepherd, and the flute of Jesus became the pipes of countless shepherds calling to countless flocks.

Then Pan said to Jesus: "Your youth is more kin to the reed than my years. And long ere this in my stillness I have heard your song and the murmur of your name.

"Your name has a goodly sound; well shall it rise with the sap to the branches, and well shall it run with the hoofs among the hills.

"And it is not strange to me, though my father called me not by that name. It was your flute that brought it back to my memory.

"And now let us play our reeds together."

And they played together.

And their music smote heaven and earth, and a terror struck all living things.

I heard the bellow of beasts and the hunger of the
forest. And I heard the cry of lonely men, and the
plaint of those who long for what they know not.
I heard the sighing of the maiden for her lover, and
the panting of the luckless hunter for his prey.
And then there came peace into their music, and
the heavens and the earth sang together.
All this I saw in my dream, and all this I heard.
HE was of the rabble, a brigand, a mountebank and a self-trumpeter. He appealed only to the unclean and the disinherited, and for this He had to go the way of all the tainted and the defiled.

He made sport of us and of our laws; He mocked at our honour and jeered at our dignity. He even said He would destroy the temple and desecrate the holy places. He was shameless, and for this He had to die a shameful death.

He was a man from Galilee of the Gentiles, an alien, from that North Country where Adonis and Ashtarte still claim power against Israel and the God of Israel.

He whose tongue halted when He spoke the speech of our prophets was loud and ear-splitting when He spoke the bastard language of the low-born and the vulgar.

What else was there for me but to decree His death?

Am I not a guardian of the temple? Am I not a keeper of the law? Could I have turned on Him, saying in all tranquillity: “He is a madman among madmen. Let Him alone to exhaust Himself raving; for the mad and the crazed and those possessed with devils shall be naught in the path of Israel”?
Could I have been deaf unto Him when He called us liars, hypocrites, wolves, vipers and the sons of vipers?

Nay, I could not be deaf to Him, for He was not a madman. He was self-possessed; and in His big-sounding sanity He denounced and challenged us all.

For this I had Him crucified, and His crucifixion was a signal and warning unto the others who are stamped with the same damnèd seal.

I know well I have been blamed for this, even by some of the elders in the Sanhedrin. But I was mindful then, as I am mindful now, that one man should die for the people rather than the people be led astray by one man.

Judea was conquered by an enemy from without. I shall see that Judea is not conquered again, by an enemy from within.

No man from the cursèd North shall reach our Holy of Holies nor lay His shadow across the Ark of the Covenant.
A WOMAN, ONE OF MARY'S NEIGHBOURS

ON the fortieth day after His death, all the women neighbours came to the house of Mary to console her and to sing threnodies.

And one of the women sang this song:

Whereto my Spring, whereto?
And to what other space your perfume ascending?
In what other fields shall you walk?
And to what sky shall you lift up your head to speak your heart?

These valleys shall be barren,
And we shall have naught but dried fields and arid.
All green things will parch in the sun,
And our orchards will bring forth sour apples,
And our vineyards bitter grapes.
We shall thirst for your wine,
And our nostrils will long for your fragrance.

Whereto Flower of our first Spring, whereto?
And will you return no more?
Will not your jasmine visit us again,
And your cyclamen stand by our wayside
To tell us that we too have our roots deep in earth,
And that our ceaseless breath would for ever climb the sky?
Whereto Jesus, whereto
Son of my neighbour Mary,
And comrade to my son?
Whither our first Spring, and to what other fields?
Will you return to us again?
Will you in your love-tide visit the barren shores
of our dreams?
WELL do I remember the last time I saw Jesus the Nazarene. Judas had come to me at the noon hour of that Thursday, and bidden me prepare supper for Jesus and His friends.

He gave me two silver pieces and said: “Buy all that that you deem needful for the meal.”

And after he had gone my wife said to me: “This is indeed a distinction.” For Jesus had become a prophet and He had wrought many miracles.

At twilight He came and His followers, and they sat in the upper chamber around the board, but they were silent and quiet.

Last year also and the year before they had come and then they had been joyous. They broke the bread and drank the wine and sang our ancient strains; and Jesus would talk to them till midnight.

After that they would leave Him alone in the upper chamber and go to sleep in other rooms; for after midnight it was His desire to be alone.

And He would remain awake; I would hear His steps as I lay upon my bed.

But this last time He and His friends were not happy.

My wife had prepared fishes from the Lake of Galilee, and pheasants from Houran stuffed with rice
and pomegranate seeds, and I had carried them a jug of my cypress wine.

And then I had left them, for I felt that they wished to be alone.

They stayed until it was full dark, and then they all descended together from the upper chamber, but at the foot of the stairs Jesus tarried awhile. And He looked at me and my wife, and He placed His hand upon the head of my daughter and He said: "Good night to you all. We shall come back again to your upper chamber, but we shall not leave you at this early hour. We shall stay until the sun rises above the horizon.

"In a little while we shall return and ask for more bread and more wine. You and your wife have been good hosts to us, and we shall remember you when we come to our mansion and sit at our own board."

And I said: "Sir, it was an honour to serve you. The other innkeepers envy me because of your visits, and in my pride I smile at them in the market-place. Sometimes I even make a grimace."

And He said: "All innkeepers should be proud in serving. For he who gives bread and wine is the brother of him who reaps and gathers the sheaves from the threshing-floor, and of him who crushes the grapes at the wine-press. And you are all kindly. You give of your bounty even to those who come with naught but hunger and thirst."

Then He turned to Judas Iscariot, who kept the purse of the company, and He said: "Give me two shekels."
And Judas gave Him two shekels, saying: “These are the last silver pieces in my purse.”

Jesus looked at him and said: “Soon, over-soon, your purse shall be filled with silver.”

Then He put the two pieces into my hand and said: “With these buy a silken girdle for your daughter, and bid her wear it on the day of the passover in remembrance of me.”

And looking again into the face of my daughter, He leaned down and kissed her brow. And then He said once more: “Good night to you all.”

And He walked away.

I have been told that what He said to us has been recorded upon a parchment by one of His friends, but I repeat it to you even as I heard it from His own lips.

Never shall I forget the sound of His voice as He said those words: “Good night to you all.”

If you would know more of Him, ask my daughter. She is a woman now, but she cherishes the memory of her girlhood. And her words are more ready than mine.
THEY released me and chose Him. Then He rose and I fell down.
And they held Him a victim and a sacrifice for the passover.
I was freed from my chains, and walked with the throng behind Him, but I was a living man going to my own grave.
I should have fled to the desert, where shame is burned out by the sun.
Yet I walked with those who had chosen Him to bear my crime.
When they nailed Him on His cross I stood there.
I saw and I heard, but I seemed outside of my body.
The thief who was crucified on His right said to Him: “Are you bleeding with me, even you, Jesus of Nazareth?”
And Jesus answered and said: “Were it not for this nail that stays my hand I would reach forth and clasp your hand.
“We are crucified together. Would they had raised your cross nearer to mine.”
Then He looked down and gazed upon His mother and a young man who stood beside her.
He said: “Mother, behold your son standing beside you.
"Woman, behold a man who shall carry these drops of my blood to the North Country."

And when He heard the wailing of the women of Galilee He said: "Behold, they weep and I thirst.
"I am held too high to reach their tears.
"I will not take vinegar and gall to quench this thirst."

Then His eyes opened wide to the sky, and He said: "Father, why hast Thou forsaken us?"

And then He said in compassion: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

When He uttered these words methought I saw all men prostrated before God, beseeching forgiveness for the crucifixion of this one man.

Then again He said with a great voice: "Father, into Thy hand I yield back my spirit.

And at last He lifted up His head and said: "Now it is finished, but only upon this hill."

And He closed His eyes.

Then lightning cracked the dark skies, and there was a great thunder.

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I know now that those who slew Him in my stead achieved my endless torment.

His crucifixion endured but for an hour.

But I shall be crucified unto the end of my years.
AFTER He was taken, they entrusted Him to me. And I was ordered by Pontius Pilatus to keep Him in custody until the following morning.

My soldiers led Him prisoner, and He was obedient to them.

At midnight I left my wife and children and visited the arsenal. It was my habit to go about and see that all was well with my battalions in Jerusalem; and that night I visited the arsenal where He was held.

My soldiers and some of the young Jews were making sport of Him. They had stripped Him of His garment, and they had put a crown of last year’s brier-thorns upon His head.

They had seated Him against a pillar, and they were dancing and shouting before Him.

And they had given Him a reed to hold in His hand.

As I entered someone shouted: “Behold, O Captain, the King of the Jews.”

I stood before Him and looked at Him, and I was ashamed. I knew not why.

I had fought in Gallia and in Spain, and with my men I had faced death. Yet never had I been in fear, nor been a coward. But when I stood before that man and He looked at me I lost heart. It seemed as
though my lips were sealed, and I could utter no word.

And straightway I left the arsenal.

This chanced thirty years ago. My sons who were babes then are men now. And they are serving Cæsar and Rome.

But often in counselling them I have spoken of Him, a man facing death with the sap of life upon His lips, and with compassion for His slayers in His eyes.

And now I am old. I have lived the years fully. And I think truly that neither Pompey nor Cæsar was so great a commander as that Man of Galilee.

For since His unresisting death an army has risen out of the earth to fight for him. . . . And He is better served by them, though dead, than ever Pompey or Cæsar was served, though living.
JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE LORD

A THOUSAND times I have been visited by the memory of that night. And I know that I shall be visited a thousand times again.

The earth shall forget the furrows ploughed upon her breast, and a woman the pain and joy of child-birth, ere I shall forget that night.

In the afternoon we had been outside the walls of Jerusalem, and Jesus had said: “Let us go into the city now and take supper at the inn.”

It was dark when we reached the inn, and we were hungry. The innkeeper greeted us and led us to an upper chamber.

And Jesus bade us sit around the board, but He Himself remained standing, and His eyes rested upon us.

And He spoke to the keeper of the inn and said: “Bring me a basin and a pitcher full of water, and a towel.”

And He looked at us again and said gently: “Cast off your sandals.”

We did not understand, but at His command we cast them off.

Then the keeper of the inn brought the basin and the pitcher; and Jesus said: “Now I will wash your
feet. For I must needs free your feet from the dust of the ancient road, and give them the freedom of the new way."

And we were all abashed and shy.

Then Simon Peter stood up and said: "How shall I suffer my Master and my Lord to wash my feet?"

And Jesus answered: "I will wash your feet that you may remember that he who serves men shall be the greatest among men."

Then He looked at each one of us and He said: "The Son of Man who has chosen you for His brethren, He whose feet were anointed yesterday with myrrh of Arabia and dried with a woman's hair, desires now to wash your feet."

And He took the basin and the pitcher and kneeled down and washed our feet, beginning with Judas Iscariot.

Then he sat down with us at the board; and His face was like the dawn rising upon a battlefield after a night of strife and blood-shedding.

And the keeper of the inn came with his wife, bringing food and wine.

And though I had been hungry before Jesus knelt at my feet, now I had no stomach for food. And there was a flame in my throat which I would not quench with wine.

Then Jesus took a loaf of bread and gave to us, saying: "Perhaps we shall not break bread again. Let us eat this morsel in remembrance of our days in Galilee."
And He poured wine from the jug into a cup, and He drank, and gave to us, and He said: "Drink this in remembrance of a thirst we have known together. And drink it also in hope for the new vintage. When I am enfolded and am no more among you, and when you meet here or elsewhere, break the bread and pour the wine, and eat and drink even as you are doing now. Then look about you; and perchance you may see me sitting with you at the board."

After saying this He began to distribute among us morsels of fish and pheasant, like a bird feeding its fledglings.

We ate little, yet we were filled; and we drank but a drop, for we felt that the cup was like a space between this land and another land.

Then Jesus said: "Ere we leave this board let us rise and sing the joyous hymns of Galilee."

And we rose and sang together, and His voice was above our voices, and there was a ringing in every word of His words.

And He looked at our faces, each and every one, and He said: "Now I bid you farewell. Let us go beyond these walls. Let us go unto Gethsemane."

And John the son of Zebedee said: "Master, why do you say farewell to us this night?"

And Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled. I only leave you to prepare a place for you in my Father's house. But if you shall be in need of me, I will come back to you. Where you call me, there I shall hear you, and wherever your spirit shall seek me, there I will be."
"Forget not that thirst leads to the wine-press, and hunger to the wedding-feast.

"It is in your longing that you shall find the Son of Man. For longing is the fountain-head of ecstasy, and it is the path to the Father."

And John spoke again and said: "If you would indeed leave us, how shall we be of good cheer? And why speak you of separation?"

And Jesus said: "The hunted stag knows the arrow of the hunter before he feels it in his breast; and the river is aware of the sea ere it comes to her shore. And the Son of Man has travelled the ways of men.

"Before another almond tree renders her blossoms to the sun, my roots shall be reaching into the heart of another field."

Then Simon Peter said: "Master, leave us not now, and deny us not the joy of your presence. Where you go we too will go; and wherever you abide, there we will be also."

And Jesus put His hand upon Simon Peter's shoulder, and smiled upon him, and He said: "Who knows but that you may deny me before this night is over, and leave me before I leave you?"

Then of a sudden He said: "Now let us go hence."

And He left the inn and we followed Him. But when we reached the gate of the city, Judas Iscariot was no longer with us. And we crossed the Valley of Jahannam. Jesus walked far ahead of us, and we walked close to one another.

When He reached an olive grove He stopped and turned towards us saying: "Rest here for an hour."
The evening was cool, though it was full spring with the mulberries unfolding their shoots and the apple trees in bloom. And the gardens were sweet.

Each one of us sought the trunk of a tree, and we lay down. I myself gathered my cloak around me and lay under a pine tree.

But Jesus left us and walked by Himself in the olive grove. And I watched Him while the others slept.

He would suddenly stand still, and again He would walk up and down. This He did many times.

Then I saw Him lift His face towards the sky and outstretched His arms to east and west.

Once He had said: "Heaven and earth, and hell too, are of man." And now I remembered His saying, I knew that He who was pacing the olive grove was heaven made man; and I bethought me that the womb of the earth is not a beginning nor an end, but rather a chariot, a pause; and a moment of wonder and surprise; and hell I saw also, in the valley called Jahannam, which lay between Him and the Holy City.

And as He stood there and I lay wrapped in my garment, I heard His voice speaking. But He was not speaking to us. Thrice I heard Him pronounce the word Father. And that was all I heard.

After a while His arms dropped down, and He stood still like a cypress tree between my eyes and the sky.

At last He came over among us again, and He said
to us: "Wake and arise. My hour has come. The world is already upon us, armed for battle."

And then He said: "A moment ago I heard the voice of my Father. If I see you not again, remember that the conqueror shall not have peace until he is conquered."

And when we had risen and come close to Him, His face was like the starry heaven above the desert.

Then He kissed each one of us upon the cheek. And when His lips touched my cheek, they were hot, like the hand of a child in fever.

Suddenly we heard a great noise in the distance, as of numbers, and when it came near it was a company of men approaching with lanterns and staves. And they came in haste.

As they reached the hedge of the grove, Jesus left us and went forth to meet them. And Judas Iscariot was leading them.

There were Roman soldiers with swords and spears, and men of Jerusalem with clubs and pick-axes.

And Judas came up to Jesus and kissed Him. And then he said to the armed men: "This is the Man."

And Jesus said to Judas: "Judas, you were patient with me. This could have been yesterday."

Then He turned to the armed men and said: "Take me now. But see that your cage is large enough for these wings."

Then they fell upon Him and held Him, and they were all shouting.

But we in our fear ran away and sought to escape.
I ran alone through the olive groves, nor had I power to be mindful, nor did any voice speak in me except my fear.

Through the two or three hours that remained of that night I was fleeing and hiding, and at dawn I found myself in a village near Jericho.

Why had I left Him? I do not know. But to my sorrow I did leave Him. I was a coward and I fled from the face of His enemies.

Then I was sick and ashamed at heart, and I returned to Jerusalem, but He was a prisoner, and no friend could have speech with Him.

He was crucified, and His blood has made new clay of the earth.

And I am living still; I am living upon the honeycomb of His sweet life.
I WAS on my way to the fields when I saw Him carrying His cross; and multitudes were following Him.

Then I too walked beside Him.

His burden stopped Him many a time, for His body was exhausted.

Then a Roman soldier approached me, saying: “Come, you are strong and firm built; carry the cross of this man.”

When I heard these words my heart swelled within me and I was grateful.

And I carried His cross.

It was heavy, for it was made of poplar soaked through with the rains of winter.

And Jesus looked at me. And the sweat of His forehead was running down upon His beard.

Again He looked at me and He said: “Do you too drink this cup? You shall indeed sip its rim with me to the end of time.”

So saying He placed His hand upon my free shoulder. And we walked together towards the Hill of the Skull.

But now I felt not the weight of the cross. I felt only His hand. And it was like the wing of a bird upon my shoulder.
Then we reached the hill-top, and there they were to crucify Him.
And then I felt the weight of the tree.
He uttered no word when they drove the nails into His hands and feet, nor made He any sound.
And His limbs did not quiver under the hammer.
It seemed as if His hands and feet had died and would only live again when bathed in blood. Yet it seemed also as if he sought the nails as the prince would seek the sceptre; and that He craved to be raised to the heights.
And my heart did not think to pity Him, for I was too filled with wonder.
Now the man whose cross I carried has become my cross.
Should they say to me again: “Carry the cross of this man,” I would carry it till my road ended at the grave.
But I would beg Him to place His hand upon my shoulder.
This happened many years ago; and still whenever I follow the furrow in the field, and in that drowsy moment before sleep, I think always of that Belovèd Man.
And I feel His wingèd hand, here, on my left shoulder.
MY son was a good man and upright. He was tender and kind to me, and he loved his kin and his countrymen. And he hated our enemies, the cursèd Romans, who wear purple cloth though they spin no thread nor sit at any loom, and who reap and gather where they have not ploughed nor sowed the seed.

My son was but seventeen when he was caught shooting arrows at the Roman legion passing through our vineyard.

Even at that age he would speak to the other youths of the glory of Israel, and he would utter many strange things that I did not understand.

He was my son, my only son.

He drank life from these breasts now dry, and he took his first steps in this garden, grasping these fingers that are now like trembling reeds.

With these self-same hands, young and fresh then like the grapes of Lebanon, I put away his first sandals in a linen kerchief that my mother had given me. I still keep them there in that chest, beside the window.

He was my first-born, and when he took his first step, I took my first step. For women travel not save when led by their children.
And now they tell me he is dead by his own hand; that he flung himself from the High Rock in remorse because he had betrayed his friend Jesus of Nazareth.

I know my son is dead. But I know he betrayed no one; for he loved his kin and hated none but the Romans.

My son sought the glory of Israel, and naught but that glory was upon his lips and in his deeds.

When he met Jesus on the highway he left me to follow Him. And in my heart I knew that he was wrong to follow any man.

When he bade me farewell I told him that he was wrong, but he listened not.

Our children do not heed us; like the high tide of today, they take no counsel with the high tide of yesterday.

I beg you question me no further about my son.

I loved him and I shall love him for evermore.

If love were in the flesh I would burn it out with hot irons and be at peace. But it is in the soul, unreachable.

And now I would speak no more. Go question another woman more honoured than the mother of Judas.

Go to the mother of Jesus. The sword is in her heart also; she will tell you of me, and you will understand.
THE WOMAN OF BYBLOS

Weep with me, ye daughters of Ashtarte, and all ye lovers of Tamouz.
Bid your heart melt and rise and run blood-tears,
For He who was made of gold and ivory is no more.
In the dark forest the boar overcame Him,
And the tusks of the boar pierced His flesh.
Now He lies stained with the leaves of yesteryear,
And no longer shall His footsteps wake the seeds
that sleep in the bosom of spring.
His voice will not come with the dawn to my
window,
And I shall be for ever alone.

Weep with me, ye daughters of Ashtarte, and all ye lovers of Tamouz,
For my Belovèd has escaped me;
He who spoke as the rivers speak;
He whose voice and time were twins;
He whose mouth was a red pain made sweet;
He on whose lips gall would turn to honey.

Weep with me, daughters of Ashtarte, and ye lovers of Tamouz.
Weep with me around His bier as the stars weep,
And as the moon-petals fall upon His wounded body.
Wet with your tears the silken covers of my bed,
Where my Belovèd once lay in my dream,
And was gone away in my awakening.
I charge ye, daughters of Ashtarte, and all ye lovers of Tamouz,
Bare your breasts and weep and comfort me,
For Jesus of Nazareth is dead.
ONCE again I say that with death Jesus conquered death, and rose from the grave a spirit and a power. And He walked in our solitude and visited the gardens of our passion.

He lies not there in that cleft rock behind the stone.

We who love Him beheld Him with these our eyes which He made to see; and we touched Him with these hands which He taught to reach forth.

I know you who believe not in Him. I was one of you, and you are many; but your number shall be diminished.

Must you break your harp and your lyre to find the music therein?

Or must you fell a tree ere you can believe it bears fruit?

You hate Jesus because someone from the North Country said He was the Son of God. But you hate one another because each of you deems himself too great to be the brother of the next man.

You hate Him because someone said He was born of a virgin, and not of man’s seed.

But you know not the mothers who go to the tomb in virginity, nor the men who go down to the grave choked with their own thirst.
You know not that the earth was given in marriage to the sun, and that earth it is who sends us forth to the mountain and the desert.

There is a gulf that yawns between those who love Him and those who hate Him, between those who believe and those who do not believe.

But when the years have bridged that gulf you shall know that He who lived in us is deathless, that He was the Son of God even as we are the children of God; that He was born of a virgin even as we are born of the husbandless earth.

It is passing strange that the earth gives not to the unbelievers the roots that would suck at her breast, nor the wings wherewith to fly high and drink, and be filled with the dews of her space.

But I know what I know, and it is enough.
A MAN FROM LEBANON: NINETEEN CENTURIES AFTERWARDS

MASTER, Master Singer,
Master of words unspoken,
Seven times was I born, and seven times have I died,
Since your hasty visit and our brief welcome.
And behold I live again,
Remembering a day and a night among the hills,
When your tide lifted us up.
Thereafter many lands and many seas did I cross,
And wherever I was led by saddle or sail
Your name was prayer or argument.
Men would bless you or curse you;
The curse, a protest against failure,
The blessing, a hymn of the hunter
Who comes back from the hills
With provision for his mate.

Your friends are yet with us for comfort and support,
And your enemies also, for strength and assurance.
Your mother is with us;
I have beheld the sheen of her face in the
  countenance of all mothers;
Her hand rocks cradles with gentleness,
Her hand folds shrouds with tenderness.
And Mary Magdalen is yet in our midst,
She who drank the vinegar of life, and then its wine.
And Judas, the man of pain and small ambitions,
He too walks the earth;
Even now he preys upon himself when his hunger
  finds naught else,
And seeks his larger self in self-destruction.

And John, he whose youth loved beauty, is here,
And he sings though unheeded.
And Simon Peter the impetuous, who denied you
  that he might live longer for you,
He too sits by our fire.
He may deny you again ere the dawn of another day,
Yet he would be crucified for your purpose, and
  deem himself unworthy of the honour.
And Caiaphas and Annas still live their day,
And judge the guilty and the innocent.
They sleep upon their feathered bed
Whilst he whom they have judged is whipped
  with the rods.
And the woman who was taken in adultery,
She too walks the streets of our cities,
And hungers for bread not yet baked,
And she is alone in an empty house.
And Pontius Pilatus is here also:
He stands in awe before you,
And still questions you,
But he dares not risk his station or defy an alien race;
And he is still washing his hands.
Even now Jerusalem holds the basin and Rome the ewer,
And betwixt the two a thousand thousand hands would be washed to whiteness.

Master, Master Poet,
Master of words sung and spoken,
They have builded temples to house your name,
And upon every height they have raised your cross,
A sign and a symbol to guide their wayward feet,
But not unto your joy.
Your joy is a hill beyond their vision,
And it does not comfort them.
They would honour the man unknown to them.
And what consolation is there in a man like
themselves, a man whose kindliness is like their own kindliness,
A god whose love is like their own love,
And whose mercy is in their own mercy?
They honour not the man, the living man,
The first man who opened His eyes and gazed at the sun
With eyelids unquivering.
Nay, they do not know Him, and they would not be like Him.

They would be unknown, walking in the procession of the unknown.
They would bear sorrow, their sorrow,
And they would not find comfort in your joy.
Their aching heart seeks not consolation in your words and the song thereof.
And their pain, silent and unshapen,
Makes them creatures lonely and unvisited.
Though hemmed about by kin and kind,
They live in fear, uncomraded;
Yet they would not be alone.
They would bend eastward when the west wind blows.

They call you king,
And they would be in your court.
They pronounce you the Messiah,
And they would themselves be anointed with the holy oil.
Yea, they would live upon your life.

Master, Master Singer,
Your tears were like the showers of May,
And your laughter like the waves of the white sea.
When you spoke, your words were the far-off whisper of their lips when those lips should be kindled with fire;
You laughed for the marrow in their bones that was not yet ready for laughter;
And you wept for their eyes that yet were dry;
Your voice fathered their thoughts and their understanding;
Your voice mothered their words and their breath.

Seven times was I born and seven times have I died,
And now I live again, and I behold you,
The fighter among fighters,
The poet of poets,
King above all kings,
A man half-naked with your road-fellows.
Every day the bishop bends down his head
When he pronounces your name;
And every day the beggars say:
"For Jesus' sake
Give us a penny to buy bread."
We call upon each other,
But in truth we call upon you,
Like the flood tide in the spring of our want and
    desire,
And when our autumn comes, like the ebb tide.
High or low, your name is upon our lips,
The Master of infinite compassion.

Master, Master of our lonely hours,
Here and there, betwixt the cradle and the coffin, I
    meet your silent brothers,
The free men, unshackled,
Sons of your mother earth and space.
They are like the birds of the sky,
And like the lilies of the field.
They live your life and think your thoughts,
And they echo your song.
But they are empty-handed,
And they are not crucified with the great crucifixion.
And therein is their pain.
The world crucifies them every day,
But only in little ways.
The sky is not shaken,
And the earth travails not with her dead.
They are crucified and there is none to witness their agony;
They turn their face to right and left
And find not one to promise them a station in his kingdom.
Yet they would be crucified again and yet again,
That your God may be their God,
And your Father their Father.

Master, Master Lover,
The Princess awaits your coming in her fragrant chamber,
And the married unmarried woman in her cage;
The harlot who seeks bread in the streets of her shame,
And the nun in her cloister who has no husband;
The childless woman too at her window,
Where frost designs the forest on the pane,
She finds you in that symmetry,
And she would mother you, and be comforted.
Master, Master Poet,
Master of our silent desires,
The heart of the world quivers with the throbbing of
your heart,
But it burns not with your song.
The world sits listening to your voice in tranquil
delight,
But it rises not from its seat
To scale the ridges of your hills.
Man would dream your dream, but he would not
wake to your dawn,
Which is his greater dream.
He would see with your vision,
But he would not drag his heavy feet to your throne;
Yet many have been enthroned in your name
And mitred with your power,
And have turned your golden visit
Into crowns for their head and sceptres for their hand.
Master, Master of Light,
Whose eye dwells in the seeking fingers of the blind,
You are still despised and mocked,
A man too weak and infirm to be God,
A God too much man to call forth adoration.
Their mass and their hymn,
Their sacrament and their rosary, are for their
imprisoned self.
You are their yet distant self, their far-off cry, and
their passion.
But Master, Sky-heart, Knight of our fairer dream,
You do still tread this day;
Nor bows nor spears shall stay your steps;
You walk through all our arrows.
You smile down upon us,
And though you are the youngest of us all
You father us all.
Poet, Singer, Great Heart,
May our God bless your name,
And the womb that held you, and the breasts that
    gave you milk.
And may God forgive us all.