



## FROM FOUR EASTER LETTERS

I

Apparently written from  
Athens, about 357 B.C.

‘ . . . We spoke to-day in the garden of the manner in which those feelings are preserved in us that are made necessary by reason of the relation which men bear to the world. For while no one of us is now careful to keep in remembrance those feasts which our forefathers celebrated at this time, nor listens with any fear to the ancient teaching as to the Gods, nevertheless it is in our hearts to be glad at this time when the earth, the fertile mother of all, is full of new life. We who have learned from Socrates would not in any wise scoff at those who find delight in the tale of Dionysus who broke the bonds of his captivity, or of Persephonê who returned at this time from Hades to make glad the maternal heart of Demeter, or in any such tales which are in the minds of all. For whether it be because of some palingenesis whereby the freshened life of some creature which lived in past times now stirs again in us, as some would say; or because we are ourselves stirred in our bodies by the warm sun, as the Physical Philosophers of the school of Anaxagoras would say, if they dared to speak: or because the Gods still have power over us, we know not. Yet when the children gather flowers or set caged birds free, and when the young men have their revels, or when some one gives freedom to a slave, it seems to us fitting at this time, when in the world a new beginning is being made with things. . . .’

## FROM FOUR EASTER LETTERS

### II

From Drondthem in North  
Norway; time, probably 145 B.C.

' . . . It has been a long winter, and the darkness seemed more fearsome than I had ever felt. For before Yule my husband and most of the men went North in their ships, and it was lonely for the women and the girls. It was lonely for me in my child-bearing. We have been telling the little ones all the old stories,—as of Baldur whom the blind Hödr slew with the mistletoe, and we wept so much when he died that we could scarce find words to tell of Ali and his revenging of Baldur's death. The children were affrighted of the cold snake which lieth coiled around Brynhild with her treasures, against the day of her awaking. We girls—for I feel a girl still, and my boy has not seen his father—used to watch the fire of Odin in the heavens, and we were glad to know that it was brighter around the men than with us, for it would help their fishing on the fjords. But we were more glad when we saw the growing light in the South at noon; and now it seems but a short time of waiting, for the Spring has indeed come. The little lemmings have waked from beneath the snow, the reindeer have come again to eat the salt weed by the shore, the flowers have risen as though they had waited but for a word, and each lark that rose yesterday as I walked took from me some of the sore pain of my longing. . . . It was then that I was first to see the brown-edged sails, and the ships were low in the water. Since it has been as a feast. We lighted fires and danced around them, nor forgot to lay out gifts to the gods so that they should not grudge us our great joy. . . . '

## FROM FOUR EASTER LETTERS

### III

Written from Jerusalem in the eighth  
year of the Governorship of Pilate.

' . . . Of a truth this has been a sad Passover time, though many of the fears that were heavy upon us are now forgotten. Many days we went restless, each one with his hand at his heart, seeking to ease the pain. For that which we had dreaded in the days of His sojourn, they did : for they crucified Him whom we loved. Thereat we had no word and no tear ; yea, we dared not so much as to look one at another. For we had trusted that it was He who should redeem Israel from bondage, bringing a comfort for all her rue, and beauty for ashes, even as it hath been promised from of old. But now we were of all men most miserable, save only that we had known Him. It may be that we were hard of heart, for of a surety we ever had need of Him, to keep our faith alive, that it should not wax faint and fail us : but for a time there was none found to say, "Though they have slain Him, yet will I trust." . . . Nevertheless the darkness has passed ; and though we understand not at all, we rejoice daily. For His love was stronger than death, and He has come among us and been with us again, walking and talking, even as He was wont hitherto ; and now is gone but a little while. For we know surely that in the same wise, howsoever it may seem strange to them that knew not Him and His love, He will be with us alway from time to time, to comfort us, even to the end of the world. And as there hath been aforetime a feast among us at this season, so we deem that there shall be one henceforth and for ever ; because that the fear of death has passed over and the Lord is risen indeed.'

## FROM FOUR EASTER LETTERS

### IV

Edinburgh, Easter 1887.

' . . . It had gone hard with my friend. One blow after another had fallen upon him; he was left like a tree stripped of its leaves. My travels abroad had kept me from visiting him, and it was Easter before I returned. I felt that to knock at his door was to knock at the door of a broken heart. When I saw him, I began murmuring some empty words of sympathy, but when I lifted my eyes to his, and saw his face—quiet, courageous, and with a new refinement, as if he were looking at far-off hills—I was minded of two old lines, whose they are I know not,

Hiems abiit, mæstaque crux,  
Lucet in eo perpetua lux.

'I could only say, "Surrexit."

'And he did not misunderstand, for he answered softly, "Vere Surrexit."

