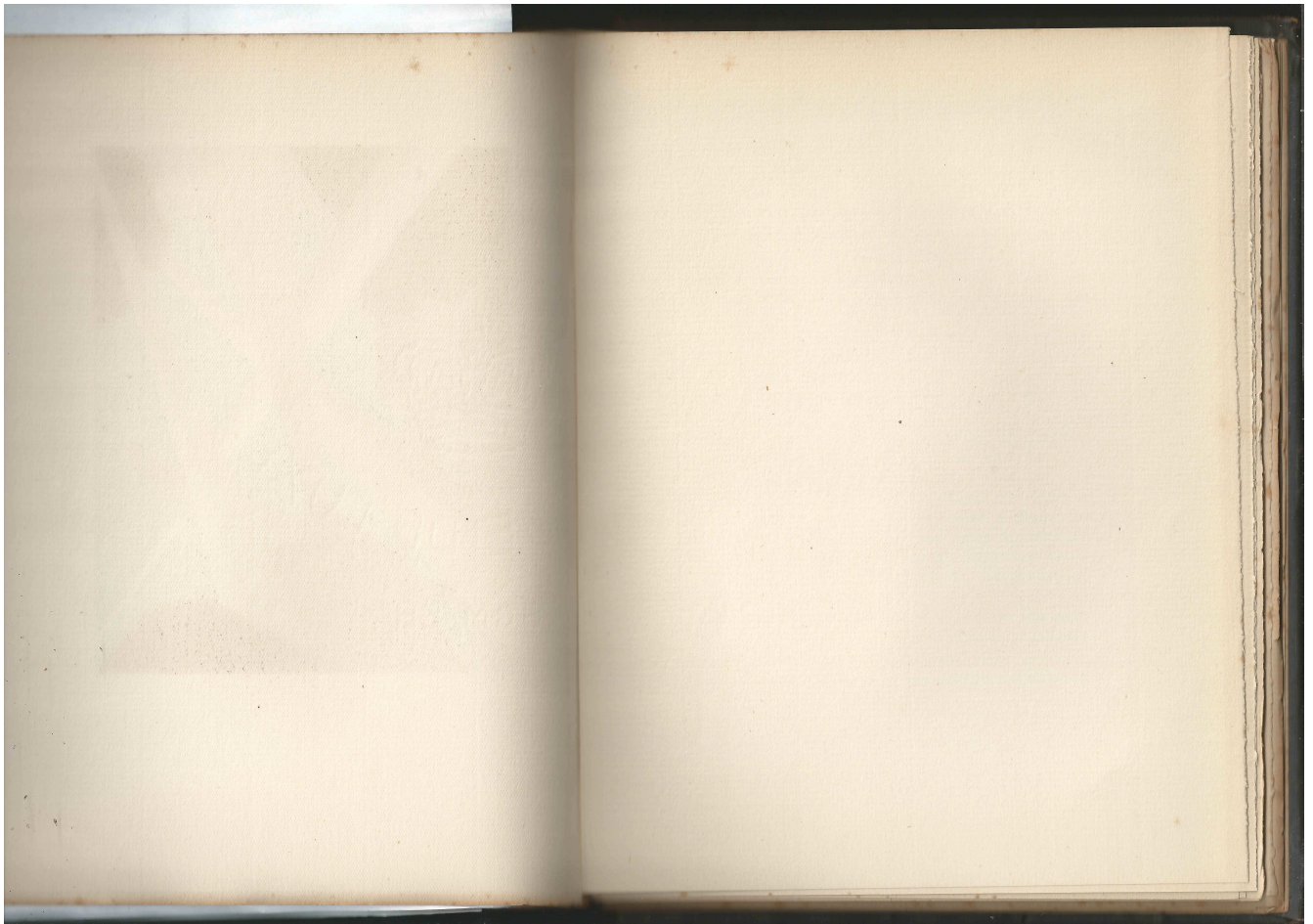


THE DIVINA COMMEDIA OF
EVAN LEYSHON



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I

EVAN LEYSHON lay, as he well knew, not far from death. He had returned, the evening before, to the place that served him for a home: knowing well that his last drink was drunk and that he would trouble the police-court cells no more. And then he had spent the night on the bare boards of the room that sheltered him, coughing and spitting blood and agonizing. That he had that shelter at all he owed to the fact that there may yet be grace in the very far fallen. Once he had almost turned the woman of the house from the road to hell; and she remembered it.

Death—what was it? He used to know, he thought. But now—well, why care? It might at least be rest. Damnation! what did he want with rest? He had had a *Soul* in him—once. He had never sought out death—as so many like him do daily. He wanted a chance to struggle on; yes, at bottom that was what he wanted: to fight on, with the bare hope that he might not die—go out at last and be at an end—ashamed. Oh, hell, hell, hell, what a rotten wreck his life had been!

An *âme damnée*, you would say, if ever there was one: humanity reduced to something like its most contemptible terms—so it still be human. There are lower grades—that yet wear all the trappings of fine success and shine in

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society; and make it their business so to shine—and to allure. Evan Leyshon, certainly, had reached no such bad eminence. He was one of those that small boys torment in the streets as they pass, and that appear as often as may be before the magistrates, 'drunk and disorderly'; a fellow with a little chin, to draw a pitying *Poor devil* from any charitably-minded Levite passing by.

Furies came about him as he lay, to hiss and scourge. Few, I suppose, would have seen Æschylean tragedy

'In sceptred pall come sweeping by,'

in that room of an evil house in the slums; yet there vultures tore Prometheus Bound; and there Orestes fled over dim Ægeans of thought: and I marvel if there were no august figures on the heights to mourn over the one; no ægissed Pallas to be evoked by the other.

Failure! failure! miserable failure! hissed the Furies. *Where are your lofty ethics now; your fits and gleams of tender poetry; your flaming rhetoric of idealism?*—It was true: a time had been when people said he would have made a better preacher than any in the city; although even then he had been far fallen, and his highest possibilities all disappointed. Would have made?—actually was! *In vino veritas*, said the moralizers: though 'half seas over' the fellow 'rang true,' pleading for things he did passionately believe in, and they were great things. The remnant only, of a wasting treasure, even then. . . .

And how long, sneered the Furies, *since you came up from*

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the grey house at Rhesolfen with that little sheaf of verses in your bag, and the knowledge that a thousand more were hovering in the air about you waiting to be discovered and written? How long is it, you drink-drenched wastrel, since you were going to sing a new light and beauty to the world?

‘Thirty years,’ moaned Evan Leyshon. He remembered those bright days miserably. The outer world had been for him, then, a mere transparency through which the splendour of the Spirit shone. He had been familiar with invisible dawns and sunsets, and not ungifted to make others feel what he saw. He had stirred great hopes: in his work, though it was youthfully imperfect, there had been something unmodern, startling: he had seen the passers-by on the common pavements beautifully majestic like the demigods of old; there had been those who had descried Shelleyan promise in him, and a ‘pardlike spirit beautiful and swift’.

But the promise had come to nothing, and the pardlike spirit was drowned; a couple of years in the city had done for it. Ever since he had been going steadily down. He had had a work to do in the world; and he had done nothing of it.

There are some crowns all the northern aurora without, and within they are wounding desperate thorns. The ‘fatal gift’ is less often possession than vision of beauty. Osiris and Typhon come not together in the same age and land merely, but again and again in the same breast. Evan Leyshon’s was a case in point. The crown had begun to

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glimmer; but only the wounding of the thorns increased. He had possessed in a measure the gift; and it had proved fatal indeed. It was now a Typhon's victory that lay dying in the slum room somewhere behind Bute Street by the docks.

And yet, too, Osiris has a thousand lives in him; he is sometimes desperately hard to kill. You see him buried at the cross roads; yet can never go by without suspecting tremors of the ground. Or you see the stone rolled up over the mouth of his sepulchre; yet can never be sure that what you hear from it thereafter is only the howling and prowling of hyænas. Evan Leyshon knew that he was dying, and whimpered miserably at the knowledge. The whimper belonged to his condition: it was, however, the expression, through that condition and proper to it, of Osirian rebellion somewhere far within. Thirty years of decline and fall: nearly ten of utter abjectness: had not been enough quite to convince Osiris that he was dead.

So the morning passed by; and with the afternoon came Captain Elias Elias: who was a man of God.

II

A Celtic sense of the unseen, and what they call *caredig-rwydd Cymru*—the native kindliness of the Welsh peasant—to begin with; a Calvinistic chapel on the Cardigan coast to mould the former of these qualities during his early years; and then long night watches at sea, given over to wrestlings with the spirit and the elements, to bring the

whole to fruition: had made him what he was. Ten years back he had left the merchant service, taken a house in Grangetown, and devoted himself, as he said, to the service of the Lord. It meant haunting the slums, seeking out the sick and dying—all whose helplessness put them at his mercy; ministering with the gentleness of a deep and tender nature to their material needs; doctoring them himself, when the peril was not too great, out of his sea medicine-chest and his old experience as skipper and doctor of the good ship *Ovingham* of Cardiff; and then letting loose upon them the hurricane and Aceldama of his flaming imagination in bedside sermons and prayer. 'Flaming' imagination is the word. What with a hundred storms off the Horn and elsewhere, and as many and as violent revival services on land, there was little in the geography of Gehenna that the old fellow did not know. He knew the sea, and he knew the slums, and he knew, or had known, the cliffs and lanes between Mwnt and Aberporth; but he knew hell much better. In the spirit he had rounded all the Horns in Hades; not once, but a dozen times. Screaming winds and black billows from the Pole had taught him to picture the roar of the flame-storms of Tophet, the overwhelming desolation of eternal doom; from the fearful valleys between the wave-mountains, he had learned the horror of the bottomless pit. Dante could not be more vivid, nor Milton armed with more grandiose gloom, than was Captain Elias Elias at his best. Queer, cross-eyed, brown-bearded, tender-hearted

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old Apostle of Damnation, I wonder what kind of karma will be yours, for all that unflagging benevolence and hideous cruelty!

Captain Elias had long since marked down Evan Leyshon as lawful prey. Sometimes he had come on him so far gone as to be fairly passive; and had had occasion then for inly exultation: another soul in a fair way to be snatched from the talons of Sathan. Generally, however, the poor wretch would fight back with fitful gleams of energy; Osiris being uneasy in his tomb. This afternoon the captain saw at once that all skirmishing was over, and the main battle waiting to begin; after preliminaries, that is to say, pertaining to this world and the captain's better nature. He sent for the nearest doctor—a personal friend of his own; and heard what he expected: that Leyshon could hardly last a day. Workhouse infirmary? That would hardly suit his plans; he himself would assume all responsibilities there where he was. Well, well; it was not worth the trouble of moving him, anyway; and there wasn't a better nurse in Cardiff than old Elias—if only he wouldn't be up to his damned tricks. 'Be merciful to the poor devil, as you expect mercy, captain!' So Dr. Burnham, departing; and added to himself: 'Queer old cuss—like all the rest of the Taffies!'

It was the captain's intention to be merciful; it always was. Here was clearly a case for the tender amenities, not for the terrors, of his theology. It was always so—always gently and lovingly—that he went to his work.

First he called in the woman of the house, and paid her handsomely to watch during his short absence. Then off with him in a cab, and back within an hour with his own camp-bedstead and bedding, and what else he deemed necessary. But for his housekeeper, he would have carried Leyshon home; but she was angular and scrub-loving, and always *nassty* on such occasions; and he thought this the better plan. With the skill of a trained nurse and the tenderness of a mother, he got his patient undressed, washed and to bed; all to an accompaniment of gentle terms of endearment in the two languages. Then, out with his spectacles and big Bible, and to reading; and after the reading, to expatiating and exhortation. His intentions were still most gentle and tender; he was full of pity. *God so loved the world*, was his text.

But what are good intentions to a long habit and a native cast of mind? The *hwy!*¹ of the little Cardigan chapel took him: the wind was in his sails, and it was the wind that blows about the Horn. He had finished with heaven before long; and then descended into hell and revelled there, and did gorgeous credit to his training. He could make word-pictures, and he did. He read and reeled off the terrors of all the planes of dementia; he brought Tophet in its awful glory into the little inglorious room. Trembling on the verges of consciousness, Evan Leyshon heard, saw, felt, and was terrified. Dumb Osiris lay quiet in his

¹ It means both the energy, inspiration or flow of a preacher, and the wind in the sails of a ship.

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sepulchre, and Typhon the victor tossed and wallowed in the horrid torrents of his native glare and gloom.

Somewhere about nightfall the captain came to a pause. The repentant sinner lay before him; his own vein was somewhat expended, and he remembered his first intentions. At once he was the tender nurse again: meeting the material needs, and filling his voice with soothing consolation. 'But fear you nothing, my boy *bach!* remember you how God does love—' and 'a long et cætera' . . . A dose given, and the moaning and tossing quieted; the candle lit, and screened from the patient's eyes; he prepared himself to argue the rest in silence—or sometimes in silence—with the Lord, and to make a night of it on his knees at his soap-box chair. The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart of old; it should be a wonder if Captain Elias Elias did not soften the Lord's now. He chose Welsh, as being the language most likely to be best understood by Deity; and went to it with all his might. A rumour of his strivings should run through all the courts and hierarchies of heaven. . . .

And he became immersed in it; and the hours went by; and meanwhile the soul of Evan Leyshon, left at peace, went forth on its adventures.

III

He was walking in a vast procession on a long, dreary road, with marshlands on this side and that which lost themselves at a little distance in vagueness, perhaps in-

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visibility—the Penarth Road, if you know those parts. And yet not the Penarth Road, either, as he could see; but the road taken by the newly dead—among whom he travelled. For there ahead—only many days' journeys ahead, and not a mere three miles or so—and yet clearly seen—rose the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem . . . high upon its promontory, with its landmark church, St. Augustine's, in the midst dominating all, and sitting there like a duck squatting, beheaded. They had been travelling long and long. At some point or other he had come in sight of the blissful vision; he supposed after passing under the railway bridge at the end of Clive Street, where the tram turns; but could not remember.

All sorts and conditions of men were on the road with him. A priest came down the line from somewhere in front, picking out the Irishmen and here and there a foreigner; he had a rather commanding way with him, and reminded one a little of a sergeant-major with recruits. The Reverend Timothy Slingill, sometime of the Baptist Forward Movement, was performing a like office for evangelicism generally; or trying to, for he had not the discipline, and must use unction and exhortation instead of the priest's command. From somewhere behind rose a belated sound of tambourines. Evan Leyshon felt little interest in these efforts. The thought of his wasted years and soul lay heavy on him; and he knew that presently, under Leckwith Hill, or about Penarth Dock, there would be a desolate turning in the road, which he would take.

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A Mrs. Churchill-Pendleton, whom he had once known, hurrying hither and thither, displayed a busy anxiety to convert him to the Anti-Something Cause. Anti-what, he could not be quite sure; perhaps it was a good many things. She pressed leaflets on him, of which she had a goodly store; she had been distributing them all along the way, and meant to keep right on with it. 'Take quite a number,' she said: 'I can get more printed, you know, when we are there.' Presumably she contemplated an Anti-campaign among the angels, and had visions of reforming heaven. She corrected his pronunciation when he spoke, but seemed unaware of the substance of his answers. Later he heard her clash with the Reverend Timothy, with whom she took a high hand, telling him his views were crude and obsolete. There were two young colliers talking football: wishing to goodness they could have lasted till after the International with England. Alderman Glumph was enlarging nervously on past charitable undertakings of his own; he managed to buttonhole Slimgill, and held him five minutes, fishing for a good word. But Alderman Glumph had belonged to the Church, and Slimgill seemed a little bored. He spied Leyshon, and made off to him; perhaps after all only more eager for the one sinner that might be caused to repent, than for the just alderman that (obviously) needed no repentance. 'My dear friend,' said Reverend Timothy, 'are you assured as to your destination?' 'Assured enough,' said Evan; 'I am going to hell.'

He spoke out loud, and saw that his words caused a little

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stir. Heads were turned; some one whistled; there was a general movement among those nearest to him to increase their distance. Apparently no one at all shared in his anticipations. Mr. Slingill, however, was true to his colours, and stuck close. You might have thought his ministrations too late by a day; but here again the ruling passion was strong in death—and after. He seemed to forget that

As the tree falls, so shall it lie
Forever through eternity;

and that this tree decidedly was fallen. But whether or no, Evan Leyshon's blood was up (if one may speak in that way of the disembodied). The abjectness of his late physicality, —the keen edge of it—had gone from him, and he could step out like a man. He knew there was something in him that did not belong to that duck-churched Heavenly City on the heights; where, he divined, there would be conventional customs, conventional fashions in apparel, morality and religion, and—horror of horrors!—conventional Sabbaths. He had no business with singing Hallelujahs. He had tried to sing something of heaven —the real heaven—down into that hell back on earth; he had failed, and miserably; but shuddered at the thought of smug and smirky bliss to follow his failure. In reality it was the spark left in him—sincerity—that caused the shudder. If hell was real, it was the place for him. If there was no justice, he would take the thing likest it. He would go where weakness and failure were punished,

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and take his damned chances. Osiris believed that Typhon would only flourish the more up yonder: in a different, but perhaps a more deadly way; that the two of them would be soothed and lulled down into a complacent unity, with such life between them as that of a fat marrow in the fields. Typhon's aim always is peace with Osiris; all he fights for is that; but Osiris, though vanquished for ever and ever and ever, is still for war.

A cry was blown along from behind, and a motion of horror ran through the crowd; there came one wailing and pursued, from whom all the righteous shrank busily; one with head hanging down ghastlily—down on his breast, below his shoulders. Some one muttered: 'At the jail this morning; the Splottlands murderer.' 'Damn them,' said Evan Leyshon, 'they've been at their legal crimes again.' He thrust himself between the poor creature and its pursuers; put an arm round it protectingly, and railed back at them till they slunk from the pursuit. Here the procession broke, leaving these two in a gap of loneliness. Leyshon spoke to the thing at his side, saying what his heart dictated; whatever it was, it brought a growing likeness to humanity to the one addressed; and, strangely enough, a growing strength to Evan himself. So they went on.

They came under Leckwith Hill, and to the cross-roads, and the railway sidings with their many trucks of coal; there these two turned and took their own way. As they went down into the gloom, they heard behind them the

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waning music of the elect: now a perfunctory *Jerusalem the Golden*—to the wheeze, it seemed, of some aerial unseen harmonium; now a straggling rattle of drums and cymbals with words to suit; now the exultant dirge or heart-breaking triumph of *O fryniau Caersalem*. It all died away at last as they went on between the standing coal-trucks and the stacked coal: through a gloom ever growing deeper, peopled with grim unhuman figures at toil.

And now, strangely, the two had changed roles; and it was not Evan Leyshon, but his Companion, that seemed the protector. 'You are not afraid?' said that one. 'No,' said Evan; 'I had a soul once.' 'Speak of it!' said the other; and in a tone that made Leyshon turn and look at him; and wonder at the transfiguration that had come to be there. It was now a veiled figure, erect, shining with a certain august light; and certainly with no mark of human desecration. 'Speak of it,' said that one; and laid a hand on Evan's arm: to whom straightway a flood of noble memories came, and he stepped proudly. 'Let us go on,' said he; 'we two may conquer hell.' It was the like of an archangel that went by his side; but veiled, so that he could not see the face.

They came to vast gates that were opened to them, and passed through into a vastness where, on high and terrible thrones amidst the shadows, sat the Judges of the Dead. Low down on a great space of floor before those judges Evan Leyshon was bidden stand; but it was as if his Companion went invisible: none but Leyshon seemed to see

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him where he stood at the latter's side. No accusation was needed, nor any passing of sentence; in silence his past life was unfolded, day after day, in a long procession through the gloomy air.

It passed; and the ground beneath him shuddered sullenly, and heaved as if moved by a dreadful life beneath—the life of death, of corruption. It began to crack and tremble like the ice-floe at high thaw; a thin glowing streak of fissure formed, and ran on, and broadened. A jagged rent opened, with muffled sound, right at his feet; and through it he looked down into gulfs below gulfs where in the thronging blackness ominous blue flames flickered and sputtered and died; or suddenly all would be a whirl and welter of red fire, and as suddenly, darkness again. He saw another crack form out in front, and run rippling towards him at right angles to the first; its edges as it widened glowing vermilion, and crumbling with little puffs of smoke. It grew, and drew nearer, nearer; and a great wail rang up out of the fathomless reek, and——

He felt his hand grasped in a hand . . . at the moment the fall began.

IV

Down, down, down; endlessly falling; through a night black as soot, in which ever and anon the blue sulphur-flames flickered grimly. And now there were charred living arms reached out to him, of those caught and tossed up by the currents and draughts of hell; and now there were avenues and narrow vistas, seen momentarily, glowing

red, and in the midst of them forms like human writhing; and now a sudden glimpse of one chained and supine upon some peak above the chasms, and preyed upon by winged and talonned flames. For the most part there was silence; but sometimes a burst of hopeless passionless shrieking, or moaning like a sea-noise on desolate sunless shores. . . .

He had time to think as he fell. If this were real, he would. . . . Could he reach some stability; could he but *get at* some of those forms through which he was falling: he would, by heaven, do or say something for them. . . . Such thoughts grew, out of a first dazedness, and then a wonder. Fear or pain he felt not; but always more and more the high Osirian longings of his earlier years on earth. He had in him something, still, that was divine: if it was only words to say. That which he had failed to proclaim, living, he would, by the glory of God that kindled in him, proclaim aloud now that he was dead for the good of the damned in hell. What was it? Falling, he could not quite re-gather that. Only—there was blue sky somewhere, and he would forthtell it. Words would come to him; he felt a rainbowed cloud of them burning in the environs of his mind. There were streams on the mountains on earth, and they should flow through his songs in hell: there were runlets that he remembered, among the bluebells and bracken on Garth Faerdre Mountain; the damned should hear of them; they should hear of the perishless white flames of the stars. Damned? Tush! it was a dream; he would find the master word presently,

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that should vibrate out through this night of fire and dissipate it!

And ever and again, by a dim light, he would see landmarks worlds and worlds below: a peak; a crag whereon some vast being crouched and gloomed: and then in a moment they shot up past him, and were lost in the spaces through which he had fallen. And there were wandering and ominous suns, crimson like a dying ember, and as little light-giving, and dropping an agony of rubiate flame. And at last the glimmer of a midnight sea below; a sea of dark fires, whereon ran gleams and breakings of blue flame and green. Shadowy creatures came about him, and tossed imploring arms: there were millions and millions of them, outworn from human semblance, wasted with perpetual vain tears. Then he knew what hand it was he was holding; and that it was his Divine Companion's, who had come to him on the road in that ghastly guise. 'Wake them!' he cried to that one; 'it is all a dream; give me words to wake them!' 'No,' said the other; 'your place is not here, but lower; come!'

Down and down; and so into the restless fire-flood on the floor of hell. But there too the words of his Companion came to him: 'One is waiting for your coming until you have aroused whom from his evil dream, you can do nothing against hell.' 'Yes,' said Evan Leyshon; 'I will arouse him, if it costs me more sorrow even than I knew on earth.' 'He is here,' said the other.

And they were in a miserable slum room, beneath the

fire-sea at the bottom of hell. There was a lighted candle, much guttered, throwing large unsteady shadows on the walls. There was a man kneeling at a soap-box; there was a bed, and the like of a dead or dying man in it. Evan Leyshon looked from the one to the other, uncertain which of the two he was to waken; nor would his Companion tell him. Then he went to the kneeling man, and shook his arm, or tried to, and cried out to him, 'Awake! awake! it is a dream!'

Captain Elias lifted his face lit up with a startled look of ecstasy. 'Saviour, I thank thee,' he murmured, 'that thou hast sent thine angel to visit me, and to give me assurance of thy mercy, of whose sweetness I have never dreamed till now.' . . .

Evan Leyshon sighed. 'He stirs in his sleep,' he said; 'but he will not be awakened.'

'Go you to the other,' said his Companion.

He did so; and bending over the bed, whispered: 'Awake, awake, poor soul! you are to live again; it is not all at an end; you are to live again, and to conquer!'

The man in the bed opened his eyes; his face seemed curiously familiar to Evan Leyshon. 'Another chance,' he muttered, '. . . a great new chance. . . . I am to live again. . . . Of course . . . of course . . . I had forgotten.' A look of transcendent delight came over his face; he smiled, as one might that had feared to die, on awaking

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to find the Angel Death bending over him, more beautiful than a night of stars, tenderer than any human compassion. . . .

The room vanished, and the mirk and the flames of hell thinned and waned; and Evan Leyshon, looking up, saw Orion shining, and the great white flame of Jupiter high in the heavens; and here the keen point Aldebaran, and there Sirius like a large diamond. And he heard songs from those triumphant luminaries: as when the stars of morning sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Hell rang with the song and was shattered; there was the like of dispersing mist; there was the like of a drifting rain of pale constellations; there was the like of a burning mountain giving up sweet stars and singing for fire. . . .

v

He was going up Bute Street westward; but in mid air; and his Companion with him. It seemed to be delight that lifted him: above the high trams; above the crowds of hurrying clerks and loitering sailors; above the consulates and offices and warehouses. Over the whole city. He saw St. Mary Street below, and High Street; then the Castle with its great square towers, and the row of sculptured beasts on the wall. Then the park, and the river; then Llandaff and the cathedral; the open fields and the hills; there the towers of Castell Coch among the trees on its hill-top; there the gap, the Gate of Wales, and the high bridge; and yonder, Garth Faerdre Mountain, all

in its silvered purple beauty, under a sunlight such as never shone on it for his living eyes. And there, above Garth Faerdre, with many spires and domes of turquoise and silver, lazuli and glistering crystal, what he knew for the Heavenly City. So those two came to the gates of Heaven.

He dwelt in Heaven for an immensity of timeless years. By green lawns and pleasant waters he wandered, and under phantom sapphire mountains where there was singing unlike any from mortal throats. It was a place of flowers, where every bloom was living and with power to touch him to the quick of joy; all his companions were as beautiful and discreet as flowers. Their speech was verse chanted; their thoughts eager and delicate and creative and strong like poetry. Memory of his past life was blotted away from him—except, sometimes, the early and hopeful days in the Vale of Neath. He remembered no sordidness, no failures; nothing of the lure of the senses, the poison that had brought him to ruin. On those piled up mountains of serenity there were always higher heights to climb: worlds upon worlds above, of more gracious colour, more ennobling beauty, more exquisite and vigorous song. And then at last he came to the Peak of peaks, very near to the Sun. Over it hovered the princely Sun, with dragon wings quivering and scintillant. And the Sun leaned down and whispered a word to him; and touched his eyes with a wand of blue turquoise stone; and thereupon all vision was fulfilled in him; and all knowledge with infinite calmness blossomed within his breast. . . .

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He saw the winged worlds and systems. He saw, strewn through the remote spaces, battle and bliss, battle and bliss. He heard the singing of the choirs of suns. The delight that trembles through the planispheres made a way for itself out through the inmost gates of his being. Then he looked down, and beheld the continents and islands of this world.

His eye fell at last on a city by the sea. He saw a long and dingy street, with groups of sailors lounging, and innumerable clerks hurrying hither and about. He could see every individual without and within: their bodily seeming, and the motions of their minds and desires. In all the crowd he seemed to be searching for some one: whom, he could not tell; but it was some one that concerned him nearly. At last he found him: the wreck of a man, shuffling miserably through the throng; and now it was night down there in the city, lit with electric globes. He saw the man going down towards the docks, lurching in his walk, and anon coughing and spitting blood. And then turning, and creeping and sneaking down by wretched side streets; and into an abominable place in the slums there to die.

Then he was concerned to know the past of that man; and saw it, following it somehow like a stream back to its source. He saw days when the man was falling, not quite fallen: when he spoke to crowds in the Hayes; he saw a divine thing, compassionate—the pride of conscious soulhood—struggling for the mastery of that life, and winning

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some little victories, and suffering many great defeats; and thwarted, and balked and driven back and humiliated, till it was almost expelled from contact with its body and brain. And then earlier days: in fields, among hills, by a beautiful river with many waterfalls: days when the world was exceeding lovely, aquiver with intense hopefulness: when almost every hour brought forth its increment of inspiration. He saw the whole of that life; he was fascinated by the sight; at every phase of it he made comment: 'Ah, no! let him shun that! . . . Let him take this other course! . . . that is not the way; let him choose thus!'—He was absorbed; he fought all the battles of the man he watched, and knew that he himself had wisdom and strength to win them. He longed fiercely to be down there in that body, informing that mind, directing that life to certain victory. . . .

In Heaven one must always go on: there is no standing still there.

He stood, be it remembered, on the highest peak; at least the highest visible. He had accomplished the seven labours of Heaven, which are seven surprising incredible aspects of joy. His Companion stood beside him.

'We must go on,' said that one; 'there is no remaining here for ever.'

'Of course,' said Evan Leyshon. 'We must go down there; there, do you see, to that world down yonder; in all space there is nothing I desire but to be there. It is a new place; a place of discoveries, of heroic adventures and

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conflicts; it has joys in it not to be found elsewhere. We must go to that man—do you not see him?—*there!* Every step of his life has been a step downward; he did not know how to fight the battles one has to fight in that world: just that atom of knowledge was lacking to him, or he might be as we now are; for he had vision, at first, almost such as we have; he was not blinded as most of them seem to be. I must go to him; somehow those battles of his are my battles, and I must fight and win them; somehow I know that that place in Heaven, that duty, is waiting for *me.*

‘Look further,’ said his Companion; ‘there is still more that you are to see.’

He looked, and followed the man right back through his youth and childhood—the happy-go-lucky home, the parental indulgences, the first mistakes—to his birth; then clouds blew across the face of the globe he watched, and all was obscured. They passed, and he saw—another country, another age, and another life; but knew that the same individual was concerned; he felt the same interest in it. It was the life of a man who gave forth songs of divine soft beauty: one with a famous name, that captured in the nets of his vision the most secret wonder of the world; one to whom the magical life of the stars and the forests and sea-beaches was crystal-clearly revealed. High performance here; not mere promise! And he discerned in that life a certain lack of discrimination, not to know the Beauty of God from the beauty of the lures that kill: the shallow pool of passional satisfaction from the deep ocean

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of the satisfaction of the Soul. And so he saw him entrapped by passion, till the stars and sea-beaches and the forests were obscured from him, and the torrents of the lower life whirled him away quickly down to death.

‘Look still further,’ said his Companion.

He looked, and was aware of clouds over the world again, and that once more time was drifting backward. Then he saw another life; but again, knew the man he now began to watch for a former edition, as it were, of him of the stars and sea-beaches, and of him of the miserable death in the slums. Now it was a life dedicated to all high thoughts and heroism: a great champion of the divine; a man of fierce passions fiercely dominated—but thoroughly; a life triumphant over the temptations of sense, but with a certain pride in virtue and intolerance of human weakness; a clear vision of right and wrong; an heroic warfare, public and private, against the wrong. A grand shining life; one that thrilled him to watch . . . and yet that hurt him, too . . . for there was that pride, that intolerance, that lack of pity. And then he knew why the singer of the stars and forests had fallen, and why the other had gone down to die miserably in the slums.

‘What is it you desire?’ said his Companion.

‘What else should I desire?’ said he. ‘To go down there and put that line of lives to rights. I know that it is my business, my adventure; there is nothing else in all this Heaven I care to be about. See: I am armed; I have the knowledge. I demand this boon from the Master of the

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Sun. That crookedness must be made straight; there will be no peace in all the universe till those lives are brought to a decent triumph; and it may easily be done; a few years of struggle and suffering—nothing! The pride of achievement is gone—sorrow and fall and lifewreck have banished that; let but the sensual weakness go—and I know how to conquer it—and he will be a true warrior for the Gods; for he has the love of man now for the central fire of his being. One life, or two, will do it. I must go down there, and run that matter, put it through. I must, because it concerns me . . . because it is . . . by heaven, because it is my own life!’

Day dawned; the sun came up over the low hills of England; over the Severn Sea; over the slums by Bute Street, as elsewhere. A ray struggled into that wretched room, and brought Captain Elias Elias from his knees and from wrestling with the Lord in prayer; it was now time to see to the patient again. He bent over the bed, and saw a kind of flush, something more than calmness, on Evan Leyshon’s face. In a moment the dying man opened his eyes; they were clear; the traces of the beast had gone from them; Typhon was not there; Osiris shone, —confidence, calmness, joy. Not for nothing, thought the captain, had the Angel of the Lord visited the slum room during the night.

‘Little heart,’ said he, ‘how is it with you in your soul, indeed now?’

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Evan Leyshon made no answer. He was taking in the fact that the life now ending had been one of his own, the Soul's, the Denizen of Heaven's; and then he was taking in the fact that this failure, Evan Leyshon, thus dying in the slums, was also . . . one of the Host—a Soul—one from the high mountains of godhood: that had come again and again to earth-life, to do things—and to win things—and suffer things. And then—he was putting the two facts together, and taking the burden and sorrow of his awful life-failure, and seeing it melt before his eyes in the knowledge that there was no finality about it: that there would be other days, other chances; and, by God! a better knowledge, now, how to meet them and turn them to the purposes of the divine; how that from birth to death is but a day, and from death to rebirth but a night; and complete victory, complete expression of the highest things in the Soul, the end and goal of it all. . . .

'*Calon fach,*' said the captain, 'how is it with you, indeed and indeed now, in your soul?'

But sure you, there, what good to bother that there was no answer? Captain Elias Elias could see well enough, by the look in the dead man's face. He went home presently, and got out what he called his 'ship's log of holiness,' and wrote down to his credit with the Lord, another soul snatched from the talons of Sathan, *whatever!*