



MARGARET J. HONN

Conscience

A CRITICAL READING EDITION

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

Conscience

Margaret J. Honn

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

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Introduction

Margaret J. Honn and Hollywood's visionary borderland

Margaret J. Honn enters the literary record through a single, remarkable Los Angeles book. *Conscience*, published by The Master Press in 1925, combines an epic poem, a long prose synopsis, mystical allegory, Hollywood satire, moral reform, and photographic portraiture. Its guiding figure is Peter of the Hills—Peter Howard, the white-haired street prophet later remembered as “Peter the Hermit”—who walks Hollywood with a staff and a white collie while warning residents that their conduct will return to them through an inexorable law of compensation. Honn turns that recognizable local figure into “Conscience,” a modern John the Baptist moving between Hollywood Boulevard and a visionary City of the Borderland.

Honn was born Margaret Mulloy in Wisconsin on April 22, 1884. The 1900 census places her in Kaukauna with her parents, Michael and Annie Mulloy. She married Laurence Honn in Los Angeles on March 26, 1925, the year *Conscience* appeared. By 1930 the couple were living at 9009 Wonderland Avenue, where the census enumerator recorded her occupation with unusual directness: “Author / Poetry.” A 1935 newspaper photograph identifies her as Peter Howard’s former benefactress and places their association in the landscape the book had already made central—the Laurel Canyon hills above Hollywood.

The later record remains slender but traceable. In 1940 Honn was living on North Highland Avenue with her daughter Morya Dawn and described herself as a self-employed singer. California voter registrations follow her in Los Angeles through 1946. She died there on February 26, 1948. No second book, substantial profile, obituary, or surviving manuscript collection has yet been located; *Conscience* remains both her known bibliography and the fullest expression of her literary life.

The poem’s mortal protagonist, Richard Meryel Wood, is a former movie actor whose vanity and exploitation of women have left him spiritually

exhausted. Led by an angel through purgatorial scenes, he watches earthly appetites recur as afterlife punishments: celebrity-seekers sacrifice themselves to a Film God; hypocrites, misers, drinkers, dancers, and corrupt churchgoers become prisoners of their own habits. Honn's verse is incantatory and deliberately repetitive, often moving in rhymed or near-rhymed couplets. Italic passages interrupt the dominant typeface like prophetic proclamations, and speaker labels turn the poem into a sustained dramatic dialogue.

Peter Howard's later life helps identify the living model without resolving Honn's biography. An Associated Press obituary published in 1969 called him Irish-born, gave his birthplace as Limerick, and said that he had been a Hollywood Boulevard fixture for nearly fifty years. The report remembered his simple white clothing, staff, vegetarianism, hillside animals, silent-film work—including an appearance in *The King of Kings*—and his habit of renaming Hollywood "Follywood." Honn's 1925 portrait is earlier and more numinous: Peter is healer, prophet, companion to his dog Dickie, and the conscience of a city built from spectacle.

This edition resets the complete authorial Preface, Prologue-Synopsis, and poem from the 1925 scan. The surviving digital copy contains duplicated photographic and textual leaves and places two printed Preface pages out of narrative order. The prose has been restored to its coherent sequence, duplicate leaves have been omitted, and each distinct photograph is reproduced once. The archival section now also includes the identified 1935 newspaper portrait of Honn. Stanza divisions, speaker changes, emphatic italics, and clearly intentional indents are retained; running heads, folios, scanner matter, and accidental page-wrap indents are not.

Archival Images

Margaret J. Honn and Peter of the Hills, 1925–35



Margaret J. Honn, photographed for the Los Angeles Evening Citizen News, May 15, 1935. The accompanying caption identified her as Peter Howard's former benefactress.



Peter of the Hills with Dickie, his white collie, in Conscience (1925).



"Toiling up the hillside winding": an archival plate from Conscience (1925).



Peter and Dickie in prayer, from Conscience (1925).

Editorial Note

Textual practice and scan reconstruction

The 1925 Los Angeles edition is the textual authority. The poem, Preface, and Prologue-Synopsis have been checked against the page images rather than inherited from an earlier project transcription.

The digitized copy repeats several leaves in lighter and darker exposures. Only one copy of each textual leaf and each distinct photograph is printed here. The printed Preface pages numbered 12 and 13 are reversed in the scan's narrative sequence; this edition places them in the order required by the continuous prose.

Obvious OCR substitutions, joined words, scanner matter, and spaces introduced around punctuation have been corrected. Honn's unusual grammar, spelling, capitalization, repetitions, and occasional awkward locutions are retained. Book and journal titles in editorial matter are italicized.

The poem's emphatic italic passages, speaker labels, stanza divisions, and the shaped "Then / He / Said," sequence are preserved. A genuine long line may wrap with a hanging continuation; physical wraps and hanging indents caused only by the original page measure have been removed.

Dedication

From the 1925 edition

*Dedicated to the one I have loved
since the days of Atlantis.*

Author's Preface

Margaret J. Honn's account of the poem and its living model

This epic poem depicts the life of a modern man, who has reached the end of the trail. He has tasted the bitter and sweet of life's experiences; he has been loved; has loved and lost; he has defied openly the workings of the great beneficent law.

Year after year he has madly run the gamut of indulgences, exhausting every known source of the so-called pleasures of life. He faces now an inevitable dullness. Life no longer has a thrill for him, and the great allness of space seems filled with stupid monotony. Life to him is shallow, colorless and without purpose. Now he does not live; he exists.

After a long stay in New York City, to which he had fled in his balmy days, hoping to defeat nature and memory, he again finds himself in Hollywood, the home of his childhood, walking the Boulevard at night, when the night life is coming forth. He is now forty-five years old, and nature has lashed him from a pleasure-seeking creature into a man, but as yet he cannot see the purpose of it all. Life to him is still a closed book. Richard Meryel Wood is dead, yet lives.

So, unknown to any of his old associates, he walks the Boulevard in an aimless fashion. Hour after hour he walks, and, sick with thoughts of it all, it being but a repetition of all that he has been through and known, he longs in his heart to know the truth about life and the purpose of the whole scheme of things.

As he walks, he turns his footsteps to the hills. It is a beautiful night; the air is scented with the sweet perfume of orange blossoms; the sky is glistening with a blanket of twinkling stars. Out and away from the lights of the Boulevard, with its surging crowds, the noisy thoroughfare, with its clanging of gongs on the street cars, its din and roar of the rushing of ceaseless traffic and automobiles, away from it all, he walks. To the hills he goes, the quiet beautiful hills. Step by step, he winds his way to the summit. He turns and looks down over the city blinking with its thousands of lights below him. He feels a new

thrill that he has never known before, and thinks if there be a God—a Great Omnipotent—surely he can be found here in the slumbering hills. But what does he know about God? What does anyone in that motley crowd of pleasure-seekers know about Deity?—And who does know? A thousand questions run riot through his tired brain; and as described in the poem, he sits down to rest and falls asleep, or thinks he does, and an Angel Being appears to him and he is taken on a long and interesting journey through the Great City of the Borderland. On the banks of the mighty River of Death he stands, beholding what is known as the purgatorial condition after death. He is also shown the hidden side of things, and the Angel shows him the great Boulevard of Life and likens it to the River of Death, along whose threatening banks the human family stumble, life after life. While in this inner world, with its many conditions, and its various kinds of denizens, his attention is attracted to a man who walks unharmed through it all, making prophecy as he goes and teaching those who are thronging by. He is trying to help these souls and liberate them from the bondage of sin and ignorance.

The “Mortal,” as the angel addresses him, also sees and talks with this man, who walks the River of Death, on the hilltops after he has returned from his journey with the angel. He addresses this prophet as “Conscience,” that being the name the angel gave him, only to learn his true name is Peter of the hills of Hollywood. This hermit man, as many call him, and the principal character of the poem—he being the character, “Conscience,”—is a man about sixty years old who dwells in the hills of Hollywood. He is not a hermit, as many think, for he mingles freely with his fellow man and is a familiar figure, both on the streets and hills of Hollywood, together with his white collie dog, Dickie, who is with him most of the time. He is rightly named Conscience by the angel, as he continually reminds people of their duty, not only to themselves, but to their fellow beings, and above all their duty to Deity, telling them that “the wages of sin is death.”

He has a philosophy all his own, deducted from his own life’s experiences and the experiences of the lives of the thousands who visit him in his mountain retreat. He is a child of nature and a man of God, and has made many instantaneous cures of disease, among them some of the members of the movie colony, and not a few screen celebrities give this quaint old man the credit of their remarkable cure. He is a modern John the Baptist, fearless and

unwavering, and is loud in his condemnation of life as lived by many of the human family. He eats simple food and preaches a simple doctrine.

The Mortal, after his long journey with the Angel Being and his talk with Peter of the Hills, has only memories that haunt him ever, and an unsatisfied longing in his heart to once more see his shining pilot.

Prologue-Synopsis

The author's narrative outline

The story is one of modern times; of a modern man, and a spiritual-minded man, who is a modern John the Baptist. The location of the story is in the heart of the famous movie city Hollywood, in Southern California, between the foothills and the murmuring Pacific.

Life is at the zenith of activity commercially, socially, physically and otherwise, with a dim blur of the spiritual significance of it all, blending its way through the mist of confusion.

The principal character of the story is a young man by the name of Richard Meryel Wood, who is about twenty-one years old. Into this panorama of whirling and scurrying humanity, he comes, the spoiled and only child of wealthy and indulgent parents.

He is young, handsome, educated and wealthy, and is the embodiment of conceit and self-indulgence, also convinced of his ability to possess all things he aspires to attainment as a movie actor. In time he does acquire some ability, but most of his opportunities are bought and paid for with his father's money and influence. As time goes by, he has many affairs with women of all walks of life, but aspires mostly to motion picture stars. His inflated idea of true values causes him to judge from appearances only. He is a man incapable of thought, and reflects only the thoughts of those he has chosen to be his companions. But he thinks he thinks, and is satisfied with life and himself.

During the course of his daily trips to a cigar and magazine store, located in one of the drug stores on the Boulevard, Richard Wood encounters services from a young girl in charge. Struck by the sweetness and naturalness of the girl, together with her beauty and innocence, the young man frequents the place where she is employed more often, thereby bringing about a better acquaintance with her. Although young, he is not new to the ways of women, and spends much time and money among the well-known women of the screen. This, however, does not interfere with his advances towards the young

girl, and after a short time of impatient waiting, he openly declares his love for her in such a convincing manner, that she in her innocence and lack of understanding of men, believes him and gives him her love unreservedly.

On the Boulevard at night with his friends as he often is, he meets Peter the Hermit, whose psychic vision reflects the true character of the man, and Peter loudly condemns his way of living and his unholy intentions towards the innocent young girl of the magazine shop, she also being an acquaintance of Peter the Hermit, as he is called. The young man only scoffs at the old hermit, as he recognizes no power greater than his own egotism. He does not care about the old hermit, does not know him and does not want to know him.

Eventually the young girl encounters trouble at home, her old parents (they being well along in years before she was born, and she being their first and only child) are much concerned and worried about the bad habits she is developing. They do not approve of this young man. But reluctance to give him up ultimately becomes the cause of the girl leaving home, causing financial distress, both to herself and parents. She leaves; her whereabouts is unknown to them. Grieving and praying for her, they await her return.

Going to her lover, the young girl appeals to him to marry her, but meets with the same success as on former occasions. He cleverly evades his duty by explaining that the difference in their social positions stands in the way of an immediate marriage, but that in time, things would be different.

Much discouraged, though still loving him, she is willing to try to forget him and return to her parents, even though her heart is breaking, but he persuades her to live in an apartment he provides for her. Wealthy as he is, it is a very plain, inexpensive little place, and in a part of town where she is not apt to meet his friends or people. Blinded by her love and faith in him she does not see through all of this and still hopes her love will be rewarded.

She continues her work in the cigar and magazine store at his request, and he gives her many feasible reasons why she should. She is only too glad of his suggestion, as she has the extra money to send to her parents, but cleverly keeps her whereabouts a secret from them.

As time goes on Richard Meryel Wood continues his debaucheries with women and high living, but still holds to the pure love of the girl, loathing to

relinquish his hold on the flower he has broken. But his soul revolts against his conduct somehow and he is not happy.

Two years pass. The girl's love remains unchanged, but the man is growing weary of his pastime and longs for an opportunity to rid himself of her.

Almost daily Richard Wood meets Peter of the Hills on the Boulevard, and each time Peter has told him what he could see in his aura and cautioned him, "That as a man sows, so also shall he reap," but the young fellow laughs and tries to make light of it all, but something deep in the soul of him stirs and fears. Peter of the Hills also meets the girl, whose name is Myoria, at the news stand as he passes, but says little to her as he sees that ahead, of which he would rather not speak. He pities the dear child and tries, timidly, to warn her of the man she loves.

One day she whispers a secret to her loved one, thinking he will rejoice and marry her. But seeing the situation is becoming rather embarrassing, he decides to break at once. He is disgusted with her, or pretends to be, and tells her he does not love her and that it is useless for them to go on as they have been doing. He even goes so far in order to strengthen his case, and give himself a justification for his action, as to accuse her of others, though he knows in his heart the falsity of his accusation.

Richard Meryel Wood leaves, never again to return to her. The girl disconsolate, heartbroken, alone, weeps continually, loses all interest in life, love being the keynote of her nature; she now only exists, she discontinues her work in the magazine store. The sharp blue eyes of Peter the Hermit misses her almost the first day. He prays to God to save and protect her, but is sad, as his vision shows him the culmination of it all. Peter seeks out the young man, and lays down the law of compensation to him which actually takes the form of a prophecy. But the young man is all too sure of himself, and also sure of the belief in his heart that Peter is superstitious and ignorant, so disregards the admonitions.

Months pass.

The girl alone, and soul-stricken, longs to see Peter and continually sends out a thought to him unconsciously, but Peter gets it and comes to her. He consoles her and warns her to be strong and teaches her how to truly pray, not only for her unborn child, but for her lover, for whom she now prays

continually. Having a premonition about the future, she entrusts Peter with the name and address of her old parents, and warns him not to see them until she gives him the word.

She goes through the long waiting period alone, her only visitor being the good man of the hills and his white collie dog. She never hears from Richard Wood and Peter the Hermit never tells her whether he sees him or not. He never talks of him to her, though he sees him often on the Boulevard.

At last the day came. Peter brings a kindly, old midwife to her, and the child is born; a little baby girl, the exact image of her mother. But the girl mother, in the ordeal of motherhood, heartbroken, deserted, and alone, betrayed and disregarded like a worn-out garment, dies, telling Peter of the Hills, with her last breath, to take the child to the address she has given him, which was that of her dear old parents, and to tell no one but them what had become of her. A pathetic scene is enacted at the home of the girl.

Peter takes the infant from the home of the midwife, where it had been taken, to the parents of the girl, at night. A striking figure he is. He walks the whole way, though he is fearless of man's feeble opinion, he wishes to avoid "even the appearance of evil." What a night! Soft zephyrs, moonlight, twinkling stars, perfume of orange blossoms, mocking birds singing plaintively; crickets and night things, each calling out its gratitude—the continuous prayer of nature. Peter, strong with the love of God in his heart, walked and walked with the slumbering infant held tenderly in his arms, his white hair blowing in the night breezes, barefooted, and his white dog beside him, acting as if he too knew the sacred errand of his master, Peter, praying as he went.

The home of the girl's parents; plain, simple, neat. The parents, old and lonely. The usual scene is enacted. They are told briefly the story of their only child, and the child left to them to be cared for. Crushed with the weight of it all they take the tender infant to raise.

Richard Meryel Wood, where is he? A wonderful reception is given him at his home on that very night. He is going to New York to start life alone; of course, backed by his parents.

Song and dance make merry the night. All of his social equals are present. But somehow, even though nearly a year has passed since he has seen Myoria,

his mind goes back continually to her, he sighs and sighs aloud. He cannot get into the spirit of the party, somehow she seems to be near; he goes out on the beautiful roof garden to be alone, even if just for a moment, into the light of the full moon, in the shadow of the palm trees. The ocean murmured in the distance, fleecy clouds passed silently over head, a mocking bird screamed at him from a nearby tree; to him it sounded like an accusation. Suddenly, he becomes conscious of some one near him. Thinking some one of the gay party below had followed him to the roof, he turned to look. Myoria stood beside him! He is frightened speechless, his own guilt being the accuser. She only stands reaching out her arms as if to enfold him.

Richard Wood is not remorseful; he knows only fear. He returns to the party below, which continues and ends as all such parties do. The thought haunts him for days. He finally confides in a friend who only laughs at him, in another who tries to convince him he is ill, still another who believes the effects of high and fast living has turned his mind. Others ridicule him and say “spooks.” But he is convinced that he has seen Myoria though he does not tell his friends who it was he saw.

Richard Wood in New York, half determines to live a better life, but in the gay whirl of the big city, the stars and the follies, he soon forgets and takes to living even a faster life than before.

Meets a girl, an actress whom he madly loves. His one thought is to make her his wife. She leads him on, fools and mocks him, belittles his love, which for her is genuine, in the presence of all his friends, causes him to draw heavily on his father’s finances to satisfy her every whim. Finally, he is literally driven by her to steal, embezzle, gamble, and becomes, from the thought of it, almost continually under either liquor or drug. Finally he learns that she is to become a mother. Rejoicing in his heart he hurries to her to tell her of his joy and make her his wife, but she scorns him, laughs at him and asks him if he thinks for a moment she had been giving him all her attention. He is silent and crushed, and back into his memory come the words of the old hermit, Peter, “As a man soweth, that also shall he reap.”

Months pass slowly in which Richard Wood is trying to forget this undeserving woman, this woman who deserved the true love of no man; and now having extricated himself, all his money gone, spent that she, the undeserving, might have, friends shying as friends sometimes do when a man is

down, his thoughts go back to Hollywood and to Myoria. Only now does he appreciate the true value of her love, he longs to see her once more, if only to ask her forgiveness.

Alone, friendless, and disheartened, he returns to Hollywood, the land of sunshine and flowers, to the place of his childhood. Arriving in Hollywood he finds many changes, sees many he knows but none of them seem to recognize him. He passes the little shop where he had met Myoria. He steps in and asks, hoping some one might remember, though many years have passed, but he is disappointed. He walks the Boulevard at night—night after night, unrecognized, hoping against hope that he might see her. Timidly he asks here and there, and at the apartment house where he had last seen her, but meets only with disappointment.

Then one night as he is wandering the Boulevard, unusually weary and puzzled with the whole fabric of life, he wanders into the hills, and has all of the wonderful experience, as it is described in the poem “Conscience” in this volume. At that time he does not recognize that the man “Conscience” that the Angel pointed out to him, on his journey, is none other than the same old Peter the Hermit, who had warned him ten years before, and at whom he had scoffed and laughed in his egotism and ignorance, and had entirely forgotten.

Several days later, and after his wonderful journey with the Angel through the nether world, he returned to the place in the hills where Peter the Hermit has his little tent pitched, where the birds sing continually, and God’s sunshine always shines, where Peter, lively and ardent, frank and kind, always welcomes a visitor, ardent in his hospitality, his white collie crouched beside him. In the distance, Lake Hollywood gleams, and the roads wind around the hills. Here to Peter, Richard Meryel Wood tells his story in all its details, including the strange experience with the angel-being and the man “Conscience,” who was none other than the selfsame Peter of the Hills of Hollyland. Peter listens as only a man of God can listen, having recognized Richard Wood from the very beginning, his sharp blue eyes never forgetting a face.

After the long story was ended, Peter told Richard, who was now a man, the pathetic story of Myoria and the sad ending of how she, in the purity of her love, had never ceased to pray for him, and of her love which continued to the end, and of the child. Richard sat silently listening—his brows knitted, shame and remorse was upon him. Grief-stricken at what he had done to the one who

truly loved him, emotion shook his frame to its very foundation. He was amid the breakers of his own turbulent life, basely lived. He had fled from it all before, but now he must stay; this was his hour of recompense. Silently, he sat for a long time, Peter telling him at intervals more about Myoria.

Suddenly, as if arousing from a sleep, he said, "Tell me all, Peter. Where is the child?" While calmly listening to Peter as he related the story, he had made up his mind that if the child lived, and it was humanly possible, he would have it, even at the cost of his life; not because it was his child, but because it was Myoria's child—though he knew full well it was their child.

Peter told him where the child was, and that it was now a little girl about eight years old. Finding that his little child was born, and that Myoria had died on the very night he had seen her standing beside him on the roof garden, convinced him that it was truly she who had come to him with her love, released from the heart which had broken.

And he felt that if she could come then, she might be even that moment beside him. Perhaps it was her prayers that had come to fructification, perhaps it was she who had brought him to Peter, to be told the sad story. Perhaps it was her pure love that commanded even the shining Angel Being, to show him the light.

Yes, he would try—try to partially redeem himself. He did not think of her now as dead to him. She lived and stood beside him. He would get their child—he would make a home, not only for the child, but the dear old father and mother who had tenderly raised it. He would do all of this for his Myoria. He had lived and loved and lost, from the standpoint of the world, but he had won immortality.

Nature needed a man, and Richard Meryel Wood was a man.

Conscience

Los Angeles, 1925

As I wandered tired, weary,
For the day was long and dreary,
On the Boulevard was walking,
When the night life forth was stalking,
I to Hollywood a stranger,
Knew I neither fear nor danger,
Walked I leisurely along then,
Seeing neither good nor bad men,
Passed I children, men and women,
Priest and preacher, kindly laymen,
White man, black man, brown and yellow,
Dapper dude and slouchy fellow,
Girl in 'teens and gray old grannie,
Rouge dabbed faces, seen I many,
Knicker-panted, slick-haired creatures,
Stalking out with painted features,
Fat old tubby gluttons walking,
Lean ones, hungry, by them stalking,
Hundreds, thousands, travel ever,
Some are stupid, some are clever,
All are smoking, pauper, banker,
For the nicotine they hanker,
Wretch'd society woman's daughter,
Doing what example taught her,
Old and young so eager reaching
For the doctrine and the teaching
Of false Filmland, so hollow,
Stupidly they stumble, follow,
Filmland, misrepresenting
Not the truth of life presenting,
Drug store cowboys, made up faces,
Harlots, bums, all tribes and races,
Side by side as time is drifting,
Through their fingers ashes sifting,

Puffing, smoking, cigaretting,
Never in their minds regretting,
Caring not, and none regarding,
As they all went Boulevarding.

Curbstone shieks were madly driving,
Every way they are conniving,
Little care they had in choosing,
Old or young, desire fusing.
Flashy cars and empty pockets,
Eyes protruding from their sockets.
Safe no little girl or grannie,
For these curbstone shieks are many.
Walked I as I looked, and shrinking
From the smell of bootleg drinking.
Men who sell it little knowing
What a harvest they are sowing.
For the sly old grizzly buying,
On Bootlegger's daughter spying.
And his son who goes to college,
Of Dad's business has no knowledge,
After school he too goes seeking,
Trained by those expert in shieking.
Finds he much, yes, goodly measure.
Give they him, Dad's bootleg treasure,
"Pour it freely," he is crying,
While the soul within is dying;
Weeping, laughing, loving, hating,
Hell another victim baiting.
Girls who walked, much overdressing
Where they got them, none are guessing,
Over acting, eating, talking,
As they go on walking, walking.
Sweet faced maidens, fearing, cowing,
Low to filmland are bowing,
Left they home and Father, Mother,
Sister, friend and kindly brother,
For a glittering promise made them.
Selfishness alone had bade them:
"Come, we make thee famous ever,
If you will to us deliver."
Waste they now in sinful living,
To the Film God they're giving

All their substance and their power,
For the praise of but an hour.
Cries the soul within, "Awaken,
Ere this false God life has taken,"
But the answer back is calling,
From these souls in deep pits falling
Falling, falling, ever calling,
From these souls in dark pits falling.

All this did I learn while walking,
As the night life forth was stalking,
And the soul within me sinking,
Pondering, pondering, deeply thinking,
Of these humans going madly
And my heart beat slow and sadly,
For I knew it was ungodly,
To be given over bodily.
Useless lives so filled with cunning,
After painted rainbows running,
Haunted, troubled, shackled, fearing,
Wasted effort, highly gearing,
Traps all set for them beguiling,
Hypocritic world is smiling,
Smiling on these foolish children,
Who through hell are making pilgrim.
Weary with the thoughts of knowing,
What life's Boulevard was showing,
Turned I to the mountains hillward,
Where the skyline looming northward
Heaven, earth was fond embracing,
Little rifts of clouds were chasing,
Moonlight, starlight, softly gleaming,
Down from heaven's vault was streaming.
Holy night thy peaceful feeling
Over all the world is stealing,
As the moon is sinking, sinking
Into depths where thinking, thinking,
Follows not while heart is beating,
While the night hours softly fleeting,
Turning life's unending pages,
Turning ever, ages, ages,
Alternating pendulum swinging
To and fro, time endless bringing,

Soundless and continuating
While the God is waiting, waiting.

All this did I think while walking,
As the night life forth was stalking,
And I now upon the highlands,
Overlooking all the lowlands,
Deep for all compassion feeling,
As the tide of life was stealing,
Those who walked and none regarding,
In the treadmill, Boulevarding,
In the grip of strange delusion
Fast bound they in earth's confusion.

As I sat me down so weary,
For the day was long and dreary,
On the hilltop where the moonlight
Mingled softly with the starlight,
Suddenly a darkness falling,
And I heard no earth sounds calling,
Was this sleep? Or was I waking?
And I took myself to shaking,
Yet I slept and still was waking,
And my body had forsaken.
As I stood there sorely musing,
Thinking of a way of choosing,
Suddenly a star came falling
Earthward, and I heard it calling;
Fast it came in flaming passage,
Vested with a heavenly message,
As I looked with strained eyes seeing,
Stood beside me, Angel Being.
Then I fearing, strangely feeling,
Ice about my heart congealing,
While I stood there waiting, hoping,
And the soul within me groping,
Spoke this Angel in a meter,
Never had I heard sounds sweeter.

Dialogue

Angel: “Child of earth, arise, awaken,
 Take from out thine eye the beam,

Though these sights are sad and sickening,
 You have not the half yet seen.
 Would thou, son of earth a journey
 Take and see thy brother man?
 From the heights of angel keepers,
 Would'st thou with thine own eyes scan?"

Mortal: I was frightened, sorely frightened,
 And I answered timidly,
 "Yes, Celestial, I would journey,
 Now the other half to see."

Angel: "Place thy hand upon my shoulder,
 Of thy body think no wise,
 For a mind in earth that's rooted,
 Never rises to the skies.
 Of thy body, earth is mother,
 Thoughts of it will hold thee back.
 If thou hast the will to go,
 Then thou must have the will to act.
*Men stand helpless on life's journey,
 In living death are they earth-bound,
 Listening to enchanted singing,
 Like trees there rooted to the ground.
 Nature guards from such her secrets,
 Wisdom, though she loudly calls:
 'Denizens of earth, awaken,'
 On dead mortal ears it falls.
 Hope stands far with weary pinions.
 Imprisoned, plodding spirits they,
 Bringing forth but sin full-grown,
 The harvest of the man of clay."*

Mortal: As I listened to this Angel,
 Daring scarce to raise my eyes
 To this being so filled with glory
 From some heavenly paradise,
 On his face was victory written,
 In his hand a scepter bore,
 Sovereign with eternal pinions,
 Casting on earth's darkly shore.
 Low his voice came like soft breezes,
 Heavenly music of the spheres,
 Sounds as if of blended voices

Fell upon my dull, earth ears.
Wings he bore upon his shoulders,
Of the brightness of the sun,
Scarcely could one bear his presence:
Living gold these wings were spun,
As I stood there daring never
For to speak another word,
Once again like softest music,
Then this Angel's voice I heard.

Angel: “Son of woman, I will take thee,
Far above gross vapors fly,
Up where fiery Mars grows redder,
Where the planets ride the sky,
Come thou now, my wings are equal,
Place thy hand upon my staff.
Of God's Angel, you are guest, Man,
Now to see the hidden half.”

Mortal: Timidly my hands stretched forward,
On his shoulder, on his staff,
And I started with this angel,
Now to see the other half;
High we rose above earth's vapors,
Far beyond the ocean black.
Crossed the level country going
Where tall trees cast shadows back,
Where soft breezes breathing fragrance,
Practiced there their tuneful art,
Far beyond the mountain shadows,
Up above earth's teeming mart.
Flaming colors saw I streaming,
Streaming forth from every place,
Colors which like sounds were humming,
Rippling like a water race.
Angels passed we, whitely vested
Fountains they, of living light,
Carrying out the law majestic
Of God's splendor and God's might;
Suddenly a light came flashing
To us like a flaming dart,
Fluttered o'er us for a moment,
Then lightened in the Angel's heart,
As I wondered what this meaning,

Waiting for the Angel's word,
In this altitude of heaven,
Once again his voice I heard.

Angel: “Earthly brother, I must answer,
For a prayer has rent my heart,
From the earth a voice is calling
Calling from that teeming mart.
Come, I take thee with me, Mortal,
You will see what man hath done,
But I tell thee while we journey,
That his time is nearly run.”

Mortal: And this Angel gave to sorrow,
Tears were in his deep, sad eyes,
For as we were coming earthward,
We could hear the human cries—
Some were praying, some were cursing,
Some were laughing loud and shrill,
Some were crying, some were sighing,
All these sounds the air did fill;
Loud the din, the mighty surging
Of this awful human sea,
Beating, beating on the shores
of unknown eternity.
Weeping, drinking, eating, doping,
Lo! the law doth hold them fast,
Asked I of this Angel Being,
“Will the God release at last?”

Angel: “I have first to answer, Mortal,
The prayer that burns within my heart,
Come, we light upon the highway,
Walking from them, not apart.”

Mortal: And I noticed that the Angel,
Had his light most drawn within,
Covering up his shining glory,
As he walked among earth's men.
Swiftly then he took me northward,
From the Boulevard of life,
Where these souls were driven madly,
By their greed in ceaseless strife,
To a little cottage nestled
Nestled in among the trees,

Where a mother there was praying,
Praying down upon her knees,
When the Angel gently touched her,
All his radiance burst aflame,
As he spoke and softly told her,
"Prayers are answered in His name."
Though she heard him not, a glory
In her heart all fear did melt,
For beside her, standing closely,
He had made his presence felt.
And I thought again, uneasy
Just to know what was the prayer,
Which I saw was still full burning
In the Angel's heart so fair,
And he caught my thought and answered;

Angel: "Bear with me, O, Mortal Man,
There are hordes of angels working,
*Trying to lift this awful ban,
Satan hard for victories striving,
Stepping down with iron heel.
But the angels work still harder,
With the flaming sword of steel.*
Come, the prayer I quickly answer,
I will take thee back again,
To the Boulevard of evil,
In the haunts of wicked men."

Mortal: As we went, a river crossing,
And I knew there was none such,
So I asked my shining pilot,
For I was so much nonplused,

Angel: And the Angel answered, "Mortal,
This the river death doth sail,
Men are driving towards it ever,
In a fierce and flapping gale.
See how closely some are coming
To its awful murky depths.
As they in this treadmill walking,
Walking with uncertain steps;
Some there are who walk this river,
Fearless are they, champion souls,
Armoured with the sword of spirit,

Underneath their feet it rolls,
 See that Mortal yonder, walking
 On the crest of murky foam,
 He is one who has the daring
 To be walking all alone,
 Bare his feet and white his hair is,
 Clean his life and fixed his mind,
In the heart of all earth's creatures,
He, a spark of God can find.
He has conquered all convention,
Creed and ism, man-made law,
Loudly he condemns the glamour,
Seeing in man's eye the flaw."

Mortal: And I asked the Angel, "Tell me,
 Who's this man who walks alone?
 With bare feet and head uplifted,
 Round about his white hair blown,
 Who has neither friend nor money,
 Mother, Father, home nor child,
 Tell me why he here is dwelling,
 Walking death's black river wild?"
 And the Angel answered softly
 As we hurried fast along,
 Crossed the river Styx and quickly
 Picked our way among the throng.

Angel: *"He, this man, his name is Conscience,*
Men ne'er see him, but they think,
He is bearing witness ever
Of the life beyond the brink,
Sharp his words, his blue eyes gleaming
Through the mist beyond the grave,
Bringing word of warning ever
To his brother man, the slave,
Hear him! Watch him where he's standing,
Crying out the warning word!"
 As I turned about and listened,
 This is what my spirit heard:

Conscience: "O men, why live ye, but to corrupt the race,
 Breathing sin among them with every breath,
 To and fro on this great earth you chase,
 Seeking to hide yourselves from dark, grim death,

Prepare ye for a great, more deadly war,
Such as the world before has never seen.
Impending danger is behind; before,
The conflagration's pent-up fires gleam,
Already through the darkness, lurid red,
A deep and terrible chasm lies ahead,
The mountain summits in convulsions crack,
And thunder down into the ocean black,
The world is hanging o'er a dark abyss,
Toppling on an awful precipice;
Tall buildings, rocking, quaking, on their base;
Down mountain sides, large threatening boulders race;
The earth wide yawns, the earth expands, contracts;
The hour has come when man's black sin reacts.
The prophecies are fulfilled, arise and think,
We're hanging on eternity's awful brink;
Dark waters rushing, flooding over all;
Long buried cities rise, and new ones fall;
Out of their graves, the long dead find their way
To come once more into the light of day,
Out of their coffins dark, to live again,
No longer they in sepulcher remain,
The hollow planks that held them in the ground,
Released their hold, when Gabriel
Loud did sound his mighty trumpet.
Now strength and money fail,
The miser and the harlot loudly wail.
You've acted and indulged to heart's content,
You've scoffed the law, but now you must repent,
Repent! for now is come the son of man,
Repent! Repent! while yet you can!"

Mortal: Thus sang out this prophet to them,
As they, stumbling, went their way,
Paying not the least attention,
Putting off another day,
Said I to the Angel, frankly,
"Does this man know of these things
Which he's calling out so loudly
In the prophecy he brings?"
And the Angel looking wisely
From his eyes so dark and deep,
Never will I lose the memory

Of those eyes so dark and deep,

Angel: *"Mortal, this man's earned the wisdom
That he speaks with fiery tongue,
From the very heart of nature,
He with suffering, truth has wrung,
Wisdom walks; is present ever,
Never in a book confined
Is the gift of God and angels
To a strong victorious mind,
But these laugh, these foolish children,
And they laugh, they know not why,
At the words of wisdom spoken
To them as they're passing by."*

Mortal: As he talked, we mingled quietly
In a crowd in Filmiland,
And the Angel, stepping quickly
Took a young girl by the hand,
"This, my prayer," he softly whispered,
As he leaned close to my ear,
Pushing in between an old man
Whom to this young girl sat near,
As he stooped and touched her gently,
Pressed a thought upon her mind,
Instantly she set to thinking
Of her mother left behind.

Angel: *"Mortal, see thou what a power,
Just a thought of love will show;
So it is with thought of evil,
Work they ever for man's woe,
Do you see these creatures standing,
Round about these humans here,
Filling them with thought of hatred,
Thoughts of lust and thoughts of fear?
Ah! these denizens are making
Life on earth a living hell.
They at times so thick will gather
Till the very air doth smell.
See there standing, sly old mortal,
With lust thought in his mind;
Dark and red, the creature crouching,
Huddled to him close behind;*

*And the fellow sitting yonder,
Thinking how he fain would die,
Followed close by one dark-hooded,
Making loud pretentious cry.
Women, selfish women, wondering
How they more and more may gain,
Working in confusion ever,
On their face a look of pain,
Greedy demons 'round them gather
Elemental selfishness!
And the dollar, O the dollar!
How they lovingly caress.
See the horde of glutton creatures
With large stomachs standing out,
Hungry, thirsty, ever craving,
See the large and sucking mouth.
And that preacher waiting calmly
With a long and drawn face,
Surely, Mortal, you can see them,
Round about him devils chase!
Hypocritic creatures are they,
Making prayer a mocking joke,
Black the heart that he does carry
Underneath religious cloak,
*This is hell where friends are strangers,
And where strangers pose as friends,
Where the real life is masqueraded,
Covered with unlovely sins!
Where the poor soul stands bewildered,
Waiting, waiting for surcease,
Bruised and bleeding, but not hopeless
For ahead there is release.*"*

Mortal: Now the Angel took me quickly,
Passed we with the speed of thought;
Up the Boulevard we glided,
For a church this Angel sought,
Oh! the glory of this Angel,
His feet with holiness were shod!
While he walked with me a mortal,
I was walking with a God,
And I feeling this great difference,
Humble, simple and forlorn,

Thinking that we poor earth mortals,
 Better had we not been born,
 As I quietly walked beside him,
 These, the thoughts were in my head,
 And the Angel broke the silence,
 As he softly to me said:

Angel: “Mortal, in a church I take thee,
 To show thee where most men have failed,
 While their voice to God was calling,
 In their hearts black sin prevailed.
 Though this church is empty, lonely,
 To the fleshly eyes so dim,
 See the crowd that here is gathered
 With long faces dark and grim,
 Reaching black hands up, despairing,
 Not a single hand is white,
 Call they for release from bondage,
 Call they, call they through the night.
Hear them intercessions making,
Prayers that sound like sobbing cries,
See them, though they yet are hopeful,
Tears are glistening in their eyes.
God punished not these poor wretched mortals,
They're punished by their sins alone.
Man must reap a full rich harvest,
Of whatever he has sown.
Church to these was stone and mortar,
Came they in fine livery dressed,
Death upon them passed the sentence,
Now they're paying without rest.
Lamentations make they ever,
Till the debt is fully paid,
For upon the Father's life-book
Restitution must be made.”

Mortal: Thus the Angel spoke—I, silent,
 For I knew not what to say,
 For this awful purgatory
 Filled me, filled me with dismay.
 And Celestial speaking once more,
 Woke me from my reverie,
 When he told me,

Angel: “Now I take thee
For a picture show to see,
Where real life is false, masqueraded,
Where the villain gets the crown,
Where the truth is executed,
With licentiousness held down,
Where the minds of tender children,
Wrecked they, in the making, are
From the path that God intended,
By false teachings led afar,
Foolish parents seeking pastime,
Take their children to this din,
And their plastic minds wide open,
Let the fiends of sex come in,
Sets ablaze emotions’ fires,
Burning out the life divine,
Misdirecting Nature’s forces,
Stifling in them soul sublime.
Come, Earth Mortal, I will show thee,
Show thee picture atmosphere,
Red the astral lamps are burning,
Lust abroad is stalking here,
For the picture makes suggestion,
And the thoughts of people draw,
Draw to them sex elementals,
With their wide and gaping jaw,
Seeking whom they may devour,
Seeking in the zeal of youth,
Sowing seed of crime and sorrow,
Sowing in the field of truth.”

Mortal: By this time my soul was weary,
And I felt a strange fatigue,
But the Angel noticed, saying,

Angel: “Mortal, you must not renege,
Angels give the strength while moving
With me on from place to place,
Fear not, Mortal, of conditions
In this intermediate space.
I have one more thing to show thee,
Ere I take you back again
To the hilltop where I found thee,
Praying as you thought in vain.”

Mortal: Then I gathered strength and asked him,
 “Angel, tell me where we are?
 From the hilltop where we started
 Have we come so very far?”

Angel: And the angel answered: “Mortal,
 Not the name and not the place,
 Not man’s money, not his culture,
 Not his tribe and not his race,
 Not the state and not the city,
 Who the man or what his fame,
 To the law’s great pendulum swinging,
 These things are as one, the same,
 But where man has conscience focused,
 That the thing that God doth know,
 And the angels watching ever
 For the light within to glow
 On the whole, the earth beings living,
 Not outside, but in the earth,
 Where his soul in bondage visions
 Lack and sickness, want and dearth,
 Where the consciousness is, man is,
 He exists where mind is kept.
 Ponder on this, Mortal Brother,
 Worthy doctrine to accept.”

Mortal: As we talked thus, we were moving,
 Towards a public dance hall bright,
 With its strange fantastic gleaming,
 Gleaming of its lurid light.
 Here the air no sweet prayer scented,
 Innocence had long since fled,
 Danced they to a rhythmic music,
 And their partners were the dead,
 Restless souls by impulse driven,
 Subtle forces drive them on,
 Weary both of soul and body,
 Drive them ever on and on.
 And the angel called attention
 To these souls affixed in hell,
 Not a place, but a condition
 Into which these mortals fell,
 Dancing demons, driving onward,

With a mad endeavor went
To a dancing hell eternal,
These poor helpless mortals sent.
As I stood there calmly watching,
At this whirling dervish band,
Stepped beside me Angel pilot,
Took me gently by the hand,

Angel: “Now we to the hilltop yonder,”

Mortal: And his wings of gold unfurled,
Once again this sea unchartered,
Sailed we, up above the world,
I embarking with this Angel,
Voyaging this unknown sea,
Where the earth lights dim, grow dimmer,
In its vague immensity.
Passed we phantoms, dim mirage-like,
Queer were they with shapes of men,
Casting on this unknown shore,
And out away beyond our ken,
Spirits of the dead embarking,
Some going out, some coming back.
Noticed I one rich old fellow,
Struggling with a money sack,
Though he loudly called, none answered,
No one seemed to comprehend,
He knew not that death had claimed him,
That earth life was at an end,
As he stood in robes of darkness,
Bewilderment upon his face,
Woe and desolation written,
Leaving on him sorrow's trace,
Doing penance worth the doing,
Worse than death this punishment,
And I wondered what this man did,
That to him this torture sent,
For his agony was trying,
Trying ever fast to hold,
In this region bleak and sterile,
To his treasured earthly gold,
Stood he in the twilight realm,
Where all things seemed vague and queer,
Where the highborn and the lowly,

With each other mingled here.
 And I noticed in this region,
 Women hanging by the hair,
 High in trees by roadside standing,
 On long limbs both bleak and bare,
 Desolate the road led upward,
 Along a dark and windy way,
 Forward, backward, oscillating,
 Ever in the breeze they sway;
 On this borderland were standing,
 Houses of ill-fame along,
 Filled with those where will was feeble,
 And with those of passion strong;
 And I noticed strangely walking,
 Men who on their shoulders bore,
 Not the heads of humans proper,
 But the heads of wolves they wore.
 Much confused by all this seeing,
 Asked I of the shining one,
 "Would's't thou, Angel Keeper, tell me
 What these human beings have done?"

Angel: "Mortal, I will tell thee quickly
 For the hours fleet away,
 From your body on the hilltop
 You can not much longer stay,
Humans comprehend but slowly,
Much of falsehood, mix with truth,
Right and wrong, they mingle strangely,
Mingle in their hearts of youth,
Yet the deed that's done in darkness,
All the world can plainly see,
For the very sunshine mocks them,
Shames their dark iniquity,
And the wise have always knowledge
Of the wrong that has been done,
Through the eyes the sin is gazing,
Speaking louder than the tongue,
Every face is ever telling,
Is expressing fear and shame,
Though they cry, 'The world is all wrong,'
In the self there is the blame,
 This man whom you saw was struggling

With his sack of treasured gold,
Acted in the ten commandments,
Took his part—both false and bold;
But he knew not God's commandments,
Worshipped he the golden calf,
Round himself his whole world centered,
In his heart was mocking laugh,
Falsehood and deceit were doctrines
That he lived to faithfully,
Now he struggles from this bondage,
Struggles ever to be free,
Justice is avenging slowly,
Bound is he with iron chain,
All the pomp of earth has vanished,
Outward show is now in vain;
Compensation's law is acting,
Now deep contrition and remorse,
Good and bad alike are balanced,
And the grip of law the force.
Now he knows that life's immortal,
Death releases not the soul.
In perpetual round, mysterious,
Onward, onward, ever roll,
Time's unending river rushing
To the waking soul reveals,
Laws of Universe are turning,
Turning life's unending wheels.
In the grip of strange condition,
Like man's thoughts it never stops,
Down through gulfs profound, eternal,
Follows like the water drops;
Birth and death are ever changing,
Changing ever death and birth,
Moving ever on towards heaven,
And from heaven back to earth;
Man is travelling in a spiral,
Travelling on forever more,
Glimpses more sublime is gaining
Of the things unseen before,
Growing, ever growing, building
Like the coral by slow degrees,
On the shores of time erecting,
Washed by life's unending seas,

*Passing, ever passing quietly,
As the ships pass in the night;
Restless and impatient going
Towards the fount of living light;
On this earth both dark and dreary
Driven on by hope and fear,
Fragile bark exploring realms,
Subterranean waters drear.
But behind poor human effort,
And all human destinies,
Over-burdened lives and struggles,
Bodies hampered with disease,
Is the world of light abiding,
Man may open now the gates,
All the glory of the morning
For the human mortal waits,
If he will his hand stretch forward
To this undiscovered land,
Launching forth a bold adventure,
Determined for to understand.
And these women, Mortal Brother,
Hanging in the trees so high
Abandoned by all and forsaken,
Even the laughing birds pass by,
And the moaning wind has carried
Every verdant leaf away,
Round about them in this region
Only is God's canopy.
He alone has not forsaken,
In his wise utility
Are the mills of God still grinding,
Grinding with a certainty,
In this dreamlike state there hanging,
Conscious of its every woe,
Swinging, swinging long the years,
Sway they ever to and fro,
Thus is here, the sad reaction
Of the sin of human pride,
For they feared contamination,
Walked they not the poor beside,
Thought they better than their fellows,
In contempt they held above,
In their veins no red blood flowing,*

*In their heart no seed of love;
And these men whose heads are wolfish,
Made they of their brothers prey,
But their nature now is showing,
Here they cannot hide away,
Now on nature's anvil are they,
Heavily her hammers smote,
Trying ever in her children
Trying to sound a better note,
Come, Earth Mortal, now we hurry
From these denizens away,
In life's great city of the border,
We must not too long delay."*
The Angel, speaking,
Came we to our journey's end,
For the speed that angels travel,
Human does not comprehend.

Angel: "Fare thee well."

Mortal: The Angel, speaking,
Weighed it heavy on my heart,
For from this Celestial creature,
All my being did loath to part,
And I now upon the highlands,
Overlooking all the lowlands,
In my heart a sadness creeping,
Looking at my body sleeping,
And I up above it hovering,
Saw it only as a covering,
Fleshly garment, soul obscuring,
Lessons on this earth procuring,
And deciding, took possession,
Now to learn a further lesson,
Dull and hard in this vibration,
Trying to work out life's salvation.
Dreamily on hillside sitting,
Loss of Angel, heart regretting,
Toiling up the hillside winding,
With white collie close behind him,
Bare his feet, his white hair flowing,
In the midnight breezes blowing,
Moved his lips, a prayer was saying,

For the whole world he was praying,
 Passed he close where I was seated,
 These the words that he repeated:

Conscience: "Praise thee, Father, praise, I praise thee,
 In thy holy way upraise me,
 Make I to thee, God, petition
 For my fellow men's condition,
 Love them, Father, save them, crave I,
 All my substance to Thee, gave I,
 Answer now, the prayer I'm making,
 Ere the dawn is breaking, breaking,
 As the night birds loud are singing,
 Praises to Thee bringing, bringing."

Mortal: As he walked and prayed, I followed,
 To a spot where mountain hollowed,
 Down below the lights were gleaming,
 From the city marts were streaming,
 And I noticed closely scanning,
 While within my mind was planning,
 Was I further vision seeing?
 For this was the selfsame being
 Who on River Death was walking,
 When the night life forth was stalking.
 Quickly I approached him saying,
 While to God he still was praying,
 And the very words he chanted,
 Made me feel my mind was haunted,
 And I said, "Thou, Conscience, tell me,
 What strange thing about doth spell me?
 What strange mystic thing doth grip me?
 And from memory now doth slip me?
 Who this Angel Being of glory
 That to me revealed this story?
 Why wert thou, the river walking?
 To those people loudly talking,
 And that prophecy you brought them,
 Do you know these things you taught them?
 All these things I saw doth ape me,
 Speak, ere memory doth escape me!"
 And I saw his face expressing,
 What his tongue was not confessing,
 Thought he this hallucination

Of a madman's mind creation,
And he set to loudly praying,
To the Father he was saying,

Conscience: "Release this soul in bondage slaving,
From dark forces, wicked knaving,
Bless him, Father, Master, bless him,
Send thy angels to protect him."

Mortal: Now I noticed he was smiling,
Mystified by his beguiling,
Said I to him, "Conscience, tell me,
What strange thing has here befell me?"

Then
He
Said,

Conscience: "My name is Peter,
Of the Hills of Hollyland,
I will tell you of this journey
Which you do not understand,
In life's secret chambers were you,
Where the mills grind ever on.
And your pilot was an Angel,
Holy, pure Celestial One."

Mortal: As he spoke, my memory clearing,
Thought I of the Angel pure,
Hoping, wondering, sadly thinking,
Would I see him ever more?
Would I somewhere, sometime, somehow,
Meet him on life's distant shore?
Meet this one of shining glory,
Meet him as I had before?
Still a vision of him haunts me,
Haunts me when awake, asleep,
Never will I lose the memory,
Of those eyes so dark and deep.

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