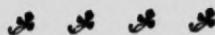


O. H. W.

# m. Gydion



Out of sight, down in the deep  
places where the lives of millions  
are imprisoned by the greed, and  
the fear, and the power of civiliza-  
tion, Justice is waiting and breath-  
ing and expanding his chest. Jus-  
tice is impersonal, and gods and  
men lose themselves in Him.



V. W. HICKS.

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W. W. HICKS.

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## M. GYDION.

Human life is full of surprises. I am about to tell you of one that fell to me and what came of it.

It was on an August afternoon in the City of New York that I was hurrying from an east side ferry, making short cuts to reach my destination, which was a printing house near Cooper Union. A fearful storm suddenly broke forth and the rain fell in torrent and the wind seemed a hurricane. Suddenly turning a corner the wind reversed my umbrella and almost swept me off my feet. I hurried on, hoping to find a convenient shelter other than a liquor saloon and soon sighted a narrow alley and instinctively turned my steps into it. I had gone but a few steps when the sign,

### NOAH'S ARK

over a basement door caught my eye, and in the only window, partly hidden by a stoop leading to the house above, was a neatly lettered legend—Umbrella Hospital. Without hesitation I entered the shop,

for surely, thought I, an ark should be my refuge from such a storm and my umbrella sadly needs repairs.

Standing behind a sort of counter which served also for a work bench, was a tall, portly, clean-shaven, white-haired man, busy mending an old coffee-pot and humming in a reminiscent way a tune familiar to me, but not often heard in New York outside of a theatre orchestra when some southern sentiment holds the stage. For a few moments the busy tinker did not, apparently, notice my intrusion, but I fancied from the quick change which passed over his countenance that he sensed my presence and was intent upon finishing the bit of soldering before welcoming a possible customer. The job finished, he ceased humming and our eyes met. Reader, did you ever see a ghost? Then you can sympathize with my agitation as I gazed, speechless with awe for a few moments, upon the face that beamed upon me. The agitation was all on my side and was soon calmed by a voice that in

past years had charmed and inspired thousands. Recovering my composure I began to declare my surprise and delight while clasping the hand of one I had for years mourned as among the dead.

"I do not mistake," I said. "You are my old friend, my teacher, my leader in many a struggle—Senator—"

"Hush," he interrupted, "don't speak my name; walls have ears, and by all the memories you have evoked let it now, at least, be forgotten. I am M. Gydion, a poor tinker of poor people's kitchen ware, a cleaner of watches, an umbrella mender, a cobbler of the shoes of poverty, and the happy skipper of Noah's Ark, into which stragglers are welcome on rainy days and the children of the streets always."

M. Gydion left his work bench and gave me a most cordial welcome as he threw about my slender person his great brawny arms.

"You are more than surprised," he continued, as we seated ourselves upon an old-fashioned sofa, "you

are astounded, nor do I wonder ; but you need not fear that my new name means that I have disgraced the old one."

"I am too happy at finding you upon the earth," I replied, "to inquire into the reasons for changing your name ; and yet—"

"It is not wanting in euphony," he quickly interrupted. "M. Gydion, philosopher, soldier, politician, whom you knew in other times by a different sound and whose salt of friendship you have often eaten and by whose side you have contended in many a conflict, political, humanitarian and spiritual."

"Yes," I added, "and whose voice I now recall ringing out from many a rostrum and in many an open field, charged with quickening words of warning and of duty to his fellow men, and—"

"Who," broke in M. Gydion, "having outlived his public opportunity among his own people and the brave companions of his prime manhood, and having yielded up to God's eternal keeping the earthly

idols of his heart, dropped into obscurity, sought and found here, in the very heart of poverty and misery and crime, forgetfulness of partisan rancour, a field of humble usefulness, and a convenient sanctuary in which to ripen for a better life than we have known—M. Gydion, proletaire."

My remarkable friend spoke with an earnestness and a pathos which vividly recalled that time in his eventful life when he easily ranked with the greatest orators and when the magnetic flashes from his glorious eyes enthralled the thousands who, for the moment, were captivated and thrilled by the burning words and the splendid climaxes.

A tumult of recollections distracted my mind as I pictured him in that great conflict of the giants of more than a generation past, standing almost alone among his peers in his native state for the preservation of the Union and for the freedom of the slave. Drawn to his standard as a youth, and inspired by his towering example, I beheld him bear-

ing it high above all with a proud and stalwart arm ; now driven from his home, now hiding in the wilderness, fed betimes by the black human ravens of God's care, and now in the midst of a mighty following in the early reconstruction days when questions most perplexing demanded solution, and the natural rights of a race were born into practical life,—until exhausted, broken, despoiled of home and family, and almost bereft of reason, he found renewed life, but not his lost treasures, in retirement,—a retirement nobly earned and enriched with the consciousness of having done his full part in the great conflict in the interest of his whole country and of Humanity at a cost incapable of computation.

"And you thought me dead," continued M. Gydion, "and you were right. I have been some time, and am now, dead—to all the past, its bitterness, its wrongs which are being avenged, its conflicts and its triumphs—dead."

"But the great conflict is still on,"

I replied, "and in many of its phases, in the best interests of Humanity, doubtful in the issue. You were never more needed, M. Gydion, than to-day, and I cannot agree with you that, being dead to certain things of the past, you are absolved from obligations to the living present and to oncoming times."

"You touch a vital spot there," said M. Gydion, "and I hope you will not misunderstand me. As Sophocles, in one of his characters, says :

'It is still my care to make my life,  
Not by words illustrious, but by deeds.'

"I am no more in the swim of life from a public point of view. I am anchored within one of the great reaches of the river of humanity where what seems stagnation prevails and only the unrelated drift eddies and swirls aimlessly, and the occasional storm breaks in to purify, to separate and to hurl again the flotsam and jetsam into the swift current onward to the sea.

"One of the results of the great revolution against Justice and Hu-

manity was the entire obliteration for me of the holy things which make this world desirable to upright men. I am not complaining. On the contrary, I am deeply indebted to all the events of the past and to all the sacrifices which attended my duty and my opportunity, and with a great philosopher, I have learned in all things and conditions to be content as to my personal life ; doing the right as God gives me to see the right.

"To the great party of Humanity whose principles I espoused and defended and still hold firmly, I am as one left behind, overlooked, forgotten, as you may think, but you are wrong there. Forgotten in high places, doubtless ; "left behind?" —no. In the excited surface and among the dividers of spoils I am not known—never was—but at the heart of movements I have my place. I can feel the pulse of necessity, of destiny, of opportunity, as never before. I am more closely in touch with humanity than ever before, and my heart never beat with higher

courage for the masses of mankind than it does to-day. All great movements have their origin in and press up from the lowest strata of society, and the real saviours of humanity enter upon their divine work through the lowest door.

"Down in this deep sounding of humanity I have rare privileges and rare opportunities. I am near to the lowest condition of human movers, in the midst of those who, because they are struggling, groaning, and suffering at the bottom, must needs get on, ascend, and, no matter how slow and painful the progress, eventually reach to the top. All the possibilities of the highest expression in life, of the noblest character in the individual, and the purest condition of Society and the State are here found, do here spring, here are born and utter their first lisp—here, in Slum Alley.

"For the rest I may say, age does not wrinkle me; memory does not deprive me of sleep. Work and thought do not weary me. The kind patronage of poverty, of

wretchedness, and of innocence, keeps my heart young and my hands busy ; also it furnishes me bread. Death has, like some other things and powers, overlooked me, and seems to have forgotten my right to his merciful visitation. But I can be as patient as death. I do not regret the past, but neither do I dwell with its sorrows and events in doleful lamentations.

'I grieve not that I once did grieve,  
In my large joy of sight and touch  
Beyond what others count for such,  
I am content to suffer much.'

I know—is all the mourner saith,  
Knowledge by suffering entereth ;  
And Life is perfected by Death.'

Your face is the first to confront me out of that past which holds all as yet, and your voice, like the trumpet of resurrection wakes within me the life that was dead. You are most welcome to Noah's Ark, but you will swear never to betray by sign or word the identity of its old master—your hand on that."

## II.

There was matchless pathos in the voice and moisture in the eye of M. Gydion as he extended again to me his hand and clasped my own in a compact that I willingly and honestly made.

The storm from whose fury I had sought shelter had now ceased, and only a gentle rain pattered upon the pavement. M. Gydion became the delightful host and opened to me all the features and beauties of "Noah's Ark." The front room in which we sat was divided off into several departments. One corner contained a shoemaker's kit and on a convenient shelf was an assortment of shoes of all conceivable conditions and quality.

Facing the window was a watchmaker's bench with a number of fine tools and a small brazier filled with burning coals, an alcohol lamp with plenty of blowpipes and soldering irons.

The counter or bench behind which I first saw M. Gydion was littered with odds and ends of vari-

ous useful and ornamental articles, such as may be seen in the windows of pawnshops, but tumbled about without order or classification. On the end farthest from the window stood a large willow basket filled with odd dishes of every sort while the shelves behind contained an indescribable assortment of tins, bottles, hardware for household use, a generous lot of candies in glass jars, and some very old-fashioned, well-worn hats. Immediately in front near the door was a rack which held a dozen or more faded and more or less broken umbrellas, and a few that had evidently been mended, the tags upon them indicating that they might be called for.

Altogether the room had the appearance of a veritable curiosity shop and a lumber room for all conceivable odds and ends, useful once, but now superseded by newer inventions. An old chair or two, with the sofa referred to, comprised the furniture. An air of ancient respectability pervaded all with a resurgent glow.

I became deeply interested in a few of the hats which seemed to surmount faces looking at you out of very ancient civilizations. M. Gydion noticed my scrutiny and divined my thought.

"Hats," he said, "are speaking monuments. They contain marvellous histories and reveal deep secrets. The original wearer of this one, for example," taking down a very shabby, tall, shaggy, much indented specimen, now almost rimless, "was doubtless given to much gaiety and was otherwise, when he could afford it, gairishly attired. A mixture of beau and philosopher, who set the fashion and sat in judgment on the world. He was not a worker but an exhibit and lived by his wits. A retired and unappreciated actor, to whom it had descended, left it with me one day in exchange for good advice and a few shillings, after eloquently reciting its pedigree. He was a 'fellow of infinite jest' and a broken life. 'Give it a prominent place in your catacomb,' M. Gydion, he said as

we parted, 'for it deserves preservation. It is all that remains of a long line of good fellows who, if they did not add to the wisdom of the world, greatly relaxed its tension.' It wears a sad, introspective look and carries in its dumb keeping the serious records of those whose jests and follies it aided to punctuate in its active time."

"But here is a far different remnant," and as he spoke M. Gydion handed down a sort of skull cap woven out of some kind of very fine grass or root fibre and lined with the finest cashmere goat hair work in the oriental fashion in several colors.

"This cap," continued M. Gydion, "comes from afar and belongs to a fashion of life and a world of thought wide away from us. It was worn by one of those mysterious beings known as an 'Adept,' a high priest of the occult. If you will look closely within you will see many symbolic figures deftly inwrought by a skillful hand, representing in color and form what look

like zodiacal signs, a serpent fetich, some phallic symbols, and here, as a sort of clasp in the very centre, the form of a triangle with the sacred letters, one at each point, forming the word A. U. M., the greatest word in the Sanskrit language, and probably the most frequently and devoutly repeated word in any language among mortals.

"So much for the little topee itself. It came to me in an abrupt way. The most remarkable person I ever knew honored me with his friendship some years ago. He drifted into my Ark out of the maelstrom of the Bowery one day, tired, ragged and hungry. He called himself Pascima. He came into my world, as I have said, out of the Bowery, which may appear incongruous to you. 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' The best that ever blessed the world did nineteen centuries ago, and out of the world's Nazareths do the redeemers yet come. That section of New York of which the Bowery is the great thoroughfare, is viewed most-

ly from one, the material, point of view. It is the seething vortex of crime, abject poverty, unnameable wretchedness and degradation in the thought of the multitude outside. The scum of the world's degeneracy is supposed to sweat and breed here. But there is another view, a truer one. Ignorance, crime, want, degeneracy, abjectness, all are conceded, but these things and conditions are confronted by their opposites in sublime reality. There is much redemption in the Bazaar. Here you will find better Greek and Latin, Hebrew and Sanskrit scholars, toiling and living in obscurity than can be found in all the universities and colleges in America. Profoundest philosophers are here whose names will never be read on the title pages of ponderous books, whose lives, like their thoughts, are pure, sweet and luminous. They speak all languages ; they are of all nationalities and they project most righteous thought into the universe for its hope and betterment. The love of God has many

homesteads here, and the Christ of innocence and compassion and holy deeds is no stranger where destitution and wretchedness are most in evidence.

"Through this door came Pas-cima, the Hindoo, to Noah's Ark. His knowledge of the English language was excellent, and in the Book of Nature he was deeply versed. Public affairs did not trouble him, and the wild contentions of men did not disturb the serenity of his life, although a more active mind in his own pursuits I never knew. His keen eyes seemed to search out the invisible causes and he had the power of illuminating you with a look or a nod. It was impossible to judge his age. He was fatherly in his sympathies and child-like in his nature—altogether lovable. Yes, he was a Pagan—at least he was not a Christian as most of us use the word, but I felt that I was entertaining a Christ-like person in him.

"'What brought you to this Babel of the world?' I asked him one

day.

" ' To search for my brothers and sisters,' he quietly replied.

" ' Not your flesh and blood kindred, surely ? '

" ' No—and yes—for all mankind are of one ; yet I search for my brothers and sisters in Karma and I have found.'

" He domiciled himself here with me until his mission was accomplished, and then he vanished into the universe leaving in my possession this cap which was not worn by him, but had been by his master, who lived somewhere in the heights of the Himalayas. Some day I will tell you more of this mysterious friend and brother, whose influence abides upon me and within the Ark.

" No, I am not superstitious, nor am I given to weird speculations, but I am far from holding lightly the doctrines of our Aryan ancestors in respect of what is known as Karma, and that other doctrine held in some form by all the ancient philosophers—Reincarnation or Transmigration of souls. Few will ques-

tion Wordsworth's poetic outgoing :

'Our birth is but a sleep  
And a forgetting ;  
The soul that rises with us,  
Our life star,  
Has had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar.'

"Or Tennyson's larger token :

'Yet how should I for certain hold  
Because my memory is so cold,  
That I *first* was in human mould.  
It may be that *no* life is found,  
Which only to one engine bound  
Falls off, but cycles always round.  
But if I lapsed from nobler place,  
Some legend of a fallen race  
Alone might hint of my disgrace.  
Or if through lower lives I came—  
Tho' all experience became  
Consolidate in mind and frame—  
I might forget my weaker lot ;  
For is not the first year forgot ?  
The haunts of Memory echo not.  
Moreover, something *is*, or *seems*,  
That touches me with mystic gleams,  
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—  
Of something felt, like something here ;  
Or something done I know not where ;  
Such as no language can declare.'

"The philosophers agree and speculate as the poets sing, that

transmigration must be, either for reasons of retribution for sins committed in the former state, or as a law of development. Be it so. An honest man would pay his debts and the deathless soul would onward go."

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### III.

A second room back was M. Gydion's living and sleeping apartment. It was comfortably furnished and contained, among other companionable things, a well-filled mahogany book case with writing desk attachment. This room became a hallowed place to me for many months after my first visit, and the memory of the many happy hours spent within its walls, listening to the voice that, alas ! is now hushed in death, is inexpressibly dear to me now.

While I was taking note of the contents of Noah's Ark a little ragged tot timidly entered and inquired if the coffee-pot was done, " Me

mudder wants to make de coffee,  
an' Mr. Glydion wats de pay?"

Her voice was low and musical, and the child showed in her manner great respect for M. Gydion, whose face beamed a blessing upon her wan features. "Ready, my dear," replied M. Gydion, "and the pay is a cup of coffee on demand." And the well-patched and old-fashioned utensil was handed to the child.

"You is so good, Mister Glydion," sweetly murmured the child, "an' me mudder says as No's Ark is de life-bote in de alley," and quickly disappeared. M. Gydion called her back and thereupon I learned what the candy jars meant in Noah's Ark.

"There," sighed M. Gydion, after the ragged child had gone with a light step and happy heart, "the quality of gratitude in Slum Alley should be sufficient to inspire a man to undertake the redemption of the world."

M. Gydion's face glowed with delight, while I looked upon him with increasing wonder and reverence. I could but consider how strangely

he had drifted into obscurity from the commanding position (not official) which he had occupied. I recalled the fact that men of his time and age, and from the same geographical centre, who had fought for the "lost cause," had been received with open arms by their political sympathisers in New York and had been elevated to positions of great trust and responsibility as well as emolument, most worthily, too, as if in repentant recognition of what once in their careers was denounced by them, under pressure of public sentiment, as treason.

But here, before me, stood a man whose services to humanity and for his country entitled him not alone to gratitude but to honor, and in his old age to protection from possible want, unrecognized and unknown, his very name forgotten by the present leaders and powers in the great party whose banner he had carried over most stubborn and defiant treasons in the most crucial time of any age. "Republics are ungrateful" has been said, and history will

often, if not generally, show that the true leaders are often the world's martyrs in the end. Republics are not ungrateful, and the American Republic least of all, but in the constitution, division and control of parties with us, it must be that unscrupulous party leaders and spoils-men to whom are given almost despotic powers by corrupting party methods, will pass by and ignore the modest, worn-out veteran whose upright soul can not be made subservient to the degrading ambition of political bosses. Had M. Gydion been a clamorous seeker after place, humbly begging "recognition" at the hands of some magnate of his party, he doubtless might have been permitted to serve in some civic capacity, or perchance been honored by permission to stand before his countrymen for some elective office. But men who serve their country and the world in their highest sense, counting no sacrifice too great to make for the just cause, are not the men who are capable of such abject political subserviency, preferring

poverty and forgetfulness until death conducts them to everlasting honor and glory. M. Gydion was conspicuously one of these.\*

The rain had entirely ceased, and the sun was sinking in the west before I could bring myself to the parting word. Permission was cheerfully given me to call as often as I could, a privilege which I learned to prize beyond all earthly things as the days went by. Almost every evening found me at Noah's Ark,

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\*A distinguished Union General who was also a most able advocate of Republican principles before the people, told the writer that after the war had ceased and he, with others of his state (Southern), proceeded to build up the waste places and establish, under the Government, the new order, the chief difficulty encountered was from the ignoring of the brave men who had borne the burden in the heat of the day and the rushing in of the mere politician who would most faithfully obey the party "Boss" at every sacrifice to the people. This brave and well-known soldier received a modest pension from the government, and was always in demand when his party was contending for power. But no place of trust and emolument could be found for him on account of the claims of younger men. He finally retired from public sight and died at a quiet retreat, and was buried by a few old comrades of the Grand Army of the Republic.

until M. Gydion came to expect me with the tenderest concern. We lived the old days over again. Noah's Ark became a temple for the worship of the heroes of our day and time, in whose mighty struggles M. Gydion had born a conspicuous part, and with many of them had held confidential relations, and of whose inner life he, of all men, was most competent to speak.

In the long evenings I would sit in his cabin, as he called his private apartment, and by question and suggestion would draw from the storm-tried veteran, his opinions, his recollections of the great events and characters of his time, the lessons of his life and his confidences for the future.

He had mastered the great lessons of life and had solved many of its most perplexing problems. The future was secure. "I do not concern about what some people call 'Future Life.' Nothing of the kind is kept in store for us. We shall continue, and all things fit shall continue for us, and the unfit shall

cease and end."

His life had been seasoned by adversity and enriched by experience, and was opening upon freedom and heaven.

There was no taint of bitterness in his reminiscences and no cloud in his sky that did not portend good. All human problems were being solved in his altruistic philosophy in the highest interest of the lowest creature. God was no myth to him, nor some indescribable personality of selfish glory, unapproachable and unknowable.

His God was immanent in nature and in man, and was the eternal presence of good in all things small and great. M. Gydion was religious in the best sense, as are all great disturbers of the world's apathy and equilibrium for the better and the better.

At different times he placed in my hands manuscripts containing his thoughts on momentous themes, written in the midst of far-reaching, world-stirring events, with brief but comprehensive character pictures of

the men who, during the past century have most deeply, for good or for ill, impressed the age. Only the most modest self-recognition appears, where I know that his own efforts and character were most conspicuous and potent. Here and there the purpose of his soul, unshaken amid fearful opposition, is recorded, and here and there, a tender touch, in evidence of his close fellowship with the greatest and the best, brightens the page.

"Noah's Ark" was the Mecca of the dwellers in Slum Alley and adjacent communities.

M. Gydion had nothing for sale except the work of his hands for patching a shoe, mending a coffee-pot or an umbrella, or rejuvenating a watch or a clock, or a child's doll, and the charge never exceeded a few pennies over the cost of material used, and more frequently nothing at all. His humble shop was filled with such articles as I have briefly mentioned, and I soon learned that they were constantly being purchased by him from the hard pressed

poor, who were his patrons and charge, only to be given away again to the most needy and deserving. His small private fortune was nearly sufficient for his personal needs, which he limited to the strictest economy that he might help others.

He had adopted a law of charity, and he was learning its value where it was most applicable, and his heart was made glad over his daily discoveries and triumphs. His love for humanity was intensified and justified by his dwelling among the very lowest.

To the children of the street he was a friend and a philosopher and a guide. His ear heard their little complaints and his voice soothed their sorrows, while he could always find a substitute for the old shoe which was lost, and a cure for the tried temper. He was master of all the languages of sorrow and poverty in the saddest slum of New York, so that his words, his kindly manner and his generous sympathy needed no interpreter. Thus lived M. Gydion, proletaire.

One afternoon as I approached the Ark, I noticed a throng about the entrance. Fear, sadness and anxiety were depicted on the humble countenances of men and women, and children in rags and bare feet were sobbing piteously. On entering I found an officer in charge. M. Gydion was dead. He was lying on his bed as though in a most peaceful sleep. Evidently death had withdrawn him without struggle or pain, and his noble face was glorified with the light of that steadfast purpose which had made his life worthy and successful. My right to care for his body was not disputed by the proper authorities, for M. Gydion had left a paper in his desk making me his executor and bequeathing to me his humble effects.

When we conveyed his body to its final resting place, after a prayer by a missionary of the neighborhood, no one dreamed of the character and majesty of the spirit that had presided over Noah's Ark. The humble dwellers in Sium Alley

and adjacent hamlets, knew that they had lost their best earthly friend. Little children, whose life knew no sunshine of home, sobbed their grief around his coffin, and before it was closed laid their hands gently upon the one face that always smiled lovingly upon them.

I alone knew that at the mention of his name thousands throughout the land would have been roused to fulsome recognition, and the patriotism which had been forgotten and neglected would have caused the living to crave the right to build a monument to the dead. But I kept, and I still keep, my secret, with something like a feeling of revenge.