

to place us on the starting line of the race of life, and leave us there for us to do the rest, while He goes to the other end to do the reckoning afterwards. He decrees not, and wants not, that one shall be a Rizal, a Napoleon, or an Edison; nor does He desire that one shall be rich and another shall be poor, or that one shall be wise and the other a fool. He only helps those who help themselves.

It is evident that we are the architects of our fate—that nothing is predestined in the fabric of our life. That there is no such thing as an unlucky or a lucky fellow. The mansion of life shall be as it is built—no more, no less. Therefore do not depend upon luck or destiny, but endeavor and struggle if you desire success, but never quit because you say you are unlucky, and what is the use of going against luck. But I say, "If there is a will there is a way." It is not luck that is against you. It is yourself, and in yourself alone can you find salvation. The trouble is that, sometimes

one sleeps the hibernal sleep of winter hoping that Fate will wake him up in spring replete with life and beauty. But, disillusioned, he finds, when too late, that bound are his feet and handcuffed are his hands, ready to be led to the abyss of doom and oblivion, or to that caravan of innumerable men, whose mission is but to struggle on and on, to the grave!

Despond not, and yield not, but struggle on and on; and if in the course of your struggle you stumble, do not blame any one, or wait for Fate to raise you, for you are the one who will put fate into complete existence. Rise and take more careful steps.

After you have run the race of life, when life's picture on the canvas is complete, you will meet your Starter Who will ask.

"To whom shall the praise or blame for the picture largely be?"

Answer solemnly, "My Lord, to the one before Thee."

The Confession

By Horacio Villavicencio, H.S. '31.

THE hour was midnight. The moon shed her soft silvery light upon the calm and peaceful waters of the bay. The cool breeze fanned the trees, and broke the silence of the night with each fresh gust. All around was profound silence, as I sat upon a rock near the seashore. I was enjoying the sea breeze, as it pleasantly whizzed past my face. I was watching the waves dash against the shore one by one. I was admiring the brilliant reflection of the moon's rays upon the waters. I was musing, meditating, dreaming

Suddenly, a continuous faint splash of water disturbed this reverie of mine. The monotonous splash-splash as paddle struck water, had an unnerving and dismal effect. The sound seemed to come nearer, for every second it sounded more and more distinct to my ears. I looked around, scrutinized the horizon from end to end but in vain! I saw nothing! But

that sound still continued to disturb me. I looked again and this time a dark moving object emerged from the horizon and came steadily across the waters towards the shore. As it neared I could make out the faint outlines of a fisherman's boat, tossed by the rippling waves of the sea. A figure, darker than its dark background, sat rowing, rowing steadily and vigorously. With bated breath I waited. At last the boat dashed against—the sands and its prow stuck. A moment later the dark figure alighted and walked slowly towards me. Slowly and rigidly, as if moved by some mechanical device, it walked. I was frightened. This was no living man. It was a ghost! For a moment I felt as if I would faint. My very nerves seemed to fail me. Everything else, even the witchery of this beautiful night, was forgotten. Everything but that tall, rigid figure which now stood before me. At first I

thought of running away, but I met his look, so fierce and evil that all courage quickly oozed out of me and left me helpless before the terrible thing.

With a super-human effort I looked at it. The eyes that mine beheld kept me for a moment spell-bound. They were dark, dark as the darkest night. They looked at me, seemed to burn me through and through. And those cheeks so pale and thin. I looked away, unable to meet his gaze any longer.

"Be not frightened, my friend," he said with a voice which long afterwards seemed to haunt me, "I have travelled far, far from my land only to unfold to you a mystery of long ago, a mystery which still remains unsolved. After I shall have departed, my friend, after I shall have told you my story, judge for yourself, if justice has been rendered to a priest, a minister of God who has been sacrificed, by a criminal in an ignoble manner,—sacrificed on the gallows."

The mysterious stranger paused. For a moment tears glistened in his expressionless eyes, and then slowly rolled down his hueless cheeks; these were tears which for a moment moistened his countenance only to be roughly wiped away with a coat-sleeve. They were tears which laid bare before me a sorrow-laden past.

"Once I lived in the distant land of Zamboanga, where bloomed the fairest maidens of the land, and the most valiant men of the country. But that was many years ago."

Again he paused to wipe another glistening tear from his eyes. A moment of silence ensued, a moment of silence which I dared not and could not break.

"It was on a night like this," he continued, "beautiful and bewitching. The church was deserted and silent. Darkness covered all around. There in one corner of the church I stood, immobile and unperturbed, clothed in a long dark cloak which covered my entire figure. The little altar lamp gave but a faint, flickering light which scarcely reached the place where I stood. Adroitly concealed under my dark cloak was a long open knife. I held it

with a grip so firm and tight that I shuddered as I felt it, trembled as I thought of how I would make use of it."

There in one corner of a church in Zamboanga stood Pierre, the son of the town's wealthiest man, hidden in a corner of the darkened church. He was waiting, waiting patiently for one whom he dearly cherished . . . the girl whom he loved. The girl who had so cruelly toyed with his affections, the girl who had broken her promise to him. Now he was waiting for her to come in answer to his summons, waiting for her with a knife in his hand, and with murder in his heart. Yes, he would kill her. Once he had loved her beyond comprehension; once he had offered and sacrificed his honor, his liberty, for her sake. Now he was here to kill her, to destroy, to butcher her for her ingratitude. He had not stopped to consider the penalty of the crime which he was about to commit. He did not care. His mind, his heart seemed to cry out for revenge, for blood!

Suddenly the church door, not far from where he stood, creaked. She had come! Slowly and silently he approached her. As silently he stabbed. Then, as he pulled the knife away from her bleeding breast, the sight of it dripping blood seemed to madden him. Blood! His heart seemed to cry out again for blood. Yes, there it was. There was blood flowing in a torrent from a horrible wound. Blood! Yet that much blood could not appease his raging thirst for it. Again and again he stabbed, scarcely knowing what he did. Then with a murderous laugh, he loosened his grip on her throat, and watched her body, as it lay in a pool of blood, at his feet.

The sound of faint footsteps seemed to awaken him from his reverie, for with a quick movement, he grasped the lifeless body and disappeared through the door. A moment afterwards another figure, that of a priest, followed him. For a few minutes the chase continued, until with a quick movement, Pierre disappeared among the bushes by the roadside. For a moment he waited behind the bushes, waited until the priest had passed. In that

short moment a plan had formed in his cunning brain. Yes, that priest had given him an idea. In a moment more, that plan had been perfected.

With great care, he proceeded towards the convent. Once there he threw the bloody knife under the stairs, and began to stain the floor with the blood of his victim. He knew that his plan was unscrupulous and terrible; but on its success depended his safety. Then straight to the convent door he went, and knocked.

A moment afterwards he was in the church, kneeling before the confessional, telling the priest what he had done, telling him what the priest himself had seen. This was part of his plan to save himself. Here he was revealing himself to another man, disclosing his identity, confessing himself the author of a terrible and inhuman crime. Yes, to another man! But to a man he was sure would not reveal him. To a man who was a priest of God, a man bound by silence to keep secret what is revealed to him in confession.

The next day the priest was placed under arrest. As Pierre looked at the flaring headlines which adorned the front page of every newspaper in the city, he chuckled. He had succeeded. He was in a safe box. Now he could go away and roam through the world as free as if a bloody, heartless murder had not stained his soul. Now he could draw a curtain between his past life and his future, he could start all over again. A day or so afterwards, Pierre disappeared from Zamboanga, without even waiting to hear of the possible fate of his second innocent victim—the priest.

Years fled by. In Russia an old man, weak and dejected seemed to think otherwise. The passing years had treated him cruelly. Lines of care and worry marred his once handsome countenance. Long gray hair covered his head. It was Pierre. No longer was he the same Pierre, who had left his country to forget, yes, to forget his past. But his past had haunted him unrelentingly. He could not forget that night in the church, that venerable old priest whom he had "framed." The years that had passed were years of sorrow. Years of battle

against his conscience. Years of slow, heart-rending tortures. His shoulders once so broad and strong, now were weak and bent. Bent with the toils of many years. Now he lay vanquished. Beaten by his own conscience. Humbled. Repentant. At last he decided to return, from his self-inflicted exile, to his own country. He would save the poor, uncomplaining priest from further torture in a cold, dark prison. Yes, from prison. He could not have been condemned to death. The thought of the poor priest dead, sent pains, steady and poignant darts into his heart. No, he could not be dead.

A day after his arrival, Pierre learned from an old friend that the priest had been executed years back. The proofs had been too convincing and strong. Yes, thought Pierre, he had worked well. But this time he was sorry that his plan had worked so smoothly. Even as he had figured, the priest had refused to reveal his identity.

Weeks passed. Weeks laden with days of sorrow and sleepless nights for Pierre. Weeks of haunting memories and horrible visions. As he lay awake on his bed, he seemed to see the aged priest seated on the electric chair, pale but firm in his resolution. He seemed to feel the feelings which surged through that old priest's breast as he sat on that cold death chair. He seemed to see the priest's face as it twitched in nervous apprehension of what awaited him. He could almost see the battle which raged in that old man's heart. The battle between his instinct of self-preservation, and his vow to his God. One word and he would have been free to go his way. But that word was never spoken. The thought of a reward, far greater than any this world can give, held his tongue. As these thoughts flashed through Pierre's mind, his conscience revolted and a feeling bitter and painful, shot through his heart, which seemed as if it should burst in his breast. Every thought of the heroic priest was a stab at his heart.

"Fifteen years ago in a dark prison cell the Grim Sceptre Death claimed another victim. Justice, or rather injustice, had taken its course.

The noble priest had sacrificed himself for me. The priest is dead, forgotten of everyone, dead to the world! But his spirit still lives within me."

Silence, dreary and dismal reigned for a moment. I sat there speechless, spell-bound. Afraid, yet interested.

"As soon as I learned of the priest's fate, I felt as if I had lost a very dear friend, a very close relative. Long afterwards I was haunted by this memory, this spectre, this horrible truth, until one day God willed to

call me to leave this world. Thank Him for that. I thank Him for my death!"

At the sound of his last words I felt as if shot.

"Dead?" I gasped, my teeth chattering.

"Yes, dead," he repeated slowly, "I am dead. Go, my friend, and proclaim to the world what I have told you."

In another moment he was gone. I looked, I tried to pierce the thick shadows which enveloped me, but the spectre was to be seen no more.

Cemetery Thoughts

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

Gray.

ONE can not forbear allowing one's thoughts to drift anon and again on the subject of death and the hereafter, since one's soul, being immortal, also claims the right to force one's mind to rest and think on the dwelling place of one's soul.

This is as it should be. Why concentrate only on what is mortal, thereby pleasing the body, and forget what is immortal? Why not give a thought once in a while to the final resting place of something that belongs to one's self and life, namely the soul?

But then, another thought assails one. How best can one meditate on death if one, not having died, can not know what death is?

But although death may not yet have visited us to claim us as his own, then let us visit death in his abode, see him in his work, gaze on those that were but are no more, feel the better for having known death the nearer, and try to grasp, as it were, wrestle with the problem that is life and the puzzle that is death.

I do not fear death.

Death is a gallant adventure that appeals to minds akin to mine. Why allow the small earth to compose and rule my entire existence? Why allow the boundaries of this sphere to

stop me from further achievement and tell me in hoarse and hollow tones "Mortal, you can go no further." Perhaps it must be pride that rules my spirit. Perhaps the thought that I am too great to be only for the earth, and that hence I need something eternal, something lasting, something for the ages, to truly reward my soul. That is why to me, death will be a reward, and not a punishment.

Come with me to the cemetery. Rest awhile your tired mind and gaze on the sepulchers. Some are white, but they are all dust beneath. Gaze on the remains of what once were mortal beings. See the whitening bones. See that piece of cranium that once held a brain as fruitful as your own. It is empty now. See that femur. Once upon a time, it belonged to a great athlete, renowned for skill and prowess. Nay, do not shudder when you see that set of yellow teeth. Are they strange to you? Why, only a few years ago, they belonged to a man that thrilled audiences. It was said that he had a "golden tongue". The worms that ate it could best describe it, I can not. But all is natural. It was so foreordained. He lived but to die and in that he has only followed the inexorable law of life and death.

Men fear death as children fear darkness.