

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.

Because they do not know what it is all about. Because to them, what is not clear as daylight, must be bad. Because they can not feel their blood a-tingle on the thought of that wonderful adventure, of that separation of soul and body, on that voyage through immense and immeasurable distances that the soul must travel before it can reach its Maker and render its account. Men fear death because they do not understand it.

But this is silly. This is childish. Tell me, have you never been thrilled when standing before the awful ferocity of an angry ocean? Have you never felt something of the immortal when you have been able to gaze on profound precipices while standing safely on the summit of a mountain? Have you not felt as if you could, with a wave of your hand, command the elements? Death must be like that. Feature yourself standing on the brink of life, gazing on the precipice of death. Feature your soul, tired of the small earth that encompassed it, now thrilling to the prospect of "returning home", of winging to its destiny. Feature the earth, and all its envy and wars, and disorder, and petty cataclysms, become a speck as you travel through ethereal regions.

I repeat again. Death will come to me as a gallant adventure, as something I have never known before, but longed to know. Life, I regard as something very transient. They say that "the paths of glory lead but to the grave." Maybe. What is that to me? What is earthly glory. I gain it, only to lose it. Like the great athlete, my femur shall rot in a mouldering tombstone. My tongue, that could thrill thousands, shall be a dainty dish for worms. My brain shall evaporate into nothing. My name shall be forgotten—my life shall be ended.

But my soul? Ah, that is something different. It shall live, for it can not die. It could not die. It is immortal. And with it shall

live all the greatness that was mine, or it shall be perhaps be tarnished with all the malevolence and sin that stamped me. Come, let us leave the cemetery in peace. We need not be in any special hurry to join the caravan of the departed, for one day, tomorrow perhaps, we too will be called and asked to join the legion of phantoms. Liberty will then be given to our soul. Liberty to think with an immortal mind. Liberty to act without any hamperings of social or civil order. Liberty to do what we please when we please. Liberty, liberty, liberty.

And then what else? What after the strange adventure? Perhaps something bigger, something more thrilling. We still shall have the anticipation of greater reward, of knowing that in death there is life.

I live, because I have not yet died. But I shall live when I die, a higher existence, a life that shall never end. Then I shall truly live, not before. Death will come as reward, as momentary rest ere I fling myself on the brink of eternity, and start on the gallant adventure.

I shall not struggle for life. I shall not fear to die. I shall not grasp my bedsheets and frantically yell to doctors and nurses to let me live. No, I shall close my eyes, as if in a dream. Death must come to me in all its majesty. I shall not meet it. I am the ruler, death the servant. He shall come to me and offer the fruits of reward. He shall beg me to accept them. I shall condescend to parley with him, perhaps pat him on the back and tell him, "Well done, good and faithful servant: I waited long for you. You have come. Let us go."

"I shall approach my grave

Like one that draws the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

*Manuel Olbes.*