

# **A Grave**

Edith Wharton

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# A Grave

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Tho life should come  
With all its marshaled honors, trump and drum  
To proffer you the captaincy of some  
Resounding exploit, that shall fill  
Man's pulses with commemorative thrill,  
And be a banner to far battle days  
For truths unrisen upon untrod ways,  
What would your answer be,  
O heart once brave?  
Seek elsewhere; for me,  
I watch beside a grave.

Tho to some shining festival of thought  
The sages call you from steep citadel  
Of bastioned argument, whose rampart gained  
Yields the pure vision passionately sought,  
In dreams known well,  
But never yet in wakefulness attained,  
How should you answer to their summons, save:  
I watch beside a grave?

Tho Beauty, from her fane within the soul  
Of fire-tongued seers descending,  
Or from the dream-lit temples of the past  
With feet immortal wending,  
Illuminate grief's antre swart and vast  
With half-veiled face that promises the whole  
To him who holds her fast,  
What answer could you give?  
Sight of one face I crave,  
One only while I live;  
Woo elsewhere; for I watch beside a grave.

The love of the one heart that loves you best,  
A storm-tossed messenger,  
Should beat its wings for shelter in your breast,

## A Grave

Where clung its last year's nest,  
The nest you built together and made fast  
Lest envious winds should stir,  
And winged each delicate thought to minister  
With sweetness far-amassed  
To the young dreams within  
What answer could it win?  
The nest was whelmed in sorrow's rising wave,  
Nor could I reach one drowning dream to save;  
I watch beside a grave.