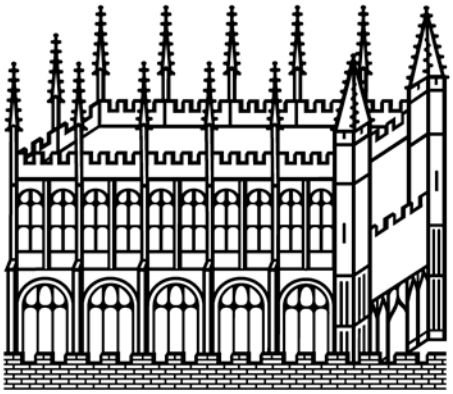

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PREFACE

THIS little book was planned and in part written before the appearance in *Macmillan's Magazine* of Mr. Matthew Arnold's article, which he has since incorporated in the preface to his selection from Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. I welcome the approbation of so great an authority on literary and educational matters, and had Mr. Arnold carried out his plan, this book would not have been printed. But Mr. Arnold's notion of editing differs widely from a schoolmaster's, and for such boys as I have taught for the last fifteen years one note to six Lives seems to me a ridiculously inadequate assistance. The difficulty of a lesson in English literature is to give boys enough to do, to show them that it wants as careful preparation as a lesson in Latin or Greek. Boys require premonitory as well as instructive notes, and without such danger-signals they will slur over any number of obscurities, content with a half-sense, or no sense at all. Doubtless for one of Lord Macaulay's school-boys Johnson's recommendation, which Mr. Arnold endorses—to turn a child into a library, and let him read at his choice—is the best advice that could be given; but to the average boy a poem like Gray's *Elegy*, without copious assistance, is as hopelessly unintelligible as an ode of Pindar. I have therefore ventured in my notes to intersperse numerous questions, to suggest obvious parallels, and to point out hackneyed imitations, at the risk of appearing to Mr. Arnold "pedantic, obscure, and dull."

In conclusion, I may briefly notice the points in which the present edition of Gray's Poems differs from the many editions already in the field.

In place of a biographical and critical introduction, I have substituted Johnson's life of the poet. This, in spite of a few inaccuracies, gives concisely and well the main facts of an uneventful life; and though Johnson's criticisms on the poems are for the most part *vitiis imitabilia*, they have at least this advantage, that they are intelligible to the dullest, while those who have any poetic sense and feeling will be stimulated to refute them. I have found that a critical introduction, however good, is generally wasted on boys. They require to have read the poems before they can understand it, and he would be a prodigy of virtue who turned back to it after reading them. I have therefore thought it better to include in the notes any remarks that occurred to me on Gray's style and diction.

The text, with a few unimportant alterations, follows the *Editio princeps* of 1768. Thus, in spite of a concensus of recent editors, I have, in the thirty-fifth line of the *Elegy*, retained the original reading, "awaits." On the other hand, it seemed to me that no object would be served in retaining a few peculiar spellings, such as "ile," "chearful."

I have added in an appendix a few specimens from Gray's correspondence. Cowper is perhaps the only Englishman who can compete with Gray as a letter-writer, and Cowper preferred Gray's letters to Swift's, which he once thought the best that could be written. The letters selected are mainly those which have reference to the poems.

Whenever I have borrowed from previous editors, I have, except through inadvertence, in each case acknowledged my debt; but I wish to express my special obligations to the Aldine Edition of Mr. Mitford.

LONDON, *January*, 1879.

CONTENTS

LIFE OF GRAY.

FROM DR. JOHNSON'S "LIVES OF THE MOST EMINENT ENGLISH POETS."

THOMAS GRAY,[1] the son of Mr. Philip Gray,[2] a scrivener[3] of London, was born in Cornhill, Novem-

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[1] He was the fifth child of twelve children—eleven died in infancy from fulness of blood, and the poet owed his life to his mother's nerve, who, with her own hand, opened a vein.

[2] Philip Gray was a worthless father and a brutal husband, as we learn from a case submitted to counsel by Mrs. Gray, to ask whether her husband had any power to molest her in the business of milliner, which she was carrying on with her sister, or to compel her to live with him. The case states that she "almost provided everything for her son whilst at Eton School, and now he is at Peterhouse at Cambridge." Before his death his father had, besides attempting to ruin his family, nearly ruined himself by neglect of business and reckless expenditure in building a country house.

Gray's love of his mother in life, and his devotion to her memory, form perhaps the most pleasing trait in his character. In the epitaph he wrote for her monument he describes her as "the careful, tender mother of many children, one of whom only had the misfortune to survive her;" and in a letter to Mr. Nicholls, dated 1766, he writes: "It is long since I heard you were gone in haste into Yorkshire on account of your mother's illness, and the same letter informed me that she was recovered; otherwise I had then wrote to you, only to beg you would take care of her, and to inform you that I had discovered a thing very little known, which is, that in one's whole life one can never have any more than a single mother. You may think this is obvious, and what you call a trite observation. You are a green gosling! I was at the same age very near as wise as you, and yet I never discovered this (with full evidence and conviction I mean) till it was too late. It is thirteen summers ago, and seems but yesterday, and every day I live it sinks deeper into my heart."

[3] A scrivener is a broker and money-lender.

ber 26,[4] 1716. His grammatical education he received at Eton,[5] under the care of Mr. Antrobus, his mother's brother, then assistant to Dr. George; and when he left school, in 1734, entered a pensioner at Peterhouse, in Cambridge.[6]

The transition from the school to the college is, to most young scholars, the time from which they date their years of manhood, liberty, and happiness; but Gray seems to have been very little delighted with academical gratifications; he liked at Cambridge neither the mode of life nor the fashion of study, and lived sullenly on to the time when his attendance on lectures was no longer required. As he intended to profess the common law, he took no degree.

When he had been at Cambridge about five years,[7] Mr. Horace Walpole, whose friendship he had gained at Eton, invited him to travel with him as his companion. They wandered through France into Italy; and Gray's Letters contain a very pleasing account of many parts of their journey. But unequal friendships are easily dissolved: at Florence[8] they quarrelled, and parted; and Mr. Walpole is now content to have it told that it was by his fault. If we look, however, without prejudice on the

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[4] Read December 26.

[5] Of his school-life we know very little. His uncle, Horace Walpole tells us, "Took prodigious pains with him, which answered exceedingly." He was a shy, retiring boy, with no turn for games, and used to read Vergil in play-hours for his own amusement.

[6] His Eton uncle selected Peterhouse, being himself a fellow of the College. "The studies of the place were mathematics, the recreation was drinking, and he had no taste for either. Classical learning, which had been everything at Eton, he found was held in disdain; and after submitting with aversion to a formal attendance on the usual routine of lectures, he came to the determination not to take a degree."—*Quarterly Review.*

[7] He left Cambridge in September, 1738, and for the next six months lived with his father and mother in London.

[8] It was at Reggio. The causes of the quarrel are not far to seek. Walpole was all for society and gaieties; Gray cared for nothing but antiquities, art, and scenery. Walpole was patronizing, and Gray was sensitive to a fault. It is said on fair authority that the final breach was caused by Gray's discovering

world, we shall find that men, whose consciousness of their own merit sets them above the compliances of servility, are apt enough in their association with superiors to watch their own dignity with troublesome and punctilious jealousy, and in the fervour of independence to exact that attention which they refuse to pay. Part they did, whatever was the quarrel; and the rest of their travels was doubtless more unpleasant to them both. Gray continued his journey in a manner suitable to his own little fortune, with only an occasional servant.

He returned to England in September, 1741, and in about two months afterwards buried his father, who had, by an injudicious waste of money upon a new house, so much lessened his fortune that Gray thought himself too poor to study the law. He therefore retired to Cambridge, where he soon after became Bachelor of Civil Law, and where, without liking the place or its inhabitants, or professing to like them, he passed, except a short residence at London, the rest of his life.

About this time he was deprived of Mr. West,[9] the son of a chancellor of Ireland, a friend on whom he appears to have set a high value, and who deserved his esteem by the powers which he shows in his Letters, and in the *Ode to May*, which Mr. Mason has preserved, as well as by the sincerity with which, when Gray sent him part of *Agrippina*, a tragedy that he had just begun, he gave an opinion which probably intercepted the progress of the work, and which the judgment of every reader will confirm. It was certainly no loss to the English stage that *Agrippina* was never finished.

In this year (1742) Gray seems to have applied himself seriously to poetry; for in this year were produced the *Ode to Spring*, his *Prospect of Eton*, and his *Ode to Adversity*. He began likewise a Latin poem, *De principiis cogitandi*.[10]

It may be collected from the narrative of Mr. Mason,

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that Walpole had opened one of his letters. Walpole was quite capable of such a meanness; and though many years after a partial reconciliation took place, the fault, whatever it may have been, was never forgiven by Gray.

[9] See note to sonnet on Richard West.

[10] The English title might run, 'On the five gateways of knowledge.' For a specimen see note, page 83.

that his first ambition was to have excelled in Latin poetry; perhaps it were reasonable to wish that he had prosecuted his design; for, though there is at present some embarrassment in his phrase, and some harshness in his lyric numbers, his copiousness of language is such as very few possess; and his lines, even when imperfect, discover a writer whom practice would have made skilful.[11]

He now lived on at Peterhouse, very little solicitous what others did or thought, and cultivated his mind and enlarged his views without any other purpose than of improving and amusing himself; when Mr. Mason,[12] being elected Fellow of Pembroke Hall, brought him a companion who was afterwards to be his editor, and whose fondness and fidelity has kindled in him a zeal of admiration which cannot be reasonably expected from the neutrality of a stranger, and the coldness of a critic.

In this retirement he wrote (1747) an ode on the *Death of Mr. Walpole's Cat;* and the year afterwards attempted a poem, of more importance, on *Government and Education,*[13] of which the fragments which remain have many excellent lines. His next production (1750) was his far-famed *Elegy in the Churchyard,* which, finding its way into a magazine, first, I believe, made him known to the public.[14]

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[11] Johnson's wish is father to the thought that Gray is but a second-rate English poet. No poet has ever written verses in a foreign tongue which have obtained more than a *succès d'estime.* Who now reads even Milton or Petrarch's Latin poems, except as literary curiosities?

[12] The Rev. William Mason (1725–1797), a third-rate poet, was the friend and literary executor of Gray. His character for literary fidelity received a rude shock by the publication of the works of Thomas Gray by the Rev. John Mitford, 1837–1843. Mitford has shown that Mason deliberately altered, interpolated, and jumbled together Gray's correspondence, and, what was worse, destroyed the originals with which he had taken these unwarrantable liberties.

[13] This fragment has not been included in this edition. It has all the faults of a didactic, philosophic poem, such as Pope's *Essay on Man,* and none of the knowledge of the world, the brilliant wit and happy illustration, which make us still read the *Essay* in spite of its philosophy.

[14] In February, 1751, Gray received a letter from the editor of the *Magazine of Magazines,* informing him that his "ingenious

An invitation from Lady Cobham about this time gave occasion to an odd composition called *A Long Story*,[15] which adds little to Gray's character.

Several of his pieces were published (1753), with designs by Mr. Bentley; and, that they might in some form or other make a book, only one side of each leaf was printed. I believe the poems and the plates recommended each other so well, that the whole impression was soon bought. This year he lost his mother.

Some time afterwards (1756) some young men of the college, whose chambers were near his, diverted themselves with disturbing him by frequent and troublesome noises, and, as is said, by pranks yet more offensive and contemptuous.[16] This insolence, having endured it awhile, he represented to the governors of the society, among whom perhaps he had no friends; and, finding his complaint little regarded, removed himself to Pembroke Hall.

In 1759 he published *The Progress of Poetry* and *The Bard*, two compositions at which the readers of poetry were at first content to gaze in mute amazement.[17] Some that tried them confessed their inability to understand them, though Warburton said that they were understood as well as the works of Milton and Shakespeare, which it is the fashion to admire. Garrick wrote a few lines in

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poem" was in the press. In order to forestall the magazine, Gray wrote to Walpole to beg him to negotiate with Dodsley, and get him to print the elegy at once without a name.

[15] Lady Cobham, who lived at the Mansion House at Stoke-Pogeis, near Windsor, wished to make the acquaintance of her neighbour the poet, who was at that time living with his aunt. Two ladies, who were staying with Lady Cobham, volunteered to call upon him, and finding him out left their cards. Gray soon became intimate with the ladies, and wrote the poem giving a humorous account of the visit. Gray had nothing of the playful humour and lightness of touch which *vers de societé* demand, and I have not cared to disinter these verses, which Gray himself would never allow to be reprinted.

[16] Gray, who was afraid of fire, had procured himself a ladder of ropes. The opportunity for a practical joke was too good to be lost, and some of the Peterhouse undergraduates raised at midnight a cry of fire in the hopes of seeing the poet descend.

[17] Goldsmith among the number: "They have caught the seeming obscurity of Pindar;" "They can at best amuse only the few," and so on.—In *Monthly Review*.

their praise. Some hardy champions[18] undertook to rescue them from neglect; and in a short time many were content to be shown beauties which they could not see.

Gray's reputation was now so high, that, after the death of Cibber, he had the honour of refusing the laurel, which was then bestowed on Mr. Whitehead.[19]

His curiosity, not long after, drew him away from Cambridge to a lodging near the Museum,[20] where he resided near three years, reading and transcribing; and, so far as can be discovered, very little affected by two odes on *Oblivion* and *Obscurity*,[21] in which his lyric performances were ridiculed with much contempt and much ingenuity.

When the Professor of Modern History at Cambridge died, he was, as he says, "cockered and spirited up," till he asked it of Lord Bute, who sent him a civil refusal; and the place was given to Mr. Brocket, the tutor of Sir James Lowther.

His constitution was weak, and, believing that his health was promoted by exercise and change of place, he undertook (1765) a journey into Scotland, of which his account, so far as it extends, is very curious and elegant: for, as his comprehension was ample, his curiosity extended to all the works of art, all the appearances of nature, and all

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[18] Wharton and Mason in chief.

[19] Colley Cibber, Poet Laureate, 1730–1757; W. Whitehead, Poet Laureate, 1757–1785. *Arcades ambo!* See Appendix, Letter xii.

[20] In 1753 lotteries were started to purchase the Sloane collection and the Harleian MSS., which were combined with the Cottonian collection, and deposited in Montague House, under the name of the British Museum. (Lecky, *History of England in XVIIIth Century*, vol. i. p. 523.) It was opened to the public in 1759, and in the July of that year Gray took lodgings in Southampton Row, in order to study and transcribe the historical and genealogical MSS. He gives in his letter an amusing account of the reading-room, where he regularly passed four hours a day. There were but five occupants—two Prussians; a third gentleman who wrote for Lord Royston; "Dr. Stukeley, who writes for himself, the very worst person he could write for; and I, who only read to know if there is anything worth writing." The present reading-room, opened 1857, accommodates three hundred readers, and is generally full.

[21] By Colman and Lloyd. *Oblivion* was a parody of Mason, not Gray.

the monuments of past events. He naturally contracted a friendship with Dr. Beattie,[22] whom he found a poet, a philosopher, and a good man. The Mareschal College at Aberdeen offered him a degree of Doctor of Laws, which, having omitted to take it at Cambridge, he thought it decent to refuse.

What he had formerly solicited in vain was at last given him without solicitation. The professorship of history became again vacant, and he received (1768) an offer of it from the Duke of Grafton. He accepted, and retained it to his death; always designing lectures, but never reading them; uneasy at his neglect of duty, and appeasing his uneasiness with designs of reformation, and with a resolution which he believed himself to have made of resigning the office, if he found himself unable to discharge it.

Ill health made another journey necessary, and he visited (1769) Westmoreland and Cumberland. He that reads his epistolary narration wishes, that to travel, and to tell his travels, had been more of his employment; but it is by studying at home that we must obtain the ability of travelling with intelligence and improvement.

His travels and his studies were now near their end. The gout, of which he had sustained many weak attacks, fell upon his stomach, and, yielding to no medicines, produced strong convulsions, which (July 30th, 1771) terminated in death.[23] His character I am willing to adopt, as Mr. Mason has done, from a letter written to my friend Mr. Boswell, by the Rev. Mr. Temple, rector of St. Gluvias in Cornwall; and am as willing as his warmest well-wisher to believe it true.

"Perhaps he was the most learned man in Europe. He was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science, and that not superficially, but thoroughly. He knew every branch of history, both natural and civil; had read all the original historians of England, France, and Italy; and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his study; voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite

[22] James Beattie (1735–1802); best known by his poem, *The Minstrel*, written in the stanza and manner of Spenser.

[23] He died at Pembroke Hall, and was buried by his own desire beside his mother in the churchyard of Stoke-Pogeis.

amusements; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening. With such a fund of knowledge, his conversation must have been equally instructing and entertaining; but he was also a good man, a man of virtue and humanity. There is no character without some speck, some imperfection; and I think the greatest defect in his was an affectation in delicacy, or rather effeminacy, and a visible fastidiousness, or contempt and disdain of his inferiors in science. He also had, in some degree, that weakness which disgusted Voltaire so much in Mr. Congreve:[24] though he seemed to value others chiefly according to the progress they had made in knowledge, yet he could not bear to be considered merely as a man of letters; and, though without birth, or fortune, or station, his desire was to be looked upon as a private independent gentleman, who read for his amusement. Perhaps it may be said, What signifies so much knowledge, when it produced so little? Is it worth taking so much pains to leave no memorial but a few poems? But let it be considered that Mr. Gray was to others at least innocently employed; to himself certainly beneficially. His time passed agreeably: he was every day making some new acquisition in science; his mind was enlarged, his heart softened, his virtue strengthened; the world and mankind were shown to him without a mask; and he was taught to consider everything as trifling, and unworthy of the attention of a wise man, except the pursuit of knowledge and practice of virtue in that state wherein God hath placed us."

To this character Mr. Mason has added a more particular account of Gray's skill in zoology. He has remarked that Gray's effeminacy was affected most "before those whom he did not wish to please;" and that he is unjustly charged with making knowledge his sole reason of preference, as he paid his esteem to none whom he did not likewise believe to be good.

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[24] The affectation of the airs of a fine gentleman. "But he treated the Muses with ingratitude; for, having long conversed familiarly with the great, he wished to be considered rather as a man of fashion and wit; and when he received a visit from Voltaire disgusted him by the despicable foppery of desiring to be considered not as an author, but a gentleman, to which the Frenchman replied, 'that if he had been only a gentleman he should not have come to visit him.'"—Johnson's *Life of Congreve.*

What has occurred to me from the slight inspection of his letters in which my undertaking has engaged me is, that his mind had a large grasp; that his curiosity was unlimited, and his judgment cultivated; that he was a man likely to love much where he loved at all; but that he was fastidious and hard to please. His contempt, however, is often employed, where I hope it will be approved, upon scepticism and infidelity. His short account of Shaftesbury[25] I will insert.

"You say you cannot conceive how Lord Shaftesbury came to be a philosopher in vogue; I will tell you: first, he was a lord; secondly, he was as vain as any of his readers; thirdly, men are very prone to believe what they do not understand; fourthly, they will believe anything at all, provided they are under no obligation to believe it; fifthly, they love to take a new road, even when that road leads nowhere; sixthly, he was reckoned a fine writer, and seems always to mean more than he said. Would you have any more reasons? An interval of about forty years has pretty well destroyed the charm. A dead lord ranks with commoners; vanity is no longer interested in the matter; for a new road has become an old one."

Mr. Mason has added, from his own knowledge, that, though Gray was poor, he was not eager of money; and that, out of the little that he had, he was very willing to help the necessitous.

As a writer he had this peculiarity, that he did not write his pieces first rudely, and then correct them, but laboured every line as it arose in the train of composition; and he had a notion not very peculiar, that he could not write but at certain times, or at happy moments; a fantastic foppery, to which my kindness for a man of learning and virtue wishes him to have been superior.[26]

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[25] Shaftesbury (1671–1713), the moralist and metaphysician. His collected works bear the title of *Characteristics*. On Gray's letters, the judgment of Cowper, himself pre-eminent as a letter-writer, is worth quoting: "I have been reading Gray's works, and think him sublime. . . . I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written, but I like Gray's better. His humour, or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never illnatured or offensive, and yet I think equally poignant with the Dean's."

[26] "I by no means pretend to inspiration, but yet I affirm that the faculty in question is by no means voluntary. It is the

Gray's poetry is now to be considered; and I hope not to be looked on as an enemy to his name, if I confess that I contemplate it with less pleasure than his life. His ode *On Spring* has something poetical, both in the language and the thought; but the language is too luxuriant, and the thoughts have nothing new. There has of late arisen a practice of giving to adjectives derived from substantives the termination of participles; such as the *cultured* plain, the *daisied* bank; but I was sorry to see, in the lines of a scholar like Gray, the *honied* Spring.[27] The morality is natural, but too stale; the conclusion is pretty.

The poem *On the Cat* was doubtless by its author considered as a trifle, but it is not a happy trifle. In the first stanza, "the azure flowers *that blow*" show how resolutely a rhyme is sometimes made when it cannot easily be found. Selima, the cat, is called a nymph, with some violence both to language and sense; but there is no good use made of it when it is done; for of the two lines,

> What female heart can gold despise?
> What cat's averse to fish?

the first relates merely to the nymph, and the second only to the cat. The sixth stanza contains a melancholy truth, that "a favourite has no friend;" but the last ends in a pointed sentence of no relation to the purpose; if *what glistered* had been *gold*, the cat would not have gone

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result I suppose of a certain disposition of mind, which does not depend on one's self, and which I have not felt this long time. You that are a witness how seldom this spirit has moved me in my life, may easily give credit to what I say." (GRAY to Dr. Wharton, 1758.) Compare Johnson's observations on the tradition preserved by Philips, that Milton's vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal. "The dependence of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of the intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination." Such opposite natures as Gray and Johnson, the fastidious dilettante and the robust dictionary maker, were not likely to understand one another.

[27] This captious bit of criticism hardly needs refutation. "Honied" is in Shakespeare and Milton. Turning to Johnson's own poems, I find near the beginning of *London* "a titled poet." Such adjectives formed from substantives are quite in keeping with the genius of the English language.

into the water; and, if she had, would not less have been drowned.

The Prospect of Eton College, suggests nothing to Gray which every beholder does not equally think and feel. His supplication to Father Thames,[28] to tell him who drives the hoop or tosses the ball, is useless and puerile. Father Thames has no better means of knowing than himself. His epithet "buxom health"[29] is not elegant; he seems not to understand the word. Gray thought his language more poetical as it was more remote from common use: finding in Dryden "honey redolent of spring,"[30] an expression that reaches the utmost limits of our language, Gray drove it a little more beyond common apprehension, by making "gales" to be "redolent of joy and youth."

Of the *Ode on Adversity*, the hint was at first taken from "*O Diva, gratum quæ regis Antium;*" but Gray has excelled his original by the variety of his sentiments, and by their moral application. Of this piece, at once poetical and rational, I will not by slight objections violate the dignity.

My process has now brought me to the *wonderful Wonder of Wonders*, the two sister odes, by which, though either vulgar ignorance or common sense at first universally rejected them, many have been since persuaded to think themselves delighted. I am one of those that are willing to be pleased, and therefore would gladly find the meaning of the first stanza of the *Progress of Poetry*.

Gray seems in his rapture to confound the images of spreading sound and running water. A "stream of music" may be allowed; but where does "music," however "smooth and strong," after having visited the "verdant vales, roll down the steep amain," so as that "rocks and nodding groves rebellow to the roar"? If this be said of music,

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[28] Lord Grenville has most happily hoist the enginer with his own petar: "He forgets his own address to the Nile in Rasselas for a purpose so very similar, and he forgets his readers to forget one of the most affecting passages in Virgil. Father Thames might well know as much of the sports of boys as the 'great Father of Waters' knew of the discontents of men, or the Tiber himself of the obsequies of Marcellus."

[29] See note on line 45.

[30] See note on line 19.

it is nonsense; if it be said of water, it is nothing to the purpose.

The second stanza, exhibiting Mars' car and Jove's eagle, is unworthy of further notice. Criticism disdains to chase a schoolboy to his common-places.[31]

To the third it may likewise be objected, that it is drawn from mythology, though such as may be more easily assimilated to real life. Idalia's "velvet green" has something of cant. An epithet or metaphor drawn from Nature ennobles Art; an epithet or metaphor drawn from Art degrades Nature.[32] Gray is too fond of words arbitrarily compounded. "Many-twinkling" was formerly censured as not analogical; we may say "many-spotted;" but scarcely "many-spotting." This stanza, however, has something pleasing.

Of the second ternary of stanzas, the first endeavours to tell something, and would have told it, had it not been crossed by Hyperion; the second describes well enough the universal prevalence of poetry; but I am afraid that the conclusion will not rise from the premises. The caverns of the North, and the plains of Chili, are not the residences of "glory and generous shame." But that poetry and virtue go always together is an opinion so pleasing, that I can forgive him who resolves to think it true.

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[31] "That the 'Phoebus' is hackneied," says Coleridge, speaking of another of Gray's poems, "and a schoolboy image, is an accidental fault, dependent on the age in which the author wrote, and not deduced from the nature of the thing. That it is part of an exploded mythology is an objection more deeply grounded. Yet when the torch of ancient learning was rekindled, so cheering were its beams, that our eldest poets, cut off by Christianity from all accredited machinery, and deprived of all acknowledged guardians and symbols of the great objects of nature, were naturally induced to adopt as a poetic language those fabulous personages, those forms of the supernatural in nature, which had given them such dear delight in the poems of their great masters. Nay, even at this day, what scholar of genial taste will not so far sympathize with them as to read with pleasure in Petrarch, Chaucer, or Spenser what he would perhaps condemn as puerile in a modern poet?"

[32] Another untenable canon of criticism, disproved by endless examples, from the Psalmist's "He giveth His snow like wool," to Tennyson's "Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn." Look at Milton's *Lycidas* for illustration.

The third stanza sounds big with "Delphi," and "Egean," and "Ilissus," and "Meander," and "hallowed fountains," and "solemn sound;" but in all Gray's odes there is a kind of cumbrous splendour which we wish away. His position is at last false. In the time of Dante and Petrarch, from whom we derive our first school of poetry, Italy was overrun by "tyrant power" and "coward vice;" nor was our state much better when we first borrowed the Italian arts.

Of the third ternary, the first gives a mythological birth of Shakespeare. What is said of that mighty genius is true, but it is not said happily; the real effects of this poetical power are put out of sight by the pomp of machinery. Where truth is sufficient to fill the mind, fiction is worse than useless; the counterfeit debases the genuine.

His account of Milton's blindness, if we suppose it caused by study in the formation of his poem, a supposition surely allowable, is poetically true, and happily imagined. But the *car* of Dryden, with his *two coursers*, has nothing in it peculiar; it is a car in which any other rider may be placed.

The Bard appears, at the first view, to be, as Algarotti[33] and others have remarked, an imitation of the prophecy of Nereus. Algarotti thinks it superior to its original; and, if preference depends only on the imagery and animation of the two poems, his judgment is right. There is in *The Bard* more force, more thought, and more variety. But to copy is less than to invent, and the copy has been unhappily produced at a wrong time. The fiction of Horace was to the Romans credible; but its revival disgusts us with apparent and unconquerable falsehood. *Incredulus odi.*[34]

To select a singular event, and swell it to a giant's bulk

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[33] Count Algarotti (1712–1764), a Venetian by birth, a distinguished littérateur, art-critic, and popularizer of science. A common friend, Mr. Howe, introduced him to Gray's poems, which he greatly admired, and this led to a correspondence between him and Gray.

[34] From Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 188:

Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic incredulus odi.

(Of the metamorphoses of Progne into a bird, Cadmus into a snake, &c.)

by fabulous appendages of spectres and predictions, has little difficulty; for he that forsakes the probable may always find the marvellous. And it has little use; we are affected only as we believe; we are improved only as we find something to be imitated or declined. I do not see that *The Bard* promotes any truth, moral or political.[35]

His stanzas are too long, especially his epodes; the ode is finished before the ear has learned its measures, and consequently before it can receive pleasure from their consonance and recurrence.

Of the first stanza the abrupt beginning has been celebrated; but technical beauties can give praise only to the inventor. It is in the power of any man to rush abruptly upon his subject that has read the ballad of *Johnny Armstrong*,[36]

Is there ever a man in all Scotland—

The initial resemblances or alliterations, "ruin, ruthless," "helm or hauberk," are below the grandeur of a poem that endeavours at sublimity.

In the second stanza the Bard is well described; but in the third we have the puerilities of obsolete mythology. When we are told that "Cadwallo hush'd the stormy main," and that "Modred made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topp'd head," attention recoils from the repetition of a tale that, even when it was first heard, was heard with scorn.

The *weaving* of the *winding-sheet* he borrowed, as he owns, from the Northern Bards; but their texture, however, was very properly the work of female powers, as the act of spinning the thread of life in another mythology. Theft is always dangerous; Gray has made weavers of slaughtered bards by a fiction outrageous and incongruous. They are then called upon to "Weave the warp, and weave the woof," perhaps with no great propriety; for it is by crossing the *woof* with the *warp* that men weave

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[35] We are reminded of the Scotchman who, after reading *Paradise Lost*, wanted to know what it proved.

[36] Is there ever a man in all Scotland,
From the highest estate to the lowest degree,
That can show himself now before our King—
Scotland 's so full of treacherie?

The best version is in *Wit Restor'd* (1658).

the *web* or piece ; and the first line was dearly bought by the admission of its wretched correspondent, "Give ample room and verge enough." He has, however, no other line as bad.

The third stanza of the second ternary is commended, I think, beyond its merit. The personification is indistinct. *Thirst* and *hunger* are not alike ; and their features, to make the imagery perfect, should have been discriminated. We are told in the same stanza how "towers are fed." But I will no longer look for particular faults ; yet let it be observed that the ode might have been concluded with an action of better example ; but suicide is always to be had, without expense of thought.

These odes are marked by glittering accumulations of ungraceful ornaments ; they strike rather than please ; the images are magnified by affectation ; the language is laboured into harshness. The mind of the writer seems to work with unnatural violence. "Double, double, toil and trouble." He has a kind of strutting dignity, and is tall by walking on tiptoe. His art and his struggle are too visible, and there is too little appearance of ease and nature.

To say that he has no beauties would be unjust : a man like him, of great learning and great industry, could not but produce something valuable. When he pleases least, it can only be said that a good design was ill directed.

His translations of Northern and Welsh poetry deserve praise ; the imagery is preserved, perhaps often improved ; but the language is unlike the language of other poets.

In the character of his *Elegy* I rejoice to concur with the common reader ; for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtilty and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours. The *Churchyard* abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo. The four stanzas beginning, "Yet even these bones," are to me original : I have never seen the notions in any other place ; yet he that reads them here persuades himself that he has always felt them. Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him.

ODES.

I.

ON THE SPRING.

LO! where the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Fair Venus' train, appear;
Disclose the long-expecting flowers,
And wake the purple year!
The Attic warbler pours her throat,
Responsive to the cuckoo's note,
The untaught harmony of Spring;
While, whisp'ring pleasure as they fly,
Cool Zephyrs through the clear blue sky
Their gathered fragrance fling.

Where'er the oak's thick branches stretch
A broader browner shade,
Where'er the rude and moss-grown beech
O'er-canopies the glade,
Beside some water's rushy brink
With me the Muse shall sit, and think
(At ease reclin'd in rustic state)
How vain the ardour of the crowd,
How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great!

Still is the toiling hand of Care,
The panting herds repose;
Yet hark, how through the peopled air
The busy murmur glows!

The insect youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honied Spring,
And float amid the liquid noon;
Some lightly o'er the current skim,
Some shew their gaily-gilded trim,
Quick-glancing to the sun.

To Contemplation's sober eye,
Such is the race of man:
And they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the busy and the gay
But flutter through life's little day,
In Fortune's varying colours drest:
Brush'd by the hand of rough Mischance,
Or chilled by age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest.

Methinks I hear, in accents low,
The sportive kind reply:
Poor moralist! and what art thou?
A Solitary fly!
Thy joys no glittering female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display;
On hasty wings thy youth is flown,
Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone—
We frolic while 'tis May.

II.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAVOURITE CAT.

DROWNED IN A TUB OF GOLD FISHES.

'TWAS on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dyed
The azure flowers that blow;
Demurest of the tabby kind,
The pensive Selima reclin'd,
Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declar'd;
The fair round face, the snowy beard,
The velvet of her paws,
Her coat, that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes,
She saw; and purred applause.

Still had she gaz'd; but 'midst the tide
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
The Genii of the stream:
Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue
Through richest purple to the view
Betray'd a golden gleam.

The hapless Nymph with wonder saw:
A whisker first and then a claw,
With many an ardent wish,
She stretched in vain to reach the prize.
What female heart can gold despise?
What cat 's averse to fish?

Presumptous maid! with looks intent
Again she stretched, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between.
(Malignant Fate sat by, and smil'd)
The slippery verge her feet beguil'd,
She tumbled headlong in.

Eight times emerging from the flood
She mewed to every wat'ry god,
Some speedy aid to send:
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd;
Nor cruel Tom, nor Susan heard.
A favourite has no friend!

From hence, ye beauties, undeceiv'd,
Know, one false step is ne'er retriev'd,
And be with caution bold.
Not all that tempts your wandering eyes
And heedless hearts, is lawful prize,
Nor all that glisters gold.

III.

ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE.

YE distant spires, ye antique towers,
That crown the watery glade,
Where grateful Science still adores
Her Henry's holy shade;
And ye, that from the stately brow
Of Windsor's heights the expanse below
Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
His silver-winding way.

Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,
Ah fields beloved in vain,
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales that from ye blow
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring.

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race
Disporting on thy margent green
The paths of pleasure trace,
Who foremost now delight to cleave
With pliant arm thy glassy wave?
The captive linnet which enthral?
What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed,
Or urge the flying ball?

While some on earnest business bent
Their murmuring labours ply
'Gainst graver hours, that bring constraint
To sweeten liberty:

Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dare descry:
Still as they run they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy.

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
Less pleasing when possest;
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
The sunshine of the breast:
Theirs buxom health of rosy hue,
Wild wit, invention ever-new,
And lively cheer of vigour born;
The thoughtless day, the easy night,
The spirits pure, the slumbers light,
That fly the approach of morn.

Alas! regardless of their doom,
The little victims play!
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond to-day:
Yet see how all around 'em wait
The ministers of human fate,
And black Misfortune's baleful train!
Ah, shew them where in ambush stand
To seize their prey the murderous band!
Ah, tell them they are men!

These shall the fury Passions tear,
The vultures of the mind,
Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
And Shame that skulks behind;
Or pining Love shall waste their youth,
Or Jealousy with rankling tooth,
That inly gnaws the secret heart,
And Envy wan, and faded Care,
Grim-visaged comfortless Despair,
And Sorrow's piercing dart.

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,
Then whirl the wretch from high,
To bitter Scorn a sacrifice,
And grinning Infamy.

The stings of Falsehood those shall try,
And hard Unkindness' alter'd eye,
That mocks the tear it forc'd to flow;
And keen Remorse with blood defil'd,
And moody Madness laughing wild
Amid severest woe.

Lo, in the vale of years beneath
A grisly troop are seen,
The painful family of Death,
More hideous than their Queen:
This racks the joints, this fires the veins,
That every labouring sinew strains,
Those in the deeper vitals rage:
Lo, Poverty, to fill the band,
That numbs the soul with icy hand,
And slow-consuming Age.

To each his sufferings: all are men,
Condemned alike to groan;
The tender for another's pain,
The unfeeling for his own.
Yet, ah! why should they know their fate?
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies.
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more;—where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.

IV.

TO ADVERSITY.

Ζῆνα
τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδώ—
σαντα, τὸν πάθει μάθος
θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.—*Æsch. Agam.* 173.

DAUGHTER of Jove, relentless power,
Thou tamer of the human breast,
Whose iron scourge and torturing hour,
The bad affright, afflict the best!
Bound in thy adamantine chain
The proud are taught to taste of pain,
And purple tyrants vainly groan
With pangs unfelt before, unpitied and alone.

When first thy sire to send on earth
  Virtue, his darling child, design'd,
To thee he gave the heavenly birth,
  And bade to form her infant mind.
Stern rugged nurse! thy rigid lore
With patience many a year she bore:
What sorrow was, thou bad'st her know,
And from her own she learned to melt at others' woe.

Scared at thy frown terrific, fly
  Self-pleasing Folly's idle brood,
Wild Laughter, Noise, and thoughtless Joy,
  And leave us leisure to be good.
Light they disperse, and with them go
The summer friend, the flatt'ring foe;
By vain Prosperity receiv'd,
To her they vow their truth, and are again believ'd.

Wisdom in sable garb array'd
  Immersed in rapturous thought profound,
And Melancholy, silent maid
  With leaden eye, that loves the ground,
Still on thy solemn steps attend:
Warm Charity, the general friend,
With Justice to herself severe,
And Pity, dropping soft the sadly-pleasing tear.

Oh, gently on thy suppliant's head,
  Dread goddess, lay thy chast'ning hand!
Not in thy Gorgon terrors clad,
  Nor circled with the vengeful band
(As by the impious thou art seen),
With thundering voice, and threatening mien,
With screaming Horror's funeral cry,
Despair, and fell Disease, and ghastly Poverty.

Thy form benign, O goddess, wear,
  Thy milder influence impart,
Thy philosophic train be there
  To soften, not to wound my heart.
The generous spark extinct revive,
Teach me to love and to forgive,
Exact my own defects to scan,
What others are to feel, and know myself a man.

V.

THE PROGRESS OF POESY.

PINDARIC.

φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν· ἐς
δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἑρμηνέων
χατίζει.—PINDAR, *Ol.* II. 152.

I. 1.

AWAKE, Æolian lyre, awake,
And give to rapture all thy trembling strings.
From Helicon's harmonious springs
A thousand rills their mazy progress take:
The laughing flowers, that round them blow,
Drink life and fragrance as they flow.
Now the rich stream of music winds along
Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,
Through verdant vales, and Ceres' golden reign:
Now rolling down the steep amain,
Headlong, impetuous, see it pour:
The rocks and nodding groves, rebellow to the roar.

I. 2.

Oh! sovereign of the willing soul,
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs,
Enchanting shell! the sullen Cares,
And frantic Passions hear thy soft controul.
On Thracia's hills the Lord of War
Has curb'd the fury of his car,
And drop't his thirsty lance at thy command.
Perching on the scepter'd hand
Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feather'd king
With ruffled plumes, and flagging wing:
Quench'd in dark clouds of slumber lie
The terror of his beak, and lightnings of his eye.

I. 3.

Thee the voice, the dance, obey,
Temper'd to thy warbled lay.

O'er Idalia's velvet-green
The rosy-crowned Loves are seen
On Cytherea's day;
With antic Sport, and blue-eyed Pleasures,
Frisking light in frolic measures;
Now pursuing, now retreating,
Now in circling troops they meet:
To brisk notes in cadence beating
Glance their many-twinkling feet.
Slow melting strains their Queen's approach declare:
Where'er she turns the Graces homage pay,
With arms sublime, that float upon the air,
In gliding state she wins her easy way:
O'er her warm cheek and rising bosom move
The bloom of young desire and purple light of love.

II. 1.

Man's feeble race what ills await!
Labour, and Penury, the racks of Pain,
Disease, and Sorrow's weeping train,
And Death, sad refuge from the storms of Fate!
The fond complaint, my song, disprove,
And justify the laws of Jove.
Say, has he given in vain the Heavenly Muse?
Night, and all her sickly dews,
Her spectres wan, and birds of boding cry,
He gives to range the dreary sky:
Till down the eastern cliffs afar
Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war.

II. 2.

In climes beyond the solar road,
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,
The Muse has broke the twilight gloom
To cheer the shivering native's dull abode.
And oft, beneath the odorous shade
Of Chili's boundless forests laid,
She deigns to hear the savage youth repeat
In loose numbers wildly sweet
Their feather-cinctur'd chiefs, and dusky loves.
Her track, where'er the goddess roves,
Glory pursue, and generous Shame,
The unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame.

II. 3.

Woods, that wave o'er Delphi's steep,
Isles, that crown the Ægean deep,
Fields, that cool Ilissus laves,
Or where Mæander's amber waves
In lingering labyrinths creep,
How do your tuneful echoes languish,
Mute, but to the voice of anguish?
Where each old poetic mountain
Inspiration breath'd around;
Ev'ry shade and hallow'd fountain
Murmur'd deep a solemn sound:
Till the sad Nine in Greece's evil hour
Left their Parnassus for the Latian plains.
Alike they scorn the pomp of tyrant Power,
And coward Vice, that revels in her chains.
When Latium had her lofty spirit lost,
They sought, O Albion! next thy sea-encircled coast.

III. 1.

Far from the sun and summer-gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's darling laid,
What time, where lucid Avon strayed,
To him the mighty Mother did unveil
Her awful face: the dauntless child
Stretch'd forth his little arms, and smil'd.
"This pencil take," she said, "whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine too these golden keys, immortal boy!
This can unlock the gates of Joy;
Of Horror that, and thrilling Fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic Tears."

III. 2.

Nor second he, that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of Ecstasy,
The secrets of th' Abyss to spy.
He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:
The living throne, the sapphire-blaze,
Where angels tremble, while they gaze,
He saw; but blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.

Behold where Dryden's less presumptous car,
Wide o'er the fields of glory bear
Two coursers of ethereal race,
With necks in thunder clothed, and long-resounding pace.

III. 3.

Hark, his hands the lyre explore!
Bright-eyed Fancy hov'ring o'er
Scatters from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.
But ah! 'tis heard no more——
Oh! lyre divine, what daring spirit
Wakes thee now? though he inherit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
That the Theban eagle bear
Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air:
Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,
With orient hues, unborrowed of the sun:
Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great.

VI.

THE BARD.

A PINDARIC ODE.

I. 1.

"RUIN seize thee, ruthless King!
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Though fann'd by Conquest's crimson wing
They mock the air with idle state.
Helm, nor hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor e'en thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears!"
Such were the sounds, that o'er the crested pride

Of the first Edward scatter'd wild dismay,
As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side
He wound with toilsome march his long array.
Stout Glo'ster stood aghast in speechless trance:
"To arms!" cried Mortimer, and couch'd his quiv'ring lance.

I. 2.

On a rock, whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the Poet stood
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air);
And with a master's hand, and prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.
"Hark, how each giant oak, and desert cave,
Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!
O'er thee, O King! their hundred arms they wave,
Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;
Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
To high-born Hoel's harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay.

I. 3.

"Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,
That hushed the stormy main:
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred, whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-top't head.
On dreary Arvon's shore they lie,
Smear'd with gore, and ghastly pale:
Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
The famish'd eagle screams, and passes by.
Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries—
No more I weep. They do not sleep.
On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,
I see them sit, they linger yet,
Avengers of their native land:
With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line."

II. 1.

"Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
The winding-sheet of Edward's race.
Give ample room, and verge enough
The characters of hell to trace.
Mark the year, and mark the night,
When Severn shall re-echo with affright
The shrieks of death, through Berkley's roofs that ring,
Shrieks of an agonizing King!
She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate,
From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs
The scourge of heaven. What Terrors round him wait!
Amazement in his van, with Flight combin'd,
And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

II. 2.

"Mighty Victor, mighty Lord,
Low on his funeral couch he lies!
No pitying heart, no eye, afford
A tear to grace his obsequies.
Is the sable warrior fled?
Thy son is gone. He rests among the dead.
The swarm, that in thy noon-tide beam were born?
Gone to salute the rising morn.
Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening-prey.

II. 3.

"Fill high the sparkling bowl,
The rich repast prepare,
Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast:
Close by the regal chair
Fell Thirst and Famine scowl
A baleful smile upon their baffled guest,
Heard ye the din of battle bray,
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?
Long years of havoc urge their destined course,

And through the kindred squadrons mow their way.
Ye Towers of Julius, London's lasting shame,
  With many a foul and midnight murder fed,
Revere his consort's faith, his father's fame,
  And spare the meek usurper's holy head.
Above, below, the rose of snow,
  Twined with her blushing foe, we spread:
The bristled boar in infant gore
  Wallows beneath the thorny shade.
Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom,
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

III. 1.

"Edward, lo! to sudden fate
  (Weave the woof. The thread is spun.)
Half of thy heart we consecrate.
  (The web is wove. The work is done.)"
"Stay, O stay! nor thus forlorn
Leave me unblessed, unpitied, here to mourn:
In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
  Descending slow their glittering skirts unroll?
Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,
  Ye unborn ages, crowd not on my soul!
No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.
All-hail, ye genuine kings, Britannia's issue, hail!

III. 2.

"Girt with many a baron bold
  Sublime their starry fronts they rear;
And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old
  In bearded majesty, appear.
In the midst a form divine!
Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line;
Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
Attemper'd sweet to virgin-grace.
What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
  What strains of vocal transport round her play!
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear;
  They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,
Waves in the eye of heaven her many-colour'd wings.

III. 3.

"The verse adorn again
Fierce War, and faithful Love,
And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest.
In buskin'd measures move
Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,
With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast.
A voice as of the cherub-choir,
Gales from blooming Eden bear;
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
That lost in long futurity expire.
Fond impious man, think'st thou yon sanguine cloud
Rais'd by thy breath, has quenched the orb of day?
To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
Enough for me: with joy I see
The different doom our Fates assign.
Be thine Despair, and sceptered Care,
To triumph, and to die, are mine."
He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plung'd to endless night.

VII.

THE FATAL SISTERS.

FROM THE NORSE TONGUE.

Now the storm begins to lower
(Haste, the loom of hell prepare),
Iron sleet of arrowy shower
Hurtles in the darken'd air.

Glitt'ring lances are the loom,
Where the dusky warp we strain,
Weaving many a soldier's doom,
Orkney's woe, and Randver's bane.

See the grisly texture grow!
('Tis of human entrails made),
And the weights, that play below,
Each a gasping warrior's head.

Shafts for shuttles, dipt in gore,
Shoot the trembling cords along.
Sword, that once a monarch bore,
Keep the tissue close and strong.

Mista black, terrific maid,
Sangrida, and Hilda, see,
Join the wayward work to aid:
'Tis the woof of victory.

Ere the ruddy sun be set,
Pikes must shiver, javelins sing,
Blade with clattering buckler meet,
Hauberk crash, and helmet ring.

(Weave the crimson web of war)
Let us go, and let us fly,
Where our friends the conflict share,
Where they triumph, where they die.

As the paths of fate we tread,
Wading through th' ensanguin'd field:
Gondula, and Geira, spread
O'er the youthful king your shield.

We the reins to slaughter give,
Ours to kill, and ours to spare:
Spite of danger he shall live
(Weave the crimson web of war).

They, whom once the desert-beach
Pent within its bleak domain,
Soon their ample sway shall stretch
O'er the plenty of the plain.

Low the dauntless earl is laid,
Gored with many a gaping wound:
Fate demands a nobler head;
Soon a king shall bite the ground.

Long his loss shall Eirin weep,
Ne'er again his likeness see;
Long her strains in sorrow steep,
Strains of immortality!

Horror covers all the heath,
Clouds of carnage blot the sun.
Sisters, weave the web of death!
Sisters, cease! the work is done!

Hail the task, and hail the hands!
Songs of joy and triumph sing!
Joy to the victorious bands;
Triumph to the younger king.

Mortal, thou that hear'st the tale,
Learn the tenor of our song.
Scotland, through each winding vale
Far and wide the notes prolong.

Sisters, hence with spurs of speed:
Each her thundering falchion wield;
Each bestride her sable steed.
Hurry, hurry to the field.

VIII.

THE DESCENT OF ODIN.

FROM THE NORSE TONGUE.

UPROSE the King of Men with speed,
And saddled straight his coal-black steed;
Down the yawning steep he rode,
That leads to Hela's drear abode.
Him the dog of darkness spied,
His shaggy throat he opened wide,
While from his jaws, with carnage fill'd,
Foam and human gore distill'd:
Hoarse he bays with hideous din,
Eyes that glow, and fangs that grin;
And long pursues, with fruitless yell,
The father of the powerful spell.
Onward still his way he takes
(The groaning earth beneath him shakes),
Till full before his fearless eyes
The portals nine of hell arise.

Right against the eastern gate,
By the moss-grown pile he sate;
Where long of yore to sleep was laid
The dust of the prophetic maid.
Facing to the northern clime,
Thrice he trac'd the Runic rhyme;
Thrice pronounced, in accents dread,
The thrilling verse that wakes the dead;
Till from out the hollow ground
Slowly breathed a sullen sound.

PROPHETESS.

What call unknown, what charms presume
To break the quiet of the tomb?
Who thus afflicts my troubled sprite,
And drags me from the realms of night?
Long on these mould'ring bones have beat
The winter's snow, the summer's heat,
The drenching dews, and driving rain!
Let me, let me sleep again.
Who is he, with voice unblest,
That calls me from the bed of rest?

ODIN.

A traveller, to thee unknown,
Is he that calls, a warrior's son.
Thou the deeds of light shalt know;
Tell me what is done below,
For whom yon glitt'ring board is spread,
Drest for whom yon golden bed.

PROPHETESS.

Mantling in the goblet see
The pure beverage of the bee;
O'er it hangs the shield of gold;
'Tis the drink of Balder bold:
Balder's head to death is given.
Pain can reach the sons of heaven!
Unwilling I my lips unclose:
Leave me, leave me to repose.

ODIN.

Once again my call obey.
Prophetess, arise, and say,
What dangers Odin's child await,
Who the author of his fate.

PROPHETESS.

In Hoder's hand the hero's doom:
His brother sends him to the tomb.
Now my weary lips I close:
Leave me, leave me to repose.

ODIN.

Prophetess, my spell obey,
Once again arise, and say,
Who the avenger of his guilt,
By whom shall Hoder's blood be spilt.

PROPHETESS.

In the caverns of the west,
By Odin's fierce embrace comprest,
A wonderous boy shall Rinda bear,
Who ne'er shall comb his raven hair,
Nor wash his visage in the stream,
Nor see the sun's departing beam;
Till he on Hoder's corse shall smile
Flaming on the funeral pile.
Now my weary lips I close:
Leave me, leave me to repose.

ODIN.

Yet a while my call obey.
Prophetess, awake, and say,
What virgins these, in speechless woe,
That bend to earth their solemn brow,
That their flaxen tresses tear,
And snowy veils, that float in air.
Tell me whence their sorrows rose:
Then I leave thee to repose.

PROPHETESS.

Ha! no traveller art thou,
King of Men, I know thee now,
Mightiest of a mighty line——

ODIN.

No boding maid of skill divine
Art thou, nor prophetess of good;
But mother of the giant brood!

PROPHETESS.

Hie thee hence, and boast at home,
That never shall inquirer come
To break my iron sleep again;
Till Lok has burst his tenfold chain.
Never, till substantial night
Has reassumed her ancient right;
Till warped in flames, in ruin hurled,
Sinks the fabric of the world.

IX.

THE TRIUMPHS OF OWEN.

A FRAGMENT FROM THE WELSH.

OWEN'S praise demands my song,
Owen swift, and Owen strong;
Fairest flower of Roderic's stem,
Gwyneth's shield, and Britain's gem.
He nor heaps his brooded stores,
Nor on all profusely pours;
Lord of every regal art,
Liberal hand, and open heart.

Big with hosts of mighty name,
Squadrons three against him came;
This the force of Eirin hiding,
Side by side as proudly riding,
On her shadow long and gay
Lochlin ploughs the watery way;

There the Norman sails afar
Catch the winds, and join the war:
Black and huge along they sweep,
Burthens of the angry deep.

Dauntless on his native sands
The dragon-son of Mona stands;
In glittering arms and glory drest,
High he rears his ruby crest.
There the thundering strokes begin,
There the press, and there the din;
Talymalfra's rocky shore
Echoing to the battle's roar.
Checked by the torrent-tide of blood
Backward Meinai rolls his flood;
While, heap'd his master's feet around,
Prostrate warriors gnaw the ground.
Where his glowing eyeballs turn,
Thousand banners round him burn.
Where he points his purple spear,
Hasty, hasty rout is there,
Marking with indignant eye
Fear to stop, and shame to fly.
There confusion, terror's child,
Conflict fierce, and ruin wild,
Agony, that pants for breath,
Despair and honourable death.

* * *

X.

THE DEATH OF HOEL.

FROM THE WELSH.

HAD I but the torrent's might,
With headlong rage and wild affright
Upon Deïra's squadrons hurled,
To rush, and sweep them from the world!

Too, too secure in youthful pride
By them my friend, my Hoel, died,

Great Cian's son: of Madoc old
He asked no heaps of hoarded gold;
Alone in nature's wealth array'd,
He asked, and had the lovely maid.

To Cattraeth's vale in glitt'ring row
Twice two hundred warriors go;
Every warrior's manly neck
Chains of regal honour deck,
Wreath'd in many a golden link:
From the golden cup they drink
Nectar, that the bees produce,
Or the grape's ecstatic juice.
Flush'd with mirth, and hope they burn:
But none from Cattraeth's vale return,
Save Aëron brave, and Conan strong
(Bursting through the bloody throng),
And I, the meanest of them all,
That live to weep, and sing their fall.

XI.

FOR MUSIC.

IRREGULAR.

I. AIR.

"HENCE, avaunt ('tis holy ground),
Comus, and his midnight-crew,
And Ignorance with looks profound,
And dreaming Sloth of pallid hue,
Mad Sedition's cry profane,
Servitude that hugs her chain,
Nor in these consecrated bowers
Let painted Flatt'ry hide her serpent-train in flowers.

CHORUS.

Nor Envy base, nor creeping Gain,
Dare the Muse's walk to stain,
While bright-eyed Science watches round;
Hence, away, 'tis holy ground!"

II. Recitative.

From yonder realms of empyrean day
Bursts on my ear the indignant lay:
There sit the sainted sage, the bard divine,
The few, whom genius gave to shine
Through every unborn age, and undiscovered clime.
Rapt in celestial transport they:
Yet hither oft a glance from high
They send of tender sympathy
To bless the place, where on their opening soul
First the genuine ardour stole.
'Twas Milton struck the deep-ton'd shell,
And, as the choral warblings round him swell,
Meek Newton's self bends from his state sublime,
And nods his hoary head, and listens to the rhyme.

III. Air.

"Ye brown o'er-arching groves,
That contemplation loves,
Where willowy Camus lingers with delight!
Oft at the blush of dawn
I trod your level lawn,
Oft woo'd the gleam of Cynthia silver-bright
In cloisters dim, far from the haunts of Folly,
With Freedom by my side, and soft-eyed Melancholy."

IV. Recitative.

But hark! the portals sound, and pacing forth
With solemn steps and slow,
High potentates, and dames of royal birth,
And mitred fathers in long order go:
Great Edward with the lilies on his brow
From haughty Gallia torn,
And sad Chatillon, on her bridal morn
That wept her bleeding love, and princely Clare,
And Anjou's heroine, and the paler rose,
The rival of her crown, and of her woes,
And either Henry there,
The murder'd saint, and the majestic lord,
That broke the bonds of Rome.
(Their tears, their little triumphs o'er,
Their human passions now no more,
Save Charity, that glows beyond the tomb.)

ACCOMPANIED.

All that on Granta's fruitful plain
Rich streams of regal bounty poured,
And bade these awful fanes and turrets rise,
To hail their Fitzroy's festal morning come;
And thus they speak in soft accord
The liquid language of the skies:

V. QUARTETTO.

"What is grandeur, what is power?
Heavier toil, superior pain.
What the bright reward we gain?
The grateful memory of the good.
Sweet is the breath of vernal shower,
The bee's collected treasures sweet,
Sweet music's melting fall, but sweeter yet
The still small voice of gratitude."

VI. RECITATIVE.

Foremost and leaning from her golden cloud
The venerable Margaret see!
"Welcome, my noble son," she cries aloud,
"To this, thy kindred train, and me:
Pleased in thy lineaments we trace
A Tudor's fire, a Beaufort's grace.

AIR.

"Thy liberal heart, thy judging eye,
The flower unheeded shall descry,
And bid it round heaven's altars shed
The fragrance of its blushing head:
Shall raise from earth the latent gem
To glitter on the diadem.

VII. RECITATIVE.

"Lo, Granta waits to lead her blooming band,
Not obvious, not obtrusive, she
No vulgar praise, no venal incense flings;
Nor dares with courtly tongue refin'd
Profane thy inborn royalty of mind:
She reveres herself and thee.
With modest pride to grace thy youthful brow
The laureate wreath, that Cecil wore, she brings.

And to thy just, thy gentle hand
Submits the fasces of her sway,
While spirits blest above and men below
Join with glad voice the loud symphonious lay.

VIII. GRAND CHORUS.

"Through the wild waves as they roar
With watchful eye and dauntless mien
Thy steady course of honour keep,
Nor fear the rocks, nor seek the shore:
The star of Brunswick smiles serene,
And gilds the horrors of the deep."

XII.

ON THE PLEASURE ARISING FROM VICISSITUDE.

A FRAGMENT.

NOW the golden morn aloft
  Waves her dew-bespangled wing,
With vermeil cheek and whisper soft
  She woo's the tardy spring:
Till April starts, and calls around
The sleeping fragrance from the ground;
And lightly o'er the living scene
Scatters his freshest, tenderest green.

New-born flocks, in rustic dance,
  Frisking ply their feeble feet;
Forgetful of their wintry trance
  The birds his presence greet:
But chief, the sky-lark warbles high
His trembling thrilling ecstasy;
And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light.

Rise, my soul! on wings of fire,
  Rise the rapturous choir among;
Hark! 'tis nature strikes the lyre,
  And leads the general song.

* * *

Yesterday the sullen year
  Saw the snowy whirlwind fly;
Mute was the music of the air,
  The herd stood drooping by:
Their raptures now that wildly flow,
No yesterday nor morrow know;
'Tis man alone that joy descries
With forward, and reverted eyes.

Smiles on past misfortune's brow
  Soft reflection's hand can trace;
And o'er the cheek of sorrow throw
  A melancholy grace;
While hope prolongs our happier hour,
Or deepest shades, that dimly lower
And blacken round our weary way,
Gilds with a gleam of distant day.

Still, where rosy pleasure leads,
  See a kindred grief pursue;
Behind the steps that misery treads,
  Approaching comfort view:
The hues of bliss more brightly glow,
Chastis'd by sabler tints of woe;
And blended form, with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of life.

See the wretch, that long has tost
  On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
  And breathe and walk again:
The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise.

Humble Quiet builds her cell,
  Near the source whence pleasure flows;
She eyes the clear crystalline well,
  And tastes it as it goes.

ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD.

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhimes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh,

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate.

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say:
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty step the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

"One morn I miss'd him on the customed hill,
Along the heath and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou can'st read) the lay,
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

THE EPITAPH.

HERE rests his head upon the lap of Earth,
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown;
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send;
He gave to Misery all he had—a tear,
He gained from heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

SONNET ON THE DEATH OF MR. RICHARD WEST.

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And redd'ning Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join;
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
These ears, alas! for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require:
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And newborn pleasure brings to happier men:
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear:
To warm their little loves the birds complain:
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear;
And weep the more, because I weep in vain.

STANZAS TO MR. BENTLEY.

A FRAGMENT.

In silent gaze the tuneful choir among
Half pleas'd, half blushing, let the Muse admire,
While Bentley leads her sister-art along,
And bids the pencil answer to the lyre.

See in their course each transitory thought
Fix'd by his touch a lasting essence take;
Each dream, in fancy's airy colouring wrought
To local symmetry and life awake.

The tardy rhymes that used to linger on
To censure cold, and negligent of fame
In swifter measures animated run,
And catch a lustre from his genuine flame.

Ah! could they catch his strength, his easy grace,
His quick creation, his unerring line;
The energy of Pope they might efface,
And Dryden's harmony submit to mine.

But not to one in this benighted age
Is that diviner inspiration giv'n,
That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
The pomp and prodigality of heav'n.

As when conspiring in the diamond's blaze,
The meaner gems that single charm the sight,
Together dart their intermingled rays,
And dazzle with a luxury of light.

Enough for me, if to some feeling breast
My lines a secret sympathy * * *
And as their pleasing influence * * *
A sigh of soft reflection * * *

SONG.

THYRSIS, when we parted, swore
Ere the spring he would return.
Ah! what means yon violet flower?
And the bud that decks the thorn?
'Twas the lark that upward sprung!
'Twas the nightingale that sung.

Idle notes! untimely green!
Why this unavailing haste?
Western gales and skies serene
Speak not always winter past.
Cease my doubts, my fears to move,
Spare the honour of my love.

CONCLUDING LINES OF EPITAPH ON MARIA,

WIFE OF JOHN MASON.

TELL them, though 'tis an awful thing to die—
'Twas e'en to thee—yet the dread path once trod,
Heaven lifts its everlasting portals high,
And bids the pure in heart behold their God.

SKETCH OF HIS OWN CHARACTER.

Too poor for a bribe, and too proud to importune,
He had not the method of making a fortune;
Could love, and could hate, so was thought somewhat odd;
No very great wit, he believed in a God;
A post or a pension he did not desire,
But left Church and State to Charles Townsend and Squire.

NOTES

ODES.

I.

ON THE SPRING.

See Appendix, Letter v.

1 *The rosy-bosom'd Hours.* From Milton's *Comus*, 984, where 'the rosy-bosomed Hours' are coupled with 'the Assyrian Queen;' *i.e.* Venus, and 'the spruce and jocund spring.' The Hours, Ὧραι, are the seasons; but the epithet is applicable only to spring and summer. Compare Homer's 'rosy-finger'd Morn.' On the other hand, the compound 'rosy-crowned Loves,' *Progress of Poetry*, 28, seems to show that Gray used it in the sense of 'crowned with roses.'

2 *Venus' train.* The *alma Venus genetrix* of Lucretius, the goddess of love and life. So his famous description of the procession of the seasons (v. 936) begins, "*It ver et Venus et Veneris praenuntius ante Pinnatus graditur Zephyrus.*"

Venus'. Words ending in a sibilant, in poetry, as a rule, mark the possessive case by a simple apostrophe. So in prose we find occasionally the *s* omitted with proper names, as 'the Prior of Sorvaulx' question' (Sir W. SCOTT), and always in the phrases 'for conscience' sake,' &c.

3 *Long-expecting flowers.* By a personal metaphor the feelings of sentient beings are attributed to the flowers. See the chapter on "The Pathetic Fallacy" in Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. Read the first lines of Chaucer's *Prologue.*

4 *The purple year.* Cf. Vergil, *Ec.* ix. 40, '*purpureum ver.*' It is not possible to decide whether Gray uses 'purple' in its proper sense, or, as in Latin, for any dazzling colour.

5 *Attic warbler.* Philomela, who was changed into a nightingale, was according to the myth the daughter of Pandion, king of Attica.

Pours her throat. From Pope's *Essay on Man*, iii. 33: "Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat?" 'Pours her throat' is a refinement on the common expression, 'pours her note.' Dr. Pattison remarks on the superior correctness of Pope's phrase, the female bird having no song. Cf. Lovelace, *To Althea*—

"When linnet-like confined, I
With shriller throat shall sing."

6 *Responsive*, &c. Not to be understood literally.

7 A sense construction. [To what does 'harmony' stand in apposition? Is harmony used here in its strict sense?]

8 Cf. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, viii. 513—

"The earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill;
Joyous the birds; fresh gales and gentle airs
Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their wings
Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub."

12 *Browner shade.* Cf. Pope's *Eloisa*, 170: "And breathes a browner horror o'er the woods." [What is the force of the comparative? Cf. the use of the comparative in Latin.]

13 *Rude and moss-grown beech.* The first is not a happy epithet, as the beech has a smooth, not a rude or rugged bole.

14 *O'er-canopies.* "'A bank o'er-canopied with luscious woodbine.' *Midsummer Night's Dream*, act iii. sc. 2."—GRAY. *Canopy* is from the Greek κωνωπεῖον, properly a mosquito curtain.

17 *Reclin'd.* Qualifies 'the muse.' The muse and the poet are identified.

Rustic state. An oxymoron, or combination of words expressing opposite ideas—'the simple luxury of a grassy seat beside a stream.' Compare the parallel in the *Elegy*, l. 101. Compare also Gray's account of his occupation at Burnham in 1737, five years before the *Ode* was written: "Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds. At the foot of one of these squats ME I (*il penseroso*), and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise before he had an Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil as I commonly do there."

23 *Peopled.* 'Populous,' 'swarming with life.'

24 *Busy murmur.* An instance of transferred epithet.

26 *To taste the honied spring.* Refers rather to the balmy air of spring than the honey of the flowers.

27 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics*, iv. 59, *nare per aestatem liquidam.*

29 *Trim.* Properly 'dress,' 'ornaments.' Cf. Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*, 151, "the goodly London in her gallant trim."

31 *Contemplation.* The abstract for the concrete.

33 *They that creep, and they that fly.* 'The humble or plodding, and the ambitious or pleasure-seekers.'

38 *Brushed.* Like a fly that is roughly brushed away.

30–40 Notice the ingenuity of the language by which the parallel between insects and man is sustained.

41 *Methinks.* 'Me' is the dative governed by the impersonal

verb 'it thinks.' So Chaucer has, 'It thoughte me,' 'me thinketh it.'

42 *The sportive kind reply.* The reply is sportive; *i.e.* satirical; but there is nothing but the poet's word to show that it is not unkindly meant.

45 *Glittering female.* Not a happy phrase, but excused by the double reference. The word too had not in Gray's time the note of vulgarity it now has. Cf. Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*—

"As some fair female unadorn'd and plain."

Meets. 'Comes to share;' but the rhyme has evidently determined the word.

50 *We* is emphatic. Common mortals as opposed to the moralist.

For the personal allusions in this last stanza see Johnson's *Life.*

II.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAVOURITE CAT.

The ode was enclosed in a letter to Horace Walpole (see Appendix ii.), which ends: "Heigh ho! I feel (as you to be sure have done long since) that I have very little to say, at least in prose. Somebody will be the better for it; I do not mean you, but your Cat, feuë Mademoiselle Selime, whom I am about to immortalize for one week or fortnight, as follows * * * There's a poem for you, it is rather too long for an Epitaph." After the death of Gray the vase was placed on a pedestal at Strawberry Hill, with an inscription taken from the ode.

3 *The azure flowers that blow.* The vase was of blue porcelain. For the stop-gap 'that blow' see Johnson's criticism.

4 *Demurest.* From the French 'de mûre' = 'de mûre conduite' ('mur' = Latin 'maturus'); or, according to others, from 'de mœurs' = 'de bons mœurs.' It had originally no depreciatory sense. Sherwood's Dictionary (1632) gives "Demure—*modeste, honnête.*"

Tabby. Through the French 'tabis,' from the Arabic. Properly a sort of watered silk, so called from a quarter of Bagdad where it was manufactured; hence applied to cats with coats of mottled black and grey, like the waves of watered silk. Here as an epithet of cats in general. [Prove that Selime was not a tabby.]

5 *Selima.* A fanciful feminine of the Turkish 'Selim.'

7 *Conscious.* The tail, which indicates joy, is naturally said to be conscious of joy. [What was the joy caused by?]

12 *Purred applause.* 'To purr' is properly an intransitive verb, but here it equals 'to express by purring,' and therefore governs an object.

13 *Still had she gazed.* Cf. "I *had* fainted, unless I had believed." (*Psalm* xxvii. 13.) 'She had gazed' is the principal clause of an inverted conditional sentence. [What represents the dependent clause?]

15 Each spot in Latin mythology had its Genius or native guardian deity.

16 *Tyrian* or Phœnician purple, the famous dye extracted from the murex.

18 *Betray'd.* Showed beneath the purple. So in the lines of Vergil, which gave the hint: "Aureus ipse, sed . . . *sub*lucet purpura." Cf.—

> "The coves and secret hollows, through a ray
> Of fainter gold a purple gleam betray."
>
> WORDSWORTH, *Evening Walk.*

19 *Nymph.* A favourite mannerism with Pope and his school: = 'maid' of line 25.

[20 *A whisker*, &c. Why this inversion?]

24. Cf. "Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
Like the poor cat i' the adage."
Macbeth, act i. sc. 7, l. 40.

27 *Fate.* The Nemesis which punishes presumption.

Headlong. '-long' represents Old English '-lunga,' a dative feminine. Cf. 'sidelong,' 'darkling.'

[31 *Eight times.* Show the appropriateness of the number.]

34 *Dolphin.* See under 'Arion' in *Classical Dictionary.*

Nereid. One of the fifty (or hundred) daughters of Nereus, sea-nymphs.

39 *Be with caution bold.* The point of the injunction is in the adverbial clause. Cf. '*festina lente.*'

42 A world-wide proverb, of which the oldest form, perhaps, is to be found in the *Parabolæ* of Alanus de Insulis, d. 1294: "*Non teneas aurum totum quod splendet ut aurum.*" Hence Chaucer, *Chanouns Yemannes Tale*—

> "But al thing which that shyneth as the gold
> Nis nat gold, as that I have herd it told."

[Quote from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice.*]

The ode is *mock-heroic:* a commonplace incident is described with all the pomp and circumstance of an epic. Pick out all the epic phrases, and translate them into ordinary prose. For the moral see Johnson's *Life.*

III.

ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE.

This ode was the first English production of Gray which appeared in print. It falls naturally into four parts: 1–20, a description of the scene in the form of an invocation; 21–50, the pursuits, pastimes, and pleasures of Eton boys; 51–90, the contrast that the passions and sorrows of mankind present to the careless innocence of childhood; 91–100, the moral.

For Gray's Eton life and Eton friends, see Johnson. Point out where Gray's description of an Eton boy's amusements is inapplicable to the present day. The fault of the ode is its vagueness. Suggest any distinctive features that Gray has omitted. Is the moral drawn a sound one?

3 *Science.* Learning; *i.e.* those who are devoted to learning.

4 Henry VI., the founder of Eton. 'Holy' is the epithet he bears in Shakespeare's *Richard III.*, act v. scene 1. Cf. Wordsworth's Sonnet, *Inside of King's College Chapel*—

"Tax not the royal saint with vain expense."

[8 What is the antecedent of each 'whose'?]

12 *Beloved in vain.* Because they failed to protect him from the misfortunes of after life. He alludes in particular to the death of his old Eton friend West.

[13 *My careless childhood.* What figure of speech?]

19 "And bees, their honey redolent of spring."

DRYDEN, *Fable of the Pythagorean System.*

21 *Father Thames.* Rivers, as forming the most ancient landmarks of a country, are represented as ancient: "That ancient river, the river Kishon;" "*pater Tiberinus.*"

23 "By slow Mæander's margent green."—MILTON, *Comus*, 232.

29 *The rolling circle's speed.* One of those poetical periphrases for common objects in which Pope and his school delighted, and against which Wordsworth protested.

30 "The senators at cricket urge the ball."

POPE, *Dunciad*, iv. 592.

32 'Con over their lessons.'

34 *To sweeten.* A consecutive infinitive. The infinitive is really a noun, and 'to sweeten' = 'for sweetening.'

[42 In what sense can hope be said to be 'possessed'?]

43 Cf. Euripides, *Medæa:* "*νέα γὰρ φροντὶς οὐκ ἀλγεῖν φιλεῖ.*"

45 *Buxom* = 'bowsome;' *i.e.* bending, pliant, good-natured, and hence of those physical qualities which generally go with good-nature.

47 *Cheer.* From the low Latin 'cara,' 'face, expression;' hence, generally of a good or lively expression, and then of what causes such an expression.

51 Cf. Pope's *Essay on Man*, i. 81—

"The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Oh blindness to the future! kindly given
That each may fill the circle marked by heaven."

55 *Around 'em.* This has only recently grown to be a vulgarism, and, as has often been pointed out, is not a corruption of 'them,' but a survival of the Old English 'eom,' the accusative plural of 'he.'

62 Alluding to the fable of Prometheus.

63 By one of the commonest figures of poetry personifications of passions, &c., are qualified by the epithet which describes their effects: Hunger is lean, Death black, &c.

66 "But gnawing Jealousy, out of their sight
Sitting alone, his bitter lips did bite."
SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*, vi. 23.

71 *This.* Used absolutely, like 'these.' Cf. Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, act ii. sc. 9, l. 69.

79 "Madness laughing in his ireful mood."—DRYDEN.

81 Cf. Shakespeare, *Othello*, act iii. scene 3: "I am declined into the vale of years;" and Collins: "In the downhill of life when I find I'm declining."

82 *Grisly.* Connected with German 'grässlich,' 'horrible.'

88 *To fill; i.e.* 'the number of, to complete.'

98 "ἐν τῷ φρονεῖν γὰρ μηδὲν ἥδιστος βίος,"
SOPHOCLES, *Ajax*, 555.

99 *No more.* 'In a word,' 'to sum up.'

Where ignorance. Prior had written—

"From ignorance our comfort flows;
The only wretched are the wise."

As usual with these wise saws, the more polished and epigrammatic form makes the ruder forgotten. We remember Benvenuto Cellini, not the finder of the nugget.

IV.

TO ADVERSITY.

The hymn seems modelled on Horace's *Ode to Fortune*, i. 35.

1 *Daughter of Jove.* There is no classical authority for the mythology. It was probably suggested by the motto from Æschylus' *Agamemnon*, prefixed to the poem: "Zeus, who led mortals into the path of understanding, who established the law of 'wisdom by woe.'"

3 *Iron scourge and torturing hour.* From Milton's *Paradise Lost*, ii. 90— "When the scourge
Inexorably, and the torturing hour,
Calls us to penance."

7 *Purple tyrants.* 'Clad in purple.' Horace, *Od.* i. 35, 12—
"Purpurei metuunt tyranni."

16 Cf. Dido's famous saying—
"Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco."

22 *Summer friends.* Cf. Horace—
"Diffugiunt cadis
Cum fæce siccatis amici,
Ferre jugum pariter dolosi."

The expression, however, is G. Herbert's—"Summer friends, flies of estate and fortune." Cf. also Pope's—

" So perish all whose breasts ne'er learned to glow
For others' good, or melt at others' woe."

24 *Truth* = 'troth.' [Distinguish the senses in which the word is used.]

25 " O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue."
MILTON, *Il Penseroso*, 16.

28 " With a sad, leaden, downward cast
Thou fix them on the ground as fast."—Ibid, 93.

32 *Sadly-pleasing.* See *Ode on the Spring*, 17.

36 *The vengeful band.* Explained by the following lines.

43 *Thy philosophic train.* Cf. Wordsworth, " With years that bring the philosophic mind"—the mind that feels " Sweet are the uses of adversity."

[47 *Exact.* What part of speech?]

V.

THE PROGRESS OF POESY.

(First published together with the *Bard* in 1757.)

The motto " Speaking to the wise, but for the many they need interpretation," is meant to forestal the objection of those who complained of the obscurity of Gray's poems. (See Appendix, letter xi.) Gray has so far condescended to the dulness of the many as to write a running comment explaining the general drift of the poem, and the connection of the parts. As no introduction can compare with the poet's, we will reproduce it in full.

1–13 " The various sources of poetry, which gives life and lustre to all it touches, are described; its quiet majestic progress enriching every subject (otherwise dry and barren) with a pomp of diction and luxurious harmony of numbers; and its more rapid and irresistible course when swoln and hurried away by the conflict of tumultuous passions."

13–25 " The power of harmony to calm the turbulent sallies of the soul."

25–42 " Power of harmony to produce all the graces of motion in the body."

42–54 " To compensate the real and imaginary ills of life the Muse was given to mankind, by the same Providence that sent the day to dispel by its presence the gloom and terrors of the night."

54–66 " The influence of poetic genius over the remotest and most uncivilized nations; its connection with liberty, and the virtues naturally attending it."

66–83 " Progress of Poetry from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England. Chaucer was not unacquainted with the writings of Dante or of Petrarch. The Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt had travelled in Italy, and formed their taste there. Spenser imitated the Italian writers, and Milton im-

proved upon them. But this school expired soon after the Restoration, and a new one arose on the French model, which has subsisted ever since."

83–95 "Shakespeare."

95–107 "Milton and Dryden."

107–123 "The poet, though he cannot rival the eagle flight of Pindar, aspires to follow in the steps of Dryden.—*Proximus huic magno sed proximus intervallo.*"

The metre. This and the following ode are constructed in uniform groups of stanzas in imitation of the Greek. There are three groups of three stanzas arranged thus: 1st, 4th, 7th—2nd, 5th, 8th—3rd, 6th, 9th. The three stanzas in each group are of the same length and measure. They correspond to the Greek strophe, antistrophe, and epode, terms derived from the movement of the chorus on the stage. Ben Jonson, in his noble ode on the death of Sir H. Morison (which contains the familiar verses, "It is not growing like a tree," &c.), was the first to introduce the regular Pindaric Ode into English, not Congreve, as Professor Hales, on Dr. Johnson's authority, states. Jonson keeps closer to the Greek metre than Gray, Gray's epode, or 'stand,' not corresponding correctly to the 'turn' and 'counterturn.'

1 *Æolian lyre.* "Pindar styles his own poetry, with its musical accompaniment, Αἰολὶς μολπή, Αἰολίδες χορδαί, Αἰολίδων πνοιαὶ αὐλῶν, Æolian song, Æolian strings, the breath of the Æolian flute."—GRAY.

"The dialect [of the *Epinicia*, or *Odes of Victory*] is epic, with a strong Dorian colouring and a few Æolic forms. When it was Dorian, the poetry is most serene and elevated, and the mythical stories most fully treated; when it was Æolian, the odes are rapid, free, careless, gay."—JEBB.

On the so-called Pindaric Odes of our English poets Dr. Johnson says in his *Life of Congreve:* "Yet to him it must be confessed that we are indebted for the correction of a national error, and for the cure of our Pindaric madness. He first taught the English writers that Pindar's odes were regular; and though certainly he had not the fire requisite for the higher species of lyric poetry, he has shown us that enthusiasm has its rules, and that in mere confusion there is neither grace nor greatness."

2 *Rapture* = 'inspired strains.'

3 *Helicon.* A mountain in Bœotia, the haunt of the muses, whence flowed the sacred springs of Aganippe and Hippocrene. *England's Helicon* was a collection of favourite poems, which appeared in Elizabeth's reign.

Harmonious springs. So Persius, in his *Prologue*, says, "I never bathed my lips in the fountain of the hack;" *i.e.* in Hippocrene, which was produced by the stroke of Pegasus' hoof.

Notice how the metaphor is sustained throughout the strophe. Compare what Dr. Johnson says on the well-known verses in Denham's *Cowper's Hill*—

"O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full."

"The lines are in themselves not perfect; for most of the words thus artfully opposed are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated. But so much meaning is comprised in few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicuously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted, and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet, that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merits. It has beauty peculiar to itself, and must be numbered among those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit and labour, but must arise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry."

7–12 A paraphrase of Horace iii. 29, 33—

"Cetera fluminis
Ritu feruntur, nunc medio aequore
Cum pace delabentis Etruscum
In mare, nunc lapides adesos,
Stirpesque raptas et pecus et domos
Volventis una non sine montium
Clamore vicinaeque silvae,
Cum fera diluvies quietos
Irritat amnes."

9 *Reign* = 'realms,' 'regnum.'

10 *Amain.* 'A' = 'on,' 'main' = Old English 'mägan,' force, German 'mögen.'

13 *Sov'reign.* More correctly spelt by Milton 'sovran,' French 'soverain,' Latin 'superanus.'

14 *Solemn-breathing.* Cf. Milton's *Comus*, 555—

"A soft and solemn-breathing sound."

15 *Shell.* The χέλυς of Homer, 'testudo' of Horace.

16 *Frantic.* Cf. the homonyms 'phrenetic,' 'frenzy.'

17 Cf. "O stronge god, that in the regnes cold
Of Thrace honoured art, and lord yhold."

CHAUCER, *Knightes Tale.*

19 Cf. "He sought all round about his thirsty blade
To bathe in blood of faithlesse enimy."

SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*, i. 5–15.

20–24 "A weak imitation of some incomparable lines in the *First Pythian* of Pindar."—GRAY. The following is a literal translation of the lines, 5–10: "And thou (the golden lyre) quenchest the thunderbolt of immortal fire; and on the sceptre of Zeus sleeps the eagle, drooping both his swift wings, the lord of birds, and o'er his beaked head thou pourest down a dark cloud, softly sealing his eyelids; in slumber he ruffles the plumes of his back, lulled by the waves of thy melody."

21 "Every fowl of tyrant wing
Save the eagle, feather'd king."—*Passionate Pilgrim.*

26 *Temper'd to* = 'regulated by.' Cf. *Lycidas*, 31—
"Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute
Temper'd to the oaten flute."

27 *Idalia.* Venus, goddess of Idalium in Cyprus.

Velvet-green. Borrowed from Young, *Love of Fame.*
"She rears her flowers, and spreads her velvet-green."
See Johnson's criticism in *Life.*

28 *Rosy-crowned.* Cf. "rosy-bosomed," *Ode on the Spring.*

29 *Cytherea.* Another name of Venus, from Cythera, an island off the S.E. coast of Laconia, celebrated for her worship.

30 *Antic*, originally synonymous with 'antique,' was specially applied to old-fashioned dances. Cf. *Bailey's Dictionary:* "'To dance the antics,' to dance after an odd and ridiculous manner, or in a ridiculous dress like a Jack-pudding."

34 Notice the accent is on *brisk*, not *to.*

35 *Many-twinkling.* Cf. *Odyssey*, viii. 265—
"μαρμαρυγὰς θηεῖτο ποδῶν, θαύμαζε δὲ θυμῷ."
"He gazed at the twinklings of their feet, and marvelled in his mind."

37 *The Graces.* The three maidens who attend on Aphrodite.

38 *Sublime.* 'Uplifted,' a Latinism.

41 From *Phrynicus*—
"λάμπει δ'ἐπὶ πορφυρέῃσι
παρείῃσι φῶς ἔρωτος."
Imitated by Vergil, *Æn.*, i. 594—
"lumenque inventae
purpureum, et laetos oculis afflarat honores."
For *purple*, see *Ode on the Spring*, 4.

46 *Fond.* 'Foolish.' The link between the old and new meaning of the word is 'foolishly doting.'

47 Cf. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, i. 26—
"And justify the ways of God to men."
[Can you defend Gray's heathen mythology?]

51 *He gives to range.* 'He permits,' a Latinism.

53 In Greek the penultimate is long, but Shakespeare, Keats, and others, shorten it.

Glittering shafts of war. Cf. Lucretius, i. 148, "Lucida tela diei."

54 *Beyond the solar road.* From Vergil, *Æn.*, vi. 796, "Extra anni solisque vias," beyond the Zodiac.

55 *Shaggy.* 'Shag' is from Old English 'sceacga,' 'a bush of hair,' 'rough underwood;' so here 'skin-clad' or 'unkempt.' Cf. 'shag tobacco.'

56 *Broke.* In many past-participles of strong verbs the suffix *n* or *en* has dropped off. So as late as Byron—

"And the idols are *broke* in the temple of Baal."

59 Molina, in his *Saggio sulla storia naturale del Chili*, says that the poets of the Araucarians are called *gempin*, or 'lords of speech.' Their poems—ballads mostly on the exploits of their heroes—are composed in the eight or eleven syllable measure, and are transmitted from father to son.

[*Laid* qualifies what?]

61 *Loose numbers.* Horace's 'numeris lege solutis' (of Pindar), 'irregular measures.'

62 Cf. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, ix. 1115—

"Such *of late*
Columbus found the American, so girt
With feathered cincture."

[Give the exact date.]

Dusky loves. Cf. Pope's *Windsor Forest*, 409—

"Till the freed Indians in their native groves
Reap their own fruits, and woo their sable loves."

64 Notice the irregular concord, said to be an imitation of the *schema Pindaricum.*

64–65 Poetry inspires ambition, shame (*i.e.* a feeling of honour, Latin 'pudor,' Greek '*αἰδώς*'), stern resolves, and love of liberty.

[Name poems which illustrate each of these propositions.]

66 *Delphi.* Named here as the shrine of Apollo, the god of song. Cf. Milton's *Hymn to Nature*, xix.—

"With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving."

67 *Isles, &c.* Cf. Byron's *The Isles of Greece*—

"The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse;
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' islands of the Blest."

(The muses of Scios and Teos are Homer and Anacreon.)

Crown. So Shakespeare calls England—

"This precious stone set in the silver sea."

68 *Illissus.* A small stream which, rising on the north slopes of Mount Hymettus, flowed to the east of Athens.

[Name the principal poets of Athens.]

69 *Mæander.* A river which flows through Phrygia and

Caria into the Icarian Sea. The windings of its lower course have given a verb and noun to Latin, and hence to English. Miletus, on the Mæander, was the birthplace of Greek philosophy and history (Thales, Hecatæus, &c.) rather than of poetry.

71 Probably suggested by the song in *Comus*, 230—

"Sweet echo, sweetest nymph, that livest unseen
Within thy airy shell,
By slow Mæander's margent green."

73–76 The best comment on these lines is a passage in Wordsworth's *Despondency Corrected*, beginning, "The lively Grecian, in a land of hills," but it is too long to quote.

77 Greece became a Roman province under the name of Achaia, B.C. 146. The last of the Greek poets were the Alexandrine school of the third century B.C.—Callimachus, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, &c.

78 Latin poetry was, if we except some early hymns to the gods, and satire, wholly imitative; and the earliest Latin poems were direct translations from the Greek. Cf. the familiar lines of Horace—

"Graecia capta ferum victorem caepit, et artes
Intulit agresti Latio."

79 The Roman empire.

80 The 'Graeculus esuriens' of Juvenal.

82 If we reckon Claudian as the last of the Roman poets, and Cædmon as the first English poet, they are separated by a period of less than three hundred years.

83 Far from the sunny south of Homer and Vergil.

84 As Bacon took all knowledge for his sphere, so Shakespeare is described by Gray as embracing by his imagination the whole world of nature, external and human.

85 *What time.* A condensed expression for 'at the time at which.' 'What,' neuter of 'who,' is properly an interrogative pronoun, and is, like 'who,' used relatively, but only when it stands before its antecedent. *Lucid Avon*, so Milton, *P. L.* i. 469—

"Abana and Pharphar lucid streams."

88 From Sandys' translation of Ovid's *Metam.*, iv. 515—

"The child
Stretch'd forth its little arms, and on him smiled."

89 *Pencil.* French 'pinceau,' Latin 'penicillum,' 'a brush.' The common meaning of the word is quite late.

90 *Year.* 'Whole for the part.'

89–94 [Name works of Shakespeare which specially illustrate each of these characteristics. What part of Shakespeare's genius is passed over? Compare Milton's lines on Shakespeare,

'What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones,'

and Ben Jonson's—

"Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, and wonder of our stage!
My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little farther off, to make thee room;
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy book doth live,
And we have wit to read, and praise to give.
* * * * * *
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee I will not seek
For names; but call forth thundering Æschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to us,
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordoua dead,
To live again to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage; or, when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
* * * * * *
Yet must I not give Nature all; thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
* * * * * *
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
Which so did take Eliza and our James."

Say which description you think the best, and why?]

95 Coleridge finely speaks of Shakespeare as "seated on one of the two glory-smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer, not rival."—Note by G. CANDY.

Sublime. From Milton's *Paradise Lost*, vi. 771—

"He on the wings of cherub rode sublime."

96 *Ecstasy.* A state of *transport*, or carrying out of oneself; so 'inspiration.'

97 Cf. *Paradise Lost*, vii. 12—

"Up led by thee
Into the Heaven of Heavens, I have presumed
An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air."

And *Elegia*, v. 14—

"Jam mihi mens liquidi raptatur in ardua caeli,
Perque vagas nubes corpore liber eo;
Perque umbras perque antra feror, penetralia vatum,
Et mihi fana patent interiora Deum;
Intuiturque animus toto quid agatur Olympo,
Nec fugiunt oculos Tartara nigra meos."

98 "Flammantia moenia mundi."—LUCRETIUS, i. 74.

99 "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone." —EZEKIEL, i. 26.

102 Vergil, *Æn.*, x. 746: "In aeternam claunduntur lumina noctem." Milton's blindness, which had been slowly coming on for ten years, was complete in 1653. It was not till 1658 that *Paradise Lost* in its epic form was begun. Milton says himself— "To have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence."
But it is hypercritical to scan thus closely Gray's splendid conceit. Compare with Gray's portraiture of Milton, Wordsworth's—

"Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour.
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up; return to us again,
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose soul was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So did'st thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

And Tennyson's—

"O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armories,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset."

103 Dryden was forty-three years old when Milton died (1674). His first great work, the *Annus Mirabilis*, appeared the same year as the *Paradise Regained*, Milton's last (1667). From Milton's death to his own (1700) he reigned supreme among English poets. Gray was an ardent admirer of Dryden. One of his letters to Beattie ends thus: "Remember Dryden, and be blind to all his faults."

106 "This verse and the foregoing are meant to express the stately march and sounding energy of Dryden's rhymes."—GRAY. Cf. Pope, *Ep.* i. book ii. 267—

"Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
The varying verse, the full-resounding line,
The long majestic march, and energy divine."

With necks. Cf. *Job* xxxix. 19.

109 *Pictur'd urn.* Cf. *Elegy*, l. 41, 'storied urn.' 'Pictur'd' is an adjective formed from the noun, not a participle.

110 An improvement on Cowley's line—

"Words that weep, and tears that speak."

111 "We have had in our language no other odes of the sublimer kind than that of Dryden on *St. Cecilia's Day;* for Cowley, who had his merit, yet wanted judgment, style, and harmony for such a task. That of Pope is not worthy of so great a man. Mr. Mason indeed, of late days, has touched the true chords, and with a masterly hand, in some of his choruses; above all in the last, of Caractacus—

"'Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread?'"—GRAY.

Gray's friendship for Mason has obscured his judgment. It is strange that he has passed by Collins, in many respects a kindred genius, whose *Ode to Evening* is immeasurably superior to anything that Mason wrote.

112–123 To whom do these lines refer? Commentators are for the most part discreetly silent. J. G. Davis says, 'to Cowley.' I have no doubt that they are a self-portraiture. 1. *Now* of line 113 would hardly have been used loosely for 'next.' 2. The antithesis of the last line has no special fitness if applied to Cowley; if Gray is speaking of himself, it is a natural note of modesty. 3. The *Ode to the Spring* and the *Elegy* both end with a personal allusion. 4. The close parallel in Horace, *Ode*, iv. 2, would seem to be decisive. Horace therein, like Gray, deprecates all suspicion of rivalry with Pindar, and compares himself to the Matinian bee.

114 "*Multa Dircæum levat aura cycnum.*"

Line 25 of the Ode.

115 "Pindar among his peers is solitary. He had no communion with the poets of his day. He is the eagle, Simonides and Bacchylides are jackdaws. He soars to the empyrean, they haunt the valley mists. . . . The simile describes the rapidity and fierceness of Pindar's spirit, the atmosphere of empyreal splendour into which he bears us with strong wings and clinging talons."—J. A. SYMONDS, *The Greek Poets.*

116 *Supreme dominion.* Cf. Horace, iv. 4, 1—

"Qualem ministrum fulminis alitem
Cui rex deorum regnum in aves vagas
Permisit."

[117 *Deep.* Give other adjectives used as substantives.]

120 *Orient.* Properly of the rising sun; so, 'clear,' 'bright,' 'shining.' Milton has "banners with orient colours waving," 'orient liquor.' Orient is a constant epithet of the pearl in our older poets; see Milton, *Paradise Lost*, iv. 238, v. 2; Shakespeare, *Richard III.* iv. 4. Trench (*Select Glossary*) says

that in this connection it always means 'white,' 'shining;' but see Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*, l. 221, "For of o perle fine *orientall*," &c.

Lowell suggests that this line may have given Wordsworth the hint for his more famous line—

"The light that never was on sea or land."

VI.

THE BARD.

ANALYSIS OF ODE.—1–23. Edward I., as he is approaching Snowdon at the head of his army, is startled by the appearance of a venerable bard seated on an inaccessible crag. 23–48. He curses Edward as the murderer of the bards, and prophesies that the ghosts of his brethren shall haunt him and his race. 49–63. Edward II. shall be foully murdered, and from his adulterous queen shall spring Edward III., the scourge of France. 63–73. He in his turn shall die, having lost his eldest son, abandoned by his remaining children, and robbed by his courtiers and his mistress. 73–77. Richard II. shall be starved to death. 77–97. The wars of the Roses and the various murders in the Tower are next foretold. 97–110. At length the curse of the family shall die out, and the House of Tudor, the genuine descendants of the Welsh kings, shall succeed. 110–135. Under Elizabeth poetry shall once more be vocal in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. 135 to end. Thus Edward's bloody race shall come to an end, and the bard shall triumph in his death.

The tradition on which this Ode is founded—that Edward I., when he completed the conquest of Wales, massacred all the bards—is wholly groundless.

1 Notice the constant alliteration throughout the Ode. See Dr. Johnson's criticism in *Life*.

3 "Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky,
And fan our people cold."—*Macbeth*, act i. scene 2.

4 "Mocking the air with colours idly spread."
King John, act v. scene 1, l. 72.

Conquest, like the Roman Victory on the Arch of Titus, coins, &c., is represented as a winged figure.

5 The omission of the first negative is common in poetry—

"Tongue, nor heart, cannot conceive nor name thee."
Macbeth, act ii. scene 3.

"Sigh, nor word, nor struggling breath
Heralded his way to death."
BYRON, *Siege of Corinth*, 27.

Hauberk "was a texture of steel ringlets, or rings interwoven, forming a coat of mail, that set close to the body, and adapted

itself to every motion."—GRAY. 'Hauberk' is the Old English 'haels beorg,' German 'halsberc,' from 'hals,' 'the neck,' and 'bergan,' 'to cover.' In the Wicliff version Goliath has "a brasun basynet on his heed, and he was clothed with an haburion hokid;" *i.e.* a habergeon of interwoven ringlets. 'Habergeon' is the diminutive of 'hauberk.' The twisted mail gave place to plate armour in Edward III.'s reign.

9 "The crested adder's pride." (DRYDEN, *Indian Queen.*) Here the meaning seems to hover between 'proud crest' and 'towering pride.'

11 *Snowdon* "was a name given by the Saxons to that mountainous tract which the Welsh themselves call Craigian-eryri. It included all the highlands of Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire, as far east as the river Conway."—GRAY.

Shaggy. See note on *Progress of Poetry*, l. 55.

12 *Wound.* Generally in this sense intransitive. But cf.—

"To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus."—1 *Hen. IV.* act iv. sc. 1.

13 "Gilbert de Clare, surnamed the Red, Earl of Gloucester and Hereford, son-in-law to King Edward."—GRAY. He had conducted the campaign of 1282.

14 *Mortimer*, Edmund, lord of Wigmore. "They were both lord-marchers, whose lands lay on the borders of Wales, and probably accompanied the king in this expedition."—GRAY.

Conway. The river which divides Carnarvonshire and Denbighshire.

18 [What is the meaning of *haggard*, a substantive?]

19 *Loose.* 'Flowing;' used as an adverb. "The image was taken from a well-known picture of Raphael representing the Supreme Being in the vision of Ezekiel. There are two of these paintings (both believed to be originals), one at Florence, the other in the Duke of Orleans' collection at Paris."—GRAY.

20 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. 535—

"Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind."

As the meteor or comet is called in Greek and Latin 'the hairy star,' so the metaphor is often transposed.

26 *Hoarser.* See note on *Ode to Spring*, 12.

28 *High-born Hoel.* Son of Owen Gwynedd, prince of North Wales. Southey has paraphrased one of his poems in *Madoc in Wales.* It is worth quoting as a good specimen of Welsh poetry—

"I have harnessed thee, my steed of shining grey,
And thou shalt bear me to the dear white walls.
I love the white walls by the verdant bank,
That glitter in the sun, where Bashfulness
Watches the silver sea-mew sail along.
I love that glittering dwelling, where we hear
The ever-sounding billows; for there dwells

The shapely maiden fair as the sea-spray,
Her cheek as lovely as the apple-flower,
Or summer evening's glow. I pine for her.
In crowded halls my spirit is with her;
Through the long sleepless nights I think of her;
And happiness is gone, and health is lost,
And fled the flush of youth, and I am pale
As the pale ocean on a sunless morn.
I pine away for her, yet pity her,
That she should spurn so true a love as mine."

Soft Llewellyn's lay. 'The lay recording the soft Llewellyn.' [What sort of genitive is this?] Llewellyn is the hero of numerous lays. One ran thus: "Llewellyn, though in battle he killed like fury, though he burnt like an outrageous fire, yet was a mild prince when the mead-horns were distributed."—See Bright's *History of England*, i. 162, 175.

Cadwallo, Urien, Modred are to us, and probably were to Gray, nothing but names. "Urien was the great North of England chief who led the battle of the Cymry for their homes and liberties against invading Angles. Llywarch the Old was Urien's friend and fellow-combatant at Lindisfarne, between the years 572 and 579. There, after the death of Urien, he carried the chief's head in his mantle from the field. 'The head,' he sang, 'that I carry carried me. I shall find it no more; it will come no more to my succour. Woe to my hand, my happiness is lost!'"—MORLEY, *First Sketch of English Literature.*

34 Cf.— "Orpheus with his lute made trees
And the mountain tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing."
Henry VIII. act iii. sc. 1.

35 *Arvon's shore.* "The shore of Caernarvonshire opposite to the Isle of Anglesea."—GRAY. "Caernarvon = Caer yn Arvon, the camp in Arvon."—HALES.

40, 41 A fine instance of the masterly way in which Gray adapts and makes his own what he borrows. The lines are a 'contamination' of *Julius Cæsar*, ii. 1—

"As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart;"

and of Otway, *Venice Preserved*, act v.—

"Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee."

48 "See the Norwegian ode, *The Fatal Sisters*."—GRAY. The refrain was probably suggested by the refrain of Catullus' *Peleus and Thetis*—

"Currite ducentes subtemina, currite fusi."

Tissue. French 'tissu,' Latin 'textum.'

49 *Weave the warp and woof.* A sort of hendiadys. The 'warp,' the upright or vertical threads; the 'woof' or weft, the horizontal threads which are interwoven.

50 *Verge.* French 'verge,' Latin 'virga,' a 'rod,' a 'measure,' a 'limit,' a 'margin.' See Dr. Johnson's *Criticism.* Cf. Dryden's *Don Sebastian*, i. 1—

"I have a soul that, like an ample shield,
Can take in all, and verge enough for more."

51 *Characters.* Greek 'χαρακτήρ,' 'anything stamped.'

"These few precepts in thy memory
See thou character."—*Hamlet.*

52 See Bright's *History of England*, i. 211.

56 *Agonizing.* Used in the primary sense by R. Browning, *Abt Vogler*—

"Have we struggled and agonized?"

57 *She-wolf of France.* See Bright, i. 209. The expression is from Shakespeare, 3 *Henry VI.*, act i. sc. 4 (used by the Duke of York of Queen Margaret).

60 So Alaric the Goth was called 'the scourge of God.'

What terrors, &c. Vergil, *Æn.*, xii. 335—

"Circumque atrae formidinis ora
Iraeque, insidiaeque, dei comitatus, aguntur."

63 See Bright, *History of England*, i. 241.

67 *Sable Warrior.* It is supposed that the name of Black Prince was given in doubtful compliment by the French after the battle of Cressy, when he fought in a black cuirass.

71 Coleridge (*Biographia Literaria*, p. 9) points out that these lines are borrowed from Shakespeare's simile in the *Merchant of Venice*, act ii. sc. 6, l. 14—

"How like a younker, or a prodigal,
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,
Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
How like the prodigal doth she return;
With over-weather'd ribs, and ragged sails,
Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!"

His comparison of the respective merits of the two passages is well worth quoting, as his remarks apply to much of Gray's poetry: "I preferred the original, on the ground that, in the imitation, it depended wholly on the compositor's putting or not putting a small capital both in this and many other passages of the same poet, whether the words should be personified or mere abstracts. I mention this because in referring various lines in Gray to their original in Shakespeare and Milton—and in the clear perception how completely all the propriety was lost in the transfer—I was, at that early period, led to a conjecture that this style of poetry, which I have characterized above as translations of pure thoughts into poetical language, had been kept

up, if it did not wholly arise from, the custom of writing Latin verses, and the great importance attached to these exercises in our public schools." He also points out *en passant* that the words 'realm' and 'sway' are rhymes dearly purchased.

74 "Ipse gubernabit residens in puppe Cupido."—OVID, *Her.*, xv. 215.

77 See Bright, i. 277.

80 Vergil, *Æn.*, vi. 603— "Lucent genialibus altis
Aurea fulcra toris, epulaeque ante ora paratae
Regifico luxu: Furiarum maxima juxta
Accubat, et manibus prohibet contingere menses,
Exsurgitque facem adtollens, atque intonat ora."

82 *Baffled.* In the technical language of chivalry the word expressed a ceremony of open scorn, with which the recreant or perjured knight was visited.

"First he his beard did shave and foully shent,
Then from him reft his shield, and it reversed,
And blotted out his arms with falshood blent,
And himself baffled, and his arms unhersed,
And broke his sword in twain, and all his armour spersed."
—SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*, iii. 37.

See Trench, *Select Glossary*.

83 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, vi. 209—
"Arms on armour brayed
Horrible discord."

84 An absolute construction, 'lance meeting lance,' or in loose apposition to 'battle.'

86 'Havoc,' not 'years,' is the dominant idea, but the metaphor can hardly be justified.

87 "Henry VI., George Duke of Clarence, Edward V., Richard Duke of York, &c., believed to be murdered secretly in the Tower of London. The oldest part of that structure is vulgarly attributed to Julius Cæsar."—GRAY.

89 "Margaret of Anjou, a woman of heroic spirit, who struggled hard to save her husband and her crown."—GRAY.

See Bright, i. 317.

90 See *Ode on Eton*, 4.

93 "The silver boar was the badge of Richard III., whence he was generally known in his own time by the name of the Boar."—GRAY. Cf. the well known doggerel—
"The Rat, the Cat, and Lovel our dog,
Rule all England under a Hog."

In infant gore. See Bright, i. 345.

94 *The thorny shade.* 'Of the white and red rose.'

99 "Eleanor of Castile died a few years after the conquest of Wales [she died in 1290]. The heroic proof she gave of her affection for her lord is well known. The monuments of his

regret and sorrow for the loss of her are still to be seen at Northampton, Gaddington, Waltham, and other places."—GRAY.

Half of thy heart. Cf. Horace, *Odes*, i. 3-8—

"Animae dimidium meae" (of his friend Vergil).

101 Addressed to the departing ghosts of the murdered bards.

109 The Welsh believed that Arthur was still alive in fairy-land, and would return to reign over Britain. Cf. Tennyson's *Mort d'Arthur*— "All the people cried,

Arthur is come again; he cannot die."

110 *All hail.* 'Hail' is a substantive. Old English 'hael,' or 'haelo;' 'haelo biddan,' 'to bid hail.' Hence 'heal,' 'health,' 'whole.'

Genuine. 'True born.' "A prophetic allusion to the House of Tudor, in which the prophecies of Merlin and Taliessin that Welsh sovereignty in Britain should be regained, seemed to be fulfilled."—GRAY. Henry VII. was the grandson of Owen Tudor.

112 *Starry fronts.* 'Foreheads bright as stars;' *i.e.* 'crowned.' Cf. Milton's *Ode on the Passion*—

"His starry front low-roofed beneath the skies."

115 The enthusiastic loyalty that the reign of Elizabeth evoked, and the spell that she threw over men like Raleigh and Sydney, are too familiar facts to need illustration. See in particular Scott's *Kenilworth* and Kingsley's *Westward Ho!*

116 "Her royal bearing, which was so greatly aided by a stately person, a keen, piercing eye, and an aquiline nose in full harmony with her imperial cast of features."—SANFORD.

121 *Taliessin.* 'Shining forehead.' One of the bards at the court of Urien and his son Owain, who celebrated Urien's victories about the middle of the sixth century.

124 "Ceu nubibus arcus

Mille trahens varios adverso sole colores."—VERGIL.

126 "Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralize my song."

—SPENSER'S *Proem to Faerie Queene.*

127 Spenser, in the letter to Raleigh prefixed to the *Faerie Queene*, says that he laboured to pourtray Arthur before he was king, "perfected in the twelve moral virtues, as Aristotle has devised, the which is the purpose of the first twelve books." Of these only six are extant.

128 *Buskin'd.* "The buskin'd stage."—*Il Penseroso*, 102. The *buskin* is the high-soled boot of the tragic actor, generally opposed to the *sock* of comedy. Compare the lines on Shakespeare in the *Progress of Poetry.*

132 Cf. Tennyson's *Milton*—

"Me rather all that bowery loneliness
The brooks of Eden mazily wandering,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches,
Charm . . . ."

135 Compare the fine lyric of Sallet—

"Aye, let the torturers e'en blind me,
Will the sun therefore lose its light?
In deepest dungeons let them bind me,
Freedom will triumph in my night."

136 *Breath.* 'Mandate.'

137 From *Lycidas*, 168—

"So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky."

VII.

THE FATAL SISTERS.

"In the eleventh century, *Sigurd*, Earl of the Orkney Islands, went with a fleet of ships and a considerable body of troops into Ireland, to the assistance of *Sictryg with the silken beard*, who was then making war on his father-in-law *Brian*, king of Dublin. The earl and all his forces were cut to pieces, and *Sictryg* was in danger of a total defeat; but the enemy had a greater loss by the death of *Brian*, their king, who fell in the action. On Christmas-day (the day of the battle), a native of Caithness, in Scotland, saw at a distance a number of persons on horseback, riding full speed towards a hill, and seeming to enter into it. Curiosity led him to follow them, till, looking through an opening in the rocks, he saw twelve gigantic figures resembling women: they were all employed about a loom, and as they wove they sung the following dreadful song, which, when they had finished, they tore the web into twelve pieces, and, each taking her portion, galloped six to the north, and as many to the south. These were the *Valkyriur*, female divinities, servants of *Odin* (or *Woden*) in the Gothic mythology. Their names signifies *choosers of the slain.* They were mounted on swift horses, with drawn swords in their hands; and in the throng of battle selected such as were destined to slaughter, and conducted them to *Valhalla*, the hall of *Odin*, or paradise of the brave, where they attended the banquet, and served the departed heroes with horns of mead and ale." Their numbers are not agreed upon, some authors representing them as *six*, some as *four*.—GRAY'S *Preface.*

1 *Lower*, or 'lour.' Bailey gives 'to look sour or grim, to be overcast with clouds.' German 'lauern,' 'to lie in wait,' 'to listen.' Low German 'luren,' 'luurweer,' 'suspicious weather.'

3 From Milton's *Paradise Regained*, iii. 324—

"Sharp sleet of arrowy showers,"

which again is borrowed from Vergil's 'Ferreus imber.'

4 From Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, act i. sc. 2, l. 22—

"The noise of battle hurtled in the air."

Darkened air. Compare the famous retort of the Spartan at Thermopylæ, that they would fight the better in the shade of the Persian arrows which darkened the air.

11 *Weights.* Attached to the threads of the warp.

15 The sword is the lay or batten (Latin 'pecten') to run the threads of the web close together.

19 *Wayward.* See note on *Elegy*, 106.

24 *Hauberk.* See note on *Bard*, 5.

32 *Youthful king.* Sigtryg. See preface.

41 *Dauntless earl.* Sigurd.

45 *Eirin.* Another form of 'Erin.'

VIII.

THE DESCENT OF ODIN.

See Appendix, Letter ix.

A translation of Bartholinus' *De Causis Contemnendae Mortis.* The original Norse is to be found in Saemund's *Edda.* The argument of the first five stanzas, which Gray has not translated, is as follows: Balder, the fairest of Odin's sons, is told in a dream that he must soon die. The other gods, to whom he tells his dream, promise to protect him from his fate, and send Freya to exact an oath from every created thing not to hurt Balder. Freya, however, forgets to adjure the mistletoe (and by a branch of mistletoe Balder was in the end slain by Hoder, at the instigation of Lok). Not content with the mission of Freya, Odin calls a council of the gods to consult further how to save the life of his son. The gods give different opinions, and then—

"Uprose the King of Men with speed," &c.

2 *Coal-black steed.* Gray has inserted a Spenserian epithet—

"And coal-black steeds yborne of hellish brood."

The original has 'Sleipner,' the eight-legged horse of Odin.

4 *Hela.* The goddess of Niflheliar, the Icelandic hell. It consisted of nine worlds or circles; hence 'the portals nine' of line 16.

17 "Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great sun begins his state."—*L'Allegro*, 60.

22 *Runic.* From Icelandic 'run,' Gothic 'runa,' 'scrutiny,' 'mystery,' 'mystic writing.' The earliest *runes* were not proper writing, but mystic signs possessing a magic power.

24 [In which of Sir W. Scott's poems is there a similar invocation of the dead?]

26 *A sullen sound.* Corresponds to "Donec invita surgeret" of Bartholinus.

43 *Mantling.* Covered with foam as with a mantle. Cf. Shakespeare's 'mantled pool,' and "Whose visages do cream and mantle like a standing pool."

73 The Virgins are the Norns, or Fates. As they are invisible to mortals, Odin by his question reveals his divinity.

86 *Angerbode.* 'Mater trium gigantum' in the original; *i.e.* of the wolf Fenris, the serpent Midgard, and Hela.

90 *Lok* is the evil spirit at whose unloosening the world of gods and men is destined to perish.

IX.

THE TRIUMPHS OF OWEN.

The original poem is by Gwalchmai, the son of Melir, and celebrates the battle in which Owen Gwynedd defeated the combined fleets of Ireland, Denmark, and Norway, *anno* 1137 (?) Gray found a prose version in Evans's *Specimens of the Welsh Poetry*, published 1764.

4 *Gwyneth.* North Wales.

13 "Canning in his celebrated simile speaks of 'those tremendous fabrics now reposing on their shadows in perfect silence.'" —Note by CANDY.

14 *Lochlin.* Denmark.

20 Cf. Tennyson's

"The dragon of the great Pendragonship."

Guinevere, 395.

Mona. Anglesea.

22 *Ruby crest.* The crest was a red dragon.

25 *Talymalfra.* The modern Moelfra.

29 The first is an extra syllable, called *anacrusis*, or backstroke.

His refers to Menai. A strong tide flows through the strait, like a river.

35 "Marking with indignation those who fear to stand, and yet are ashamed to fly." A very harsh use of the abstract for the concrete.

X.

THE DEATH OF HOEL.

A fragment of the Welsh poem, *The Gododin*, ascribed to the warrior-bard Aneurin. The poem celebrates the praises of ninety Cymric chieftains who fell in the great battle of the Cymric league against the invading Angles. The battle was fought at Cattraeth (Catterick), in the valley of the Swale, near Richmond, in Yorkshire. The Gododin (Odotani) are the

natives of Deivyr and Bryneich (Deira and Bernicia), the Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, the modern Durham, Northumberland, and Yorkshire.

Gray's is a poetized version of a literal translation in Evans's *Specimens of Welsh Poetry*. See H. Morley's *Shorter English Poems*, where a version of a considerable portion of the poem will be found.

5 Hoel had married a daughter of a prince of the Bryneich, with which tribe he was at feud. He abjured her family, and refused to take the dower from her father Madoc, who in revenge slew him in battle.

11 The rest of Gray's Ode is a sufficiently close version of the twenty-first stanza of the Gododin. Gray closes it like a true poet that he is; but the diction of the eighteenth century is answerable for his inflation of the plain words "wine and mead" into

> "Nectar, that the bees produce,
> Or the grape's ecstatic juice."
>
> MORLEY, *loc. cit.*

XI.

FOR MUSIC.

This Ode was written for the installation of the Duke of Grafton, who was elected Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in 1769. Gray had received from his Grace the appointment of Professor of History, and volunteered, as in gratitude bound, to write the complimentary verses, which are set to music, and performed as a regular part of the ceremony. He did not rank his own performance highly, and remarked that the music might be taken for his, and the verses for Dr. Randal's. It is true they are vastly inferior to his other odes, yet as *vers d'occasion* they must rank among the very best.

1 *Avaunt.* French 'avant,' 'move on.' [What part of speech is it here?]

[2 Who are Comus' crew? See Milton's *Comus*, 102, *seq.*]

8 Cf. "Mediisque in floribus angit."—LUCRETIUS.

13 *Empyrean.* The sphere of fiery light which lies beyond our atmosphere. Used as a substantive by Milton.

14 *Th' indignant lay.* 'Hence, avaunt,' &c. For 'lay' see *Elegy*, 115.

22 *Genuine ardour.* The 'vis vivida ingeni.'

23 Milton was admitted a Pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge, February 12th, 1625, and proceeded to his M.A. degree July, 1632. Thus for more than seven years Cambridge was his principal residence.

25 *Newton* was admitted as sizar at Trinity College, Cambridge, July, 1661; scholar, April, 1664; and minor fellow, 1667. According to Dr. Whewell, he resided in Trinity College for thirty-five years without the interruption of a month. (*History of the Inductive Sciences*, vol. ii. book viii.) Notwithstanding his grave quarrels with Flamstead, Leibnitz, and others, he well deserves the epithet of 'meek.'

26 Newton died in his 86th year.

29 [What other poet has described the Cam?]

39 Edward III., the founder of Trinity College. He added the *fleurs-de-lys* of France to the arms of England.

41 "Mary de Valentia, Countess of Pembroke, daughter of Guy de Chatillon, Comte de St. Paul, in France. Tradition tells us that her husband, Aymar de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, was slain at a tournament on the day of his nuptials. She founded Pembroke College under the name of Aula Mariae de Valentia."—GRAY.

42 "Elizabeth de Burg, Countess of Clare, was wife of John de Burg, son and heir of the Earl of Ulster, and daughter of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, by Joan of Acres, daughter of Edward I. Hence the poet gives her the name of princely. She founded Clare Hall."—GRAY.

43 Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI., who founded Queen's College.

The paler rose. Elizabeth Widville, wife of Edward IV., a benefactress of Queen's College.

45 Henry VI. (see *Ode to Eton*, 4) and Henry VIII., the chief benefactor of Trinity College.

51 *Granta.* Cambridge.

54 *Fitzroy.* Augustus Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton. He was Premier from December, 1767, to January, 1770, and the object of Junius's most virulent attacks.

66 The Countess of Richmond and Derby, and mother of Henry VII. She founded John's and Christ's Colleges. She was by birth a Beauford, hence the allusion in line 70.

71-76 Gray expresses in somewhat turgid diction that the Duke will dispense with judgment his patronage in Church and State, *subaudito*, as he had in the case of the poet.

78 "Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retired."
MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, l. 504.

[What is the primary meaning of the words?]

84 "Lord Treasurer Burleigh was Chancellor of the University in the reign of Elizabeth."—GRAY.

92 "Neque altum
Semper urgendo, neque, dum procellas
Cautus horrescis, minium premendo
Littus iniquum."—HORACE, *Odes*, xi. 10.

XII.

ON THE PLEASURES ARISING FROM VICISSITUDE.

3 *Vermeil cheek.* From *Comus*, 749. 'Vermeil,' from 'vermiculus,' the worm of the gall-nut, whence the dye is obtained. Cf. 'crimson,' from Turkish 'kermes,' the gall-nut.

4 "Rorifera mulcens aura, Zephyrus vernas evocat herbas."—SENECA, *Hippolytus*, i. 11.

16 Cf. Shelley, *To a Skylark*—

"The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight."

28 Cf. Tennyson, *In Memoriam*—

"The cattle huddled on the lea."

31 Cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act iv. sc. 4—

"He, that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before, and after."

33 "As we reflect tranquilly on the past, we can smile at misfortunes that are over." Gray's excessive love of personification sometimes leads him into confusion of metaphor.

35 Cf. "Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit."

37 As in *Comus* the lady sees a "sable cloud turn forth its silver lining to the night."

41 *Still.* 'Ever,' as in Shakespeare *passim.*

42 *A kindred grief.* For an illustration see Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act ii. sc. 6, l. 9—

"These violent delights have violent ends,
And in their triumph die; like fire and powder,
Which, as they kiss, consume: the sweetest honey
Is loathsome in his own deliciousness."

45 "Of light and shade provoke the noble strife,
And wake each striking feature into life."

BROWN, *Essay on Satire*, 360.

49 Gray has borrowed from, and at the same time improved upon, some lines of Gresset—

"O! jours de la convalescence!
Jours d'une pure volupté;
C'est une nouvelle naissance,
Un rayon d'immortalité.
Quel feu! tous les plaisirs ont volé dans mon âme,
J'adore avec transport le céleste flambeau;
Tout m'interesse, tout m'enflamme—
Pour moi l'univers est nouveau.

"Les plus simples objects; le chante d'une fauvette,
Le matin d'un beau jour, la verdure des bois,
La fraicheur d'une violette;
Mille spectacles, qu'autrefois

On voyait avec nonchalance
Transportent aujourd'hui, présentent des appas
Inconnus à l'indifférence
Et que la foule ne voit pas."

THE ELEGY.

See Appendix, Letters iii., iv.

1 *Curfew.* Used by Bacon in the literal sense of a fire-cover, a grate. The time for the curfew bell varied from three to eight. Cf. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, act iv. scene 4, l. 4—

. . . "The second cock hath crow'd,
The curfew bell hath rung, 't is three o'clock."

Gray quotes Dante, *Purgatorio*, 8—

"Squilla di lontano
Che paia 'l giorno pianger, che si muore."
("Hears the vesper bell from far,
That seems to mourn for the expiring day.")

Parting. 'Departing.' Prefixes are constantly dropped in Elizabethan English—'braid for upbraid, 'file for defile, 'collect for recollect. *Dying* of the first draft was changed to *parting*, to avoid the conceit. It is said that Gray had originally inserted a comma after "tolls," but the printer omitted it, and Gray adopted the emendation.

2 *Lea.* Meadow-land or forest glade, where the cattle love to *lie*. Common both as a prefix and suffix in names of places—Leighton, Hadleigh, Brenchley, &c.

4 Cf. Petrarch—

"Quando 'l sol bagna in mar l'aurato cerco,
E 'l aer nostro, a la mia mente imbruna."
("When the sun bathes in the sea his golden orb,
And darkens our atmosphere and my mind.")

But Gray has given a grotesque turn to his original.

6 One of Gray's favourite inversions.

7 Cf. *Macbeth*, act iii. scene 2—

"The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,
Hath rung night's yawning peal."

Notice the different sentiments which the same natural object evokes in different moods.

10 The 'ignavus bubo' of Ovid. Cf.

"The wailing owl
Screams solitary to the mournful moon."

[Point out a blot in this line.] *Mallett.*

11 *Bower.* Properly 'chamber.'

13 "Or against the rugged bark of some broad elm."
MILTON, *Comus.*

17 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ix. 192—

"Now when, as sacred light began to dawn
In Eden on the humid flowers, that breathed
Their morning incense."

18 Tennyson, *Princess*—

"The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds."

Vergil, *Æn.*, viii. 455—

"Evandrum ex humili tecto lux suscitat alma,
Et matutini volucrum sub culmine cantus."

19 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, vii. 443—

"The crested cock, whose clarion sounds
The silent hours."

20 [*Lowly bed.* Point out any ambiguity in this expression.]

21 *Lucretius*, iii. 894—

"Jam jam non domus accipiet te laeta, neque uxor
Optima, nec dulces occurrent oscula nati
Praeripere."

22 *Care.* 'Pensum,' 'task.' The phrase is hardly English, and necessitated by the rhyme.

26 Vergil, *Georgics*, i. 94—

"Rastris glebas qui frangit inertes."

27 [*Afield.* What does the *a-* represent?]

28 *Sturdy.* French 'étourdi.' Defined in *Promptorium Parvulorum* as 'unbuxum' ('unyielding'), 'rebellis, contumax,' and so used by Chaucer, Gower, &c.

33 *Heraldry.* Juvenal's 'Stemmata quid faciunt?'

35 *Awaits.* Has by the common consent of editors been altered to 'await,' but 'awaits' is the reading both of Gray's manuscript and of the Editio princeps of 1768. Is not 'the inevitable hour' the subject? Such an inversion is so common with Gray as almost to amount to a mannerism. This too gives a more natural sense to 'awaits.'

37 *You, ye.* Properly 'ye' is nominative, 'you' accusative, and this distinction is observed in our English Bible, though generally disregarded by the Elizabethans, the choice being determined mostly by euphony. Cf. Rowe: "Were you, ye fair, but cautious whom ye trust."

38 [*Trophies.* What is the original meaning?]

39 *Fretted.* The word 'fret' represents at least three distinct forms which have been assimilated; but it is difficult to disentangle the different meanings, and assign each to its original. 1. The Old English 'freten,' 'to eat;' cf. German 'fressen' (for 'ver-essen'), 'a moth fretting a garment.' [What other meaning belongs to this head?] 2. There is another Old English word (probably connected with the first) 'fraet,' 'fraetwan,' 'ornament,' 'to ornament.' 3. 'Fret' in architecture and heraldry is from a Roman root; Italian 'ferrata," French 'fretté,' properly iron grating or trellis-work; so of the

lozenge-shaped bars crossing one another in a coat of arms, or the cross bands of a ceiling; Latin 'laquearia.' 4. 'Frets,' the stops or keys of a musical instrument, is of uncertain origin. [Class under three heads, and explain, the following quotations from Shakespeare: "This majestical roof, fretted with golden fire." "Though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me." "Yon grey lines that fret the clouds." "His fretted fortunes gave him hope and fear." "He's fretted like a gummed velvet." "The roof of the chamber with golden cherubims is fretted."

40 *Anthem.* 'Anthem' and 'antiphon' are doublets. Old English 'antefne,' as we find it in the *Ancren Riwle* (1220). [How did this class of words come into English?]

41 *Storied urn.* Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 159, "storied windows." The epithet is not happily transferred, as the monumental urn (a survival of the cinerary urn of the Romans) has no story inscribed on it.

Animated. Cf. Pope's—

"Lely on animated canvas stole
The sleepy eye, that spoke the languid soul."

And Vergil's 'spirantia aera,' and 'viros de marmore voltus.'

47 Tickell has "Proud names that once the reins of empire held;" and Gray first wrote 'reins.' [Can you suggest a reason for the emendation?]

50 [*Unroll.* Justify the metaphor.]

51 *Rage.* Constantly used by Pope and his school as a synonym of poetic inspiration, genius.

53 *Many a.* A difficult idiom. We find it as early as Layamon's *Brut* (*circ.* 1205), where it is declined as a single word—"Unimete folc monianes cunnes" (immense folk of many a kin). This is sufficient to disprove Trench's conjecture that 'many' represents the French 'mesnie;' and Barnes's that 'a' represents 'on.' Compare the German 'manch ein.'

52–56 Much learning has been expended in tracing the original of these celebrated lines. Instead of quoting the many parallels more or less close, it will be more profitable to give the wise remarks of Lowell on imitations in general, from his essay on Dryden: "He certainly gave even a liberal interpretation to Molière's rule of taking his own property when he found it, though he sometimes blundered awkwardly about what was properly *his;* but in literature it should be remembered *a thing always becomes his at last who says it best, and that makes it his own.* . . . For example, Waller calls the Duke of York's flag

"'His dreadful streamer, like a comet's hair.'

And this, I believe, is the first application of the celestial portent to this particular comparison. Yet Milton's 'imperial

ensign' waves defiant behind his impregnable lines; and even Campbell flaunts his 'meteor flag' in Waller's face. Gray's *Bard* might be sent to the lock-up, but even he would find bail.

'C'est imiter quelqu'un que de planter des choux.'"

57 Gray wisely substituted Hampden and Cromwell for Brutus and Julius of the first draft.

Hampden refused the payment of ship-money in 1637.—See Bright, ii. 630.

[What should you gather from this stanza as to Gray's political opinions? Is he Cavalier or Roundhead, Tory or Whig?]

61–64 [Illustrate by examples each line.]

63 From Tickell—

"To scatter blessings o'er the British land."

65 ['He forbad to go' is not English. Can you justify the construction here?]

68 From Shakespeare, *Henry V.*, act iii. scene 3—

"The *gates of mercy* shall be all shut up."

69 *Conscious truth.* The truth of which they are conscious, which they know, and fain would testify.

71 The age of Queen Anne was the age of patronage and fulsome dedication.—See Macaulay's *Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson.* Thus Pope is constantly boasting that he is a unique exception to the prevailing vice, and satirizing men like Bufo (Halifax),

"Fed with soft dedication all day long."

73 From Drummond, *Sonnet* 49—

"Far from the madding worldling's hoarse discords."

Shakespeare has "madding Dido," and Milton "madding wheels." The construction is, 'The wishes of them who were far,' &c.

77 *Yet.* "Humble as they are, and wanting stately tombs."

78 *Still.* 'Notwithstanding'; but the position of the word is awkward.

[79 *Deck'd.* 'Protect.' Is this a just rhyme?]

Rhimes. So spelt by Gray. 'Rime' is correct (Old English for number). 'Rhyme' is due to the false derivation from Greek ῥυθμός.

81 *Muse.* 'Poet.' So in Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, &c. Cf. Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 21—

"So is it not with me as with that muse,
Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse."

84 *That teach.* Strict grammar would require the singular.

Moralist. Used loosely for one who learns or practices morals.

85 It is a moot point, which it is impossible to determine, whether *to dumb forgetfulness a prey* is in apposition to 'who,' or to 'being.' The first interpretation is the simplest in construction; the second, in meaning. In the first case the question

is really contained in the appositional clause, 'Who being a prey to forgetfulness resigned life' = 'Who in resigning life ever thought he would be forgotten.' In the second case the meaning will be, 'Who ever resigned this life to oblivion,' = 'Who ever was content to die and be forgotten.'

86 Cf. *Adriani morientis ad animam*—

"Animula vagula blandula.
Hospes, comesque corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loca?
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec, ut soles, dabis joca."

87 Cf. Lucretius, "luminis oras."

89 Compare the 'uncouth rhimes' of Drayton—

"It is some comfort to a wretch to die
(If there be comfort in the way of death),
To have some friend or kind alliance by,
To be officious at the parting breath."

90 *Pious drops.* The 'piae lacrimae' of Ovid. 'Tears of affection.'

92 Chaucer, *Reve's Prologue*, 3880, has

"Yet in oure aisshen cold is fyr yreken (raked)."

The similarity is in the words, not the sense. The Reve says that even in old age the passions of youth are warm. Gray means even after death the yearning for affection still lives.

Gray himself quotes Petrarch, *Sonnets*—

"Ch' i veggio nel pensier, dolce mio fuoco,
Fredda una lingua e due begli occhi chiusi,
Rimaner doppo noi pien di faville."

93 *For thee.* 'As for thee.'

95 *Chance.* Cf. adverbial use of 'fors.'

96 *Kindred spirit.* One like the poet, 'mindful of the unhonour'd dead.'

97 *Swain.* First meaning, 'a boy;' then 'a servant;' lastly, in pastoral poetry, used for 'a lover.'

98 Cf. *Comus*, 138—

"Ere the babbling eastern scout,
The nice morn, on the Indian steep
From his cabined loophole peep."

100 *Upland.* Milton (*L'Allegro*, 92) uses 'upland' in the older sense of 'country;' but Gray is thinking rather of another passage of Milton (*Lycidas*, 25)—

"Ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the morn."

102 *As You Like It*, act ii. scene 1—

"He lay along
Under an oak, whose antique root peep'd out
Upon the brook that brawls along the wood."

104 Cf. Burns, *Epistle to William Simpson*—

"The muse, nae Poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!"

105 From closeness of texture we get the idea of proximity.

106 *Wayward.* Old English 'waeward,' and so probably connected with 'woe,' not 'way.' The analogies of 'froward,' 'toward,' may, however, have influenced the meaning.

107 "Low spirits are my true and faithful companions; they get up with me, go to bed with me, make journeys and returns as I do; nay, and pay visits, and will even affect to be jocose, and force a feeble laugh with me; but most commonly we sit alone together, and are the prettiest insipid company in the world." GRAY to West, August, 1737. See Macaulay's somewhat brutal remarks in *Essay on Moore's Life of Byron, ad fin.*: "To people who are unacquainted with real calamity, 'nothing is so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.' This faint image of sorrow has in all ages been considered as an agreeable excitement. Old gentlemen and middle-aged gentlemen have so many real causes of sadness that they are rarely inclined 'to be as sad as night only for wantonness.' Indeed, they want the power almost as much as the inclination. We know very few persons engaged in active life who, even if they were to procure stools to be melancholy upon, and were to sit down with all the premeditation of Master Stephen, would be able to enjoy much of what somebody calls the 'ecstasy of woe.'"

114 *Church-way path.* The phrase occurs in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, act v., sc. 1, l. 386. There is no need to suppose a corruption of 'hay' ('enclosure'), or to correct 'churchyard.'

115 *Lay.* Used, *metri gratia*, for 'verse.' 'Lay' is probably a Celtic word, and means properly 'a ballad, or song recited to music.'

Before the *Epitaph* Gray originally inserted this stanza—

"There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are showers of violets found;
The redbreast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground."

Gray afterwards omitted the lines, as forming too long a parenthesis; but they are in themselves as exquisite as anything he ever wrote.

119 Cf. Horace, *Odes*, iv. 3, 1—

"Quem tu Melpomene semel
Nascentem placido lumine videris."

[In what sense did *science* smile on Gray's birth?]

124 *A friend.* An editor annotates: "The friend whom Gray gained from heaven was Mason." Correct him.

[How far is the *Epitaph* true to Gray's character, as you know it from his life?]

SONNET ON THE DEATH OF MR. RICHARD WEST.

Gray was accustomed to communicate all his compositions to West. He sent him the *Ode on the Spring*, but when it arrived his friend was dead. The last letter he received from West was one rallying him for having said that he conversed only with the illustrious departed, and almost longed to be with them. From the tone of the remonstrance it is evident that the writer was quite unconscious that his own sand-glass had nearly run out. Gray, tender and devoted in his attachments, not only felt the loss acutely at the time, but to the end of his life, whenever the name of West was mentioned, his countenance changed, and he looked as if he was suffering from a recent loss. (See *Quarterly Review*, vol. lxxxix.)

The sonnet, apart from the singular melody and beauty of all except the opening lines, has an interest of its own, having served as the text for two famous critiques—that of Wordsworth in the preface to his *Lyrical Ballads*, and the counter-criticism of Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*. Without attempting to discuss the wide question therein raised, we will notice those parts which refer directly to this sonnet. The sonnet is quoted by Wordsworth as an illustration of his famous paradox, that the language of poetry ought not to differ (save for metrical arrangement) from the language of prose, or, more strictly, from "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." He selects Gray because he was at the head of those who attempted to widen the interval between prose and poetry,* and because he is distinguished by the curious elaboration of his poetic diction. He then italicizes the following lines as the only part of the sonnet which is of any value—

A different object do these eyes require:
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.

I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear;
And weep the more, because I weep in vain.

"It is equally obvious," he adds, "that except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word 'fruitless' for 'fruitlessly,'

* "The language of the age is never the language of poetry, except among the French. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself." GRAY to West.

which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose."

Coleridge begins by a just complaint that Wordsworth takes for granted the reader's sympathy with his praise or blame of the different parts, without attempting to win it by an argumentative analysis. He then shows that the lines quoted differ from the language of ordinary life as much as those rejected as worthless. (Notice, for instance, the *order* of the first and third lines.) He then proceeds to analyse for this object the sonnet line by line.

1 "The first line is distinguished from the ordinary language of men by the epithet to morning. (We will set aside at present the consideration that the particular word 'smiling' is hacknied, and, as it involves a sort of personification, not quite congruous with the common and material attribute of shining.)" He goes on to defend pictorial epithets on the authority of the greatest poets, ancient and modern.

2 "The second line,

'And redd'ning Phœbus lifts his golden fire,'

has indeed almost as many faults as words. But then it is a bad line not because the language is distinct from that of prose, but because it conveys incongruous images; because it confounds the cause and the effect, the real thing with the personified representation of the thing." The line has almost past into a bye-word to point the affectation and unreality of the eighteenth century school of poets; but though no one would now admire it, something may be said in Gray's defence. The last part, as usual, is a classical reminiscence—

"Jamque rubrum tremulis jubar ignibus erigere alto
Cum cæptat natura."

—LUCRETIUS, iv. 404.

As to the first half of the line, Phœbus had so passed into a commonplace of poetry (Cf. Shakespeare's "And Phœbus 'gins to rise") that it can hardly be called a personification. Nothing further needs comment, except the vagueness and consequent badness of the eleventh line, the beauty of the twelfth line (Cf. Shelley's "The nightingale's *complaint* it dies upon her heart"), and the directness, simplicity, and pathos of the concluding couplet, which has almost a Shakespearian ring.

The concluding lines of Gray's poem, *De Principiis Cogitandi*, are worth quoting, both as an illustration of the sonnet and a good specimen of Gray's Latin verse—

"Vidi egomet duro graviter concussa dolore
Pectora, in alterius non unquam lenta dolorem;
Et languere oculos vidi, et pallescere amantem
Vultum, quo nunquam Pietas nisi rara, Fidesque,

Altus amor Veri, et purum spirabat Honestum.
Visa tamen tardi demùm inclementia morbi
Cessare est, reducemque iterum roseo ore Salutem
Speravi, atque unà tecum, dilecte Favoni!
Credulus heu longos, ut quondàm, fallere soles:
Heu spes nequicquam dulces, atque irrita vota!
Heu mœstos soles, sine te quos ducere flendo
Per desideria, et questus jam cogor inanes!
At Tu, sancta anima, et nostri non indiga luctûs,
Stellanti templo, sincerique aetheris igne,
Unde orta es, fruere; atque o si secura, neque ultra
Mortalis, notos olim miserata labores
Respectes, tenuesque vacet cognoscere curas;
Humanum si forté altâ de sede procellam
Contemplere, metus, stimulosque cupidinis acres,
Gaudiaque et gemitus, parvoque in corde tumultum
Irarum ingentem, et sævos sub pectore fluctus;
Respice et has lacrimas, memori quas ictus amore
Fundo; quod possum, juxtà lugere sepulcrum
Dum juvat, et mutae vana haec jactare favillae."

STANZAS TO MR. BENTLEY.

See Appendix, Letters vii., x.

Mr. Bentley, the son of the celebrated critic, at the suggestion of Horace Walpole, designed some illustrations for a collected edition of Gray's poems. These consisted at the time (1753) of the *Elegy*, the *Long Story*, and four *Odes*. Gray, with an absurd affectation of modesty, insisted that the title should run, *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for Six Poems of Mr. T. Gray.* The original drawings are preserved in the library at Strawberry Hill, and Mr. Bentley survives like the fly in amber.

2 There is a confusion between the Muse of Poetry and the poet.

6 *Essence.* One of the large family of philosophic terms which have come to us from Aristotle through the Latin. οὐσία (essentia) is the first of the Aristotelian categories, and signifies formal existence—that which makes a thing to be what it is. Gray uses the word loosely for 'existence.'

20 "Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,
To Shakespeare gave as much, she could not give him more."—DRYDEN *to Congreve.*

25 A corner of the MS. copy was torn. Mason and others have attempted to fill the gap, but not very successfully. [Try your hand at supplying the imperfect lines.]

EPITAPH ON MRS. MASON.

Gray showed the original verses of Mason to Mr. Nicholls, saying, "That will never do for an ending; I have altered them thus: 'Tell them, &c.'"

Mason had the meanness to assume the whole credit of the epitaph to himself.

SKETCH OF HIS OWN CHARACTER.

(Written in 1761, and found in one of his pocket-books.)

4 A sneer at the Deists of the eighteenth century, for whom Gray had no tolerance. He resented the covert scepticism of Middleton, had a low opinion of Hume's talents, and regarded Voltaire with mixed admiration and loathing.

6 *Charles Townsend*, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Chatham's last administration. His Colonial Importation Bill, brought in during Chatham's illness, helped to precipitate the American Revolution. Macaulay calls him the most brilliant and versatile of mankind, and says of him that "he had belonged to every party, and cared for none."

Squire, Samuel. A fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and afterwards Dean of Bristol and Bishop of St. David's.

"Bishop Warburton one day met Dean Tucker, who said that he hoped his lordship liked his situation at Gloucester, on which the sarcastic bishop replied that never bishopric was so *bedeaned*, for that his predecessor had made religion his trade, and that he, Dean Tucker, had made trade his religion."

APPENDIX

I.

MR. GRAY TO MR. WEST.

LONDON, *Aug.* 22, 1737.

AFTER a month's expectation of you, and a fortnight's despair, at Cambridge, I am come to town, and to better hopes of seeing you. If what you sent me last be the product of your melancholy, what may I not expect from your more cheerful hours? For by this time the ill health that you complain of is (I hope) quite departed; though, if I were self-interested, I ought to wish for the continuance of any thing that could be the occasion of so much pleasure to me.* Low spirits are my true and faithful companions; they get up with me, go to bed with me, make journeys and returns as I do; nay, and pay visits, and will even affect to be jocose, and force a feeble laugh with me; but most commonly we sit alone together, and are the prettiest insipid company in the world. However, when you come, I believe they must undergo the fate of all humble companions, and be discarded. Would I could turn them to the same use that you have done, and make an Apollo of them. If they could write such verses with me, not hartshorn, nor spirit of amber, nor all that furnishes the closet of an apothecary's widow, should persuade me to part with them: But, while I write to you, I hear the bad news of Lady Walpole's death on Saturday night last. Forgive me if the thought of what my poor Horace must feel on that account, obliges me to have done in reminding you that I am yours, &c.

II.

MR. GRAY TO MR. WALPOLE.

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 1, 1747.

As one ought to be particularly careful to avoid blunders in a compliment of condolence, it would be a sensible satisfaction to me (before I testify my sorrow, and the sincere part I take in

---

* "Grief fills the room up of my absent child;
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks," &c.—*King John*, act iii. sc. 4.

your misfortune) to know for certain, who it is I lament. I knew Zara and Selima (Selima, was it? or Fatima?) or rather I knew them both together; for I cannot justly say which was which. Then as to your handsome Cat, the name you distinguish her by, I am no less at a loss, as well knowing one's handsome cat is always the cat one likes best; or if one be alive and the other dead, it is usually the latter that is the handsomest. Besides, if the point were never so clear, I hope you do not think me so ill-bred or so imprudent as to forfeit all my interest in the survivor; Oh no! I would rather seem to mistake, and imagine to be sure it must be the tabby one that had met with this sad accident. Till this affair is a little better determined, you will excuse me if I do not begin to cry;

"Tempus inane peto, requiem, spatiumque doloris."

Which interval is the more convenient, as it gives time to rejoice with you on your new honours.* This is only a beginning; I reckon next week we shall hear you are a free-Mason, or a Gormogon† at least.—Heigh ho! I feel (as you to be sure have done long since) that I have very little to say, at least in prose. Somebody will be the better for it; I do not mean you, but your Cat, feuë Mademoiselle Selime, whom I am about to immortalize for one week or fortnight, as follows * * *

* * * * *

There 's a poem for you, it is rather too long for an Epitaph.

III.

MR. GRAY TO MR. WALPOLE.

CAMBRIDGE, *Feb.* 11, 1751.

As you have brought me into a little sort of distress, you must assist me, I believe, to get out of it as well as I can. Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it), who have taken the *Magazine of Magazines* into their hands: They tell me that an *ingenious* Poem, called reflections in a Country Church-yard, has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith; that they are informed that the *excellent* author of it is I by name, and that they beg not only his *indulgence*, but the *honour* of his correspondence, &c. As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent, or so correspondent, as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me; and

---

* Mr. Walpole was about this time elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

† See some account of the "Gormogons" in Nicholls's *Life of Hogarth*, page 424. There is a Print of Hogarth's with the title, "The Mystery of Masonry brought to light by the Gormogons." There is also a Poem, by Harry Carey, called *The Moderator between the Free Masons and Gormogons;* see also Pope's *Dunciad*, book iv. verse 576.—*Mitford.*

therefore am obliged to desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him, but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be,—Elegy, written in a Country Church-yard. If he would add a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you behold the *Magazine of Magazines* in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. If Dodsley do not do this immediately, he may as well let it alone.

NOTE.—Gray succeeded in forestalling the magazines by a few days. The first edition, as is proved by the next letter, was out by February 20. Its title ran, "*An Elegy wrote in a Country Church-yard.* London: Printed for R. Dodsley in Pall Mall, and sold by M. Cooper in Paternoster Row, 1751. Price 6d." It appeared in the *Magazine of Magazines* for February, in the *London Magazine* for March, and in the *Grand Magazine of Magazines* for April, 1751. Magazines at that period came out at the end of the month.

IV.

MR. GRAY TO MR. WALPOLE.

ASH-WEDNESDAY, CAMBRIDGE, 1751.

MY DEAR SIR,—You have indeed conducted with great decency my little *misfortune:* you have taken a paternal care of it, and expressed much more kindness than could have been expressed from so near a relation. But we are all frail; and I hope to do as much for you another time.

Nurse Dodsley has given it a pinch or two in the cradle, that (I doubt) it will bear the marks of as long as it lives. But no matter: we have ourselves suffered under her hands before now; and besides, it will only look the more careless and by *accident* as it were. I thank you for your advertisement, which saves my honour, and in a manner *bien flatteuse pour moi*, who should be put to it even to make myself a compliment in good English.

You will take me for a mere poet, and a fetcher and carrier of sing-song, if I tell you that I intend to send you the beginning of a drama,* not mine, thank God, as you will believe, when you hear it is finished, but wrote by a person whom I have a very good opinion of. It is (unfortunately) in the manner of the ancient drama, with choruses, which I am to my shame the occasion of; for, as great part of it was at first written in that form, I would not suffer him to change it to a play fit for the stage, and as he intended, because the lyric parts are the best of

* This was the *Elfrida* of Mr. Mason.

it, they must have been lost. The story is Saxon, and the language has a tang of Shakespeare, that suits an old-fashioned fable very well. In short I don't do it merely to amuse you, but for the sake of the author, who wants a judge, and so I would lend him *mine:* yet not without your leave, lest you should have us up to dirty our stockings at the bar of your house, for wasting the time and politics of the *nation.* Adieu, Sir !—I am, ever yours, T. GRAY.

V.

MR. GRAY TO MR. WALPOLE.

* * * * *

I send you a bit of a thing for two reasons; first, because it is of one of your favourites, Mr. M. Green ; and next, because I would do justice. The thought on which my second Ode* turns is manifestly stole from hence ; not that I knew it at the time, but having seen this many years before, to be sure it imprinted itself on my memory, and, forgetting the author, I took it for my own. The subject was the Queen's Hermitage.

* * * * *

Tho' yet no palace grace the shore,
To lodge the pair you † should adore,
Nor abbeys great in ruins rise,
Royal equivalents for vice;
Behold a grot in Delphic grove,
The Graces' and the Muses' love,
A temple from vain-glory free ;
Whose goddess is Philosophy:
Whose sides such licens'd idols ‡ crown
As Superstition would pull down:
The only pilgrimage I know,
That men of sense would choose to go.
Which sweet abode, her wisest choice,
Urania cheers with heavenly voice ;
While all the Virtues gather round
To see her consecrate the ground.

If thou, the God with winged feet,
In council talk of this retreat,
And jealous Gods resentment show
At altars rais'd to men below,
Tell those proud lords of heaven 'tis fit
Their house our heroes should admit.
While each exists (as poets sing)
A lazy, lewd, immortal thing,
They must, or grow in disrepute,
With earth's first commoners recruit.

Needless it is, in terms unskill'd,
To praise whatever Boyle shall build.

---

* The *Ode on the Spring.* † Speaking to the Thames.
‡ The four busts.

Needless it is the busts to name
Of men, monopolists of fame;
Four chiefs adorn the modest stone,
For virtue, as for learning known:
The thinking sculpture helps to raise
Deep thoughts, the genii of the place:
To the mind's ear, and inward sight,
There silence speaks, and shade gives light:
While insects from the threshold preach,
And minds dispos'd to musing teach;
Proud of strong limbs and painted hues,
They perish by the slightest bruise;
Or maladies begun within
Destroy more slow life's frail machine:
From maggot-youth, thro' change of state,
They feel like us the turns of fate:
Some born to creep have liv'd to fly,
And chang'd earth's cells for dwellings high:
And some that did their six wings keep,
Before they died, been forced to creep.
They politics, like ours, profess;
The greater prey upon the less.
Some strain on foot huge loads to bring,
Some toil incessant on the wing:
Nor from their vigorous schemes desist
Till death; and then they are never mist.
Some frolick, toil, marry, increase,
Are sick and well, have war and peace;
And broke with age in half a day,
Yield to successors, and away.

* * * * *

VI.

MR. GRAY TO MR. WHARTON.

* * * * *

Of my house* I cannot say much; I wish I could! But for my heart, it is no less yours than it has long been; and the last thing in the world that will throw it into tumults is a fine Lady. The verses† you so kindly try to keep in countenance were wrote to divert that particular family, and succeeded accordingly; but being showed about in town, are not liked there at all.

Mrs. French, a very fashionable personage, told Mr. Walpole that she had seen a thing by a friend of his, which she did not know what to make of, for it aimed at everything, and meant nothing; to which he replied, that he had always taken her for a woman of sense, and was very sorry to be undeceived. On the other hand, the stanzas‡ which I now enclose to you have had the misfortune, by Mr. Walpole's fault, to be made still more public, for which they certainly were never meant; but it

---

* The house he was rebuilding in Cornhill.—MASON.
† The *Long Story.* ‡ The *Elegy in a Country Church-yard.*

is too late to complain. They have been so applauded, it is quite a shame to repeat it. I mean not to be modest; but I mean, it is a shame for those who have said such superlative things about them, that I can't repeat them. I should have been glad that you and two or three more people had liked them, which would have satisfied my ambition on this head amply.

* * * * *

December 18 [1751], *Cambridge.*

VII.

MR. GRAY TO MR. WALPOLE.

STOKE, *January*, 1753.

I am at present at Stoke, to which place I came at half an hour's warning upon the news I received of my mother's illness, and did not expect to have found her alive; but when I arrived she was much better, and continues so. I shall therefore be very glad to make you a visit at Strawberry Hill, whenever you give me notice of a convenient time. I am surprised at the print,* which far surpasses my idea of London graving. The drawing itself was so finished, that I suppose it did not require all the art I had imagined to copy it tolerably. My aunts seeing me open your letter, took it to be a burying-ticket, and asked whether anybody had left me a ring; and so they still conceive it to be, even with all their spectacles on. Heaven forbid they should suspect it to belong to any verses of mine; they would burn me for a poet. On my own part, I am satisfied if this design of yours succeed so well as you intend it; and yet I know it will be accompanied with something not at all agreeable to me.—While I write this I receive your second letter. Sure, you are not out of your wits! This I know, if you suffer my head to be printed, you will infallibly put me out of mine. I conjure you immediately to put a stop to any such design. Who is at the expense of engraving it, I know not; but if it be Dodsley, I will make up the loss to him. The thing as it was, I know, will make me ridiculous enough; but to appear in proper person at the head of my works, consisting of half a dozen ballads in thirty pages, would be worse than the pillory.

---

* "A proof print of the 'Cul de Lampe,' which Mr. Bentley designed for the *Elegy in a Country Church-yard*, and which represents a village funeral; this occasioned the pleasant mistake of his two aunts. The remainder of the letter relates entirely to the projected publication of Mr. Bentley's designs, which were printed after by Dodsley this same year. The latter part of it, where he so vehemently declares against having his head prefixt to that work, will appear highly characteristical to those readers who were personally acquainted with Mr. Gray. The print, which was taken from an original picture, painted by Eckardt, in Mr. Walpole's possession, was actually more than half engraved, but afterwards on this account suppressed."—MASON.

I do assure you, if I had received such a book, with such a frontispiece, without any warning, I believe it would have given me a palsy: therefore I rejoice to have received this notice, and shall not be easy till you tell me all thoughts of it are laid aside. I am extremely in earnest, and cannot bear even the idea.

I had written to Dodsley if I had not received yours, to tell him how little I liked the title which he meant to prefix; but your letter has put all that out of my head. If you think it necessary to print these explanations for the use of people that have no eyes, I should be glad they were a little altered. I am to my shame in your debt for a long letter, but I cannot think of anything else till you have set me at ease on this matter.

VIII.

MR. GRAY TO MR. NICHOLLS.

It is long since that I heard you were gone in haste into Yorkshire on account of your mother's illness, and the same letter informed me that she was recovered, otherwise I had then wrote to you only to beg you would take care of her, and to inform you that I had discovered a thing very little known, which is, that in one's whole life one can never have any more than a single mother. You may think this is obvious, and (what you call) a trite observation. You are a green gosling! I was at the same age (very near) as wise as you, and yet I never discovered this (with full evidence and conviction I mean) till it was too late. It is thirteen years ago, and seems but as yesterday, and every day I live it sinks deeper into my heart.* Many a corollary could I draw from this axiom for your use (not for my own), but I will leave you the merit of doing it for yourself. Pray tell me how your health is: I conclude it perfect, as I hear you offered yourself as a guide to Mr. Palgrave into the Sierra-Morena of Yorkshire. For me, I passed the end of May and all June in Kent, not disagreeably. In the west part of it, from every eminence, the eye catches some long reach of the Thames or Medway, with all their shipping: in the east the sea breaks in upon you, and mixes its white transient sails and glittering blue expanse with the deeper and brighter greens of the woods and corn. This sentence is so fine I am quite ashamed; but no matter! You must translate it into prose. Palgrave, if he heard it, would cover his face with his pudding sleeve. I do not tell

* "He seldom mentions his mother without a sigh. After his death her gowns and wearing apparel were found in a trunk in his apartments just as she had left them; it seemed as if he could never take the resolution to open it, in order to distribute them to his female relations, to whom by his will, he bequeathed them."—MASON.

you of the great and small beasts, and creeping things innumerable, that I met with, because you do not suspect that this world is inhabited by anything but men and women and clergy, and such two-legged cattle. Now I am here again, very disconsolate and all alone; for Mr. Brown is gone, and the cares of this world are coming thick upon me. You, I hope, are better off, riding and walking in the woods of Studley, &c. &c. I must not wish for you here; besides, I am going to town at Michaelmas, by no means for amusement.

IX.

MR. GRAY TO MR. BEATTIE.

PEMBROKE HALL, *December* 24, 1767.

Since I had the pleasure of receiving your last letter, which did not reach me till I had left the North, and was come to London, I have been confined to my room with a fit of the gout. Now I am recovered and in quiet at Cambridge, I take up my pen to thank you for your very friendly offers, which have so much the air of frankness and real good meaning, that were my body as tractable and easy of conveyance as my mind, you would see me to-morrow in the chamber you have so hospitably laid out for me at Aberdeen. But, alas! I am a summer-bird, and can only sit drooping till the sun returns: even then too my wings may chance to be clipped, and little in plight for so distant an excursion.

The proposal you make me, about printing at Glasgow what little I have ever written, does me honour. I leave my reputation in that part of the kingdom to your care, and only desire you would not let your partiality to me and mine mislead you. If you persist in your design, Mr. Foulis certainly ought to be acquainted with what I am now going to tell you. When I was in London the last spring, Dodsley, the bookseller, asked my leave to reprint, in a smaller form, all I ever published; to which I consented, and added that I would send him a few explanatory notes; and if he would omit entirely the *Long Story* (which was never meant for the public, and only suffered to appear in that pompous edition because of Mr. Bentley's designs, which were not intelligible without it), I promised to send him something else to print instead of it, lest the bulk of so small a volume should be reduced to nothing at all. Now it is very certain that I had rather see them printed at Glasgow (especially as you will condescend to revise the press) than at London; but I know not how to retract my promise to Dodsley. By the way, you perhaps may imagine that I have some kind of interest in this publication; but the truth is, I have none whatever. The expense is his, and so is the profit, if there be any. I therefore told him the other day, in general terms, that I heard there

would be an edition put out in Scotland by a friend of mine, whom I could not refuse; and that, if so, I would send thither a copy of the same notes and additions that I had promised to send to him. This did not seem at all to cool his courage. Mr. Foulis must therefore judge for himself, whether he thinks it worth while to print what is going to be printed also at London. If he does, I will send him (in a packet to you) the same things I shall send to Dodsley. They are imitations of two pieces of old Norwegian poetry, in which there was a wild spirit that struck me; but for my paraphrases I cannot say much; you will judge. The rest are nothing but a few parallel passages, and small notes just to explain what people said at the time was wrapped in total darkness. You will please to tell me, as soon as you can conveniently, what Mr. Foulis says on this head, that (if he drops the design) I may save myself and you the trouble of this packet. I ask your pardon for talking so long about it; a little more, and my letter would be as big as all my works.

I have read, with much pleasure, an Ode of yours (in which you have done me the honour to adopt a measure that I have used) on Lord Hay's birthday. Though I do not love panegyric, I cannot but applaud this, for there is nothing mean in it. The diction is easy and noble, the texture of the thoughts lyric, and the versification harmonious. The few expressions I object to are . . . . *. These, indeed, are minutiæ; but they weigh for something, as half a grain makes a difference in the value of a diamond.

X.

MR. GRAY TO MR. DODSLEY.

February 12, CAMBRIDGE.

SIR,—I am not at all satisfied with the title. To have it conceived that I publish a collection of *Poems* and half a dozen little matters (four of which too have already been printed again and again) thus pompously adorned, would make me appear very justly ridiculous. I desire it may be understood (which is the truth) that the verses are only subordinate and explanatory to the Drawings, and suffered by me to come out thus only for that reason: therefore, if you yourself prefixed this title, I desire it may be altered; or if Mr. W. [Walpole] ordered it so, that you would tell him why I wish it were changed in the manner I mentioned to you at first, or to that purpose; for the more I consider it, the less I can bear it as it now stands. I even think there is an uncommon sort of simplicity that looks like affectation, in putting our plain Christian and surnames without a Mr.

* "Another paragraph of particular criticism is here omitted."—MASON.

before them. But this (if it signifies anything) I easily give up, the other I cannot. You need not apprehend that this change in the title will be any prejudice to the sale of the book. A showy title-page may serve to sell a pamphlet of a shilling or two; but this is not of a price for chance customers, whose eye is caught in passing by a window, and could never sell but from the notion the town may entertain of the merit of the drawings, which they will be instructed in by some that understand such things.

I thank you for the offer you make me, but I shall be contented with three copies, two of which you will send me, and keep the third till I acquaint you where to send it. If you will let me know the exact day they will come out a little beforehand, I will give you a direction. You will remember to send two copies to Dr. Thomas Wharton, M.D., at Durham. Perhaps you may have burnt my letter, so I will again put down the title —"Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for six Poems of Mr. T. Gray." —I am, Sir, your humble servant, T. G.

XI.

MR. GRAY TO MR. HURD.

STOKE, *August* 25, 1757.

DEAR SIR,—I do not know why you should thank me for what you had a right and title to, but attribute it to the excess of your politeness, and the more so because almost no one else has made me the same compliment. As your acquaintance in the University (you say) do me the honour to admire, it would be ungenerous in me not to give them notice that they are doing a very unfashionable thing; for all people of condition are agreed not to admire, nor even to understand. One very great man, writing to an acquaintance of his and mine, says that he had read them seven or eight times, and that now, when he next sees him, he shall not have above thirty questions to ask. Another, a peer, believes that the last stanza of the second Ode relates to king Charles the First and Oliver Cromwell. Even my friends tell me they do not succeed, and write me moving topics of consolation on that head; in short, I have heard of nobody but a player and a doctor of divinity that profess their esteem for them. Oh yes! a lady of quality, a friend of Mason's, who is a great reader. She knew there was a compliment to Dryden, but never expected there was anything said about Shakespeare or Milton till it was explained to her, and wishes that there had been titles prefixed to tell what they were about. From this mention of Mason's name you may think, perhaps, we are great correspondents; no such thing; I have not heard from him this two months. I will be sure to scold in my own

name as well as in yours. I rejoice to hear you are so ripe for the press, and so voluminous—not for my own sake only, whom you flatter with the hopes of seeing your labours, both public and private, but for yours too; for to be employed is to be happy. This principle of mine, and I am convinced of its truth, has, as usual, no influence on my practice. I am alone and *ennuyé* to the last degree, yet do nothing; indeed, I have one excuse: my health, which you so kindly enquire after, is not extraordinary ever since I came hither. It is no great malady, but several little ones, that seem brewing no good to me. It will be a particular pleasure to me to hear whether Content dwells in Leicestershire, and how she entertains herself there; only do not be too happy, nor forget entirely the quiet ugliness of Cambridge.—I am, dear Sir, your friend and obliged humble servant, T. GRAY.

XII.

MR. GRAY TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON.

December 19, 1757.

DEAR MASON,—Though I very well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver, yet, if any great man would say to me, "I make you Rat-catcher to his Majesty, with a salary of £300 a year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand on these things," I cannot say I should jump at it; nay, if they would drop the very name of the office, and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me. But I do not pretend to blame anyone else who has not the same sensations. For my part, I would rather be serjeant trumpeter or pinmaker to the palace. Nevertheless, I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it who will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit. Rowe was, I think, the last man of character that had it. As to Settle, whom you mention, he belonged to my lord mayor, not to the king. Eusden was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned out a drunken parson. Dryden was as disgraceful in the office from his character as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses. The office itself has always humbled the professor (even in the days when kings were somebody), if he were a poor writer, by making him more conspicuous; and if he were a good one, by setting him at war with the little fry of his profession; for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate.

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