

ELEGY AND
OTHER POEMS



THOMAS GRAY

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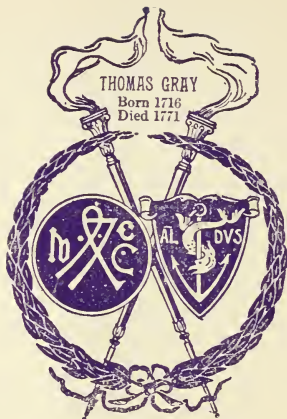
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ELEGY
*Written in a
Country Churchyard*



*Thomas
Gray ~*

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Elegy and Other Poems

Introduction

THOMAS GRAY was born in Cornhill, London, December 26, 1716. Philip Gray, the poet's father, a broker and scrivener, was a man of ungovernable temper, whose cruelty to his gentle wife became so unendurable as to lead to a separation. Dorothy Gray, on the other hand, possessed a beautiful character, and it is to her love and industry that Thomas owed his education. Mrs. Gray met the expenses of her son at Eton College by keeping, together with her sister, a millinery shop in London. The poet rewarded her by the most lively gratitude and by devot-

ing himself very assiduously to his studies. From Eton young Gray went to Cambridge, being admitted as a pensioner at Peter-House in his nineteenth year. After four years' residence, the poet left the university in the company of Horace Walpole, whose acquaintance he had formed while there, and made an extended tour of the Continent, returning to England in 1741. Shortly afterward Gray took up his residence again in Cambridge, which he made his home, with the exception of two brief intervals, throughout the rest of his life.

The events that follow in the biography of the poet are the quiet happenings in the life of a scholar and man of letters: the writing of a poem, the publication of a book, the formation

Introduction ❀

of a literary friendship, — such are the typical landmarks in these tranquil years.

In 1742 Gray wrote his “Ode to Spring,” “Ode on Eton College,” and “Hymns to Adversity,” and began the “Elegy in a Country Churchyard,” though the latter was not published until 1751. In 1753 his mother died. Two years later the “Progress of Poesy” and “The Bard” were published, and added to the already great reputation won for the poet by the “Elegy.”

In 1762 Gray declined the laureateship, saying shrewdly regarding the matter in a personal letter: “For my part, I would rather be sergeant-trumpeter or pinmaker to the palace; nevertheless, I interest myself a little

in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit. . . . The office itself has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age 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 own profession; for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate.”

A tour of Scotland in 1765 occasioned many interesting descriptive letters, which have been, fortunately, preserved. In 1768 Gray, then fifty-two years of age, was appointed professor of modern history at Cambridge. His health, however, never

robust, was now much broken, and he never delivered any lectures. He died on the 30th of July, 1771, and was buried beside his mother at Stoke Pogis.

Gray was always more or less of a recluse, and frequently the victim of low spirits. He never married. In disposition he was kind, but very reserved; in manners fastidious almost to effeminacy. His moral character was irreproachable; his erudition surpasses that of any eminent English poet, with one or two possible exceptions. His poetry is marked by restraint, elegance, and precision, and is pervaded by a spirit of gentle contemplation.

Popular opinion agrees with the verdict of the critics in pronouncing the

“Elegy” to be the poet’s masterpiece. Lord Byron wrote regarding it: “Had Gray written nothing but his ‘Elegy,’ high as he stands, I am not sure that he would not stand higher; it is the corner-stone of his glory. . . . Gray’s ‘Elegy’ pleased instantly and eternally.”

Elegy and Other Poems

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting
day,
The lowing herd winds 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,

✻ Elegy and Other Poems

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 echo-
ing 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 :

✻ Elegy and Other Poems

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
pow'r,

And all that beauty, all that wealth
e'er gave,

Await alike th' inevitable hour.

The paths of glory lead but to the
grave.

Elegy and Other Poems ❁

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these
the fault,

If memory o'er their tomb no
trophies raise,

Where thro' 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 flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear
of death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid

Some heart once pregnant with celes-
tial fire;

❖ Elegy and Other Poems

Hands, that the rod of empire might
 have sway'd,
Or waked 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 unfathom'd caves of ocean
 bear :
Full many a flower is born to blush
 unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the
 desert air.

Elegy and Other Poems ❧

Some village Hampden, that, with
dauntless breast,

The little tyrant of his fields with-
stood,

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 circumscribed
alone

Their growing virtues, but their
crimes confined;

❧ Elegy and Other Poems

Forbade 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 learn'd to
stray ;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of
their way.

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

Their name, their years, spelt by th'
unletter'd 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 ling'ring 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' un-
honour'd dead, *
Dost in these lines their artless tale
relate ;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy
fate, —

Elegy and Other Poems ❀

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 bab-
bles by.

“Hard by yon wood, now smiling as
in scorn,

Mutt’ring his wayward fancies he
would rove ;

❖ Elegy and Other Poems

Now drooping, woful-wan, like one
forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in
hopeless love.

“ One morn I miss'd him on the
'custom'd hill,
Along the heath, and near his fav'rite
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 canst
read) the lay
Graved 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 mark'd him for her
own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul
sincere,

Heaven did a recompense as largely
send ;

He gave to mis'ry (all he had) a tear,

He gain'd from heav'n ('twas all he
wish'd) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,

Or draw his frailties from their dread
abode,

✻ Elegy and Other Poems

(There they alike in trembling hope
repose,)

The bosom of his Father and his
God.

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 gather'd fragrance fling.

Where'er the oak's thick branches
stretch
A broader browner shade,

❧ Elegy and Other Poems

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 reclined 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 honeyed spring,
And float amid the liquid noon :
Some lightly o'er the current skim,

Elegy and Other Poems ❀

Some show 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 Mis-
chance,
Or chill'd 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,

❖ Elegy and Other Poems

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.

ON THE DEATH OF A
FAVOURITE CAT

DROWNED IN A TUB OF GOLDFISHES

'T WAS 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, reclined,
 Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared ;
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 purr'd applause.

❧ Elegy and Other Poems

Still had she gazed; 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 stretch'd, in vain, to reach the
prize.

What female heart can gold despise ?

What Cat's averse to fish ?

Presumptuous maid! with looks in-
tent

Again she stretch'd, again she bent,

Nor knew the gulf between.

Elegy and Other Poems ❀

(Malignant Fate sat by, and smiled)
The slipp'ry verge her feet beguiled,
She tumbled headlong in.

Eight times emerging from the flood,
She mew'd to ev'ry wat'ry God,
Some speedy aid to send.

No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd :
Nor cruel Tom, nor Susan heard.

A fav'rite has no friend !

From hence, ye beauties, undeceived,
Know, one false step is ne'er retrieved,
And be with caution bold.

Not all that tempts your wandering
eyes

And heedless hearts is lawful prize,
Nor all, that glisters, gold.

ON A DISTANT PROSPECT
OF ETON COLLEGE

Ἀνθρῶπος, ἰκανὴ πρόφασις εἰς τὸ δυστυχεῖν.

Menander, Incert. Fragm. ver. 382. ed. Cler. p. 245.

YE distant spires, ye antique towers,
That crown the wat'ry glade,
Where grateful Science still adores
Her Henty's holy shade ;
And ye, that from the stately brow
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse
below
Of grove, of lawn, of mead sur-
vey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flow-
ers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
His silver-winding way :

Elegy and Other Poems ❁

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 enthal ?

What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed,
Or urge the flying ball?

While some on earnest business bent
Their murm'ring labours ply
'Gainst graver hours that bring con-
straint

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 possess ;
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
The sunshine of the breast :

Elegy and Other Poems ❁

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 th' 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, show them where in ambush
 stand,
To seize their prey, the murth'rous
 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 forced to
flow ;

Elegy and Other Poems ❁

And keen Remorse with blood defiled,
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 suff'rings : all are men,
Condemn'd alike to groan ;
The tender for another's pain,
Th' unfeeling for his own.

✻ Elegy and Other Poems

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.

HYMN TO ADVERSITY

— Ζήνα —

.
Τὸν φρονεῖν Βροτοῦς ὀδώ-
σαντα, τῷ πάθει μαθῶν
Θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.

Æsch. Agam. ver. 181.

DAUGHTER of Jove, relentless power,
Thou tamer of the human breast,
Whose iron scourge and tort'ring 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 heav'nly 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 learn'd 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 received,
To her they vow their truth, and are
again believed.

Elegy and Other Poems ❁

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

O, gently on thy suppliant's head,
Dread goddess, lay thy chast'ning hand !
Not in thy Gorgon terrors clad,
Not circled with the vengeful band
(As by the impious thou art seen)
With thund'ring voice, and threat'ning mien,

❖ Elegy and Other Poems

With screaming Horror's fun'ral 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 gen'rous 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.

THE PROGRESS OF POESY

A PINDARIC ODE ¹

Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν · ἐς
Δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐρμηνέων
Χατίζει.

Pindar. Ol. II. v. 152.

I. I.

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,

¹ Finished in 1754. Printed together with
"The Bard, an Ode," August 8, 1757. — MS.

❧ Elegy and Other Poems

Drink life and fragrance as they flow.
Now the rich stream of music winds
 along,
Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,
Thro' 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.

O Sov'reign of the willing soul,
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing
 airs,
Enchanting shell ! the sullen Cares
 And frantic Passions hear thy soft
 control.
On Thracia's hills the Lord of War
Has curb'd the fury of his car,

Elegy and Other Poems ❧

And dropt his thirsty lance at thy
command.

Perching on the sceptred 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 terrors 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 Pleas-
ures,

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. I.

Man's feeble race what ills await !
Labour, and Penury, the racks of Pain,

Elegy and Other Poems ❀

Disease, and Sorrow's weeping train,
And Death, sad refuge from the
storms of fate!

The fond complaint, my song, dis-
prove,

And justify the laws of Jove.

Say, has he giv'n in vain the heav'nly
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 od'rous shade
Of Chili's boundless forests laid,
She deigns to hear the savage youth
repeat,

In loose numbers wildly sweet,
Their feather-cinctured chiefs, and
dusky loves.

Her track, where'er the goddess roves,
Glory pursue, and gen'rous Shame,
Th' unconquerable Mind, and free-
dom's holy flame.

II. 3.

Woods, that wave o'er Delphi's steep,
Isles, that crown th' Ægean deep,
Fields, that cool Ilissus laves,
Or where Mæander's amber waves

Elegy and Other Poems ❧

In lingering lab'rinth creep,
How do your tuneful echoes languish,
Mute, but to the voice of anguish!
Where each old poetic mountain
Inspiration breathed 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. I.

Far from the sun and summer-gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's darling
laid,

What time, where lucid Avon stray'd,
To him the mighty mother did un-
veil

Her awful face: the dauntless child
Stretch'd forth his little arms and
smiled.

“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 sympa-
thetic tears.”

III. 2.

Nor second He, that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of Ecstasy,
The secrets of th' abyss to spy.

He pass'd 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 presump-
tuous 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 —

O 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,

Elegy and Other Poems ❧

With orient hues, unborrow'd 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.

THE BARD

A PINDARIC ODE

I. I.

“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 Cam-
bria’s tears!”

Such were the sounds that o’er the
crested pride
Of the first Edward scatter’d wild
dismay,

Elegy and Other Poems ❧

As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy
side

He wound with toilsome march his
long array.

Stout Glo'ster stood aghast in speech-
less trance :

“To arms!” cried Mortimer, and
couch'd his quiv'ring lance.

I. 2.

On a rock whose haughty brow,
Frowns o'er cold Conway's foaming
flood,

Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the poet stood ;
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled
air)

And with a master's hand, and proph-
et'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 hush’d the stormy main:
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred, whose magic song

Elegy and Other Poems ❧

Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-
topt 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 tis-
sue of thy line.

II. I.

“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 af-
fright
The shrieks of death, through Berk-
ley’s roof that ring,
Shrieks of an agonising king!
She-wolf of France, with unrelent-
ing fangs,

That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled
mate,
From thee be born, who o'er thy
country hangs
The scourge of heav'n. What terrors
round him wait !
Amazement in his van, with flight
combined,
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 noontide 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, hush'd in grim repose, expects
his ev'ning 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

Elegy and Other Poems ❁

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 urged their
 destined course,
And thro' the kindred, squadrons mow
 their way.

Ye towers of Julius, London's last-
 ing shame,
With many a foul and midnight mur-
 der 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 ac-
cursed loom,
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and
ratify his doom.

III. I.

“Edward, lo! to sudden fate
(Weave we 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 unblest'd, 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 Snow-
don'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 be-
wail.

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 heav'n 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,
Raised by thy breath, has quench'd
the orb of day ?

To-morrow he repairs the golden
flood,
And warms the nations with re-
doubled ray.

Enough for me ; with joy I see
The diff'rent doom our fates assign.

Be thine despair, and sceptred care ;
To triumph, and to die, are mine.”
He spoke, and headlong from the
mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to
endless night.

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.

≡ Elegy and Other Poems

Yet morning smiles the busy race to
cheer,
And new-born 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.

EPITAPH

ON MRS. JANE CLERKE

Lo ! where this silent marble weeps,
A friend, a wife, a mother sleeps :
A heart, within whose sacred cell
The peaceful virtues loved to dwell.
Affection warm, and faith sincere,
And soft humanity were there.
In agony, in death resign'd,
She felt the wound she left behind.
Her infant image, here below,
Sits smiling on a father's woe :
Whom what awaits, while yet he strays
Along the lonely vale of days ?
A pang, to secret sorrow dear ;
A sigh ; an unavailing tear ;
Till Time shall every grief remove,
With life, with memory, and with love.

ODE

ON THE PLEASURE ARISING FROM
VICISSITUDE

Now the golden morn aloft
Waves her dew-bespangled wing,
With vermeil cheek and whisper soft
She woos 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 skylark warbles high
His trembling thrilling ecstasy ;

Elegy and Other Poems ❧

And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light.

Rise, my soul ! on wings of fire,
Rise the rapt'rous choir among ;
Hark ! 'tis nature strikes the lyre,
And leads the gen'ral song :
Warm let the lyric transport flow,
Warm as the ray that bids it glow ;
And animates the vernal grove
With health, with harmony, and love.

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,
Chastised 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.
“ While ” far below the “ madding ”
crowd
“ Rush headlong to the dangerous flood,”
Where broad and turbulent it sweeps,
“ And ” perish in the boundless deeps.

Mark where indolence and pride,
“ Soothed by flattery’s tinkling sound,”

Go, softly rolling, side by side,
Their dull but daily round :
“ To these, if Hebe’s self should bring
The purest cup from pleasure’s spring,
Say, can they taste the flavour high
Of sober, simple, genuine joy ?

“ Mark ambition’s march sublime
Up to power’s meridian height ;
While paled-eyed envy sees him climb,
And sickens at the sight.
Phantoms of danger, death, and dread
Float hourly round ambition’s head ;
While spleen, within his rival’s breast,
Sits brooding on her scorpion nest.

“ Happier he, the peasant, far,
From the pangs of passion free,
That breathes the keen yet wholesome
air
Of rugged penury.

He, when his morning task is done,
Can slumber in the noontide sun ;
And hie him home, at evening's close,
To sweet repast, and calm repose.

“ He, unconscious whence the bliss,
Feels, and owns in carols rude,
That all the circling joys are his,
Of dear Vicissitude.

From toil he wins his spirits light,
From busy day the peaceful night ;
Rich, from the very want of wealth,
In heaven's best treasures, peace and
health.”

STANZAS TO MR. BENTLEY

A FRAGMENT

IN silent gaze the tuneful choir among,
Half pleased, 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 Mil-
ton's page,
The pomp and prodigality of heav'n.

As when conspiring in the diamond's
blaze,
The meaner gems that singly 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 "im-
part;"
And as their pleasing influence "flows
confest,"
A sigh of soft reflection "heaves the
heart."

• • • • •

SKETCH OF HIS OWN CHAR-
ACTER

WRITTEN IN 1761, AND FOUND IN
ONE OF HIS POCKET - BOOKS

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
Townshend and Squire.

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.

THE END



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