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tions of Israel, that character is a singular phenomenon. They occupy for this people the same place which for other races is also filled by the traditional stories of their reputed founders or typical heroes. We know what these are in general. But here, instead of fragmentary legends we have clear and simple narratives; instead of dream-like figures, we see men like those we know; instead of wild exploits, romantic achievements, and the pride of war and conquest, we behold in these first heirs of promise a separation from the course and spirit of the world, common virtues disciplined in common trials, "touches of nature which make the whole world kin," scenes by which the heart is made better, and in distinct relief three living lessons of *faith*, and *hope*, and *charity*.

Thus in respect of historical method, doctrinal faith, and ethical spirit, the Book of Genesis fitly opens the course of revelation and the development of the kingdom of God. Thus it appears as part of a great design, the original part, fundamental to the rest, shaped by the same hand, vitalized by the same breath, which have presided over the formation of the entire Book which the Catholic Church acknowledges as the written Word of God.

T. D. BERNARD.

ART. V.—THOMAS GRAY.[1]

MR. GOSSE, in the series of "English Men of Letters," has given us a book which will probably be the standard authority upon Gray for the future. It is a very graceful as well as most interesting monograph. The edition is in four volumes, and is more complete than any that has yet appeared. It is certainly remarkable that all the writings of a classic so distinguished as Gray had not been given in any one edition to the world before. Mason had made a collection of the "letters" and a few of the minor prose works, and had also printed a variety of the posthumous poems. The Rev. John Mitford published the first accurate edition of the poems, and Mathias has published the works of Gray in two quarto volumes; but many of the poet's letters and verses, though published in various forms and sizes, have never been included in Gray's works. It remained for the Clark Lecturer on English

[1] *Gray*, by EDMUND W. GOSSE. "English Men of Letters." Macmillan and Co. *The Works of Gray*, by EDMUND GOSSE. Macmillan and Co.

Literature at Cambridge to give to the public for the first time a consecutive collection of Gray's letters and essays. Though Mr. Gosse tells us "the preparation of this issue of the entire works of Thomas Gray was no holiday task," yet it must have been a source of pleasure to himself, and assuredly his laborious carefulness as an editor will be a source of pleasure to others. Among the Stonehewer MSS. at Pembroke College, he found "holograph copies of the majority of Gray's poems, written by him on the backs of leaves in his great commonplace book;" and this discovery has enabled him to be independent of all previous editions, in printing the greater part of the posthumous poems, both English and Latin. Amongst other things which are new to the world, the most important contained in Mr. Gosse's first volume are, a play exercise at Eton, the poet's journal in France, and a Canto of Dante's Inferno, which the editor characterizes as "the most vigorous passage in blank verse which has been written in English since the death of Milton." We fancy that Mr. Gosse is mistaken in saying that the translation from Propertius, Lib. ii., Eleg. 1, and inscribed to Mæcenas, is now for the first time published; for the best lines in a paraphrase which is not of a high tone, or not remarkable for merit, have been long familiar to all students of Gray. We allude to the passage beginning with the lines—

> Yet would the Tyrant Love permit me raise
> My feeble voice to sound the Victor's Praise,
> To paint the Hero's toil, the Ranks of War,
> The laurell'd Triumph, and the sculptured Carr,

—and on to the end of the poem.

It is not our intention to criticize Mr. Gosse's edition of Gray's works; it is enough to say that though it needs some emendations, and a careful revision, before it can be pronounced perfect, yet it must eventually supersede all former editions of the poet. What we wish to do in the present paper is to give a sketch of Gray's life, and to speak of him as a poet and a letter-writer. The present year has been made memorable in literary circles by the unveiling of a bust of one of the most faultless of our poets, and one of the most illustrious children of the University, in the hall of Pembroke College, Cambridge, in the presence of men as distinguished as the late Lord Houghton, Mr. Lowell, Sir Frederick Leighton, and others of name in the world of Art and Literature, as well as of name in the University. And so, after 114 years, the poet who, as Mr. Lowell said, "has written less, and perhaps pleased more people than any other," has at last a visible memorial within the walls of the college, where he passed the longer and

happier portion of his life, and where in the arms of his friend, Dr. Brown, Master of Pembroke, he died. It will be but fitting, therefore, before the year passes away, to present to the readers of THE CHURCHMAN a poet, who, if not one of the supreme poets of the world, has yet done more than any other poet, with the exception of Shakespeare and Pope, to enrich our language with felicitous lines and phrases that have become household words, and passed into the common speech of the million.

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, on the 26th of December, 1716. He seems to have sprung on the side of both father and mother from the lower middle classes. When he became famous as a poet, Baron Gray of Gray, in Forfarshire, claimed him as a relation; but the poet showed no anxiety to prove that he had gentle blood in his veins. "I know no pretence," he said to Beattie, "that I have to the honour Lord Gray is pleased to do me; but if his lordship chooses to own me, it certainly is not my business to deny it." The only proof that he was related to this ancient family was the possession of a bloodstone seal which had belonged to his father, engraved with Lord Gray's arms, and these have been accepted at Pembroke College as the arms of the poet. His father, Philip Gray, apparently an only son, inherited from his father, a successful merchant, a portion of £10,000, and about his thirtieth year married Miss Dorothy Antrobus, a Buckinghamshire lady about twenty years of age, who, with her elder sister Mary, kept a milliner's shop in the City. A third sister Anna married a country lawyer, and the two brothers, Robert and John Antrobus, were Fellows of Cambridge Colleges, and afterwards tutors at Eton. His mother was not happy in her married life; her husband was violent, jealous, and probably mad. She had twelve children, but all except Thomas died in infancy; he too would have died as an infant had not his mother, finding him in a fit, opened a vein with her scissors, and so relieved the determination of blood to the brain. His father neglected him, so he was brought up by his mother and his Aunt Mary. Indeed, so miserable was his home life at Cornhill from the cruelties of his father, that his uncle, Robert Antrobus, removed the boy to his own house at Burnham, in Buckinghamshire. With his uncle, who was a Fellow of Peterhouse, Thomas studied botany, and became learned, according to Horace Walpole, in the virtues of herbs and simples. Unhappily for the boy, this uncle died in January, 1729. Though his father about this time had in one of his extravagant fits a full-length of his son painted by Richardson, the fashionable portrait-painter of the day, a picture which is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, he absolutely refused to educate him. It was at the expense of

his mother, and under the auspices of his uncles, that he was sent to Eton, about 1727. It was here, and in the same year, that he made the acquaintance, which ripened into a lifelong friendship, of Horace Walpole, then ten years old, and the son of a Prime Minister. They were both oppidans and not collegers, and, as Walpole confesses, they "never made an expedition against bargemen, or won a match at cricket, but wandered through the playing-fields, tending a visionary flock, and sighing out some pastoral name to the echo of the cascade under the bridge which crosses Chalvey Brook. An avenue of limes among the elms is still named "The Poet's Walk," and is connected by tradition with Gray. The young friends were neither of them physically strong, and cared nothing for the athletic sports in which their fellows took delight. Two other boys similar to them in character were drawn by sympathy to Walpole and Gray. These were West, son of a Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and grandson on the mother's side of the famous Bishop Gilbert Burnet; and Ashton, who died in 1775. Besides this inner circle of friends, there was an outer ring with whom Gray shared those boyish delights which he has described in one of the stanzas of his Eton Ode:

> 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?

But there is no doubt that Gray's tastes and temperament drew him more to study than to sport, and even while he was at Eton he began to write verses.[1]

In 1734 he went to Cambridge, and was for a short time a pensioner of Pembroke Hall, but in July he entered Peterhouse as a fellow-commoner. Walpole went to King's College, Cambridge, in 1735, and West was sent by his friends to Christ Church, Oxford, much against his will. It is probable that Ashton was a student at Cambridge. During Gray's re-

[1] Mr. Gosse was fortunate enough to find among the MSS. in Pembroke College a "play exercise" in the poet's handwriting, which has never been printed, and which is valuable as showing us the early ripeness of his scholarship. It is a Latin theme, in seventy-three hexameter verses; its thoughts borrowed in the main from Horace and Pope, but suggestive of the author's maturer moral and elegiac manner, the boy being here seen as the father of the man.

sidence both at Eton and at Cambridge, he owed almost everything to his mother, who supported him from the receipts of the shop kept by herself and her sister, his father, who was miserly, and most cruel to his wife, providing nothing for the maintenance of his son. Gray repaid the struggles and self-sacrifice of his mother by a passionate attachment, and remembered her with tenderness till the day of his death.

During his residence at Cambridge the poet was a victim to that melancholy which endured to the end of his days. "He was considered," to use Mr. Gosse's word, "effeminate" at College, but the only proof that is given to us of this is one with which the most robust modern reader must sympathize, namely, that he drank tea for breakfast, while all the rest of the University, except Horace Walpole, drank beer. He accuses himself, in a letter to West, of idleness; says "all the employment of my hours may be best explained by negatives;" "that, taking his word and experience upon it," doing nothing is a most amusing business, and adds, "yet neither something nor nothing gives me any pleasure." This very same letter, however, proves that the idleness of his life consisted only in his imagination; for we are told that he is studying the classics, reading Statius, and translating the sixth book of the "Thebaid:" this being the first example of his English verse which has been preserved. He took Dryden as a model in the art of verse-writing rather than Pope, preferring the sonorous modulations of the former to the lighter and more artificial couplets of the latter poet.

The close of Gray's undergraduate career was marked by a Latin ode; and in the same year, 1838, he translated from Propertius into English heroics a passage beginning:

> Long as of youth the joyous hours remain,
> Me may Castalia's sweet recess detain,
> Fast by th' umbrageous vale lull'd to repose,
> Where Aganippe warbles as it flows.

After leaving Cambridge Gray resided six months in his father's house, with apparently no definite plans regarding his own future career, when Horace Walpole suddenly proposed to him that they should start together on "the grand tour." Walpole was to pay all Gray's expenses, and Gray was to be absolutely independent. So generous was this man of the world, so attached was he to Gray, that, unknown to the poet, he made his will before starting, and made him, in case of his death abroad, his sole legatee. In March, 1739, the two friends started for Dover. It was the only time that Gray was out of his native country, but his visit to the Continent lasted for nearly three years, and produced a deep impression on his character. It roused him from his natural indolence, and

while he was abroad we hear nothing of his "true and faithful companion, melancholy;" and, taken out of himself, he was "bright and human."

The travellers loitered through Picardy, stopping at Montreuil, Abbeville, and Amiens; and when they reached Paris they were warmly welcomed by Walpole's cousins, the Conways, and by Lord Holdernesse. Here the young men were introduced to what is conventionally called "the best society," and made acquaintance with all that was witty and brilliant in Paris. Gray was delighted with the elegance and cheerfulness and tolerance of Parisian society, and delivering himself into the hands of a French tutor, who covered him with silk and fringe, and widened his figure with buckram, a yard on either side, making his waistcoat and breeches so tight that he could scarcely breathe, he became quite a little fop. Thus adorned, and with a vast solitaire round his neck, wearing ruffles to his fingers'-ends, his two arms stuck into a muff, he and Walpole went to the comedy and the opera, visited Versailles, and saw all that was to be seen in Paris. In June, in company with Henry Conway, Walpole and Gray left Paris, and travelled to Rheims, where, having introductions, they were welcomed into the best circles of the town. On leaving Rheims they visited Dijon and Lyons, and passing through Savoy that they might see the Grande Chartreuse, they arrived at last at Geneva. Returning to Lyons, they found a letter from Sir Robert Walpole, in which he desired his son to go on to Italy; so they pushed on at once to the foot of the Alps, armed against the cold with "muffs, hoods, and masks of beaver, fur boots, and bear-skins." After a very severe and painful journey of a week's duration, they descended into Italy early in November. On the sixth day of this journey an incident occurred which has been graphically described both by Walpole and Gray. Walpole had a pet little black spaniel called Tory, of which he was very fond; and as this pampered creature was trotting beside the ascending chaise, enjoying his little constitutional, a young wolf sprang out of the covert and snatched the shrieking favourite away from amongst the carriages and servants before anyone had the presence of mind to draw a pistol. Walpole screamed and wept, but Tory had disappeared for ever.

Gray, in a letter to his mother, dilates on the beauty of the crags and precipices with a warmth of language which proves him to have been a loving observer of Nature in her most sublime and grandest moods.

From a letter to West, written in Turin nine days later, we discover that Gray's thoughts still lingered among the wonders he had left behind.

I own I have not as yet [he wrote] anywhere met with those grand and simple works of art that are to amaze one, and whose sight one is to be the better for; but those of nature have astonished me beyond expression. In our little journey up to the Grande Chartreuse, I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining; not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits here at noonday. You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed as to compose the mind without frighting it. I am well persuaded that St. Bruno was a man of no common genius to choose such a situation for his retirement, and perhaps I should have been a disciple of his had I been born in his time.

The man who in the eighteenth century could write thus of the Alps in the beginning of winter, "not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry," was a poet in spite of the times.

The travellers spent ten days in Genoa, and left it unwillingly; but wishing to push on they crossed the mountains, and within three days found themselves at Piacenza, and so at Parma. And then they proceeded to Bologna; then, crossing the Apennines, they "descended through a winding-sheet of mist into the streets of Florence." And here they were hospitably welcomed by Mr. Horace Mann, whose house was to be their home for fifteen months. Music, statuary, and painting occupied Gray's time here. They left the many enjoyments of the City of Flowers in order to reach Rome in time to see the coronation of the successor in the Popedom to Clement XII., who had just died (March, 1740). With the magnificence of the ancient city Gray was delighted, but he found modern Rome and its inhabitants very contemptible and disgusting. He was not, however, without some amusement here, and entered freely into society; and at one ball "he watched," among others of note at Rome, "from the corner where he sat regaling himself with iced fruits, the object of his hearty disapproval, the English Pretender, displaying his rueful length of person." After visiting the remains of Herculaneum, then only just exposed, the young men returned to Rome and then to Florence. Their life here was one of indolence and pleasure, "excellent," as Gray says, "to employ all one's animal sensations in, but utterly contrary to one's rational powers." However, he was not wholly idle. At Reggio took place the quarrel which interrupted the young men's friendship for some years. The cause of the breach has never been accurately ascertained. Walpole was the offender, and this he generously admits in a letter to Mann. Gray passed on to Venice alone, and Walpole stayed at Reggio, where he had a severe attack of quinsy, of which he might have died had he not been nursed during his

illness by Spence, Oxford Professor of Poetry, and the friend of Pope, who happened to be passing through Reggio with Lord Lincoln. Meanwhile, Gray passed leisurely through the north of Italy, and crossing the Alps, stayed once more at the Grande Chartreuse, and wrote in the album of the Fathers his famous Alcaic Ode, "Oh tu, severi Religio loci," the best known and practically the last of his Latin poems. On the 1st of September, 1741, he reached London, after an absence of two years and five months. Walpole, restored to health, arrived in England ten days after, but the quarrel was not then made up.

On his return to England, Gray found his father lying very ill, exhausted by successive attacks of gout, and two months later he died in a paroxysm of the disease. His last act was to squander his fortune on building a country house at Wanstead. This remained in the possession of Mrs. Gray, who with her sister, Mary Antrobus, kept house for a year in Cornhill, till at the death of their brother-in-law, Rogers, in 1742, they joined their widowed sister Anne in her house at Stoke-Pogis, in Buckinghamshire. They wound up their business in Cornhill, and disposed of their shop on tolerably advantageous terms. Thinking that the family property would be enough to provide amply for him also, Gray began to study the law, and for six months or more he stayed in London, applying himself somewhat languidly to his profession.[1]

After the death of his unfortunate friend West, Gray went on a visit to his uncle and aunt at Stoke Pogis, the small village with a picturesque church which has become immortal through his name. He had only been a few days at Stoke before he wrote his "Ode to Spring," a poem which is more remarkable for its form than for its expression. It is usually placed at the beginning of his poetical works, and, though lacking the perfect beauty of the "Elegy," suggests the lyrical poet of the future, and proves him eager to break away from the formal measures of what is known as "the Augustan Age" in literature. The death of West called forth some hexameters full of emotion, and also a sonnet in English, first published by Mason in his "Memoirs of Gray." This, in a MS. of the sonnet now at Cambridge, is marked "at Stoke, Aug., 1742." In the same month of August was written "The Ode on a Distant

[1] The winter which Gray and West spent together in London was marked by his first original production in English verse, the fragment of a tragedy of "Agrippina" in blank verse, which was not a happy effort, for the drama was not the true vocation of the author of the "Elegy" and the "Bard." All that remains of the play is one complete scene, and a few odd lines which, while they display some force of versification, show a great want of true dramatic power.

Prospect of Eton College." East and west from the church at Stoke Pogis there is a gentle acclivity from which the ground slopes southward to the Thames, and which lies opposite those "distant spires" and "antique towers" of which Gray has so melodiously sung. "The Eton Ode," to use the words of Mr. Gosse, "was inspired by the regret that the illusions of boyhood, the innocence that comes not of virtue but of inexperience, the sweetness born not of a good heart but of a good digestion, the elation which childish spirits give, and which owe nothing to anger or dissipation—that these simple qualities cannot be preserved through life." This poem, in length not a hundred lines, has the high honour of giving us three expressions which have become the very commonplaces of our language—"familiar as household words." Many use them in their daily speech, of whom it is not too much to say they are ignorant of their origin. While the "Elegy" is still read, and admired, and loved, we question if this Ode is as generally known as it ought to be, though we hope we may be wrong. Yet who does not often use in conversation, either as a proverb or a witticism, "to point a moral or adorn a tale," the felicitous phrases, "to snatch a fearful joy," "regardless of their doom the little victims play," "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise"?

In this same month of August, 1742, yet another Ode was composed, the "Ode to Adversity," "remarkable as the first of Gray's poems in which he shows that stateliness of movement and pomp of allegorical illustration which gives an individuality in his mature style." His most important poem, "The Elegy in a Country Churchyard," was begun about the same date.

Gray was now twenty-five years of age, and never having applied himself seriously to the study of the law, and the support of his mother and her two sisters leaving him but little margin, he returned to Cambridge, where living was cheap, and he could indulge his literary tastes. In the winter of 1742 he went to Peterhouse, and, taking his bachelor's degree in Civil Law, became a resident of that College. His vacations, varied only by occasional visits to London, were spent at Stoke. But though Gray took up his abode at Peterhouse, all his interests were centred in his own College of Pembroke, and outside its walls he had but few associates. His principal friend was Conyers Middleton, the librarian of Trinity, a man of mark, and broad in his theology, yet within the pale of orthodoxy, who had won his reputation by attacking the Deists from ground almost as sceptical as their own. Gray's own religion, though he had a hatred of an open profession of Deism, seems to have been but cold, lacking in warmth and in that spirituality which is the life of orthodoxy,

and lifts it into a higher region than that of form. Orthodoxy without enthusiasm is but the casket without the jewel—the body without the soul.

Notwithstanding the solace of a few friendships, he found his residence at Cambridge "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable," and its atmosphere unfavourable to the composition of poetry. The flow of his verse came to a sudden and abrupt pause, and, forsaking the muse, he began to study the literature of ancient Greece.[1]

The difference with Horace Walpole came to a close in the winter of 1744, and the friends returned gradually to their old intimacy and affection. In 1747 Walpole visited, and afterwards bought, the estate on the banks of the Thames, which he made famous under the name of Strawberry Hill, and Gray scarcely ever passed a long vacation without spending some of his time there. It was now that Walpole persuaded him to publish his first poem, "The Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," and it appeared anonymously in the summer of 1747. The Ode fell stillborn, the public being so apathetic that it received little or no attention. Gray was now thirty years of age, and absolutely unknown. It was in the year 1747 that Gray's attention was directed by a friend to a modest volume of verse in imitation of Milton; he made the acquaintance of the author, William Mason, a young man of twenty-two, the son of a Yorkshire clergyman, and a scholar of St. John's College, Cambridge. In the course of the same year, through the exertions of Gray and another friend, Dr. Heberden, a Fellow of his own College, and the distinguished Professor of Medicine, Mason was nominated a Fellow of Pembroke, a College at that time, like some of the others, given over to the Lord of Misrule. Mason became a great support and comfort to Gray. His devotion to literature, his physical vigour, his enthusiasm for the poet, supplied to Gray that stimulus that he needed, and were an amazing source of refreshment and encouragement to the fastidious, timid, and retiring man. Cambridge was at this time the scene of disgraceful orgies and disturbances, and many of the Professors

[1] One of his schemes was a critical text of Strabo, which never came to anything; and the same must be said of an edition of Plato which he projected, and the notes for which were found by Mason when he came to examine his papers. He wasted months over another labour, toiling in vain on a text of the Greek Anthology, with translations of each separate epigram into Latin verse, and which he eventually abandoned. Then he determined to restore Aristotle, from the neglect into which he had fallen, to the notice of English scholars; but his intentions, after much waste of energy and learning, remained unfulfilled.

and Fellows set a scandalous example to the youth of the University.[1]

In the spring of 1749 peace was established between the Masters and the Fellows of Pembroke, and Gray writes to Wharton, "Pembroke is all harmonious and delightful." In November his aunt died somewhat suddenly at Stoke. This sad event seems to have brought to his recollection "The Elegy," which he had begun at Stoke. He finished it at Stoke in June, 1750. The poem was immediately sent to Walpole, and was circulated in MS. The editor of the *Magazine of Magazines* wrote him a letter asking leave to publish it. The poet refused, and wrote to Walpole desiring him to bring it out in pamphlet form. It was published in February, 1751, by Dodsley, at sixpence, and ran through many editions in a short time. It was also largely pirated.

Thus was introduced to the world a poem which, as Mr. Gosse says, "was destined to enjoy and to retain a higher reputation in literature than any other English poem, perhaps than any other poem of the world, written between Milton and Wordsworth."

Mr. J. Russell Lowell, the eminent Minister from the United States to our Court, in his speech on the occasion of the unveiling of the bust by Mr. Thornycroft, has called Gray "the greatest artist in words that English literature has produced," and as some critics have accused the poet of being "commonplace," entered upon the defence of the "commonplace" in poetry. And, indeed, the "Elegy" is a great poem for the very reason that it is "commonplace;" because it touches commonplace interests, rouses commonplace emotions, awakes commonplace feelings, and expresses them in such simplicity of language and lucidity of rhythm that they reach our hearts, and enshrine themselves in our memories. There is nothing very profound or original in the thoughts, nothing in

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[1] It was in the midst of the confusion and dissipation that reigned at Cambridge that Gray sat down to write his poem, "The Alliance of Education and Government." It is a short poem in the heroic measure, and drew from Gibbon this eulogistic notice: "Instead of compiling tables of chronology and natural history, why did not Mr. Gray apply the powers of his genius to finish the philosophical poem of which he has left us such an exquisite specimen?" In a letter written to Wharton, Gray says that his "object was to show that education and government must concur in order to procure great and useful men." While the poem was being composed, Montesquieu's "L'Esprit des Lois" fell into his hands, and finding, as he told Mason, that the baron had forestalled some of his best thoughts, his own treatment of the theme became distasteful to him, and the scheme languished. Some years later he thought of taking it up again, and was about to compose a prefatory ode to M. de Montesquieu, when the writer died, and the whole thing was abandoned.

the versification of elaborate artifice or tiresome effort; but there is the exquisite beauty of perfect balance and harmony between the matter and the workmanship: there is consummate art and perfect ease; but the thoughts, the words, and the music of the verse are so clear, so apt, and so melodious, that the poem will be read and loved by both old and young, so long as the English language endures. For ourselves we can never read it too often; and as we read, the chord of plaintive melancholy is ever struck, and we become alive to a sadness, not deep enough for tears, but to which tears lie very close, and which need only a little more pathos of a personal nature to call them to the eyes, and make them overflow the cheek. This poem arouses much the same feeling that one has—

> When looking on the happy autumn fields,
> And thinking of the days that are no more.

The only writers of note who have spoken in disparagement of Gray's poetry are Dr. Johnson,[1] who may have had personal reasons for his depreciation, and Mr. Swinburne, who from natural temperament is not fitted to do justice to Gray, although he does allow that as an elegiac poet he is unassailable and sovereign. Others, who write with authority, have meted to Gray the measure of praise which is his due. As Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his discriminating essay on Gray, in the edition of English Poets edited by Mr. Ward, reminds us, "Butler, at the end of the eighteenth century, writing to Sir William Forbes, says: 'Of all the English poets of this age, Mr. Gray is most admired, and I think with justice.' Cowper writes, 'I have been reading Gray's works, and think him the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of sublime.' Adam Smith says: 'Gray joins to the sublimity of Milton the eloquence and the harmony of Pope; and nothing is wanting to render him perhaps the first poet in the English language, but to have written a little more.' And Sir James Mackintosh speaks of Gray thus: 'Of all English poets he was the most finished artist. He attained the highest degree of splendour of which poetical style seems to be capable.'"

Looking over an old number of the *Quarterly Review* lately, we found mention made of one or two coincidences—or shall

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[1] Dr. Johnson had, as Boswell tells us, a low estimation of Gray as a poet, and denied him the possession of "a bold imagination, or much command of words." He, however, does praise the "Elegy" for its happy selection of images, and in his "Life of Gray" he says, referring to the same poem, "Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him."

we call them marks of imitation?—in the "Elegy." We are familiar with the beautiful stanza—

> 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.

Now compare Bishop Hall: "There is many a rich stone laid up in the bowells of the earth, many a fair pearle in the bosome of the sea, that never was seene nor never shall bee." —*Contemplations*, L. vi., p. 872. And Dr. Young:

> Pure gurgling rills the lonely desert trace,
> And waste their sweetness on the desert race.
> *Universal Passion*, Sat. v.

Again:

> Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.—*Gray.*
> Even in our ashen cold is fire ywreken.
> Chaucer: *Reve's Tale*, l. 3180.

And here we may give a very beautiful stanza of the "Elegy," which, though printed in some of the first editions, was afterwards omitted:

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

It was through "The Elegy in a Country Churchyard," at that time only in manuscript, and handed about by Horace Walpole to his friends, that Gray became known to Lady Cobham, then living at the Manor House, at Stoke Pogis. She conceived a great desire to know the poet, and through a little clever management effected her purpose. The acquaintance which she contrived to form with the shy poet led to a friendship with herself and her niece, Miss Speed, which lasted through the remainder of Lady Cobham's life. This lady would have been pleased to see him the husband of her niece, and Gray seems to have been really alarmed lest they should marry him to Miss Speed against his will. He escaped, however.[1]

Gray was roused from his leisurely and scholarly ease by the news of his mother's illness, and he hurried up from Cambridge, where the tidings reached him, to find her alive and better than he expected. But she rallied only for a time, and died,

[1] The lady, when nearly forty, married the Comte de Viry, a young French officer, and went to live abroad. The poem called "A Long Story" was written in August, 1750, and was suggested by the incident that a Lady Schaub and Miss Speed, when anxious to make the poet's acquaintance, paid him an afternoon call, and found that he had gone out for a walk. To Miss Speed he addressed his "Amatory Lines"—the only verses of this complexion which he ever composed.

after a painful struggle, in March, 1753, at the age of sixty-seven. She was buried in the family vault, and her son inscribed on her tombstone the simple and touching epitaph:

> In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow, the careful, tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her.

Walpole has remarked that Gray was "in flower" during the years 1750-1755. "The Ode on the Pleasure arising from Vicissitude" was found after the poet's death in a pocket-book of the year, but it was unrevised and unfinished. Gray acknowledged that he owed the idea of this poem to Gresset's "Epitre à ma Sœur." Mason with some audacity printed the poem restored and finished by himself. Seven complete stanzas are the genuine work of Gray.

It is not certain at what time Gray resolved on composing what we know as "The Pindaric Odes," odes in the Greek manner, and in the style of Pindar; but towards the close of 1754 he completed one such elaborate lyric, "The Progress of Poesy." Mr. Matthew Arnold remarks that "the evolution of 'The Progress of Poesy' is no less noble and sound than its style." By evolution he means that the ideas naturally flow out of one another till the climax is attained; thought follows thought consecutively, and, as Mr. Gosse remarks, "Each line, each group of lines, has its proper place in a structure that could not be shorter or longer without a radical re-arrangement of ideas." Gray said himself that the style he aimed at was "extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous and musical." Compared with the poetry of the age in which he wrote, he may be said to have reached in his style the excellence after which he aspired. In 1754, the year in which "The Progress of Poesy" was finished, "The Bard" was begun. It was not published, however, till 1757, when it appeared with "The Progress of Poesy," and bore the title of Ode II. It attained on the instant a popularity which has been awarded to it from that day to this. It has three divisions, with strophe, antistrophe, and epode, and is distinguished by a patriotic fervour and a sustained dignity of style. It opens with the startling voice of the last of the ancient race of the Celtic Bards, who from a rock above the defile through which the forces of Edward I. are about to march, "reproaches the King with all the misery and desolation which he had brought into his country, foretells the misfortunes of the Norman race, and with prophetic spirit declares that all his cruelty shall never extinguish the noble ardour of poetic genius in this island, and that men shall never be wanting to celebrate true virtue and valour in immortal strains, to expose

vice and infamous pleasure, and boldly censure tyranny and oppression." The opening lines are admirably effective, and at once impress the imagination :

Ruin seize thee, ruthless King !
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Tho' fann'd by Conquest's crimson wing,
They mock the air with idle state.
Helm, nor Hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor even thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears !

The vision of Elizabeth, surrounded by a courtly throng of her barons and poets, is one of the most striking passages in the poem—

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 lyon-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.

Few, if any, at the present day will agree with Dr. Johnson's estimate of the odes : "They are forced plants, raised in a hot-bed, and they are poor plants ; they are but cucumbers after all."[1] It is an extraordinary piece of criticism.

In 1757 Colley Cibber died, having held the office of Poet-Laureate for twenty-seven years. The post was offered to Gray by the Duke of Devonshire, who was then Lord Chamberlain, but he directed Mason, through whom the offer was made, to decline it very civilly.

Though I 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 upon 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 still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me. But I do not pretend to blame anyone else that has not the same sensations. For my part, I would rather be serjeant-trumpeter, or pin-maker to the palace. Nevertheless, I interest myself a

[1] Boswell's "Life of Johnson."

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. 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. Eusdon was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned out a drunken parson. Dryden was as disgraceful to the office, from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses. 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.

And this is the man whom Johnson called "a dull fellow," dull in company, dull in his "closet," dull everywhere! Is it possible that Johnson was jealous of Gray's high reputation? Even the greatest men are not free from faults and foibles.

In 1768 Gray published some romantic lyrics, paraphrased in short measure, from Icelandic and Gaelic sources. In these romantic poems he is the herald of Sir Walter Scott, and of the later poets, who have treated with great power and effect themes suggested by the old Norse literature. The three paraphrases are, "The Fatal Sisters," "The Descent of Odin," and "The Triumphs of Owen." We quote a few lines from the first of these:—

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,
Gondola, 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.)

When the Duke of Grafton succeeded the Duke of Newcastle as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, in 1768, Gray composed an ode to be performed at the ceremony of installation. This was "The Installation Ode;" and being set to music by the Professor of Music, Dr. J. Randall, of King's, was performed before a brilliant assembly on July 1st, 1769. The poem, though unequal, and not sustained with the same dignity throughout, contains some fine passages, and Hallam praises highly the stanza in which the procession of Cambridge worthies is sung. It begins—

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 Chantillon, 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.

But perhaps the most beautiful passage is the third strophe, the stanza supposed to be sung by Milton, and written in the metre which Milton chose for the opening of his "Hymn on the Nativity," "'Twas in the winter wild."

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.

This ode was the last of Gray's works; his poetic life was over. As his health was now bad, and his spirits depressed, he sought refreshment and amusement in travel, and he visited Scotland, Wales, and the English Lakes. He was the first to open up to Englishmen the beauties of Westmoreland, and the whole Lake country, and to direct attention to the romantic landscapes of that lovely land. Wordsworth afterwards immortalized the exquisite scenes which the elder poet described with such impressiveness and unaffected sincerity in the "Journal in the Lakes."

We now come to the last months of Gray's life. He had formed a friendship with a young Swiss gentleman, named Charles Victor de Bonstetten, who had come to England to study our language and literature. His gaiety, his love for English poetry, conquered the shy and solitary poet at sight, and the difference in age between them disappeared at once. They read together at Cambridge, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, and the other great English classics, "until their study would slip into sympathetic conversation, in which the last word was never spoken." When Bonstetten left for Switzerland, he had compelled Gray to promise that he would visit him the next summer. However, Gray became too unwell to carry out his purpose, and, overwhelmed by dejection, he remained at Cambridge. While he was at dinner in the College Hall of Pembroke, on the 24th of July, he felt a sudden nausea, which obliged him to go hurriedly to his room. He never left his bed, and was seized on the Sunday with a strong convulsive

fit, and the fits recurred until he died. He was perfectly sensible of his condition, retained his senses almost to the last, but expressed no concern at the thought of leaving the world. Towards the end he did not suffer, but lay in a sort of stupor, out of which he woke to call for his niece, Miss Mary Antrobus. She took his hand, and he said to her, in a clear voice, "Molly, I shall die!" These were his last words. He ceased to breathe about eleven o'clock, an hour before midnight, on the 30th of July, 1771, aged fifty-four years, seven months, and four days. So passed away a man of whom Mr. Temple, Rector of St. Gluvias, Cornwall, said: "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 amusements; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening." Yet Johnson could call him "a dull fellow"! He was buried at Stoke, under the "ivy-mantled tower" of which he had sung in the most famous of his poems, and in the same vault that contained all that was mortal of his mother.

James Brown, Master of Pembroke Hall, at Cambridge, Gray's friend and executor, wrote a letter a fortnight after Gray's death to another of his friends, Dr. Wharton, of Old Park, Durham, in which occurs the following passage: "Everything is now dark and melancholy in Mr. Gray's room—not a trace of him remains there; it looks as if it had been for some time uninhabited, and the room bespoke for another inhabitant. The thoughts I have of him will last, and will be useful to me the few years I can expect to live. He never spoke out, but I believe from some little expressions I now remember to have dropped from him, that for some time past he thought himself nearer his end than those about him apprehended." Mr. Matthew Arnold considers that those four words, "he never spoke out," explain the scantiness of his poetical work. "He never spoke out" in poetry because, in addition to his shyness and ill-health, he, as a born poet, fell upon an age of prose. Mr. Arnold thinks that "if he had been born in the same year with Milton, Gray would have been another man; born in the same year with Burns, he would have been another man." "A man born in 1608 could profit by the larger and more poetic scope of the English spirits in the Elizabethan age; a man born in 1759 could profit by the European renewing of men's minds of which the

great historical manifestation is the French Revolution." But as regards literary productions in the eighteenth century, "its taste was not the poetic interpretation of the world; it was to create a plain, clear, straightforward, efficient prose. Poetry obeyed the bent of mind requisite for due fulfilment of this task of the century. It was intellectual, argumentative, ingenious; not seeing things in their truth and beauty, not interpretative." "A sort of spiritual east-wind was at that time blowing;" and to a man like Gray, who had the mind and soul of a genuine poet, "full, spiritual flowering was impossible." There is no doubt a great deal of truth in this criticism, but may not Gray's scantiness of production be also partly explained by his fastidiousness; by his elaborate exactness; by his desire to bring each line to the highest degree of perfection, as well as by an indolence which grew fatigued before the projected work was completed? Had Milton been born in the eighteenth century, would his productiveness have been restrained by the want of a congenial atmosphere? Had Burns been born in this age, would its prosaic character have fettered the flow of his genius and condemned it to sterility?

But whatever was the cause, Gray never did "speak out in his poetry," and therefore no one can rightly estimate the man, or his place in literature, who has not read his letters and his journals. His "letters are delightful:" now full of humour, now thoughtful, tender, serious. He almost equals Cowper, if he may not dispute with him the palm of being "the best letter-writer in the language." He is especially happy in descriptive power, and when he writes of places, discusses poetry, or refers lightly to some piece of gossip, he charms us by his ease and playfulness of style. Simplicity, life, spontaneity, play of fancy, and flashes of wit, are all characteristics of the letter-writing of Gray. Our space forbids many extracts, and we must send those who desire to know Gray's endowments as a letter-writer and his picturesqueness in description to "The Works of Gray," edited by Mr. Gosse.

A passage from his letters, sweet, serious, and unaffected, we shall give, concluding with two extracts of great beauty from his "Journal in the Lakes." The passage is from a letter to his mother on the death of his aunt, Mary Antrobus, written from Cambridge (November, 1749):

> The unhappy news I have just received from you equally surprises and afflicts me. I have lost a person I loved very much, and have been used to from my infancy; but am much more concerned for your loss, the circumstances of which I forbear to dwell upon, as you must be too sensible of them yourself, and will, I fear, more and more need a consolation that no one can give except He Who had preserved her to you so many years, and at last, when it was His pleasure, has taken her from us to Himself; and perhaps, if we reflect upon what she felt in this life, we

may look upon this as an instance of His goodness both to her and to those that loved her. She might have languished many years before our eyes in a continual increase of pain, and totally helpless; she might have long wished to end her misery without being able to attain it, or perhaps even lost all sense, and yet continued to breathe—a sad spectacle for such as must have felt more for her than she could have done for herself. However you may deplore your own loss, yet think that she is at last easy and happy, and has now more occasion to pity us than we her. I hope and beg you will support yourself with that resignation we owe to Him Who gave us our being for good, and Who deprives us of it for the same reason.

We close with two extracts from his "Journal of a Tour in the Lakes." He writes:

Walked over a spongy meadow or two, and began to mount this hill through a broad and straight green alley among the trees, and with some toil gained the summit. From hence saw the lake opening directly at my feet, majestic in its calmness, clear and smooth as a blue mirror, with winding shores, and low points of land covered with green enclosures, white farmhouses looking out among the trees, and cattle feeding. The water is almost everywhere bordered with cultivated lands, gently sloping upwards till they reach the feet of the mountains, which rise very rude and awful with their broken tops on either hand. Directly in front, at better than three miles' distance, Place Fell, one of the bravest among them, pushes its bold, broad breast into the midst of the lake, and forces it to alter its course, forming first a large bay to the left, and then bending to the right.

And now for the second passage:

In the evening walked alone down to the lake by the side of Crow Park after sunset, and saw the solemn colouring of light draw on, the last gleam of sunshine fading away on the hill-tops, the deep serene of the waters, and the long shadows of the mountains thrown across them, till they nearly touched the hithermost shore. At distance heard the murmur of many waterfalls, not audible in the daytime. Wished for the moon, but she was *dark to me and silent, hid in her vacant interlunar cave.*

Surely this is poetry, if poetry there be in the world, though the thought is expressed in prose.

CHARLES D. BELL, D.D.

ART. VI.—NONCONFORMIST OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

IN discussing the important question which is now filling the minds of all Churchmen, the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church, I think I have observed a tendency to deal too much with one class of opponents, and too exclusively with certain aspects of the controversy. The Liberationist programme is a very sweeping programme, and our attention has naturally been fastened upon it. But it would be a mistake to suppose that it represents the whole attitude