AN

ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A

COUNTRY CHURCH YARD.

WITH AN

HYMN

TO

ADVERSITY.

BY

Mr. GRAY.

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WRITTEN IN A

COUNTRY CHURCH YARD.

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

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

Save that from yonder ivy mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her antient 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 shade,
The cock's shrill clariion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall roufe them from their lowly bed.
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her ev'ning care:
No children run to lisp their fire's return.
Or climb his knees the envied kisses 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 asti|eld!
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.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If mem'ry 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 flatter sooth 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 extasy the living lyre.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repressed 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 oceanbear;
Full many a flow’r is born to blush unseen,
And waltz its sweetness on the delfart air.

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

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

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib’d alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin’d:
Forbade to wade thro’ 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 learnt to stray;
Along the cool sequester’d vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet even these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected high,
With uncouth rhimes and shapeless sculpture deck’d,
Implore the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, splet 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;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

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

Haply, some hoary-headed swain may say,
' Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
' Brushing with hasty steps 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 litless length at noon tide would he stretch,
' And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

' Hard by yon wood, now smilling as in scorn,
' Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove;
' Now drooping, woful man, like one forlorn,
' Or craz'd with care, or crofs'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 hue and sad array,
' Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him born,
' Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
' Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.
The E P I T A P H.

"H E R E 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,
Heav'n did a recompence 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,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his father and his God."

H Y M N to A D V E R S I T Y.

By the same.

D A U G H T E R of J O V E, relentless pow'r,
Thou tamer of the human breast,
Whose iron scourge, and tort'ring hour
The bad afflict, 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 fire 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 badst her know,
And from her own she learn'd to melt at others' woe.
Scar'd 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,
Immers'd 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 general friend,
With justice to herself severe,
And pity, dropping soft the sadly-pleasing tear.

Oh! gently on thy suppliant's head,
Dread goddeses, lay thy chast'ning hand!
Not in thy gorgon terrors clad,
Nor circled with the vengeful hand,
(As by the impious thou art teen)
With thund'ring voice, and threat'ning mien,
With screaming horror's funeral cry,
Despair, and fell disease, and ghastly poverty.

Thy form benign, oh goddeses, 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.

FINIS.