

NOTES

THE ELEGY.

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

... "The second cock hath crow'd,

The curfew bell hath rung, 't is three o'clock."

Gray quotes Dante, *Purgatorio*, 8—

"Squilla di lontano

Che paia 'l giorno pianger, che si muore."

("Hears the vesper bell from far,

That seems to mourn for the expiring day.")

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

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

⁴ Cf. Petrarch—

"Quando 'l sol bagna in mar l'aurato cerco,

È 'l aer nostro, a la mia mente imbruna."

("When the sun bathes in the sea his golden orb,
And darkens our atmosphere and my mind.")

But Gray has given a grotesque turn to his original.

⁶ One of Gray's favourite inversions.

⁷ Cf. *Macbeth*, act iii. scene 2—

"The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,

Hath rung night's yawning peal."

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