

eighteenth century. Gray worshipped at its shrine. He tells us that the style he aimed at was extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, and this he assuredly reached in the "Elegy." He united in himself genius and diletanteism. Poetry is said to be divine madness, but the English poets of the eighteenth century were the sanest of the sane. As Lowell says, no English poet between 1700 and 1800 need have feared a writ *de lunatico inquirendo*. Still there are hints in the "Elegy" that the heart of man was turning for inspiration to the shrine of nature. A critic says that Gray *never spoke out*, — that his thought lacked spontaneity. "He was a poetical scholar and scholarly poet. His poetry twined itself around his learning and was saturated by it. He planted himself in bookish soil and flowered at last into verse."

Gray was a great admirer of Dryden and borrowed from him the form or mould in which the "Elegy" is cast. It is the iambic pentameter measure. Of course it was not original with Dryden, being first employed by Raleigh. It is a measure which fits the theme most admirably. The reader cannot fail to note its suitableness for pictorial effect. Gray had a thorough knowledge of perspective, while his skill as an artist in combining words and

Technique and
Language of
the "Elegy."