

CV.—ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD.

GRAY.

THOMAS GRAY (b. 1716, d. 1771) is best known as the author of the celebrated *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, one of the most popular of all poems. "It abounds," says Dr. Johnson, "with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo." Through the loving care and kindness of his mother, Gray received an excellent education. After graduating at Cambridge, he made the tour of the Continent in company with Horace Walpole. On his return to England he fixed his residence at Cambridge University, where he passed the rest of his life in study. He wrote but little, but what he did write is perfect in execution, and bears the marks of his ripe scholarship and refined taste.

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,
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, wandering 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 mouldering 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 twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.