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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

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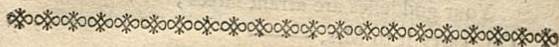
London, 1758

An Ode On a distant Prospect of Eton College.

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IV.

Her voice, her touch might give th' alarm—
 'Twas both perhaps, or neither;
 In short, 'twas that provoking charm
 Of CÆLIA altogether.



A N O D E

On a distant Prospect of

E T O N C O L L E G E.

By Mr. GRAY.

YE distant spires, ye antique towers,
 That crown the wat'ry glade,
 Where grateful science still adores
 Her HENRY's holy shade;
 And ye that from the stately brow
 Of WINDSOR's heights th' expanse below
 Of grove, of lawn, of mead-survey,
 Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
 Wanders the hoary Thames along
 His silver-winding way.
 Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,
 Ah fields belov'd in vain,
 Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
 A stranger yet to pain!
 I feel the gales, that from ye blow,
 A momentary bliss bestow,

As

As waving fresh their gladfome wing,
 My weary soul they seem to sooth,
 And, redolent of joy and youth,
 To breathe a second spring.

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 arms thy glassy wave ?
 The captive linnet which enthrall ?
 What idle progeny succeed
 To chase the rolling circle's speed,
 Or urge the flying ball ?

While some on earnest business bent
 Their murm'ring labours ply,
 'Gainst graver hours, that bring constraint
 To sweeten liberty :
 Some bold adventurers disdain
 The limits of their little reign,
 And unknown regions dare descry :
 Still as they run, they look behind,
 They hear a voice in every wind,
 And snatch a fearful joy.

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
 Less pleasing when possess'd ;
 The tear forgot as soon as shed,
 The sunshine of the breast,

Theirs

Theirs buxom health of rosy hue,
 Wild wit, invention ever-new,
 And lively chear of vigour born ;
 The thoughtless day, the easy night,
 The spirits pure, the slumbers light,
 That fly th' approach of morn.

Alas, - regardless of their doom,
 The little victims play !
 No sense have they of ills to come,
 No care beyond to-day :
 Yet see how all around 'em wait
 The ministers of human fate,
 And black misfortune's baleful train !
 Ah, shew them where in ambush stand,
 To seize their prey the murth'rous band !
 Ah, shew them they are men !

These shall the fury passions tear,
 The vultures of the mind,
 Disdainful anger, pallid fear,
 And shame that sculks behind ;
 Or pining love shall waste their youth,
 Or jealousy with rankling tooth,
 That inly gnaws the secret heart,
 And envy wan, and faded care,
 Grim visag'd comfortless despair,
 And sorrow's piercing dart.

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,
 Then whirl the wretch from high,
 To bitter scorn a sacrifice,
 And grinning infamy ;

The stings of falshood those shall try,
 And hard unkindness' alter'd eye,
 That mocks the tear it forc'd to flow;
 And keen remorse with blood defil'd,
 And moody madness laughing wild
 Amid severest woe.

Lo, in the vale of years beneath
 A grievous troop are seen,
 The painful family of death,
 More hideous than their queen:
 This racks the joints, this fires the veins,
 That every labouring sinew strains,
 Those in the deeper vitals rage:
 Lo, poverty, to fill the band,
 That numbs the soul with icy hand,
 And slow-consuming age.

To each his sufferings: all are men,
 Condemn'd alike to groan,
 The tender for another's pain;
 'Th' unfeeling for his own.
 Yet ah! why should they know their fate!
 Since sorrow never comes too late,
 And happiness too swiftly flies.
 Thought would destroy their paradise.
 No more; where ignorance is bliss,
 'Tis folly to be wise.

