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Poems

Gray, Thomas

London, 1770

Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.

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O D E
ON A
DISTANT PROSPECT
OF
ETON COLLEGE.

"Ανθρώπος· ἰκανὴ πρόφασις εἰς τὸ δυσυχεῖν.

MENANDER.



O D E

BY

DISTANT PROSPECT

ETON COLLEGE

MINDERS.





O D E

ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF

ETON COLLEGE.

YE distant spires, ye antique towers,
That crown the watry glade,

Where grateful Science still adores

Her HENRY's ^e holy Shade ;

^e King HENRY the Sixth, Founder of the College.

C

And



18 ODE ON A DISTANT

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 lov'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



PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE. 19

As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to sooth,
And, ^f 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 arm thy glassy wave?

^f And bees their honey redolent of spring.

Dryden's Fable on the Pythag. System.



20 ODE ON A DISTANT

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



PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE. 21

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
Lefs pleasing when poffest ;
The tear forgot as foon as fhed,
The sunshine of the breast :
Theirs buxom health of rofy hue,
Wild wit, invention ever-new,
And lively chear of vigour born ;
The thoughtlefs day, the eafy night,
The fpirits pure, the flumbers light,
That fly th' approach of morn.

Alas, regardlefs of their doom,
The little victims play !
No fenfe have they of ills to come,
Nor 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, tell them, they are men !

These shall the fury Passions tear,

The vulturs of the mind,

Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,

And Shame that sculks behind ;

Or

PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE. 23

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,

C 4

That



24 ODE ON A DISTANT

That mocks the tear it forc'd to flow;
And keen Remorse with blood defil'd,
And moody Madnes^s laughing wild
Amid severest woe.

Lo, in the vale of years beneath
A grievly 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,

* — Madnes laughing in his ireful mood.

Dryden's Fable of Palamon and Arcite.

Those



PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE. 25

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 suff'rings : 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.

H Y M N



Those in the deeper shades;
I, Poverty, to fill the band,

That number the soul with joy hand,
And flow-consuming age.

To each, his suit sings: all his man,

Contented alike to grow,

The tender for another's sake,

It's unalike for his own sake,

Yet all, why should they know their fate!

Since sorrow never ceases too late,

And happiness too faintly late,

They'd rather would deliver their hearts,

No more, what's ignorance is bliss,

It's folly to be wise.

BY M. J.

