Thomas Gray, â??Ode on the Springâ?•

Description

THOMAS GRAY

â??Ode on the Springâ?•

Lo! where the rosy-bosomâ??d hours,
Fair VENUSâ?? train, appear,
Disclose the long-expecting flowers,
And wake the purple year!
The Attic warbler pours her throat,
Responsive to the cuckowâ??s note,
The untaught harmony of spring:
While, whispâ??ring pleasure as they fly,
Cool Zephyrs throâ?? the clear blue sky
Their gatherâ??d fragrance fling.

Where-eâ??er the oakâ??s thick branches stretch
A broader browner shade;
Where-eâ??er the rude and moss-grown beech
Oâ??er-canopies the glade;
Beside some waterâ??s rushy brink
With me the Muse shall sit, and think,
(At ease reclinâ??d in rustic state),
How vain the ardour of the crowd,
How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great!

Still is the toiling hand of Care;
The panting herds repose:
Yet hark, how throâ?? the peopled air
The busy murmur glows!
The insect youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honied spring,
And float amid the liquid noon:
Some lightly oâ??er the current skim,
Some shew their gayly-gilded trim
Quick-glancing to the sun.

To Contemplationâ??s sober eye
Such is the race of man:
And they that creep, and they that fly,

Shall end where they began.
Alike the busy and the gay
But flutter throâ?? lifeâ??s little day,
In Fortuneâ??s varying colours drest:
Brushâ??d by the hand of rough Mischance,
Or chillâ??d by Age, their airy dance
They leave in dust to rest.

Methinks I hear, in voices low,
The sportive kind reply;
Poor Moralist! and what are thou?
A solitary fly!
Thy joys no glittâ??ring female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display:
On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
Thy sun is set, thy spring is goneâ??
We frolic while â??tis May.

NOTES:

2 *VENUS* Roman goddess of beauty and love (*OED*).

9 *Zephyrs* Personified west wind (*OED*).

14 *Oâ??er-canopies the glade* â??A bank/Oâ??er-canopied with luscious woodbine. *Shakesp[eare] Mids[ummer] Nightâ??s Dream*â?• [Authorâ??s Note]. Act II, scene 1, ll. 257, 259.

16 *Muse* â??Patron goddesses of poetsâ?• (*Britannica*).

27 *And float amid the liquid noon* â??Nare per aestatem liquidamâ??/*Virgil. Georg[ics]. lib* [Book] 4â?• [Authorâ??s Note]. Line 59: â??beholdest their army floating on high,/And the marvelous dusky cloud trailed down the wind afarâ?• (Arthur Way, *The Georgics of Virgil in English Verse*, p. 91.)

30 *Quick-glancing to the sun* â??sporting with quick glance,/Shew to the sun their wavâ??d coats dropt with gold. *Miltonâ??s Paradise Lost, book 7*â?• [Authorâ??s note]. Lines 405-06.

31 *To Contemplationâ??s sober eye* â??While insects from threshold preach, &c./M[atthew] Green, *in the Grotto ./Dodsleyâ??s Miscellenies, Vol. 5, p.* 161â?• [Authorâ??s Note]. Grayâ??s poem was first published in Robert Dodsleyâ??s *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (1748).

37 *Fortune* â??Chance, hap, or luck, regarded as a cause of events and changes in menâ??s affairs. Oftenâ?¦personified as a goddessâ?• (*OED*).

38 *Mischance* â??Bad luck; ill fortuneâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems by Mr. Gray. A New Edition* (London, 1778), pp. 43-47. [Google Books]

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