

Shall end where they began.
 Alike the busy and the gay 35
 But flutter thro' life's little day,
 In Fortune's varying colours drest:
 Brush'd by the hand of rough Mischance,
 Or chill'd by Age, their airy dance
 They leave in dust to rest. 40

Methinks I hear, in voices low,
 The sportive kind reply;
 Poor Moralist! and what are thou?
 A solitary fly!
 Thy joys no glittering female meets, 45
 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 gone
 We frolic while 'tis May. 50

NOTES:

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

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

14 *O'er-canopies the glade* – A bank/*O'er-canopied* with luscious woodbine. *Shakesp[eare] Mids[ummer] Night's Dream* • [Author's Note]. Act II, scene 1, ll. 257, 259.

16 *Muse* – Patron goddesses of poets • (*Britannica*).

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

30 *Quick-glancing to the sun* – sporting with quick glance, / Shew to the sun their wav'd coats dropt with gold. *Milton's Paradise Lost*, book 7 • [Author's note]. Lines 405-06.

31 *To Contemplation's sober eye* – While insects from threshold preach, &c. / *M[atthew] Green, in the Grotto . / Dodsley's Miscellanies, Vol. 5, p. 161* • [Author's Note]. Gray's poem was first published in Robert Dodsley's *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (1748).

37 *Fortune* – Chance, hap, or luck, regarded as a cause of events and changes in men's affairs. Often personified as a goddess • (*OED*).

38 *Mischance* – Bad luck; ill fortune • (*OED*).

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

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