

also a little out of fashion, will still find a place in the poetical anthologies, where, if they have a slightly better chance of being read than the average verse in those compilations, it will be because of the natural curiosity to see what the author of the *Elegy* could do in a different vein of poetry. There are not half a dozen other poems of Gray's besides these we have mentioned, about which the generality of readers know anything now or will probably care anything hereafter. It is really the *Elegy* that "floats" the remainder of the slender consignment of verse down the tide of time.

Volume I. of Mr. Gosse's quartet is filled out with the *Journals* in France and among the Lakes (the latter for the first time printed entirely from Gray's MS.), and the *Essays* on the Philosophy of Bolingbroke, Norman Architecture, Metre, etc. Volumes II. and III. are devoted to the *Letters*, now first collected from Mitford's edition of 1816 and his supplementary issues of 1843 and 1853. Volume IV. contains certain Notes on Aristophanes and Plato, of little value or interest in themselves, but possibly worth preserving as from the hand of Gray. The General Index of fifty-four double-columned pages in fine print is so full that it might almost serve as an epitome of the four volumes.

Mr. Gosse tells us in his preface that when he undertook to edit Gray's works, he hoped to be able to add considerably to their bulk. There had been rumors for many years of unprinted poems and letters which he counted upon unearthing; but the most careful search has enabled him to bring out comparatively little in either prose or verse that had not been already printed in some form or other. A few bits of humorous rhyme have been recovered, with a graceful little *Epitaph on a Child*, and certain translations from Propertius and Dante. This last, from the 33d canto of the *Inferno*, is certainly a striking piece of blank verse, if it does not possess the "extraordinary merit" which the discoverer sees in it. It is by far his most important "find," and he may be pardoned if he somewhat exaggerates its value.

As an editor, Mr. Gosse has evidently been most painstaking and conscientious. He has given us the first unexceptionable text of the *Poems* since Gray's own of 1768. No former editor, indeed, except Mr. W. J. Rolfe, in his *Select Poems of Gray*, published in 1876 (to which Mr. Gosse pays a tribute in his preface), has made any attempt to reprint the poems as Gray wrote and printed them. Mason, Mathias, and Mitford, with the poet's MS. before them, deliberately falsified it in diction and punctuation. Mathias even gives us an admirably engraved fac-simile of the Pembroke MS. of the *Elegy*, while he spoils two lines of the Epitaph in it by mispointing them thus in his text:

He gave to Misery (all he had) a tear,  
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

Gray wrote "He gave to Misery all he had, a tear." With his fine ear for rhythm he could never have cast the two lines in one mould, as his stupid editor makes him do. This is but one illustration out of many that might be given to show how Gray suffered at the hands of those who have attempted to edit him.

Mr. Gosse has, moreover, aimed to give us in his notes all the *varie Lectiones* of the poems. Gray elaborated his verses with the minutest care, as the three manuscripts of the *Elegy* that have come down to us, and the successive printed forms of the poem, abundantly prove; and the same is true of most of the other poems. In the case of the *Elegy*, Mr. Gosse prints, in addition to the text of 1768 (which unquestionably is that which Gray finally settled down upon) that of the first authorized edition of 1751, and that of the Pembroke MS. The variations of the other two manuscripts are given in foot-notes.

In this collation of texts we note some obvious inaccuracies. The 9th stanza of the text of 1768 stands thus:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour,  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

So Mr. Gosse gives it, not changing *Awaits* to *Await* as is generally done, confusing subject and object, and spoiling the sense withal; but in his foot-notes he quotes *Await* as the reading in the text above and *Awaits* as the reading of the Egerton MS. We know nothing of this Egerton MS., but certainly the other two MSS. have *Awaits*. Mr. Gosse's reprint of the Pembroke MS. gives it so. We suspect that the Egerton has *Await*, though we should be inclined to regard it as a slip of the pen rather than Gray's deliberate alteration. If it was the latter, he had the good sense to return to *Awaits* when he printed the poem in 1768.

In the reprint of the Pembroke MS. we note one or two other slips. There are six marginal alterations (if we may trust Mathias's engraved fac-simile) of which Mr. Gosse gives only four. The omitted ones are in the line "And in our Ashes glow their wonted Fires," where the margin has "Ev'n" and "live" for "And" and "glow." The stanza "There scatter'd oft," etc., is put immediately after the one, "The next with Dirges due," etc.; while in the MS. it is at the bottom of the page with an asterisk in the text directing attention to it. This is what we should expect, as Gray adds the note "Omitted in 1753," and the MS. was written after that time.

Again, the marginal note on the MS. giving the dates of its publication, editions, etc., is printed twice by Mr. Gosse (on pages 72 and 227) and the two copies, evidently meant to be *verbatim et literatim*, etc., do

#### GOSSE'S GRAY.\*

IT was Gray, we believe—if not, it might well have been—to whom somebody referred as "going down to posterity with a very small volume of poetry under his arm." His poems, with all the illustrative and critical matter appended to them, fill but a trifle more than half of one of these four comely volumes; and of the poems the renowned *Elegy* is the only one by which Gray is generally known, or which posterity is likely to associate with his name. The Pindaric Odes are good specimens of an obsolete type of metrical composition, and will continue to be read and quoted as such by students, but they can never be widely popular. The *Eton College* ode and the *Hymn to Adversity*, though

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not agree exactly in either wording or pointing; and neither agrees with Mathias's facsimile, of which Mr. Rolfe gives an accurate transcript in his *Select Poems*.

These are little things, it is true, but in this kind of editing absolute accuracy in little things is essential. If we make a point of giving the exact wording and spelling and pointing of the manuscript, we must be minutely exact, or the transcript is worthless. As a matter of fact, it is rare to find two such transcripts that agree, and quite as rare to find either of them precisely correct. This is by no means the first time that we have happened to see two inaccurate copies of the same writing in the same volume.

But these small errors can be corrected in future editions; and they do not detract in the least from the general merit of Mr. Gosse's editorial work. We are indebted to him for what must remain the standard edition of Gray for our generation, and probably for many generations to come.