

empty. Now you can walk all the way down the darkest hallway without barking your knee on a trunk. The ordeal is over. And just at this moment your wife discovers that you never packed the writing paper, the clean clothes which came last night from the laundry, or the electric toaster. As I think I said before, packing is a science.

### THE ELEGY

BY NEWMAN LEVY

**C**HILDREN are taught at school that it took Thomas Gray twenty-five years to write his "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard." At last I am able to give the world the true history of this famous poem. Most of the actors in this quaint and almost tragic pastoral drama are now dead. Laughing, roguish Polly Warren, the scampering, hoydenish minx, lies peacefully in the churchyard of Stoke Poges, close by the grave of Tom Gray himself. Kit Rogers, too, is dead, and big boisterous Jack Fletcher, who left the village shortly after the elegy was finished, "to try to forget," as he said, has vanished from the face of the earth. Some say—but I am getting ahead of my story. Only a few of us oldsters are left now to chuckle over old times, and to remember how Tom Gray wrote his elegy. *Eheu fugaces!*

Tom was always a queer sort of lad. Perhaps it was because he was rather frail and delicate that he never used to take part in the rough boyish games that we played about the village of Stoke Poges. When school was over, and we had rushed merrily forth to our sports, he would take his books and wander lonesomely through the old churchyard. As we romped by noisily we could see him sitting on a grave, trying to read an inscription on a tombstone, or else doing his homework there.

I can remember it as clearly as though it happened yesterday. I was having supper at the Gray's—Tom's older brother, Wilbur, was my closest friend.

Old Mr. Gray was ponderously trying to tell us jokes. Suddenly, without any preliminary warning, almost, as I afterward said, like a bolt from the blue, Tom, in that melancholy voice of his, said "I'm writing an elegy." "Indeed?" said his father. "Yes," said Tom, "an elegy in a country churchyard."

Old Mr. Gray tried to make some humorous remark, I've forgotten just what, but I could see that he was secretly pleased. He was like that. He never let on to Tom how impressed and pleased he was, but he used to button-hole his acquaintances in the town and say in a voice quivering with pride, "My boy Tom is writing an elegy."

Of course, in a small town like ours there are no secrets. Everybody knows what everybody else is doing. The following day all Stoke Poges was talking about Tom Gray's elegy. Tom seemed unchanged. Perhaps he appeared to be a bit more serious and more melancholy. He certainly spent more time in the churchyard than ever before. As we boys scampered through the streets we instinctively quieted down as we approached the churchyard; and if one of us thoughtlessly raised his voice, the rest would say reprovingly, "Hush! Tom Gray is writing his elegy."

And thus we come to Tom's nineteenth birthday. The elegy was then three years old and, as Tom used to say in reply to questions, "progressing satisfactorily." I was sitting on the front porch of the Gray house talking to Wilbur. Mr. Gray was lying in the hammock, asleep. It was a crisp autumn night,—late in September I think. Mrs. Gray, who had been in the kitchen, came out on the porch and said to us, "Will you boys run down to the churchyard and tell Tom to come home. It's getting kinder damp and chilly and he hasn't got his rubbers on."

We found Tom seated on his favorite grave. There was a radiantly triumphant look on his thin, pale face. "I've just finished the first line," he

whispered. "Listen: 'The churchyard tolls the knell of dying day.'" We helped him up and took him home.

For the next six months or so I saw very little of Tom although I was a frequent visitor at the Gray home. "He's working very hard on his elegy," his mother used to say. I remember one cold December night when Tom did not come home to supper. Mrs. Gray sent Wilbur and me down to the graveyard with sandwiches and hot coffee for him. The air was bleak, and there was a thin coating of frost on the graves. Tom's face was haggard and careworn as he sat shivering on the cold grave. He looked up as we approached.

"I think I have it in shape now," he said. "I've changed 'dying day.'"

I must have looked puzzled.

"It originally read 'dying day,'" he explained. "I've changed the line to read, 'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.'"

As I look back now over the shadowy perspective of years, the time seems to have flown quickly by, but to Tom Gray and his family it was a long hard struggle. True, Tom, with the passing of years, had become a person of some importance in Stoke Poges. The fame of his elegy had spread beyond the confines of our simple village, and at one time, I remember, we even thought of sending him to Parliament. But Tom would have none of it, "I can't go to London," he said. "How can I write an Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard unless I am actually in a country churchyard?" That was Tom Gray all over. A less conscientious artist might have been satisfied to stay comfortably in the house and write the piece. But not Tom.

After his mother and father died, the burden of supporting the poet fell upon Wilbur, for, of course, Tom could not take a job of any sort until his great work was finished. It was at Wilbur's wedding that Tom came over to me with a look of deep earnestness in his face. He had taken no part in the

merrymaking, but had stood moodily aloof as though buried in deep thought.

"Do you know," he said to me, "I'm not at all sure that 'dying day' mightn't be better after all."

And so the years dragged on, and the immortal poem grew slowly to completion. Now it was Wilbur's little boy, Milton, who daily used to take Tom's supper to him in the churchyard. We tried to persuade him in very cold weather, to sit in the church and write. We said that it was technically the same as being in the churchyard. But Tom could not see it. His hair had become quite gray—and he walked with a slow faltering step. He had a chronic hacking cough which he acquired, I am sure, sitting out in the graveyard in all sorts of weather. But still, the fire of genius burned bright and unquenchable.

One evening we were seated in the living room of Wilbur's house. My daughter, who was engaged to Wilbur's son Milton, sat in a corner with her fiancé. Suddenly the door opened and Tom entered. We were startled, not so much by the change in his appearance, as by his early arrival, for it was only six o'clock.

"It's finished!" he cried in a vibrant voice. "My elegy is finished!"

The women hugged and kissed him; the men grasped his hands and slapped him affectionately on the back.

"I knew you'd put it over," said Wilbur with tears in his voice.

And then, as we sat there in the deepening twilight, we listened in reverent silence as Thomas Gray read for the first time his undying masterpiece "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." As the last sonorous echo of the cadenced periods died away I was the first to speak.

"And now, Tom, that you've finished it what are you going to do?"

He cast a flashing glance at me.

"I am going to write An Ode on the Distant Prospect of Eton College."

That was Tom Gray. A genius to his finger tips.



## Be Patient: Be Polite!

BY EDWARD S. MARTIN

IT has been suggested that there would be timeliness in a little discourse about the expediency of being polite to everyone and not using harsh language even in one's business. Does something really need to be said about that? Does some one need to have it pointed out that scolds are seldom prospered and even when prospered are seldom happy? "I know cases of very likely young men who were permanently damaged by too much energy of admonition in their employers!" So says our comrade who appeals for gentleness. We all know of such cases. The world, in spite of all the discipline it has lately undergone, still abounds in persons who think their own way by far the best, and do not hesitate to impose their will on others if they can. Some such persons seem to do pretty well in life, but not because they are overbearing but in spite of it. They may have great virtues combined with their defects. They may be qualified by resolution and persistence to deal with difficult situations and drive or muddle successfully through them. They usually leave more or fewer casualties behind them, lives partly thwarted, natures twisted, wills cheated out of their development, but they may in their way be effective, though at high cost. In every war there are fighting generals of that type. In every dozen households there are individuals of that quality; overbearing men; women with overdeveloped wills and limited understanding, who get their own way be-

cause it is too hard to fight them. But such people are not good to live with, and particularly not good to work for, though they may be fairly generous, because they thwart the development of character. Violence is not creative or even constructive. Energy, to be sure, accomplishes things, but not noise and not harshness. People are apt to mix these agents up, because they sometimes get together, and to conclude that noise is a sign of energy. But very quiet people, thoughtful of others and considerate, often have tremendous driving force. They hold their line. They do what they think necessary, and accomplish the needful, but they know the secret of authority without compulsion, and they do not scold. Of course, they are people who have accomplished self-control, which is the first requisite to the successful direction of other people. The seat of power is not in the body but in the spirit. To be self-controlled, to be polite, to govern one's own speech—those are the accomplishments of successful managers.

Everyone has a right to live his life according to what knowledge and convictions and impulses he has, in so far as it is compatible with a like course in the people about him, or with earning wages, if he must do that. Tolerant people recognize that right and give it all the scope that circumstances allow. Intolerant people keep running against it, see their own way big and other people's desires small. The less wise they are, the more