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GOLDSMITH



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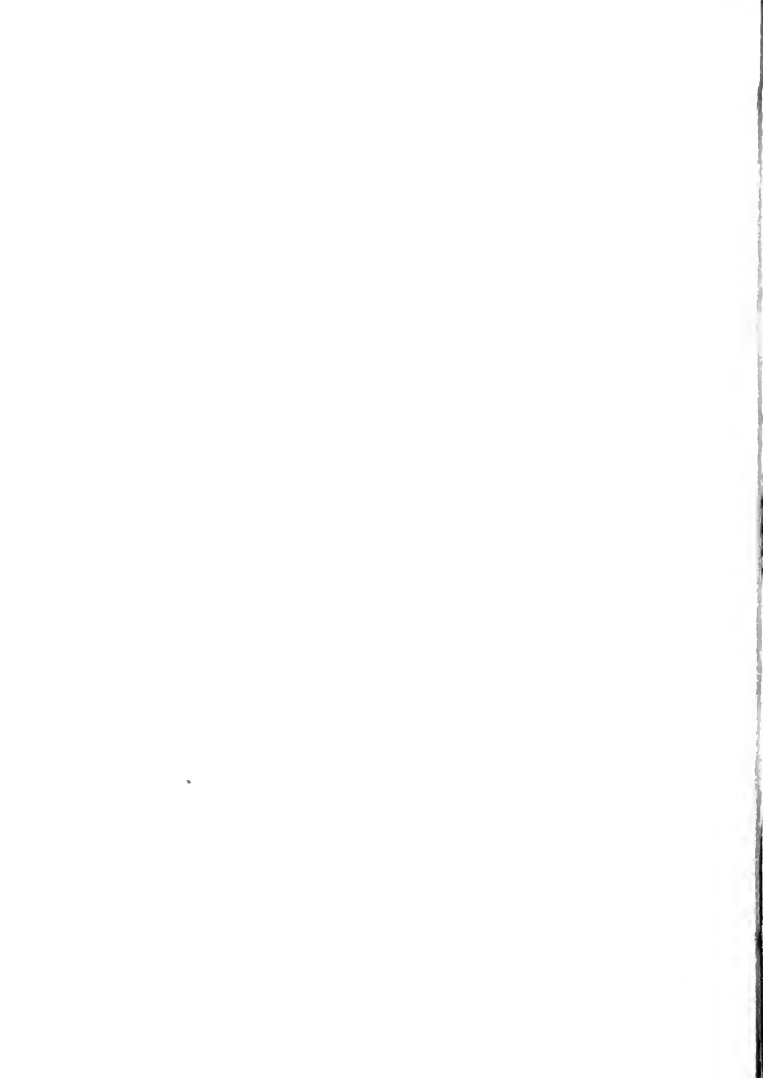
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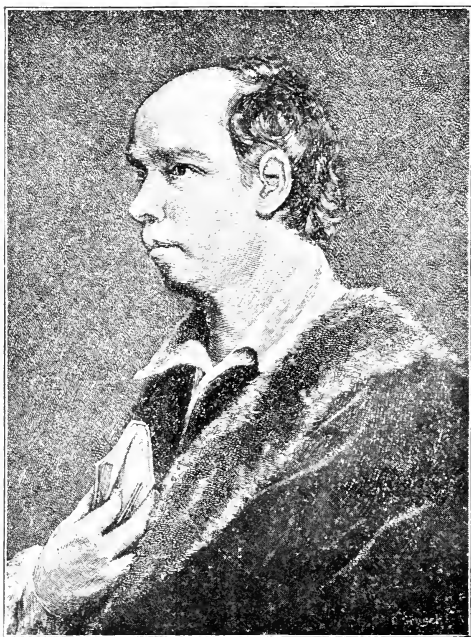
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OLIVER GOLDSMITH





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BY

COL. JOHN A. JOYCE

Author of "Complete Poems," "Checkered Life,"

"Peculiar Poems," "Zig Zag,"

"Jewels of Memory,"

Songs, etc.

WASHINGTON

THE NEALE COMPANY

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PREFACE

To know a Bohemian poet, you must join him in soul, in midnight moments, when oscillating between the blunders of Bacchus and vanity of Venus.

I have knelt at the shrine of Goldsmith, the good-natured man, for fifty years, and although a hundred and twenty-six have passed since he stepped "Across the Ranges" to eternity, his "Vicar of Wakefield" and "Deserted Village" are still cherished in the homes and hearts of mankind with undimmed luster.

I lay this literary leaf among the wilderness of flowers that decorate the memory of "Poor Goldy," trusting that the reader may never cease to love and laugh at the benevolent blunders of the greatest Irish poet.

J. A. J.

Washington
October 1, 1900

I DEDICATE
ALL THAT IS GENEROUS AND NOBLE IN **THIS**
VOLUME TO COLONEL WILLIAM B. ALLISON,
A MAN WHO NEVER VIOLATED A
PRIVATE OR POLITICAL
PROMISE.

J. A. J.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

INTRODUCTION

OLIVER GOLDSMITH was the greatest poetic genius of the eighteenth century; and while Sam. Johnson is styled the "Lion of English Literature," from his ponderous tread and roar, Goldsmith might well be compared to the mountain eagle that soars over the world in sunshine and storm, dipping lightly into the darkest valley of despair or rising grandly over the highest peaks of poetic magnificence.

Goldsmith was cradled in the gloom of adversity amid the rural desolation of Ireland, reared in the walks of humiliating poverty and thrown on the world like

a rich wreck, broken to pieces by the contending billows of fortune and misfortune.

The wail of the Banshee and the laugh of the fairies must have commingled at his birth, for his whole life was a contention between poverty and pride, and often when Dame Fortune placed within his grasp some of the richest jewels in her crown, he flung them away like a petulant child and turned his back on the gilded palaces of power to suffer and starve around the rickety stairs of Green Arbor Court or Grub Street.

His poverty and pride went hand in hand, and while at times he seemed to conquer the former, he never could subdue the latter. But while pride was his besetting sin, it also was his constant solace and kept him afloat amid the breakers that overwhelmed many stronger men.

The storm was never dark enough to

dim the lustre of his hope, and the night was never so long but bright rays from the dawning illuminated his squalid quarters. When the fierce blasts of winter howled like a wolf through his broken window and down his cheerless chimney, he had heart enough to lend the poor beggar girl his last pot of coals and crawl himself under a threadbare rug to keep from freezing.

The starving and naked never appealed to him in vain, and even when his last shilling was gone he would send his only good coat to the pawn-shop to relieve the distress of some one more wretched than himself.

The pathway of Goldsmith was tangled with thorns, and even the few wild roses that were plucked by the wayside he bestowed upon the first needy traveler he met — parting with the perfume of prosperity while he continued to tread the

bleeding highway of adversity. His nature was as unselfish as the sun, lighting up the dark nooks of despair as well as irradiating the pinnacles of pomp and power. His poetic heart was as light as a gazelle skimming over the plain or meandering around mountain steeps.

His literary flight was like some long, rolling river, beginning its course in upland springs and peaks, winding through sunlight and shadow to the brawling brook, murmuring with a gentle flow through meadow lands and fallow fields, then rushing through rocky rapids and leaping over fearful falls to sink forever in the dark waters of the limitless ocean.

The sunny side of his character was a background of sadness, and while his blundering brogue enlivened his companions at the "Three Jolly Pigeons" or "Literary Club," his weary heart often

beat to the siren echoes of suicide in the lonely hours of midnight when no sound was heard but the chiming clock in the church tower or the mournful howl of the distant watchdog.

Mirth, humor and melancholy ran a race for the mastery, and while the world laughed at his innocent credulity, it was compelled to worship at the classic shrine of his poetry and at the Pantheon portals of his philosophy.

From boyhood, Goldsmith was a constant prey to a horde of parasites, and whenever his financial feathers grew strong and beautiful, these impecunious wretches plucked the fat goose and left him again naked and ungainly, to sweat as a bookseller's hack or starve in the gloom of a London garret. He came upon the world like a comet in the sky when shadows of evening hasten the footsteps of declining day. His radiant

beams were slow in development, but gradually the warm glow of his genius spread over the world like a midnight meteor, filling all space with the dazzling light of his intellect and leaving behind a beauty that will never fade and a memory that shall never die.

As the Celtic Congreve says :

“ The bards may go down to the place of their
slumbers,
The lyre of the charmer be hushed in the
grave,
But far in the future the power of their
numbers
Shall kindle the hearts of the faithful and
brave.

“ It will waken an echo in souls deep and
lonely,
Like voices of reeds by the winter wind
fanned ;
It will call up a spirit of freedom when
only
Her breathings are heard in the songs of
our land !”

BIRTH AND RURAL SCHOOL DAYS

Oliver Goldsmith was the fifth child of Rev. Charles Goldsmith, a country parson of the English Church, who held a poor living at the obscure village of Pallasmore, in the County of Longford, amid the rural solitudes of Ireland. Oliver was born at this place on the 10th of November, 1728, one hundred and seventy-two years ago. He was very young and innocent when he was born, and continued so for the remainder of his life !

Up to the age of seventeen the education of little Oliver was secured around the romantic scenery of Kilkinny, Lissoy, Elphin, Athlone, and Ballymahon, places that made a lasting impression on his mystic mind and gave color, beauty and force to the subsequent products of his

prolific pen. From his first attendance at school he was pronounced a blockhead; and his relative Elizabeth Delap, his first teacher, said, "Never was so dull a boy."

At the age of nine we find him attending the school of Paddy Byrne at Lissoy, and little did the palavering pedagogue know the wealth of poetic intellect that lay slumbering in the heart and soul of his shy and awkward pupil. Paddy Byrne had served in the wars of Marlborough as quartermaster in Spain, and had a large stock of tales, campaign stories, fairy lore and a knack at singing Irish ballads and spouting verses of his own composition. Between scholastic work and recreation he was fond of amusing his scholars with stories that thronged his memory, and we may be sure that none of them were lost on the fertile brain of little Oliver.

Thirty years afterwards, amid the whirl of London life and overburdened with hack work for Shylock publishers, he gave a graphic picture of "the village school master" that has never been equaled or surpassed. Here it is :

" Beside you straggling fence that skirts the
way,
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
There in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school ;
A man severe he was and stern to view—
I knew him well, and every truant knew ;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face ;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he ;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.
Yet he was kind ; or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault.
The village all declared how much he knew—
'T was certain he could write and cipher too ;

Lands he could measure, terms and tides pre-
sage,
And even the story ran that he could gauge.
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
For even though vanquished, he could argue
still,—
While words of learned length and thundering
sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,—
And still they gazed and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew!”

A violent attack of smallpox forced Oliver to quit the school of Paddy Byrne, and when he had recovered, his grotesque form and pitted face produced in the beholder a feeling of laughter that no doubt caused the little fellow many a heart pang. From this time forward he seems to have been the butt of his associates and the sport of Dame Fortune in the distribution of her fickle favors. He attended school for a while at Elphin, and when he was eleven years old was sent to a higher

school at Athlone, five miles from Lissoy, taught by a minister named Campbell. He remained here two years, and then went for a period of four years to the Latin school of Rev. Patrick Hughes at Edgesworthtown in the County of Longford, where he finished the ordinary branches of a liberal education.

While Goldsmith was tossed about from school to school in this rural region we only hear of him during vacation at Lissoy as a shy, awkward, comical boy, and thought by his school-mates "no better than a fool." But his last teacher gave him credit for classical knowledge. He took great delight in the translations of Ovid, Horace, and Tacitus, but cared little for the orations of Cicero. Dr. Johnson says that "he was a plant that flowered late and nothing remarkable about him when young." Yet when he was only eleven years of age in his uncle's house at

Elphin he surprised the family, and the fiddler Cummings, who called him ugly Æsop, with this sharp reply :

“ Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,
See Æsop dancing and his monkey playing.”

At the age of seventeen it was a great puzzle what to do with Goldsmith. His father was perplexed for the future of his wayward son. The family funds had recently been brought to their lowest ebb by the pride of the old minister in giving a marriage portion to his eldest daughter Catherine, who had imprudently and privately married a Mr. Daniel Hodson, the son of a neighboring landed gentleman.

If Oliver was to attend the University it must be as a sizar, or poor scholar, who receives food, tuition and lodging for almost nothing ; who performs menial work, wears a coarse gown, a red cap, and is a kind of college football for tyrannical

teachers and scheming scholars. At this proposition his sensitive nature recoiled, and he expressed a preference to be bound to some trade, where wealthy mediocrity would not spurn indigent superiority.

TRINITY COLLEGE ESCAPADES

The advice of his good-natured uncle, Rev. Thomas Contarine, finally prevailed, and on the 11th of June, 1745, Goldsmith was admitted last of a list of eight sizars at Trinity College, Dublin. For four years this human sensitive plant must have endured the agonies of the damned as pictured in the scorching lines of the immortal Dante, who suffered himself many of the humiliating tortures that fell to the lot of poor little Oliver. Flood and Burke were his schoolmates, and many others who afterwards became renowned in church and state; yet their lives were not tormented by poverty nor blistered by the contempt of taunting teachers.

Goldsmith soon fell under the tutorship of a brute named Wilder, who took special

delight in persecuting the young sizar and humiliating him on every occasion. In May, 1747, two months after the death of his famished father, Oliver took part in a college riot against the police of Dublin, who had unjustly arrested one of his class. Several persons were killed and wounded in the attack on the prison. Four of the ring-leaders were expelled from the college, and among four others publicly reprimanded was Oliver Goldsmith. To this day the Latin record of the University shows that he "favored sedition and riot"—a just course against tyranny.

The tyranny of Wilder now became worse than ever. One evening, after Goldsmith had received several shillings for a lot of ballads furnished a Dublin music dealer, he invited "a party of young friends of both sexes from the city" to supper and a dance in his outside detached quarters. When the fun

of the revelers was at its highest, the wicked Wilder broke into the rooms, abused Oliver before the whole company and wound up his midnight raid by giving the poor fellow a thrashing. The gay party dispersed in a hurry, and the next morning Goldsmith left the college, after selling his books, and started for Cork and America with only a shilling in his pocket ! He wandered around for a week in a half-dazed and starving condition and finally went home to his brother Henry, who prevailed on him to go back to the college, where he secured re-admission. He continued to be "cautioned" and "fined" in the "buttery books" to the end of his University term, February, 1749, when he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts, graduating the lowest in his class.

Thus at the age of twenty-one he emerged from the classical halls of old

Trinity with the lowest honors; yet never in the history of that renowned University has there been one of its scholars that has conferred higher honors on his *Alma Mater* or greater pleasure to the world, than the sensitive, rollicking, impulsive, unselfish Irish Goldsmith.

A score of anecdotes are told of his rare eccentricities and rebounding nature. Who has not heard of his waiting in midnight hours on the streets of Dublin, leaning against a lamp-post or crouching around a corner, to hear the vagrant ballad singers reciting his pathetic or rollicking songs and then retiring through the back gate of the college, where he meets a poor beggar woman and her shivering children, for whose immediate relief he gives up all his bed blankets, splits open the ticking and crawls into the feathers to keep himself from freezing that memorable winter night?

What a glorious example of charity, heart, and benevolent humanity ! The records of the human race furnish no finer or more sympathetic soul than was found in the God-given genius of Goldsmith.

A quotation from his " Bee " papers will illustrate the unselfishness of the man and the great tenderness of his noble nature : " Why was this heart of mine formed with so much sensibility, or why was not my fortune adapted to its impulse ? Tenderness without a capacity for relieving only makes the man who feels it more wretched than the object which sues for assistance."

LAUNCHED ON THE OCEAN OF LIFE

This human craft was now launched on the ocean of life, less prepared for its buffeting billows than any of his college mates. With a poetic soul for a compass, sentiments for sails and a tender heart for a rudder, the great wonder is that he was not engulfed by the first storm that struck his lurching barque. For two years he wandered around as a "Buckeen," or genteel vagabond, among his relatives and friends, living part of the time with his mother at Ballymahon and rollicking at wayside inns and ale houses with idle and dissolute companions. We can see the "man in black," "Moses," and "Marlow" singing with "Tony Lumpkins" the festive song of the "Three Jolly Pigeons":

“ Then come put the jorum about,
And let us be merry and clever ;
Our hearts and our liquors are stout —
Here’s the ‘ Three Jolly Pigeons ’ forever.
Let some cry up woodcock or hare,
Your bustards, your ducks and your widgeons,
But of all the gay birds in the air,
Here’s a health to the ‘ Three Jolly Pigeons. ’ ”

What a wonderful analogy exists in the festive Bacchanalian bouts of Burns and the hilarity of Goldsmith. In the year 1751, at the age of twenty-three, the Irish bard made midnight musical with his verses at Ballymahon, while the Scotch bard, in 1791, at the age of thirty-three, enlivened the ale houses and taverns of Dumfries with his philosophic poetry and comical songs. I can hear even now himself and his rollicking chums deify their mutual friend, John Barleycorn :

“ Then let us toast John Barleycorn —
Each man a glass in hand ;

And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland !”

Burns was fifteen years old, and had begun writing poetry on his father's farm, when the dazzling Goldsmith died ; and it seems that the spirit of the “ Mountain Dew ” of the Emerald Isle was transferred in a double measure to the heart of Bobby Burns, for the number of foaming ales and “ hot scotches ” he drank on winter nights might suffice to float a ship. If there is a Scotchman in the world who has ever attended a Caledonian banquet on St. Andrew's night, he can have an idea of the brimming beakers that Burns could empty in one of his tavern testimonials.

“ The storm without might roar and rustle,
Tam did not mind the storm a whistle ;
Kings might be blessed, but Tam was glorious—
O'er all the ills of life victorious ! ”

Between hunting, fishing, spreeing and teaching, Goldsmith spent another year in a kind of aimless life ; but at last he threw up his tutorship in the family of Mr. Finn, of Roscommon, and with a fine horse and thirty pounds in his pocket, he started again for Cork and America. Bad luck was his portion as usual. After six weeks of strolling about Ireland, he appeared at his mother's home in a forlorn condition, riding an old, broken-down horse that he called " Fiddleback." It seems that he had gone to Cork, secured passage for America, put his kit aboard the vessel, and while " larking " about town a favorable breeze arose and the ship suddenly sailed with his passage money and luggage. He was compelled to sell his good horse and work his way back to relatives for another start. His mother must have been as much mortified as when he brought the gross of green

spectacles home from the fair in exchange for the young colt bartered away for almost nothing.

GOLDSMITH AS A HORSE TRADER

This scene in the "Vicar of Wakefield" between the good "Deborah," presumptively Goldsmith's mother, and old "Dr. Primrose," his father, will show some of the eccentricities and mistakes of "Moses":—

" 'My dear wife, as we are now about to hold up our heads, it would be proper to sell the colt at a neighboring fair and buy a horse that would carry single or double and make a pretty appearance at church or upon a visit.' "

Dr. Primrose intimates that he intends to go to the fair himself and sell the colt, but his good wife would not listen to such a thing, as the parson had a bad cold, and she remarked :

" 'No, my dear ; our son Moses is a

discreet boy and can buy and sell to a very great advantage ; you know all our great bargains are of his purchasing. He always stands out and haggles and actually tires them till he gets a bargain.' ”

Dr. Primrose continues and says :

“ ‘ I was willing to entrust my son with the sale of the colt, for I had a good opinion of his prudence, and the next morning I perceived his sisters mighty busy in fixing out Moses for the fair,—trimming his hair, brushing his buckles and cocking his hat with pins. The business of the toilet being over, we had at last the satisfaction of seeing him mounted upon the colt, with a deal-box before him for grocery supplies. He wore a suit of that cloth called “thunder and lightning,” which, though grown too short, was much too good to be thrown away. His waistcoat was of gosling green, and his sisters

had tied his hair with a broad black ribbon. We all followed him several paces from the door, bawling after him, "good luck ! good luck !" till we could see him no longer. * * *

" ' I wonder what keeps Moses so long at the fair, as it is now almost night-fall.'

" ' Never mind our son,' cried my wife ; ' depend upon it, he knows what he is about. I 'll warrant we 'll never see him sell his hen of a rainy day. I have seen him buy such bargains as would amaze one. I 'll tell you a good story about that that will make you split your sides with laughing. But, as I live, yonder comes Moses without a horse and the box on his back.'

" As she spoke, Moses came slowly on foot and sweating under the deal-box, which he had strapped around his shoulders like a peddler. ' Welcome,

welcome Moses! Well, my boy, what have you brought us from the fair?' 'I have brought you myself,' cried Moses, with a sly look, and resting the box on the dresser. 'Ay, Moses,' cried my wife, 'that we know, but where is the horse?' 'I have sold him,' cried Moses, 'for three pounds five shillings and twopence.' 'Well done, my good boy,' cried my wife; 'I knew you would touch them off in fine style. Between ourselves, three pounds five shillings and twopence is no bad day's work. Come, let us have the money!' 'I have brought back no money,' cried Moses. 'I have laid it all out in a great bargain, and here it is. Here they are — a gross of green spectacles with silver rims and shagreen cases.' '“A gross of green spectacles,”' repeated my wife in a faint voice. 'And you have parted with the pretty colt and brought us back nothing but a gross of paltry

green spectacles !’ ‘Dear mother,’ cried the boy, ‘why don’t you listen to reason? I had the sharpers at a dead bargain or I should not have bought them. The silver rims alone will sell for double the money !’ ‘A fig for your silver rims!’ cried my wife in a passion. ‘I dare say they won’t sell for half the money as broken silver, five shillings an ounce.’ ‘You need be under no uneasiness,’ said I, ‘about selling the rims, for the whole lot are not worth a sixpence, as they are only varnished copper.’ ‘What, what!’ cried my wife. ‘Not silver, the rims not silver?’ ‘No,’ cried I; ‘no more silver than your sauce-pan!’ ‘And so we have parted with our sweet little colt for a gross of green spectacles. A murrain on such trumpery; throw them in the fire — hang the blockhead. Oh you little idiot!’ ”

By this time the boy saw that he had been swindled by a couple of confidence

sharpers at the fair. Yet this was only one of the long train of misfortunes that fell to the lot of our confiding "Moses"! Such guileless credulity has seldom been found in man, and the foregoing escapade of "poor Goldy," as told of himself in the "Vicar of Wakefield," well illustrates the innocence and unsuspecting nature of this great character — this benevolent bunch of intellectuality.

ROLLICKING AROUND DUBLIN AND
EDINBURGH — PATRIOTISM

Goldsmith, soon after visiting his mother, started again for London on his horse "Fiddleback," with fifty pounds in his pocket, to study law in the Temple. He only got as far as Dublin, where he met a number of boon companions, with whom he spent the fifty pounds in drinking and gambling, and was compelled to fall back again upon his relatives.

He was forgiven once more, and for the last time started from home to study medicine in Edinburgh. Thus, at the age of twenty-four he left the enchanting scenes of Lissoy, and he says "the most pleasing horizon in Nature," never again to press the green sod of old Ireland, or mingle his voice in the chorus of the

“Three Jolly Pigeons.” However, he never forgot the rural companions of his youth, and always kept a warm spot in his heart for his native land. He was a true Irishman in the best sense of the term, and while it has often been alleged by surface readers of his character that he was more English than Irish and never wrote anything in praise of his own country, I say emphatically, and challenge successful contradiction, that his pen and voice was never purchased by British gold ; and this is more than can be said of the Nugents, Kelleys, Sheridans, Burkes, and Moores !

No, when the Earl of Northumberland, Bishop Percy, Sam Johnson and Lord North tried to purchase his pen to assist tyranny during the American Revolution, he spurned their brilliant offers with contempt from the gloom of a London garret, preferring to be even a book-

seller's hack rather than a toadying pensioner on the rolls of royalty ! His heart always turned to old Ireland, and the letter to his brother Maurice in January, 1770, shows abiding love for his Irish friends, soliciting correspondence from home to cheer his hours of carking care. And again to his brother Henry, in his poem of "The Traveler," he breaks out in a sigh of sorrow :

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravel'd fondly turns to thee ;
Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain."

And to prove the climax of his Irish patriotism, hear his classical indictment in the "Deserted Village" against the tyranny of landlords and princes, who brought desolation and death to his own "Sweet Auburn" :

“Sweet, smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled and all thy charms with-
drawn ;

Amidst thy bowers the tyrant’s hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green :
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way ;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest ;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries ;
Sunk are thy bowers, in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o’ertops the mouldering wall ;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler’s
hand,

Far, far away, thy children leave the land.
Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay :
Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,
A breath can make them, as a breath has made ;
But a bold peasantry, their country’s pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied.”

Goldsmith remained around Edinburgh for eighteen months, strolling among the Highlands, feasting at banquet boards or drinking and singing with wild students at taverns and ale houses. We may be sure that he paid more attention to amusement than to medicine, and the money received from Irish friends found its way into drinking tills of taverns.

Still restless, he took the sudden notion to visit Holland and finish his medical studies at Leyden. But the vessel in which he and half a dozen adventurers embarked, after being out a few days, was driven back to land. The medical students now indulged in social cheer, and were finally arrested for rioting and put in jail for two weeks as French sympathizers. The ship finally sailed without Goldsmith, and all on board were lost, showing that Providence kept watch over the wandering minstrel. He finally reached

Leyden, where for ten months he hung about the great Gaubius, storing his erratic brain with chemical lore.

TRAVELS ON THE CONTINENT

Medicine could not minister to a mind like Goldsmith's. Baron Holberg, the Danish humorist, had then but recently made a tour of Europe on foot, without friends or money, nothing but a fluent tongue and sweet voice to pay the expense of his travel, after which he returned to Copenhagen to live in opulence and be honored by Kings and Queens. With a flute and a clean shirt and a shilling, Goldsmith thought he could do likewise, and at once tossed aside his medical books, departing from Leyden on foot to view strange lands and study continental customs. He passed through Flanders, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, visiting the principal cities or lingering along rural roads and hamlets as a

philosophic vagabond, singing and playing his familiar flute for bread and bed.

Although "chill penury froze the genial current of his soul," it could not fetter the flight of his mystic muse, which sung to the world the rhythmic numbers of the lone "Traveler." How the heart of our poet must have swelled with exultation and pride as he viewed the architectural grandeur of Paris, climbed the rugged glaciers of the towering Alps, or wandered through the artistic halls of Venice, Verona, and Florence. I behold him now in lonely contemplation, musing and composing immortal verses on Alpine peaks; seated at the foot of some great masterpiece of art, shining from the sculptured walls of Florentine palaces; debating at Universities for supper and shelter, or tuning his magic flute in twilight hours for the delight of dancing peasantry! Glorious, unconscious genius!

After a wild, lunatic ramble of more than two years, we find this guileless creature, in February, 1766, landing under the chalk cliffs at Dover without a farthing or friend to cheer his heavy heart. London was the goal of his ambition — that seething, voracious gulf, where Dryden, Butler, Otway, and Chatterton had been swallowed up in the hungry maw, and now Goldsmith was “one the more, to baffled millions which had gone before.” In working his way to the capital he was compelled to attach himself to a strolling band of players, who performed in taverns and barns for the few shillings that rustic simplicity paid for mediocre amusements.

LONDON WHIRLPOOL

He finally entered London, shambled through its crooked lanes, wondered at its stately streets and mural monuments, pondered over its temples and towers and stood on the strand near the crumbling arches of London Bridge — where the dark waters of the Thames roll its sluggish circles to the sea.

Here he is at last, at the age of twenty-seven years and three months, leaning against some ruined warehouse or broken column, not knowing in that Leviathan pool of human hopes where to turn for work, bread or shelter. Alone in the midst of millions —

“Lone as a solitary cloud,
Lone as a corpse within a shroud.”

He was not the first one who had come up to London to set the Thames afire with his intellectual torch. Men from every land under the sun had sought to inflame and burn up the dark waters, but they roll on to-day as heedless of the world as when "Poor Goldy" gazed into the running mirror. Yet, after all the failures of these ideal wanderers to reap the rich grain of financial fortune, they are the men that the world cares to honor and remember, when myriads of their sordid commercial contemporaries are lost in the waters of oblivion. (The trials he encountered in the cold winds and mists of March to prevent absolute starvation, and the shifts he must have made to keep from freezing in midnight hours when he "lived among the beggars of Axe-Lane," will never be known.

An usher at a boarding-school seems to have been his first employment, but after a

few months' trial he declares that he would rather be an under turnkey in Newgate prison than suffer the cruel humiliations of his task. He here submits a list of civil service questions and answers for primary teachers who intend to become first-class ushers. Hear him :

“Have you been bred apprentice to the business?” “No.” “Then you will never do for a school.”

“Can you dress the boys' hair?” “No.” “Then you won't do for the school.”

“Have you had the small-pox?” “No.” “Then you won't do for a school.”

“Can you lie three in a bed?” “No.” “Then you will never do for a school.”

“Have you a good stomach?” “Yes.” “Then you will certainly not do for a school.”

“Well, sir, since you are not fitted for

the peculiar position of usher, what do you think of becoming an author? I'll show you forty dull, jog-trot fellows about town who live in opulence by writing rotten stuff, who if bred cobblers would all their lives have only mended shoes but never made them."

So the usher hailed with joy the position of authorship and became a worshiper at the shrine of his literary mother of Grub Street.

But for awhile "Poor Goldy" was a pounder of pills and a kind of peripatetic doctor. Poverty pursued him with relentless fury, and his natural improvidence quickened her pace, yet necessity compelled him to mould monuments of thought that will endure and live when temples in stone and columns in bronze shall perish under the corroding touch of Time. Competition in English literature was at its height when Goldsmith took a

job of hack-work with Griffiths, proprietor of the *Monthly Review*. His idea of hack-work is given in an epitaph to his friend :

“ Here lies poor Ned Purden, from misery free,
Who long was a bookseller’s hack ;
He led such a damnable life in this world
That I don’t think he’ll wish to come back !”

A long list of Irish, Scotch and English second-class writers were devouring each other on the newspapers, reviews and magazines of London, while first-class stars like Johnson, Smollet, Fielding, Collins, Gray, Chesterfield, Gibbon, Burke, Ramsey, Cibber, Garrick, Hogarth, and Reynolds shone in the firmament of British literature and art.

Yet into this list of intellectual gladiators, Goldsmith, the youngest, threw his shining lance and challenged them to combat. His lodgings in Green Arbor

Court, among tinkers, beggars and wash-erwomen were not calculated to inspire philosophic prose or patriotic poetry. Yet his "Inquiry into Polite Learning," "The Citizen of the World," Histories of Greece, Rome, and England, "The Traveler," "Vicar of Wakefield," "The Deserted Village," and "Animated Nature" are some of the rare flowers that sprung from this hot-bed of wretchedness.

HAPPY DAYS

Smollet introduced Goldsmith to Newbery, the publisher, who employed our poet on the *British Magazine* and *Public Ledger*. About this time a ray of prosperity shone on "Poor Goldy," and we find him in better quarters at Wine Office Court and the Temple, giving literary suppers to "Jupiter" Johnson and his satellites. His appearance at the banquet board toasting stag guests must have been ludicrous in the extreme. Imagine a five foot five, blue-eyed man, wearing a puffed, powdered wig, green vest, ruffled shirt, plum-colored coat, scarlet breeches, buckled pumps, and shining sword dangling by his side, glass in hand, singing Johnny Armstrong's "Last Good Night," or the "Three Jolly

Pigeons'' and you will have some idea of this good-natured, blundering beau, who sought to cover up the deformities of nature with the artistic circus suits of his trusting tailor Filby. Poor fellow, his heart was so honest and his acts were so innocent that he never, to his dying day, appreciated his funny attitude nor the laughter he provoked among his tavern companions or the lords of the Literary Club. He was, however, a welcome guest at the coffee house of the neglected and the mansion of the renowned, and his ringing laughter and guileless wit infected all who came under the spell of his genial magnetism.

The mellifluous flow of his liquid language could soften the dryest subject, and even commonplace things were relegated to the realms of romance. His sententious sentences and delightful diction sends a thought through the heart,

swift as an arrow from the quiver of Diana. Prosperity could not inflate his pride nor adversity depress it. He walked his wild, wandering way as God had created him, and the petty rules and regulations of mankind were ignored in the calendar of his philosophy. If his shrewdness had kept pace with his generosity he might have left behind a million pounds, but as it was he left not a penny, but debts ; and was buried by the charity of friends. It is an incontrovertible fact that men of great genius have no aptitude for accumulating or retaining money, while men of mediocrity and mathematical methods leave millions behind them, to be separated and squandered by quarreling children and laughing lawyers.

“ Poor Goldy ” was vain, frivolous and improvident, yet in spite of this he was modest, faithful and philosophic. Such a medley of contradictions has seldom

been seen in the same man, and we are often at a loss to know whether to pronounce him "an inspired idiot" or a sage from the school of Socrates.

There is no Irishman so poor that does not have others poorer than himself as dependents. Goldsmith was cursed with a crowd of perambulating parasites—literary tramps—who took advantage of his weakness and generosity.

The Kelleys, Purdens, and Pilkentons leached upon his life. It is related that Pilkenton rushed into the poet's room one morning to borrow twenty guineas to purchase a cage for some white mice he intended to present a grand lady, whose influence and wealth he wished to command. Goldsmith told his impecunious chum that he had but a guinea, when Pilkenton suggested that his gold watch might be pawned to raise the desired amount of money. "That's so," said

Goldsmith, "I never thought of that" ; and suiting the action to the words, pulled out his fine watch, gave it to the wretch, who quickly placed it in pawn, made away with the money, and did not see his benefactor again until on his deathbed, when "Goldy," hearing of his condition, hastened to his relief, gave more money to purchase medicine, and forgave the fraud practiced on his unsuspecting heart.

Thackeray says that Goldsmith "carried no weapon save the harp on which he played, and with which he delighted great and humble, young and old, the captains in the tents, the soldiers round the camp fires—or the women and children in the villages at whose porches he stopped to play, and sing his simple songs of love and beauty."

At the age of thirty-six Goldsmith made his first great hit with the poem of

the "Traveler," which came from the press of Newbery in December, 1764. It immediately took rank with the best poems in the English language, and from the cot of the peasant to the palace of the prince it became a welcome guest, and crowned its author with a laurel wreath of poetic victory. Envious authors and domineering aristocrats who had insulted him in his days of obscurity and poverty now gave him universal praise.

How he pictures friendship in this quotation :

" And what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep ;
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
And leaves the wretch to weep ? "

Fifteen months after the issue of the "Traveler," the "Vicar of Wakefield" was launched on the world, not however until it had accumulated the dust of more

than two years in the desk of Newbery. If his poetry secured the author honest praise, his effort in the field of historic fancy made a lasting impression, and surprised even the authors of his day. The five greatest novels of the world are "Don Quixote," "Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," the "Wandering Jew," and "Vicar of Wakefield," and strange to say the authors—Cervantes, Bunyan, DeFoe, Sue, and Goldsmith—were imprisoned or exiled for the audacity of their genius by the ignorance and tyranny of the age in which they lived. But the millions of human hornets who pursued them have long since gone to forgotten graves, while these universal characters still shine above the gloom of bigotry and shall continue to irradiate the midnight of coming ages.

DRAMAS AND MISCELLANEOUS
LITERATURE

Goldsmith professed no worldly creed. Nature was his Bible and right his religion. The catholicity and benevolence of his spirit soared over the earth with a halo of celestial beauty and went out to all mankind like warm rays of sunshine or the refreshing dews of the dawn. His flight of poetic fancy wings away from the highest peaks of Parnassus, and in his tribute to the Village Preacher, indicates his belief in one eternal God.

“ A man he was to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year.
 * * * * * *
 As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the
 storm,
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are
 spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

In January, 1768, his comedy of the "Good Natured Man" was produced at Covent Garden, and in March, 1773, "She Stoops to Conquer" was rendered at the same theatre under the management of Coleman. The characters of "Honeywood" and "Marlow" in these plays are strict counterparts of the vacillating, blundering, credulous conduct of glorious Goldsmith. His novels, poems and plays were simple autobiographies, and the secret of his success and endurance is the impossibility of separating the author from the man, who honestly acknowledges his failings and humanity, securing at once our pity and sympathy and commanding our admiration and love.

In the interval of regular work he wrote the lives of Beau Nash, Bolingbroke, Parnell, Voltaire, the "Citizen of the World," the "Bee Papers," and other

fugitive works. Even many of the "Mother Goose" and "Goody Two Shoes" are ascribed to his prolific pen. The finest poetic production from his pen was the "Deserted Village," which appeared in May, 1770, through Griffin, who gave the poet one hundred guineas for the manuscript, or about five hundred dollars — no bad price in those days, but worth ten times more. If there was any doubt before as to the poetic excellence of Goldsmith, it was now banished forever. The polished lines, the mellifluous couplets and the round, sonorous flow of the perspicuous periods, joined with the cauterizing rebuke given to luxury, arrogance, vice and tyranny — and the beautiful description of village life and rural innocence, has secured for the poem a front place in the golden pages of British classics. While the "Traveler" may have more consistency in plan and phi-

losophy, it has not such perfect rhythmic measure, nor such a variety of home and heart pictures. Its simplicity is its crowning glory, and there are more monosyllable words in the poem than any other of equal length in the language, not excepting the immortal lines of Homer and divine sentences of Shakespeare.

Could we to-day put a tongue in the Mitre Tavern, the bountiful homes of Reynolds, Davies and Johnson, what an echo would arise out of Fleet Street, Leicester Square, Russell Street, and the Inner Temple — haunts made memorable by the wit and genius of illustrious men.

That great personification of toadyism, Boswell, has left us in his life of Johnson many rare bits of wit emanating from the writers and talkers of his day. He seems to have been created as a tender to Johnson's engine, or a burr on the back of the Grand Llama of literature. He had a

peculiar aversion to Goldsmith, and sought every opportunity to vent his spleen on the poet. Some one in the presence of Goldsmith said of "Bozzy" that he was a Scotch cur. "No," said "Goldy," "you are too severe. Tom Davies threw him at Johnson in sport and he has the facility of sticking." While the poet could not shine in conversation with Beauclerk, Johnson, Burke, or Garrick, he often astonished them with his sententious remarks. Johnson frequently acted curt and brutal to "poor Goldy," which led him to say that if the pistol of Johnson missed fire he knocked you down with the butt end of it. Yet while Johnson took unusual liberties with the poet, he would not tolerate such conduct in others. When Boswell spoke disparagingly of Goldsmith, Johnson said: "You are mistaken, sir; Dr. Goldsmith is a great man and one of the first authors."

During the last years of the poet's life he wandered around with Bohemian chums through inland shires in search of peace and health, visiting friends or taking the waters of Bath, where Beau Nash, the monarch of politeness and fashion, reigned over society for more than half a century. He went to Florence for a few weeks with the widow Horneck and her two beautiful daughters, whose friendship he secured and maintained to the end of his life. And although his "Jessamy Bride"—Mary Horneck—married some years after his death and survived the poet sixty-six years, she never forgot the funny little man that jumped into the fountain at Versailles in an effort to prove his dexterity for the admiring eyes of his sweetheart.

EXIT

When he lay dead in his coffin in his quarters at the Temple, on the 4th of April, 1774, a slender, sweet-faced woman, dressed in mourning, was seen to pass through the line of beggars, tinkers, and Bohemians, and clip from his scanty locks a few strands of hair, place them in her bosom and disappear as silently as a nun behind the flowing folds of a black veil. This was Mary Horneck, his "Jessamy Bride," who inspired the affections of the poet, and, as Washington Irving says, "rendered her interesting throughout life and hung a poetical wreath above her grave."

The last literary gem that fell from the jeweled fountain of his brain was the poem "Retaliation," touching off the members

L. of G.

of the Literary Club, who had made him the butt of some Bacchanalian cheer. Garrick satirized the poet with some wit with his celebrated lines :

“ Here lies Poet Goldsmith, for shortness called
Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor
Poll.”

Goldsmith made this reply to the jealous Garrick :

“ Here lies David Garrick, describe him who
can—
An abridgement of all that was pleasant in
man ;
As an actor confessed without rival to shine,
As a wit, if not first, in the very first line.
Yet with talents like these and an excellent
heart,
The man had his failings, a dupe to his art.
Like an ill-judging beauty his colors he
spread,
And bespattered with rouge his own natural
red ;

On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting—
'T was only that when he was off he was acting.

With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
He turned and he varied full ten times a day;
He cast off his friends as a huntsman his pack,
For he knew when he pleased he could whistle
them back.

Of praise a mere glutton, he swallowed what
came,

And the puff of a dunce, he mistook it for
fame ;

'Till his relish grown callous, almost to dis-
ease,—

Who peppered the highest was surest to
please !”

Garrick made a reply, containing mean, personal allusions, which are only remembered as a contrast to the keen and just cuts conjured up by the magic wand of our benevolent, good-natured poet. When he came to the last and best name belonging to the Literary Club, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the illustrious painter, he left the

lines unfinished, and from his nerveless grasp dropped the potent pen that astonished the age in which he lived and has electrified the world down to the present day — and shall continue to bless it with his rare voluptuous periods when tomes of pompous platitudes are mouldering in forgotten archives ; and even when the lone traveler of Macaulay, wandering from the wilds of New Zealand, shall stand upon the broken arches of London Bridge amid desolation and solitude, surrounded by crumbling palaces, temples and towers, I imagine that he will hold in his hand a volume of Goldsmith and ponder upon the ruins of another Deserted Village !

Farewell, dear Goldsmith, thy majestic muse
Will sing forever, and shall never lose
The spirit of thy noble, gentle heart,
That can not from our daily lives depart ;

But, from the deepest gloom of care and strife
Shall echo sweetly through the trials of life ;
Soothe in every grief, shine even o'er despair,
A golden treasure always sparkling there.
Above thy tomb, rare flowers of fadeless hue
Shall bloom forever and thy fame renew,
And weary pilgrims shall their steps incline
To worship at the glory of thy shrine.
Pale poverty or wealth adown the years
May read "Sweet Auburn" through their smiles
 or tears,
Sigh with the Parson, laugh with village boys,
Mix with all their woes, mingle in their joys ;
And with the Village Master and his jokes
May turn from town and dwell with country
 folks ;
Drink at the ale house, dance upon the green,
And round the hawthorn bush renew each scene
That blessed the rustic swains of long ago —
Ere landed tyrants brought them ceaseless woe.
And when the village joy departs and fails,
We 'll turn to other climes and fresher gales,
Where Alpine mountains rear their giant form,
Lifting their icy shoulders to the storm !
And frowning grandly o'er the vales below
Where grinding glaciers thunder in their flow,

And the wild avalanche with frightful sound
Leaps from its moorings, startles, tears the
ground !

Or if to Italy we wish to turn,
Thy Muse, dear "Goldy," will inspire each urn
With tongues that tell of poets, painters, sages,
Who left deep footprints in the rock of ages ;
While in the mirror of the mystic mind
You picture every thought that thrills mankind.
And when we tire of soft Italian skies
Your magic flute shall make our spirit rise,
Where the French grandsire, skilled in gestic
lore,

Dances beneath the burthen of three-score,
Or where the dykes of Holland boldly stand
To battle back the ocean from the land.
Thy lingering lyre still sounds a pensive lay
Where man and morals melt into decay —
Where Albion lawns and Loudon's gilt and glare
Your tireless muse still sings o'er cruel care ;
And though you sigh o'er England's wasted
charms,

"The land of scholars and the nurse of arms,"
You yet can boast that freedom's highest reach
Is but to lay proportioned loads on each —

Deploring penal laws that grind and kill,
The poor man's wreckage and the rich man's
will.

But in the club-room and the parlor scene
We catch your antics when in velvet green,
Your songs and dances with a romping glee ;
Your truthful heart is light, and pure, and free
As airs that wing o'er bright Arcadian bowers
To kiss bright dew drops from the fairest flowers,
And leave behind a glow of radiant dyes
To thrill our souls and fascinate our eyes.
Long shall your pleasing, honest, native art
Inspire the throbbing of each heavy heart ;
And though grand, pompous names attract our
view,
We 'll turn to truth and find eternal love in you !

THE END

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