

THE RURAL IN GOLDSMITH'S MAJOR WORKS

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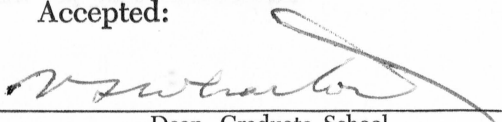
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iii
CHAPTER.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION TO SUBJECT: PERSONAL ACQUAIN- TANCE WITH THE RURAL AS REVEALED IN BIOGRAPHY .	1
Early Life	2
Influence of childhood surroundings. .	3
Early education	3
Influence of his father	3
His first school teachers.	4
Schooling at Ballyoughter and first promise of poetic nature.	5
Favorite sports and pranks	7
Summary.	8
College	8
Personal problems in college.	8
Relation to his teachers and classmates	10
Financial problems	10
Generosity.	11
Departure from college.	11
Later Life	12
Introduction to the idea of holy orders	12
Two probationary years	13
Failures.	15

CHAPTER.	PAGE
Preparation for a career in medicine	
in Edinburgh	15
Medical study and travel on the	
continent	16
Return to England.	17
Brief employment as an usher and an	
apothecary's assistant.	18
Practice of medicine.	19
Writing to make a living	20
Unsuccessful efforts to advance	
accompanied by increased literary	
activity	20
Entrance into literary society	22
Rise in popularity	22
Sickness and death	23
Use of his childhood scenes and	
characters in his writings	25
Goldsmith's Major Works Used in the	
Preparation of This Thesis.	26
Early interest in writing	26
Essays, their order and form of	
publication	27
Chronological order of publication of	
major works to be used.	28
"The Traveller"	28

CHAPTER.	PAGE
<u>The Vicar of Wakefield</u>	29
"The Deserted Village".	29
<u>She Stoops to Conquer</u>	30
II. RURAL SCENES IN GOLDSMITH'S MAJOR WORKS	31
Popularity of Goldsmith's best known works.	31
Transition to Romanticism	31
"The Traveller".	32
His brother Henry's home	32
Contentment of the peasant.	33
Pastoral scenes in Italy	33
Bleak scenes in Switzerland	33
Ocean influences in Holland	34
Outdoor scenes of Britain	34
"The Deserted Village"	35
Background of the poem	35
Rural Irish surroundings	35
Setting.	35
Physical surroundings	36
The home and the church	36
The hawthorn bush	37
Other mentions of the hawthorn bush	37
Duplications of the Alehouse.	38
Importance of Red Hill.	40
Rural Sounds	40

CHAPTER.	PAGE
Familiar objects	41
Goldsmith's pastoral imagination.	42
<u>The Vicar of Wakefield</u>	42
Popularity of the novel.	42
Fireside pictures of the novel	43
Rural community	44
Rural scenery	45
Rural peace	45
General happiness of family	46
<u>She Stoops to Conquer.</u>	47
Timeless popularity of the comedy	47
Factual basis of the comedy	48
Rural setting	49
Life in the country	50
Directions in the country	51
Rural manners	52
Rural outdoor scene	53
Contrasting attitudes	53
Composition of Rural Scenes.	54
Composition of poems	
Simple rural descriptions.	54
Qualities of "The Deserted Village"	54
Source of scenery	55
Belief in rural happiness in "The Traveller".	55

CHAPTER.	PAGE
Composition of <u>The Vicar of Wakefield</u> .	57
Rank among other novels	58
Author's style	58
Construction of novel	59
Composition of <u>She Stoops to Conquer</u> .	60
Purpose of Rural Scenes	61
III. TYPES AND ROLES OF GOLDSMITH'S CHARACTERS IN HIS MAJOR WORKS	62
Introduction.	62
Study of Rural characters	63
Types of rural characters	63
"The Traveller".	64
Dedication of "The Traveller".	64
Peasants in his travels.	64
Peasants' family life	65
Peasants' patriotism.	66
Personal love for homeland.	67
"The Deserted Village"	67
Preparation for "The Deserted Village".	67
The Village preacher.	68
Picturing the village preacher	68
Qualities of the preacher.	69
Understanding of the preacher	70
Divine leadership of the preacher	71
Benevolences of the preacher.	71

CHAPTER.	PAGE
Position in the church	71
Comparison with Chaucer's "poor parson"	72
The Schoolmaster	73
Picturing the schoolmaster	73
Classroom characteristics.	74
Depopulation problem.	75
Life of villagers before depopulation	77
Happiness	77
Value to country.	79
Sorrows.	79
Moral lapses.	79
Hardships.	80
Effects of emigration	80
Rural Characters in Major Poems	81
<u>The Vicar of Wakefield</u>	82
Appeal	82
Qualities of the vicar.	83
Comparison.	84
Neighborly traits	85
Vicar's family.	86
Wife.	86
Daughters	87
Oldest son.	88
Neighborliness of rural life	90
Activities.	90

CHAPTER.	PAGE
Hospitality	91
Rural characteristics in <u>The Vicar</u> <u>of Wakefield</u>	92
<u>She Stoops to Conquer</u>	92
- Appeal of Goldsmith's comedy	92
Characteristics of Mr. Hardcastle .	93
Characteristics of Mrs. Hardcastle.	93
Characteristics of Tony Lumpkins .	94
Attitude toward characters	95
Goldsmith's choice of characters	96
IV. CONCLUSION.	98
Rural Scenes.	98
"The Traveller"	98
"The Deserted Village"	98
<u>The Vicar of Wakefield</u>	100
<u>She Stoops to Conquer</u>	101
Rural Characters	101
Most prominent figures	102
Other prominent figures.	103
Peasants.	103
Goldsmith's Achievements.	103
BIBLIOGRAPHY	105

CHAPTER I

THE RURAL IN GOLDSMITH'S MAJOR WORKS

Oliver Goldsmith, a writer of prose, poetry, essay, and drama in the eighteenth century, was the best loved of the English writers of his age. While the majority of his contemporaries aimed at making themselves hated, Goldsmith won for himself many friends because of his genial nature and ready humor.¹ His writings concerning the simple people with whom he mingled are ever touching because of their down-to-earth qualities and their expressions of human kindness and simplicity. The deep-rooted love he possessed for the peasant life of his native land sparkles within the scenes and characters of his choice writings. "The Deserted Village" and The Vicar of Wakefield, both widely read, portray life in rustic Ireland during his youth. It is in these works and in others like them that we find the real Goldsmith himself and his love for pastoral life. As Irving said, "We read his character in every page, and grow into familiar intimacy with him as we read."² His sincere kindness toward mankind, his sympathetic understanding of the weaknesses of human nature, and

¹F. Frankfort Moore, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1911), p. 1.

²Washington Irving, Oliver Goldsmith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 5.

his good sense of humor mixed with pensiveness--all portray Goldsmith's moral and intellectual qualities.

An acquaintance with the private biographer of Goldsmith lets us into the secret of his gifted pages. We there discover them to be little more than transcripts of his own heart and picturings of his fortunes. There he shows himself the same kind, artless, good-natured, excursive, sensible, whimsical, intelligent being that he appears in his writings. Scarcely an adventure or character is given in his works that may not be traced to his own party-colored story. Many of his most ludicrous scenes and ridiculous incidents have been drawn from his own blunders and mischances, and he seems really to have buffeted into almost every maxim imparted by him for the instruction of his reader.¹

Oliver Goldsmith, who inherited the virtues and weaknesses of his ancestors,² was born November 10, 1728, in the hamlet of Pallas, or Pallasmore, county of Langford, Ireland. His father, the Reverend Charles Goldsmith, lived in an old manse that was in a lonely part of the country overlooking the river Inny. In this "tumbledown, fairy-haunted farmhouse" were born five children to the Irish pastor and his wife, Ann. because of the death of his wife's uncle some two years after the birth of young Oliver, Charles Goldsmith was promoted to the rectory of Kilkenny West at the small village of Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath. There under the roof of that old inviting house connected with the highway by a long avenue of ash-trees was nurtured in humility, pity, and benevolence Charles

¹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

²Ibid., p. 6.

Goldsmith's family.¹ Lissoy furnished the setting for Goldsmith's boyhood and the scenes from which he drew many of those pictures, "rural and domestic, whimsical and touching,"² which dominate his works. Lissoy is considered the "Auburn" of "The Deserted Village." His father's position as farmer and vicar there also furnished material, it is believed, for the rural thrift of The Vicar of Wakefield. In Goldsmith's writings there are many pictures which portray his father and his family during his youth.

The education of Goldsmith was much deeper than the printed pages of his textbooks or the fixed rules of his school masters, for it began during the very earliest associations with his father, who readily instilled in his children such traits as love, kindness, humor, humility, and self-sacrifice. Irving stressed the memories of such parental guidance as this in Goldsmith's creative work:

"My father," says the "Man in Black," who, in some respects, is a counterpart of Goldsmith himself, "my father, the younger son of a good family, was possessed of a small living in the church. His education was above his fortune, and his generosity greater than his education. Poor as he was, he had his flatterers poorer than himself, for every dinner he gave them, they returned him an equivalent in praise; and this was all he wanted. The same ambition that actuates a monarch at the head of his army influenced my father at the head of his table: he told the story of the ivy-tree, and that was laughed

¹Austin Dobson, Life of Oliver Goldsmith (London: Walter Scott, 1888), pp. 13-14.

²Irving, op. cit., p. 7.

at; he repeated the jest of the two scholars and one pair of breeches, and the company laughed at that; but the story of Taffy in the sedan-chair was sure to set the table in a roar. Thus his pleasure increased in proportion to the pleasure he gave; he loved all the world, and he fancied all the world loved him.

"As his fortune was but small, he lived up to the very extent of it: he had no intentions of leaving his children money, for that was dross; he resolved they should have learning, for learning he used to observe, was better than silver or gold. For this purpose he undertook to instruct us himself, and took as much care to form our morals as to improve our understanding. We were told that universal benevolence was what first cemented society; we were taught to consider all the wants of mankind as our own; to regard the human face divine with affection and esteem; he wound us up to be mere machines of pity, and render us incapable of withstanding the slightest impulse made either by real or fictitious distress. In a word we were perfectly instructed in the art of giving away thousands before we were taught the necessary qualifications of getting a farthing."¹

Thus from the great author's own lines we believe we can account for his brotherly love, his forgiving nature, and his extreme generosity.

When Oliver was three years old, he was sent to the neighborhood school taught by Mrs. Elizabeth Delap, who enjoyed boasting in after years that she had been the first to start Goldsmith on his career, although she confessed, "Never was so dull a boy: he seemed 'impenetrably stupid.'"² After three years with Mrs. Delap, he was sent to the village schoolmaster,

¹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²John Forster, The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith (London: Chapman and Hall, 1871), I, 10.

Mr. Thomas Byrne, a retired quarter-master of an Irish regiment. Through this teacher's instructions in "wild legends of an Irish hovel" and "wayside melodies" the very young pupil, no doubt, was inspired to develop a desire for a vagrant life.¹ Irving says that Byrne's stories of his vagabond wanderings in foreign lands had great influence upon the vivid imagination of Goldsmith and "awakened an unconquerable passion for wandering and seeking adventure."² Dobson mentions other influences that stirred the vivid imagination of Goldsmith. Among these were "The songs of the blind harper, O'Carolan, to awaken in him a love of music which he never lost"³ and Peggy Golden, the Goldsmith dairy-maid, who entertained him often with "Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night" and "The Cruelty of Barbara Allen."⁴

After Goldsmith suffered a severe attack of smallpox, which permanently pitted his face, he was sent to the home of his uncle, John Griffin, Esq., of Ballyoughter, where he continued his education under Mr. Griffin, schoolmaster of Elphin. There his studies were more advanced, but he showed no unusual ability.⁵ From Mangin's essays Dr. Streaan learned, according

¹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²Irving, op. cit., p. 10.

³Dobson, Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 15.

⁴Ibid., p. 15.

⁵Forster, op. cit., I, 11.

to Forster, that Goldsmith "was considered by his contemporaries and school-fellows," with whom Streaan often conversed, "as a stupid, heavy blockhead, little better than a fool, whom everyone made fun of."¹ In his uncle's home, however, Goldsmith exhibited what his uncle considered to be an unusual talent for poetry. Irving tells this story: A number of young folks had assembled at his uncle's to dance. One of the company, named Cummings, played on the violin. In the course of the evening Oliver undertook a horn-pipe. His short and clumsy figure, and his face pitted and discolored with the small-pox, rendered him a ludicrous figure in the eyes of the musician, who made merry at his expense, dubbing him his little AEsop. Goldsmith was nettled by the jest, and stopping short in the hornpipe, exclaimed, --

Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,
See AEsop dancing, and his monkey playing.²

Because this retort for a boy nine years old was somewhat unusual, Goldsmith occupied the place of genius in the uncle's home. Through the help of several relatives, chief among whom was the Reverend Thomas Contarine, Oliver was sent to other teachers in order to prepare him for the university. Even though he did not show any degree of intellect, he did seem to be a favorite among his teachers and his schoolmates. His interests seemed to be mainly Latin poets and historians.³

¹Ibid., p. 12.

²Irving, op. cit., p. 11.

³Ibid., p. 12.

Goldsmith was a leader in sports, especially ball-playing and pranks. He was with a group who robbed the orchard of Tirlicken, the family residence of Lord Annaly. Like Shakespeare and his deer-stealing colleagues, the boys were caught, but unlike the former, these boys were not punished severely.¹ Pranks were also played on young Oliver. Once when he was sixteen years old he had to spend the night at a small town of Ardagh. Unfortunately he had more money with him than he was accustomed to having, and wanting to play the role of the experienced well-to-do, he inquired of Mr. Kelly, a native of the village, where he could find the best house in the place. Amused at the superficial arrogance of young Goldsmith, Mr. Kelly directed him to what was "the best house in the place," the family mansion of Mr. Featherstone.

Goldsmith accordingly rode up to what he supposed to be an inn, ordered his horse to be taken to the stable, walked into the parlor, seated himself by the fire, and demanded what he could have for supper. . . . The owner of the house, however, soon discovered his whimsical mistake, and being a man of humor, determined to indulge it, especially as he accidentally learned that this intruding guest was the son of an old acquaintance.

Accordingly Goldsmith was "fooled to the top of his bent," and permitted to have full sway throughout the evening. Never was schoolboy more elated. When supper was served, he most condescendingly insisted that the landlord, his wife, and daughter should partake, and ordered a bottle of wine to crown the repast and benefit the house. His last flourish was on going to bed, when he gave especial orders to have a hot cake at breakfast.²

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Ibid., pp. 13-14.

Next morning, according to the account, Goldsmith discovered his mistake and was very much humiliated. Following his custom of using events in his life, Goldsmith dramatized this event in his comedy, She Stoops to Conquer or The Mistakes of a Night.¹ Forster says this was the first known instance of his attempt "to swagger with a grand air," which he later revealed in other forms.²

Thus Goldsmith, who was much later to say of himself, "An ugly and a poor man is society for himself and such society the world lets me enjoy in great abundance,"³ nevertheless enjoyed the exuberant experiences of youth and molded in his mind those characters and themes of rural districts that became the background of his works.

In 1747, Goldsmith entered Trinity College, Dublin, but because of economic conditions he registered as a sizer or "poor scholar." His board and tuition were free, but he paid a small fee for his room. In addition, he swept part of the court and waited on tables. As a "poor student," he was required to wear "a black gown of coarse stuff without sleeves, and a plain black cloth cap without a tassel."⁴ The poor

¹Ibid., p. 14.

²Op. cit., I, 20.

³Richard Ashe King, Oliver Goldsmith (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1910), p. 49.

⁴Ibid., p. 22.

psychology of such regulations is obvious, as it was to Irving when he said: "We can conceive nothing more odious and ill-judged than these distinctions, which attached the idea of degradation to poverty, and placed the indigent youth of merit below the worthless minion of fortune. They were calculated to wound and irritate the noble mind, and to render the base mind baser."¹ According to Forster, Goldsmith in his "Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning" commented upon such discrimination in these words: ". . . that men should be at once learning the liberal arts, and at the same time treated as slaves; at once studying freedom and practising servitude."² What effect these unhappy school experiences had upon Goldsmith cannot be accurately measured, but Irving says that Oliver was "shy and sensitive," and that at times he became "moody and despondent."³ The sting of his embarrassment seems not to have faded when he advised his brother Henry not to send his son to school under similar financial arrangements. "If he has ambition, strong passions, and an exquisite sense of sensibility of contempt," he said, "do not send him there, unless you have no other trade for him except your own."⁴

¹Op. cit., p. 26.

²Op. cit., p. 22.

³Op. cit., p. 17.

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

Goldsmith was unfortunate in his relationship not only with his fellow students but also with his teachers.¹ The Reverend Theaker Wilder ridiculed and tormented him in the presence of his classmates. This more or less aroused in him an attitude of distaste for the tyrant, as Goldsmith looked upon him.² Another reason, no doubt, for his dislike for his professor was Goldsmith's naturally lazy disposition and his passion for feasting and drinking. "I was a lover of mirth, good-humor, and even sometimes fun," said he, "from my childhood."³

Only a year and a half after he entered college, he received the news of the sudden death of his father. The financial support that he had received from home ended. Through the occasional gifts from his Uncle Contarine, petty loans from various friends, and the sale of some of his books, however, he managed to remain in college. He began to write street ballads and sell them for five shillings each. Then at nightfall he stole among the dark streets and listened eagerly to the harsh notes of the beggar who drew an audience as he sang in a discordant manner Goldsmith's rhymes. The notes may have been rough to the listeners, but they were music to the poet, who felt that this was one effort in which he had not failed.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Forster, op. cit., I, 30.

³Irving, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴Forster, op. cit., I, 26.

Throughout his life Goldsmith was too generous with the poor. His was a generosity he could not afford economically, but a generosity that preaches a beautiful sermon without words. The following story of his college days is one which recurred, at least in pattern, during his entire life:

He was engaged to breakfast one day with a college intimate, but failed to make his appearance. His friend repaired to his room, knocked at the door, and was bidden to enter. To his surprise he found Goldsmith in his bed, immersed to his chin in feathers. A serio-comic story explained the circumstance. In the course of the preceding evening's stroll he had met with a woman with five children, who implored his charity. Her husband was in the hospital; she was just from the country, a stranger and destitute, without food or shelter for her helpless offspring. This was too much for the kind heart of Goldsmith. He was almost as poor as herself, it is true, and had no money in his pocket; but he brought her to the college, gave her the blankets from his bed to cover her little brood, and parts of his clothes for her to sell and purchase food; and finding himself cold during the night, had cut open his bed and buried himself among the feathers.¹

In February, 1749, he finished his Bachelor of Arts degree and left the University.² His record at college had been somewhat disappointing to his family and friends, who felt he certainly had neither taken advantage of his opportunities nor met the responsibilities demanded of a genius. Goldsmith lightly admits his knowledge of their disappointment in "The Man in Black" from the Citizen of the World, as noted by Irving³:

¹Irving, op. cit., p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 21.

³Ibid., p. 22.

The first opportunity he had of finding his expectations disappointed was at the very middling figure I made in the University: he had flattered himself that he should soon see me rising into the foremost rank in literary reputation but was mortified to find me utterly unnoticed and unknown. His disappointment might have been partly ascribed to his having over-rated my talents, and partly to my dislike of mathematical reasonings at a time when my imagination and memory, yet unsatisfied, were more eager after new objects than desirous of reasoning upon those I knew. This did not, however, please my tutors, who observed indeed, that I was a little dull; but at the same time allowed that I seemed to be very good-natured, and had no harm in me.¹

The Uncle, Contarine, however, seemed never to lose faith in Goldsmith, for he invited him to live in his house and gave him financial support. He persuaded him to prepare for holy orders, against Goldsmith's natural inclination, according to his biography of "The Man in Black": "To be obliged to wear a long wig when I liked a short one, or a black coat when I generally dressed in brown, I thought such a restraint upon my liberty that I absolutely rejected the proposal."² Goldsmith was twenty-one when he agreed to prepare for clerical life. The two years of his probation he spent in carefree roaming from place to place and in visiting his relatives at Lissoy and his brother Henry "at the old goblin mansion at Pallas."³ He seemed to get a satisfying

¹The Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Peter Cunningham, F. S. A. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881), II, 183-184. Irving cites this passage in his Oliver Goldsmith, p. 22.

²Irving, op. cit., p. 23.

³Ibid., p. 23.

serenity from the happy peaceful life of his brother and family:

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.
Eternal blessings crown my earliest friend,
And round his dwelling guardian saints attend;
Bless'd be that spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, trim their evening fire;
Bless'd that abode, where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair:
Bless'd be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale:
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.¹

During these two years of probation, Goldsmith did not study, but he read biographies, novels, travels, plays, and poetry. Much of his time he spent along the river banks of Inny; sometimes he entered into the sports and became proficient "at throwing the sledge, a favorite feat of activity and strength in Ireland."² Goldsmith records these in "The Deserted Village":

How often have I bless'd the coming day,
When toil, remitting, lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree!
While many a past time circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey'd;
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And sleights of arts and feats of strength went round.³

¹"The Traveller," ll. 7-22, The Poetical Works of Goldsmith, Collins, and T. Wharton, ed. Rev. George Gilfillan (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1854). Hereafter all poetical lines will be taken from this book.

²Ibid., p. 24.

³"The Deserted Village," ll. 15-22.

Also during this period of idleness, he and his cousin, Robert Bryanton, organized a country club at the Ballymahon inn, where Oliver became "the oracle and prime wit; astonishing his unlettered associates by his learning, and being considered capital at a song and a story."¹ The consensus is that here he found material and characters for She Stoops to Conquer, such as Tony Lumpkins and his associates: "Dick Muggins, the exciseman; Jack Slang, the horse-doctor; little Aminidab, that grinds the music box, and Tom Twist that spins the Pewter platter."² Furthermore it is believed that Tony's drinking song at "The Jolly Pigeons", the ale house in She Stoops to Conquer, was a revival of one used at Ballymahon:

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 of woodcock or hare,
 Your bastards, your ducks, and your widgeons
 But of all the gay birds in the air,
 Here's a health to the Three Jolly Pigeons.
 Toroddle, toroddle, toroll.³

From such experiences as these Goldsmith drew still more material for his later writings, together with a permanent fondness for clubs. Of the many conjectures given as to why the Right

¹Irving, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

²Ibid., p. 25.

³Ibid.

Rev. Dr. Synge, Bishop of Elphin, rejected Goldsmith's application as a clergyman, perhaps none are correct.¹

A career in the church no longer to be expected, Goldsmith turned again to his Uncle Contarine. First, his uncle helped him to become tutor to a gentleman of Roscommon named Flinn, but he did not hold this position long, much to the dismay of his family and friends.² Next, his uncle suggested law. According to Goldsmith's sister, Mrs. Hodson, even "his uncle Contarine, who was also reconciled to him, now resolved to send him to the Temple, that he might make the law his profession. But on his way to London he met at Dublin with a sharper who tempted him to play, and emptied his pockets of fifty pounds, with which he had been furnished for his voyage and journey. He was obliged again to return to his poor mother, whose sorrow at his miscarriage need not be described, and his own distress and disgrace may readily be conceived."³

On January 13, 1753, he became a member of the Medical Society of Edinburgh, a volunteer association of the students, and according to the records he attended the lectures of various instructors, among whom was Alexander Monroe, a professor of anatomy. But the record of "his social qualities, his tale-

¹Dobson, Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 28.

²Ibid., pp. 28-29.

³Ibid., p. 30.

telling and his singing, is richer than his studies."¹ In this year was dated his first known verse called "The Clown's Reply," and from this year came two letters to his friends, letter writing being an arduous task to him. "An hereditary indolence (I have it from the mother's side) has hitherto prevented my writing to you," he says to Bob Bryanton, "and still prevents my writing at least twenty-five letters more, due to my friends in Ireland. No turnspit-dog gets up into its wheel with more reluctance than I sit down to write; yet no dog ever loved the roast meat he turns better than I do him I now address."²

After spending two years in Edinburgh, Goldsmith decided to continue his medical studies on the continent, his uncle agreeing to furnish the money. During the year he spent at Leyden, he attended lectures on anatomy and chemistry, but "his studies are said to have been miscellaneous, and directed to literature rather than science."³ In Paris in addition to attending lectures on chemistry, he attended the theater and particularly seemed to enjoy the famous actress Mademoiselle Clairon, of whom he wrote with much sympathy in The Bee.⁴ In Paris he saw conditions clearly enough to predict the French Revolution:

¹Ibid., p. 31.

²Ibid., p. 32.

³Irving, op. cit., p. 44.

⁴Ibid., pp. 45, 290.

When I consider that these parliaments, the members of which are all created by the court, and the presidents of which can only act by immediate direction, presume even to mention privileges and freedom, who till of late received directions from the throne with implicit humility; when this is considered, I cannot help fancying that the genius of Freedom has entered that Kingdom in disguise. If they have but three weak monarchs more successively on the throne, the mask will be laid aside, and the country will certainly once more be free.¹

In Geneva, he became a traveling tutor to the son of a London pawnbroker.² From Switzerland he went to Italy, visiting Verona, Mantua, Venice, and Padua. In Padua he received his degree in medicine.³

In 1756, he returned to England. He was twenty-eight years old. He had as yet no status. His life had been a little less than average; his early schooling had been fairly promising, his college work less so. He had failed in the many things he had tried. His mother, along with the relatives, had lost faith in his ability to use his talents and training. The fruits of all his past experiences were in the embryonic stage:

. . . he had unconsciously gone through a course in training, and accumulated a stock of experiences, of which little or nothing was to be lost. He had looked at sorrow close, and learned to sympathize with poverty; he had known men and cities; he had studied character in its undress . . . and somehow, he had already, as his letters testify, acquired that easy and perspicuous

¹Ibid., p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 47.

³Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 40.

style of writing, which comes to few men as a gift. Who shall say, then, that his life had been a failure, when in its assimilative period so much had been achieved?¹

For several days he walked the streets of London and endured cold and hunger with those of his kind. His general reaction is given in his Citizen of the World, Letter CXVII:

The clock has just struck two, the expiring taper rises and sinks in the socket, the watchman forgets the hour in slumber, the laborious and happy are at rest, and nothing makes but meditation, guilt, revelry and despair. The drunkard once more fills the destroying bowl, the robber walks his midnight round, and the suicide lifts his guilty arm against his own sacred person. . . . What a gloom hangs all around! The dying lamp feebly emits a yellow gleam; no sound is heard but the chiming clock or the distant watch-dog. All the bustle of human pride is forgotten; an hour like this may well display the emptiness of human vanity. . . . How few appear in those streets which, but some few hours ago, were crowded! and those who appear now no longer wear their daily mask, nor attempt to hide their lewdness or their misery.

But who are those that make the street their couch, and find a short repose from wretchedness at the doors of the opulent? These are the strangers, wanderers, and orphans, whose circumstances are too humble to expect redress, and whose distresses are too great even for pity. Their wretchedness rather excites horror than pity. Some are without the covering even of rags, and others emaciated with disease: the world has disclaimed them: society turns its back upon their distresses, and has given them up to nakedness and hunger. . . . Why, why was I born a man, and yet see the suffering of wretches I cannot relieve! Poor houseless creatures! the world will give you reproaches but not give you relief. . . .²

Goldsmith's employment in London began first with a job as an usher to a school, but because of the humiliations

¹Ibid., pp. 42-43.

²The Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Peter Cunningham, II, 498-500. Dobson cites this passage in his Life of Goldsmith, p. 70.

to which he was subjected he did not remain long. Of his unhappy experience, he said in No. VI of The Bee: "Every trick is played upon the usher; the oddity of his manners, his dress or his language, are [is] a fund of eternal ridicule; the master himself now and then cannot avoid joining in the laugh, and the poor wretch, eternally resenting this ill-usage, seems to live in a state of war with all the family."¹ An apothecary named Jacob on Fish Street Hill made him his assistant because of his knowledge of chemistry. Shortly after, however, the generosity of Dr. Sleight, a former college friend, enabled him to begin the practice of medicine in Bankside, Southwark.²

His practice in this section was not very remunerative, Bankside being the poorest district in London. Beatty, another school friend, "described him as conventionally costumed in tarnished green and gold, but with a 'shirt and neckcloth which appeared to have been worn at least a fortnight. He said he was practicing physic, and doing very well."³ Sir Joshua Reynolds retold another pathetic story concerning the clothes Goldsmith wore:

"In conformity to the prevailing garb of the day for physicians," says Prior, "Goldsmith unable probably to

¹Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 47.

²Ibid., p. 44.

³Ibid., p. 45.

obtain a new, had procured a second-hand velvet coat; but either from being deceived in the bargain or by subsequent accident, a considerate breach in the left breast was obliged to be repaired by the introduction of a new piece. This had not been so neatly done, as not to be apparent to the close observation of his acquaintance, and such persons as he visited in the capacity of medical attendant: willing, therefore, to conceal what is considered too obvious a symptom of poverty, he was accustomed to place his hat over the patch, and retain it there carefully during the visit; but this constant position becoming noticed, and the cause being soon known, occasioned no little merriment at his expense.¹

Because the fees he charged were small and seldom paid, Goldsmith supplemented his salary in a small way by writing. Dr. Sleigh introduced him to some of the booksellers, who employed him occasionally. Through these acquaintances he met Samuel Richardson, who employed him as proof reader at his office in Salisbury Court.² One contact led to another, and Goldsmith found casual employment in various literary quarters. However, according to Irving, he was writing for money and not from inspiration.³

In fact, much of his time was spent writing in order to defray his expenses to go into another field. Shortly after he had substituted for Dr. Milner in the Peckham school, Dr. Milner used his influence with a friend, an East India director, to get him a medical appointment in India. To meet

¹Ibid., p. 45.

²Irving, op. cit., p. 53.

³Ibid., p. 64.

the expenses necessary for fitting himself for the voyage, he began writing in earnest on An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe.¹ His plans and enthusiasm were stimulated by the anticipation of salary and opportunities that he imagined would be offered a physician in Coromandel, a district on the eastern coast of India. Because of the death of Dr. Milner, or because of "some heedlessness and blundering on his own part; or some obstacle arising from his insuperable indigence,"² the Coromandel position was transferred to another candidate.³ In order to meet his next trial, that of being examined at the College of Physicians for the position of hospital mate, it was necessary for him to write four articles for the Monthly Review so that he could buy suitable clothes for the occasion. He wrote the articles and bought the clothes, but he failed in his examination and was "rejected and unqualified."⁴ At the height of his despondency over the rejection, a poor woman came to his room to implore his financial help. Because his kindheartedness always overruled his reasoning, he impulsively pawned the new suit he had bought for the examination at Surgeon's Hall to raise money enough to help her and pay off his own debt.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 65.

²Ibid., p. 66.

³Ibid., p. 72.

⁴Ibid., p. 73.

⁵Ibid., pp. 74-76.

By 1760, Goldsmith began to receive money from the booksellers. He moved to better apartments in Wine-office Court, Fleet Street. About this time he became a member of the Robin Hood debating club, where he sometimes debated. In the Robin Hood archives is this statement about him: "a candid disputant with a clear head and an honest heart, though coming but seldom to the society."¹ At his new apartment he began to entertain his literary associates. At this time also he met Dr. Samuel Johnson, with whom he became a close friend although they were opposites in disposition. Both had been financially poor from early childhood, but each had reacted differently toward his handicap. "Goldsmith, buoyant, heedless, sanguine, tolerant of evils, and easily pleased, had shifted along by any temporary expedient. Cast down at every turn, but rising again with indomitable good-humor, and still carried forward by his talent at hoping. Johnson, melancholy, and hypochondriacal and prone to apprehend the worst, yet sternly resolute to battle with and conquer it, had made his way doggedly and gloomily, but with a noble principle of self reliance and a disregard for foreign aid."²

As Goldsmith won recognition for his literary works, he acquired more poise and social graces. Through Sir Joshua

¹Ibid., p. 89.

²Ibid., pp. 90-91.

Reynolds, he became a close friend of "the beautiful family of the Hornecks."¹ A vivid picture of him at this time was given by Judge Day, a student in the Temple:

"In person he was short; about five feet five or six inches; strong, but not heavy in make; rather fair in complexion, with brown hair; such, at least, as could be distinguished from his wig. His features were plain, but not repulsive,--certainly not so when lighted up by conversation. His manners were simple, natural, and perhaps on the whole, we may say, not polished; at least without the refinement and good breeding which the exquisite polish of his compositions would lead us to expect. He was always cheerful and animated, often, indeed, boisterous in his mirth; entered with spirit into convivial society; contributed largely to its enjoyments by solidity of information, and the naivete and originality of his character; talked often without premeditation, and laughed loudly without restraint."²

In the fall of 1772, Goldsmith's health began to fail, and writing to meet financial obligations became burdensome to him:

He lost his usual gaiety and good-humor, and became at times peevish and irritable. Too proud of spirit to seek sympathy or relief from his friends, for the pecuniary difficulties he had brought upon himself by his errors and extravagance, and unwilling, perhaps, to make known their amount, he buried his cares and anxieties in his own bosom, and endeavored in company to keep up his usual air of gayety and unconcern. This gave his conduct an appearance of fitfulness and caprice, varying suddenly from moodiness to mirth, and from silent gravity to shallow laughter; causing surprise and ridicule in those who were not aware of the sickness of heart which lay beneath.³

¹Ibid., p. 178.

²Ibid., pp. 178-179.

³Ibid., p. 253.

Returning to London in the spring of 1774, he consulted with a doctor but rejected the medicine prescribed. He took James's powder, a medicine harmful to his disease. He grew steadily worse and died on April 4, 1774.¹ "The announcement of his death came like a shock upon his friends. Burke burst into tears; Sir Joshua laid aside his pencil for the day; and a deeper gloom settled upon Johnson. At Brick Court other, and humbler mourners, to whom he had been kind, filled the little staircase with their sorrow."² Thus ended the life of one of England's greatest authors. "Let not his frailties be remembered," said Johnson; "he was a very great man."³ As a boy he was timid and clumsy, but always aware of life about him; he was the target of jokes and taunts, but he often retaliated with a clever and witty retort; he was a poor student in mathematics and science, but enthusiastically listened to Irish fairy lore and travel tales. Throughout his life he followed no plan and was forever in debt, forever kind and forever charitable. He studied for the ministry, law, and medicine, succeeding at none. As means of support he began to write. During the fifteen years in which he wrote, he sifted the seeming dross of his life and gave to England and to the world the gold. His kindly nature, the gentle spirit

¹Dobson, Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 183.

²Ibid., p. 183.

³Ibid., p. 274.

of his father and his brother, and the refined associations of his boyhood are found in his works: in the two didactic poems, "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village," which are still taught to our school children; in the collection of essays, which are "characterized by his delightful style, his pure, benevolent morality, and his mellow unobtrusive humor";¹ in his domestic novel, The Vicar of Wakefield, which "presents religion under its most endearing forms, and with a feeling that could only flow from the deep convictions of the heart";² in his eminently good play, She Stoops to Conquer, which ranks among the best of English comedy.

Reviewing the facts of Goldsmith's lonely life as I have related them, one is not surprised to see him return to the scenes and characters of his childhood in his literary work. Ashe King supports this view: "It is not distance only that lends enchantment to the scenes of our childhood, nor only the mirage that rises up in the desert of after years; but also the ineffaceable vividness and delightfulness of first impressions, and the irrecoverable happiness of days when care brooded over us protectingly and had not its beak in our heart."³ In reminiscent mood Goldsmith laid aside all his unhappiness and penned only the simple rural themes dear

¹Irving, op. cit., p. 86.

²Ibid., p. 272.

³Op. cit., p. 10.

to his memories. In this attitude he was, King believes, probably unique: "Goldsmith stands alone among writers in this, that not one single drop of the overflowing bitterness of his life or his spirit tinctures his work."¹ Like many biographers, King holds that Goldsmith's works are a revelation of the real author himself: "If, then, you wish to find the real Goldsmith, you will find him more faithfully reflected in his own works than in the accounts of his contemporaries or in the biographies of his biographers."² From a few of his major works such as: "The Deserted Village," "The Traveller," "The Vicar of Wakefield," and "She Stoops to Conquer," come expressions of his understanding of human nature, humorous scenes of his youth, and a study of the simple folk who formed the background of the nation.

Goldsmith's interest in writing verses came early, for his sister tells us "that he not only began to scribble verses when he could scarcely write, but otherwise showed a fondness for books and learning."³ His street ballads were written during his first years in college to prevent his starving on the low wages of a sizer⁴ and were to him, no doubt, the nuclei on which he built his future success.

¹Ibid., p. 289.

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Forster, op. cit., I, 10.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

Even though his essays are not extensively used in the preparations of this thesis, there were some of them which were important in the development of his career and which were referred to in this chapter. An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning, his first literary piece,¹ was a "duodecimo of two hundred pages"² published without a name but not denied by Goldsmith.³ The work, however, was not in print until 1759. A revised edition appeared in 1774, and a French translation was made in 1762.⁴ Goldsmith received recognition for his essays, published in the Monthly Review, a literary journal. This work he did in 1757, 1758, and 1763, under the bookseller, Mr. Griffith.⁵ Two other well-known works in the journalistic field are The Bee and The Citizen of the World or "Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to His Friends in the East." The Bee, which was published weekly in eight issues from October 6, 1759, to November 24, 1759, is a collection of original essays similar to those in the Rambler.⁶ The first book form appeared in

¹Ibid., p. 56.

²Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 66.

³Ibid., p. 67.

⁴F. W. Bateson, The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), II, 639.

⁵Ibid., p. 638.

⁶Forster, op. cit., I, 210.

1759, and it was reissued under a new title in the latter part of the eighteenth century or the early part of the nineteenth century.¹ In 1760, The Citizen of the World, a series of "Chinese Letters,"² was published twice weekly in the Public Ledger. By the close of 1760 some "ninety-eight of the letters had been published."³ According to Bateson they appeared in two volumes in 1762.⁴

Listed in chronological order according to publication, the works to be used in my study of the rural scenes and rural characters are "The Traveller," The Vicar of Wakefield, "The Deserted Village," and She Stoops to Conquer.

"The Traveller" or a "Prospect of Society," published on December 19, 1764, was "a thin eighteen-penny quarto" dedicated to Reverend Henry Goldsmith.⁵ According to Dobson the second, third, and fourth editions followed immediately, with the fifth in 1768, the sixth in 1770, and the ninth in 1774.⁶ The Cambridge Bibliography also accounts for an edition in 1778 and one in 1786, with the final one at Oxford, 1888.⁷

¹Bateson, op. cit., p. 639.

²Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 80.

³Forster, op. cit., I, 252-253.

⁴Bateson, op. cit., p. 641.

⁵Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 96.

⁶Ibid., p. 102.

⁷Bateson, op. cit., p. 641.

According to Dobson the first publication of The Vicar of Wakefield, which was in two volumes, was on March 12, 1766. The second and third editions appeared in May and August of the same year, together with two unauthorized editions, one at Dublin and the other at London. The fifth edition appeared in 1774 and the sixth in 1779.¹ In addition to this information, the Cambridge Bibliography accounts for three editions in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1791 and 1792.² Translations were made in French in 1767, 1796, 1802, and 1803; in German in 1767, 1776, 1777, 1781, and 1818; and in Dutch in 1768.³ Of the book Goethe is reported to have said, "with unabated delight, 'read the charming book again from beginning to end, not a little affected by the lively recollection' of how much he had been indebted to the author seventy years before."⁴

His well-known poem, "The Deserted Village," was published May 26, 1770, about two years after the author began his work on it.⁵ During that same year six editions in quarto form were published, and in the same form the ninth edition was published in 1779.⁶ Many publications of it have gone to

¹Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, pp. 119-120.

²Bateson, op. cit., p. 642.

³Ibid.

⁴Forster, op. cit., I, 423.

⁵Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 149.

⁶Ibid., p. vii.

press in the United States, and as early as 1772, a translation was made in French. In 1805 this was followed by another. Then in 1812 a translation was made in German.¹

She Stoops to Conquer, a comedy in which he "rehearsed the first sketch" early in life,² was published in London in 1773 in octavo form.³ Mr. Bateson in the Cambridge Bibliography tells us that it was performed at Covent Garden on March 15, 1773. The fifth edition appeared before the close of the same year. Also during that time publications were made in Dublin, Belfast, and Philadelphia. Dublin continued to make rapid publications during the years 1774, 1775, 1783, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1792, and 1797. During the year of its first production a translation was made in German.⁴

¹Bateson, op. cit., p. 643.

²Dobson, The Life of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 105.

³Ibid., p. xiv.

⁴Bateson, op. cit., p. 643.

CHAPTER II

RURAL SCENES IN GOLDSMITH'S MAJOR WORKS

The best known works of Oliver Goldsmith were popular in their time and are as eagerly read today as then. Their charming and humorous descriptions have given them a permanent place in the hearts of readers. Their rural scenes strike a responsive chord in the hearts of both urban and country people, of those who know and those who know not tranquillity in daily living.

Into Goldsmith's works crept the first thoughts of romanticism, a feeling of rebellion against classical rules, a rejection of formality, and a return to imagination.¹ From Rousseau he seems to have borrowed the use of landscapes,² which give his works a truly pastoral effect. As Goldsmith's forerunners in the use of rural characters and British scenes, James Thomson and Thomas Gray both deserve a definite place among the pastoral writers of the eighteenth century. Thomson, a lover of natural scenery, expressed himself "with an equal eye in varying aspects," on such subjects as the "forest, river, sky, sea, plains, mountains, meadows, valleys, flowers, and animals." He ranged from "the repercussive roar of

¹Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England (New York: Appleton-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 1123.

²Ibid., p. 975.

thunder to a thoroughly sentimental treatment of the domestic animal," and he included the wolves of the Alps with the British countryside.¹ Gray, a transitional writer, also found delight in the Alpine scenery and the English Lake regions.²

"The Traveller"

Equally interested in landscape and the pastoral life, Goldsmith joined these transitional writers in foreshadowing the Romantic Movement. Therefore, with his rural background and his rural influences, Goldsmith's readers anticipate these effects on his scenes and characters. In "The Traveller" Goldsmith pictures his brother's home, which was characterized by friendliness and kindness, traits typical of the poet himself. Such thoughts are described in these lines:

Blest be the spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire;
Blest that abode, where want and pain repair;
And every stranger finds a ready chair:
Blest be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale;
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.³

¹Ibid., p. 937.

²Ibid., p. 1013.

³Oliver Goldsmith, "The Traveller," ll. 13-22. The Poetical Works of Goldsmith, Collins, and T. Wharton, ed. Rev. George Gilfillan (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1854). Poetical lines from "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village" will be taken from this book.

In his description of the peasant, Goldsmith stresses the point that regardless of the country, the peasant is contented. The fact is that rural life seems to breed contentment. From the same poem these lines emphasize his thought:

As in those domes where Caesar's once bare sway,
Defaced by time, and tottering in decay,
There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed;
And wondering man could want the larger pile,
Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile.¹

As Goldsmith travelled from one country to another, he was impressed by the magnificent pastoral scenes which surrounded him. On the continent he found the beauties of nature sparkling in the forests, the meadows, the rocks, the skies, and the waters. In the warmth and wealth of Italy he saw, however, almost too much luxuriance:

Whatever fruits in different climes are found
That proudly rise, or humbly count the ground;
Whatever blooms in torrid tracts appear,
Whose bright succession decks the varied year;
Whatever sweets salute the northern sky
With vernal lives, that blossom but to die:
These here disparting own the kindred soil,
Nor ask luxuriance from the planter's toil;
While sea-born gales their gelid wings expand,
To winnow fragrance round the smiling land.
But small the bliss that sense alone bestows,
And sensual bliss is all the nation knows,
In florid beauty groves and fields appear.²

On the contrary, Goldsmith found quite the opposite in cold, barren regions of Switzerland. Beauty lay not in

¹Ibid., ll. 159-164.

²Ibid., ll. 113-125.

its warmth but in its bleakness, of which he wrote:

No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,
But winter lingering chills the lap of May;
No zephyr fondly sues the mountain's breast
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest.¹

Living in these stern surroundings, the noble Swiss stands staunch on his barren ground:

Thus every good his native wilds impart,
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart;
And even those hills, that round his mansion rise,
Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies.²

In Holland the author seems to have rested his attention on the ocean and the land rescued from it. Beauty rose from the influence of its power on the land, as he describes it:

While the pent ocean, rising o'er the pile,
Sees an amphibious world beneath him smile;
The slow canal, the yellow-blossom'd vale,
The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail,
The crowded mart, the cultivated plain,
A new creation rescued from his reign.³

While these rural sights of the continent were beautiful to Goldsmith's eye, he was much more impressed with the outdoor scenery of Britain;

Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,
And brighter streams than famed Hydaspes glide:
There all around the gentlest breezes stray,
There gentle music melts on every spray.⁴

¹Ibid., ll. 171-175.

²Ibid., ll. 199-202.

³Ibid., ll. 291-296.

⁴Ibid., ll. 318-322.

"The Deserted Village"

In his next major poem, "The Deserted Village," Goldsmith emphasized rural village scenery. When his favorite brother, Henry, died, his thoughts were turned to the happy days of his youth and their rural Irish surroundings. The pain he felt found relief in his remembering former friends, old times, and familiar scenes, a relief that found expression in the lovely idyl, "The Deserted Village." A pleasing melancholy and contemplative atmosphere introduce the poem:

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring
 swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:¹

There has always been some doubt as to where Goldsmith's "deserted village" really was. The Rev. R. H. Newell, B.D., and Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, said it was Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath, in Ireland.² Dobson suggests that it could have been "Kennaguhair in Dream County, Poet Land."³ In his note Dobson says that there is an Aldbourn in Wiltshire, not far from Marlborough, which may have furnished the suggestion.⁴ At Lissoy some of the friends of Goldsmith

¹"The Deserted Village," ll. 1-4.

²Austin Dobson, "The Deserted Village," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CIV (December, 1901), 400.

³Ibid., p. 400.

⁴Austin Dobson, The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 179.

followed through with the idea that the poem had reference to their village. "Indeed one of the poet's admirers, a Mr. Hogan, who christened his house Auburn, went so far as to rebuild or repair the old ale-house at Lissoy, and to equip it with the sign of the 'Three Jolly Pigeons.' Furthermore, he restored or supplied the properties of the ale-house in the poem."¹ Even though there is some doubt as to the actual setting of the poem, the descriptions are so simple and life-like that one accepts without question the actuality of "Auburn or Lissoy, or whatever the village may be supposed to be."²

Regardless of the actual location of "Sweet Auburn," it was the church, the meadows, the creek, and the thickets of Lissoy that furnished the physical surroundings of this idyl:

The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
 The never failing brook, the busy mill,
 The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring
 hill;
 The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
 For talking age and whispering lovers made!³

In any rural community anywhere, except in the plains and desert countries, one can picture according to his own

¹Dobson, "The Deserted Village," p. 400.

²William Black, Goldsmith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1918), p. 126.

³Dobson, "The Deserted Village," ll. 10-14.

experience a house almost hidden by trees and shrubbery and surrounded by well-kept farm land. To the side or at the back of the farm is the river, a child's paradise, and near by stands the mill. Fittingly situated and overlooking the village for which it is responsible, the church stands sentinel for the faith and solace of its members. According to Dr. Streat, curate in Kilkenny West in 1807, the picture here is an exact reproduction of that Lissoy; that is, the church as it was seen from the house at Lissoy.¹

Because Goldsmith's scenes are not minute in detail, one can picture any type of hawthorn bush, whether its blossoms are pink or white, with an inviting rustic bench beneath its shade. The Rev. Annesley Streat, the clergyman who succeeded Henry Goldsmith at Kilkenny West, remembered well the hawthorn bush in front of the village ale-house. Originally it had three trunks, but a few years later only one remained, "the other two having been cut, from time to time, by persons carrying pieces of it away to be made into toys, etc., in honour of the bard, and the celebrity of his poem."²

The hawthorn scene calls to one's mind not only the memory pictures of actual experiences but also memory pictures of other British writers to whom the hawthorn was an

¹Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" and Other Poems, edited by Robert N. Whiteford, Ph.D. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909), p. 332.

²Dobson, The Poetical Work of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 179.

essential feature of the rural landscape. As lacking in detail, yet giving the same effect are these lines from Milton's "L'Allegro":

And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.¹

In "The Cotter's Saturday Night" Burns uses similar imagery in these lines but with more sensory detail:

In others' arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the
evening gale.²

During the time that Goldsmith was barely existing in Green Arbour Court, he sent his brother Henry a sample of his heroic comic poem which described "A Grub Street Writer in bed in 'a paltry ale-house'." Such accessories as "the sanded floor," the "twelve rules,"³ and the games of goose,⁴ were part of the poem. Furthermore the chest had

¹Dobson, The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 179.

²Robert Burns, The Complete Works of Robert Burns, Cabinet Edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1900), ll. 80-81, p. 34.

³In Dobson, The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 187, is given this information: In every house was a copy of "King Charles' 'Twelve Good Rules.'" This "old broadside, surmounted by a rude woodcut of the King's execution, is still prized by collectors. The rules of King Charles the First were: 1. Urge no healths; 2. Profane no divine ordinances; 3. Touch no state matters; 4. Reveal no secrets; 5. Pick no quarrels; 6. Make no comparisons; 7. Maintain no ill opinions; 8. Keep no bad company; 9. Encourage no vice; 10. Make no long meals; 11. Repeat no grievances; 12. Lay no wagers."

⁴Dobson (page 188) also gives this information: The royal game of goose is described "as a game of compartments with different titles through which the player progresses according to the numbers he throws with the dice. At every fourth or fifth compartment is depicted a goose, and if the player's cast falls upon one of these, he moves forward double the number of his throw."

its parallel in the night cap:¹

A night cap deck'd his brows instead of bay,
A cap by night--a stocking all the day!²

"A year or two later he expanded these lines in the Citizen of the World, and the scene becomes the Red Lion in Drury Lane. From this second version he adapted, or extended again, the description of the inn parlor in the "Deserted Village."³ The ale-house that was restored by Mr. Hogan had the properties of the ale-house in the poem as the author explains: "Whether it actually had its:

. . . chest contriv'd a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day,

. . . we know not; but it certainly had:

The whitewashed wall; the nicely sanded floor;
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
The pictures plac'd for ornament and use;
The twelve good rules; the royal game of goose.⁴

Nor, says Goldsmith's laborious first biographer, Prior, were wanting: 'The broken teacups, wisely kept for show,'⁵

¹Dobson, "The Deserted Village," p. 401.

²Goldsmith, "Description of an Author's Bed Chamber," Poetical Works of Goldsmith, Collins, T. Wharton, ed. Rev. George Gilfillan (Edinburg: James Nichol, 1854), ll. 19-20.

³Dobson, "The Deserted Village," p. 401.

⁴"The Deserted Village," ll. 229-232.

⁵Ibid., l. 235.

which glistened over the chimney, but for some occult reason were firmly embedded in the mortar--a circumstance which did not prevent their being stolen. . . ."¹

It has been suggested that Goldsmith was thinking of the little hill of Knockaruadh (Red Hill) in front of Lissoy parsonage when he wrote these lines:

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close,
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.²

There is a sketch of the hill in Newell's Poetical Works (1811). At that time it had become known as "Goldsmith's Mount." Goldsmith himself had mentioned it in a letter to his brother-in-law, Hodson (dated December 27, 1757), in which he said, "I had rather be placed on the little mount before Lissoy gate, and there take in, to me, the most pleasing horizon in nature."³

It is not only that one sees the place as a picture but also that "one seems to be breathing its very atmosphere, and listening to the various cries that thrill the 'hollow silence.'"⁴

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
There, as I pass'd with careless steps and slow,
The mingled notes came soften'd from below;

¹Dobson, "The Deserted Village," pp. 400-401.

²"The Deserted Village," ll. 113-114.

³Dobson, The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 183.

⁴Black, op. cit., p.125.

The swain responsive as the milk maid sung,
 The sober herd that lowed to meet their young;
 The noisy geese that gobbled o'er the pool,
 The playful children just let loose from school;
 The watch-dog's voice that bay'd the whispering
 wind,

And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind.¹

Some sounds such as the cry of the "hollow-sounding bittern"²
 are less pleasant. In his History of Animated Nature he
 writes:

. . . of all these sounds, there is none so dismally
 hollow as the blooming of the bittern. . . . It is
 like an interrupted bellowing of a bull, but hollower
 and louder, and is heard at a mile's distance, as if
 issuing from some formidable being that resided at the
 bottom of the waters. I remember in the place where I
 was a boy with what great terror this bird's note
 affected the whole village; they considered it as a
 presage of some sad event, and generally found or made
 one to succeed it.³

Goldsmith's simple and modest descriptions of familiar
 objects are pleasing, and his enthusiasm for humble things is
 transmitted to the reader. His "shelter'd cot," his "busy
 mill," his "glassy brook," and his "mouldering wall" become
 reflections of reality. He "inspires us with a fondness to
 trace the simplest recollections of Auburn, till we count
 the furniture of its ale-house, and listen to the 'varnished
 clock' that clicked behind the door."⁴

¹"The Deserted Village," ll. 113-122.

²Ibid., l. 44.

³Horatio Sheafe Krans, Ph.D., ed. The Poems of
 Oliver Goldsmith (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908),
 note, p. 55.

⁴Ibid., p. 63.

The whitewash'd wall, the nicely-sanded floor,
 The varnish'd clock that click'd behind the door;
 The chest, contrived a double debt to pay,
 A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
 The pictures placed for ornament and use,
 The twelve good rules, the royal games of goose;
 The hearth, except when winter chill'd the day,
 With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel, gay;
 While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,¹
 Ranged o'er the chimney, glisten'd in a row.¹

Black says that Goldsmith wrote "in a pre-Wordsworthian age when, even in the realms of poetry, a primrose was not much more than a primrose; but it is doubtful whether, either before, during, or since Wordsworth's time, the sentiment that the imagination can infuse into the common and familiar things around us ever received more happy expression than in the well-known lines"² about the primrose. Regarding Goldsmith's use of rural scenery, Ashe King wrote: "'The Deserted Village' established the reputation of Goldsmith as the first English poet of his day, and the first perhaps, of pastoral English poets of any day."³

The Vicar of Wakefield

The same qualities that made Goldsmith's poems popular are also to be found in his novel. Many biographers have praised the popularity of The Vicar of Wakefield; like his

¹"The Deserted Village," ll. 227-236.

²Black, op. cit., p. 128.

³Richard Ashe King, Oliver Goldsmith (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1910), p. 204.

other works, its presentation of vivid rural scenes, as well as its simplicity and humility, have kept it on the book-sellers' shelves. Of its value one author has written:

One who, on the day of its appearance, had not left the nursery, but who grew to be a popular poet and a man of fine wit, and who happily still survives with the experience of the seventy years over which his pleasures of memory extend, remarked lately to the present writer, that, of all the books which, through the fitful changes of three generations, he had seen rise and fall, the charm of the Vicar of Wakefield had alone continued as at first; and could he revisit the world after an interval of many more generations, he should as surely look to find it undiminished. Such is the reward of simplicity and truth and of not overstepping the modesty of nature.¹

The scenes of the vicar and his wife, together with their children performing their daily tasks with an attitude of happiness, "which Walter Scott declares to be without a parallel, in all his novel reading," make up "a fireside picture of perfect beauty."² Almost all of the appreciation and success of the novel has lain in the scenes of happiness and sorrow shared by the members of the Primrose family. Goldsmith draws them together in the field to share in saving the after-growth of hay.³ They met at noon time to spread their lunch and to enjoy together the beauties of nature.⁴

¹Forster, op. cit., I, 411.

²Ibid., p. 417.

³Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, The World's Popular Classics (New York: Book, Inc., n.d.), p. 32.

⁴Ibid., pp. 41-42.

And again they join together on the familiar honeysuckle bank to soothe the broken heart of one of their members.¹

The neighborhood into which Dr. Primrose moved after losing his money was rural in every detail: "The place of our retreat was in a little neighbourhood, consisting of farmers, who tilled their own grounds, and were equal strangers to opulence and poverty."² In the next scene one gets a closer view of the vicar's rural location. The picture is almost complete, with the snug little cottage and its surroundings. The meadow, the green, the river, the trees, and the warmth of the thatch-covered cottage present a typical pastoral scene:

Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a prattling river before: on one side a meadow, on the other a green. My farm consisted of about twenty acres of excellent land, having given an hundred pound for my predecessor's good-will. Nothing could exceed the neatness of my little enclosures: the elms and hedge-rows appearing with inexpressible beauty. My house consisted of but one story, and was covered with thatch, which gave it an air of snugness; the walls on the inside were nicely white-washed, and my daughters undertook to adorn them with pictures of their own designing. Though the same room served us for parlour and kitchen, that only made it the warmer. Besides, as it was kept with the utmost neatness, the dishes, plates, and coppers being well scoured, and all disposed in bright rows on the shelves, the eye was agreeably relieved, and did not want richer furniture.³

¹Ibid., p. 169.

²Ibid., p. 20.

³Ibid., p. 21.

Glancing away from the immediate surroundings of their house, the vicar and his family were refreshed by this quiet, peaceful scene, one of serene beauty clothed in nature's most gorgeous colors: "At a small distance from the house, my predecessor had made a seat, overshadowed by an hedge of hawthorn and honeysuckle. Here, when the weather was fine and our labour soon finished, we usually sat together, to enjoy an extensive landscape in the calm of the evening."¹

In this age of rush and worry the reader envies the family as they enjoy their picnic: "Our family dined in the field, and we sate, or rather reclined, round a temperate repast, our cloth spread upon the hay, while Mr. Burchell gave cheerfulness to the feast. To heighten our satisfaction, two blackbirds answered each other from opposite hedges, the familiar redbreast came and pecked the crumbs from our hands, and every sound seemed but the echo of tranquillity."² Another tranquil rural scene is that of the return of the vicar after he has found Olivia: "As I walked but slowly, the night waned apace. The labourers of the day were all retired to rest; the lights were out in every cottage; no sounds were heard but of the shrilling cock, and the deep-mouthed watch-dog at a hollow distance. I approached my abode of

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²Ibid., p. 41.

pleasure, and before I was within a furlong of the place, our honest mastiff came running to welcome me."¹ How often Goldsmith draws his family together in a scene of warmth! The following is not merely a happy fireside scene in which stories of the past are told and plans for the future are laid, but it is a happy family relationship in which Moses' opinion on "things in general" is freely given and received:

It was within about four days of her intended nuptials, that my little family at night were gathered round a charming fire, telling stories of the past, and laying schemes for the future. Busied in forming a thousand projects, and laughing at whatever folly came uppermost. "Well, Moses," cried I, "we shall soon, my boy, have a wedding in the family; what is your opinion of matters and things in general?" . . . "My opinion, father, is, that all things go on very well; and I was just now thinking, that when sister Livy is married to farmer Williams, we shall then have the loan of his cyder-press and brewing tubs for nothing." . . . "That we shall Moses," cried I, "and he will sing us 'Death and the Lady,' to raise our spirits, into the bargain."²

The Vicar of Wakefield is brought to a close by the happy rustic picture of the family all together once more by the fireside. This particular one is a scene of rest and satisfaction. The Vicar, having been tested for his faith, is proved victorious. His simple life with its simple surroundings has given him a sound knowledge of true happiness:

As soon as dinner was over, according to my old custom, I requested that the table might be taken away to have the pleasure of seeing all my family assembled once more by a cheerful fire-side. My two little ones sat upon

¹Ibid., p. 159.

²Ibid., pp. 105-106.

each knee, the rest of the company by their partners. I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for; all my cares were over, my pleasure was unspeakable. It now only remained that my gratitude in good fortune should exceed my former submission in adversity.¹

She Stoops to Conquer

When we turn to Goldsmith's comedy we find that in some ways it holds little in common with the poems and the novel. On March 15, 1773, She Stoops to Conquer, dedicated to Dr. Johnson, was presented at Covent Garden. During the evening of the first performance, Goldsmith retreated to St. James's Park and walked about "until a friend dragged him into the theater in time for Act V and to hear the delighted laughter that had greeted the play from the very beginning."² On December 28, 1949, She Stoops to Conquer was presented in City Center, New York. Maurice Evans delivered a new prologue to the old comedy, which he declared was no more "dated than our coffee."³ The humor is timeless, and the eighteenth-century rural charm of the play perennially delights the audience. As Wyatt writes: "It's not a bit the flavor of the London smart set or Sheridan's stinging epigrams. Goldsmith's wit blows through hawthorn hedges; its sting no worse than the smoke from the logs in the Georgian fireplace;

¹Ibid., p. 243.

²Euphemia Van Renselaer Wyatt, "Theater," Catholic World, CLXX (February, 1950), 385.

³Ibid., p. 385.

with scratches no deeper than the prickles from the gooseberry bushes in the garden."¹

Goldsmith wrote She Stoops to Conquer during the summer of 1771, while he was living at a farmhouse out from London. He wrote to a friend in September of that year, saying that "for three months he had been trying to make people laugh, and suggests a picture of himself strolling along the hedgerows, 'studying jests with the most tragical countenance.'"² Wyatt says that Tony, the Squire, and Mrs. Hardcastle, together with the remaining characters, "were as factual as many of the incidents."³ For instance, the real Tony Lumpkins, to whom Goldsmith dedicated the drinking song,⁴ was with him when he organized a club during his three years of idleness.⁵ "The facts behind the incidents are that Goldsmith had actually mistaken a gentleman's country house for an inn in Ireland. Lord Clare's daughter had once tied Goldsmith's wig to his chair, and Sheridan tested out Tony's circuitous drive on Mme. de Genlis and found it worked

¹Ibid.

²She Stoops to Conquer, ed. Dudley Miles, Ph.D. (Dallas: Ginn and Company, 1917), p. xii.

³Op. cit., p. 385.

⁴Dobsen, Life of Oliver Goldsmith (London: Walter Scott, 1888), p. 27.

⁵Forster, op. cit., II, 36.

perfectly.¹ Goldsmith certainly felt himself standing in Marlow's pumps when he stammered with embarrassment beside Miss Hardcastle."²

As Goldsmith brought out the rural in his major poems and his novel, his readers naturally expect to find it present in his comedy. She Stoops to Conquer does exhibit the rural element but with a different feeling. Rather than appealing to the emotions as it does in his poems and novels, it arouses a sense of humor in the minds of the readers. The rural setting of the old-fashioned family mansion must apparently play a part in shaping the lives of its inhabitants, who have acquired somewhat of a rustic state through their close association with their artless tenants. The undue familiarity shown by both the Master and the working hands, the typical rural hospitality exhibited toward the guests, and the urban-minded desires displayed by some of its characters bring out the rural in the play. In the opening of the play the conversation between Mr. Hardcastle and his wife gives the rural

¹Gertrude Van Arsdale Ingall, in "Some Sources of Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer," PMLA, XLIV (June, 1929), 565, writes that the incident in which Mrs. Hardcastle was driven about her own gardens for several hours by her son, Tony, corresponds to Steele's story about Lady Bluemantle. Like Mrs. Hardcastle she, too, was restless and peevish and often desired to change her habitation. To humor her, she was led about her own grounds. She carries the gossip from one family to another and makes herself the storehouse of gossip.

²Wyatt, op. cit., p. 385.

setting:

Mrs. Hardcastle. I vow, Mr. Hardcastle, you're very particular. Is there a creature in the whole country but ourselves that does not take a trip to town now and then, to rub off the rust a little? There's the two Miss Hoggs, and our neighbor Mrs. Grigsby, go to take a month's polishing every winter.

Hardcastle. Ay, and bring back vanity and affection to last them the whole year. I wonder why London cannot keep its own fools at home. In my time, the follies of the town crept slowly among us, but now travel faster than a stagecoach. Its fopperies come down not only as inside passengers, but in the very basket.

Mrs. Hardcastle. Ay, your times were fine times indeed; you have been telling us of them for many a long year. Here we live in an old rumbling mansion, that looks for all the world like an inn, but that we never see company. Our best visitors are old Mrs. Oddfish, the curate's wife, and little Cripplegate, the lame dancing master; and all our entertainment your old stories of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough. I hate old-fashioned trumpery.¹

Another rural scene is given indirectly by Mrs. Hardcastle as she talks with Mr. Hastings. Mrs. Hardcastle's less interesting life in the country is made more bearable by what she gets from magazines and from people who visit at her house:

Mrs. Hardcastle. Well I vow, Mr. Hastings, you are very entertaining. There's nothing in the world I love to talk of so much as London, and the fashions, though I was never there myself.

Hastings. Never there! You amaze me! From your air and manner, I concluded you had been bred all your life either at Ranelagh, St. James's, or Tower Wharf.

¹She Stoops to Conquer, I, i, 1.

Mrs. Hardcastle. Oh, sir, you're only pleased to say so. We country persons can have no manner at all. I'm in love with the town, and that serves to raise me above some of our neighboring rustics; but who can have a manner, that has never seen the Pantheon, the Grotto Gardens, the Borough, and such places, where the nobility chiefly resort? All I can do is to enjoy London at secondhand. I take care to know every "tete-a-tete" from the Scandalous Magazine, and have all the fashions as they come out in a letter from the two Miss Rickets of Crooked Lane. Pray, how do you like this head, Mr. Hastings?¹

Another confusing yet intriguing rural scene is suggested when Tony and the Landlord give Marlow and Hastings false directions. Such directions are typical of a country dweller, as well as depicting the remote back country without roads or signs.

Landlord. Master Hardcastle's! Lack-a-daisy, my masters, you're come a deadly deal wrong! When you came to the bottom of the hill, you should have crossed down Squash Lane.

Marlow. Cross down Squash Lane?

Landlord. Then you were to keep straight forward, till you came to four roads.

Marlow. Come to where four roads meet?

Tony. Ay; but you must be sure to take only one of them.

Marlow. Oh, sir, you're facetious.

Tony. Then keeping to the right, you are to go sideways till you come upon Crack-skull Common: there you must look sharp for the track of the wheel, and go forward till you come to farmer Murrain's barn. Coming to the farmer's barn, you are to turn to the right, and then to the left, and then to the right about again, till you find out the old mill.

¹Ibid., II, i, 35.

Marlow. Zounds, man! we could as soon find out the longitude.¹

The wholesome humor of the play is carried forward in the scene in the old-fashioned house in which the awkward servants are instructed by their landlord in how to meet their new responsibilities. Since no account is given of the Hardcastles' having house servants, Goldsmith's readers recognize immediately the necessity of the master of the house polishing the rural manners and habits of these field and barn servants in order to serve adequately the city guests. For three days Mr. Hardcastle tried to impress on them that they were to act familiar with their new stands and not to behave as "frightened rabbits" or to stand with their hands in their pockets and stare awkwardly about the room. During the meals each was to stand at a certain position and to be most attentive to the guests. He was to refrain from entering into the conversations, to look uninterested during the dinner courses, and by all means to bridle his tongue if a humorous story was told. The personal remarks and comments passed between Hardcastle and his servants are not only very comical but are also quite rustic and unlearned on both sides.²

¹Ibid., I, ii, 9-26. The remarks about finding "out the longitude" came from the fact that after more than fifty years of trial, John Harrison had recently won a reward of twenty thousand pounds for giving an explanation of how to determine longitude.

²Ibid., II, i, 18-27.

The only outdoor scene was described by Tony, who gleefully told how he took Mrs. Hardcastle and Miss Neville on the circuitous drive which lasted three hours through the mud and thickets of Mrs. Hardcastle's own property. Hastings learned of it from Tony himself:

You shall hear. I just took them down Feather-bed-Lane, where we stuck fast in the mud. I then rattled them crack over the stones of Up-and-down Hill. I then introduced them to the gibbet on Heavy-tree Heath, and from that, with a circumbendibus, I fairly lodged them in the horsepond at the bottom of the garden.¹

In She Stoops to Conquer as in "The Traveller," "The Deserted Village," and The Vicar of Wakefield, Goldsmith depicted the rural life and surroundings of his boyhood in the succession of scenes. His youth in the rustic localities of Ireland with his father, his brother, his uncle Contarine, his cousin Tony Lumpkins, and his cousin Byranton, together with his many humorous experiences, furnished that rich rural element present in his works. In examining the rural aspects of his works, one cannot help noticing the differences in the poems and the novel as compared to the comedy. While there is a feeling of humility and kindness shown toward the characters in his poems and his novel, there is a sense of mockery and humor expressed toward those in the comedy. The kind vicar and the loveable village preacher strike a note of sympathy with the readers, while the jovial old squire

¹Ibid., V, ii, 12-20.

arouses laughter. The rustic scenes of the villagers in "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village" and the pastoral beauty of the meadows, greens, and honeysuckle banks of The Vicar of Wakefield are quite a contrast to Up-and-down Hill and Feather-bed Lane in She Stoops to Conquer.

Composition of Rural Scenes

Simple and unadorned are the characteristics of the composition of the rural scenes that Goldsmith used in his poems, his novel, and his drama, but he colored them with his own nature and his own true experiences. "The Deserted Village" is a unique example "of sustained and exquisite description of a rural countryside."¹ The village is portrayed in a succession of simple phrases which are easily remembered and easily referred to. Many lines of the poem stay with the reader and evoke a sense of gentleness and clearness "which makes its images so distinct and lovely. ". . . 'What true and pretty pastoral images,' exclaimed Burke, years after the poet's death, 'has Goldsmith in his "Deserted Village"! They beat all: Pope and Phillips, and Spenser too in my opinion.'²

Goldsmith, according to Forster, has attained "unity, completeness, polish, and perfectness" in this poem. It is

¹William Freeman, Oliver Goldsmith (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 114.

²Forster, op. cit., II, 198.

conceded that his range is limited and that he never wanders far from that of his own experience: "but within that circle, how potent is his magic, what a command it exercises over the happiest forms of art, with what a versatile grace it moves between what saddens us in humor or smiles on us in grief."¹ His word pictures are not very large, but their colors are "exquisite and unfading."²

The belief is that "everything in it is English, the feeling, the incidents, descriptions, and allusions;"³ but Goldsmith, drawing from his youth, has placed his dream picture in Ireland. Such conclusion as this has been drawn:

Scenes of the poet's youth had doubtless risen in his memory as he wrote, mingling with, and taking altered hue from, later experiences; thoughts of those early days could scarcely have been absent from the wish for a quiet close to the struggles and toil of his mature life, and very possibly, may almost certainly, when the dream of such a retirement haunted him, Lissoy formed part of the vision; it is even possible he may have caught the first hint of his design from a local Westmeath poet and schoolmaster, who, in his youth, had given rhymed utterance to the old tenant grievances of the Irish rural population.⁴

The rural scenes in "The Traveller" cross and recross the argument of the poem, the argument being that "there may be equal happiness in states that are differently governed

¹Ibid., p. 199.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 206.

⁴Ibid.

from our own; that every state has a particular principle of happiness and each may be carried to a mischievous excess."¹ The plan of the poem gives Goldsmith the opportunity to paint some of the rural scenes of the countries through which he has roamed. In Switzerland, Holland, and Italy he saw the wooded pastoral scenes and these humble rustic characters that were important in his thoughts. Goldsmith visited Corinthia, in Greece, in 1755, and Cunningham says that it still retains its characteristic inhospitality² that Goldsmith recorded in these lines:

Or onward where the rude Corinthian boor
Against the houseless stranger shuts the
door.³

He was in the Alps also:

And, placed on high above the storm's career,
Look downward where a hundred realms appear!
Lakes, forests, cities, plains extending wide.⁴

In Italy he saw:

Its uplands sloping deck the mountain's side,
Woods over woods in gay theatric pride.⁵

And during his wanderings in France he probably knew from experience these lines:

¹Oliver Elton, A Survey of English Literature (1730-1780) (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), I, 107.

²Dobson, The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith, p. 167.

³"The Traveller," ll. 3-4.

⁴Ibid., ll. 33-35.

⁵Ibid., ll. 107-108.

How often have I led thy sportive choir,
 With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire!
 Where shading elms along the margin grew,
 And freshen'd from the wave the zephyr few.¹

Goldsmith had seen in Holland:

The slow canal, the yellow-blossom'd vale,
 The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail.²

But regardless of the country in which he found himself, he always gravitated toward the peasants.

According to Krans, The Vicar of Wakefield is the first domestic novel in English literature. In its setting it is an idyll, and to quote Carlyle, "the best of all modern prose idylls." In form it is similar to Fielding's novels, but in substance it is different. From Defoe to Smollett "tales of adventure, tales depicting society, high and low, tales of the town and of the open road had abounded but no picture of the family and the hearth, of quiet labour and domestic happiness, no picture so finely and delicately drawn, had, until Goldsmith wrote The Vicar, made its appearance in English fiction."³ The charm and truth of the character portrayal and the tenderness of its sentiment and humor add warmth to these idyllic pictures of life and love on the honeysuckle bank and around the fireside. The best scenes are impressions of Goldsmith's own experiences and his own

¹Ibid., ll. 243-246.

²Ibid., ll. 293-294.

³Op. cit., pp. liii-liv.

environment.¹ All the rural scenes are brought to the attention of the reader directly by the vicar, who as the narrator, expresses Goldsmith's thought.

The rusticity and sincerity of Goldsmith's style in The Vicar of Wakefield was in sharp contrast to that of his contemporaries; consequently the style did not meet the standards of the more sophisticated critics of his day.² However, it became popular because the general readers were hungry for that type of novel.

The Vicar of Wakefield is loosely constructed, but the tragic story is arranged "with genuine power"; and the many tragedies which fall upon Dr. Primrose come at "studied intervals." Between these intervals are rural scenes which serve as a breathing-space for the reader.³ After reading the unhappy beginning, in which the vicar and his family have lost their money through a merchant in town, and in which he and his family have set out for a new location and a salary of fifteen pounds a year, one is refreshed by the rural scene describing the house, "at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a prattling river before: on one side a meadow, on the other a green."⁴

¹King, op. cit., p. 151.

²Ibid., p. 146.

³Elton, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

⁴Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, p. 21.

Between the successive misfortunes that overwhelm the vicar, night scenes, as well as day scenes, serve as contrast. For example, after he has rescued Olivia, he has momentary peace: "As I walked but slowly, the night waned apace. The labourers of the day were all retired to rest; the lights were out in every cottage; no sounds were heard but of the shrilling cock, and the deep-mouthed watch-dog at hollow distance."¹ This rural stillness continues until he reaches his door, and it tends to emphasize the following misfortune: "It was now near midnight that I came to knock at my door: all was still and silent: my heart dilated with unutterable happiness, when, to my amazement, I saw the house bursting out in a blaze of fire, and every aperture red with conflagration! I gave a loud convulsive outcry, . . ."² Thus the peaceful rural environment, emphasized by the silence of the wooded habitat broken only by quiet country sounds, prepares both the actors and the readers to meet maturely any catastrophe which might arise. In describing such disasters the author maintains a sense of balance, for every bitter is followed by a sweet. Therefore his scenes of misfortune are followed by scenes of happiness, as: with the disappearance of Olivia came the Vicar's reuniting with George; with the loss of the house came the kind hospitality of the neighbors;

¹Ibid., p. 159.

²Ibid.

and with the final calamity came Sir William Thornhill not only to save them from undeserved punishment but also to restore them to normal living.

Like the novel, She Stoops to Conquer broke all critical rules. The rural scenes are brought into the play to create an atmosphere of reality despite the oddness of character and incident. His rural scenes are as beautifully described in prose as they are in poetry. The style is clear and simple and easily understood; and according to Thorndike, "We never want to read his period twice over, except for the pleasure it bestows; obscurity never calls us back to repetition of it."¹ In She Stoops to Conquer the rural scenes start the play on its way. Of it Thorndike says: "How simply and pleasantly the opening scene introduces us to an old-fashioned house in the country and its occupants. . . ."² These typical gentry of the countryside mansion responded quite differently to their problems as compared with the Primroses in The Vicar of Wakefield. While we laugh with the Squire and his family, we weep with the Vicar and his. Goldsmith wrote comedy to entertain, and he who inspired Sheridan to make "changes in the practice of playwrights" was instrumental in bringing "laughing comedy" to

¹Ashley H. Thorndike, English Comedy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 426.

²Op. cit., p. 426.

the stage.¹ In an article Goldsmith wrote: "Distress, therefore, is the proper object of tragedy since the great excite our pity by their fall, but not equally so of the comedy, since the actors employed in it are originally so mean, that they sink but little when they fall."² Thus through his comedy he displayed his good-natured satire and poked fun at the country ways of the gentry living in their humorous world of make-believe.

Purpose of Rural Scenes

These rural scenes, whether outdoors or around the fireplace, add charm and pathos to Goldsmith's poems, his novel, and his play. They serve as a background for the composition as a whole and as a breathing space for the concentrated incidents, philosophical teachings, and successive fortunes and misfortunes of his characters. But most of all they present scenes that Goldsmith loved, for in them he relived the golden days of his youth, which he saw through rose-colored glasses. He walked through the meadow, fished in the river, listened to the tales of his old schoolmaster, traveled on the continent, and enjoyed the companionship of his family.

¹She Stoops to Conquer, p. xvi.

²Ivan L. Schulze, "An Inconsistency in the Thought of Goldsmith," Modern Language Association, LII (March, 1937), 207.

CHAPTER III
TYPES AND ROLES OF GOLDSMITH'S CHARACTERS
IN HIS MAJOR WORKS

In surveying the rural characters of Goldsmith's writings, together with their types and roles, I find that he chose often the ones with a simple environment. His miserable life on Grub Street accounted for his sympathetic attitude toward the English lower class, for their lowly lives restored to him the joys and sorrows of his youth.¹ Goldsmith at his best "will admit that the unlettered man beholds nature with a finer relish, and tastes his blessings with a keener appetite, than does the philosopher . . . and that the laws of savages are more humane than the laws designed to protect property in a refined community."² According to Column there are among his characters "the gentry, the gentlemen farmers, the rectors, professional people, land stewarts and merchants living in the country,"³ and they were the ones who were not unhappy in their surroundings.⁴ Historically

¹Robert W. Seitz, "The Irish Background of Goldsmith's Social and Political Thought," PMLA, LII (June, 1937), 405.

²W. F. Gallaway, "The Sentimentalism of Goldsmith," PMLA, XLVIII (December, 1953), 1176.

³Padraic Colum, "Young Goldsmith," Scribner's Magazine, LXXXVI (July-December, 1929), 558.

⁴Ibid.

speaking, these eighteenth-century farmers, peasants, gentlemen farmers, and professional people were living very much as they did in the sixteenth century.¹ History tells us that:

One might still see the countless little agricultural villages and manor houses nestling among the hills or dotting the plains, surrounded by green fields and fringed with forest or waste lands. The simple villagers still cultivated their strips in the common fields in the time-honored way, working hard for meager returns. . . . There were some enterprising and prosperous landowners who used newer and better methods, and even wrote books about "husbandry" as agriculture was called. . . . These new methods were all very fine for "gentlemen farmers," but for the average peasant the old "open field" system was an effective barrier to progress.²

Both humorous and serious characters in Goldsmith's works portray his colorful past. In the poetical lines I see the more serious faces revealing his deeper thoughts; while in his novel I find an older contemplative mind molding the behavior of his happy youth. His comedy, written to amuse and entertain, is in a world of its own. Dudley Miles makes this statement: "Moreover, Goldsmith does not try to make drama 'a school of laughter'; he is content if he can arouse natural and genuine laughter. There is no moralizing of his characters."³

¹Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Political and Social History of Modern Europe (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), p. 395.

²Ibid.

³She Stoops to Conquer, ed. Dudley Miles (Dallas: Ginn and Company, 1917), p. xvi.

"The Traveller"

"The Traveller," the first poem published bearing Goldsmith's name, was addressed to a man who despised "fame and fortune." And this particular man who had retired to peace and tranquillity on "forty pounds a year" was his much respected brother Henry.¹ To him Goldsmith wrote, "You have entered upon a sacred office, where the harvest is great, and the labourers are few; while you have left the fields of ambition, where the labourers are many, and the harvest not worth carrying away."² Thus one would imagine a poem addressed to a man of his fashion to be one of simple truth and humble nature. In these lines Goldsmith dedicates "The Traveller" to his brother:

Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see
My heart untravell'd, fondly turns to thee:
Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.³

Goldsmith's travels on the continent inspired him to write "The Traveller." Having been a traveller himself among the peasants, he had a deep appreciation for their humble abodes. Cooke, a young Irish law student, who became very familiar with him in later life, says: "He frequently used to talk of his distresses on the continent, such as living

¹Forster, op. cit., I, 364.

²Ibid., I, 364-365.

³"The Traveller," ll. 7-10.

on the hospitalities of the friars in convents, sleeping in barns, and picking up a kind of mendicant livelihood by the German flute, with great pleasantry."¹ Goldsmith emphasized the fact that one who travels on foot through the continent has a much better understanding than one who travels in a coach.²

While he traveled in Switzerland, he observed the peasants' hardy enjoyment of their crude homes, and because of his own human sympathy, he could describe their appreciation of their bare and bleak locality. In these simple rural folk Goldsmith found contentment in their meager living, and he believed this to be the result of "their own self-government in mind and temper,"³ which he expressed as follows:

Yet still even here, content can spread a charm,
 Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm
 Though poor the peasant's hut, his feast though
 small,
 He sees his little lot the lot of all;
 Sees no contiguous palace rear its head,
 To shape the meanness of his humble shed;
 No costly lard the sumptuous banquet deal,
 To make him loathe his vegetable meal:
 But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
 Each wish contracting, fits him to the soil:
 Cheerful at morn he wakes from short repose
 Breathes the keen air, and carols as he goes;
 With patient angle trolls the finny deep,
 Or drives his venturous plough share to the steep;

¹Ibid., pp. 58-59.

²Ibid., p. 59.

³Forster, op. cit., I, 69.

Or seeks the den where snow tracks mark the way,
And drags the struggling savage into day.¹

The toil-worn peasant finds himself repaid when he returns
to his poor cottage and is greeted and respected by his
family, as shown in the following lines:

At night returning, every labour sped,
He sits him down, the monarch of a shed;
Smiles by his cheerful fire, and round surveys
His children's looks that brighten at the blaze
While his loved partner, boastful of her hoard,
Displays her cleanly platter on the board,
And happy too some pilgrim, thither led,
With many a tale repays the nightly bed.²

That peasant who finds good in his barren ground,
happiness in his humble state, and a concentrated love in
his family ties cannot by-pass a solid patriotism for his
beloved country. The greater the stormy stress that shakes
the earth beneath his feet, the closer he clings to the
breast of his native soil. In the following lines Goldsmith
shows how like a child the peasant becomes when fear arises
and how dependent he is on his native soil:

Thus every good his native wilds impart,
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart;
And even those hills, that round his mansion rise,
Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies.
Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms;
And as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,
So the loud torrent, and the whirlwind's roar,
But bind him to his native mountains more.³

¹"The Traveller," ll. 174-190.

²Ibid., ll. 191-199.

³Ibid., ll. 199-208.

Then Goldsmith points out that regardless of the place one may go, he will find that lowly one who claims his spot the best. The native treasures his slim possessions, and his earthly plot becomes a part of him. Whether he tills the soil in the cold barren countries or basks in the sun of the torrid zone, his land is his own. Such feeling is expressed in these lines:

The shuddering tenant of the frigid zone
 Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own;
 Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,
 And his long nights of revelry and ease:
 The naked Negro panting at the line,
 Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
 Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
 And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.
 Such is the patriot's boasts, where'er we roam,
 His first, best country, ever is at home.¹

"The Deserted Village"

While "The Traveller" presents its rural figures in general, "The Deserted Village" is more specific in portraying the characters dear to Goldsmith's heart. Forster says:

"All the characteristics of the first poem seem to me developed in the second, with as chaste a simplicity, with as choice a selectness of natural expression, in verse of as musical mechanical cadence; but with yet greater earnestness of purpose, and a far more human interest."² One may find in it those pictures common to the imaginative mind. No doubt, because of the

¹Ibid., ll. 65-74.

²Op. cit., ll. 200.

physical and mental problems in the city with which Goldsmith was forced to struggle, he found relief in his reminiscing, as Forster remarks: "From that great city in which his hard-spent life had been diversified with so much care and toil, he traveled back to the memory of lives more simply passed, of more cheerful labour, of less anxious care, of homely affections and humble joys for which the world and all its success offer nothing in exchange."¹

The characteristics of Goldsmith's father, brother, and Uncle Contarine have all been knit together to create the well-known village preacher.² From Dobson's article on the poem we learn that according to Goldsmith's sister, Mrs. Hodson, the characterization bears a true likeness to their father. She wrote, "The Rev. Charles Goldsmith is allowed by all that knew him to have been faithfully represented by his son in the character of the Village Preacher in his poem."³ Dobson adds that if the reader interprets the one whom Goldsmith addresses as having retired early on "forty pounds a year," then the individual is the brother Henry; but that particular point could be contradicted, because it so happens that many of the village pastors received that amount.⁴ In

¹Ibid., p. 202.

²Ibid., II, 151.

³Dobson, "The Deserted Village," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CIV (December, 1901), 402.

⁴Ibid.

reviewing the facts of Goldsmith's life we realize that the traits of his father, brother, and Uncle Contarine are fused in this very important character, for the village preacher reflects their kindness and humility, which were common to the simple country folk. Dobson presents the idea that the kind Uncle Contarine may have had great influence:

It was Uncle Contarine who had assisted him at school and college; Contarine who had established him as a tutor; Contarine who had equipped him fruitlessly for the law; and Contarine who had finally supplied the funds to enable him to study medicine at Edinburg. But the truth is he drew from none of these individually, though he may have borrowed traits from each. That they were all kindly, modest, simple, unambitious, generous is probably true; but it is impossible to dissociate from them a certain weakness and want of fiber which are frequently found in combination with these amiable qualities. To what he saw in them Goldsmith added a dignity, a moral grandeur which again exalts the character to the type. . . .¹

Goldsmith must have received an emotional satisfaction from picturing the village preacher, finding in him those qualities that made him welcomed among his flock. To all alike he opened his doors. His interests were not in his meager earnings or his own gains, but in the salvation of his children. Neither did he seek praise for himself, nor did he choose to be great. His happiness came in his unselfish attitudes. Goldsmith presents to the reader a godly image of one who took willingly all the rebuffs that life had to offer. Goldsmith pictures his qualities in the following:

¹Ibid.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild,
 There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
 The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
 A man he was to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his
 place;
 Unskillful he to fawn, or seek for power
 By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
 For other aims his heart had learned to prize,
 More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.¹

The path that led to the preacher's door was well-worn by the villagers because they sought him in all their distresses. His gentle meekness and constant love were also a magnet to all beggars, spendthrifts, and weary soldiers. He was attentive to their stories and was a balm to their heart-aches. In their faces he read their hunger for love, kindness, and forgiveness. Through his abundant pity he forgave them for their past and directed their futures:

His house was known to all the vagrant train,
 He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
 The long remembered beggar was his guest,
 Whose beard descending swept his age breast;
 The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
 Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;
 The broken soldier, kindly bid to stay,
 Sat by his fire, and talk'd the night away;
 Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
 Shoulder'd his crutch, and show'd how fields were
 won.
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learn'd to
 glow,
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
 His pity gave ere his charity began.²

¹"The Deserted Village," ll. 137-148.

²Ibid., ll. 149-162.

Regardless of the many faults and vices of these unfortunates, his faithful prayers, accompanied by tears, were delivered to relieve their miserable souls and strengthen their faith. He lifted their thoughts to brighter worlds. His acts of wise leadership are described in these lines:

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings lean'd to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt, for all:
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-pledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,¹
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.¹

When death came to his parishioners, he was there to hear their last confessions and make their parting easier. His simple prayers lifted to God came as a solace to their final farewell, and they in turn shed their sorrows and breathed a grateful homage:

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismay'd
The reverend Champion stood, at his control,
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whisper'd praise.²

Finally, within his own church he was the same sincere, unadorned, righteous being whose face was a reflection of his devout living. Those who dared to mock his words were overpowered by his sincerity and repented of their false

¹Ibid., ll. 163-170.

²Ibid., ll. 171-176.

pride. At the close of each service his eager flock gathered about him to receive his blessings, common to all, far in him they saw a symbol of goodness. Such scenes are portrayed in the following lines:

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
 His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
 Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
 And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.
 The service past, around the pious man,
 With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
 Even children follow'd, with endearing wile,
 And pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's
 smile;
 His ready smile a parent's warmth express'd;
 Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distress'd:
 To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
 But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
 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.¹

In summing up the traits of the village preacher which Goldsmith seemed to have sifted from his father, his brother and his Uncle Contarine, Dodson said: "But not to one, or any of these separately, belong those noble concluding lines which for so many years have been regarded as the ne-varietur representation of a typical village pastoral picture for a parallel to which one must travel back some four hundred years to Chaucer's 'poor parson of a town.'² For his poor parson Chaucer also used the same measuring stick:

¹Ibid., ll. 177-192.

²Dobson, "The Deserted Village," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CIV(December, 1901), 402.

A good man was ther of religioun,
 And was a povre Persoun of a Toun;
 But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk;
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
 That Cristes Gospel trewely wolde preche:
 His parissshens devoutly wolde he teche.
 Benygne he was and wonder diligent,
 And in adversitee ful pacient;
 And swich he was y preved ofte sithes.

.
 That firste he wroghte and afterward he taughte.
 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
 And this figure he added eek therto,
 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
 For if a priest be foul, or whom we truste,
 No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;¹

Another spectacular figure among Goldsmith's rural characters is the village schoolmaster. He, like the preacher, is a central figure, and one, no doubt, in whom Goldsmith found many deserving qualities. Several biographers have referred to Thomas (Paddy) Byrne, his old schoolmaster, as the one the author portrays in the village teacher. Even though some of the characteristics may have been typical of Byrne, Goldsmith's sister did not agree to the comparison. She said that Byrne "was a character so individual that, if Goldsmith intended to depict him, he must be held to have failed conspicuously."² This adventurous Paddy Byrne, who had traveled on the continent, who had seen strange things on land and sea, and who had an unabated desire for roaming, had

¹The Canterbury Tales, ll. 477-485, 497-502, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Dallas: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), p. 24.

²Dobson, "The Deserted Village," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CIV (December, 1901), 401.

an inexhaustible supply of exciting legends. To young Oliver these stories were "a never failing source of delight."¹ However, Dobson explains that in "The Deserted Village" we do not find these characteristics of Byrne in the village schoolmaster. "Goldsmith might have depicted that worthy just as well if he had never heard of Paddy Byrne, never listened to his tales . . . he may have been able to presage 'times and tides,' and even have used 'words of learned length and thundering sound.' But it is evident that if these were among his peculiarities, Goldsmith must have intentionally neglected his essential features in order to seize upon certain characteristics which he possessed in common with a great many people."²

Looking in on the typical eighteenth-century village school, one may readily recognize the author's potent little pedagogue. That fearless instructor of the "Three R's," who impresses one as having mastered the basic rules of his art, had his awed little group at his command. They early learned to perceive his state of mind and read the fortunes of the day in his facial expressions. Goldsmith writes:

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossom'd furze, unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
The village master taught his little school;

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

A man severe he was, and stern to view,
 I knew him well, and every truant knew;
 Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning face;
 Full well they laugh'd with counterfeited glee
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
 Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
 Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd;¹

Behind the schoolmaster's stern looks and harsh reproofs
 were a human kindness and a sincere love which could be easily
 kindled. Among the villagers he was respected for his versa-
 tile knowledge and profound insight, but Goldsmith reminds
 us that now his glorious victories are all forgotten:

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;
 'Twas certain he could write and cipher too;
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
 And even the story ran that he could gauge.
 In arguing, too, the parson own'd his skill,
 For even though vanquish'd 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 should carry all he knew.
 But past is all his fame. The very spot,²
 Where many a time he triumph'd is forgot.

Goldsmith was quite concerned over the depopulation
 of Auburn, which represented in his mind both his native vil-
 lage and the typical English village. Professor Tinker
 describes as follows the destruction of the English peasantry
 by the wealthy:

He aspired to draw effective attention to an alarming
 evidence of national decay. He was disturbed, and he

¹"The Deserted Village," ll. 193-204.

²Ibid., ll. 204-218.

might well be disturbed, by the condition of the English country side. As a result of the vast accumulation of wealth, he saw an increasing number of great estates with large "tracts" improved by the new art of landscape gardening, and exhibiting long, picturesque prospects which were often enriched with a glimpse of a Gothic ruin, sometimes genuine, and sometimes an imitation of the antique in lath and plaster. It was all got up to look very fine; but cottages formerly occupied by peasants and busy tillers of the soil had at times to be swept away wholesale in order to open out the fine views. Still other tracts of land had to be preserved for game.¹

Goldsmith's sympathy for the evacuated peasants is felt throughout his poem. Forster indicates that it is possible he may have been inspired to write "The Deserted Village" after reading Allan Ramsay's poem which describes the sorrows and woes of the dispossessed Irish peasants:

Their native soil were forc'd to quit,
So Irish land lords thought it fit
How many villages they razed,
How many parishes laid waste!²

Also he could have been influenced by Robert Napper's purchase of great tracts of lands which were turned into a large estate and which meant the moving of many farmers.³ In real life Catherine Geraghty, a lonely widow living off the bare products of the soil, was the only one left in the depopulated village of Lissoy. Living alone in this desolate spot, she was forced to search among its ruins for her bread. Forster

¹Chauncey Brewster Tinker, "Figures in a Dream," The Yale Review, XVII (July, 1928), 671.

²Forster, op. cit., II, 206.

³Ibid.

says that the memory of her cabin with its brook and ditches is still present in the minds of the inhabitants, "and Catherine's children live in the neighborhood."¹ Goldsmith describes her plight thus:

But now the sounds of population fail,
 No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
 No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
 But all the blooming flush of life is fled:
 All but yon widow'd solitary thing,
 That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
 She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread,
 To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
 To pick her wintry fagot from the thorn,
 To seek her nightly shed, and weep 'till morn;
 She only left of all the harmless train,
 The sad historian of the pensive plain.²

Goldsmith writes about the villagers as a group in whose lives he depicts all the joys, the sorrows, and the adventures of rural life. The social activities of the villagers were not only pleasing scenes in the eyes of the author but they also revealed the simple charm of these loveable ordinary people sharing life's fun as well as its responsibilities. Their diversions grew out of their exhibitions of arts and skills; and Dan Cupid with his bow and arrow stood prompt to his cue. The following lines show the villagers' sports:

How often have I bless'd the coming day,
 When toil, remitting, lent its turn to play,
 And all the village train from labour free,
 Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree!

¹Ibid., p. 207.

²"The Deserted Village," ll. 125-136.

While many a pastime circled in the shade,
 The young contending as the old survey'd;
 And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground
 And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;
 And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
 Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired--
 The dancing pair that simply sought renown,
 By holding out to tire each other down;
 The Swain mistrust less of his smutted face,
 While secret laughter titter'd round the place;
 The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love;
 The matron's glance, that would those looks reprove:
 These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,
 With sweet succession, taught even toil to please;
 These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
 These were thy charms--but all these charms are fled.¹

"The dancing pair" is suggestive of these lines from "The Traveler":

And dance forgetful of the moontide hour.
 Alike all ages; dames of ancient days
 Have led their children through mirthful maze;
 And the gay grandsire, skilled in gestic lore,
 Has frisk'd beneath the burden of three score.²

Goldsmith finds the most prominent feature of these villagers to be the joy and contentment of their simple living. They accepted the state to which they were born and found richness in their daily blessings:

These simple blessings of the lowly train;
 To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
 One native charm than all the gloss of art.
 Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
 The soul adopts, and owns the first-born sway;
 Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
 Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.³

¹Ibid., ll. 15-34.

²"The Traveller," ll. 250-255.

³"The Deserted Village," ll. 252-258.

By comparison Goldsmith throws a light on the value of the peasant to his country. The mighty lords may come and go, but no one can substitute for the hardy peasant who is the backbone of the nation. Goldsmith reveals his attitude in these lines:

Princes and lords may flourish or may bade;
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.¹

Goldsmith again implies this same thought toward the close of his poem:

E'en now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the soil,
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand;
Contented toil, and hospitable care,
And kind connubial tenderness are there:
And piety with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.²

Both the great and the humble may reveal their weakness in times of temptations; however, the unfortunate often pay double for their sins. In showing this, Goldsmith reveals how the innocent ambition of the villager may be easily betrayed by the will of the more powerful and how false promises may lead the inexperienced mind to immoral acts which leave broken characters. Goldsmith expresses his compassion in these lines:

¹Ibid., ll. 53-56.

²Ibid., ll. 397-406.

. . . the poor houseless shivering female lies;
 She, once, perhaps, in village plenty bless'd,
 Has wept at tales of innocence distress'd,
 Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
 Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn:
 Now lost to all, her friends, her virtue, fled,
 And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
 With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
 When idly first, ambitious of the town,
 She left her wheel, and robes of country brown.¹

The hardships of the peasants were obvious to the poet. When the land failed to yield, the weary peasant trudged on hopefully while the blinded rich watched him sink in his own mire. Such a situation is deplored in the following lines:

. . . scourged by famine, from the smiling land
 The mournful peasant leads his humble band;
 And while he sings, without one arm to save,
 The country blooms--a garden and a grave.²

The peasants' grief over the emigration problem excited Goldsmith's pity. He described the behavior of these humble folk as they prepared to leave their much loved and respected cottages: "It is enough that the abandonment by a number of poor people of the homes in which they and theirs have lived their lives, is one of the most pathetic facts in our civilization: and out of the various circumstances surrounding this forced migration Goldsmith has made one of the most graceful and touching poems in the English language."³ Bidding farewell to their native soil, the deeply grieved

¹Ibid., ll. 326-336.

²Ibid., ll. 299-302.

³Black, op. cit., p. 124.

peasants wept for the loss of their material possessions and wished for a reproduction of the same sights in the Western world. These sorrows are described in the following passage:

Good Heavens! what sorrows gloom'd that parting day,
That called them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly look'd their last,
And took a long farewell, and wish'd in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main,
And shuddering still to face the distance deep,
Return'd and wept, and still return'd to weep!¹

The elderly emigrants who prayed for the fate of others wished only that they might pass to "worlds beyond the grave."² The women also had to suffer because of the break up of the accustomed pattern of their lives:

His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kissed her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly dear.³

Rural Characters in Major Poems

In "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village" Goldsmith has not only given his readers specific rural characters but he has also presented the general traits of the ordinary peasants of his time. In doing so he appeals to one's

¹"The Deserted Village," ll. 362-370.

²Ibid., l. 374.

³Ibid., ll. 375-382.

nostalgia for his youth. These mental pictures are solaces to which one clings when undesirable changes are brought about. This is explained by Professor Tinker: "The beauty of the deserted village is that pensive grace which clings in memory to blessings lost long since. There is a sadness inseparable from the changes, inevitable though they be, which are wrought by Time; and in particular, is such regret stimulated by the recollection of the home which we loved at another period of life."¹

The Vicar of Wakefield

In contrast to the detailed descriptions in the poem, Goldsmith's novel presents the characters dramatically. In reading The Vicar of Wakefield I did not find detailed paragraphs describing the physical features or the mental attitudes of his characters, but I did become acquainted with them through their deeds and actions. From their behavior one readily recognizes their rural simplicity, which is obvious throughout the novel. King attributes the popularity of the book to "its divine humanity, and the sincerity of its humanity. It is not cant; it is not sentiment; it is not Sterne; it is not Rousseau; it is Goldsmith."² The preceding passage, which expresses the spirit of the novel, also explains

¹Tinker, op. cit., p. 673.

²King, op. cit., p. 153.

the characters. King says that "in The Vicar of Wakefield, he opens to us his whole heart. And it is heart, beating in every page of the novel, which makes such wide and deep appeal to the heart of humanity."¹

Among Goldsmith's characters in The Vicar of Wakefield is Dr. Charles Primrose, the vicar himself, who is believed to be based on Charles Goldsmith, the author's father.² In reading we realize immediately the vicar's aptitude for rural life. His very simplicity and his cordial hospitality, which radiate from his personality, make him a solace to the hearts of his people. His meekness, his virtues, and his fortitude all impress his readers and arouse a sympathetic attitude. Comparing the vicar's life with that of Job makes an excellent study of Dr. Primrose's adversities, which he seemed to meet patiently. The Vicar of Wakefield, considered structurally, follows the lines of the Book of Job. You take a good man, overwhelm him with successive misfortunes, show the pure flame of his soul burning in the midst of the darkness, and then, as the reward of his patience and fortitude and submission, restore him gradually to happiness with even larger flocks and herds than before.³

¹Ibid.

²Forster, op. cit., I, 416.

³Black, op. cit., p. 85.

There is a very close similarity between the village preacher in "The Deserted Village" and the vicar in The Vicar of Wakefield. While more concrete accounts are given of the village preacher's understanding and benevolences toward his group, the vicar's acts of charity and kindness are implied by the responses of his parish. Both patiently loved, guided, and reprimanded, and both were respected and admired. The length of the novel permits the reader to learn much of the ordinary human traits of the vicar. In him we not only see those characteristics expected of a humble vicar, but we also see the humorous side of his everyday living, as when he attempted to reprimand his wife and daughters for their too elaborate dress on their first Sunday in the small village:

I could not help smiling at their vanity, particularly that of my wife, from whom I expected more discretion. In this exigence, therefore, my only resource was to order my son, with an important air, to call our coach. The girls were amazed at the command; but I repeated it with more solemnity than before. . . . "Surely, my dear, you jest," cried my wife, "we can walk it perfectly well: we want no coach to carry us now." "You mistake, child," returned I, "we do want a coach; for if we walk to church in this trim, the very children in the parish will hoot after us," . . . "Indeed," replied my wife, "I always imagined that my Charles was fond of seeing his children neat and handsome about him." "You may be as neat as you please," interrupted I, "and I shall love you the better for it; but all this is not neatness, but frippery. These rufflings, and pinkings, and patchings will only make us hated by all the wives of our neighbours. No, my children," continued I, more gravely, "those gowns may be altered into something of a plainer cut; for finery is very unbecoming in us, who want the means of decency. I do not know whether such flouncing and shredding is becoming even in the rich, if we consider upon a

moderate calculation, that the nakedness of the indigent world may be clothed from the trimmings of the vain."¹

Dr. Charles Primrose's hospitality extended far and wide. His doors were open to all--the rich, the poor, the blind, the maimed, and the happy--and to each he extended a hearty welcome. This trait, characteristic of the peasant, was also very prominent in the vicar. He showed a liking for his relatives and his neighbors regardless of the size of their purses. The following quotation describes such qualities in the vicar:

As we lived near the road, we often had the traveller or stranger visit us to taste our gooseberry-wine, for which we had great reputation; and I profess with the veracity of an historian, that I never knew one of them find fault with it. Our cousins too, even to the fortieth remove, all remembered their affinity, without any help from the Herald's office, and came very frequently to see us. Some of them did us no great honour by the claims of kindred; as we had the blind, the maimed, and the halt amongst the number. However, my wife always insisted that as they were the same 'flesh and blood,' they should sit with us at the same table. So that if we had not very rich, we generally had very happy friends about us; for this remark will hold good through life, that the poorer the guest, the better pleased he ever is with being treated: and some men gaze with admiration at the colours of a tulip, or the wing of a butterfly, so I was by nature an admirer of human faces.²

It is typical of his generosity that the clergyman exhibited his brotherly love and interest toward a stranger who was in financial straits. He not only displayed his neighborly

¹The Vicar of Wakefield, The World's Popular Classics (New York: Books, Inc. n.d.), pp. 23-24.

²Ibid., p. 2.

interest, but also kindled the fire of friendship. His generosity is expressed in this passage: "Upon the landlord's leaving the room, I could not avoid expressing my concern to the stranger at seeing a gentleman in such circumstances, and offered him my purse to satisfy the present demand. 'I take it with my heart, Sir', replied he, 'and am glad that a late oversight in giving what money I had about me, has shewn me that there are still some men like you.'"¹ Like the farmer in "The Traveller" who worked diligently each day, returned home to a cheerful family, and became "monarch of his shed," the vicar arose at dawn, proceeded with his daily work on his farm, and returned in the evening to the happiness of his family and the friendship of his neighbors. According to the vicar: "As we rose with the sun, so we never pursued our labours after it was gone down, but returned home to the expecting family; where smiling looks, a neat hearth, and pleasant fire were prepared for our reception. Nor were we without guests: sometimes farmer Flamborough, our talkative neighbor, and often the blind piper, would pay us a visit, and taste our gooseberry-wine; for the making of which we had lost neither the receipt nor the reputation."²

Even though the vicar's wife was guilty of vanity and often showed signs of selfishness, Goldsmith portrayed in her

¹Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²Ibid., pp. 21-22.

those industrious qualities that are evident in all active farm wives. When we realize her many domestic capacities, we can easily overlook her giddiness. As she is pictured in the novel: "To do her justice, she was a good-natured notable woman; and, as for her breeding, there were few country ladies who could show more. She could read any English book without much spelling; but for pickling, preserving, and cookery, none could excel her. She prided herself also upon being an excellent contriver in house keeping; though I could never find that we grew rich with her contrivances."¹

The Primrose daughters, Olivia and Sophia, are truly representative of the eighteenth century. While Olivia, beautiful and domineering, was eager to please, Sophia, retiring and gentle, "repressed excellence without fear to offend." Goldsmith makes both faithful and chaste and capable of winning the hearts of men.² Their domestic abilities and their ignorance of city life with its customs and manners label the two girls as being from the rural districts. In talking with the two rather forward women from the city, Mrs. Primrose explained the accomplishments of her two daughters:

"I hope," cried she, "Your Ladyships will pardon my present presumption. It is true we have no right to

¹Ibid., p. 1.

²William Dean Howells, "The Vicar of Wakefield," Harper's Bazaar, XXXIII (May 5, 1900), 4, 8.

pretend to such favors; but yet it is natural for me to wish putting my children forward in the world. And I will be bold to say my two girls have had a pretty good education, and capacity, at least the country can't shew better. They can read, write, and cast accompts; they understand their needle, breadstitch, cross and change, and all manner of plain-work; they can pink, point, and frill; and know something of music; they can do up small clothes, work upon catgut; my eldest can cut paper, and my youngest has a very pretty manner of telling fortunes upon the cards.¹

Olivia and Sophia also practiced economy which was both common and necessary during the eighteenth century. After being corrected for wearing such extravagant gowns with trains, the two girls took their father's suggestion seriously, cut off the trains, and made them into waistcoats for their two younger brothers. As the vicar reported: "This remonstrance had the proper effect; they went with great composure, that very instant, to change their dress; and the next day I had the satisfaction of finding my daughters, at their own request, employed in cutting up their trains into Sunday waistcoats for Dick and Bill, the two little ones; and what was still more satisfactory, the gowns seemed improved by their curtailings."²

In George Primrose, the oldest son, are found many rural qualities. In a way he corresponds to Goldsmith, who left the farm to make a living in the city. Having had a little musical training, George was able to make his way in

¹The Vicar of Wakefield, pp. 67-68.

²Ibid., p. 24.

Europe. He felt closer to the peasants than to the city people; for, along with his appreciation for a simple life, George showed great admiration for the peasants. In his travels abroad he turned to them for his food and lodging, which he paid for by his playing the flute. His common music naturally appealed to the hearts of the unsophisticated. As he wrote to his parents:

I passed among the harmless peasants of Flanders, and among such of the French as are poor enough to be very merry; for I ever found them sprightly in proportion to their wants. Whenever I approached a peasant's house towards night-fall, I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging, but substance for the next day. I once or twice attempted to play for people of fashion; but they always thought my performance odious, and never rewarded me even with a trifle.¹

George's love for the simple ordinary living of his parents' home again indicates his wholesome rural traits. Even though, like Goldsmith, he had to leave, he looked back on his boyhood days as the golden ones. In reading a letter to his father, one realizes that George, like others separated from home, longed to return for a fireside chat. His desire to share in their simplicity and humility shows his appreciation for rustic living. He wrote:

I have called off my imagination a few moments from the pleasures that surround me, to fix it upon objects that are still more pleasing--the dear little fireside at home. My fancy draws that harmless group,

¹Ibid., p. 143.

as listening to every line of this with great composure. I view those faces with delight, which never felt the deforming hand of ambition or distress! . . .¹

The vicar and his family, like the rest of his parish, engaged in the reactions typical of their locality. These were very simple because time, place, money, and class served as barriers to more sophisticated activities. The amusements were limited to very brief periods during the day, but they were meaningful to the tiller of the soil. In one instance Goldsmith tells of the afternoon diversions of the Vicar: "Walking out, drinking tea, country dances, and forfeits shortened the rest of the day, without the assistance of cards, as I hated all manner of gaming, except backgammon."² Yet more typical were the active outdoor games, which were greatly enjoyed by the youth. An example is given in the following:

Mr. Burchell, who was of the party, was always fond of seeing some innocent amusement going forward, and set the boys and girls to blind man's buff. My wife too was persuaded to join in the diversion, and it gave me pleasure to think she was not yet too old. In the meantime, my neighbour and I looked on, laughed at every feat, and praised our own dexterity when we were young. Hot cockles succeeded next, questions and commands followed that, and last of all they sat down to hunt the slipper.³

Among the peasants Goldsmith noted the old custom of celebrating festival days. Such celebrations are described in

¹Ibid., p. 202.

²Ibid., p. 8.

³Ibid., pp. 63-64.

the following passage: "They wrought with cheerfulness on days of labour; but observed festivals at intervals of idleness and pleasure. They kept up the Christmas carol, sent true love-knots on Valentine morning, ate pancakes on Shrove-tide, shewed their wit on the first of April, and religiously cracked nuts on Mechaelmas eve."¹ The villagers were "strangers of opulence" but "unacquainted with distress." They strictly kept all holidays. In Goldsmith's time this situation was true in Ireland but was rapidly disappearing in England.²

The rural element was also stressed in the hospitality of the vicar's neighbors. When the Reverend Mr. Primrose's house burned, the neighbors shared what little they had with the vicar's family: "The neighbours contributed, however, what they could to lighten our distress. They brought us clothes, and furnished one of our out-houses with kitchen utensils; so that by daylight we had another, though a wretched dwelling, to retire to. My honest next neighbour and his children were not the least assiduous in providing us with everything necessary, and offering whatever consolation untutored benevolence could suggest."³

¹Ibid., p. 20.

²Seitz, op. cit., p. 405.

³The Vicar of Wakefield, p. 161.

Thus Goldsmith has presented a novel steeped in rural characteristics. The typical pastoral scenes with their meadows and greens, their hawthorns and honeysuckles, and their woods and rivers, which form a perfect landscape for the thatch-covered cottages, make a fitting background for the rural characters, who exhibit such traits as simplicity, generosity, kindness, and love. These qualities which Goldsmith saw in his rural people assure his readers of his interest in them and their problems.

She Stoops to Conquer

When we turn to the rural characters in Goldsmith's comedy, She Stoops to Conquer, we anticipate different types from those in his other works. Goldsmith did not wish his characters to create pathetic scenes or present moral lessons, but he did wish to arouse a "genuine laughter."¹ In that the "comedy mimics the deeds of men so as to appeal largely to the sense of humour,"² one realizes as he reads Goldsmith's comedy that he did not portray the human affairs of the peasants, but he drew his scenes of mockery from the rural gentry. In his other major works Goldsmith has made evident that his sympathy lies with the humble folk, for he has attempted to defend them in their many hardships.

¹She Stoops to Conquer, p. xvi.

²Thorndike, op. cit., p. 11.

The rural element is present in life at the Hardcastle mansion, located some distance from town and surrounded by its own woods and garden. The friendliness and hospitality of the entire family are appealing. Mr. Hardcastle is thus described by Forster: "The jovial old' squire, with his love for everything that's old, 'old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine, not forgetting his own interminable old stories,' is just the man to have his house mistaken for an inn; and the man to resent it too, with something festive and enjoying in the very robustness of his rage."¹ Mr. Hardcastle showed another rural characteristic when he apologized so profusely for his absence on the arrival of his guests and when he extended to them such a hearty welcome. On that occasion he declared: "Gentlemen, once more you are heartily welcome. Which is Mr. Marlow? Sir, you are heartily welcome. It's not my way, you see, to receive my friends with my back to the fire. I like to give them a hearty reception, in the old style, at my gate. I like to see their horses and trunks taken care of."²

The very humorous Mrs. Hardcastle is every inch rural in her speech and mannerisms. Her desire to see London for the sake of its fashions and gossip, her disgruntled attitude toward her country neighbors and friends, and her gullible

¹Op. cit., II, 329.

²Act II, Scene 1, ll. 1-5.

hunger for flattery and show make her not only an immature socialite but also a ridiculous self-centered rural character. Goldsmith brings out her absurd personality in these lines:

Mrs. Hardcastle. I vow, since inoculation began, there is no such thing to be seen as a plain woman; so one must dress a little particular, or one may escape in the crowd.

Hastings. But that can never be your case, madam, in any dress. [Bowing]

Mrs. Hardcastle. Yet what signifies my dressing, when I have such a piece of antiquity by my side as Mr. Hardcastle? All I can say will never argue down a single button from his clothes. I have often wanted him to throw off his great flaxen wig, and where he was bald, to plaster it over, like my Lord Pately, with powder.¹

No flattery is too brazen for her to accept. She knows so little of city life she believes anything Hastings tells her, as in the following exchange:

Mrs. Hardcastle. Pray, Mr. Hastings, what do you take to be the most fashionable age about town?

Hastings. Some time ago forty was all the mode; but I'm told the ladies intend to bring up fifty for the ensuing winter.

Mrs. Hardcastle.² Seriously? Then I shall be too young for the fashion.

Dudley Miles describes Tony Lumpkin as a typical "Country bumpkin."³ He furnishes the spark of humor to the comedy and arouses interest through his stupidity and his

¹Act II, Scene i, ll. 29-32.

²Act II, Scene i, ll. 14-19.

³Ibid., p. xvi.

cunning ways. His love for "low company" is the grief of the whole family.¹ Goldsmith shows this situation in a conversation including Mrs. Hardcastle, Mr. Hardcastle, and Tony:

Mrs. Hardcastle. Tony, where are you going, my charmer? Won't you give papa and I a little of your company, lovey?

Tony. I'm in haste, mother; I cannot stay.

Mrs. Hardcastle. You shan't venture out this raw evening, my dear; you look most shockingly.

Tony. I can't stay, I tell you. "The Three Pigeons" expects me down every moment. There's some fun going forward.

Hardcastle. Ay, the alehouse, the old place; I thought so.

Mrs. Hardcastle. A low paltry set of fellows.

Tony. Not so low, neither. There's Dick Muggins, the exciseman; Jack Slang, the horse doctor; Little Aminadab, that grinds the music box; and Tom Twist, that spins the pewter platter.

Mrs. Hardcastle. Pray, my dear, disappoint them for one night at least.

Tony. As for disappointing them, I should not so much mind; but I can't abide to disappoint myself.²

Although the reader is amused by these characters, he never feels the love for them that he does for Goldsmith's humbler characters. We enjoy Mr. Hardcastle's old-fashioned qualities, but we do not love him as we do the vicar. We

¹Forster, op. cit., II, 329.

²Act I, Scene i, ll. 13-30.

can laugh at Tony without a deep sympathy for him. As for Mrs. Hardcastle, we can not imagine her cutting her train off. Such characteristics make up the upper rural class who through their mock behavior make themselves amusing.

Goldsmith's Choice of Characters

In his work as a whole, therefore, Goldsmith has shown his preference for the humble type of character. His poems and his novel present his brother, his father, and his uncle in roles of the village preacher and the vicar, who demonstrate a desire to bring happiness to the peasants of the land. In meekness and humility they are ever ready to share their possessions with their neighbors and relieve the sorrow of the weak. Close on the heels of these is the schoolmaster, still another humble type who gains the respect of the villagers. Along with his humor is his ability to instill within the hearts of his pupils a romantic love for adventure and nature. Great emphasis is placed on the peasants in nearly all Goldsmith's work. Because of their position they are forced to bow to the dictates of the upper classes. Goldsmith's writings defend their cause and seek protection for the underprivileged. Unpolished and meek in their manners, these humble rural characters plod wearily, yet contentedly, through their menial tasks and share their sorrows and their blessings with their neighbors. In the minds of his readers Goldsmith fosters a feeling of patience,

sympathy, and charity for the country folk. On the other hand, Goldsmith reveals an entirely different attitude toward the characters of his comedy. He has cleared his comedy of all sentiment and has presented it merely to entertain. His characters, with their generous hospitality, and their combination of eccentricity and yearning for city polish, are classified as "genteel" rural individuals. Through them, Goldsmith portrays the humorous side of rural living.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In summing up the rural scenes and rural characters in Goldsmith's work, his readers find those choice places and those choice people who were the central attraction of his youth. Goldsmith's use of rural scenes in his poems, his novel, and his play is consistent; that is, the setting ever remains rural.

Rural Scenes

A most interesting and universal point is the way in which he uses these scenes to enhance his own sensations and motives. In "The Traveller" the general plan of the poem is suggested by his sitting upon an Alpine rock looking over the countries of Europe which he has visited in his travels. As he sits looking around comparing economic and social conditions, he comes to the conclusion that happiness comes from within, rather than from without. His attention is more often centered on the peasant in his rural setting, where happiness is the result of being contented with the simple things of life. The dedication of the poem to his brother Henry praised his wisdom in choosing the simple rural life to work in rather than in choosing the more lucrative positions in the city.

In "The Deserted Village" Goldsmith's use of rural scenes is more concentrated. These simple and happy scenes

effectively pictured in contrast to the destruction wrought by meaningless luxury. He was, it seems, trying to arouse his readers to the danger of the increase of misdirected luxuries. Auburn, formerly the scene of happy living, had become deserted because a wealthy man had bought up all the land. The land which had formerly been used by the poor farmers for a livelihood was now used for expensive houses, artificial lakes, parks, stables, and hunting grounds. Goldsmith paints a tranquil scene of simple living, then abruptly changes to a scene of disaster. The way in which he contrasts the scenes makes the rural scene look peaceful, happy, and desirable. In fact, the reader is indignant that society will permit the willful destruction of such happiness. Goldsmith is adroitly painting these rural scenes in order for the statesmen to decide whether they want a commercialized England or a happy England. The happy England is throughout the poem a rural England of charm, in which the people are contented with their daily toil and their simple daily pleasures. Innocence, ease, loyalty, and love are the dominating virtues of Goldsmith's rural and happy England. Goldsmith's retrospective mood in painting the rural scenes is a mixture of sadness and melancholy, which he felt following the recent death of his brother Henry. His memories of the golden past and his longing to get away from the disappointments of the life he chose seem to be centered on the

quiet, peaceful rural village pictured in the poem.

The rural scenes likewise furnish the setting for The Vicar of Wakefield. These scenes move along with each tragedy to make the plot seem more lifelike. They also give a resting place for the sympathetic reader, whose emotions are somewhat strained by the many tragedies that follow one another in the Primrose family. The unfortunate family, however, does not seem so alone in this neighborhood of farmers who cheerfully worked their farms and observed the festivals at times of idleness and pleasure and who, dressed in their Sunday clothes, welcomed the pastor on his arrival to this quiet and happy rural village. Warmth and coziness follow the family into the manse situated at the foot of a hill and surrounded by elms and hedgerows. Inside, the white-washed walls, the neatly arranged dishes on the shelf, and the scoured copper pans hanging on the wall give an air of added cheerfulness. Evenings by the fireside with guests furnished satisfying entertainment. The reader shares these quiet feasts several times in the course of the plot. Another favorite spot at the close of the day was under the hedge of hawthorn and honeysuckle. Here they drank tea, read together, and sang, accompanied by the guitar. Sometimes they ate breakfast together on the "honeysuckle bank." The novel closes with the family's sitting around the cheerful fire-side, leaving the reader peacefully exhausted and reluctant

to part company with the Primrose family, who have enjoyed the pleasures and endured the tragedies in this peaceful rural village.

The rural scenes in She Stoops to Conquer furnish the background for the wholehearted fun Goldsmith meant to give his audience. The fun is introduced by Mrs. Hardcastle's lamenting the fact that they remain too much in their rural surroundings and never get to go into more populous sections. The key to the play is sounded when she says their rambling old house looks like an inn, but is unlike an inn because no one comes there. The setting continues to be rural as the plot advances. Marlow and Hastings have lost their way "upo' the forest" and stop at the country alehouse. The remaining scenes are in Hardcastle's rural house except for the one scene at the back of the garden. Throughout the play, the rural background serves to arouse the amusement of the audience. Thus his attitude in his comedy is different from that in his other works.

Rural Characters

Through the characters in his poems, his novel, and his comedy, Goldsmith, sharing with others his love, his sympathy, his understanding, and his deep-rooted humor, portrayed his own life. From the many biographies of the Irish author, his readers learn of his father, his brother Henry, his uncle Contarine, his schoolmaster, and his cousin

Tony Lumpkins, who were important in molding his youth, and one readily recognizes them in his works. These living characters, who reveal both the serious and humorous incidents of his earlier days, express the author's choice of a simple environment with a rural background. Of them and of the peasants, who form the backbone of the nation, Goldsmith expressed his sincere appreciation.

Selecting a few of these characters, one can recognize the chief traits of Goldsmith himself. Most important in these characteristics of Goldsmith was his benevolence, and this foremost ingredient was prominent especially in the village preacher in "The Deserted Village" and the vicar in The Vicar of Wakefield. They who spent their lives in service to mankind were benefactors to all. Even though their purses may have been somewhat flat, they continued to open their doors to the traveller and the poor and to those who sought warm hospitality, kind affection, physical aid, and spiritual guidance. They not only preached reverent obedience, but they also put into practice their teachings of the Golden Rule. The vicar, the spokesman of Goldsmith, through his Christian habits produced order among the prisoners when he himself was unjustly imprisoned, and gave those unfortunates a promising future. In his domestic behavior he lent a touch of humor in shaping the lives of his family. When he purposely upset the face-wash of his two

daughters to destroy their vanity and when he often focused his attention on the importance of Moses' opinions, he displayed his cleverness and his wit.

Among other significant characters is Paddy Byrne, the schoolmaster, who suggested the position of one whose learning made him revered in the village. He, too, had an understanding of simple living and love for mankind. Even Tony Lumpkins, who plays quite a different role and leads his readers to laugh with him, prefers country life. In short, Goldsmith uses both serious and humorous characters to make his works realistic.

Generally speaking, the peasants in his works are very important because they are the ones in whom Goldsmith shows his greatest interest. He displays their humility, their simple happiness and their sorrows, and he emphasizes their contentment and their Christian spirit, which glow in their humble lives. In his youth and in his travels he found them kind and hospitable. They were the ones to whom he turned when in need, and they were the ones he attempted to defend in his works. Goldsmith pointed out their distresses, and he reprimanded the wealthy class for robbing them of their land. These individuals proved to be the most important in Goldsmith's deepest thoughts.

Goldsmith's Achievements

Goldsmith's sympathetic attitude was always pronounced

when speaking of home, and he magnified its good qualities in his poems and in his novel. To him home meant a place of simple living among genuine rural folk. For in his works he pictured this ideal place through the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia. His thoughts stuck fast with those who were mistreated by the power of the wealthy -- and he seemed to experience every blow his victims received. On the other hand, he filled his comedy with rollicking satire, for he laughed heartily at the rural gentry as he dramatized their place in society. Through his works Goldsmith's readers realize that he spoke directly and indirectly, giving his political and social viewpoints and speaking openly in behalf of the rural peasants. Goldsmith produced those qualities characteristic of himself. Being a man of wide experiences and having many associates, he was able to give variety to his works; for this great writer, who was in his early career an applicant for the ministry, a student of law and medicine, a traveller abroad, and a hack writer, had much to unfold to appreciative readers. The events of his youth, whether gay or heartbreaking, gave color to his writings and made him the best loved writer of the eighteenth century.

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