WASHINGTON IRVING

OLIVER GOLDSMITH: A BIOGRAPHY

Вашингтон Ирвинг

Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography

Ирвинг В.

Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography / В. Ирвинг — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Washington Irving
Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography

PREFACE

In the course of a revised edition of my works I have come to a biographical sketch of Goldsmith, published several years since. It was written hastily, as introductory to a selection from his writings; and, though the facts contained in it were collected from various sources, I was chiefly indebted for them to the voluminous work of Mr. James Prior, who had collected and collated the most minute particulars of the poet's history with unwearied research and scrupulous fidelity; but had rendered them, as I thought, in a form too cumbrous and overlaid with details and disquisitions, and matters uninteresting to the general reader.

When I was about of late to revise my biographical sketch, preparatory to republication, a volume was put into my hands, recently given to the public by Mr. John Forster, of the Inner Temple, who, likewise availing himself of the labors of the indefatigable Prior, and of a few new lights since evolved, has produced a biography of the poet, executed with a spirit, a feeling, a grace and an eloquence, that leave nothing to be desired. Indeed it would have been presumption in me to undertake the subject after it had been thus felicitously treated, did I not stand committed by my previous sketch. That sketch now appeared too meager and insufficient to satisfy public demand; yet it had to take its place in the revised series of my works unless something more satisfactory could be substituted. Under these circumstances I have again taken up the subject, and gone into it with more fullness than formerly, omitting none of the facts which I considered illustrative of the life and character of the poet, and giving them in as graphic a style as I could command. Still the hurried manner in which I have had to do this amid the pressure of other claims on my attention, and with the press dogging at my heels, has prevented me from giving some parts of the subject the thorough handling I could have wished. Those who would like to see it treated still more at large, with the addition of critical disquisitions and the advantage of collateral facts, would do well to refer themselves to Mr. Prior's circumstantial volumes, or to the elegant and discursive pages of Mr. Forster.

For my own part, I can only regret my shortcomings in what to me is a labor of love; for it is a tribute of gratitude to the memory of an author whose writings were the delight of my childhood, and have been a source of enjoyment to me throughout life; and to whom, of all others, I may address the beautiful apostrophe of Dante to Virgil:

> "Tu se' lo mio maestro, e 'l mio autore:
> Tu se' solo colui, da cu, io tolsi
> Lo bello stile, che m' ha fato onore."

W.I.

SUNNYSIDE, *Aug. 1, 1849.*

CHAPTER ONE

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOLDSMITH RACE – POETICAL BIRTHPLACE – GOBLIN HOUSE – SCENES OF BOYHOOD – LISSOY – PICTURE OF A COUNTRY PARSON – GOLDSMITH'S SCHOOLMISTRESS – BYRNE, THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER – GOLDSMITH'S HORNPIPE AND EPIGRAM – UNCLE CONTARINE – SCHOOL STUDIES AND SCHOOL SPORTS – MISTAKES OF A NIGHT

There are few writers for whom the reader feels such personal kindness as for Oliver Goldsmith, for few have so eminently possessed the magic gift of identifying themselves with their writings. We read his character in every page, and grow into familiar intimacy with him as we read. The artless benevolence that beams throughout his works; the whimsical, yet amiable views of human life and human nature; the unforced humor, blending so happily with good feeling and good sense, and singularly dashed at times with a pleasing melancholy; even the very nature of his mellow, and flowing, and softly-tinted style, all seem to bespeak his moral as well as his intellectual qualities, and make us love the man at the same time that we admire the author. While the productions of writers of loftier pretension and more sounding names are suffered to moulder on our shelves, those of Goldsmith are cherished and laid in our bosoms. We do not quote them with ostentation, but they mingle with our minds, sweeten our tempers, and harmonize our thoughts; they put us in good humor with ourselves and with the world, and in so doing they make us happier and better men.

An acquaintance with the private biography 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-humored, 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 been buffeted into almost every maxim imparted by him for the instruction of his reader.

Oliver Goldsmith was born on the 10th of November, 1728, at the hamlet of Pallas, or Pallasmore, county of Longford, in Ireland. He sprang from a respectable, but by no means a thrifty stock. Some families seem to inherit kindliness and incompetency, and to hand down virtue and poverty from generation to generation. Such was the case with the Goldsmiths. "They were always," according to their own accounts, "a strange family; they rarely acted like other people; their hearts were in the right place, but their heads seemed to be doing anything but what they ought." – "They were remarkable," says another statement, "for their worth, but of no cleverness in the ways of the world." Oliver Goldsmith will be found faithfully to inherit the virtues and weaknesses of his race.

His father, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, with hereditary improvidence, married when very young and very poor, and starved along for several years on a small country curacy and the assistance of his wife's friends. His whole income, eked out by the produce of some fields which he farmed, and of some occasional duties performed for his wife's uncle, the rector of an adjoining parish, did not exceed forty pounds.

"And passing rich with forty pounds a year."

He inhabited an old, half rustic mansion that stood on a rising ground in a rough, lonely part of the country, overlooking a low tract occasionally flooded by the river Inny. In this house Goldsmith was born, and it was a birthplace worthy of a poet; for, by all accounts, it was haunted ground. A tradition handed down among the neighboring peasantry states that, in after years, the house, remaining for some time untenanted, went to decay, the roof fell in, and it became so lonely and

forlorn as to be a resort for the "good people" or fairies, who in Ireland are supposed to delight in old, crazy, deserted mansions for their midnight revels. All attempts to repair it were in vain; the fairies battled stoutly to maintain possession. A huge misshapen hobgoblin used to bestride the house every evening with an immense pair of jack-boots, which, in his efforts at hard riding, he would thrust through the roof, kicking to pieces all the work of the preceding day. The house was therefore left to its fate, and went to ruin.

Such is the popular tradition about Goldsmith's birthplace. About two years after his birth a change came over the circumstances of his father. By the death of his wife's uncle he succeeded to the rectory of Kilkenny West; and, abandoning the old goblin mansion, he removed to Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath, where he occupied a farm of seventy acres, situated on the skirts of that pretty little village.

This was the scene of Goldsmith's boyhood, the little world whence he drew many of those pictures, rural and domestic, whimsical and touching, which abound throughout his works, and which appeal so eloquently both to the fancy and the heart. Lissoy is confidently cited as the original of his "Auburn" in the Deserted Village; his father's establishment, a mixture of farm and parsonage, furnished hints, it is said, for the rural economy of the Vicar of Wakefield; and his father himself, with his learned simplicity, his guileless wisdom, his amiable piety, and utter ignorance of the world, has been exquisitely portrayed in the worthy Dr. Primrose. Let us pause for a moment, and draw from Goldsmith's writings one or two of those pictures which, under feigned names, represent his father and his family, and the happy fireside of his childish days.

"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 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 intention 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 rendered 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."

In the Deserted Village we have another picture of his father and his father's fireside:

"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 aged breast;
The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud
Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;
The broken soldier, kindly bade 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 learned to glow
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began."

The family of the worthy pastor consisted of five sons and three daughters. Henry, the eldest, was the good man's pride and hope, and he tasked his slender means to the utmost in educating him for a learned and distinguished career. Oliver was the second son, and seven years younger than Henry, who was the guide and protector of his childhood, and to whom he was most tenderly attached throughout life.

Oliver's education began when he was about three years old; that is to say, he was gathered under the wings of one of those good old motherly dames, found in every village, who cluck together the whole callow brood of the neighborhood, to teach them their letters and keep them out of harm's way. Mistress Elizabeth Delap, for that was her name, flourished in this capacity for upward of fifty years, and it was the pride and boast of her declining days, when nearly ninety years of age, that she was the first that had put a book (doubtless a hornbook) into Goldsmith's hands. Apparently he did not much profit by it, for she confessed he was one of the dullest boys she had ever dealt with, insomuch that she had sometimes doubted whether it was possible to make anything of him: a common case with imaginative children, who are apt to be beguiled from the dry abstractions of elementary study by the picturings of the fancy.

At six years of age he passed into the hands of the village schoolmaster, one Thomas (or, as he was commonly and irreverently named, Paddy) Byrne, a capital tutor for a poet. He had been educated for a pedagogue, but had enlisted in the army, served abroad during the wars of Queen Anne's time, and risen to the rank of quartermaster of a regiment in Spain. At the return of peace, having no longer exercise for the sword, he resumed the ferule, and drilled the urchin populace of Lissoy. Goldsmith is supposed to have had him and his school in view in the following sketch in his Deserted Village:

"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;
A man severe he was, and stern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew:
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they 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:
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 e'en the story ran that he could gauge:
In arguing, too, the parson own'd his skill,

For, e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learned length and thund'ring sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around —
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew."

There are certain whimsical traits in the character of Byrne, not given in the foregoing sketch. He was fond of talking of his vagabond wanderings in foreign lands, and had brought with him from the wars a world of campaigning stories, of which he was generally the hero, and which he would deal forth to his wondering scholars when he ought to have been teaching them their lessons. These travelers' tales had a powerful effect upon the vivid imagination of Goldsmith, and awakened an unconquerable passion for wandering and seeking adventure.

Byrne was, moreover, of a romantic vein, and exceedingly superstitious. He was deeply versed in the fairy superstitions which abound in Ireland, all which he professed implicitly to believe. Under his tuition Goldsmith soon became almost as great a proficient in fairy lore. From this branch of good-for-nothing knowledge, his studies, by an easy transition, extended to the histories of robbers, pirates, smugglers, and the whole race of Irish rogues and rapparees. Everything, in short, that savored of romance, fable, and adventure was congenial to his poetic mind, and took instant root there; but the slow plants of useful knowledge were apt to be overrun, if not choked, by the weeds of his quick imagination.

Another trait of his motley preceptor, Byrne, was a disposition to dabble in poetry, and this likewise was caught by his pupil. Before he was eight years old Goldsmith had contracted a habit of scribbling verses on small scraps of paper, which, in a little while, he would throw into the fire. A few of these sybilline leaves, however, were rescued from the flames and conveyed to his mother. The good woman read them with a mother's delight, and saw at once that her son was a genius and a poet. From that time she beset her husband with solicitations to give the boy an education suitable to his talents. The worthy man was already straitened by the costs of instruction of his eldest son Henry, and had intended to bring his second son up to a trade; but the mother would listen to no such thing; as usual, her influence prevailed, and Oliver, instead of being instructed in some humble but cheerful and gainful handicraft, was devoted to poverty and the Muse.

A severe attack of the small-pox caused him to be taken from under the care of his story-telling preceptor, Byrne. His malady had nearly proved fatal, and his face remained pitted through life. On his recovery he was placed under the charge of the Rev. Mr. Griffin, schoolmaster of Elphin, in Roscommon, and became an inmate in the house of his uncle, John Goldsmith, Esq., of Ballyoughter, in that vicinity. He now entered upon studies of a higher order, but without making any uncommon progress. Still a careless, easy facility of disposition, an amusing eccentricity of manners, and a vein of quiet and peculiar humor, rendered him a general favorite, and a trifling incident soon induced his uncle's family to concur in his mother's opinion of his genius.

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 hornpipe. 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."

The repartee was thought wonderful for a boy of nine years old, and Oliver became forthwith the wit and the bright genius of the family. It was thought a pity he should not receive the same

advantages with his elder brother Henry, who had been sent to the University; and, as his father's circumstances would not afford it, several of his relatives, spurred on by the representations of his mother, agreed to contribute toward the expense. The greater part, however, was borne by his uncle, the Rev. Thomas Contarine. This worthy man had been the college companion of Bishop Berkeley, and was possessed of moderate means, holding the living of Carrick-on-Shannon. He had married the sister of Goldsmith's father, but was now a widower, with an only child, a daughter, named Jane. Contarine was a kind-hearted man, with a generosity beyond his means. He took Goldsmith into favor from his infancy; his house was open to him during the holidays; his daughter Jane, two years older than the poet, was his early playmate, and uncle Contarine continued to the last one of his most active, unwavering, and generous friends.

Fitted out in a great measure by this considerate relative, Oliver was now transferred to schools of a higher order, to prepare him for the University; first to one at Athlone, kept by the Rev. Mr. Campbell, and, at the end of two years, to one at Edgeworthstown, under the superintendence of the Rev. Patrick Hughes.

Even at these schools his proficiency does not appear to have been brilliant. He was indolent and careless, however, rather than dull, and, on the whole, appears to have been well thought of by his teachers. In his studies he inclined toward the Latin poets and historians; relished Ovid and Horace, and delighted in Livy. He exercised himself with pleasure in reading and translating Tacitus, and was brought to pay attention to style in his compositions by a reproof from his brother Henry, to whom he had written brief and confused letters, and who told him in reply that if he had but little to say to endeavor to say that little well.

The career of his brother Henry at the University was enough to stimulate him to exertion. He seemed to be realizing all his father's hopes, and was winning collegiate honors that the good man considered indicative of his future success in life.

In the meanwhile Oliver, if not distinguished among his teachers, was popular among his schoolmates. He had a thoughtless generosity extremely captivating to young hearts; his temper was quick and sensitive, and easily offended; but his anger was momentary, and it was impossible for him to harbor resentment. He was the leader of all boyish sports and athletic amusements, especially ball-playing, and he was foremost in all mischievous pranks. Many years afterward, an old man, Jack Fitzimmons, one of the directors of the sports and keeper of the ball-court at Ballymahon, used to boast of having been schoolmate of "Noll Goldsmith," as he called him, and would dwell with vainglory on one of their exploits, in robbing the orchard of Tirlicken, an old family residence of Lord Annaly. The exploit, however, had nearly involved disastrous consequences; for the crew of juvenile depredators were captured, like Shakespeare and his deer-stealing colleagues, and nothing but the respectability of Goldsmith's connections saved him from the punishment that would have awaited more plebeian delinquents.

An amusing incident is related as occurring in Goldsmith's last journey homeward from Edgeworthstown. His father's house was about twenty miles distant; the road lay through a rough country, impassable for carriages. Goldsmith procured a horse for the journey, and a friend furnished him with a guinea for traveling expenses. He was but a stripling of sixteen, and being thus suddenly mounted on horseback, with money in his pocket, it is no wonder that his head was turned. He determined to play the man, and to spend his money in independent traveler's style. Accordingly, instead of pushing directly for home, he halted for the night at the little town of Ardagh, and, accosting the first person he met, inquired, with somewhat of a consequential air, for the best house in the place. Unluckily, the person he had accosted was one Kelly, a notorious wag, who was quartered in the family of one Mr. Featherstone, a gentleman of fortune. Amused with the self-consequence of the stripling, and willing to play off a practical joke at his expense, he directed him to what was literally "the best house in the place," namely, 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. On ordinary occasions he was diffident and even awkward in his manners, but here he was "at ease in his inn," and felt called upon to show his manhood and enact the experienced traveler. His person was by no means calculated to play off his pretensions, for he was short and thick, with a pock-marked face, and an air and carriage by no means of a distinguished cast. 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. His confusion and dismay, on discovering the next morning that he had been swaggering in this free and easy way in the house of a private gentleman, may be readily conceived. True to his habit of turning the events of his life to literary account, we find this chapter of ludicrous blunders and cross purposes dramatized many years afterward in his admirable comedy of "She Stoops to Conquer, or the Mistakes of a Night."

CHAPTER TWO

IMPROVIDENT MARRIAGES IN THE GOLDSMITH FAMILY – GOLDSMITH AT THE UNIVERSITY – SITUATION OF A SIZER – TYRANNY OF WILDER, THE TUTOR – PECUNIARY STRAITS – STREET BALLADS – COLLEGE RIOT – GALLOWS WALSH – COLLEGE PRIZE – A DANCE INTERRUPTED

While Oliver was making his way somewhat negligently through the schools, his elder brother Henry was rejoicing his father's heart by his career at the University. He soon distinguished himself at the examinations, and obtained a scholarship in 1743. This is a collegiate distinction which serves as a stepping-stone in any of the learned professions, and which leads to advancement in the University should the individual choose to remain there. His father now trusted that he would push forward for that comfortable provision, a fellowship, and thence to higher dignities and emoluments. Henry, however, had the improvidence or the "unworldliness" of his race; returning to the country during the succeeding vacation, he married for love, relinquished, of course, all his collegiate prospects and advantages, set up a school in his father's neighborhood, and buried his talents and acquirements for the remainder of his life in a curacy of forty pounds a year.

Another matrimonial event occurred not long afterward in the Goldsmith family, to disturb the equanimity of its worthy head. This was the clandestine marriage of his daughter Catherine with a young gentleman of the name of Hodson, who had been confided to the care of her brother Henry to complete his studies. As the youth was of wealthy parentage, it was thought a lucky match for the Goldsmith family; but the tidings of the event stung the bride's father to the soul. Proud of his integrity, and jealous of that good name which was his chief possession, he saw himself and his family subjected to the degrading suspicion of having abused a trust reposed in them to promote a mercenary match. In the first transports of his feelings he is said to have uttered a wish that his daughter might never have a child to bring like shame and sorrow on her head. The hasty wish, so contrary to the usual benignity of the man, was recalled and repented of almost as soon as uttered; but it was considered baleful in its effects by the superstitious neighborhood; for, though his daughter bore three children, they all died before her.

A more effectual measure was taken by Mr. Goldsmith to ward off the apprehended imputation, but one which imposed a heavy burden on his family. This was to furnish a marriage portion of four hundred pounds, that his daughter might not be said to have entered her husband's family empty-handed. To raise the sum in cash was impossible; but he assigned to Mr. Hodson his little farm and the income of his tithes until the marriage portion should be paid. In the meantime, as his living did not amount to £200 per annum, he had to practice the strictest economy to pay off gradually this heavy tax incurred by his nice sense of honor.

The first of his family to feel the effects of this economy was Oliver. The time had now arrived for him to be sent to the University, and, accordingly, on the 11th of June, 1747, when sixteen years of age, he entered Trinity College, Dublin; but his father was no longer able to place him there as a pensioner, as he had done his eldest son Henry; he was obliged, therefore, to enter him as a sizer or "poor scholar." He was lodged in one of the top rooms adjoining the library of the building, numbered 35, where it is said his name may still be seen, scratched by himself upon a window frame.

A student of this class is taught and boarded gratuitously, and has to pay but a very small sum for his room. It is expected, in return for these advantages, that he will be a diligent student, and render himself useful in a variety of ways. In Trinity College, at the time of Goldsmith's admission, several derogatory and indeed menial offices were exacted from the sizer, as if the college sought to indemnify itself for conferring benefits by inflicting indignities. He was obliged to sweep part of

the courts in the morning, to carry up the dishes from the kitchen to the fellows' table, and to wait in the hall until that body had dined. His very dress marked the inferiority of the "poor student" to his happier classmates. It was a black gown of coarse stuff without sleeves, and a plain black cloth cap without a tassel. 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.

Indeed, the galling effect of these servile tasks upon youths of proud spirits and quick sensibilities became at length too notorious to be disregarded. About fifty years since, on a Trinity Sunday, a number of persons were assembled to witness the college ceremonies; and as a sizer was carrying up a dish of meat to the fellows' table, a burly citizen in the crowd made some sneering observation on the servility of his office. Stung to the quick, the high-spirited youth instantly flung the dish and its contents at the head of the sneerer. The sizer was sharply reprimanded for this outbreak of wounded pride, but the degrading task was from that day forward very properly consigned to menial hands.

It was with the utmost repugnance that Goldsmith entered college in this capacity. His shy and sensitive nature was affected by the inferior station he was doomed to hold among his gay and opulent fellow-students, and he became, at times, moody and despondent. A recollection of these early mortifications induced him, in after years, most strongly to dissuade his brother Henry, the clergyman, from sending a son to college on a like footing. "If he has ambition, strong passions, and an exquisite sensibility of contempt, do not send him there, unless you have no other trade for him except your own."

To add to his annoyances the fellow of the college who had the peculiar control of his studies, the Rev. Theaker Wilder, was a man of violent and capricious temper, and of diametrically opposite tastes. The tutor was devoted to the exact sciences; Goldsmith was for the classics. Wilder endeavored to force his favorite studies upon the student by harsh means, suggested by his own coarse and savage nature. He abused him in presence of the class as ignorant and stupid; ridiculed him as awkward and ugly, and at times in the transports of his temper indulged in personal violence. The effect was to aggravate a passive distaste into a positive aversion. Goldsmith was loud in expressing his contempt for mathematics and his dislike of ethics and logic; and the prejudices thus imbibed continued through life. Mathematics he always pronounced a science to which the meanest intellects were competent.

A truer cause of this distaste for the severer studies may probably be found in his natural indolence and his love of convivial pleasures. "I was a lover of mirth, good humor, and even sometimes of fun," said he, "from my childhood." He sang a good song, was a boon companion, and could not resist any temptation to social enjoyment. He endeavored to persuade himself that learning and dullness went hand in hand, and that genius was not to be put in harness. Even in riper years, when the consciousness of his own deficiencies ought to have convinced him of the importance of early study, he speaks slightingly of college honors.

"A lad," says he, "whose passions are not strong enough in youth to mislead him from that path of science which his tutors, and not his inclination, have chalked out, by four or five years' perseverance will probably obtain every advantage and honor his college can bestow. I would compare the man whose youth has been thus passed in the tranquillity of dispassionate prudence, to liquors that never ferment, and, consequently, continue always muddy."

The death of his worthy father, which took place early in 1747, rendered Goldsmith's situation at college extremely irksome. His mother was left with little more than the means of providing for the wants of her household, and was unable to furnish him any remittances. He would have been compelled, therefore, to leave college, had it not been for the occasional contributions of friends, the foremost among whom was his generous and warm-hearted uncle Contarine. Still these supplies were so scanty and precarious that in the intervals between them he was put to great straits. He had two

college associates from whom he would occasionally borrow small sums; one was an early schoolmate, by the name of Beatty; the other a cousin, and the chosen companion of his frolics, Robert (or rather Bob) Bryanton, of Ballymulvey House, near Ballymahon. When these casual supplies failed him he was more than once obliged to raise funds for his immediate wants by pawning his books. At times he sank into despondency, but he had what he termed "a knack at hoping," which soon buoyed him up again. He began now to resort to his poetical vein as a source of profit, scribbling street-ballads, which he privately sold for five shillings each at a shop which dealt in such small wares of literature. He felt an author's affection for these unowned bantlings, and we are told would stroll privately through the streets at night to hear them sung, listening to the comments and criticisms of bystanders, and observing the degree of applause which each received.

Edmund Burke was a fellow-student with Goldsmith at the college. Neither the statesman nor the poet gave promise of their future celebrity, though Burke certainly surpassed his contemporary in industry and application, and evinced more disposition for self-improvement, associating himself with a number of his fellow-students in a debating club, in which they discussed literary topics, and exercised themselves in composition.

Goldsmith may likewise have belonged to this association, but his propensity was rather to mingle with the gay and thoughtless. On one occasion we find him implicated in an affair that came nigh producing his expulsion. A report was brought to college that a scholar was in the hands of the bailiffs. This was an insult in which every gownsman felt himself involved. A number of the scholars flew to arms, and sallied forth to battle, headed by a hare-brained fellow nicknamed Gallows Walsh, noted for his aptness at mischief and fondness for riot. The stronghold of the bailiff was carried by storm, the scholar set at liberty, and the delinquent catchpole borne off captive to the college, where, having no pump to put him under, they satisfied the demands of collegiate law by ducking him in an old cistern.

Flushed with this signal victory, Gallows Walsh now harangued his followers, and proposed to break open Newgate, or the Black Dog, as the prison was called, and effect a general jail delivery. He was answered by shouts of concurrence, and away went the throng of madcap youngsters, fully bent upon putting an end to the tyranny of law. They were joined by the mob of the city, and made an attack upon the prison with true Irish precipitation and thoughtlessness, never having provided themselves with cannon to batter its stone walls. A few shots from the prison brought them to their senses, and they beat a hasty retreat, two of the townsmen being killed, and several wounded.

A severe scrutiny of this affair took place at the University. Four students, who had been ringleaders, were expelled; four others, who had been prominent in the affray, were publicly admonished; among the latter was the unlucky Goldsmith.

To make up for this disgrace, he gained, within a month afterward, one of the minor prizes of the college. It is true it was one of the very smallest, amounting in pecuniary value to but thirty shillings, but it was the first distinction he had gained in his whole collegiate career. This turn of success and sudden influx of wealth proved too much for the head of our poor student. He forthwith gave a supper and dance at his chamber to a number of young persons of both sexes from the city, in direct violation of college rules. The unwonted sound of the fiddle reached the ears of the implacable Wilder. He rushed to the scene of unhallowed festivity, inflicted corporal punishment on the "father of the feast," and turned his astonished guests neck and heels out of doors.

This filled the measure of poor Goldsmith's humiliations; he felt degraded both within college and without. He dreaded the ridicule of his fellow-students for the ludicrous termination of his orgy, and he was ashamed to meet his city acquaintances after the degrading chastisement received in their presence, and after their own ignominious expulsion. Above all, he felt it impossible to submit any longer to the insulting tyranny of Wilder; he determined, therefore, to leave, not merely the college, but also his native land, and to bury what he conceived to be his irretrievable disgrace in some distant country. He accordingly sold his books and clothes, and sallied forth from the college walls the very

next day, intending to embark at Cork for – he scarce knew where – America, or any other part beyond sea. With his usual heedless imprudence, however, he loitered about Dublin until his finances were reduced to a shilling; with this amount of specie he set out on his journey.

For three whole days he subsisted on his shilling; when that was spent, he parted with some of the clothes from his back, until, reduced almost to nakedness, he was four-and-twenty hours without food, insomuch that he declared a handful of gray peas, given to him by a girl at a wake, was one of the most delicious repasts he had ever tasted. Hunger, fatigue, and destitution brought down his spirit and calmed his anger. Fain would he have retraced his steps, could he have done so with any salvo for the lingerings of his pride. In his extremity he conveyed to his brother Henry information of his distress, and of the rash project on which he had set out. His affectionate brother hastened to his relief; furnished him with money and clothes; soothed his feelings with gentle counsel; prevailed upon him to return to college, and effected an indifferent reconciliation between him and Wilder.

After this irregular sally upon life he remained nearly two years longer at the University, giving proofs of talent in occasional translations from the classics, for one of which he received a premium, awarded only to those who are the first in literary merit. Still he never made much figure at college, his natural disinclination to study being increased by the harsh treatment he continued to experience from his tutor.

Among the anecdotes told of him while at college is one indicative of that prompt but thoughtless and often whimsical benevolence which throughout life formed one of the most eccentric yet endearing points of his character. 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 gate, gave her the blankets from his bed to cover her little brood, and part 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.

At length, on the 27th of February, 1749, O.S., he was admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and took his final leave of the University. He was freed from college rule, that emancipation so ardently coveted by the thoughtless student, and which too generally launches him amid the cares, the hardships, and vicissitudes of life. He was freed, too, from the brutal tyranny of Wilder. If his kind and placable nature could retain any resentment for past injuries, it might have been gratified by learning subsequently that the passionate career of Wilder was terminated by a violent death in the course of a dissolute brawl; but Goldsmith took no delight in the misfortunes even of his enemies.

He now returned to his friends, no longer the student to sport away the happy interval of vacation, but the anxious man, who is henceforth to shift for himself and make his way through the world. In fact, he had no legitimate home to return to. At the death of his father, the paternal house at Lissoy, in which Goldsmith had passed his childhood, had been taken by Mr. Hodson, who had married his sister Catherine. His mother had removed to Ballymahon, where she occupied a small house, and had to practice the severest frugality. His elder brother Henry served the curacy and taught the school of his late father's parish, and lived in narrow circumstances at Goldsmith's birthplace, the old goblin house at Pallas.

None of his relatives were in circumstances to aid him with anything more than a temporary home, and the aspect of every one seemed somewhat changed. In fact, his career at college had disappointed his friends, and they began to doubt his being the great genius they had fancied him. He whimsically alludes to this circumstance in that piece of autobiography, "The Man in Black," in the Citizen of the World.

"The first opportunity my father had of finding his expectations disappointed was in the middling figure I made at 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 overrated 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, however, did not 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 only one of his relatives who did not appear to lose faith in him was his uncle Contarine. This kind and considerate man, it is said, saw in him a warmth of heart requiring some skill to direct, and a latent genius that wanted time to mature, and these impressions none of his subsequent follies and irregularities wholly obliterated. His purse and affection, therefore, as well as his house, were now open to him, and he became his chief counselor and director after his father's death. He urged him to prepare for holy orders, and others of his relatives concurred in the advice. Goldsmith had a settled repugnance to a clerical life. This has been ascribed by some to conscientious scruples, not considering himself of a temper and frame of mind for such a sacred office; others attributed it to his roving propensities, and his desire to visit foreign countries; he himself gives a whimsical objection in 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."

In effect, however, his scruples were overruled, and he agreed to qualify himself for the office. He was now only twenty-one, and must pass two years of probation. They were two years of rather loitering, unsettled life. Sometimes he was at Lissoy, participating with thoughtless enjoyment in the rural sports and occupations of his brother-in-law, Mr. Hodson; sometimes he was with his brother Henry, at the old goblin mansion at Pallas, assisting him occasionally in his school. The early marriage and unambitious retirement of Henry, though so subversive of the fond plans of his father, had proved happy in their results. He was already surrounded by a blooming family; he was contented with his lot, beloved by his parishioners, and lived in the daily practice of all the amiable virtues, and the immediate enjoyment of their reward. Of the tender affection inspired in the breast of Goldsmith by the constant kindness of this excellent brother, and of the longing recollection with which, in the lonely wanderings of after years, he looked back upon this scene of domestic felicity, we have a touching instance in the well-known opening to his poem of The Traveler:

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Or by the lazy Scheld or wandering Po;

"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, and trim their evening fire;
Bless'd that abode, where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair:

[1] Citizen of the World, Letter xxvii.

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."

During this loitering life Goldsmith pursued no study, but rather amused himself with miscellaneous reading; such as biography, travels, poetry, novels, plays – everything, in short, that administered to the imagination. Sometimes he strolled along the banks of the river Inny, where, in after years, when he had become famous, his favorite seats and haunts used to be pointed out. Often he joined in the rustic sports of the villagers, and became adroit at throwing the sledge, a favorite feat of activity and strength in Ireland. Recollections of these "healthful sports" we find in his 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 labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree:
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round."

A boon companion in all his rural amusements was his cousin and college crony, Robert Bryanton, with whom he sojourned occasionally at Ballymulvey House in the neighborhood. They used to make excursions about the country on foot, sometimes fishing, sometimes hunting otter in the Inny. They got up a country club at the little inn of Ballymahon, of which Goldsmith soon became the oracle and prime wit, astonishing his unlettered associates by his learning, and being considered capital at a song and a story. From the rustic conviviality of the inn at Ballymahon, and the company which used to assemble there, it is surmised that he took some hints in after life for his picturing of Tony Lumpkin 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." Nay, it is thought that Tony's drinking song at the Three Jolly Pigeons was but a revival of one of the convivial catches 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 bustards, 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."

Notwithstanding all these accomplishments and this rural popularity, his friends began to shake their heads and shrug their shoulders when they spoke of him; and his brother Henry noted with anything but satisfaction his frequent visits to the club at Ballymahon. He emerged, however, unscathed from this dangerous ordeal, more fortunate in this respect than his comrade Bryanton; but he retained throughout life a fondness for clubs; often, too, in the course of his checkered career,

he looked back to this period of rural sports and careless enjoyments as one of the few sunny spots of his cloudy life; and though he ultimately rose to associate with birds of a finer feather, his heart would still yearn in secret after the THREE JOLLY PIGEONS.

CHAPTER THREE

GOLDSMITH REJECTED BY THE BISHOP – SECOND SALLY TO SEE THE WORLD – TAKES PASSAGE FOR AMERICA – SHIP SAILS WITHOUT HIM – RETURN ON FIDDLE-BACK – A HOSPITABLE FRIEND – THE COUNSELOR

The time was now arrived for Goldsmith to apply for orders, and he presented himself accordingly before the Bishop of Elfin for ordination. We have stated his great objection to clerical life, the obligation to wear a black coat; and, whimsical as it may appear, dress seems in fact to have formed an obstacle to his entrance into the church. He had ever a passion for clothing his sturdy but awkward little person in gay colors; and on this solemn occasion, when it was to be supposed his garb would be of suitable gravity, he appeared luminously arrayed in scarlet breeches! He was rejected by the bishop; some say for want of sufficient studious preparation; his rambles and frolics with Bob Bryanton, and his revels with the club at Ballymahon, having been much in the way of his theological studies; others attribute his rejection to reports of his college irregularities, which the bishop had received from his old tryant Wilder; but those who look into the matter with more knowing eyes pronounce the scarlet breeches to have been the fundamental objection. "My friends," says Goldsmith, speaking through his humorous representative, the "Man in Black" – "my friends were now perfectly satisfied I was undone; and yet they thought it a pity for one that had not the least harm in him, and was so very good-natured." His uncle Contarine, however, still remained unwavering in his kindness, though much less sanguine in his expectations. He now looked round for a humbler sphere of action, and through his influence and exertions Oliver was received as tutor in the family of a Mr. Flinn, a gentleman of the neighborhood. The situation was apparently respectable; he had his seat at the table, and joined the family in their domestic recreations and their evening game at cards. There was a servility, however, in his position, which was not to his taste; nor did his deference for the family increase upon familiar intercourse. He charged a member of it with unfair play at cards. A violent altercation ensued, which ended in his throwing up his situation as tutor. On being paid off he found himself in possession of an unheard of amount of money. His wandering propensity and his desire to see the world were instantly in the ascendency. Without communicating his plans or intentions to his friends, he procured a good horse, and with thirty pounds in his pocket made his second sally forth into the world.

The worthy niece and housekeeper of the hero of La Mancha could not have been more surprised and dismayed at one of the Don's clandestine expeditions than were the mother and friends of Goldsmith when they heard of his mysterious departure. Weeks elapsed, and nothing was seen or heard of him. It was feared that he had left the country on one of his wandering freaks, and his poor mother was reduced almost to despair, when one day he arrived at her door almost as forlorn in plight as the prodigal son. Of his thirty pounds not a shilling was left; and instead of the goodly steed on which he had issued forth on his errantry, he was mounted on a sorry little pony, which he had nicknamed Fiddle-back. As soon as his mother was well assured of his safety, she rated him soundly for his inconsiderate conduct. His brothers and sisters, who were tenderly attached to him, interfered, and succeeded in mollifying her ire; and whatever lurking anger the good dame might have, was no doubt effectually vanquished by the following whimsical narrative which he drew up at his brother's house and dispatched to her:

"My dear mother, if you will sit down and calmly listen to what I say, you shall be fully resolved in every one of those many questions you have asked me. I went to Cork and converted my horse, which you prize so much higher than Fiddle-back, into cash, took my passage in a ship bound for America, and, at the same time, paid the captain for my freight and all the other expenses of my

voyage. But it so happened that the wind did not answer for three weeks; and you know, mother, that I could not command the elements. My misfortune was that, when the wind served, I happened to be with a party in the country, and my friend the captain never inquired after me, but set sail with as much indifference as if I had been on board. The remainder of my time I employed in the city and its environs, viewing everything curious, and you know no one can starve while he has money in his pocket.

"Reduced, however, to my last two guineas, I began to think of my dear mother and friends whom I had left behind me, and so bought that generous beast Fiddle-back, and bade adieu to Cork with only five shillings in my pocket. This, to be sure, was but a scanty allowance for man and horse toward a journey of above a hundred miles; but I did not despair, for I knew I must find friends on the road.

"I recollected particularly an old and faithful acquaintance I made at college, who had often and earnestly pressed me to spend a summer with him, and he lived but eight miles from Cork. This circumstance of vicinity he would expatiate on to me with peculiar emphasis. 'We shall,' says he, 'enjoy the delights of both city and country, and you shall command my stable and my purse.'

"However, upon the way I met a poor woman all in tears, who told me her husband had been arrested for a debt he was not able to pay, and that his eight children must now starve, bereaved as they were of his industry, which had been their only support. I thought myself at home, being not far from my friend's house, and therefore parted with a moiety of all my store; and pray, mother, ought I not to have given her the other half crown, for what she got would be of little use to her? However, I soon arrived at the mansion of my affectionate friend, guarded by the vigilance of a huge mastiff, who flew at me and would have torn me to pieces but for the assistance of a woman, whose countenance was not less grim than that of the dog; yet she with great humanity relieved me from the jaws of this Cerberus, and was prevailed on to carry up my name to her master.

"Without suffering me to wait long, my old friend, who was then recovering from a severe fit of sickness, came down in his nightcap, night-gown, and slippers, and embraced me with the most cordial welcome, showed me in, and, after giving me a history of his indisposition, assured me that he considered himself peculiarly fortunate in having under his roof the man he most loved on earth, and whose stay with him must, above all things, contribute to perfect his recovery. I now repented sorely I had not given the poor woman the other half crown, as I thought all my bills of humanity would be punctually answered by this worthy man. I revealed to him my whole soul; I opened to him all my distresses; and freely owned that I had but one half crown in my pocket; but that now, like a ship after weathering out the storm, I considered myself secure in a safe and hospitable harbor. He made no answer, but walked about the room, rubbing his hands as one in deep study. This I imputed to the sympathetic feelings of a tender heart, which increased my esteem for him, and, as that increased, I gave the most favorable interpretation to his silence. I construed it into delicacy of sentiment, as if he dreaded to wound my pride by expressing his commiseration in words, leaving his generous conduct to speak for itself.

"It now approached six o'clock in the evening; and as I had eaten no breakfast, and as my spirits were raised, my appetite for dinner grew uncommonly keen. At length the old woman came into the room with two plates, one spoon, and a dirty cloth, which she laid upon the table. This appearance, without increasing my spirits, did not diminish my appetite. My protectress soon returned with a small bowl of sago, a small porringer of sour milk, a loaf of stale brown bread, and the heel of an old cheese all over crawling with mites. My friend apologized that his illness obliged him to live on slops, and that better fare was not in the house; observing, at the same time, that a milk diet was certainly the most healthful; and at eight o'clock he again recommended a regular life, declaring that for his part he would *lie down with the lamb and rise with the lark*. My hunger was at this time so exceedingly sharp that I wished for another slice of the loaf, but was obliged to go to bed without even that refreshment.

"This lenten entertainment I had received made me resolve to depart as soon as possible; accordingly, next morning, when I spoke of going, he did not oppose my resolution; he rather commended my design, adding some very sage counsel upon the occasion. 'To be sure,' said he, 'the longer you stay away from your mother, the more you will grieve her and your other friends; and possibly they are already afflicted at hearing of this foolish expedition you have made.' Notwithstanding all this, and without any hope of softening such a sordid heart, I again renewed the tale of my distress, and asking 'how he thought I could travel above a hundred miles upon one half crown?' I begged to borrow a single guinea, which I assured him should be repaid with thanks. 'And you know, sir,' said I, 'it is no more than I have done for you.' To which he firmly answered, 'Why, look you, Mr. Goldsmith, that is neither here nor there. I have paid you all you ever lent me, and this sickness of mine has left me bare of cash. But I have bethought myself of a conveyance for you; sell your horse, and I will furnish you a much better one to ride on.' I readily grasped at his proposal, and begged to see the nag; on which he led me to his bedchamber, and from under the bed he pulled out a stout oak stick. 'Here he is,' said he; 'take this in your hand, and it will carry you to your mother's with more safety than such a horse as you ride.' I was in doubt, when I got it into my hand, whether I should not, in the first place, apply it to his pate; but a rap at the street door made the wretch fly to it, and when I returned to the parlor, he introduced me, as if nothing of the kind had happened, to the gentleman who entered, as Mr. Goldsmith, his most ingenious and worthy friend, of whom he had so often heard him speak with rapture. I could scarcely compose myself, and must have betrayed indignation in my mien to the stranger, who was a counselor-at-law in the neighborhood, a man of engaging aspect and polite address.

"After spending an hour, he asked my friend and me to dine with him at his house. This I declined at first, as I wished to have no further communication with my hospitable friend; but at the solicitation of both I at last consented, determined as I was by two motives: one, that I was prejudiced in favor of the looks and manner of the counselor; and the other, that I stood in need of a comfortable dinner. And there, indeed, I found everything that I could wish, abundance without profusion and elegance without affectation. In the evening, when my old friend, who had eaten very plentifully at his neighbor's table, but talked again of lying down with the lamb, made a motion to me for retiring, our generous host requested I should take a bed with him, upon which I plainly told my old friend that he might go home and take care of the horse he had given me, but that I should never re-enter his doors. He went away with a laugh, leaving me to add this to the other little things the counselor already knew of his plausible neighbor.

"And now, my dear mother, I found sufficient to reconcile me to all my follies; for here I spent three whole days. The counselor had two sweet girls to his daughters, who played enchantingly on the harpsichord; and yet it was but a melancholy pleasure I felt the first time I heard them; for that being the first time also that either of them had touched the instrument since their mother's death, I saw the tears in silence trickle down their father's cheeks. I every day endeavored to go away, but every day was pressed and obliged to stay. On my going, the counselor offered me his purse, with a horse and servant to convey me home; but the latter I declined, and only took a guinea to bear my necessary expenses on the road.

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"To Mrs. Anne Goldsmith, Ballymahon."

* * * * *

Such is the story given by the poet-errant of this his second sally in quest of adventures. We cannot but think it was here and there touched up a little with the fanciful pen of the future essayist, with a view to amuse his mother and soften her vexation; but even in these respects it is valuable

as showing the early play of his humor, and his happy knack of extracting sweets from that worldly experience which to others yields nothing but bitterness.

CHAPTER FOUR

SALLIES FORTH AS A LAW STUDENT – STUMBLES AT THE OUTSET – COUSIN JANE AND THE VALENTINE – A FAMILY ORACLE – SALLIES FORTH AS A STUDENT OF MEDICINE – HOCUS-POCUS OF A BOARDING-HOUSE – TRANSFORMATIONS OF A LEG OF MUTTON – THE MOCK GHOST – SKETCHES OF SCOTLAND – TRIALS OF TOADYISM – A POET'S PURSE FOR A CONTINENTAL TOUR

A new consultation was held among Goldsmith's friends as to his future course, and it was determined he should try the law. His uncle Contarine agreed to advance the necessary funds, and actually furnished him with fifty pounds, with which he set off for London, to enter on his studies at the Temple. Unfortunately, he fell in company at Dublin with a Roscommon acquaintance, one whose wits had been sharpened about town, who beguiled him into a gambling-house, and soon left him as penniless as when he bestrode the redoubtable Fiddle-back.

He was so ashamed of this fresh instance of gross heedlessness and imprudence that he remained some time in Dublin without communicating to his friends his destitute condition. They heard of it, however, and he was invited back to the country, and indulgently forgiven by his generous uncle, but less readily by his mother, who was mortified and disheartened at seeing all her early hopes of him so repeatedly blighted. His brother Henry, too, began to lose patience at these successive failures, resulting from thoughtless indiscretion; and a quarrel took place, which for some time interrupted their usually affectionate intercourse.

The only home where poor erring Goldsmith still received a welcome was the parsonage of his affectionate, forgiving uncle. Here he used to talk of literature with the good, simple-hearted man, and delight him and his daughter with his verses. Jane, his early playmate, was now the woman grown; their intercourse was of a more intellectual kind than formerly; they discoursed of poetry and music; she played on the harpsichord, and he accompanied her with his flute. The music may not have been very artistic, as he never performed but by ear; it had probably as much merit as the poetry, which, if we may judge by the following specimen, was as yet but juvenile:

TO A YOUNG LADY ON VALENTINE'S DAY

WITH THE DRAWING OF A HEART

With submission at your shrine,
Comes a heart your Valentine;
From the side where once it grew,
See it panting flies to you.
Take it, fair one, to your breast,
Soothe the fluttering thing to rest;
Let the gentle, spotless toy,
Be your sweetest, greatest joy;
Every night when wrapp'd in sleep,
Next your heart the conquest keep.
Or if dreams your fancy move,
Hear it whisper me and love;
Then in pity to the swain,

Who must heartless else remain,
Soft as gentle dewy show'rs,
Slow descend on April flow'rs;
Soft as gentle riv'lets glide,
Steal unnoticed to my side;
If the gem you have to spare,
Take your own and place it there.

If this valentine was intended for the fair Jane, and expressive of a tender sentiment indulged by the stripling poet, it was unavailing, as not long afterward she was married to a Mr. Lawder. We trust, however, it was but a poetical passion of that transient kind which grows up in idleness and exhales itself in rhyme. While Oliver was thus piping and poetizing at the parsonage, his uncle Contarine received a visit from Dean Goldsmith of Cloyne; a kind of magnate in the wide but improvident family connection, throughout which his word was law and almost gospel. This august dignitary was pleased to discover signs of talent in Oliver, and suggested that as he had attempted divinity and law without success, he should now try physic. The advice came from too important a source to be disregarded, and it was determined to send him to Edinburgh to commence his studies. The Dean having given the advice, added to it, we trust, his blessing, but no money; that was furnished from the scantier purses of Goldsmith's brother, his sister (Mrs. Hodson), and his ever-ready uncle, Contarine.

It was in the autumn of 1752 that Goldsmith arrived in Edinburgh. His outset in that city came near adding to the list of his indiscretions and disasters. Having taken lodgings at haphazard, he left his trunk there, containing all his worldly effects, and sallied forth to see the town. After sauntering about the streets until a late hour, he thought of returning home, when, to his confusion, he found he had not acquainted himself with the name either of his landlady or of the street in which she lived. Fortunately, in the height of his whimsical perplexity, he met the cawdy or porter who had carried his trunk, and who now served him as a guide.

He did not remain long in the lodgings in which he had put up. The hostess was too adroit at that hocus-pocus of the table which often is practiced in cheap boarding-houses. No one could conjure a single joint through a greater variety of forms. A loin of mutton, according to Goldsmith's account, would serve him and two fellow-students a whole week. "A brandered chop was served up one day, a fried steak another, collops with onion sauce a third, and so on until the fleshy parts were quite consumed, when finally a dish of broth was manufactured from the bones on the seventh day, and the landlady rested from her labors." Goldsmith had a good-humored mode of taking things, and for a short time amused himself with the shifts and expedients of his landlady, which struck him in a ludicrous manner; he soon, however, fell in with fellow-students from his own country, whom he joined at more eligible quarters.

He now attended medical lectures, and attached himself to an association of students called the Medical Society. He set out, as usual, with the best intentions, but, as usual, soon fell into idle, convivial, thoughtless habits. Edinburgh was indeed a place of sore trial for one of his temperament. Convivial meetings were all the vogue, and the tavern was the universal rallying-place of good-fellowship. And then Goldsmith's intimacies lay chiefly among the Irish students, who were always ready for a wild freak and frolic. Among them he was a prime favorite and somewhat of a leader, from his exuberance of spirits, his vein of humor, and his talent at singing an Irish song and telling an Irish story.

His usual carelessness in money matters attended him. Though his supplies from home were scanty and irregular, he never could bring himself into habits of prudence and economy; often he was stripped of all his present finances at play; often he lavished them away in fits of unguarded charity or generosity. Sometimes among his boon companions he assumed a ludicrous swagger in money matters, which no one afterward was more ready than himself to laugh at. At a convivial meeting

with a number of his fellow-students, he suddenly proposed to draw lots with any one present which of the two should treat the whole party to the play. The moment the proposition had bolted from his lips his heart was in his throat. "To my great though secret joy," said he, "they all declined the challenge. Had it been accepted, and had I proved the loser, a part of my wardrobe must have been pledged in order to raise the money."

At another of these meetings there was an earnest dispute on the question of ghosts, some being firm believers in the possibility of departed spirits returning to visit their friends and familiar haunts. One of the disputants set sail the next day for London, but the vessel put back through the stress of weather. His return was unknown except to one of the believers in ghosts, who concerted with him a trick to be played off on the opposite party. In the evening, at a meeting of the students, the discussion was renewed; and one of the most strenuous opposers of ghosts was asked whether he considered himself proof against ocular demonstration? He persisted in his scoffing. Some solemn process of conjuration was performed, and the comrade supposed to be on his way to London made his appearance. The effect was fatal. The unbeliever fainted at the sight, and ultimately went mad. We have no account of what share Goldsmith took in this transaction, at which he was present.

The following letter to his friend Bryanton contains some of Goldsmith's impressions concerning Scotland and its inhabitants, and gives indications of that humor which characterized some of his later writings.

"*Robert Bryanton, at Ballymahon, Ireland*.
"EDINBURGH, September 26, 1753.

"MY DEAR BOB – How many good excuses (and you know I was ever good at an excuse) might I call up to vindicate my past shameful silence. I might tell how I wrote a long letter on my first coming hither, and seem vastly angry at my not receiving an answer; I might allege that business (with business you know I was always pestered) had never given me time to finger a pen. But I suppress those and twenty more as plausible, and as easily invented, since they might be attended with a slight inconvenience of being known to be lies. Let me then speak truth. An hereditary indolence (I have it from the mother's side) has hitherto prevented my writing to you, and still prevents my writing at least twenty-five letters more, due to my friends in Ireland. No turn-spit-dog gets up into his 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.

"Yet what shall I say now I am entered? Shall I tire you with a description of this unfruitful country; where I must lead you over their hills all brown with heath, or their valleys scarcely able to feed a rabbit? Man alone seems to be the only creature who has arrived to the natural size in this poor soil. Every part of the country presents the same dismal landscape. No grove, nor brook, lend their music to cheer the stranger, or make the inhabitants forget their poverty. Yet with all these disadvantages to call him down to humility, a Scotchman is one of the proudest things alive. The poor have pride ever ready to relieve them. If mankind should happen to despise them, they are masters of their own admiration, and that they can plentifully bestow upon themselves.

"From their pride and poverty, as I take it, results one advantage this country enjoys – namely, the gentlemen here are much better bred than among us. No such character here as our fox-hunters; and they have expressed great surprise when I informed them that some men in Ireland of one thousand pounds a year spend their whole lives in running after a hare, and drinking to be drunk. Truly if such a being, equipped in his hunting dress, came among a circle of Scotch gentry, they would behold him with the same astonishment that a countryman does King George on horseback.

"The men here have generally high cheek bones, and are lean and swarthy, fond of action, dancing in particular. Now that I have mentioned dancing, let me say something of their balls, which are very frequent here. When a stranger enters the dancing-hall, he sees one end of the room taken up by the ladies, who sit dismally in a group by themselves; in the other end stand their pensive partners

that are to be; but no more intercourse between the sexes than there is between two countries at war. The ladies indeed may ogle, and the gentlemen sigh; but an embargo is laid on any closer commerce. At length, to interrupt hostilities, the lady directress, or intendant, or what you will, pitches upon a lady and gentleman to walk a minuet; which they perform with a formality that approaches to despondence. After five or six couple have thus walked the gantlet, all stand up to country dances; each gentleman furnished with a partner from the aforesaid lady directress; so they dance much, say nothing, and thus concludes our assembly. I told a Scotch gentleman that such profound silence resembled the ancient procession of the Roman matrons in honor of Ceres; and the Scotch gentleman told me (and, faith, I believe he was right) that I was a very great pedant for my pains.

"Now I am come to the ladies; and to show that I love Scotland, and everything that belongs to so charming a country, I insist on it, and will give him leave to break my head that denies it – that the Scotch ladies are ten thousand times finer and handsomer than the Irish. To be sure, now, I see your sisters Betty and Peggy vastly surprised at my partiality – but tell them flatly, I don't value them – or their fine skins, or eyes, or good sense, or – , a potato; – for I say, and will maintain it; and as a convincing proof (I am in a great passion) of what I assert, the Scotch ladies say it themselves. But to be less serious; where will you find a language so prettily become a pretty mouth as the broad Scotch? And the women here speak it in its highest purity; for instance, teach one of your young ladies at home to pronounce the 'Whoar wull I gong?' with a becoming widening of mouth, and I'll lay my life they'll wound every hearer.

"We have no such character here as a coquette, but alas! how many envious prudes! Some days ago I walked into my Lord Kilcoubry's (don't be surprised, my lord is but a glover),[2] when the Duchess of Hamilton (that fair who sacrificed her beauty to her ambition, and her inward peace to a title and gilt equipage) passed by in her chariot; her battered husband, or more properly the guardian of her charms, sat by her side. Straight envy began, in the shape of no less than three ladies who sat with me, to find faults in her faultless form. – 'For my part,' says the first, 'I think what I always thought, that the duchess has too much of the red in her complexion.' 'Madam, I am of your opinion,' says the second; 'I think her face has a palish cast too much on the delicate order.' 'And let me tell you,' added the third lady, whose mouth was puckered up to the size of an issue, 'that the duchess has fine lips, but she wants a mouth.' – At this every lady drew up her mouth as if going to pronounce the letter P.

"But how ill, my Bob, does it become me to ridicule women with whom I have scarcely any correspondence! There are, 'tis certain, handsome women here; and 'tis certain they have handsome men to keep them company. An ugly and poor man is society only for himself, and such society the world lets me enjoy in great abundance. Fortune has given you circumstances, and nature a person to look charming in the eyes of the fair. Nor do I envy my dear Bob such blessings, while I may sit down and laugh at the world and at myself – the most ridiculous object in it. But you see I am grown downright splenetic, and perhaps the fit may continue till I receive an answer to this. I know you cannot send me much news from Ballymahon, but such as it is, send it all; everything you send will be agreeable to me.

"Has George Conway put up a sign yet; or John Binley left off drinking drams; or Tom Allen got a new wig? But I leave you to your own choice what to write. While I live, know you have a true friend in yours, etc., etc.

"OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

"P.S. – Give my sincere respects (not compliments, do you mind) to your agreeable family, and give my service to my mother, if you see her; for, as you express it in Ireland, I have a sneaking kindness for her still. Direct to me, – , Student in Physic, in Edinburgh."

---

[2] William Maclellan, who claimed the title, and whose son succeeded in establishing the claim in 1773. The father is said to have voted at the election of the sixteen Peers for Scotland, and to have sold gloves in the lobby at this and other public assemblages.

Nothing worthy of preservation appeared from his pen during his residence in Edinburgh; and indeed his poetical powers, highly as they had been estimated by his friends, had not as yet produced anything of superior merit. He made on one occasion a month's excursion to the Highlands. "I set out the first day on foot," says he, in a letter to his uncle Contarine, "but an ill-natured corn I have on my toe has for the future prevented that cheap mode of traveling; so the second day I hired a horse about the size of a ram, and he walked away (trot he could not) as pensive as his master."

During his residence in Scotland his convivial talents gained him at one time attentions in a high quarter, which, however, he had the good sense to appreciate correctly. "I have spent," says he, in one of his letters, "more than a fortnight every second day at the Duke of Hamilton's; but it seems they like me more as a jester than as a companion, so I disdained so servile an employment as unworthy my calling as a physician." Here we again find the origin of another passage in his autobiography, under the character of the "Man in Black," wherein that worthy figures as a flatterer to a great man. "At first," says he, "I was surprised that the situation of a flatterer at a great man's table could be thought disagreeable; there was no great trouble in listening attentively when his lordship spoke, and laughing when he looked round for applause. This, even good manners might have obliged me to perform. I found, however, too soon, his lordship was a greater dunce than myself, and from that moment flattery was at an end. I now rather aimed at setting him right, than at receiving his absurdities with submission: to flatter those we do not know is an easy task; but to flatter our intimate acquaintances, all whose foibles are strongly in our eyes, is drudgery insupportable. Every time I now opened my lips in praise, my falsehood went to my conscience; his lordship soon perceived me to be very unfit for his service: I was therefore discharged; my patron at the same time being graciously pleased to observe that he believed I was tolerably good-natured, and had not the least harm in me."

After spending two winters at Edinburgh, Goldsmith prepared to finish his medical studies on the Continent, for which his uncle Contarine agreed to furnish the funds. "I intend," said he, in a letter to his uncle, "to visit Paris, where the great Farheim, Petit, and Du Hammel de Monceau instruct their pupils in all the branches of medicine. They speak French, and consequently I shall have much the advantage of most of my countrymen, as I am perfectly acquainted with that language, and few who leave Ireland are so. I shall spend the spring and summer in Paris, and the beginning of next winter go to Leyden. The great Albinus is still alive there, and 'twill be proper to go, though only to have it said that we have studied in so famous a university.

"As I shall not have another opportunity of receiving money from your bounty till my return to Ireland, so I have drawn for the last sum that I hope I shall ever trouble you for; 'tis £20. And now, dear sir, let me here acknowledge the humility of the station in which you found me; let me tell how I was despised by most, and hateful to myself. Poverty, hopeless poverty, was my lot, and Melancholy was beginning to make me her own. When you – but I stop here, to inquire how your health goes on? How does my cousin Jenny, and has she recovered her late complaint? How does my poor Jack Goldsmith? I fear his disorder is of such a nature as he won't easily recover. I wish, my dear sir, you would make me happy by another letter before I go abroad, for there I shall hardly hear from you… Give my – how shall I express it? Give my earnest love to Mr. and Mrs. Lawder."

Mrs. Lawder was Jane, his early playmate – the object of his valentine – his first poetical inspiration. She had been for some time married.

Medical instruction, it will be perceived, was the ostensible motive for this visit to the Continent, but the real one, in all probability, was his long-cherished desire to see foreign parts. This, however, he would not acknowledge even to himself, but sought to reconcile his roving propensities with some grand moral purpose. "I esteem the traveler who instructs the heart," says he, in one of his subsequent writings, "but despise him who only indulges the imagination. A man who leaves home to mend himself and others is a philosopher; but he who goes from country to country, guided by the blind impulse of curiosity, is only a vagabond." He, of course, was to travel as a philosopher, and in truth his outfits for a continental tour were in character. "I shall carry just £33 to France," said he, "with

good store of clothes, shirts, etc., and that with economy will suffice." He forgot to make mention of his flute, which it will be found had occasionally to come in play when economy could not replenish his purse, nor philosophy find him a supper. Thus slenderly provided with money, prudence, or experience, and almost as slightly guarded against "hard knocks" as the hero of La Mancha, whose head-piece was half iron, half pasteboard, he made his final sally forth upon the world; hoping all things; believing all things; little anticipating the checkered ills in store for him; little thinking when he penned his valedictory letter to his good uncle Contarine that he was never to see him more; never to return after all his wandering to the friend of his infancy; never to revisit his early and fondly-remembered haunts at "sweet Lissoy" and Ballymahon.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AGREEABLE FELLOW-PASSENGERS – RISKS FROM FRIENDS PICKED UP BY THE WAYSIDE – SKETCHES OF HOLLAND AND THE DUTCH – SHIFTS WHILE A POOR STUDENT AT LEYDEN – THE TULIP SPECULATION – THE PROVIDENT FLUTE – SOJOURN AT PARIS – SKETCH OF VOLTAIRE – TRAVELING SHIFTS OF A PHILOSOPHIC VAGABOND

His usual indiscretion attended Goldsmith at the very outset of his foreign enterprise. He had intended to take shipping at Leith for Holland, but on arriving at that port he found a ship about to sail for Bordeaux, with six agreeable passengers, whose acquaintance he had probably made at the inn. He was not a man to resist a sudden impulse; so, instead of embarking for Holland, he found himself plowing the seas on his way to the other side of the Continent. Scarcely had the ship been two days at sea when she was driven by stress of weather to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Here "of course" Goldsmith and his agreeable fellow-passengers found it expedient to go on shore and "refresh themselves after the fatigues of the voyage." "Of course" they frolicked and made merry until a late hour in the evening, when, in the midst of their hilarity, the door was burst open, and a sergeant and twelve grenadiers entered with fixed bayonets, and took the whole convivial party prisoners.

It seems that the agreeable companions with whom our greenhorn had struck up such a sudden intimacy were Scotchmen in the French service, who had been in Scotland enlisting recruits for the French army.

In vain Goldsmith protested his innocence; he was marched off with his fellow-revelers to prison, whence he with difficulty obtained his release at the end of a fortnight. With his customary facility, however, at palliating his misadventures, he found everything turn out for the best. His imprisonment saved his life, for during his detention the ship proceeded on her voyage, but was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and all on board perished.

Goldsmith's second embarkation was for Holland direct, and in nine days he arrived at Rotterdam, whence he proceeded, without any more deviations, to Leyden. He gives a whimsical picture, in one of his letters, of the appearance of the Hollanders. "The modern Dutchman is quite a different creature from him of former times; he in everything imitates a Frenchman but in his easy, disengaged air. He is vastly ceremonious, and is, perhaps, exactly what a Frenchman might have been in the reign of Louis XIV. Such are the better bred. But the downright Hollander is one of the oddest figures in nature. Upon a lank head of hair he wears a half-cocked narrow hat, laced with black ribbon; no coat, but seven waistcoats and nine pair of breeches, so that his hips reach up almost to his armpits. This well-clothed vegetable is now fit to see company or make love. But what a pleasing creature is the object of his appetite! why, she wears a large fur cap, with a deal of Flanders lace; and for every pair of breeches he carries, she puts on two petticoats.

"A Dutch lady burns nothing about her phlegmatic admirer but his tobacco. You must know, sir, every woman carries in her hand a stove of coals, which, when she sits, she snugs under her petticoats, and at this chimney dozing Strephon lights his pipe."

In the same letter, he contrasts Scotland and Holland. "There hills and rocks intercept every prospect; here it is all a continued plain. There you might see a well-dressed duchess issuing from a dirty close, and here a dirty Dutchman inhabiting a palace. The Scotch may be compared to a tulip, planted in dung; but I can never see a Dutchman in his own house but I think of a magnificent Egyptian temple dedicated to an ox."

The country itself awakened his admiration. "Nothing," said he, "can equal its beauty; wherever I turn my eyes, fine houses, elegant gardens, statues, grottoes, vistas, present themselves; but when

you enter their towns you are charmed beyond description. No misery is to be seen here; every one is usefully employed." And again, in his noble description in The Traveler:

"To men of other minds my fancy flies,
Imbosom'd in the deep where Holland lies.
Methinks her patient sons before me stand,
Where the broad ocean leans against the land,
And, sedulous to stop the coming tide,
Lift the tall rampire's artificial pride.
Onward, methinks, and diligently slow,
The firm connected bulwark seems to grow;
Spreads its long arms amid the watery roar,
Scoops out an empire, and usurps the shore.
While the pent ocean, rising o'er the pile,
Sees an amphibious world before 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."

He remained about a year at Leyden, attending the lectures of Gaubius on chemistry and Albinus on anatomy; though his studies are said to have been miscellaneous, and directed to literature rather than science. The thirty-three pounds with which he had set out on his travels were soon consumed, and he was put to many a shift to meet his expenses until his precarious remittances should arrive. He had a good friend on these occasions in a fellow-student and countryman, named Ellis, who afterward rose to eminence as a physician. He used frequently to loan small sums to Goldsmith, which were always scrupulously paid. Ellis discovered the innate merits of the poor awkward student, and used to declare in after life that "it was a common remark in Leyden, that in all the peculiarities of Goldsmith, an elevation of mind was to be noted; a philosophical tone and manner; the feelings of a gentleman, and the language and information of a scholar."

Sometimes, in his emergencies, Goldsmith undertook to teach the English language. It is true he was ignorant of the Dutch, but he had a smattering of the French, picked up among the Irish priests at Ballymahon. He depicts his whimsical embarrassment in this respect, in his account in the Vicar of Wakefield of the *philosophical vagabond* who went to Holland to teach the natives English, without knowing a word of their own language. Sometimes, when sorely pinched, and sometimes, perhaps, when flush, he resorted to the gambling tables, which in those days abounded in Holland. His good friend Ellis repeatedly warned him against this unfortunate propensity, but in vain. It brought its own cure, or rather its own punishment, by stripping him of every shilling.

Ellis once more stepped in to his relief with a true Irishman's generosity, but with more considerateness than generally characterizes an Irishman, for he only granted pecuniary aid on condition of his quitting the sphere of danger. Goldsmith gladly consented to leave Holland, being anxious to visit other parts. He intended to proceed to Paris and pursue his studies there, and was furnished by his friend with money for the journey. Unluckily, he rambled into the garden of a florist just before quitting Leyden. The tulip mania was still prevalent in Holland, and some species of that splendid flower brought immense prices. In wandering through the garden Goldsmith recollected that his uncle Contarine was a tulip fancier. The thought suddenly struck him that here was an opportunity of testifying, in a delicate manner, his sense of that generous uncle's past kindnesses. In an instant his hand was in his pocket; a number of choice and costly tulip-roots were purchased and packed up for Mr. Contarine; and it was not until he had paid for them that he bethought himself that he had spent

all the money borrowed for his traveling expenses. Too proud, however, to give up his journey, and too shamefaced to make another appeal to his friend's liberality, he determined to travel on foot, and depend upon chance and good luck for the means of getting forward; and it is said that he actually set off on a tour of the Continent, in February, 1775, with but one spare shirt, a flute, and a single guinea.

"Blessed," says one of his biographers, "with a good constitution, an adventurous spirit, and with that thoughtless, or, perhaps, happy disposition which takes no care for to-morrow, he continued his travels for a long time in spite of innumerable privations." In his amusing narrative of the adventures of a "Philosophic Vagabond" in the Vicar of Wakefield, we find shadowed out the expedients he pursued. "I had some knowledge of music, with a tolerable voice; I now turned what was once my amusement into a present means of subsistence. I passed among the harmless peasants of Flanders, and among such of the French as were poor enough to be very merry, for I ever found them sprightly in proportion to their wants. Whenever I approached a peasant's house toward nightfall, I played one of my merriest tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging, but subsistence for the next day; but in truth I must own, whenever I attempted to entertain persons of a higher rank, they always thought my performance odious, and never made me any return for my endeavors to please them."

At Paris he attended the chemical lectures of Rouelle, then in great vogue, where he says he witnessed as bright a circle of beauty as graced the court of Versailles. His love of theatricals, also, led him to attend the performances of the celebrated actress Mademoiselle Clairon, with which he was greatly delighted. He seems to have looked upon the state of society with the eye of a philosopher, but to have read the signs of the times with the prophetic eye of a poet. In his rambles about the environs of Paris he was struck with the immense quantities of game running about almost in a tame state; and saw in those costly and rigid preserves for the amusement and luxury of the privileged few a sure "badge of the slavery of the people." This slavery he predicted was drawing toward a close. "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." Events have testified to the sage forecast of the poet.

During a brief sojourn in Paris he appears to have gained access to valuable society, and to have had the honor and pleasure of making the acquaintance of Voltaire; of whom, in after years, he wrote a memoir. "As a companion," says he, "no man ever exceeded him when he pleased to lead the conversation; which, however, was not always the case. In company which he either disliked or despised, few could be more reserved than he; but when he was warmed in discourse, and got over a hesitating manner, which sometimes he was subject to, it was rapture to hear him. His meager visage seemed insensibly to gather beauty; every muscle in it had meaning, and his eye beamed with unusual brightness. The person who writes this memoir," continues he, "remembers to have seen him in a select company of wits of both sexes at Paris, when the subject happened to turn upon English taste and learning. Fontenelle (then nearly a hundred years old), who was of the party, and who being unacquainted with the language or authors of the country he undertook to condemn, with a spirit truly vulgar began to revile both. Diderot, who liked the English, and knew something of their literary pretensions, attempted to vindicate their poetry and learning, but with unequal abilities. The company quickly perceived that Fontenelle was superior in the dispute, and were surprised at the silence which Voltaire had preserved all the former part of the night, particularly as the conversation happened to turn upon one of his favorite topics. Fontenelle continued his triumph until about twelve o'clock, when Voltaire appeared at last roused from his reverie. His whole frame seemed animated. He began his defense with the utmost defiance mixed with spirit, and now and then let fall the finest strokes of raillery upon his antagonist; and his harangue lasted till three in the morning. I must confess that,

whether from national partiality or from the elegant sensibility of his manner, I never was so charmed, nor did I ever remember so absolute a victory as he gained in this dispute."

Goldsmith's ramblings took him into Germany and Switzerland, from which last mentioned country he sent to his brother in Ireland the first brief sketch, afterward amplified into his poem of The Traveler.

At Geneva he became traveling tutor to a mongrel young gentleman, son of a London pawnbroker, who had been suddenly elevated into fortune and absurdity by the death of an uncle. The youth, before setting up for a gentleman, had been an attorney's apprentice, and was an arrant pettifogger in money matters. Never were two beings more illy assorted than he and Goldsmith. We may form an idea of the tutor and the pupil from the following extract from the narrative of the "Philosophic Vagabond."

"I was to be the young gentleman's governor, but with a proviso that he should always be permitted to govern himself. My pupil, in fact, understood the art of guiding in money concerns much better than I. He was heir to a fortune of about two hundred thousand pounds, left him by an uncle in the West Indies; and his guardians, to qualify him for the management of it, had bound him apprentice to an attorney. Thus avarice was his prevailing passion; all his questions on the road were how money might be saved – which was the least expensive course of travel – whether anything could be bought that would turn to account when disposed of again in London. Such curiosities on the way as could be seen for nothing he was ready enough to look at; but if the sight of them was to be paid for, he usually asserted that he had been told that they were not worth seeing. He never paid a bill that he would not observe how amazingly expensive traveling was; and all this though not yet twenty-one."

In this sketch Goldsmith undoubtedly shadows forth his annoyances as traveling tutor to this concrete young gentleman, compounded of the pawnbroker, the pettifogger, and the West Indian heir, with an overlaying of the city miser. They had continual difficulties on all points of expense until they reached Marseilles, where both were glad to separate.

Once more on foot, but freed from the irksome duties of "bear leader," and with some of his pay, as tutor, in his pocket, Goldsmith continued his half-vagrant peregrinations through part of France and Piedmont, and some of the Italian States. He had acquired, as has been shown, a habit of shifting along and living by expedients, and a new one presented itself in Italy. "My skill in music," says he, in the "Philosophic Vagabond," "could avail me nothing in a country where every peasant was a better musician than I; but by this time I had acquired another talent, which answered my purpose as well, and this was a skill in disputation. In all the foreign universities and convents there are, upon certain days, philosophical theses maintained against every adventitious disputant; for which, if the champion opposes with any dexterity, he can claim a gratuity in money, a dinner, and a bed for one night." Though a poor wandering scholar, his reception in these learned piles was as free from humiliation as in the cottages of the peasantry. "With the members of these establishments," said he, "I could converse on topics of literature, *and then I always forgot the meanness of my circumstances*."

At Padua, where he remained some months, he is said to have taken his medical degree. It is probable he was brought to a pause in this city by the death of his uncle Contarine, who had hitherto assisted him in his wanderings by occasional, though, of course, slender remittances. Deprived of this source of supplies he wrote to his friends in Ireland, and especially to his brother-in-law Hodson, describing his destitute situation. His letters brought him neither money nor reply. It appears from subsequent correspondence that his brother-in-law actually exerted himself to raise a subscription for his assistance among his relatives, friends, and acquaintance, but without success. Their faith and hope in him were most probably at an end; as yet he had disappointed them at every point, he had given none of the anticipated proofs of talent, and they were too poor to support what they may have considered the wandering propensities of a heedless spendthrift.

Thus left to his own precarious resources, Goldsmith gave up all further wandering in Italy, without visiting the south, though Rome and Naples must have held out powerful attractions to one of

his poetical cast. Once more resuming his pilgrim staff, he turned his face toward England, "walking along from city to city, examining mankind more nearly, and seeing both sides of the picture." In traversing France his flute – his magic flute – was once more in requisition, as we may conclude, by the following passage in his Traveler:

"Gay, sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleased with thyself, whom all the world can please,
How often have I led thy sportive choir
With tuneless pipe beside the murmuring Loire!
Where shading elms along the margin grew,
And freshened from the wave the zephyr flew;
And haply though my harsh note falt'ring still,
But mocked all tune, and marr'd the dancer's skill;
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power,
And dance forgetful of the noontide hour.
Alike all ages: Dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful maze,
And the gay grandsire, skill'd in gestic lore,
Has frisk'd beneath the burden of threescore."

CHAPTER SIX

LANDING IN ENGLAND – SHIFTS OF A MAN WITHOUT MONEY – THE PESTLE AND MORTAR – THEATRICALS IN A BARN – LAUNCH UPON LONDON – A CITY NIGHT SCENE – STRUGGLES WITH PENURY – MISERIES OF A TUTOR – A DOCTOR IN THE SUBURB – POOR PRACTICE AND SECOND-HAND FINERY – A TRAGEDY IN EMBRYO – PROJECT OF THE WRITTEN MOUNTAINS

After two years spent in roving about the Continent, "pursuing novelty," as he said, "and losing content," Goldsmith landed at Dover early in 1756. He appears to have had no definite plan of action. The death of his uncle Contarine, and the neglect of his relatives and friends to reply to his letters, seem to have produced in him a temporary feeling of loneliness and destitution, and his only thought was to get to London and throw himself upon the world. But how was he to get there? His purse was empty. England was to him as completely a foreign land as any part of the Continent, and where on earth is a penniless stranger more destitute? His flute and his philosophy were no longer of any avail; the English boors cared nothing for music; there were no convents; and as to the learned and the clergy, not one of them would give a vagrant scholar a supper and night's lodging for the best thesis that ever was argued. "You may easily imagine," says he, in a subsequent letter to his brother-in-law, "what difficulties I had to encounter, left as I was without friends, recommendations, money, or impudence, and that in a country where being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed. Many, in such circumstances, would have had recourse to the friar's cord or the suicide's halter. But, with all my follies, I had principle to resist the one, and resolution to combat the other."

He applied at one place, we are told, for employment in the shop of a country apothecary; but all his medical science gathered in foreign universities could not gain him the management of a pestle and mortar. He even resorted, it is said, to the stage as a temporary expedient, and figured in low comedy at a country town in Kent. This accords with his last shift of the "Philosophic Vagabond," and with the knowledge of country theatricals displayed in his Adventures of a Strolling Player, or may be a story suggested by them. All this part of his career, however, in which he must have trod the lowest paths of humility, are only to be conjectured from vague traditions, or scraps of autobiography gleaned from his miscellaneous writings.

At length we find him launched on the great metropolis, or rather drifting about its streets, at night, in the gloomy month of February, with but a few half-pence in his pocket. The deserts of Arabia are not more dreary and inhospitable than the streets of London at such a time, and to a stranger in such a plight. Do we want a picture as an illustration? We have it in his own words, and furnished, doubtless, from his own experience.

"The clock has just struck two; what a gloom hangs all around! no sound is heard but of the chiming clock, or the distant watch-dog. How few appear in those streets, which but some few hours ago were crowded! But who are those who make the streets their couch, and find a short repose from wretchedness at the doors of the opulent? They are strangers, wanderers, and orphans, whose circumstances are too humble to expect redress, and whose distresses are too great even for 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 distress, and has given them up to nakedness and hunger. *These poor shivering females have once seen happier days, and been flattered into beauty.* They are now turned out to meet the severity of winter. Perhaps now, lying at the doors of their betrayers, they sue to wretches whose hearts are insensible, or debauchees who may curse, but will not relieve them.

"Why, why was I born a man, and yet see the sufferings of wretches I cannot relieve! Poor houseless creatures! The world will give you reproaches, but will not give you relief."

Poor houseless Goldsmith! we may here ejaculate – to what shifts he must have been driven to find shelter and sustenance for himself in this his first venture into London! Many years afterward, in the days of his social elevation, he startled a polite circle at Sir Joshua Reynolds' by humorously dating an anecdote about the time he "lived among the beggars of Axe Lane." Such may have been the desolate quarters with which he was fain to content himself when thus adrift upon the town, with but a few half-pence in his pocket.

The first authentic trace we have of him in this new part of his career, is filling the situation of an usher to a school, and even this employ he obtained with some difficulty, after a reference for a character to his friends in the University of Dublin. In the Vicar of Wakefield he makes George Primrose undergo a whimsical catechism concerning the requisites for an usher. "Have you been bred apprentice to the business?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you dress the boys' hair?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you lie three in a bed?" "No." "Then you will never do for a school. Have you a good stomach?" "Yes." "Then you will by no means do for a school. I have been an usher in a boarding-school myself, and may I die of an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be under-turnkey in Newgate. I was up early and late; I was browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys."

Goldsmith remained but a short time in this situation, and to the mortifications experienced there we doubtless owe the picturings given in his writings of the hardships of an usher's life. "He is generally," says he, "the laughingstock of the school. Every trick is played upon him; the oddity of his manner, his dress, or his language, 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, lives in a state of war with all the family." – "He is obliged, perhaps, to sleep in the same bed with the French teacher, who disturbs him for an hour every night in papering and filleting his hair, and stinks worse than a carrion with his rancid pomatums, when he lays his head beside him on the bolster."

His next shift was as assistant in the laboratory of a chemist near Fish Street Hill. After remaining here a few months, he heard that Dr. Sleigh, who had been his friend and fellow-student at Edinburgh, was in London. Eager to meet with a friendly face in this land of strangers, he immediately called on him; "but though it was Sunday, and it is to be supposed I was in my best clothes, Sleigh scarcely knew me – such is the tax the unfortunate pay to poverty. However, when he did recollect me, I found his heart as warm as ever, and he shared his purse and friendship with me during his continuance in London."

Through the advice and assistance of Dr. Sleigh, he now commenced the practice of medicine, but in a small way, in Bankside, Southwark, and chiefly among the poor; for he wanted the figure, address, polish, and management, to succeed among the rich. His old schoolmate and college companion, Beatty, who used to aid him with his purse at the university, met him about this time, decked out in the tarnished finery of a second-hand suit of green and gold, with a shirt and neckcloth of a fortnight's wear.

Poor Goldsmith endeavored to assume a prosperous air in the eyes of his early associate. "He was practicing physic," he said, "and *doing very well!*" At this moment poverty was pinching him to the bone in spite of his practice and his dirty finery. His fees were necessarily small, and ill paid, and he was fain to seek some precarious assistance from his pen. Here his quondam fellow-student, Dr. Sleigh, was again of service, introducing him to some of the booksellers, who gave him occasional, though starveling employment. According to tradition, however, his most efficient patron just now was a journeyman printer, one of his poor patients of Bankside, who had formed a good opinion of his talents, and perceived his poverty and his literary shifts. The printer was in the employ of Mr. Samuel Richardson, the author of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison; who combined the novelist and the publisher, and was in flourishing circumstances. Through the journeyman's intervention Goldsmith is said to have become acquainted with Richardson, who employed him as

reader and corrector of the press, at his printing establishment in Salisbury Court; an occupation which he alternated with his medical duties.

Being admitted occasionally to Richardson's parlor, he began to form literary acquaintances, among whom the most important was Dr. Young, the author of Night Thoughts, a poem in the height of fashion. It is not probable, however, that much familiarity took place at the time between the literary lion of the day and the poor Aesculapius of Bankside, the humble corrector of the press. Still the communion with literary men had its effect to set his imagination teeming. Dr. Farr, one of his Edinburgh fellow-students, who was at London about this time, attending the hospitals and lectures, gives us an amusing account of Goldsmith in his literary character.

"Early in January he called upon me one morning before I was up, and, on my entering the room, I recognized my old acquaintance, dressed in a rusty, full-trimmed black suit, with his pockets full of papers, which instantly reminded me of the poet in Garrick's farce of Lethe. After we had finished our breakfast he drew from his pocket part of a tragedy, which he said he had brought for my correction. In vain I pleaded inability, when he began to read; and every part on which I expressed a doubt as to the propriety was immediately blotted out. I then most earnestly pressed him not to trust to my judgment, but to take the opinion of persons better qualified to decide on dramatic compositions. He now told me he had submitted his productions, so far as he had written, to Mr. Richardson, the author of Clarissa, on which I peremptorily declined offering another criticism on the performance."

From the graphic description given of him by Dr. Farr, it will be perceived that the tarnished finery of green and gold had been succeeded by a professional suit of black, to which, we are told, were added the wig and cane indispensable to medical doctors in those days. The coat was a second-hand one, of rusty velvet, with a patch on the left breast, which he adroitly covered with his three-cornered hat during his medical visits; and we have an amusing anecdote of his contest of courtesy with a patient who persisted in endeavoring to relieve him from the hat, which only made him press it more devoutly to his heart.

Nothing further has ever been heard of the tragedy mentioned by Dr. Farr; it was probably never completed. The same gentleman speaks of a strange Quixotic scheme which Goldsmith had in contemplation at the time, "of going to decipher the inscriptions on the *written mountains*," though he was altogether ignorant of Arabic, or the language in which they might be supposed to be written. "The salary of three hundred pounds," adds Dr. Farr, "which had been left for the purpose, was the temptation." This was probably one of many dreamy projects with which his fervid brain was apt to teem. On such subjects he was prone to talk vaguely and magnificently, but inconsiderately, from a kindled imagination rather than a well-instructed judgment. He had always a great notion of expeditions to the East, and wonders to be seen and effected in the Oriental countries.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LIFE OP A PEDAGOGUE – KINDNESS TO SCHOOLBOYS – PERTNESS IN RETURN – EXPENSIVE CHARITIES – THE GRIFFITHS AND THE "MONTHLY REVIEW" – TOILS OF A LITERARY HACK – RUPTURE WITH THE GRIFFITHS

Among the most cordial of Goldsmith's intimates in London during this time of precarious struggle were certain of his former fellow-students in Edinburgh. One of these was the son of a Dr. Milner, a dissenting minister, who kept a classical school of eminence at Peckham, in Surrey. Young Milner had a favorable opinion of Goldsmith's abilities and attainments, and cherished for him that good will which his genial nature seems ever to have inspired among his school and college associates. His father falling ill, the young man negotiated with Goldsmith to take temporary charge of the school. The latter readily consented; for he was discouraged by the slow growth of medical reputation and practice, and as yet had no confidence in the coy smiles of the muse. Laying by his wig and cane, therefore, and once more wielding the ferule, he resumed the character of the pedagogue, and for some time reigned as vicegerent over the academy at Peckham. He appears to have been well treated by both Dr. Milner and his wife, and became a favorite with the scholars from his easy, indulgent good nature. He mingled in their sports, told them droll stories, played on the flute for their amusement, and spent his money in treating them to sweetmeats and other schoolboy dainties. His familiarity was sometimes carried too far; he indulged in boyish pranks and practical jokes, and drew upon himself retorts in kind, which, however, he bore with great good humor. Once, indeed, he was touched to the quick by a piece of schoolboy pertness. After playing on the flute, he spoke with enthusiasm of music, as delightful in itself, and as a valuable accomplishment for a gentleman, whereupon a youngster, with a glance at his ungainly person, wished to know if he considered himself a gentleman. Poor Goldsmith, feelingly alive to the awkwardness of his appearance and the humility of his situation, winced at this unthinking sneer, which long rankled in his mind.

As usual, while in Dr. Milner's employ, his benevolent feelings were a heavy tax upon his purse, for he never could resist a tale of distress, and was apt to be fleeced by every sturdy beggar; so that, between his charity and his munificence, he was generally in advance of his slender salary. "You had better, Mr. Goldsmith, let me take care of your money," said Mrs. Milner one day, "as I do for some of the young gentlemen." – "In truth, madam, there is equal need!" was the good-humored reply.

Dr. Milner was a man of some literary pretensions, and wrote occasionally for the "Monthly Review," of which a bookseller, by the name of Griffiths, was proprietor. This work was an advocate for Whig principles, and had been in prosperous existence for nearly eight years. Of late, however, periodicals had multiplied exceedingly, and a formidable Tory rival had started up in the "Critical Review," published by Archibald Hamilton, a bookseller, and aided by the powerful and popular pen of Dr. Smollett. Griffiths was obliged to recruit his forces. While so doing he met Goldsmith, a humble occupant of a seat at Dr. Milner's table, and was struck with remarks on men and books which fell from him in the course of conversation. He took occasion to sound him privately as to his inclination and capacity as a reviewer, and was furnished by him with specimens of his literary and critical talents. They proved satisfactory. The consequence was that Goldsmith once more changed his mode of life, and in April, 1757, became a contributor to the "Monthly Review," at a small fixed salary, with board and lodging, and accordingly took up his abode with Mr. Griffiths, at the sign of the Dunciad, Paternoster Row. As usual we trace this phase of his fortunes in his semi-fictitious writings; his sudden transmutation of the pedagogue into the author being humorously set forth in the case of "George Primrose," in the Vicar of "Wakefield." "Come," says George's adviser, "I see you are a lad of spirit and some learning; what do you think of commencing author like me? You have

read in books, no doubt, of men of genius starving at the trade; at present I'll show you forty very dull fellows about town that live by it in opulence. All honest, jog-trot men, who go on smoothly and dully, and write history and politics, and are praised: men, sir, who, had they been bred cobblers, would all their lives only have mended shoes, but never made them." "Finding" (says George) "that there is no great degree of gentility affixed to the character of an usher, I resolved to accept his proposal; and having the highest respect for literature, hailed the *antiqua mater* of Grub Street with reverence. I thought it my glory to pursue a track which Dryden and Otway trod before me. Alas, Dryden struggled with indigence all his days; and Otway, it is said, fell a victim to famine in his thirty-fifth year, being strangled by a roll of bread, which he devoured with the voracity of a starving man."

In Goldsmith's experience the track soon proved a thorny one. Griffiths was a hard business man, of shrewd, worldly good sense, but little refinement or cultivation. He meddled, or rather muddled with literature, too, in a business way, altering and modifying occasionally the writings of his contributors, and in this he was aided by his wife, who, according to Smollett, was "an antiquated female critic and a dabbler in the 'Review.'" Such was the literary vassalage to which Goldsmith had unwarily subjected himself. A diurnal drudgery was imposed on him, irksome to his indolent habits, and attended by circumstances humiliating to his pride. He had to write daily from nine o'clock until two, and often throughout the day; whether in the vein or not, and on subjects dictated by his taskmaster, however foreign to his taste; in a word, he was treated as a mere literary hack. But this was not the worst; it was the critical supervision of Griffiths and his wife which grieved him: the "illiterate, bookselling Griffiths," as Smollett called them, "who presumed to revise, alter, and amend the articles contributed to their 'Review.' Thank heaven," crowed Smollett, "the 'Critical Review' is not written under the restraint of a bookseller and his wife. Its principal writers are independent of each other, unconnected with booksellers, and unawed by old women!"

This literary vassalage, however, did not last long. The bookseller became more and more exacting. He accused his hack writer of idleness; of abandoning his writing-desk and literary workshop at an early hour of the day; and of assuming a tone and manner *above his situation*. Goldsmith, in return, charged him with impertinence; his wife with meanness and parsimony in her household treatment of him, and both of literary meddling and marring. The engagement was broken off at the end of five months, by mutual consent, and without any violent rupture, as it will be found they afterward had occasional dealings with each other.

Though Goldsmith was now nearly thirty years of age, he had produced nothing to give him a decided reputation. He was as yet a mere writer for bread. The articles he had contributed to the "Review" were anonymous, and were never avowed by him. They have since been, for the most part, ascertained; and though thrown off hastily, often treating on subjects of temporary interest, and marred by the Griffith interpolations, they are still characterized by his sound, easy, good sense, and the genial graces of his style. Johnson observed that Goldsmith's genius flowered late; he should have said it flowered early, but was late in bringing its fruit to maturity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEWBERY, OF PICTURE-BOOK MEMORY – HOW TO KEEP UP APPEARANCES – MISERIES OF AUTHORSHIP – A POOR RELATION – LETTER TO HODSON

Being now known in the publishing world, Goldsmith began to find casual employment in various quarters; among others he wrote occasionally for the "Literary Magazine," a production set on foot by Mr. John Newbery, bookseller, St. Paul's Churchyard, renowned in nursery literature throughout the latter half of the last century for his picture-books for children. Newbery was a worthy, intelligent, kind-hearted man, and a seasonable though cautious friend to authors, relieving them with small loans when in pecuniary difficulties, though always taking care to be well repaid by the labor of their pens. Goldsmith introduces him in a humorous yet friendly manner in his novel of the Vicar of Wakefield. "This person was no other than the philanthropic bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, who has written so many little books for children; he called himself their friend; but he was the friend of all mankind. He was no sooner alighted but he was in haste to be gone; for he was ever on business of importance, and was at that time actually compiling materials for the history of one Mr. Thomas Trip. I immediately recollected this good-natured man's red-pimpled face."

Besides his literary job work, Goldsmith also resumed his medical practice, but with very trifling success. The scantiness of his purse still obliged him to live in obscure lodgings somewhere in the vicinity of Salisbury Square, Fleet Street; but his extended acquaintance and rising importance caused him to consult appearances. He adopted an expedient, then very common, and still practiced in London among those who have to tread the narrow path between pride and poverty; while he burrowed in lodgings suited to his means, he "hailed," as it is termed, from the Temple Exchange Coffeehouse near Temple Bar. Here he received his medical calls; hence he dated his letters, and here he passed much of his leisure hours, conversing with the frequenters of the place. "Thirty pounds a year," said a poor Irish painter, who understood the art of shifting, "is enough to enable a man to live in London without being contemptible. Ten pounds will find him in clothes and linen; he can live in a garret on eighteen pence a week; hail from a coffee-house, where, by occasionally spending threepence, he may pass some hours each day in good company; he may breakfast on bread and milk for a penny; dine for sixpence; do without supper; and on *clean-shirt-day* he may go abroad and pay visits."

Goldsmith seems to have taken a leaf from this poor devil's manual in respect to the coffee-house at least. Indeed, coffee-houses in those days were the resorts of wits and literati, where the topics of the day were gossiped over, and the affairs of literature and the drama discussed and criticised. In this way he enlarged the circle of his intimacy, which now embraced several names of notoriety.

Do we want a picture of Goldsmith's experience in this part of his career? we have it in his observations on the life of an author in the "Inquiry into the State of Polite Learning," published some years afterward.

"The author, unpatronized by the great, has naturally recourse to the bookseller. There cannot, perhaps, be imagined a combination more prejudicial to taste than this. It is the interest of the one to allow as little for writing, and for the other to write as much as possible; accordingly tedious compilations and periodical magazines are the result of their joint endeavors. In these circumstances the author bids adieu to fame; writes for bread; and for that only imagination is seldom called in. He sits down to address the venal muse with the most phlegmatic apathy; and, as we are told of the Russian, courts his mistress by falling asleep in her lap."

Again. "Those who are unacquainted with the world are apt to fancy the man of wit as leading a very agreeable life. They conclude, perhaps, that he is attended with silent admiration, and dictates to the rest of mankind with all the eloquence of conscious superiority. Very different is his present situation. He is called an author, and all know that an author is a thing only to be laughed at. His person, not his jest, becomes the mirth of the company. At his approach the most fat, unthinking face brightens into malicious meaning. Even aldermen laugh, and avenge on him the ridicule which was lavished on their forefathers… The poet's poverty is a standing topic of contempt. His writing for bread is an unpardonable offense. Perhaps of all mankind an author in these times is used most hardly. We keep him poor, and yet revile his poverty. We reproach him for living by his wit, and yet allow him no other means to live. His taking refuge in garrets and cellars has of late been violently objected to him, and that by men who, I hope, are more apt to pity than insult his distress. Is poverty a careless fault? No doubt he knows how to prefer a bottle of champagne to the nectar of the neighboring ale-house, or a venison pasty to a plate of potatoes. Want of delicacy is not in him, but in those who deny him the opportunity of making an elegant choice. Wit certainly is the property of those who have it, nor should we be displeased if it is the only property a man sometimes has. We must not underrate him who uses it for subsistence, and flees from the ingratitude of the age even to a bookseller for redress."…

"If the author be necessary among us, let us treat him with proper consideration as a child of the public, not as a rent-charge on the community. And indeed a child of the public he is in all respects; for while so well able to direct others, how incapable is he frequently found of guiding himself. His simplicity exposes him to all the insidious approaches of cunning; his sensibility, to the slightest invasions of contempt. Though possessed of fortitude to stand unmoved the expected bursts of an earthquake, yet of feelings so exquisitely poignant as to agonize under the slightest disappointment. Broken rest, tasteless meals, and causeless anxieties shorten life, and render it unfit for active employments; prolonged vigils and intense application still further contract his span, and make his time glide insensibly away."

While poor Goldsmith was thus struggling with the difficulties and discouragements which in those days beset the path of an author, his friends in Ireland received accounts of his literary success and of the distinguished acquaintances he was making. This was enough to put the wise heads at Lissoy and Ballymahon in a ferment of conjectures. With the exaggerated notions of provincial relatives concerning the family great man in the metropolis, some of Goldsmith's poor kindred pictured him to themselves seated in high places, clothed in purple and fine linen, and hand and glove with the givers of gifts and dispensers of patronage. Accordingly, he was one day surprised at the sudden apparition, in his miserable lodging, of his younger brother Charles, a raw youth of twenty-one, endowed with a double share of the family heedlessness, and who expected to be forthwith helped into some snug by-path to fortune by one or other of Oliver's great friends. Charles was sadly disconcerted on learning that, so far from being able to provide for others, his brother could scarcely take care of himself. He looked round with a rueful eye on the poet's quarters, and could not help expressing his surprise and disappointment at finding him no better off. "All in good tune, my dear boy," replied poor Goldsmith, with infinite good-humor; "I shall be richer by-and-by. Addison, let me tell you, wrote his poem of the Campaign in a garret in the Haymarket, three stones high, and you see I am not come to that yet, for I have only got to the second story."

Charles Goldsmith did not remain long to embarrass his brother in London. With the same roving disposition and inconsiderate temper of Oliver, he suddenly departed in a humble capacity to seek his fortune in the West Indies, and nothing was heard of him for above thirty years, when, after having been given up as dead by his friends, he made his reappearance in England.

Shortly after his departure Goldsmith wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, Daniel Hodson, Esq., of which the following is an extract; it was partly intended, no doubt, to dissipate any further

illusions concerning his fortunes which might float on the magnificent imagination of his friends in Ballymahon.

"I suppose you desire to know my present situation. As there is nothing in it at which I should blush, or which mankind could censure, I see no reason for making it a secret. In short, by a very little practice as a physician, and a very little reputation as a poet, I make a shift to live. Nothing is more apt to introduce us to the gates of the muses than poverty; but it were well if they only left us at the door. The mischief is they sometimes choose to give us their company to the entertainment; and want, instead of being gentleman-usher, often turns master of the ceremonies.

"Thus, upon learning I write, no doubt you imagine I starve; and the name of an author naturally reminds you of a garret. In this particular I do not think proper to undeceive my friends. But, whether I eat or starve, live in a first floor or four pairs of stairs high, I still remember them with ardor; nay, my very country comes in for a share of my affection. Unaccountable fondness for country, this *maladie du pais*, as the French call it! Unaccountable that he should still have an affection for a place, who never, when in it, received above common civility; who never brought anything out of it except his brogue and his blunders. Surely my affection is equally ridiculous with the Scotchman's, who refused to be cured of the itch because it made him unco' thoughtful of his wife and bonny Inverary.

"But now, to be serious: let me ask myself what gives me a wish to see Ireland again. The country is a fine one, perhaps? No. There are good company in Ireland? No. The conversation there is generally made up of a smutty toast or a bawdy song; the vivacity supported by some humble cousin, who had just folly enough to earn his dinner. Then, perhaps, there's more wit and learning among the Irish? Oh, Lord, no! There has been more money spent in the encouragement of the Padareen mare there one season than given in rewards to learned men since the time of Usher. All their productions in learning amount to perhaps a translation, or a few tracts in divinity; and all their productions in wit to just nothing at all. Why the plague, then, so fond of Ireland? Then, all at once, because you, my dear friend, and a few more who are exceptions to the general picture, have a residence there. This it is that gives me all the pangs I feel in separation. I confess I carry this spirit sometimes to the souring the pleasures I at present possess. If I go to the opera, where Signora Columba pours out all the mazes of melody, I sit and sigh for Lissoy fireside, and Johnny Armstrong's 'Last Good-night' from Peggy Golden. If I climb Hampstead Hill, than where nature never exhibited a more magnificent prospect, I confess it fine; but then I had rather be placed on the little mount before Lissoy gate, and there take in, to me, the most pleasing horizon in nature.

"Before Charles came hither my thoughts sometimes found refuge from severer studies among my friends in Ireland. I fancied strange revolutions at home; but I find it was the rapidity of my own motion that gave an imaginary one to objects really at rest. No alterations there. Some friends, he tells me, are still lean, but very rich; others very fat, but still very poor. Nay, all the news I hear of you is, that you sally out in visits among the neighbors, and sometimes make a migration from the blue bed to the brown. I could from my heart wish that you and she (Mrs. Hodson), and Lissoy and Ballymahon, and all of you, would fairly make a migration into Middlesex; though, upon second thoughts, this might be attended with a few inconveniences. Therefore, as the mountain will not come to Mohammed, why Mohammed shall go to the mountain; or, to speak plain English, as you cannot conveniently pay me a visit, if next summer I can contrive to be absent six weeks from London, I shall spend three of them among my friends in Ireland. But first, believe me, my design is purely to visit, and neither to cut a figure nor levy contributions; neither to excite envy nor solicit favor; in fact, my circumstances are adapted to neither. I am too poor to be gazed at, and too rich to need assistance."

CHAPTER NINE

HACKNEY AUTHORSHIP – THOUGHTS OF LITERARY SUICIDE – RETURN TO PECKHAM – ORIENTAL PROJECTS – LITERARY ENTERPRISE TO RAISE FUNDS – LETTER TO EDWARD WELLS – TO ROBERT BRYANTON – DEATH OF UNCLE CONTARINE – LETTER TO COUSIN JANE

For some time Goldsmith continued to write miscellaneously for reviews and other periodical publications, but without making any decided hit, to use a technical term. Indeed, as yet he appeared destitute of the strong excitement of literary ambition, and wrote only on the spur of necessity and at the urgent importunity of his bookseller. His indolent and truant disposition, ever averse from labor and delighting in holiday, had to be scourged up to its task; still it was this very truant disposition which threw an unconscious charm over everything he wrote; bringing with it honeyed thoughts and pictured images which had sprung up in his mind in the sunny hours of idleness: these effusions, dashed off on compulsion in the exigency of the moment, were published anonymously; so that they made no collective impression on the public, and reflected no fame on the name of their author.

In an essay published some time subsequently in the "Bee," Goldsmith adverts, in his own humorous way, to his impatience at the tardiness with which his desultory and unacknowledged essays crept into notice. "I was once induced," says he, "to show my indignation against the public by discontinuing my efforts to please; and was bravely resolved, like Raleigh, to vex them by burning my manuscripts in a passion. Upon reflection, however, I considered what set or body of people would be displeased at my rashness. The sun, after so sad an accident, might shine next morning as bright as usual; men might laugh and sing the next day, and transact business as before; and not a single creature feel any regret but myself. Instead of having Apollo in mourning or the Muses in a fit of the spleen; instead of having the learned world apostrophizing at my untimely decease; perhaps all Grub Street might laugh at my fate, and self-approving dignity be unable to shield me from ridicule."

Circumstances occurred about this time to give a new direction to Goldsmith's hopes and schemes. Having resumed for a brief period the superintendence of the Peckham school during a fit of illness of Dr. Milner, that gentleman, in requital for his timely services, promised to use his influence with a friend, an East India director, to procure him a medical appointment in India.

There was every reason to believe that the influence of Dr. Milner would be effectual; but how was Goldsmith to find the ways and means of fitting himself out for a voyage to the Indies? In this emergency he was driven to a more extended exercise of the pen than he had yet attempted. His skirmishing among books as a reviewer, and his disputatious ramble among the schools and universities and literati of the Continent, had filled his mind with facts and observations which he now set about digesting into a treatise of some magnitude, to be entitled "An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe." As the work grew on his hands his sanguine temper ran ahead of his labors. Feeling secure of success in England, he was anxious to forestall the piracy of the Irish press; for as yet, the Union not having taken place, the English law of copyright did not extend to the other side of the Irish Channel. He wrote, therefore, to his friends in Ireland, urging them to circulate his proposals for his contemplated work, and obtain subscriptions payable in advance; the money to be transmitted to a Mr. Bradley, an eminent bookseller in Dublin, who would give a receipt for it and be accountable for the delivery of the books. The letters written by him on this occasion are worthy of copious citation as being full of character and interest. One was to his relative and college intimate, Edward Wells, who had studied for the bar, but was now living at ease on his estate at Roscommon. "You have quitted," writes Goldsmith, "the plan of life which you once intended to pursue, and given up ambition for domestic tranquillity. I cannot avoid feeling some regret that one of

my few friends has declined a pursuit in which he had every reason to expect success. I have often let my fancy loose when you were the subject, and have imagined you gracing the bench, or thundering at the bar: while I have taken no small pride to myself, and whispered to all that I could come near, that this was my cousin. Instead of this, it seems, you are merely contented to be a happy man; to be esteemed by your acquaintances; to cultivate your paternal acres; to take unmolested a nap under one of your own hawthorns or in Mrs. Wells' bedchamber, which, even a poet must confess, is rather the more comfortable place of the two. But, however your resolutions may be altered with regard to your situation in life, I persuade myself they are unalterable with respect to your friends in it. I cannot think the world has taken such entire possession of that heart (once so susceptible of friendship) as not to have left a corner there for a friend or two, but I flatter myself that even I have a place among the number. This I have a claim to from the similitude of our dispositions; or setting that aside, I can demand it as a right by the most equitable law of nature; I mean that of retaliation; for indeed you have more than your share in mine. I am a man of few professions; and yet at this very instant I cannot avoid the painful apprehension that my present professions (which speak not half my feelings) should be considered only as a pretext to cover a request, as I have a request to make. No, my dear Ned, I know you are too generous to think so, and you know me too proud to stoop to unnecessary insincerity – I have a request, it is true, to make; but as I know to whom I am a petitioner, I make it without diffidence or confusion. It is in short, this, I am going to publish a book in London," etc. The residue of the letter specifies the nature of the request, which was merely to aid in circulating his proposals and obtaining subscriptions. The letter of the poor author, however, was unattended to and unacknowledged by the prosperous Mr. Wells, of Roscommon, though in after years he was proud to claim relationship to Dr. Goldsmith, when he had risen to celebrity.

Another of Goldsmith's letters was to Robert Bryanton, with whom he had long ceased to be in correspondence. "I believe," writes he, "that they who are drunk, or out of their wits, fancy everybody else in the same condition. Mine is a friendship that neither distance nor tune can efface, which is probably the reason that, for the soul of me, I can't avoid thinking yours of the same complexion; and yet I have many reasons for being of a contrary opinion, else why, in so long an absence, was I never made a partner in your concerns? To hear of your success would have given me the utmost pleasure; and a communication of your very disappointments would divide the uneasiness I too frequently feel for my own. Indeed, my dear Bob, you don't conceive how unkindly you have treated one whose circumstances afford him few prospects of pleasure, except those reflected from the happiness of his friends. However, since you have not let me hear from you, I have in some measure disappointed your neglect by frequently thinking of you. Every day or so I remember the calm anecdotes of your life, from the fireside to the easy-chair; recall the various adventures that first cemented our friendship; the school, the college, or the tavern; preside in fancy over your cards; and am displeased at your bad play when the rubber goes against you, though not with all that agony of soul as when I was once your partner. Is it not strange that two of such like affections should be so much separated, and so differently employed as we are? You seem placed at the center of fortune's wheel, and, let it revolve ever so fast, are insensible of the motion. I seem to have been tied to the circumference, and whirled disagreeably round, as if on a whirligig."

He then runs into a whimsical and extravagant tirade about his future prospects. The wonderful career of fame and fortune that awaits him, and after indulging in all kinds of humorous gasconades, concludes: "Let me, then, stop my fancy to take a view of my future self – and, as the boys say, light down to see myself on horseback. Well, now that I am down, where the d – l *is I*? Oh gods! gods! here in a garret, writing for bread, and expecting to be dunned for a milk score!"

He would, on this occasion, have doubtless written to his uncle Contarine, but that generous friend was sunk into a helpless, hopeless state from which death soon released him.

Cut off thus from the kind co-operation of his uncle, he addresses a letter to his daughter Jane, the companion of his schoolboy and happy days, now the wife of Mr. Lawder. The object was to

secure her interest with her husband in promoting the circulation of his proposals. The letter is full of character.

"If you should ask," he begins, "why, in an interval of so many years, you never heard from me, permit me, madam, to ask the same question. I have the best excuse in recrimination. I wrote to Kilmore from Leyden in Holland, from Louvain in Flanders, and Rouen in France, but received no answer. To what could I attribute this silence but to displeasure or forgetfulness? Whether I was right in my conjecture I do not pretend to determine; but this I must ingenuously own that I have a thousand times in my turn endeavored to forget *them*, whom I could not but look upon as forgetting *me*. I have attempted to blot their names from my memory, and, I confess it, spent whole days in efforts to tear their image from my heart. Could I have succeeded, you had not now been troubled with this renewal of a discontinued correspondence; but, as every effort the restless make to procure sleep serves but to keep them waking, all my attempts contributed to impress what I would forget deeper on my imagination. But this subject I would willingly turn from, and yet, 'for the soul of me,' I can't till I have said all. I was, madam, when I discontinued writing to Kilmore, in such circumstances that all my endeavors to continue your regards might be attributed to wrong motives. My letters might be looked upon as the petitions of a beggar, and not the offerings of a friend; while all my professions, instead of being considered as the result of disinterested esteem, might be ascribed to venal insincerity. I believe, indeed, you had too much generosity to place them in such a light, but I could not bear even the shadow of such a suspicion. The most delicate friendships are always most sensible of the slightest invasion, and the strongest jealousy is ever attendant on the warmest regard. I could not – I own I could not – continue a correspondence in which every acknowledgment for past favors might be considered as an indirect request for future ones; and where it might be thought I gave my heart from a motive of gratitude alone, when I was conscious of having bestowed it on much more disinterested principles. It is true, this conduct might have been simple enough; but yourself must confess it was in character. Those who know me at all, know that I have always been actuated by different principles from the rest of mankind: and while none regarded the interest of his friend more, no man on earth regarded his own less. I have often affected bluntness to avoid the imputation of flattery; have frequently seemed to overlook those merits too obvious to escape notice, and pretended disregard to those instances of good nature and good sense, which I could not fail tacitly to applaud; and all this lest I should be ranked among the grinning tribe, who say 'very true' to all that is said; who fill a vacant chair at a tea-table; whose narrow souls never moved in a wider circle than the circumference of a guinea; and who had rather be reckoning the money in your pocket than the virtue in your breast. All this, I say, I have done, and a thousand other very silly, though very disinterested, things in my time, and for all which no soul cares a farthing about me… Is it to be wondered that he should once in his life forget you, who has been all his life forgetting himself? However, it is probable you may one of these days see me turned into a perfect hunks, and as dark and intricate as a mouse-hole. I have already given my landlady orders for an entire reform in the state of my finances. I declaim against hot suppers, drink less sugar in my tea, and check my grate with brickbats. Instead of hanging my room with pictures, I intend to adorn it with maxims of frugality. Those will make pretty furniture enough, and won't be a bit too expensive; for I will draw them all out with my own hands, and my landlady's daughter shall frame them with the parings of my black waistcoat. Each maxim is to be inscribed on a sheet of clean paper, and wrote with my best pen; of which the following will serve as a specimen. *Look sharp: Mind the main chance: Money is money now: If you have a thousand pounds you can put your hands by your sides, and say you are worth a thousand pounds every day of the year: Take a farthing from a hundred and it will be a hundred no longer.*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.