

Oliver Goldsmith

(1730 - 1774)

Biography

Oliver Goldsmith was born on November 10th, 1730. His birthplace is disputed, but it is most probably Pallasmore, County Longford. At the age of eight, he had a severe attack of smallpox which disfigured him for life. He received a B.A. degree in February 1749 from Trinity College Dublin, before he left Ireland in 1752 to study medicine in Edinburgh. He subsequently wandered through Europe, supporting himself by begging and by playing the flute, before settling in London.



His most famous works are his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), his long poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his play *She Stoops to Conquer* (a comedy; 1773). His voluminous lesser-known works include *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759), *Retaliation* (Essays, 1774), *Memoirs of M. de Voltaire* (1761); *The History of England* (1771), *The Citizen of the World or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, residing in London, to his Friend in the East* (1760-1761), *Plutarch's Lives, Abridged from the Greek* (1762), *The Art of Poetry* (1762), *The Traveler or A Prospect of Society* (1764), *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature* (1774), *An History of England in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son* (1764), *A Concise History of Philosophy and Philosophers* (translated by Goldsmith from the French of Forme; 1766), *A Short English Grammar* (1766), *Poems for Young Ladies* (collected; 1767); *Beauties of English Poesy* (1767), *The Good Natured Man* (a comedy; 1768); *A Survey of Experimental Philosophy* (published posthumously 1776), and *The Haunch of Venison* (published posthumously 1776).

Oliver Goldsmith was extravagant in taste and recklessly generous, to the extent that he died leaving debts of £2000. He never married, but had a close relationship with Mary Horneck, with whom he fell in love in 1769. He died after a short illness in the spring of 1774, and is buried in the churchyard of the Church of Saint Mary, also known as The Temple, in London. His epitaph, by Johnson, includes the famous line: *Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit* (He touched nothing that he did not adorn)¹.

¹ "Oliver Goldsmith", *Irish Writers Online*, www.irishwriters-online.com/olivergoldsmith.html

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