

**LONGMAN'S ENGLISH
CLASSICS. THE
VICAR OF WAKEFIELD**

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Longman's English Classics. The Vicar of Wakefield by Oliver Goldsmith & Mary A. Jordan & George Rice Carpenter

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OLIVER GOLDSMITH & MARY A. JORDAN & GEORGE RICE CARPENTER

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EDITED BY

GEORGE RICE CARPENTER, A.B.

PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ENGLISH COMPOSITION IN COLUMBIA COLLEGE

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OLIVER GOLDSMITH

(After the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds)

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OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S
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EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

MARY A. JORDAN, A.M.

PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND OLD ENGLISH IN SMITH COLLEGE



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PREFACE

Few books have less to gain from the commentator than has the "Vicar of Wakefield." And for this there are two reasons. One lies in the nature of the theme, the other in the style. There is no wide or varied use of dialect, no close study of trades or of technical processes, no painstaking reproduction of remote times or ancient customs. The people, the places, the occupations, the interests described, are easily intelligible, though they are not all familiar to the boys and girls of the United States. Goldsmith's style is the perfection of colloquial ease and readiness. In detail it is often not clear, but in general effect it is always vivid. The pupil, therefore, who is to read this book has a different task from that set him in the case of many other works of fiction. His success in mastering the book will not consist in large additions to his information, nor in a varied but definite extension of his knowledge of the world he lives in and of the effect of surroundings on the character and purposes of the men and women he meets. The gain he will get from "reading and practice" in the "Vicar of Wakefield" will be an increase in his powers of literary appreciation. That is, he will read good literature with less effort and more pleasure. And this pleasure no foot-notes can give him. For the most of his literary enjoyment of the right sort he will always have himself to thank, and in getting it he will have to depend upon himself. The editor has tried to supply the few helps that seemed desirable or necessary, but has avoided offering any suggestion where the pupil might

reasonably be expected to see for himself or apply again the information already given by notes.

In order to get the greatest pleasure out of the reading and the earliest possible sense of the literary form of the story, the pupil is advised to read it straight through, if feasible, at a single sitting. The feeling that the story is a sort of show or spectacle, where light, color, sound and human life make a pleasing combination, should be encouraged, and the reader should, as it were, taste the book as he goes along. Whenever he is conscious that he needs help to understand what is going on, he should consult the notes. After an interval of from a day to a fortnight let him take up the story again and read it carefully, a chapter at a time, asking himself what contribution to the progress of the plot is made by each chapter. He should try to see how the way in which Goldsmith says things and talks about life makes the things and the life more interesting than they are without Goldsmith's help. He should notice what mannerisms appear in the course of the story, and learn to take pleasure in the variety and richness of suggestion they supply. He should, in short, try to get at the secret of Goldsmith's pleasure in writing his story and share it.

For the wider literary interests suggested by the story, the pupil must follow out the implication of the notes. Such study is extraneous to the "Vicar of Wakefield," however naturally it may follow from it. The present editor believes that before young students try to become learned in what other people think and feel about masterpieces they should make an intelligent and modest beginning at thinking and feeling themselves.

The text is that of the fifth edition, that of 1773, the last before Goldsmith's death. The title page (page 1) is that of the first edition.

M. A. J.

SMITH COLLEGE, *April*, 1896.