

**GOLDSMITH'S THE  
TRAVELLER, AND THE  
DESERTED VILLAGE: GRAY'S  
ELEGY AND OTHER POEMS**

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Goldsmith's the Traveller, and the Deserted Village: Gray's Elegy and Other Poems by James F. Hosic & Ashley H. Thorndike

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**JAMES F. HOSIC & ASHLEY H. THORNDIKE**

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# LONGMANS' ENGLISH CLASSICS

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GOLDSMITH'S  
THE TRAVELLER, AND  
THE DESERTED VILLAGE

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GRAY'S  
ELEGY  
AND OTHER POEMS

Longmans' English Classics

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GRAY'S  
E L E G Y  
AND OTHER POEMS

EDITED

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION BY

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## INTRODUCTION

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GRAY and Goldsmith were contemporaries. Born in the so-called Age of Pope, both lived well on into the period of English letters dominated by Samuel Johnson. The works of both give indications of the dawning romanticism which was to result in the period of Wordsworth and Scott. Both were writers of fluent and admirable prose as well as poets. And there are some personal resemblances. Both found the prescribed work of college, especially mathematics, distasteful, and preferred to read at will; both travelled extensively on the continent; neither married. But the likenesses between the two are few and mainly superficial. In temperament, in experience, in kind and quantity of work, our authors were very different. Gray was a sober, retiring scholar, who lived by choice within college walls near the great libraries, shrinking from notoriety and cherishing a few friends with intellectual sympathies like his own. He was a painstaking student, devoted to knowledge for its own sake, keenly critical, and loth to publish his literary efforts to the world. Goldsmith, on the other hand, was convivial to a degree. He loved the society of his fellows, even the humblest and the rudest, and was warmly loved by them in return. His parents were poor. He himself was the victim of chronic improvidence and of a soft heart, which refused no demand

upon his charity; so that he was unable, like Gray, to live the life of a gentleman reading for pleasure. After many fruitless adventures he settled in the heart of London and slaved for the booksellers to earn his daily bread. Hack work, however, could not wholly stifle his genius. He became a member of the Literary Club and an intimate of Johnson, Garrick, Burke, and Reynolds. He wrote the *Traveller*, the *Deserted Village*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, *She Stoops to Conquer*; and before his death he had gained much of the recognition and popularity he sought.

We must read the poems of these two writers, then, from somewhat different points of view. The interest in Gray must inevitably be largely in his method. He was a conscious literary experimenter and very sensitive to all the intellectual currents and counter-currents of his times. His odes, for example, are clever attempts to carry Greek and Italian models over into English verse. As a whole, his work represents three distinct periods of development, in each of which a particular interest predominates. He began as a classicist, an avowed admirer of Dryden and Pope; with the *Elegy* he joined the followers of Milton; and finally he became a student of early Norse and Welsh literature and wrote poems based upon these sources. All his work shows the greatest familiarity with classic writers, especially the poets, both of England and of Italy and Greece. He has the scholar's fondness for remote allusion, and he echoes, often consciously, many memorable phrases from the authors he knew so well. With the exception of the *Elegy*, the human interest is not strong in Gray, and even in that poem the experience is broadly typical. It holds us rather by its exquisite poetic tone and perfect expression than by the appeal of the emotion. We shall do well, therefore, to read Gray's poems with an