

**Cambridge Plain Texts**

**GOLDSMITH**  
**THE GOOD-NATUR'D MAN**

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68210-8 - Goldsmith: The Good-Natur'd Man

Frontmatter

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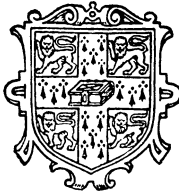
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## NOTE

AMONG the legacies of a happy genius that touched nothing it did not adorn, OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728–1774) has left the world two delightful Comedies. But *The Good-Natur'd Man* has never enjoyed, on the stage at any rate, a tittle of the good fortune attendant on his younger sister *She Stoops to Conquer*. We may find the reason for this, if we choose, in the nature of things, and say that our good-natur'd man, Honeywood, was designed—like Goldsmith himself—to be a butt. Garrick took the MS. of the play, doubted its success, made suggestions for improving it, paltered with its sensitive author, and added final injury to supposed insult by forestalling Goldsmith with a rival production, *False Delicacy*, written by Hugh Kelly.

*False Delicacy* was produced at Drury Lane on Saturday, January 23, 1768, *The Good-Natur'd Man* at the rival house of Covent Garden six nights later. Johnson, Burke, Reynolds and other members of the Literary Club turned up to cheer. The play was saved, as by fire, by the acting of Shuter in the part of 'Croaker'—saved twice before the curtain fell. It ran for ten nights, and the author received something between £350 and £400 by benefit performances on the third, sixth and ninth nights. Kelly's forgotten play brought him more than £700 in book rights alone.

Goldsmith, too, printed, and promptly; in a preface returning 'upon the whole' his thanks to the public for

the favourable reception *The Good-Natur'd Man* had met with. The preface ends, as did Dr Johnson's Prologue, spoken on the first night, with a simple claim that the play be judged on its merit. No one can deny a handsome award to the characters of Croaker and Lofty—whose pretence and detection make together one of the finest things in English comedy—or wholesome laughter to the general fun of the plot.

Q.

December, 1920

## PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY DR JOHNSON :

SPOKEN BY MR BENSLEY

PREST by the load of life, the weary mind  
Surveys the general toil of human kind;  
With cool submission joins the labouring train,  
And social sorrow loses half its pain:  
Our anxious Bard, without complaint, may share  
This bustling season's epidemic care,  
Like Cæsar's pilot, dignified by fate,  
Tost in one common storm with all the great;  
Distrest alike, the statesman and the wit,  
When one a Borough courts, and one the Pit.  
The busy candidates for power and fame,  
Have hopes, and fears, and wishes, just the same;  
Disabled both to combat, or to fly,  
Must hear all taunts, and hear without reply.  
Uncheck'd on both, loud rabbles vent their rage,  
As mongrels bay the lion in a cage.  
Th' offended burgess hoards his angry tale,  
For that blest year when all that vote may rail;  
Their schemes of spite the poet's foes dismiss,  
Till that glad night, when all that hate may hiss.  
This day the powder'd curls and golden coat,  
Says swelling Crispin, begg'd a cobbler's vote.  
This night, our wit, the pert apprentice cries,  
Lies at my feet, I hiss him, and he dies.

The great, 'tis true, can charm th' electing tribe;  
The bard may supplicate, but cannot bribe.  
Yet judg'd by those, whose voices ne'er were sold,  
He feels no want of ill-persuading gold;  
But, confident of praise, if praise be due,  
Trusts without fear, to merit, and to you.