

Goldsmith Visits Me*

DR FARR

From the time of Goldsmith's leaving Edinburgh, in the year 1754, I never saw him till 1756, when I was in London, attending the hospitals and lectures; early in January [1756 is an evident mistake for 1757] he called upon me one morning before I was up, and on my entering the room, I recognised 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 a 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 more earnestly pressed him not to trust to my judgment, but to the opinion of persons better qualified to decide on dramatic compositions, on which he told me he had submitted his production, so far as he had written, to Mr Richardson, the author of *Clarissa*, on which I peremptorily declined offering another criticism on the performance. The name and subject of the tragedy have unfortunately escaped my memory, neither do I recollect with exactness how much he had written, though I am inclined to believe that he had not completed the third act; I never heard whether he afterwards finished it. In this visit I remember his relating a strange Quixotic scheme he had in contemplation 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 300*l.* per annum, which had been left for the purpose, was the temptation!

NOTE

Dr Farr was one of Goldsmith's fellow-students at Edinburgh.

* In John Forster, *The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith* (London: Bradbury et al., 1854) p. 51. Editor's title.