The Vicar of Wakefield
by Oliver Goldsmith (1728/1730-1774)

Published in 1766, The Vicar of Wakefield was Oliver Goldsmith’s only novel. It was thought to have been sold to the publisher for £60 on Oliver Goldsmith’s behalf by Dr Johnson to enable Goldsmith to pay off outstanding rent and to release himself from his landlady’s arrest. It is the story of the family of Dr. Primrose, a benevolent vicar, and follows them through their fall from fortune and their ultimate rise again. The story provides insight into family life and circumstances in the mid 18th century and the plot has many aspects of a pantomime-like quality: Impersonation, deception, an aristocratic villain and the abduction of a beautiful heroine.

Goldsmith himself dissipated his savings on gambling while a student at Trinity College, Dublin, and subsequently travelled in Europe sustaining himself by playing the flute and disputing doctrinal matters in monasteries and universities. Later he worked as an apothecary’s assistant, a doctor and a school usher (experiences shared in this story by Dr Primrose’s son).

Read by Martin Clifton
Total runtime: 6:23:19

Cover design by Kathryn Delaney
Illustration for The Vicar of Wakefield by J. Massey Wright (1773-1866)