

ARTS & LETTERS



Olivia Primrose with Squire Thornhill in Oliver Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield. The plight of such "sweetly pathetic" maidens symbolized to many 18th-century English readers the decline of parental control.

From *The Vicar of Wakefield*, by Oliver Goldsmith. © 1939 by The Heritage Club.

Soon, even this system broke down. The English could no longer tolerate laws that viewed young women as little more than chattel. Starting in the late 18th century, English courts began treating women as individuals, and during the 19th century, young girls came under the protection of statutory rape laws.

English popular novelists, however, focused not on the maiden's suffering but on the parents' lasting shame and loss. In the popular *Charlotte Temple* (1801), Susanna Rowson wrote that daughters cry tears, but aggrieved fathers weep "drops . . . from bleeding hearts." The authors usually kept their protagonists out of court, refusing even to acknowledge the state's new role. Their readers, concludes Staves, shed tears "not only for the death of innocence, but also for the death of an idealized older form of the family."

OTHER NATIONS

Is Britain Reviving?

"Don't Sell the Great Thatcher Experiment Short" by Walter Guzzardi, Jr., in *Fortune* (May 18, 1981), Time-Life Building, Chicago, Ill. 60611.

By many standards, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's conservative prescriptions for Britain's sick economy seem to have flopped. Unemployment has doubled to 10 percent since she took office in 1979, and

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corporate profits and national output both are down. But Guzzardi, a *Fortune* editor, contends that her programs are beginning to work.

Government efforts to slow the growth of the money supply have cut inflation in Britain by nearly half, to 12.5 percent, since 1980. However, some of Thatcher's own advisers think that she has relied on a gauge that overstates expansions of the money supply (e.g., by counting bank loans but not the purchase of certificates of deposit, which loans often finance). As a result, they believe, she has slowed economic growth unnecessarily. In fact, her strategy has been partly thwarted by the Bank of England, which has been increasing the money supply to keep down interest rates and ensure the flow of capital to private industry.

Thatcher's most serious failure has been her inability to reduce the costly burden of government, writes Guzzardi. Britain's deficit last year rose to \$30 billion, prompting the reluctant conservatives to raise individual and corporate taxes. The central government now soaks up more than 45 percent of the country's gross national product (versus 23 percent in the United States). Thanks to a Thatcher campaign pledge, government employees (who comprise 21 percent of the work force) have seen their salaries climb by as much as one-fourth. And \$10 billion went to the 1.5 million people thrown out of work last year, most of them in the private sector.

Yet Britain's private companies have been streamlining their operations "to a degree impossible in better times," observes Guzzardi. They have shut down their least efficient plants. And unions in the private sector have accepted wage hikes more than 50 percent below those won by government workers. Guzzardi expects private industry's "inventory runoff" to end in late 1981 and production to rise. If Thatcher can hold inflation steady, these "toughened up" companies may spark the renewed growth that Britain desperately needs.

Revising China's Past

"In Search of China's Beginnings: New Light on an Old Civilization" by K. C. Chang, in *American Scientist* (Mar.-Apr. 1981), 345 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn. 06511.

During the past 30 years, archaeological finds across the People's Republic have forced scholars to revise many cherished ideas about China's remote past.

Until the 1970s, specialists believed that agriculture in China began around 3000 B.C.—late in the world's "prehistory"—reports Chang, a Harvard anthropologist. This indicated that farming spread to China from the Middle East or Southeast Asia, where agriculture began several millennia earlier. China's first farmers—the Yangshao people—lived in the Yellow River basin, grew millet, raised dogs and pigs, lived in earthen houses, and fashioned painted red pottery.

By 2200 B.C., this New Stone Age culture had produced China's first recorded hereditary dynasty, the Xia. They developed China's first