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also, of course, "the revealed happiness which comes from scribbling," a wine both ladies had savored the greater part of their lives.

Of the two, Madame Blanc was more the woman of the world, Miss Jewett more the provincial; Madame Blanc the social analyst, Miss Jewett the social empathizer; Madame Blanc outspoken, Miss Jewett benign. There inhered, however, enough of each quality within the other to bring about a near-perfect fusion. The historiography of letters is richer for this happy conjunction.



MADAME BLANC'S "LE ROMAN DE LA
FEMME-MÉDECIN"

Translated by ARCHILLE H. BIRON

[*Note:* In the preceding article Richard Cary has traced the progress and quality of the friendship between Sarah Orne Jewett and Marie Thérèse Blanc, who wrote under the pen name of Th. Bentzon. It is notable that their relationship sprang from the appearance of a review of Miss Jewett's *A Country Doctor* (1884) written by Madame Blanc for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, LXVII (February 1, 1885), 598-632. For students of Sarah Orne Jewett to whom the *Revue* is not available or to whom French is a language as yet unriddled, this translation is helpfully offered. This essay-review deals, in fact, not only with Miss Jewett's first orthodox novel but also with *Deephaven* and three collections of her short stories and sketches. Madame Blanc's introductory survey of the status of women is eliminated as not immediately relevant to consideration of Miss Jewett's accomplishment as a novelist. Also eliminated are numerous superfluous plot summaries and long quotations from text. What remain are Madame Blanc's insights and judgments.]

Before giving here the analysis of *A Country Doctor*, we shall make known its author. The preceding works of Sarah Orne Jewett, and what they reveal of this singularly sympathetic personality, lend a good deal of weight to the crusade begun by her with as much frankness as prudence in favor of the free woman. Her patronage is among those that oblige the most recalcitrant to take up a doubtful cause. No author can be less suspected than Miss Jewett of firing bold pistol shots to assemble and amuse the crowd. She had limited herself up to now to exquisite pictures of nature. Her premier

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book, entitled *Country By-Ways*, has the kind of charm that formerly assured such a genuine success to the rural sketches of another authoress almost contemporaneous with Walter Scott, Mary Russell Mitford; it is also dedicated to an adored father, "the best teacher, the best friend, the wisest of men," Doctor Jewett, whose lessons shaped the young mind of his daughter, while they both wandered together through these country lanes which afterward were to be the point of departure of a literary fortune. In fact, *Country By-Ways* is only distinguished from *Our Village*, the village of Miss Mitford, situated in the south of Great Britain, by the penetrating tang of the soil which transports us from the first lines to that New England, humorous and puritanical at the same time. A like sentiment has dictated both books: the need, full of tenderness, to paint as one sees them the local scenes, the humble familiar faces, goodness and happiness exist, that the way to meet them is to seek for them in nature, in the open air, in the full sunlight. Miss Mitford has outlined this framework; Miss Jewett, after her, sought to fill it in by using new types and new colors. At first she forbade herself to go far; however, many profound and even bold things will be found in the limits that she traced on the rapid current that we descend in her pleasant company. [Here Madame Blanc quotes several paragraphs from the opening of "River Driftwood."]

There is a sample of Miss Jewett's manner, if one can call *manner* the natural bent of her mind towards digressions. More than one American humorist has followed this serpentine road in the steps of old English essayists; unfortunately, they all fall into an almost inevitable mistake, verbosity. Wendell Holmes, himself, the famous author of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, does not know how to contain within reasonable limits the happy wanderings of his thought. Miss Jewett, on the contrary, has the merit, everywhere rare, of a brief and concise form without dryness. The capricious flight of her reflections makes her fly swiftly away: we were considering the smallest details of the earth, and suddenly we are flying in the open sky; the same poetic and religious burst as in *Les Horizons Prochains* or in *Vesper*, those divine little feminine books. But, less dreamy than her Genevan emulator, less tormented, the author of *Country By-Ways* always chases away

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with a gay smile, in which is reflected an imperturbable moral health, the tears which were going to rise to her eyes. Like Mme. de Gasparin, moreover, she pervades us with esteem for such little people who turn out to be very original persons, very proud and having the right to be. With that, a sort of devotion for the colonial period, those old times of America whose memories have constantly surrounded her; besides, the gift of hearing all the learned or troubling things the smallest insect of the woods whispers to the most insignificant blade of grass; the qualities of a painter borrowed at the same time from the Dutch realists or from Claude Lorrain, according to whether it is a question of a portrait or a landscape; an ingenuous amalgam of pantheism and of Christian morals; these are the principal characteristics of a feminine talent, if there ever was one, nourished by charitable intentions.

Let us embark on the boat, which sometimes takes a complete afternoon to go two miles, it tarries so long by the least bend in the bank. We shall not complain of the slowness of our guide, rocked as we shall be by the most varied desultory talks: they begin with the history of this unknown arm of the Piscataqua, which flows between Maine and New Hampshire, history of an aquatic highway very commercial in the time when the land routes were neither sure nor practical. Formerly, the Indians used to fish for salmon in it; even before . . . But here the retrospective curiosity of Miss Jewett encounters barriers which bother her. How few people worry about a thing in itself, of what this thing was before any bonds attached it to the needs or to the pleasures of the human species! What philologist worries about discovering how a pug-dog expresses itself before engaging a big dog to help it in a fight? Who preoccupies himself with knowing exactly the tune which, played by Orpheus or Amphion, calms wild animals, the rocks themselves, and of finding the key of friendly conversations between the old saints and the swallows? That is the science, however, that our subtle American would possess; she has a respect for animals who, gifted differently from us, are perhaps better so on a given point. She believes that the day of universal suffrage above all will come, when the reason-for-being of all creatures will finally be understood, when the smallest will have their proper rights and values, for the life of this atom

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emanates from God's; its material form is the manifestation of a thought, this body encloses a soul; yes, the body of a muskrat, which chases the mussels of the river, and the body of this mussel which awaits a certain death by the bite of the muskrat. What a pity that each being is thus the prey of another! Death, which conserves and raises our identity, is still full of consolations; but how can one reconcile a bird, for example, with its fate, which is to become a part of the plumpness of a cat, traitor to its nature, creeping in wait? In spite of this question which embarrasses her, the lovable storyteller pleases herself in supposing that our death is only a link in a chain, that progress proceeds uninterruptedly. Grass sprouts all perfumed from the cold earth; the ox which browses on it and chews it, assimilates it to itself, as later on the human being will assimilate its flesh to itself, which will become a part of this human being. We do not know what an angel is, but the life that is in us will one day be necessary to form this angel.

And, from digressions to theories, from paradoxes to truths, we glide along the current of the water like wood adrift, "River Driftwood," questioning along the way a flowering rush about the most serious social problems, on the most solemn problems of life and death, or gathering along the destroyed quays the story of the ancestors who inhabited these old domiciles, remaining a hundred times more imposing than the new ones. [*Here Madame Blanc summarizes the content of "An October Ride" and "From a Mournful Villager," and makes brief mention of "Andrew's Fortune."*]

The thread of simple and brief stories that alternates with the effects of the sun, with the promenades and the pure and simple vagabondage of familiar speech, this thread, light as that of a cobweb, would not be able to support many embroideries. The skillful worker knows how to embellish it without overburdening it. Her heroes, her heroines, are only accessory figures sketched in two strokes, expressive and good likenesses notwithstanding, just what is necessary in order to give life to the picture—landscape as in "The Landless Farmer," an interior picture as in "Good Luck," sea effect caused by a ray of sunshine as in "The Mate of the Daylight," little scenes of clerical habits and country customs seen through a magnifying glass as in "A New Parishioner," etc. The un-

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couthness of dialect, introduced here and there, develops without affectation the rare purity of style, as flowing as it is original.

A jewel in this modest genre is the little book which, by means of the walks and conversations of two young girls, gives us so vivid an impression of the appearance of the New England coasts and of the character of the inhabitants of an old abandoned port, *Deephaven*. One leaves this reading fortified in mind, as are physically, by the salt air, the two friends who tell us about their summer stay on this unpretentious beach. Together they establish themselves alone, while their parents travel and, from the beginning of the story, bursts forth this taste for independence that education encourages instead of suppressing in the American woman. The happy hermits of *Deephaven* are naively delighted to run their little household, to feel weighing upon them the burden of material life, to have to be occupied with provisions under penalty of famine. Notice that they are persons as cultivated as intelligent, capable of reading Emerson in their free moments. But the free moments are here much better employed in the open air. In their company we take on the tastes of children of six years; we wander in the sand looking for shells, from the height of the lighthouse we are present at innumerable sunsets; we listen attentively to the stories of old retired sea captains who form the society of the place; we discover tragedies in the inscriptions in the cemetery which recall so many shipwrecks. They row, they fish like little sailors and are not lacking in gentility for it; briefly, their society is so attractive that we also leave with regret this *Deephaven* where one could have easily been bored and where on the contrary one always had a good time, thanks to an imperturbable good humor, to the happy faculty of enjoying everything, to the discernment full of benevolence which makes the observer guess at a diamond in the rough, a savory fruit in its spiny or rough bark, a beautiful soul beneath the tanned skin of the roughest sea wolf.

To enjoy the slightest things, to get something out of everything, this is the secret that Miss Jewett teaches in every line without preaching; for her there is no life irremediably ruined, no misfortune that does not have its good side: "The great griefs of our youth sometimes become the charm of our ma-

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ture age; we can remember them only with a smile." Those who expect too much from fate will go to her school with profit and will find it well to know the spinsters whose adorable varieties she presents to us, from the placid Miss Horatia, who preserves silently in the depths of her heart the memory of a fiancé lost at sea, happy in her widowhood because she feels the romance of her youthful years etched more and more clearly instead of fading away, as a long faithfulness ennobles her in her eyes and in the eyes of her neighbors; from that touching Horatia who one day sees the so-called dead man for whose return she weeps, without recognizing her, in the guise of an old debauched vagabond drunkard, succored in passing with a mixture of horror and compassion, to the servant Melissa, who keeps to the end of her laborious career the resistant greenness of the cedar, her rough qualities of *freshness*, *toughness*, and *quaintness*, untranslatable in any language, *la fraîcheur*, *la solidité*, *la bizarerie*, which seem to represent them, only giving a feeble and incomplete idea; from Miss Catherine Spring, the model housekeeper, who, in going to fetch a penny's worth of cream, brings back a fortune in her milk jug, to Miss Sydney, who after having loved flowers with a selfish passion, ends by sacrificing her loved ones to the pleasures of the little sick one in a children's hospital, to the joy of poor beings who are flowers in their own manner, flowers ready to blossom in the garden of whoever consoles them, flowers which bless you for having blessed them, which love you for having loved them, flowers which have eyes like yours, thoughts like yours, a life similar to your life.

The art of interesting us in details, even in the infinitely small details of cooking, for example, in the works of Sarah Jewett, to the same point as in the works of a Van Ostade or a Gerard Dow; outside she listens to the grass growing, so to speak, and she makes us share her sensation; on the hearth, she flatters our sense of smell with the appetizing aromas of a family supper; she forces us to appreciate the savory confection of pound cake. She *is* realistic; in the sense that all that seems unbelievable, falsely exalted, repels her strangely; she has used, however, the fantastic or semi-fantastic element in two of her stories: "A Sorrowful Guest" and "Lady Ferry." "A Sorrowful Guest" is a poor devil who is unceasingly ob-

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sessed by hallucinations; during the war, on the eve of a battle, he has exchanged a strange vow with his best friend: each has sworn half seriously, half jokingly, that the first to die would come back to haunt the other. Now, one of the companions disappeared, is believed killed; immediately the constant horrible illusion begins for the survivor. This phenomenon of a stricken imagination must evidently be the prelude to madness since at the end of the story it so happens that the would-be dead man, the inconvenient ghost, was only a deserter. In this little story, marvelous in precision, is betrayed the analytical science of a doctor; Doctor Jewett must have talked with his daughter a good deal about mental disorders, their causes, and their progressive pace.

There is also insanity in "Lady Ferry," this ruin of the past so old, so old that one cannot count her age, and who believes herself condemned to life eternal; but for the child who is supposed to tell us about her relations with the would-be immortal mummified in all her finery of the last century, it is the very fable of the old age of Tithon transported to a sorrowful reality. The skill of the author is to make us feel the mixture of surprise, curiosity, and fearful attraction that the confident little girl experiences, of the wanderings of this fairy skeleton, to whom, in a burst of pity, she one day gives the kiss which will withdraw a last tear from those sightless eyes, impatient to close: "I pray God not to leave you lingering like me, apart from all your kindred, and your life so long that you forget you ever were a child."

This world is a school that prepares us for larger horizons; the lesson is almost interminable for Lady Ferry. We learn, however, with a sigh of relief which proves to the people most taken with life how redoubtable such a fate would be, that this arid and desolate lesson has belatedly had an end, that the immortal one is dead.

A care for the simple and the true which accompanies her ever through the caprices of fantasy, a moral conclusion ingeniously contrived, this assures Miss Jewett's books their just renown among good books. It remains to be seen if she will succeed in the novel as she has succeeded in her pastoral sketches, where philosophy and humor join the picturesque element always superabundant. Her little stories in *Old Friends*

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and *New* betray more than one awkwardness, more than one fault of arrangement. The subject that she does not know or does not wish to pursue disappears beneath digressions; she systematically bypasses violent scenes. One notices it especially in "A Lost Lover," where a pathetic situation turns short before the climax and, to our regret, remains suspended rather than untangled; it is even worse in the story of the woman doctor, the only work of long and exacting labor that this penetrating but non-inventive pen has produced. Passion, movement, variety—none of these must be asked of *A Country Doctor*. All the gentle seduction of talent of Miss Jewett seems to be concentrated on one goal: to obtain the grace of the strong woman, the free woman, to show what her strength and liberty cost her, how many female virtues continue to flourish beneath male faculties acquired at the price of sacrifices which compel our respect, if not our sympathy.

The first chapter, however, announces itself dramatically, as if the author were proposing once and for all to get away from the narrative method which is so dear to her and to enter into action resolutely. [*Here Madame Blanc quotes the entire first chapter of the novel.*]

Naturally the reader is impatient to know what remorse, what despair, has led this unfortunate one first towards the river, then by a sudden reaction towards the shelter of her childhood, abandoned so long ago, but it would be necessary before that to penetrate into the farm and to listen for a long time patiently to a lot of gossip in old, coarse English as the peasants murder it. These words are exchanged between the mistress of the house, Mrs. Thacher, and her friends the Dyer women, married to two inseparable twins who are not annoyed, it seems, to remain alone together drinking cider while their wives gossip with a neighbor. In this talk there is revealed to us by rambling conversations the story of an ungrateful daughter whose marriage has turned out badly, that misery should bring back to the nest, but that an intractable pride still keeps her from her old mother. The whir of the wheel, the clicking of the needles, the discussion of a point in the knitting, the story of the village is constantly resifted by the three good women, who are worried more than we are by the price of whale oil, of its superiority over tallow, of pastry recipes, etc.

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All this monotonous accompaniment of a rustic evening cools the interest excited by the first enthusiasm, which never again finds the same intensity. This photographic procedure, so to speak, applied complacently to the reproduction of little everyday things, has been reproached in George Eliot herself, who atoned for it by all the gifts of genius. Miss Jewett, who only has talent, is wrong to sacrifice to it. Those who quarrel with the inexhaustible cups of tea in English novels will become even more impatient with certain apples savored by little slices around the hearth of the farm, while the unfortunate Adeline is at the point of death on the doorstep. These famous apples are the result of an exquisite graft brought back from the mother country to a Thacher when the grafted fruit was considered infinitely rare in this brand new country. Public rumor accused old Thacher of going, each time his importunate neighbors tore a branch from his famous apple tree, to destroy in the night this precious eye grafted on the native species. Since that time, his descendants have shown themselves less avaricious and less jealous; nevertheless, the golden apples brought back from England have never wished to ripen except in Thacher's orchard. That is fine, but this legend dedicated to gardeners is no more in its place than the one of the night without candles when the dead father of Adeline broke his leg. When, then, will the farmer's wife, oppressed since sunset by sad presentiments, finally hear a strange little cry behind the door, a cry which will make her shudder? When, then, will she decide to open the door, asking while trembling from head to foot, "Who is there?"

Great! We have reached the thrilling point, our curiosity is going to be satisfied. Not yet. A digression, inexcusable at this juncture, leads us, teasingly, into the neighboring farm of Martin Dyer. [*Madame Blanc here provides a seven-page synopsis of plot.*]

It is clear that Doctor Jewett had a fraternal resemblance to Doctor Leslie, that he was among those scientists who only accept the dictates of science with reservations and who defend an independent mind, largely humane, from doctrines that are too absolute. His daughter was brought up in his school; there must have been between him and her conversations similar to those whose echo the office of the virtuous Leslie has

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kept. They were there, father and daughter, beside the fire, the lamp lighting all the room with its discreet light, a red reflection shining here and there on the backs of the books, which are lined up on superimposed shelves. Many old engravings; in a corner, the bronze figure of Dante, thin, angular, as if he had come out of his tomb in order to cast one last look upon the people in a hemisphere unknown in his time. The servant speaks with an indifferent respect of this skeleton and suggests that other decorations might better occupy its space. The chimney mantel is just large enough to hold cigar boxes, the little clock, a few phials. Above are hung three or four riding crops and pipes; in a corner of the room some old canes are standing. A portrait of a paternal ancestor shows us a gentleman with a kindly face, the most famous of the ministers of the area. Happy is the child who grows up in this atmosphere of science and tenderness, of calmness and simplicity. . . .

It is surely curious to follow, step by step, the progress of intellectual and moral nature as it grows, as a shrub develops with its periods of rests and its sudden bursts, the acts and the works representing those signs of vitality which, as far as the plant is concerned, are called flowers and leaves, but minute observation does not suffice to give interest to a novel. The novel has nothing in common with a work of morality, education, or pure psychology. Frigidity is its greatest fault; in vain one piles on numerous secondary personages who have no solid bond with the subject: it is only one more fault. In life, many figures pass thus on our road to disappear, leaving, however, a trace of their influence. No matter! Once again poetic reality is submitted to rules which will never be grasped by the so-called novelists whose talent has scientific pretensions.

One moment, we can believe that Nan, after a few years of living at home, as she reaches the age when imagination opens its wings, when the unknown begins to tempt young girls, is going to feel a battle taking place within herself. The impetuous *moi* that she gets from her mother will no doubt battle the resolutions which example have suggested to her, as powerful in us as heredity, of which it is perhaps too often a question in this book. She dreams, she languishes, she seems to be bored, she accumulates new experiences and stops at nothing; often galloping on a farm horse, she seeks in this violent

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exercise a means of escaping the trouble in her mind. It is no longer a question of calling her the little doctor, for she no longer seems to bring to the books of medicine haphazardly leafed through that childish interest that formerly made her old friends smile. One notices in her more reserve; she neglects housework. The doctor is worried about this something to which his adopted child aspires, a something he is perhaps incapable of giving her. But no, unfortunately, for we should need absolutely a bit of the unforeseen, Nan will not for a single moment be distracted from the vocation which torments her and which is betrayed by these queer symptoms, inseparable from the choice of a condition. If nothing satisfies her any longer, it is because the time has come to give a real shape to her dream and she is afraid that she will not be encouraged at the moment of acting, whatever indulgence her tutor had once shown her for what he perhaps called childishness. . . .

Thus, as her tutor wished, things came from themselves, following their natural course. Nan has no illusions about the difficulties to conquer: she is ready, she has the sentiments of a reformer, of a radical facing the task that awaits her; she faces the storm, she is intoxicated by it in advance. . . .

Nan dedicates two years to prove her vocation by working with him. As ignorant as she still is, she has a diagnostic instinct, as a painter has for color, or a composer for harmony. Study and experience will develop this natural gift; but she possesses it, and their conversations during the long evenings by the fireside or the long trips from one farm to another, make her learn all that the courses in medical school do not reveal. Already she knows neither disgust nor prudery at the bedside of her patients, nor fear in the presence of death: her mind is filled with it, she has assiduously carried on the profession of a nurse at the same time that she has begun, under an enlightened teacher, the ordinary studies when the time comes for her to leave the port.

Here the author sketches many difficulties: it would be curious to see Nan in a large city, abandoned to herself; a bit of romantic emotion could be the result; but we know nothing about this period, however interesting, of the life of a woman doctor, except that all the protections that contribute to urging on a young man are refused to a girl. What does honor to

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the former harms the latter, rather; the mass of honest people from whom she would not wish to separate herself for anything in the world, disapproves tacitly of the efforts one would highly praise if they were justified by a bit of beard. . . .

A very nice scene is the one where, in the middle of a certain half sentimental walk, Nan finds the opportunity to reset the broken arm of a peasant, under the eyes of Gerry, who observes her with the mixture of admiration and repugnance that you can imagine. He feels himself weak, useless before her; he would have liked to fill the role of the surgeon, and this inversion of roles repulses him. At the same time, he feels a strong desire to place an obstacle in the path of what Nan calls her vocation, to win over this serious childish fantasy aroused in solitude by an old man. He gets excited about it, passion plays a role in it (at least the author affirms it, because we do not see any trace of it), a communicative passion which staggers the resolutions, so well affirmed, of the future lady doctor: "It seemed to her that the coming of Death at her life's end could not be more strange and sudden than this great barrier which had fallen between her and her girlhood, the dear old life which had kept her so unpuzzled and safe. So this was love at last, this fear, this change, this strange relation to another soul."

In passing, she casts a glance at the *Highflyer*, an old ship, whose damages from a battle are keeping it in port: "Such a ship," she says, "belongs to the high sea, it seems to be a prisoner when it touches land."

That night, having slipped beneath her pillow, as a means of defense and consolation, the last letter from Doctor Leslie which she has not dared to read, Nan hears the cocks crow at two different times. She stares at the moonbeams on the floor; the birds announce day to her before she has been able to resolve what she will do or say on this new day.

She feels herself carried away by an impetuous flood and is astonished that certain conditions of life, which until then she had scarcely given any consideration, seem so necessary from this time on. She sees herself seated at a peaceful hearth, in the house where she already reigns, content with her lot, regarding from afar her unbounded projects like a vanished dream. It does not matter what she loved before, she loves

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George Gerry; her ambitions abandon her one by one, she values only George's love; nothing is worth the happiness that two human beings seek hand in hand; but as the shadows give way to the light of day, her duty appears clearer and clearer, this duty which must rule everything, even love; the reasons to follow a path once chosen present themselves very strongly. She finds the strength to resist this temptation and to attach herself desperately to her work, even though she must sacrifice to it everything that is the happiness of other women. Heaven has not given her powerful faculties in order to let them go down the drain. That is her conclusion. She still loves George Gerry but she comes to hate the love that undergoes such tests. . . .

We shall only glimpse Nan at the end of her studies, Nan on the threshold of her career, hesitating again between the hospitals of a large city, the desire to go to Zurich and affirm her knowledge, and the almost evangelical mission of country doctor, which would tempt her above everything else if a colleague had not already put a hand on a part of the practice of Doctor Leslie, who has become old. She goes to see the grave of her poor young mother, whose heritage of headstrong passions she has transformed into virtues, and standing at the edge of the river where she almost died, innocent victim of a despair that she could not understand, she looks afar at the other shore. A light breeze passed over her hair, like a caressing hand, the air and the sun enveloped her gently, the trees seemed to observe her attentively, like old friends, and suddenly, raising her arms to the heavens in an ecstasy of life, of strength and of joy: "O God," she cries, "I thank thee for my future."

Assuredly there remains in our imagination a lovable type of woman, intelligent and naive at the same time, who accomplishes very naturally and simply a strange destiny. To make it stand out more in contrast, Miss Jewett has placed as a pale hothouse flower, beside this superb and vigorous lily of the fields, the figure of Eunice Fraley. Brought up according to the old traditions in a provincial town, the trembling slave of an authoritative mother and of the principles she inherits from this mother, who will treat her as a child until her dying day, without independent ideas, without an existence proper for her, so to speak, poor Eunice awaits the liberator who must

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finally bring her to life. Among us there are many copies of this blurred pastel. We can state the justness of the touches, the exactitude of the resemblance.

If *A Country Doctor* is not a novel, it is at least a very interesting gallery of portraits and landscapes, a magic lantern with multiple pictures of singular newness, for which nothing is missing except to light it sufficiently. There where the flame of passion and the stress of plot are wanting, the accumulation of picturesque and psychological details cannot suffice, especially when they do not succeed in hiding the thesis which imposes itself antipathetically upon a great number. We should like a larger place to be made for the test of love, that the struggle be longer and more cruel in Nan's heart, that she remain bloody and wounded from it; especially we should wish Gerry to show himself, eloquent in defending the cause of marriage instead of pleading it in a manner which recalls the devil's advocate destined to be beaten in a kind of churchly conference apparently outmoded.

Orthodoxy, only, loses in the present case, the good old orthodoxy of the family. With whatever proportion and suitability the opinions of Miss Jewett are expressed, they are those of Doctor Leslie: the life of a man is elevated, fortified by domestic happiness; a woman's, on the other hand, cannot be shared; a woman is completely her lord and master's or gives herself completely to a social task. To be adequate for a double mission as man is, is beyond her forces; she must dedicate herself body and soul to household duties or to public professional duties. Let her choose then between two destinies of which one, the result of progress and the transformations which accompany it, is not superior to the other, but merely different. The class of free women will grow larger, without any doubt, as the highest developments of civilizations take place; one day the prejudice attached to it will disappear as if it had never existed; there will no longer be any reason to arm oneself in order to defend it. He who manipulates ideas has an enormous advantage over the one who depends on events and, although these two categories of mind do not belong inevitably, on the one hand to women, on the other hand to men, one can affirm that women have not yet begun to use the best resources of their nature as yet scarcely liberated by adverse

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and oppressive influences. Today, the preservation of the race has ceased to be the only important question; more and more one takes into consideration individual happiness. The simple fact that women are in the majority in centers of civilization indicates well enough that certain ones are set apart for a goal other than marriage. No doubt, the great majority accepts the bonds and support that this institution involves; but as society begins to see more clearly, it will permit girls to withdraw from the obligations of a state about which it is a question of ennobling by choosing it completely instead of degrading by submitting to it through concern for convention.

That is, after all, only a moderate claim; it had already furnished an interesting subject for Miss Muller's brochure; but, in a novel, the slightest grain of emotion is better than the finest reasoning. The novel lives by the shock of passions, and Miss Jewett does not seem to know it. This does not take anything away from her merit as a writer and thinker, even to break new ground discreetly in regions which would be suspect to us with any other guide. She makes us appreciate the beauties of them, the grandeur; she leads us straight to the immaculate snows, to pure ether, skillfully avoiding the precipices, sparing us the mud which so many others, under pretext of realism, apply themselves to discovering right away. We do not persist any the less in believing that a happy compromise between the didactic form and the romantic form, the essay, properly speaking, is the genre which best suits her flowing pen.

This mixed genre can get along without invention; it neither demands that one imagine, nor that one concentrate; all the most serious theories are in their place, in their marvelously elastic framework beside a jest or a paradox; it suffers from the fact that the subjects are confused with one another like crazy creepers, without being studied in depth to their fullest development; it does not demand, on the other hand, the difficult art of transition. In brief, the little boat whose cruise was so well described in "River Driftwood" is the skiff that the author of *A Country Doctor* ought to man by preference. No passenger will complain that it is drifting, especially if he has the good fortune to glimpse, gliding capriciously along the waterway, figures as original, and as attractive at the same

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time, as Nan, produced fresh as a rose from the laboratories and amphitheatres where she has remained a woman while becoming a doctor. This proven miracle ought to be rare enough for one to write it down.



THE CHILD IN SARAH ORNE JEWETT

By EUGENE HILLHOUSE POOL

Sarah Orne Jewett's artistic approach seems primarily to be an attempt to avoid extremes in an effort to maintain a balanced mean. It is this approach that gives to her works the quality of tranquility that is so captivating, and the refinement of emotion that demonstrates the presence of a sophisticated and commanding hand. In general Miss Jewett wished, both personally and artistically, to ride comfortably over and through the tensions of life, seeking through compromise to attain a relatively steady, central plane of existence.

Miss Jewett was born in South Berwick, Maine, in 1849 and died there, in the same house in which she was born, in 1909. She gained her great love for this northern region of New England chiefly from her father, Dr. Theodore Herman Jewett, whom she once called "the best and wisest man I ever knew."¹ Sarah Jewett would often travel with him through the Berwick countryside as he went on his rounds, and listen to him speak of literature as well as the names of the birds and flowers and animals. He almost encouraged her to be truant from school, and would sometimes insist the trips would be beneficial to his daughter just so she would accompany him. Miss Jewett thus enjoyed a firm and close relationship with her father. As Richard Cary says, "In her estimation of men and mortals, he stood at the pinnacle."² Miss Jewett always looked back with happiness upon their rides together, and the stories that her father would tell. . . . They were to have indelible influence.

¹ Dedication, *Country By-Ways* (Boston, 1881).

² "Sarah Orne Jewett and the Rich Tradition," *Colby Library Quarterly*, IV (November 1957), 211.