Some Bibilographic Ghosts of Sarah Orne Jewett

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SOME BIBLIOGRAPHIC GHOSTS OF SARAH ORNE JEWETT

By Richard Cary

With the panache of born genius Carlyle dubbed economics the dismal science. The world awaits an equally gifted phrasemaker who will so fitly characterize the stumbling science of bibliography. O the poor-devil practitioner! No sooner is his opus offered to the public than it is obsolete; fourteen new items have come into being between typescript and print. Days and nights of scanning every likely and many unlikely sources, page by blurring page, go for naught as this and/or that critic (who has never grappled the bibliographic demon) points archly to a missed five-line notice in a fugitive broadside. And what of the anguished discovery — alas, too late to amend — that, despite repeated rechecks and four proofreadings, the pesky thing came out CIXXXVII not CLXXXVIII, folio not folio (a horridly appropriate Freudian slip).

Thoughts of this ilk disquieted the present bibliographer as he hunched over an untidy pile of notes scribbled or typed on varicolored swatches of cards and slips. These are the residuum of perhaps a decade of research on the life and work of Sarah Orne Jewett, bibliographic ghosts chanced upon while stalking other game, hastily remarked and filed against some vague day of reclamation. The significant registry of writings by and about Miss Jewett has been accomplished by Clara C. and Carl J. Weber in A Bibliography of the Published Writings of Sarah Orne Jewett (Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1949), and brought forward by John Eldridge Frost in “Sarah Orne Jewett Bibliography: 1949-1963,” Colby Library Quarterly, VI (June 1964), 405-417. The list which follows is not a further updating. It confines itself to the time span already covered by the Webers and Frost, comprising items not recorded in the Bibliography or the supplement, some corrections and adjustments of data therein presented, and some speculative additions to the canon. The approach, in keeping with expressed misgivings, is gingerly.
I. STORIES AND ARTICLES UNRECORDED IN WEBER OR FROST:

1. "Theodore Herman Jewett, M.D., of South Berwick," *Transactions of the Maine Medical Association, 1877-1879* (Portland, 1879), VI, 680-684. This obituary appears with others under "Article LXVII. Report of the Committee on Necrology. By J. W. Beede, M.D., of Auburn." However, the introduction closes with this statement: "The following sketches . . . are presented precisely as they were furnished by the respective friends of the deceased." There would seem little doubt that this tribute to Dr. Jewett's "treasure of wisdom and experience" was penned by his adoring daughter.

2. "The Growtown 'Bugle,'" *Harper's Weekly*, XXXII (August 18, 1888), 610-611. One of Miss Jewett's parsimonious spinsters, Miss Prudence Fellows of Simmsby, Massachusetts, secretly invests in a Kansas boomtown and prospers mightily. She plans but constantly postpones benefactions to her indigent neighbor's young girl until, ironically, the child starves to death. The paradox of rich-in-money, poor-in-spirit overwhelms Prudence in the end.

3. "An Every-Day Girl," *Ladies' Home Journal*, IX (June 1892), 5-6; (July), 7-8; (August), 5-6. In this parable on the Puritan ethic of work and reward, Mary Fleming is compelled into a lowlier occupation than she has been trained for, but by sheer determination rises in position and self-confidence. This story is uncovered by David Bonnell Green in "The Sarah Orne Jewett Canon: Additions and a Correction," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, LV (Second Quarter, 1961), 141-142. Frost records two articles by Green in *PBSA* but not his findings therein.


II. UNRECORDED ANONYMOUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE *Atlantic Monthly*:

Research for a study of Whittier's relations with Miss Jewett led to a bonanza of prospects in this category. On February 21, 1882, Miss Jewett wrote to Whittier: "I wish to do some writing as soon as I can but somehow I have not liked the thought of it yet. You will say I need a bright red room to stay in, and will recommend my own prescriptions in 'The Colour Cure.' Did you see that bit of the Contributors' Club for March? I wrote it and Mrs. Fields laughed over it a good deal, which was satisfaction enough, wasn't it?" She was citing an untitled, unsigned
two-column essay in the Atlantic Monthly, XLIX (March 1882), 425-426, designated as “A Color Cure” in the table of contents for The Contributors’ Club, and up to now unknown as hers. This disclosure, of course, led to deeper inquiry into this department of anonymous causeries, founded by editor William Dean Howells in January 1877 with the purpose of providing an informal area for “opinion on events, manners, and letters which otherwise goes unuttered in print.” Miss Jewett was attracted immediately and seems to have favored its pages for half a dozen years, after which her growing reputation and accelerated demands from editors left neither time nor inclination for unacknowledged publications.

Requests to the magazine for a census of Miss Jewett’s appearances in The Contributors’ Club produce no reply, so one must depend upon recognition of characteristic themes, stylistic touches, and small nuggets of data that point decidedly to her authorship. On these evidences at least ten other pieces may be attributed to Miss Jewett with some assurance. They extend from 1878 to 1884; three or four others during 1892-1893, following her fourth European trip, tempt inclusion but are less verifiable, so must wait on more definite reference.

1. “Materials for American Fiction,” Atlantic Monthly, XLII (August 1878), 248-249. Contains vignettes of typical back-region characters and the germ of such “return of the native” stories as her “A New Parishioner” and “A Native of Winby.”

2. “Domestic Touches in Fiction,” AM, XLIII (March 1879), 396-397. Lauds the presentation of everyday life which rescues it from the commonplace while still leaving it natural, the average human life being more wonderful than any imagined story.

3. “Good Society Novels,” AM, XLIX (January 1882), 136-138. Familiarity with the smaller country towns and with numerous books and authors which she discusses elsewhere.


7. “Ungathered Flowers,” AM, LI (June 1883), 854-856. Beside the amenable central topic, there are allusions to events in Northern Italy and Amsterdam, which she had recently visited.

8. “Tree Planting,” AM, LII (October 1883), 574-575. Deplores the choice of maples and horse-chestnuts as shade trees in smaller New England cities, preferring white birches, poplars, and mountain ashes.

Recollection of reading her father's copy of *Sentimental Journey* by Laurence Sterne, whose excellences he had often recommended to her.

10. “An Adventure,” *AM*, LIII (January 1884), 143-144. Exploit in a gloomy manor house in a woodland; likely premonitor to “The Landscape Chamber.”

III. UNRECORDED INCLUSIONS IN ANTHOLOGIES:


IV. UNRECORDED TRANSLATION:

*Das Land der spitzen Tannen* (Zurich: Manesse Verlag, [1961]). Manesse Bibliothek der Weltliteratur. German translation of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by Elisabeth Schnack.

V. CORRECTIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS OF WEBER BIBLIOGRAPHY:


Pages 14-15: For strict chronological observance, the two books listed on these pages — and in the “Chronological Check-List of the Books,” page [3] — should be reversed in order. *Tales of New England* was published on May 3, 1890; *Strangers and Wayfarers* on November 19, 1890.


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Page 30: “The Orchard’s Grandmother” is unquestionably established as Miss Jewett’s by her statement to Anna Laurens Dawes on December 11, 1876. See Letter 10 in this issue.

Page 37: “The News from Petersham” is collected in A White Heron and Other Stories (1886).

Page 38: “Mary and Martha” is collected in A White Heron and Other Stories (1886).


Page 57: By nature of the contents of Le Roman de la Femme-Médecin, préface de Th. Bentzon, the conjectured publication date of 1893 would seem rather late. The more likely date of 1890 is supported by Miss Jewett’s receiving “a volume of S.O.J. all in French” (letter to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, July 23, 1890, in Annie Fields, editor, Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett [Boston, 1911], 70).

WRITINGS ABOUT SARAH ORNE JEWETT

I. UNRECORDED IN WEBER OR FROST:


4. Betty Leicester, reviewed in: American Hebrew, XLII (April 4, 1890), 199. “It is disgraceful to compare Miss Jewett’s delicate workmanship with this rubbish” —i.e., the “silly novels” of Mary J. Holmes, May Agnes Fleming, Bertha Clay, Mrs. Southworth, and “the rest of the crew!”
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10. William C. Derry, “Horse and Buggy Travels with Her Doctor-Dad Lent Author Background,” Portland Sunday Telegram (October 23, 1938), D-1.


II. ADJUSTMENTS OF WEBER BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Page 59: In an odd departure from bibliographical procedure, two relevant essays by Th. Bentzon (Marie Thérèse Blanc) in the Revue des Deux Mondes are alluded to but not documented. For particulars, the footnote adverts to an article by Carl J. Weber in the New England Quarterly for September 1947. The essays by Madame Blanc are: “Le
Communisme en Amérique," *RDDM*, CXLIV (November 15, 1897), 300-335; and "Dans la Nouvelle-Angleterre," *RDDM*, CL (December 1, 1898), 542-582. Perhaps it is just as well that Weber did not furnish data in the Bibliography for he only offers English translations of the titles and renders the date and pagination of the second essay inaccurately.

**Page 61:** The New York *Evening Post* review of *A Country Doctor* (1884) appeared on August 2, 1884, the first page of an unpaged Supplement. The nameless critic draws comparisons with William Dean Howells’ *Dr. Breen’s Practice* (1881) and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward’s *Dr. Zay* (1882).

**Page 70:** Paul Elmer More is the “anonymous critic” of the *Nation*, XCI (October 27, 1910), 386-387; identified in W. I. Fletcher, editor, *The Annual Library Index, 1910* (New York, 1911), 154. In More’s opinion, Miss Jewett’s *Stories and Tales* (7 vols., 1910) are “dressed for an age of endurance” and permeated by “the spirit of Cranford, modified a little by New England weather.”

**Page 74:** Rose D. Nealley’s chapter “Sarah Orne Jewett” in *Just Maine Folks* originally appeared as “Sarah Orne Jewett, Interpreter of Maine People,” in the Lewiston *Journal Magazine Section* (August 30, 1924), 4, 13.

**Page 79:** The pagination of Florence M. Dunnack, “‘Little Kennebec,’ Nurse of Sarah Orne Jewett,” Lewiston *Journal Magazine Section* (August 5, 1939), is A-40. Second part of the title is, “Recalls Happy Memories of Her Famous Patient.”

**CAVEAT!** It must be re-emphasized that the above listing does not represent a methodical or exhaustive reconstitution of the Weber Bibliography or the Frost supplement, rather a random of notes acquired while prying into other Jewett arcana. Numerous items, thus encountered, persist in mystery. To take a single instance: on October 8, 1876, Miss Jewett remarked to Anna Lauren Dawes (Letter 8 in this issue) that “one of the big English reviews gave me a stunning compliment for the Excursions.” This is one of the earliest commentaries on her work, of more than ordinary interest since it is foreign and pre-*Deephaven*. But Professor Hollis could find no source, and my own canvass of available British periodicals is so far fruitless. In the name of SOJ we signal SOS.