SARAH ORNE JEWETT: A STUDY

by

Margaret Faust, A.B.,
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Approved by:

[Signature]
instructor in Charge.

[Signature]
Chairman of Department.

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PREFACE

An interest in American fiction, more particularly in the short story, was the motivating factor in first undertaking this work. The suggestion of the particular subject, however, came from Professor J. H. Nelson, of the Department of English, under whose direction the investigation has been conducted. The writer wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to him, as well as to the Librarian of the University, and his assistants, for help in securing books.
CHAPTER I.

The Woman Herself.

"The rapid multiplication of the portable Kodak has scarcely surpassed the swift growth of local writers"¹ who have sought out and exhibited, in photographic cross-sections, the various elements of our society. In this field of localized fiction, especially the short story, most of the critics of American literature since the Civil War have conceded a place of some importance to a woman writing in and of New England — Miss Sarah Orne Jewett.

The secret of Miss Jewett's success in her work, outside of its artistic perfection, is the "spirit of loving kindness and tender mercy that pervades it".² The same spirit is evident in the woman herself, and to know her is certainly the first step in understanding and appreciating her works.

Charles Miner Thompson has said that a search should reveal the author within the book,³ and of no author is the statement truer than of Miss Jewett. Her literary production is so closely linked to her life and personality, the relationship between author and work is so intimate, that it seems best to begin this study with a glance at biographical facts.

Miss Jewett was born September 3, 1849, in the village

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¹ T. W. Higginson in the Independent, March 11, 1892.
² Spofford's Little Book of Friends, p. 21.
of South Berwick, Maine, on the beautiful Piscataqua river. The village itself had a pleasant historical atmosphere, and aristocratic mansions were more numerous there than in most New England towns. In one of these beautiful old houses, full of strange and lovely things brought from all over the world by seafaring ancestors, Sarah Orne Jewett was born and reared. The Colonial mansion, with its paneled hall, wide arches and ample staircase, untouched by modern hands, was the picture of hospitality, and Miss Jewett expresses her love for the old house thus: "I was born here, and I hope to die here, leaving the lilac bushes still green and growing, and all the chairs in their places."

She falls unquestionably into Holmes' Brahmin class, coming from a family of the gentilefolk of New England, and numbering among her ancestors ministers, doctors, and even one of the early English settlers of Plymouth, Mary Chilton. Her mother's people, the Gilmans of Exeter, were rebels, but her father's ancestors could not forsake allegiance to the mother country. Even Sarah herself felt such a strong ancestral tie that she could write, "The spring weather in Old England has a kind of hereditary ease and superiority", and she found it very easy to sympathize with the Loyalists in her historical novel of the revolution, The Tory Lover.

In addition to her English ancestry, she had French blood in her veins, and it was to this, perhaps, that she owed her delicate refinement of manner and her physical characteristics. A black and white silhouette of a French grandmother is said to have

5. Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett, ed. by Annie Field, p. 146.
a perfect replica in Sarah's own, with the "lovely, innocent forehead, the delicately arched eye-brow, the finely chiseled nose, the curl of the upper lip, the exquisite corners of the mouth, the oval of the cheek". Sarah's own mother was a delicate, gentle woman with gracious manners, and this is one reason why the daughter grew up to have a gentle courtesy toward everyone, especially older people.

The child's schooling was very greatly affected by ill health, and she attended intermittently both the village school and the Academy at Berwick. Part of the time she had lost was made up, in her ninth year, by enrolling in a summer school, while staying with her grandmother in Exeter. She hated school, but liked to read, and found it easy to write verse even as a child. Although her formal education was scanty, her reading and study received direction at home, where she had access to a good library.

Her father, a graduate of Bowdoin and of Jefferson Medical College, was a physician and surgeon, prominent in the profession, but never so busy as to neglect his wise little girl. Instead of urging her to go to school, he used to take her in the chaise beside him on long drives into the country, where she was admitted to intimate acquaintance with the lives of people later revealed in her stories. One of her early volumes, Country By-Ways is dedicated to "My dear father, my dear friend; the best and wisest

man I ever knew; who taught me many lessons and showed me many things as we went together along the country by-ways."

Dr. Jewett was learned in ornithology, interested in animal and flower life, and had a comprehensive knowledge of herbs and simples, and these interests he passed on to his small companion, along with a deep interest in the medical profession. As she grew older she began to question him, read handbooks of anatomy and take such an interest in his work that "many a young graduating doctor today might well envy that slip of a girl for the knowledge at first hand which had been conveyed to her impressionable mind." That she had even thought seriously of becoming a doctor herself, we learn from her own statement, "though", she adds, "very likely I am enough of one already to get the best of it for myself, and perhaps I have done as much as I ever could for other people."

The deepest lessons which she learned from her father dealt with human beings, as she realized later. "My father had inherited from his father an amazing knowledge of human nature, and from his mother's French ancestry that peculiarly French trait called maisté de cœur. Through all the heavy responsibilities and anxieties of his busy professional life, this kept him young at heart and cheerful. His visits to his patients were often made delightful and refreshing to them by his kind heart and the charm

of his personality. I knew many of the patients whom he used to visit on lonely island farms or on the sea-coast in York and Wells. I used to follow him about silently, like an understanding little dog, content to follow at his heels. I had no consciousness of watching or listening, or indeed of any special interest in the country interior. In fact, when the time came that my own world of imagination was more real to me than any other, I was sometimes perplexed at my father's directing my attention to certain points of interest in the character or surroundings of our acquaintances. I cannot help believing that he recognized, long before I did myself, in what direction the current of purpose in my life was setting. Now, as I write my sketches of country life, I remember again and again the wise things he said and the sights he made me see. He was impatient only with affectation and insincerity."

With such a friend to guide her, she began to write for *Young Folks* and *The Riverside* when hardly more than a child. She was fortunate in having a sister about two years older than herself who listened with pleasure to the tales the little story-teller wove, sometimes when they were both tucked in bed. Only a few of these stories were written out, but in 1869, when she was only nineteen, Sarah had a story "Mr. Bruce" accepted by the *Atlantic Monthly*, under the name du plume, "A. C. Eliot." This was followed by *Deephaven*, a "bundle of sketches", written when she was just past her twentieth birthday, but not published until

1877.

In a preface to this work in the 1893 edition, she speaks of Mrs. Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island* which appeared in 1862, as having opened her eyes to the literary value of the country folk she knew so well. The young author began to see with new eyes and to follow eagerly the shore-paths and country lanes with which she was acquainted, in search of literary material. According to the author herself, the greater part of the value of these early sketches is in their youthfulness, and she acknowledges that they contain sentences which made her feel as if she were the grandmother of the writer, instead of the writer herself. But she had found her life work and gently persisted in her course.

Her literary activity did not make of her a recluse, and, instead of devoting her whole time to writing, she found time for most pleasant associations with her family and friends. We have already seen that the best friend of her childhood was her father, and with his death came her first real sorrow. She was not one to give way to grief, however, and, while she always cherished his memory, she transferred the affection she had lavished on him to other members of her family and to her friends. A second blow to her was her mother's death, but she still clung to her two sisters, one older and one younger. She was one to whom companionship was necessary for the enjoyment of life, and in dedicating a volume to her

10. *A Native of Winby.*
young sister she makes the statement, "I have had many pleasures that were doubled because you shared them, and so I write your name at the beginning of this book". Such a social nature must necessarily form friendships, and Miss Jewett made friends wherever she went, among rich and poor, old and young. She loved this world of friends and gave herself to them unselfishly, as far as her health would permit.

One of her most intimate friends was Annie Fields, the charming wife of James T. Fields, publisher and man of letters, whose home in Boston was the heart of poets and writers of the time. Before Mr. Fields' death, he suggested Miss Jewett as a possible companion for his young wife, and later, when left alone, Mrs. Fields acted upon the suggestion. The two women became so much attached to each other that their friendship approached sisterly affection, and they were either together or thinking about each other almost constantly. To Mrs. Fields we are indebted for a very charming collection of Miss Jewett's letters, which reveals not only their own beautiful friendship, but also Miss Jewett's feeling for her other friends.

Through association with the Fields and by virtue of her own personality, Miss Jewett was able to become intimately acquainted with many of the outstanding literary figures of her day in America. Besides acquaintance, her list of personal friends included Colia Thaxter, Mrs. Stowe, William Dean Howells, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, James Russell Lowell.
Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, Bliss Perry, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Willa Cather, Dorothy Ward, George Woodberry, and Mrs. Whitman, the artist. Furthermore, she found friendships on the other side of the Atlantic with such people as Lord and Lady Tennyson, Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Arnold, Mrs. Hazlitt, Mrs. Alice Keynell, John Ruskin, and Du Maurier.

For her friends, Miss Jewett never seemed to be able to do enough. She could not say to each of them the compliment of dedicating a volume, as she did to Annie Fields, Mrs. Whitman, and John Greenleaf Whittier, but she was always encouraging them, saying helpful things about them, writing them affectionate letters, and doing it all in such an unobtrusive and kindly way that we must feel her sincerity.

Although she knew many literary figures personally, she knew a great many more through their works. She loved books, read untiringly in all fields of literature, and formed keen and critical impressions. Nor was her reading confined to American or English authors. She knew and enjoyed them, of course, but she was not unacquainted with Russian and French authors. She was particularly interested in the latter in the original and says of George Sand, "I am willing to study French very hard all winter in order to read her comfortably in the spring." 

11. The Lates of the Daylight and Friends Ashore, Strangers and Wayfarers, The King of Molly Island and Other People, in respective order.
went into all of her reading, and when she found an author or a work which she particularly enjoyed, she immediately wished to share the pleasure with someone else. In many of her letters to her dearest friends, especially Annie Fields, we find her enraptured over some new discovery, or expressing a wish that they might enjoy a certain literary experience together. Among her favorite authors, we are not surprised to find Carlyle, Arnold, Tennyson, Thackeray, Wordsworth, Madame de Sévigné and Voltaire, and her appreciation of Jane Austen seems very natural. "Dear me, how like her people are to the people we knew years ago!" It is just as much New England before the war — that is, in provincial towns — as it ever was Old England. I am going to read another, Persuasion tasted so good."13

Her dislike of the methods of Tolstoy and George Eliot also seem natural to a woman of her sensitive and delicate nature, but she is never harsh in her criticism. She acknowledges her preferences, but finds something good in everything she reads. It seems to be characteristic of the woman to be ever on the lookout for the pleasant and to disregard, as far as possible, the unpleasant.

This search for simple pleasure is nowhere more apparent than in her love of nature. She had an inborn love for natural beauty, and found as many joyful associations in her rides and tramps among the woods and streams of New England as she did among her human acquaintances. "I was first cousin to a caterpillar if they called me to come in", she writes to a friend, "and I was own sister to a giddy-minded bobolink when I ran away across the fields."

as I used to do very often."

"Because of her delicate health, she was encouraged in out-of-door pursuits. She loved nature at any time and often slipped out for early morning rambles where she could be "neighborly with a hopetoad and with a joyful robin who was sitting on a corner of the barn, and become very intimate with a big poppy which had made every arrangement to bloom as soon as the sun came up.""

"It was in the simplest aspects of nature that she found her greatest delight — in a "trif little company of anemones in a pasture, all growing close together as if they kept each other warm, and walked the whole sun to themselves besides", in an old-fashioned garden with the "hollyhocks in a double row and all my own!": in the "big pitch-pine tree that I loved best of all the wild trees that lived in Berwick": in "the sea calling and all the song sparrows singing by turns to try to make you sing, too".

To Miss Jewett, the creatures and growing things of nature were almost like human friends, and she felt a real sorrow at the felling of a great pine tree she had loved, or the death of her father's tame canary. "There never was a little creature with so true and good a heart. He knew so many things — though not one trick! and he would chirp at me until I answered and spoke to him and then would sing himself to pieces.""

"She loved to endow wild creatures with human sensibilities."

15. Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett, p. 42.
16. Ibid., p. 212.
"Once I was standing on a log that had fallen across the stream, and I looked round to see a solemn little squirrel who had started to cross his bridge! and discovered me. He looked as if he had never seen such a thing before, and he sat up and took a good look, that squirrel did, and then discreetly went back. You ought to have seen us looking at each other; I didn't know there was anybody around either!!"17

Miss Jewett thoroughly enjoyed trout-fishing, and used to spend whole days beside the clear, cool trout-brooks of Maine. "It was not alone the fishing, but the delightful loneliness and being out of doors," she says, which she enjoyed. Her sense of communion with nature was so strong that she sometimes almost lost herself in it. "When one goes out of doors and wanders alone," in the early moonlight, "how wonderfully one becomes part of nature, like an atom of quick-silver against a great mass. I hardly keep my separate consciousness, but go on and on until the mass has sport itself."18

It was not only in this reflective mood, however, that she enjoyed nature. She found a keen enjoyment in all the sports that her natural environment offered. She loved picnics and long drives in the country, she knew how to fish in the sea as well as in inland streams, she could sail or row a boat as well as an old seaman, and she coasted down the snow-covered Aconantic hills with the zest of happy youth.

18. Ibid., p. 51.
Her sportsmanlike attitude she retained through life, and at the age of forty she laid aside her dignity and went coasting with her young nephew — which experience she tells thus: "I beheld Stubby faring along with his sled which is about as large as a postage stamp. So I borrowed it, as you say, and was driven up to the top of the hill street and down I slid over that pound-cake frosting of a coast most splendid, and weekly went back to the village and returned the slid. Then an hour later in bursts Stubby with shining morning face: 'There were two fellows that said Aunt Sarah was the boss, she went down side-saddle over the hill just like the rest of the boys!'"19

Wherever she went, she never failed to derive pleasure from nature and to revel in its beauties. In her own South Berwick, in Boston, where she spent many winter seasons with Mrs. Fields, at Manchester-by-the-Sea, where she sometimes summered, in her travels in America and abroad, she always found some natural beauty to love. She did not find the same flowers, birds and trees that she knew so well in her childhood, but there were always some forms of natural life to bring her delight.

Miss Jewett travelled extensively in Canada and the United States, and made four trips abroad, most of the time in company with Annie Fields. Their first European tour was made in 1882, when they spent seven months seeing England and France, making friends and gathering material for Miss Jewett's history of the Norman conquest.

In the summer of 1892, they again toured France, England and Italy. It was on this trip that a friendship with Madame Blanc, a cultivated French woman, was made, and the acquaintance with Lord and Lady Tennyson was strengthened. "It meant a great deal more to me," says Miss Jewett, "than when I saw them before. I wish I could make you know their wonderful faces. One goes into their presence with the feeling of a former age. I believe that I know exactly what I should have felt a thousand years ago if I were paying a friendly visit to my King. . . . If somebody said, 'Come and see Shakespeare with me', I couldn't have felt any more or deeper than I did about Tennyson."20

The scenic beauty of France seems to have affected Miss Jewett more keenly than that of England. "I never, never shall forget," she enthusiastically declares, "one bit of that lovely day when we drove from Maltigny over the Tete Noire. A's dear birthday and such weather, and such flowers (it is sainfoin, that pink one that I asked you about), whole fields of ladies' delights, and large double buttercups, and harebells, and forget-me-nots, and red things, and pink things, and yellow things galore, and Solomon's seal, one sprig in a ledge just to show that there was a piece of everything, if you only stopped to look: blue gentians withal, something like our friended gentians in October. . . . We went on up and up that dear, high green valley, passing cold little white-silky brooks; and every now and then on the road we came to peasant

20. Letters. 94-182.
families with their flocks and herds chirping and clanking, and all
the children capering, and the old grandmother with her staff, go-
ing up to the high Chalets, to pasture for the month of June ....
And the grass so green and just in flower, and none of it cut, and
everybody so pleasant along that road, and we being so pleasant and
gay that we kept getting out to have a little walk; the air getting
into our heads, and the great peaks coming around other peaks' cor-
ners, to look at us solemnly, and all the morning clouds blowing
away one by one, until the sky was all clear blue, and when we got
to Chamonix, at night-fall, Mont Blanc was shining white and the
full moon, right above it, as if we had come to see at last where
the moon lived, and started from, to go up into the sky."21

Italy, too, fascinated Miss Jewett with its "stone shutters,
the old lonesome, mysterious monasteries that stare in each other's
solemn eyes through the shadows, the dampness, the greenness, the
birds that sing and the droning bells. Well, when you wish to give
me a happy moment of the sweetest remembrance, just say Torcello
and back I shall fly to it."22

In 1898, accompanied by her sister and nephew, Miss Jewett
made a third trip to England, France, and Scotland, and we have her
own word for it that the sea voyage and the sight-seeing in those
countries were most delightful. She was especially impressed with
the quaint fishing-town of Whitby, the home of Du Maurier, perhaps
because it offered a companion to her own beloved Maine coast towns.

During January and February of 1899, Mrs. Fields and Miss Jewett had a very delightful cruise among the West Indies, touching Jamaica, the Bahamas, Hayti, and Porto Rico; and later in the same year, they were strongly tempted to go to Egypt but abandoned the idea.

In 1900, over a stormy sea, Miss Jewett arrived in Europe for the last time, and on this trip, she travelled chiefly in Italy and Greece. Her artistic soul rejoiced in "the glory that was Greece," and she made daily visits to the Museum and Acropolis. She was so captivated by the beauty around her that she wrote, "It is quite true that there is nothing so beautiful as Athens, the Parthenon and the marbles in the Museum... It isn't the least bit of use to try to write about those marbles, but they are simply the most human and affecting and beautiful things in the world." 23

When she was so evidently moved and delighted by the things she saw and experienced in her trips abroad, it seems rather strange that the flavor of her literary output was not more noticeably affected by them. *The Story of the Norman*, being an historical work, has, of course, its setting in France and England; *Betty Leicester's Christmas* gives us a glimpse of London society life; *The Tory Lover* makes some use of English setting and characters; and the later short stories dealing with Irish characters take some account of life in rural Ireland; but for the most part, Miss Jewett's

writings are American.

Her first publications, *Deephaven*, in 1877, *Play-Days*, a book of children's stories, in 1878, and *Old Friends and New*, a book of short stories, in 1879, were largely experimental. The young author was finding herself. Even as late as 1881, she published *Country By-Ways* under her pseudonym, Alice Eliot, and it was only in the eighties that her literary reputation began to be firmly established. Her work began to appear regularly in the better magazines, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *McClure's* and *Scribler's*, and during the next few years, her stories and sketches were collected and published in several volumes.


During this period of literary activity, Miss Jewett had
succeeded in making her literary merit felt, and she was accepted in the highest circles and belonged to the best literary clubs of Boston. In June, 1901, she had the degree of Litt. D. conferred upon her by Bowdoin — the first woman to be so honored by the school — and she accepted the honor in childish delight. "You can't think how nice it was to be the single sister of so many brothers at Bowdoin, walking in the procession in cap and gown and Doctor's hood, and being fetched by a marshal to the President, to sit on the platform with the Board of Overseers and the Trustees, also the Chief Justice and all the judges of the Supreme Court, who were in session in Portland, or somewhere near by! And being welcomed by the President in a set speech as the only daughter of Bowdoin, and rising humbly to make the best bow she could. But what was most touching was the old chaplain of the day who spoke about father in his 'bidding prayer' and said those things of him which were all true. And your S. O. J. applauded twice by so great an audience!"24

After this recognition, an occasional short story found its way to magazine publication, and even as late as 1908, a poem from a small collection of verse, written earlier but known only to a few friends, was published in McClure's; but the latter years of Miss Jewett's literary activity were cramped by unfortunate circumstances.

In 1903, she was thrown from a carriage in a severe accident, and she never fully recovered from the long illness which

followed the injury. Her recuperation was slow, and "headaches" and "the prevailing fall cold" sent her "down hill" again and again. She explains her condition thus: "A strange loss of balance followed the terrible blow on my head, and I am not yet free from its troubles or from the attacks of pain in the back of my neck. People say, 'Can't you write a little?' but in nothing can that sense of balance count as it must in writing." 25

She grew stronger slowly, but she found it very difficult to read or to write, as she had done previously, and at times the pain grew worse and made "so much trouble for other people." She did recover sufficiently to take several cruises down the Maine coast with friends, but she was never able to return to literary production, even as a "third young author", starting in afresh.

She still possessed the desire to write, and envied other writers their work, even their difficulties, but she could never get further than planning new stories. This inability to accomplish what she set out to do was very unusual and trying to her usually serene nature, and she sighs, "I have never been very strong, but always capable of 'great pulls.'" 26

Through the years of her semi-invalidism, she retained her patience and humor, and could look on the gay side, in spite of her disability. "Though I feel like a dissected map with a few pieces gone, the rest of me seems to be put together right!" 27

In one of her last letters she was finally forced to acknowledge, "I have had such drear times trying to play well when I wasn't," and a little later, she uttered to Mrs. Fields a hopeless little cry, "Dear, I do not know what to do with me!" When the brave spirit crumbled, the poor weakened body had no reason for further existence, and in the village which had always been her real home, Miss Jewett died June 24, 1909.

The continuance of Miss Jewett's spirit will be insured by her books, because they are so much like her, so much a very part of her. Just as the personality of an author sometimes causes a work to live, so her personality, shining through that work, causes the author herself to live on in spirit.

Absolute simplicity and sincerity were among Miss Jewett's own chief characteristics, and "if by rare fortune, you heard her read from her own pages, with a voice like a soft south wind, and with a quaint and lovely air that was all her own, then you knew that these stories of hers were written from the heart that beat for humbler, homelier people as if with the same blood." 28

Her portrait itself is symbolic of her work in its simple beauty and sweetness. We know instinctively that this woman with her lofty carriage, stately grace, dark beauty and kind eyes, is the kind of woman who would love the world and whom the world would love in return. Her placid, affectionate nature is mirrored in her face, and we cannot help wondering, as we look at her, how romance could have passed her by. Perhaps it didn't, and there may be a sad

chapter in her life that is hidden from the world.

She seemed to find something to love in everyone and everything, and was willing to give herself unstintedly in unselfish service for others. Mrs. Meynell says of her, "I always thought of her as the most selfless creature I had ever known; a few hours in her dear company convinced me of that; and her letters are inevitably like her." She seemed always impelled by one great purpose — "to make life a little easier for others."29

She disliked all talk of illness and complaining, and demanded no sympathy, but she inherited from her father a love of helping the unfortunate which led her to study methods of relief, and if she had been strong enough physically, she would have studied and practiced medicine. Since this was impossible, she helped in every way she could to make the world brighter for those around her. And not one of the least of her methods of bringing happiness was to voice the praise she thought truly merited by others. As she was always so ready to praise others, she was frankly pleased with praises she herself received, and writes to Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich concerning Madame Blanc, "She sent me a volume of S. O. J. all in French, which caused such pride of heart that no further remarks are ventured on the subject!"

With this same childlike malice, she retained a spirit of continued youthfulness and was "always nine years old." In spite of this attitude she was distinguished by a sweet dignity of character, "one which never put a barrier between her and anyone else, 29. Letters, p. 11."
but was a part of her own self; with all her wit and humor and kind ways there was no suggestion leading to sudden nearness nor too great intimacy. 30

Miss Jewett's whole life was delightful — to herself and to those around her. Her home was a fascinating place, she was most fortunate in the matter of family and friends, and the clouds which hang over her last years only served to emphasise the noble patience and sweet endurance which sprang from a heroic strain of character. The qualities of genuineness, innocence, friendliness, sweetness, common sense and nobility are all so perfectly merged in this one personality that, even had she written nothing for which the world should remember her, we could say with a little old lady whom she had befriended, "I want you to thank your mother for bringing you into the world, you have been such a pleasure to me." 31

CHAPTER II.
THE ARTIST.

When the nine muses of ancient mythology were provided for inspiring literary effort, a serious omission occurred in the plan. The epic writer had Callippe, the lyricist Euterpe, the love-crazed poet Erato, to aid them in literary production, while Melpomene and Thalia stood as divine patronesses of the tragedy and comedy, but to none of the sisters was given the task of inspiring the writer of prose-fiction.

In spite of this lack of provision for divine inspiration, prose writers have persevered and prose-fiction has made very rapid progress. Through the mediæval prose tale, the prose romance, and the development of the novel, we have arrived at the age of the short story, a literary form which has long been in existence, but the critical consciousness of which dates only from the nineteenth century.¹

The period between the Civil War and the Great War may be termed the "Era of the Short Story." All over the world it has developed from a formless thing to its present state,² but the Americans have brought the short story nearer perfection in an all-round sense than perhaps any other people.³

Washington Irving was the first important writer of short

1. Hamilton, Materials and Methods of Fiction, p. 170
3. Howells, Criticism and Fiction, p. 131.
fiction which American produced. He made the form popular by his blending of the moral tale with the Addisonean essay and the addition of characterization, humor and atmosphere. After Irving, the artificiality and ornateness of the "gift books" monopolized the short story until Hawthorne lifted it to art. He centered his effort about a single situation, and gave to the tale unity, suggestion, and psychologic delineation of character.4

With Poe, in the forties, came the science of the short story. He could not, as he has been credited with doing, invent a form which had been evolving for two decades, but he was the first consciously to avail himself of short story technique and formulate it into a system.5 For him, the success of a short story depended on impressionism and "unity and totality of effect."

During the middle of this century, sentimentalism and rococo effects came into the short story as well as into the novels and Hawthorne was prone to blame the decline on the "mob of scribbling women" who were trying to produce literature.

Still another, and more numerous tribe of "scribbling women" came into prominence in the latter part of the century. Rose Terry Cooke used consistently for the first time "local color" and humor, and soon a whole school of local colorists sprang up among women writers, including Mary Murfree, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Grace King, Eleanor Brown, Margaret Deland, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and Sarah Orne Jewett.

5. Pattes, Development of the American Short Story, p. 141.
The movement "back to nature" and the breaking of literary traditions produced what is "perhaps the best body of short stories in any language." The well-known names of Bret Harte, Samuel Clemens, George W. Cable, Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page are found among the local colorists of the period, and beside them we can place Sarah Orne Jewett, who ranks high in her artistry of the short story.

Miss Jewett's own theory of story-writing is interesting to note. Sincerity of purpose is to her one of the chief requisites of an author, and she says, "To work in silence and with all one's heart, that is the writer's lot." Along with an interest in the work, she thinks there should be a touch of individuality. "One must have one's own method: it is the personal contribution that makes true value in any form of art or work of any sort." She does not scorn experimentation, but heartily endorses it. "If something comes into a writer's or a painter's mind the only thing is to try it, to see what one can do with it, and give it a chance to show if it had real value. Story-writing is always experimental, just as a water-color sketch is, and that something which does itself is the vitality of it."

In her letters we find frequent allusions to her inspirations for stories. Sometimes they came while she was sitting in church, listening to a boresome sermon; sometimes they took such complete possession of her mind that she was "simply bewitched with a story." Sometimes the children of her brain played queer pranks on their creator. In her planning of "The Gray Man", she says, "I had

the solitary man whom I talked about at first, and then came the "man who never smiled" and I coquetted over these two estimable characters for some days, when suddenly without note or warning they turned a double somersault and one swallowed the other, and I found they were really one person! The Gray Man was masquerading a little, that was all, and by this time I have over so many notes about him and I long to write him all down before I see you again."8

Her idea of the composition of a story is vigorously expressed: "Good heavens! What a wonderful kind of chemistry it is that evolves all the details of a story and unites them presently in one flash of time! For two weeks I have been noticing a certain string of things and having hints of character, etc., and day before yesterday the plan of the story comes into my mind, and in half an hour I have put all the little words and ways into their places and can read it off to myself like print. Who does it? for I grow more and more sure I don't!"9

To Miss Jewett the short story was not as to Poe, a deliberate thing of form, but a sympathetic study in individuality which came without conscious effort. "It is these unwritable things that the story holds in its heart, if it has any, that makes the true soul of it, and these must be understood, and yet how many a story goes lame for lack of that understanding. In France there is such a code, such recognition, such richness of allusions; but here we confuse our

9. Ibid., pp. 61-62.
scaffolding with our buildings and — and so."\textsuperscript{10}

In a letter to Mrs. Field, she speaks of herself as "S.C.J.," whose French ancestry comes to the fore and makes her nibble all round her stories like a mouse. They used to be as long as yard sticks, they are now as long as spools, and they will soon be the size of old-fashioned peppermints, and have neither beginning or end, but shape and flavor may still be left them, and a kind public may still accept when there is nothing else. One began to write itself this morning called 'The Failure of Mr. David Berry'; I have written a quarter and it goes very well indeed, and seems to have its cheerful points.\textsuperscript{11}

We might gather from Miss Jewett's rather flippant remarks about her own stories that she was careless in her work. On the contrary, she was a very conscientious artist, thinking and planning her stories over and over, revising them with great care. She was exceedingly desirous of making the most of her materials — "the stone ought to be made a lovely statue" — and she was more than once disappointed in her results. After the completion of The Very Lover, she says, "I grow very melancholy if I fall to thinking of the distance between my poor story and the first dreams of it, but I believe that I have done it just as well as I could."\textsuperscript{12} And again she writes, "The more one has cared to put one's very best into a thing, the surer he is to think that it falls far short of the 'sky he meant'.\textsuperscript{13}

After years of experience as an author she gives this advice

\textsuperscript{10}Letters, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 180.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 160.
to a younger author, Willa Cather: "I want you to be sure of your backgrounds, — you don’t see them yet quite enough from the outside — you stand right in the middle of each of them when you write, without having the standpoint of the looker-on who takes them each in their relation to letters, to the world. Your good schooling and knowledge of 'the best that has been thought and said in the world', as Matthew Arnold put it, have helped you, but these you wish and need to deepen and enrich still more. . . . . You do need reassurance — every artist does! — but you need still more to feel 'responsible for the state of your conscience', and you need to dream your dreams and go on to new and more shining ideals, to be aware of 'the gleam' and to follow it. . . . You must write to the human heart, the great consciousness that all humanity goes to make up. Otherwise what might be strength in a writer is only crudeness and what might be insight is only observation; sentiment falls to sentimentality — you can write about life, but never write life itself."14

In criticism of a particular story of Miss Cather's she wrote, "The lover is as well done as he could be when a woman writes in the man's character — it must always, I believe, be something of a masquerade. I think it is safer to write about him as you did about the other, and not try to be his! . . . Do not hurry too fast in these early winter days — a quiet hour is worth more to you than anything you can do in it."15

15. Ibid., pp. 246-47.
We have caught a glimpse of Miss Jewett as theorist and critic in the art of story-writing. Let us see how successfully she followed her own ideals. Of her sincerity and love for her works there can be no doubt, even though she sometimes grew weary at her task. She experimented with her materials, beginning her work when very young, and perfecting her own art until she ranks in the artists' class.

It is true her methods differed greatly from those laid down by Poe in his analysis of short story technique, but she is no less an artist because of this divergence. Poe strives for a single effect at the sacrifice of truth. His stories are deliberately artistic, dramatically timed, intellectual, scientific, written with the sole object of creating an impression, but his characters are artificial, his dialogue unnatural, and he makes no attempt to localize the action or portray life and conditions as they exist. What a different art was Miss Jewett's! She saw the ironies and whimsies of life round about her and set them down with a lack of conspicuous "efficiency" of method, but a naturalness that makes them teeming with vitality.

The manner is quietly delicate with a lightness of touch, a flavor of individuality, an exquisite simplicity that raises it above the level of much of our local color artistry. Her very art is so delicately refined that it is difficult to analyze and becomes art by its apparent artlessness.

Technical excellence seems to have been born perfected in Miss Jewett. Her literary style is simple, clear, vigorous, correct;
her diction pure and informal. She writes with the ease and grace of a cultivated woman in a style at the same time limpid and distinctive. "There is a certain 'quality' in all that Miss Jewett wrote, a certain unconscious 'noblesse oblige' that kept her ever in the realm of the gentle, the genteel, the Berwick old regime."16

There is something almost patrician in her avoidance of the common, and squalid, and in her own use of the objective altitude which she recommended to Willa Cather; but even though she stands a bit apart from her stories, she is always sympathetic with her characters and draws truer pictures of humble but self-respecting New Englanders and the fundamental verities of American ideals than better known writers. Her "effortless strength" has been likened to Hawthorne, and by some critics she has been ranked second only to that great American in her interpretation of the spirit of New England.17

In bringing New England before the reader, Miss Jewett achieves the highest pinnacles of her art in her gentle and sympathetic humor, her subtle characterization, her creation of atmosphere. Her humor is healthy, contagious, full of witty turns, but is sometimes mingled with the pathetic in a way that makes one smile rather than laugh outright. We are amused by the account of the Robin "girls," the minister's two spinster daughters, who, in an effort to keep their youth, make a trip to the city for rejuvenation, only to be duped into buying out-of-date frises to cover their own graying tresses. We smile at their gullibility, at their ridiculous appearance, at their own sense of satisfaction, but it is with a feeling of

pity that we hear Miss Lucinda's pathetic ultimatum: "I think we
case it to society to observe the fashions of the day. A lady cannot
afford to be unattractive. I feel now as if we were prepared for any-
thing." 18

There is also delicious humor mixed with pathos in "New Land." 
Mrs. Powder, when called in as nurse for Mrs. Barnet, announces, in
a voice loud enough for the patient to hear, that she is a very sick
woman, as she "knew 'twould please her." She shrewdly conceives the
idea of pretending the sick woman is worse than she really is, makes
her think she is dying, and thus gets her to forgive the Crostys with
whom the Barnets have been engaged in a legal feud for years. Mrs.
Barnet even gives her consent to the marriage of Ruth Crosby to her
own son Ezra, and after all this death-bed forgiveness, recovers her
normal health.

Miss Jewett's comments on people are delightful in their
simplicity, conciseness, and picturesque description. In one sentence
we get a fairly adequate idea of a character. We see Maria Harris as
"one o' them pretty little lambs that make dreadful homely old sheep," 19
and Miss Pickett, "a straight, flat little person, as if, when not in
use, she kept herself, silk dress and all, between the leaves of a book." 20
Or we get a glimpse of Captain Littlepage who "looked like an aged grass-
hopper of some strange human variety." 21

Miss Jewett puts her individualized characters into definite
local settings and over the picture throws a certain atmosphere that

makes everything seem to "belong". She gives a New England flavor to her description, she makes use of symbolic nature, she relies on the homely phraseology of ordinary New England speech — all to create "atmosphere." She does this, however, without the excess use of dialect for dialect's sake. Like Miss Wilkins and a few others, she recognizes the subordinate value of dialect and puts in just enough to flavor conversation.

In simple description, Miss Jewett shows extraordinary power. She gives her description a picturesque twist in speaking of a countenance as suddenly looking "like a clock-face that has lost its hands," or she makes her description of nature pleasantly suggestive: "The spring wind whistled in the window crack, now and then, and buffeted the little house in a dusty way that had a sort of companionable effect." She describes the salt marshes as looking "as if the land had been raveled out into the sea."

She may begin a story with a deft bit of description which gives us, in one short paragraph, setting, characterization and atmosphere.

"One hot afternoon in August a single moving figure might have been seen following a straight road that crossed the salt marshes of Walpole. . . . This was not an afternoon that one would naturally choose for a long walk, yet Mr. Jerry Lane stepped briskly forward, and appeared to have more than usual energy. His big boots trod down the soft carpet of pussy-clover that bordered the dusty, whitish road. He struck at the stationary procession of thistles with a little stick as he went by. Flight after flight of yellow butterflies fluttered up as he passed, and then wavered . . . .

down again to their thistle flowers, while on the shiny cambric back of Jerry's Sunday waistcoat bashed at least eight large green-headed flies in complete security. 23

In addition to recording faithfully what can actually be seen, Miss Jewett carries her descriptive power over into the realm of imagination and describes a band of crusaders, as her mind's eye sees them.

"The very blood thrills and leaps along our veins as we watch the Roman knights ride by along the dusty Roman roads. The spears shine in the sunlight, the horses prance, the robber-castles clench their teeth and lock down from the hill as if they were grim monsters lying in wait for prey. The apple-trees are in blossom, and the children scramble out of the horses' way; the flower of chivalry is out parading, and in clanking armor, with flaunting banners and crosses on their shields, the knights ride by to the defense of Jerusalem." 24

Miss Jewett's refinement is instinctive, her wordmanship graceful, and it has been said that she "has more distinctly a style than any other American woman." 25 She can describe states of mind, analyze conscience, make characters live, portray aspects of nature; she cannot, however, invest her scenes with passion and action.

Narrative has three elements, action, actors and setting. In the latter two of these Miss Jewett excels, but in handling the first she falls short. It is true that occasionally, as in "The Only Rose" and "Low Lane," considerable attention is paid to action and dramatic climaxes, but it is usually not so much what the people do, but what they are that interests Miss Jewett. Her delight is in the sim-

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24. Story of the Normans, p. 156.
ple or idyllic rather than in the dramatic, she pays little attention to plot, and yet no tale was ever more worth telling than "The Milton's Holiday.") It may lack action, but it exposes to the reader a view quivering bits of human life in a section of rural New England, and exalts fatherhood, motherhood, and the spirit of childhood.

Miss Jewett began writing at a time when it was almost impossible to avoid the gush of sentiment which was flooding literature, but with her it became largely the pathos of sympathy and understanding, and gave her the ability to picture trouble poignantly. There are bits of sentimentality in her works that we could wish were not there, but, although influenced by earlier writers like Mrs. Stowe, she is not guilty of the sentimental excesses to which they resorted.

Miss Jewett's sentimentality is never of the type in which the heroine faints or bursts into tears at the slightest provocation, but she sometimes makes things seem just a little too "sweet" or "dear". The worst of her sentimentality exhibits itself in her earlier works, especially those for children. We frequently encounter the expressions "poor lady," "good doctor," "Dear Betty," and similar phrases, and the heroine of Betty Leicestor is sentimentalized all the way through. At the end of one chapter, the author leaves her time: "Good night, dear Betty, in your best bedroom, sound asleep all the summer night adreaming of those you love."

In her later publications, the traces of sentimentality are more vague, but we do find one now and then. In "Martha's Lady" we find the idolized heroine crying to her humble worshipper: "Oh,
my dear Martha! won't you kiss me goodnight? Oh, Martha, have you remembered like this, all these long years?" We find Mary Hamilton, the heroine of *The Troy Lover*, slightly censured because "she had not even given him her dear hand at parting."

Even in "*A White Heron*," considered to be one of the best of Miss Jewett's sketches, we see touches of sentiment bordering on the objectionable. It does not move us to tears, but we feel like calling Sylvia a "good" girl. She martyrs herself to the cause of nature, and is exalted as a shining example of childhood because of her self-sacrifice. "Were the birds better friends than their hunter might have been, --- who can tell? Whatever treasures were lost to her, woodlands and summer-time, remember! Bring your gifts and graces and tell your secrets to this lovely country child!"

Despite her being preachy and sentimental sometimes, Miss Jewett carefully avoided one evil of which so many of the sentimentalists were guilty, careless constructions. In only a few instances was I able to find a deviation from this carefulness, and it came as such a shock to find, in *A Country Doctor*, a paragraph full of mixed tenses that it almost seemed someone else had taken Miss Jewett's pen for a few moments and juggled the present, past, conditional, and past perfect tenses around to suit his whims. It seems so unlike her, but even the most conscientious writers are sometimes caught off guard.

The limitation of her art might be considered a weakness in Miss Jewett's writing, but it is, in truth, her greatest strength. Her talents for pungency and brevity make her more successful in short
stories and sketches and lead her more often into the fields of short fiction, where her art achieves its finest heights, but she is not wholly unsuccessful in her longer works. Her history, The Story of the Normans, is full of interesting details and graphic descriptions, and her novels are not without merit, although her lack of emphasis on action makes them either imitative or more series of sketches connected by a meager thread of plot. In this looseness of construction, The Country Doctor is typical of most of the novels, and we feel as if we were reading a series of short stories or sketches containing the same characters, rather than one unified story. Miss Jewett herself says of novels that they "are good as they go along. It is only when they stop that you take it in that the pretty bubble is made of a splatter of soap suds."26 In contrast to the form of the other novels, The Tory Lover is a pretty story, well planned and written, but it is much like other historical novels of the period.

In reply to Mr. Collyer's request for her opinion of the novel, she offered these two quotations from Flaubert: "Ecrire la vie ordinaire comme on ecrit l'histoire," and "Ce n'est pas de faire rire mais d'agir a la facon de la nature, c'est a dire de faire rever." These quotations she kept constantly before her at her desk, but it was not in novels that she made the best use of the advice. Her own art was more easily adapted to shorter efforts, and she herself realized that her best expression was in short

stories and sketches. Accordingly, she devoted her time primarily to short story writing, and in that field has become a real artist.

There are various types of short stories, the episodic, the fairy tale, the character sketch, the dialogue of comedy, the Christmas story, transplanted from England, the Thanksgiving story, an American creation, and many others; and Miss Jewett experimented with practically all of them. She used also a variety of forms, the simple narrative with a moderate share of dialogue, the first person narrative, and the method, often used in short stories, of telling a story by letters. Her stories possess most of the traits which Brander Matthews finds desirable in the short story.\textsuperscript{27} They have originality, unity, compression, brilliancy of style, form, substance and sometimes fantasy, but as previously pointed out, are often lacking in action.

We have already said that many of Miss Jewett's stories are sketch-like in character. The difference between a short story proper and a sketch is that in a short story something always happens, however slight, and a sketch may picture only still-life. It may be an outline of character, a picture of a mood, a glimpse of natural beauty, in which action is no longer of great importance. With Miss Jewett's writing so excellently in her sketch-like style, Mr. Matthews' requirement of action seems to fade into the background.

\textsuperscript{27} Patten, \textit{Development of the American Short Story}, p. 294.
In addition to the feature of the short story recommended by Mr. Matthews, Professor Pattee adds some of his own, namely brevity, immediaseness, momentum, characterization, verisimilitude, culmination and soul, all of which are found, to some degree at least, in Miss Jewett's stories.

Is it, then, merely the measuring up to these rules laid down by critics, that makes Miss Jewett's work worth while? It is that, and more than that. Roscoe Gilmore Stott says, "The finer touches are those that raise work out of the commonplace and amateurish and give it a fighting chance for life," and it is these finer touches that give Miss Jewett's stories enduring qualities in spite of their delicacy.

She did not glide triumphantly over details; on the contrary, she paid most careful attention to them, but she managed to give all her work the unconscious touch. Her stories begin and end with apparently little effort and progress so naturally that the artist's technique is not apparent to the casual reader.

Hamilton says that the opening should give a hint of the element to be predominant in the story. Poe began a story of setting with description, a story of character with a remark by or about the

leading actor, and a story of action with a sentence pregnant with potential incident. He also conveyed the emotional tone of the entire narrative in the first sentence. These sound like rather stereotyped rules to follow, and still what could be more natural and simple than the beginning of "A late supper?"

The story begins one afternoon in June just after dinner. Miss Catherine Spring was the heroine; and she lived alone in her house, which stood on the long village street in Brookton -- up in the country, city people would say -- a town certainly not famous, but pleasant enough because it was on the outer edge of the mountain region, near some great hills.

Here we have a suggestion of character, setting, and tone all in one short paragraph.

Miss Jewett does not disregard the element of suspense, and she sometimes employs climactic or surprise endings, but she is more likely to tell her story plainly, simply, beautifully, and bring it to a close in the same manner. "Who can laugh at my Marsh Rosemary," she asks, "or who can cry, for that matter? The gray primness of the plant is made up from a hundred colors if you look close enough to find them. This Marsh Rosemary stands in her own place, and holds her dry leaves and tiny blossoms toward the same sun that the pink lotus blooms for, and the white rose." 30

Miss Jewett was not unfamiliar with devices for heightening effects, but she did not overuse them. She contrasts two sisters 31 to obtain a balance, she repeats a question at the beginning

31. *In The Town Poor.*
of each separate part of a story to secure emphasis and unusual effect, but her methods never seem mechanical. On the contrary, they are usually quite subtle. In addition to excellent direct characterization, she uses the indirect method of character drawing, by recording the speech, actions, environment, and the effect on other people, of her characters. She makes you definitely feel atmosphere without naming it. She brings you beauties of which you would never think of looking for yourself. Her stories are not merely narratives told as she happened to think of them. They are full of balance and shade, even though their fiber is simple truth itself.

Miss Jewett portrays real life, but in some respects she stands on the border-line between the realistic and the romantic. Her pictures are faithful to environment, but she is not a realist dominated by the material. By her own definition, "the trouble with most realism is that it isn't seen from any point of view at all, and so its shadows fall in every direction, and it fails of being art." In speaking of romanticism, she says, "Mr. Howells thinks that the age frowns upon the romantic, that it's no use to write romance any more; but, dear me, how much there is left in every day life, after all." This spirit of romanticism exhibits itself in her stories. She tells the truth, but not always the whole truth; she records the lovely, not the harsh; she sees the romantic

32. "Where's Nora?"
33. Letters, p. 79.
34. Ibid., p. 59.
in the commonplace and throws over her realism that atmosphere of
the glory departed which is the soul of romance.

Like Jane Austen she is at her best when painting her "two
inches square of ivory" with no setting forth of rustic squalor,
no grim fatalism. She is of that school of local colorists who
 tended away from the uglier forms of realism and pessimism and por-
trayed the Irvingesque softness and sentiment. Her scenes are so
full of poetic realism that she has been called a "romanticist
equipped with a camera and a fountain pen."56

Fantasy, which finds a rank among the salient features of
the short story, becomes a factor in this romanticized realism. "A
Sorrowsid Guest" is almost as fantastic a tale as Poe could have pro-
duced, although it is handled much more humanly and sympathetically.
The symbolism in "Lady Eher" and "The Gray Man" reminds us of Poe in
mystery and ghostliness and of Hawthorne in philosophy and style.
Traces of impressionism and symbolism can be found in several other
stories, especially among the earlier works of Miss Jewett, which
are fantastic in nature. It seems altogether probable that Poe and
Hawthorne had some influences on those earlier writings.

In summarizing concerning the art of Miss Jewett, we can-
not fail to notice particularly the feminine note. One author says
that the "female author is at once self-conscious and didactic."37
Perhaps she is, but her sketches and studies are "faithfulier and
more realistic than those of men."38 Miss Jewett speaks for the

feminine soul of the New England race, and even if the accusation that her "men are masculine ciphers" 39 were true, she portrays perfectly feminine understanding, patience, and a mother's feeling. She shows a feminine distaste for crude tragedy and sorrowful detail. Like all the feminine group of the latter part of the century, the daughters of Brahmins, she was sensitive, intellectual, introspective, and could draw a lady without having to think.

"She wrote to please herself, to satisfy her own artistic requirements," 40 and at the same time she wished to lay open, for other eyes to see, those qualities in human nature which ennoble their possessors, high or low, rich or poor; those floods of sympathy to be unsealed in the most unpromising and dusty natures by the touch of a divining spirit. Finding herself in some dim way the owner of this sacred touchstone what wonder that she loved her work and believed in it?" 41

She arouses the reader to reflection, stimulates curiosity, contributes to faith in the worth of experience. Her subdued passion, grace, refinement, artistry, perfection of style, seem to be of the eighteenth rather than the nineteenth century, and there is something patrician in the beauty of her work, in its simple genuineness.

Her work is essentially American, and yet is by strength of her own personality, cosmopolitan in appeal. Clayton Hamilton says that holding the attention of the reader lies in the ability

40. Pattee, Development of the American Short Story, p. 262.
41. Letters, p. 10.
to "make 'em laugh; make 'em weep; make 'em wait." Miss Jewett
does that and more. She makes us see the beauty of her land and
her people by showing us their simple joys and sorrows.

Charles Miner Thompson pays her this tribute with which
it seems fitting to close this discussion of her as an artist: "I
always think of her as one who, hearing New England accused of be-
ing a bleak land without beauty, passes confidently over the snow,
to a southern bank, and there, brushing away the decayed leaves,
triumphantly shows to the faultfinder a spray of the trailing ar-
butter. And I should like for my own part to add this: that the
fragrant, retiring, exquisite flower, which I think she would say
is the symbol of New England virtue, is the symbol also of her own
modest and delightful art."42

CHAPTER III.

THE INTERPRETER OF NEW ENGLAND LIFE.

American fiction at its best is mainly an affair of localities, vivid cross-sections of life in various parts of our country. This diversification of locality has given the short story an unusual opportunity. As a type, it is peculiarly suited to display the characteristics of a people either when the country is virgin soil for literary efforts, or when it has been worn out by the novelist. The first condition is illustrated by the South, the latter by New England. A microscopic study of human life is practically what the realistic school of local colorists demand, and that is perhaps easier to obtain in a short story than in a novel.

The far west has been utilized in this local color movement, the South has been brought into literature, and even New England, so often the center of the greatest literary efforts of America, has been utilized in a fresh way, and has again become prominent in the local color movement. There began in the seventies a whole New England school of local color chroniclers, including Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Rose Terry Cooke, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Alice Brown, and Sarah Orne Jewett.

That New England types and scenery should become conspicuous in this movement appears natural, since New England herself possesses the factors which go to make up local color. Her coast

is picturesque, its life centering about the fisherman and sailor, her people are homogeneous, her position isolated. Boston has been distinguished from most American cities by the fact that it is "not on the way anywhere". When a community is isolated from others, as is a New England village in winter, it has a tendency to continue the same habits and customs generation after generation. Its vistas are narrow and limited, prejudices and antipathies thrive, its climate and topography influence character, its industries and occupations create distinctive types. "For intense, self-centered, smouldering volatilities of humanity, New England cannot be matched the world over."

With such a field before her, Miss Jewett began her work. Her literary beginnings were almost contemporaneous with those of Harte, Miss Woolson, and Cable. "Unlike any of these three, however, she was indigenous to the region she portrayed, for generations indigenous; she wrote always with complete knowledge and with perfect sympathy."  

As a child she had every facility for acquiring an intimate and thorough knowledge of nature and people — her materials. In her girlhood, she rode much with her father on his rounds among his patients, and he made it possible for her to know the story of every

family. She knew their lives with peculiar intimacy, learned the
social life of the region, sympathized with it and interpreted it in her
stories.

In the village of Berwick, which became Desplaines in her
writings, she grew up, with the hills and waters and a large open
country all about her. The Piscataqua river at one time swept goodnessized vessels up to the very edge of the village, and she, as a child
heard the graphic dialect of store and wharf, and met, at her grand-
father’s house, the old ship-masters who could no longer put out to
sea.

The village had once been the residence of Governor Cham-
trey, a wealthy ship-owner and East India merchant, and was rich in
tradition. Miss Jewett was wise enough to know that accurate ob-
servation will discover the stuff of fiction anywhere and began to
look for material at home, where she knew thoroughly her picturesque
setting.

Berwick itself, pronounced "Berwick", is the setting for
The Merry Lovers, and the old Wallingford house which she describes
in that story was actually the stately home of her grandfather.
The towns of York and Wells find their way into her stories also,
and she once said, "Somehow dear, dull old Wells is a first-rate
place to find stories in."5 She acknowledges that she knew the town
of Tideshead, the old aunts and the child who inspired Betty Leices-
ter, that the house in "Lady Ferry" was drawn from real life, and

4. Pattee, Development of the American Short Story, pp. 259-60.
5. Letters, p. 60.
that many of her characters are actual people transferred to the
printed page. Elijah Tilleys, the old man in The Country of the
Pointed Fires who sits and knits all day and speaks of his dead
wife as "poor dear", was an old friend of Miss Jewett's, a fisher-
man whose days of usefulness were past. In speaking of Deem-
haven she says, "Miss Chauncy is the only one who was a real per-
son, and I made the first visit to her one afternoon just as I
have described. Very little of that chapter is imaginary."5

She made use not only of old friends and acquaintances,
but also of material gleaned in chance observations. She once
wrote to Mrs. Fields, "You will be amused to hear that the funny
old man in the linen duster whom I caught sight of at Chapel Sta-
tion has really been the making of the Atlantic sketch."7

She does not adhere strictly to characters she knew or
had seen. Sometimes she gives her imagination full sway. She may
select real people and put them in artificial situations as she admits 8
as she did in The Tory Lover. "I knew Lieutenant Wallingford was killed,
none better, but how could I write about him unless I kept him
alive?" She made him a Tory out of her own imagination and later
found out that he really was, and that his lady refused to marry
him because of it, just as she did in the story. Miss Jewett adds
to her explanation, "Now how could I have guessed at his character
and what was likely to happen, and better? Imagination is the only
true thing in the world."8

7. Letters, p. 57. The sketch referred to is The Coast of My Real.
8. Letters, pp. 209-10
She again admits her use of imagination in the following conversation with Henry James.

"It is foolish to ask, I know," (Mr. James says) "but were you in just such a place as you describe in the 'Pointed Firs'?"

"No," she said, "not precisely; the book was chiefly written before I visited the locality itself."

"And such an island?"

"Not exactly."

"Ah! I thought so," he said musingly, "and the language -- it is so absolutely true -- not a word overdone -- such elegance and exactness. And Mrs. Demmet -- how admirable she is." 9

Even though Miss Jewett admits that she did not know the exact locality about which she was writing, we feel that she was familiar with it through a knowledge of her own village. What she says of Dunsott Landing could apply to her own Berwick. "When one really knows a village like this and its surroundings, it is like becoming acquainted with a single person... A lover of Dunsott Landing returned to find the unchanged shores of the pointed fire, the same quaintness of the village with its elaborate convention-alities; all that mixture of remoteness and childish certainty of being the centre of civilization of which her affectionate dreams had told." 10

Miss Jewett sensed the significance of local things, but she also had broadening associations. She knew the village and country life of New England in all seasons, when fishing was good, when roses and syringas were in bloom, or when the hamlets were piled full of snow, but her acquaintance went beyond this range.

She knew the old world as well as the new, and Mr. James says in *The Bostonians* that the house in Boston where she lived with Mrs. Fields was furnished "with associations". She was most successful in picturing the country where she was reared, but her life in Boston made her able to portray certain social problems, and prepared her for writing more about town life in her later years, besides giving her the broadening influence of literary associations.

She made several attempts to extend her range of locality and was not altogether successful in some of them. In her Southern stories there is beauty but faintness in the picture. The central figure in *The Lizzie of Sydenham Plantation* is a New England gentlewoman, merely transferred to South Carolina, and the negro dialect is unconvincing. Miss Jewett knew New England as she did not know the South nor could ever even hope to. On very rare occasions, an author is able to write successfully about a country he does not know, as General Lew Wallace did in *Ben-Hur*, but he must usually know the setting at least in which his characters move. Miss Jewett knew not only the New England settings, but often the characters themselves and therefore is qualified to make her country really live before us.

The New England of different writers necessarily varies, because only part of it can be shown — the part each knows as his
own. The first interpreter of note which this section of the country had was Hawthorne. "New England," he wrote in his later years, "is quite as large a lump of earth as my heart can readily take in, and it is a larger lump than any two writers can see just alike.

Hawthorne's legends of New England are cold and gloomy, centering about abnormal personalities. His genius is lyric rather than epic or dramatic, his style of the eighteenth century, and he has a keen eye for situation. Miss Jewett's work has often been likened to that of Hawthorne. They both reflect the environment and the real Puritan temperament, it is true, but their methods and attitudes are not the same. There are traces in her work of the influence of The House of the Seven Gables, especially in "A Village Shop," where the middle-aged heroine Esther, like Hawthorne's Miss Pyncheon, is reduced to keeping a shop in the ancestral house. "The Gray Man" also reminds us of "The Ambitious Guest," but we cannot believe that Miss Jewett was a deliberate imitator of Hawthorne. In fact, she states that she was never a Hawthorne lover, so it is improbable that she should try to imitate him to any great degree. Their styles have a lyric charm which makes them not unlike, but Miss Jewett does not pay as much attention to action and situation as does Hawthorne. Neither is her attitude so cold and stern, and she casts a glamour over dismal realities.

Miss Jewett also invites comparison, in the modern field of New England portraiture, with Mary Wilkins Freeman. The two

12. Ibid., p. 102.
writers are often mentioned in the same breath as delineators of New England life, and yet how differently they see and portray that life. Mrs. Freeman's style is puritanic, angular, severe, an admirable one for picturing the barrenness and grimness of life. Her backgrounds are meager, her interest being in people rather than in the beauties of nature. She is a daughter of the Puritans, typical of the veritists of the nineties, who told the truth unidealized. She has produced a series of moral pictures which are, as far as they go, as true and terse as anything in literature, but her realism is almost painful in its fidelity.

She has, unhappily, left almost out of sight the more cultivated and ancestral aspects of New England life, to which Miss Jewett has done ampler justice. Miss Jewett's characters, in the main, are of a higher social order than Mrs. Freeman's, her outlook on life is more calm and even, her sympathy and insight into nature and human nature deeper. There is less violence of tragedy and more happiness in her stories, and she writes of the decadence of New England, not despairingly like Mrs. Freeman and the depressed realists, but reverently and gently. "She delights in decaying old seaports with their legends of other and better days, of old sea captains mellow and reminiscent and of dear old ladies serene in spite of the buffet of time." Common humanity touches her, and her stories are interpretations of life, not mere recitals of incidents in life.

Not long after her twentieth year, Miss Jewett awoke to

the fact that the New England of her favorite authors, Cooke, Stowe, and Lowell, was rapidly becoming a New England of tradition only and that the New England of her childhood was passing. Wharves, once busy, were now neglected and decayed, buildings were tumbling down, business and social life was disintegrating, and only a small group of the old aristocracy, a remnant of the courtly society of the manor houses, remained.

In Deephaven we see her own village as she saw it in her youth: "Deephaven seemed more like one of the lazy little English seaside towns than any other. It was not in the least American. There was no excitement about anything, there were no manufactories; nobody seemed in the least hurry. The only foreigners were a few stranded sailors. I do not know when a house or a new building of any kind had been built; the men were farmers, or went outward in boats, or inward in fish-wagons, or sometimes mackerel and halibut fishing in schooners for the city markets. Sometimes a schooner came to one of the wharves to load with hay or firewood; but Deephaven used to be a town of note, rich and busy, as its forsaken warehouses show... There was hardly a day in the year that you didn't hear the shipwrights' hammers, and there was always something going on at the wharves."14 She further describes the decline of the village thus: "It seemed as if all the clocks in Deephaven, and all the people with them, had stopped years ago, and the people had been doing over and over what they had been busy about during the last week of their unambitious progress."15

With such conditions around her, Miss Jewett became retrospective. She clung to the traditions of the old social regime, and pictured for us the survivors of the old aristocracy. Pride of family, hospitality, courtesy, high breeding, stateliness, reserve, belonging to the old days and to a fast-disappearing order of things, found their way into her stories.

In *Pemmican* she describes a stately old house belonging to the past social system. "It was an imposing great white house, and the lilacs were tall, and there were crowds of rose-bushes not yet out of bloom, and there were box borders, and there were great elms at the side of the house and down the road. . . . It was impossible to imagine any children in the old place; everything was for grown people; even the stair railing was too high to slide down on." Just as much does she delight in the people who lived in such houses. In *A Country Doctor*, we see Miss Prince as "a proud and stately woman of the Old New England type: more colonial than American perhaps, and quite provincial in her traditions and prejudices."17

While Miss Jewett delighted in dipping into the past and letting us see the beauties of the old gentry of New England, she was not slow to acknowledge a change in the order of things. She clings lovingly to the old things, but does not fail to see the new influences. She acknowledges that the people of the generation before her had some things that were better than those found in her

own time, "even if they did not hear from England by telegraph."
Sometimes there is a touch of satire in her attitude toward the
monotony of a more modern world. She sees in nearly every home
the same county map, the same kind of photograph book, the same
chrome pictures on the wall, and various kinds of luxuries which
would have made her ancestors "stare their eyes out o' their
head." She reflects on the decreasing purchasing power of the
dollar, and the increasing wants of the people, who must have bay
windows in their houses, or "else they ain't considered Christian."

The change in the religious attitude of the people is
clearly marked. From the days of the "divine right of ministers",
when the clergy was all powerful, even Puritan New England has ar-
rived at the place where "Sunday-keepin's all gone out o' fashion."
Miss Jewett's characters, in their conversation, revert to "the old
brimstone discourses", but admit that "preachers is far more reason-
able nowadays."

Miss Jewett recognizes the rise of manufacturing with the
consequent immigration of mill workers to replace the old English
descendants of the little towns. We find, in many of her later
stories, "Ellenem", "The Gray Hills of Farley", "Between Mass and Vea-
ners", "A Little Captive Raid", and "The Luck of the Bogans", Irish
immigrants taking up life in their adopted country. Miss Jewett
treats her Irish characters sympathetically and handles the Irish
brogue fairly well, but her Irish stories are not as convincing as

those in which she writes of the native New Englander. The Canadian-French characters which she introduces from time to time in her stories, do not lack charm, but they, too, are eclipsed by her pictures of the people she knew more intimately. We cannot regret that Miss Jewett painted these later portraits, for they are worthy in themselves and show her realization of changing conditions, but it is for her interpretation of the real New Englander that she will always be remembered.

Miss Jewett's characters are not, in general, highly individualized; neither does she take refuge in types now follow too closely specific examples. She deals with human figures of the New England variety in their native environment, and gives us delicate country idyls, pleasant realistic tales, or even grim pictures of a sterile land and its inhabitants. But with her deep understanding and genial spirit, she is usually prepared to see the brighter side of life, even among dismal surroundings.

The condition of many of the barren New England farms and their occupants is set forth in "A Bit of Shore Life."

"I wonder if anyone has not often been struck, as I have, by the sadness and hopelessness which seems to overshadow many of the people who live on the lonely farms in the outskirts of small New England villages. It is most noticeable among the elderly women. Their talk is very cheerless, and they have a morbid interest in sickness and deaths; they tell each
other long stories about such things; they are very forlorn, they dwell persistently upon any troubles which they have; and their petty disputes with each other have a tragic hold on their thoughts, sometimes being handed down from one generation to the next. Is it because their world is so small, and life affords so little amusement and pleasure, and is at best such a dreary round of the dullest housekeeping? There is a lack of real Merriment, and the fun is an odd, rough way of joking, it is a stupid, heavy sort of fun, though there is much of a certain quaint humor, and once in a while a flash of wit."

It is her faculty for seeking out the best and most pleasant in everything that relieves of their grimness Miss Jewett's stories of this type of country people. She gives us pictures of kind, generous, childlike old ladies, hardy farmers, "called gran'ther by clumsy creatur's goin' on fifty or sixty," overworked mothers and fathers, odd, silent children; and yet she makes their lives seem not so unpleasant. Even though they are poor, they are neat, sociable, and contented in their way. They have strange customs and wear curious clothes, but they are human beings, lovable and real.

Whether their houses are of comfortable proportions, green-shuttered and surrounded by rose and syringa bushes, or whether they are barren little structures scarcely large enough for a shelter, they are always scrupulously neat, and the housewives are "of the dry, shrewd, quick-witted New England type, with their hair twisted neatly back out of the way." When an untidy

character does shuffle into one of Miss Jewett's stories, she makes you feel, just as she does about her very disagreeable characters, that they are victims of circumstance and should be pitied rather than condemned.

Miss Jewett is particularly fond of the New England spinster, but she varies the type. Her Miss Penexter is "a cheerful, even gay little person, who always brought a pleasant flurry of excitement, and usually had a genuine though small piece of news to tell, or some new aspect of already received information," while Nancy Floyd is cast in a sterner mold, with a "firmly-set angular face" and one lock of hair betraying "a slight crinkle at its edge," but it owed nothing to any encouragement of Nancy Floyd's. A hard, kindly face this was, of a woman whom everybody trusted, who might be expected to give of whatever she had to give, good measure, pressed down and running over. She was a lonely soul, she had no near relatives in the world. It seemed always as if nature had been mistaken in not planting her somewhere in a large and busy household.

Often these women characters marry late in life, or do not marry at all, cherishing the memory of a lost romance. In fact, Miss Jewett is more successful in recording memories of youthful love than she is in picturing youthful love itself. Her younger heroines are likely to be sentimental, but in these older women, the feeling has ripened into sentiment. Even Mrs. Todd, whom we delight in meeting, in The Country of the Painted Fires, as landlady,

herb-gatherer, rustic philosopher and mariner, cherishes the remembrance of an old love affair. Of the unknown lover, she says, "He's forgot our youthful feelin's, I expect, but a woman's heart is different: then feelin's comes back when you think you're done with 'em, as sure as spring comes with the year." 25

Second marriages, especially among people of middle age, occur frequently in Miss Jewett's stories, one of the most humorous relations of the kind being found in "A Winter Courtship." In that charming story, Jefferson Bridley, driver of a stage between two neighboring towns "was a meek and timid-looking body, but he held a warlike soul, and encouraged his fancies by reading awful tales of bloodshed and lawlessness in the far West" and by carrying an unloaded pistol. One cold December day, he finds in his stage a lone passenger, the genial middle-aged widow, Mrs. Robin, who admonishes the driver to "urge the beast, can't ye, Jefferson? I ain't used to bein' out in such bleak weather. Seems if I couldn't git my breath I'm all pinched up and wigglin' with shivers now.

"Tain't no use lettin' the hoss go stop-a-by-stop, this fashion." It is not long until she engineers a move to the front seat, becomes suddenly coy and reminiscent, and steers conversation toward a proposal. In the last paragraph, Miss Jewett brings the story to a delightful close, leaving us admiring her understanding of human nature, and chuckling over the strange romance:

"Who'd have thought we'd done such a piece of engineerin' when we started out?" inquired the dear one of Mr. Bridley's heart.

"Both on us, jest the least grain," answered the lover. "Give me a good smack now, you clever creature," and so they parted. Mr. Briley had been taken on the road in spite of his pistol.26

Occasionally, Miss Jewett introduces a fiery character like John Paul Jones, "a little wasp of a fellow, with a temper like a blaze of the gunpowder whose smoke he loved," but ordinarily her characters are of the more placid type, belonging either to the old New England gentry or to the hard-working lower social classes. She paints sweet, gentle children like Betty Leicester, young ladies like Mary Hamilton, so lovely she seemed "like a single flower upon the family tree," gentle old ladies who cling to the traditions of the past, worn-out sea captains whose sea-faring days are over; or she turns to the rugged farms of New England and draws from them human material for her stories. Not all of her pictures are pleasant, because life is not that way. She may give us a glimpse of a solitary woman living in a lonely little house on the hillside, but she makes us feel more than the loneliness and pity of the situation. Miss Jewett helps you to see the cheerfulness and friendliness and strength of her characters, even in adverse situations. She is not blind to the sordid, depressing side of life about her, and does not shun it, but she will not let us feel that the world is made up of such things and people. She emphasizes rather the hopefulness and promise of human life.

Miss Jewett rejoiced to be a part of the life she depicted, and longed to bring the people she knew and loved to others so that

they might learn to love them also. And none of her characters did she cherish more than the old retired captains and sailors who sat around neglected wharves and talked of bygone days or prophesied the weather for the next day. Their "faces looked like leather, with a few deep folds instead of wrinkles," their "hair looked like the fine seaweed which clings to the kelp-roots and mussel-shells in little nooks" they "sang with voices like the bowl of the wind, with an occasional deep note or two."

"They wore like some worn old driftwood at the harbor-side, and they bore a queer family likeness to the worm-eaten pieces of ship timber and the small rusty anchor with a broken fluke which were stored away near them." Thus symbolically does Miss Jewett picture the old sailors.

She is not content with the superficialities of the local life she studied. She tries to establish a true relationship between the rocky country and the sea she loves and these weathered inhabitants. The characteristics of the sea seem to belong to them naturally; they appear almost to be a part of it.

Miss Jewett herself is passionately fond of the sea. "I think the life in me must be next of kin to the life of the sea," she declares, "for it is drawn toward it strangely, as a little drop of quicksilver grows uneasy just out of reach of a greater one."
This love of the sea has a great influence on the characters and themes of her stories. The shore folk and Down-Easters are specifically her own, and she brings them to the reader in a kindly, sympathetic way. Her stories are full of old navigators who speak in nautical terms and tell strange tales of the sea, hardy fisherman who know all the wiles of outwitting the rough waves and ensnaring their scaly prey, women who wait apprehensively for their loved ones to arrive safely back on land again. Miss Jewett was reared in a town where everything, even the sermons, was influenced by the sea, her own grandfather, as we have said, was a sea-captain, and it is not strange, therefore, that the sea appealed to her and that she loved to write about it. We are not surprised that she had the insight to see in the eyes of the villagers "a look of anticipation and joy, a far-off look that sought the horizon; one often sees it in seafaring families, inherited by girls and boys alike from men who spend their lives at sea, and are always watching for distant sails or the first loom of the land."

Though she loves the sea, she writes also of its tragic aspects. She recounts tales of disaster, of friends and loved ones lost at sea, and in one poetic attempt, "The Gloucester Mother," expresses a feeling of dread of the sea as a place of burial. In the last verse of that poem she relieves the atmosphere of awe by assuming a hopeful, prayerful attitude,

"God bless them all who die at sea!  
If they must sleep in restless waves,  
God make them dream they are ashore,  
With grass above their graves."

Miss Jewett loved nature wherever she saw it and knew it.

For the same reason that she loved the sea, she loved the salt marshes, the country-side, the pine woods, and the little creatures that dwelt in them. From her childhood, she was intimate with all of them and, in a letter to Whittier, once spoke of "the country out of which I grew and where every bush and tree seem like my cousins." She was a close and loving observer of nature, and scattered through her stories are stately, old-fashioned gardens, bare New England pastures with their wallums and junipers and moss-grown rocks, winding wood-roads and shaded village streets, rocky bits of sea-coast, and wide green marshes where the sea comes and goes.

Sometimes Miss Jewett reaches ecstatic heights in her appreciation of nature. She describes the joys of breaking out of a house into the glories of an old-fashioned flower garden in early morning. She expresses the pleasure of a long walk with only a dog for company on "a day that loves you." Her joyful imagination makes the old apple-trees look "as if they were all dancing in an old-fashioned reel." To her all nature is joyful and lovable, and she never wearies of its simple pleasures.

This devotion to natural beauty she passes on to her characters, and in her stories, we see the women of New England tenderly caring for their little gardens, where poppies, marigolds, larkspur and verbena vie with one another for first place in the hearts of

the gardeners. We see these same women going out on buckwheesring expeditions or to gather "pennyroyal" and other fragrant herbs which grow on the New England slopes. We find farmers so devoted to their land that they cannot be happy away from its earthly smell. We find even children who risk their own comfort and happiness rather than betray the secret of nature's creatures.

The author has always the deepest sympathy and affection for the things of nature themselves and sometimes even invests them with spiritual powers. Mrs. Todd, the beloved herb-dispenser in The Country of the Pointed Firs serves in the capacity of physician to the villagers.

With most remedies the purchaser was allowed to depart unadornished from the kitchen, Mrs. Todd being a wise saver of steps; but with certain vials she gave cautions, standing in the doorway, and there were other doses which had to be accompanied on their healing way as far as the gate, while she muttered long chapters of directions, and kept up an air of secrecy and importance to the last. It may not have been only the common ills of humanity with which she tried to cope; it seemed sometimes as if love and hate and jealousy and adverse winds at sea might also find their proper remedies among the curious wild-looking plants in Mrs. Todd's garden.34

After reading the story of Mrs. Todd, one almost feels that Miss Jewett was right, and that her garden of herbs brought spiritual, as well as physical relief to sufferers.

Miss Jewett was proud of the scenery in her own country and used it as the background for most of her stories. She saw the

34. Country of the Pointed Firs, p. 5.
value of her native heath, and we can almost hear an echo of her own thought in the words of William, "There ain't no such view in the world, I expect." She paints a commonplace scene and makes us recognize in it a beauty of which we might be unaware if we should view it for ourselves. She sees, with the artist, hero of A Marsh Island, the possibilities of a "familiar row of willows and a foreground of pasture."

Nowhere in her writings is her appreciation of nature and her insight into shore life so summarized as in the closing paragraph of Deerhaven.

The thought of Deerhaven will always bring to us our long quiet summer days, and reading aloud on the rocks by the sea, the fresh salt air, and the glory of the sunsets; the wall of the Sunday psalm-singing at church, the yellow lichen that grew over the trees, the houses, and the stone-walls; our boating and wandering ashore; our importance as members of society and how kind every one was to us both. By and by the Deerhaven warehouses will fall and be used for firewood by the fisher-people and the wharves will be worn away by the tides. The few old gentlefolk who still linger will be dead then; and I wonder if Kate Lancaster and I will go down to Deerhaven for the sake of old times, and read the epitaph in the burying-ground, look out to sea, and talk quietly about the girls who were so happy there one summer long before. I should like to walk along the beach at sunset, and watch the color of the marshes and the sea change as the light of the day goes out. It would make the old days come back vividly. We should see the roofs and chimneys of the village, and the great Chantrey cliffs look black against the sky. A little later the marsh fog would show faintly white, and we should feel it deliciously cold and wet against our hands and faces; when we looked up there would be a star; the crickets would chirp loudly; perhaps some late sea-birds would fly inland. Turning, we

35. Country of the Pointed Firs, p. 5.
should see the lighthouse lamp shine out over the water, and the great sea would move and speak to use lazily in its idle, high-tide sleep.\footnote{35}

In just such a town and its surrounding country did Miss Jewett set her powers of observation at work to secure materials for her stories, and one of the evidences of her being an unusually close observer is found in her use of dialect. She noticed not only the old ways in which people pronounce words, but the characteristic words and phrases which they use.

We find in her stories spinal meningitis pronounced "mer-goo-tis", neuralgia called "neurology", unreasonable pronounced "unreason-able", tootset "hunmit", herbs "airbs", and many similar instances of mispronunciation. The use of words with a special provincial meaning is also clearly discernible in the dialect. The New Englander says "rule" for recipe, "persuasion" for deno-mination, "care" for train, "near" for stingy, and so on through a long list of provincial expressions; nor does he hesitate to coin words to suit himself, such as "meedments", "misbehelden", "dis-remember". Other words and phrases found frequently in Miss Jewett's stories, and which add local color interest, appear in the

\footnote{36. 
Deenchaven, pp. 253-54.}
following list: "pretty behaved", "be seen him dreadfully", "harkin' to us", "setting under preaching", "it does so", "proud of you clean through", "mite o' capital", and "she's to home fast enough".

In reporting conversation, Miss Jewett does not weary the reader, as many writers do, with an excessive use of dialect, but records enough only to give a true impression of the person's habit of speech. The intrusion of a rather ambitious word into the midst of otherwise uneducated speech is very characteristic of the New Englander, and this Miss Jewett illustrates again and again. It makes no difference whether the ambitious sounding utterance is a word or not as long as it sounds difficult. In The Tony Lower, for instance, old Peggy confides to Mary, "I'm dreadful spent myself, bein' up 'early and late. We carried an upstropolis sight o' dishes to an' froze." 37

In addition to knowing and using convincingly the dialect of the New Englander, Miss Jewett had also an intimate knowledge of his habits, customs, and mannerisms. She knew the remoteness of the villages, with their strange, disorderly array of buildings, and felt for the people who lived in them a deep sympathy in their days of toil and hours of simple pleasures. "It gave me a feeling of gratitude", she says, "that some of the little houses had not been carelessly dumped on their sides, or upside down, which would have made housekeeping in them even more inconvenient than it was." 38

She notes the efficiency of the frugal New England house-

37. P. 136.
wife, however, in spite of her lack of modern conveniences, and points out her methodical habits. "I ain't got my sitting-room chamber carpet taken up yet," sighs Mrs. Bickford in "The Only Rose". "I do feel condemned." And a little later we hear her telling Miss Pendexter, "I always sweep the setting-room and front entry Wednesdays." In "Low Lane", we get a glimpse of the same kind of a housekeeper. "The thump of a flat-iron signified to an educated passer-by that this was Tuesday morning; yesterday having been fair and the weekly washing-day unhindered by the weather. It was what undoubtedly what Mrs. Fowler pleased herself by calling a good orthodox week; not one of the disjointed and imperfect sections of time which a rainy Monday forced upon methodical housekeepers." 39

These housewives apologize for their "bad luck" in cooking when they are fully aware that their meals are delicious, though simple. They are extremely hospitable; they proudly usher guests into the stuffy, damp "best parlor", and serve to them the triumphs of their culinary efforts. Notable among the characteristics of the New Englander are frugality, industry, loyalty to home, hospitality, and sociability. Both men and women work for the homes they love and spend their few leisure moments in simple pastimes. The women congregate in small groups, discussing and enlarging upon the current news; the old men loiter on the store steps and "set there and talk and talk about what they went through when they followed the sea, and when the women-folks come tradin'"

they are obliged to climb right over 'em', the younger men stand or sit about, conversing on topics of present-day interests. Once in a while, an event of common interest takes place, fair day rolls around again or a family has a reunion and invites the whole country-side to participate in it, and it is then that the typical New Engander is in his glory. "It is very rare in country life, where high days and holidays are few, that any occasion of general interest proves to be less than great. Such is the hidden fire of enthusiasm in the New England native that, once given an outlet, it shines forth with almost volanic light and heat."41

To the New Engander that Miss Jewett writes about, sickness and death are events in the life of a community. The neighbors "watch" with the sick after their own folks are "tackered out", sit up with the dead, and turn out en masse for the funeral. "A funeral in the country is always an era in a family's life; events date from it and centre in it."42 Sometimes it seems to be almost a time of celebration as we find in this quotation from "Andrew's Fortune": "I know we set the supper table over five times. Mother always said it was a real pleasant occasion; 'twas in September and a beautiful day for a funeral, and all the family gathered together."43

The funeral customs do not change much in rural New England, and the relatives and friends still form a procession to follow the deceased to the family burying-ground. One of these processions Miss

41. Country of the Pointed Firs, p. 156.
42. A Country Doctor, p. 38.
Jewett tells how describes in a letter, "then we all walked out, two by two, across a broad green field, with old-fashioned pall-bearers carrying the coffin by hand and changing -- first four would take it and then four others who went before, just as it must have been in England two hundred years ago." 44

Tradition is strong, so that any departure from the traditional method of procedure is resented. Miss Jewett records one incident in which precedence was wrongly assigned in the funeral procession, "the blood-relations ridin' behind them that was only kin by marriage!" The speaker voices her disapproval of such a mistake in no uncertain terms, and doesn't "wonder they felt hurt." 45

Other traditions also have a strong hold upon the people. They cling to old superstitions and habits and are loath to admit modern changes and customs. They have a consciousness of social position, but they sometimes jeer at "book learnin'." They enjoy their hay cart and sailing parties, their prayer-meetings, their dances and other social gatherings, but there are objections, among the older people, to theater-going. It is the Puritan strain in his blood which makes the old farmer say haughtily to the young city chap who offers to take his niece to see the actor Jefferson, "Our folks ain't in the habit of attending theatres, sir." 45

The New Englanders which Miss Jewett draws are dubious of modern inventions and ideas. They feel "terrible unsartain on the

44. *Letters*, pp. 70-71.
45. *Daphne*, p. 49.
46. *The Life of Nancy*, p. 5.
"They are shocked at the idea of a woman studying medicine, they are pessimistic about progress. Mrs. Goodsoe voices the opinion of more than herself when she says, "'Twas never my idea that we was meant to know what's goin' on all over the world to once. There's goin' to be some sort of a set-back one o' these days, with these telegraphs and things, an' letters comin' every hand's turn, and folks leavin' their proper work to answer 'em. I may not live to see it. 'Twas allowed to be different for folks to git about in old times, or to git word across the country, and they stood in their lot and place, and weren't all just alike, either, same as pins-spills."

And in the next breath, she adds gloomily, "'Tis a bad sign when folks wears out their best clothes faster'n they do their every-day ones."

But, despite the struggles of the rural New Englander against improvements, Miss Jewett shows us that they did come to him as they did to the rest of the world. Housekeeping tasks became lighter, farming methods were improved, trains and trolley cars came with the summer boarders, and New England learned to accept the new regime.

Not least among the characteristics which are outstanding in the New Englander is that one which finds us all skin — curiosity. It is a trait which seems to have reached a high point of development in Miss Jewett's character, especially among the women. They are always eager to devour the slightest crumb of news or gossip, perhaps because their own lives are so cramped and stripped of interest. Curiosity is such a ruling passion with some of them that, even in the hour when death is near, they cannot overcome it. A witness in the

47. Tales of New England, p. 255.
death chamber of Sister Bassett reports that she "was herself to
the last. I see her put out a thumb and a finger from under the
spread and pinch up a fold of her sister Deckett's dress, to try
and see if 'twas all wool." 48

Miss Jewett herself has said that when she first began to
write the only New Englander generally recognized in literature was
the caricatured Yankee, but she wrote of New England people as they
were. Her stories show an accurate knowledge of local character and
dialect, but they do more than that. She tells the absolute truth
with what Howells calls "an exquisite veracity." She paints old,
conventional New England in new colors as she portrays the ancient,
decadent, respectable, gentle and winsome seacoast towns and the life
therein. Her transcriptions from life are not only faithful, but
fresh. She sees New England character from the most attractive side,
giving greater prominence to the gentler aspects and not unduly em-
phasizing the harsher ones. With an effortless, limpid style which
seems perfect for recording the fading glories of an old regime, she
has made her stories breathe the spirit of her New England. With a

48. A Native of Winkie, p. 146.
fine delicacy of touch she has gone far beyond the surface pecu-
liarities, and has found, in the lives of the most everyday people,
the material of poetry, the suggestion of pathos, the hint of
romanticism, the soul of literature.
CHAPTER IV.

THE TEACHER AND PHILOSOPHER.

Most authors have some kind of a purpose in mind when they start writing, and Miss Jewett had indeed a worthy one. Her earliest motive was a social one — the mutual enlightenment of city and country. "There is a noble saying of Plato that the best thing that can be done for the people of a state is to make them acquainted with one another."¹ This Miss Jewett tried to accomplish by picturing both city and country life so that the people of New England would understand one another better.

Her call to duty came early in life. "When I was perhaps fifteen," she says, "the first city boarders began to make their appearance near Berwick, and the way they misconstrued the country people and made game of their peculiarities fired me with indignation. I determined to teach the world that country people were not the awkward, ignorant set those persons seemed to think. I wanted the World to know their grand, simple lives; and so far as I had a mission, when I first began to write, I think that was it."²

Miss Jewett was so perfect an artist that a shallow adherence to the doctrine of art for art's sake might lead one to conclude

1. Letters, pp. 7-8.
2. The Outlook, vol. 92, p. 542.
that she was never consciously a teacher. That she thought of herself as a teacher, however, is delightfully attested by the following passage from one of her letters — "You must remember that a story-writer does not have her readers before her with their eager faces as a teacher (I was going to say, the other kind of a teacher) does." She is the kind of a teacher herself that she describes Thackeray as being, one who "does not affect, but humbly learns and reverently tries to teach out of his own experience."

Having grown up in a section of the country that had thrived on Puritanism for more than two centuries, it is not strange that any New England writer should possess a tendency to teach, moralize, or even to preach. It has been said that Hawthorne would have been a preacher had he lived in the seventeenth century. Living and writing as he did, in the nineteenth century, his Puritanical ancestry still made the tendency to preach, philosophize, expand an idea, strong and irresistible. His notebooks were full of ideas which he jotted down and later expanded and moralized upon in his stories.

Miss Jewett showed this same tendency to moralize, handed down from Puritan ancestors, but she assumed a gentler outlook than Hawthorne's. She has been described as a Pilgrim rather than a Puritan in outlook, and indeed there is much truth in the statement. The very word "Puritan" connotes austerity and unrelenting adherence to established morals and dogmas, while to the word "Pilgrim" we

3. Introduction to The Night before Thanksgiving, White Heron, and
attach a meaning less stern. It is true that the New England Pil-
grims were Puritans, but when we speak of them as Pilgrims we gener-
ally think of the heroic aspects of their lives, their attempts to
establish homes in a new country and conquer adversity, rather than
their Puritanical observance of moral and religious customs. Just
so, when we call Miss Jewett a Pilgrim, we are not forgetting that
she is really a Puritan in ideals, but we are aware of the fact that
it is the less austere side of her nature which is always thought to
the public. She is Puritanical in her desire to teach moral truth,
but she is never stern in her methods. She has the genuine New
England Puritan's wish to be sincere, just, righteous, but these
she does not place before her wish to be kind, merciful and humble.

We may find, in the fact of her being a member of the
gentler sex, a reason for this gentler outlook on life, but we are
not inclined to agree with the statement that a "female author is at
once self-conscious and didactic." Miss Jewett is didactic some-
times, just as many men writers are, but she is certainly not self-
conscious.

Her didacticism is most prominent in her earlier works,
especially her books for children. Louisa M. Alcott's success in
this field were matched by Miss Jewett's Betty Leicester and her other
girls' books, in which we find sweet and well-mannered child charac-
ters. We find qualities like unselfishness, obedience, simplicity,
emphasized and the social and domestic arts set forth to children

while they are young. Miss Jewett usually introduces characters who are models for her young readers, but sometimes she points out faults which they are to avoid. In "Half-Done Polly" she portrays a little girl who never finishes what she starts, but in the end, after a dream of half-done processes, she resolves to do better.

In all these stories for children Miss Jewett seems to be constantly preaching to her small readers, not sternly, but none the less insistently. She admonishes them to mind their mothers, be good, and above all, to be unselfish and contented. The following quotation from Play-Days is a typical example of her attitude.

"I wonder if some little girl is reading this who has ever so many more things to make her happy, who pities Rosy a little, and yet grows very discontented sometimes. I wish when she thinks she "has nothing to do" or "hates to go to school", she would remember Rosy and Pussy who have so few playthings and nobody at all to play with, and yet are contented, and little women in spite of their real loneliness."

Her own philosophy of contentment is set forth in a simple poem from Play-Days in which a dissatisfied buttercup asks a robin to find her a white frill so that she can be a daisy. The robin replies:

"You're nicer in your own bright gown;
The little children love you;
Be the best buttercup you can,
And think no flower above you.

Though swallows leave me out of sight
We'd better keep our places,
Perhaps the world would all go wrong
With one too many daisies.

7. Play-Days, p. 28.
Look bravely up into the sky
And be content with knowing
That God wished for a buttercup
Just here where you are growing."

Miss Jewett's didactic attitude is carried over to a certain degree into her stories for grown-ups, but there it does not assume the proportions it does in the children's stories, and, in her later, it shows decidedly lessening tendencies.

Miss Jewett does not, of course, approach her grown-up readers in the same way that she does her child readers and tell them now and why they should do this and shouldn't do that. She does not often preach to them herself, but rather lets her characters do it for her. She is always in front of her characters, describing, explaining, interpreting them, but it is usually in their mouths that she places the truths she wishes to tell. Her own view of life finds expression in theirs, and her philosophy is set forth in their homely phraseology. We find in Dr. Leslie's philosophy, the summary of Miss Jewett's own: "It seems to me like stealing for men and women to live in the world and do nothing to make it better."

From the words of wisdom which fall from the lips of other characters, we are able to glimpse some of Miss Jewett's attitudes concerning minor points. An interesting discussion of men is found in "A Second Spring:"

"Men is boys," retorted Mrs. Martin. "The more you treat 'em like boys, the better they think you use 'em. They always want motherin', an' somebody to come to. I always tell folks I've got five child'n, counting Mr. Martin the 8. A Country Doctor, p. 180."
youngest." 9

On friendship, we have this bit of Mrs. Todd’s philosophy:

"Yes’r’, old friends is always best, ‘less you can catch a new one that’s fit to make an old one out of." 10

And from that same philosopher we glean the truth that "there’s some herb that’s good for everybody, except for them that thinks they’re sick when they ain’t." 11

We feel, in a husband’s disapproval of a modern woman actively entering the business world which has belonged for so many years to the men, Miss Jewett’s own conservative expression:

"It seems to me that it is something like women’s smoking; it isn’t wicked, but it isn’t the custom of the country." 12

Miss Jewett was conservative, but not foolishly so, and in A Country Doctor staunchly defends a girl’s entrance into the professional world, even in defiance of tradition. In that book we find statements which are almost proverbial in their commonness and wisdom, as this one:

Conformity is the inspiration of much second-rate virtue. 13

Similar aphorisms appear not infrequently in Miss Jewett’s stories, and we often encountered sentences which express, in terse, forceful language, general truths as the author sees them.

11. Ibid., p. 82.
Preaching her wise and gentle philosophy, Miss Jewett was always, either directly or indirectly, an advocate of peace and goodwill. She never tired of teaching unselfishness and harmony in personal relationships and believed that this same philosophy should be used in diplomatic affairs. She was always happy when she found evidence of growing goodwill between nations, as set forth in 'The Queen's Twin,' but their bickerings and differences distressed her. In commenting on the situation between England and Ireland she says, "The association of different peoples is after all beyond human control; we are 'mixed and sorted' by a higher power. And looked at from the human side, what business has any nation to keep another under authority, but the business of the stronger nation keeping the weaker in check when the weaker is the enemy?" She acknowledges the necessity of government, but thinks that "the mistake of our time is in being governed by the ignorant mass of opinion, instead of by thinkers and men who know something." We might think that such a woman would be a strict pacifist, but we find, in The Story of the Normans, that this is not true. She analyses causes and effects and comes to the conclusion that war is necessary and even beneficial to progress.

War is the conflict between ideas that are going to live and ideas that have passed their maturity and are going to die. Men possess themselves of a new truth, a clearer perception of the affairs of humanity; progress itself is made possible with its larger share of freedom for the individual or for nations.

only by a relentless overthrowing of outgrown opinions. It is only by new combinations of races, new assertions of the old unconquerable forces, that the spiritual kingdom gains or rather shows its power. When men claim that humanity can only move in a circle, that the world has lost many things, that the experience of humanity is like the succession of the seasons, and that there is reproduction but not progression, it is well to take a closer look, to see how by combination, by stimulus of example, and power of spiritual forces and God's great purposes, this whole world is nearer every year to the highest level any fortunate part of it has ever gained. Wars may appear to delay, but in due time they surely raise whole nations of men to higher levels, whether by preparing for new growths or by mixing the new and old. Generals of battalions and unreasoned camp-followers alike are effects of some great change, not causes of it. And no war was ever fought that was not an evidence that one element in it had outgrown the other and was bound to set itself manifested and better understood. The first effect of war is incidental and temporary; the secondary effect makes a link in the grand chain of the spiritual education and development of the world.

An another political matter Miss Jewett voices her opinion in no uncertain terms, and declares that the day of truly universal suffrage is coming. She is not a suffragette in the sense that we think of one, even though she lived and died before the right to vote was granted to women in our country, but she believes in equality of all kinds, simply because each body possesses a spirit and a right to use it.

She once humorously said, "Confession must be made of the author's belief in a theory of psychological misfits, or the

occasional occupation of large-sized material bodies by small-sized spiritual tenants, and the opposite of this, by which small shapes of clay are sometimes animated in the noblest way by lofty souls. But, large or small, she believes they should exercise the same rights and privileges.

She finds, besides human rights and bonds, a great bond between the human and the animal kingdom, and says, of animals, that taming is only forcing them to learn some of our customs; that we should be wise if we let them tame us to make use of theirs. She maintains that they are thoughtful and are called upon to decide as many questions of action or direction as humans; that there are "many emergencies of life when we are far more helpless and foolish than they."

Her psychological attitude is interesting. She finds a bond between man and whatever of nature he has come into contact with. "Whatever man's hands have handled, or his thoughts have centred in, gives something back to man, and becomes charged with his transferred life, and brought into relationship." And again in her letters she writes, "Never mind people who tell you there is nothing to see in the place where people lived who interest you. You always find something of what made them the souls they were, and at any rate you see their sky and earth."

17. Ibid., p. 256.
18. Letters, p. 158.
Miss Jewett also believed in a psychological transferral of thought similar to mental telepathy. "We can think to each other when we are really friends," she says, "much better and often-er than we can write. When they find out all about wireless telegraphy, they are going to find out how the little batteries in our heads send messages, and then we can do it by rule and not by accident."19

There is just a hint of the supernatural or spiritualistic in her philosophy. After receiving the news of the death of a friend, she writes, "I remember well that long bright day and the wonderful cloud I watched at evening floating slowly through the upper sky on some high current northward, catching the sun still when we were in shadows. I could not help the strange feeling, that it had something to do with her."20

And again, while editing Mrs. Whitman’s letters, she writes, "It cannot be doubted that a letter is a living thing with an individuality of its own, and if the head and tail are cut off, and two or three pieces taken out of the body, that individuality is lost. This is my own strong instinct. I have felt her at my elbow so often in reading these proofs that it has been hard not to follow our dislikes and preferences."21

At rare intervals, Miss Jewett mentions Fate, but she is certainly not a fatalist. We may call her rather a Christian op-

20. Ibid., p. 203.
21. Ibid., p. 204.
timist, taking life as it comes, enjoying it and not worrying too much about the future. She believes that our lives follow a certain plan, but it is the plan of a loving providence, not a relentless Fate. A firm believer in God, she delights in his manifestations to man. "The strength of the hills and the voice of the waves are no longer only grand poetical sentences, but an expression of something real, and more and more one finds God himself in the world, and believes that we may read the thought that He writes for us in the book of Nature."22 The importance which she attaches to the Christian influence on life is shown in the following quotation from Dæphaven:

I find that I understand better and better how unsatisfactory, how purposeless and disastrous, any life must be which is not a Christian life. It is like being always in the dark, and wandering one knows not where, if one is not learning more and more what it is to have a friendship with God.23

Miss Jewett's Christianity is the kind that is always present, and she asserts in the words of old Mrs. Bonney that she "can't bear to see folks so pious to meeting, and cheat your eye-teeth out Monday morning."24 She contends that happiness is the result of putting into practice throughout the week the religion we learn on Sunday. "It is the people who can do nothing who find nothing to do, and the secret of happiness in this world is not only to be useful, but to be

22. Dæphaven, p. 186.
23. Ibid., p. 217.
24. Ibid., p. 197.
forever elevating one's uses."  

She draws a likeness between a harborless heart and a harborless country — where no treasure is carried away, there is not any brought in.  

She believes firmly in a useful Christian life, but she does not sit in harsh judgment on those who do not lead such exemplary lives. She thinks that "God must always know what blighted and hindered any life and growth of His," and that he sometimes saves and pitied what man has scorned and blamed. She realizes that happiness and hardship are present in the world and cannot be avoided by mortals — "since Adam and Eve were in Paradise, before the devil joined them, nobody has had a chance to imitate that unlucky couple" — but she always has a word of encouragement, a note of cheer, as in wishing for a young friend, "a sweet sobriety and fearlessness as she grows older and finds life a harder thing to understand and a graver thing to know."  

Miss Jewett understands that it is resource, bravery, and being able to think for one's self, rather than the possession of unlimited knowledge, which after all makes a life worthwhile. And, in order to be strong mentally and morally, she lays great stress on the necessity of keeping fit our physical bodies. "How can those who preach to the soul," she says, "hope to be heard by those who do not even make the best of their bodies?"  

An optimist in life, Miss Jewett carries her optimism into

26. *In River Driftwood*.
the realm of death. She admits that the human family has an
instinctive fear of death, yet she reminds us of the horror of life
prolonged far into uselessness.\textsuperscript{30} She believes that our lives are
divinely ordered, and when usefulness has ceased, we should go to
meet death and a future life gladly and fearlessly. To her death
is a relief from the materialism of the world, and in her imagina-
tion, she ponders "if in heaven our best thoughts — poet's thoughts,
especially — will not be flowers, somehow, or some sort of beauti-
ful live things that stand about and grow, and don't have to be
chaffed over and bought and sold."\textsuperscript{31}

Miss Jewett's search was always for goodness and sweetness,
and when she had found it in life, she tried to convey it to her
readers. She saw the depth and strength of life as it was lived
around her and determined to open up that life for the public eye
to see its simple greatness. "On the well-worn boards of the pro-
vincial theatres the great plays of life, the comedies and tragedies,
with their lovers and conspirators and clowns, their Juliets and
Ophelias. Skylocks and King Lear, are acted over and over again."\textsuperscript{32}
From those plays of life, she took what was good and gave it to us
in stories which enlighten and amuse, which teach and entertain,
which turn our minds to the more serious side of life without ne-
glecting its lighter phases.

And through it all, Miss Jewett remains an optimist, ex-

\textsuperscript{30} In \textit{Lady Kerry}.
\textsuperscript{31} Letters, pp. 62-63.
\textsuperscript{32} A Lawless Farmer, in \textit{Atlantic Monthly}, vol. 57, p. 627.
pounding to her reader a Christian philosophy of happiness andesignation so fittingly summed up in the quotation with which she
ends one of her stories33 — the first verse of Browning's "Rabbi
Barzara":

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole is planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all,
nor be afraid!"

33. "A Late Supper."
CHAPTER V.

AN EVALUATION.

There remains to be made a summary estimation of Miss Jewett's work in the realm of American letters. She has already received considerable recognition from students and critics of American literature, but has her recognition been adequate? We can scarcely pick up a general work on American literature or a more specialized discussion of the particular fields in which she worked, without finding the name of Sarah Orne Jewett. And usually where we find her name, we hear her praises sung, but too often the song is of brief duration. The reviewers and critics have been kind to her, and have said only complimentary things, for the most part, but they have failed to say enough of them. We can find no objection to what they have said about her, but rather what they have left unsaid.

Her largest recognition is among literary people, who should be capable of judging if any one can. Henry James voiced a sincere appreciation of her work,¹ and William Dean Howells saw great promise in her stories. "If Miss Jewett were of a little longer breath than she has yet shown herself in fiction," he says, "I might say the Jane Austen of Portsmouth was already with us, and had merely not yet begun to deal with its precious material."²

¹. Howe, Memories of a Hostess, p. 300.
As has been said before, Miss Jewett numbered among her friends and acquaintances many of the literary people of her time. In a letter to her, Thomas Bailey Aldrich makes this comment on her magazine writing: "Whenever you give me one of your perfect little stories the whole nature seems in bloom." Rudyard Kipling also says of a particular work, The Country of the Pointed Firs:

I am writing to you to convey some small installment of our satisfaction in that perfect little tale. It's immense — it is the very life. So many of the people of lesser sympathy have missed the lovely New England landscape, and the genuine New England nature.

P.S. I don't believe even you know how good that work is.4

Even in his recent comprehensive treatment of world literature, John Macy gives a small place to Miss Jewett:

The people and the landscapes of New England are drawn for all time in the delicate stories of Mary Wilkins-Freeman and Sarah Orne Jewett.5

I could cite many other instances of recognition from writers whose opinions are more or less respected in literary circles, but the fact remains that Miss Jewett is still almost unknown to the general reading public in America today, or at best is vaguely known. Now that her stories are no longer brought before them in magazines, people do not take the trouble to seek them out for themselves.

Why is it that she is not even as well known as her con-
temporary, Mary Wilkins Freeman? We do not propose to take away
from the glory of the latter — she has deserved all the praise
she has received and should have a place in American literature —
but we do think that Sarah Orne Jewett deserves an equal rating,
or even a higher one. We feel that one writing as interestingly
as she did, about life among the common people, should be recog-
nized and enjoyed by the common reading public. Lack of interest
is a natural result of lack of information, and we believe if the
American public could be brought to a fuller knowledge of Miss
Jewett and the charming interpretations of life which have come
from her pen, they would readily grant to her a high place in
American letters.

Surely her work possesses merit, if we only care to seek
it, and such merit as places it in the front rank of American short
fiction. Clayton Hamilton says the purpose of fiction is "to embody
certain truths of human life in a series of imagined facts," and
this Miss Jewett does admirably. She even goes farther than imagined
facts, sometimes giving us events from actual life as it was lived
around her. She had interesting, but not momentous, material with
which to work, and her plots are the least important part of her
stories. She profited by the specimens of a fast-disappearing
dialect, with which she was privileged to acquaint herself, and em-
ployed the quaint talk and picturesque expressions of the old New
England to add flavor and zest to her studies of life.

"When local color becomes an end in itself, when a writer begins to study it as a really determinative factor in his final product, then he foredooms his work to pettiness," says Edward Chapman. But Miss Jewett did not make local color the eminent feature of her stories. She wished to portray life, and to do it well, she recorded it as it was lived around her. It was the injection of her own personality into her stories and her masterly method, not the local color itself, which allowed her to make the simplest tales of the old New England gentry, dwelling in the quietest of country towns, interesting to a reader.

Her stories have the reflection of reality in them, local-coloring and character -- even to the use of names -- but, what a different sort of realism from that of the present age! Miss Jewett's characters are real, live human beings, yet seem almost incapable of any act which is not dignified or gracious, and if a thoroughly disagreeable person is presented, it is always with apologies or for a definite purpose. Miss Jewett's own cheerful outlook on life is reflected in her work, and it seems as impossible for her to dwell on the sordid side of human nature as it is for some of the modern writers to avoid it.

Some may accuse her of failing to meet reality, of being unwilling to cope with the unpleasant phases of life, of casting a cloak of romanticism around stern facts. But is it not refreshing, after a literary diet of grim and stark realism, to devour a

few morsels of a realism seasoned with optimism and romantic glamour?

We cannot truthfully say that Miss Jewett avoids unpleasantness, but she makes it seem more bearable. There is pathos in her portrayal of the soul of fading villages on the sea and the life of people who move as if the motive fire in their hearts had been covered over with ashes, but, in her hands, the situation seems less terrible than it might in the hands of others. Surely it is an art to write thus convincingly, realistically, and still avoid the bitterness of the rank realist.

It is for art that some stories exist, for content that others live, and of course a combination of the two is most desirable. An attempt has been made here to show that Miss Jewett's work has real content, and that the material has been handled artistically. The next consideration is to place her in the particular field in which her best work was done.

The short story lays a special claim on Miss Jewett, not only because the greater part of her work was done in that field of literature, but because her talents for simplicity, fancy, and brevity make the short story her best mode of expression. Even though she wrote some novels of merit, it is her short stories which display her art at its best.

According to one writer, a short story is "a brief, imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single
chief character, it contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed and the whole treatment so organized, as to produce a single impression.8 This type of fiction, in the early years of American literature, was considered "an exotic in New England, and was deemed a trivial thing, a sap shoot from the trunk of serious literature,"9 but after Irving, Hawthorne and Poe had made much of the possibilities of the form, it was accepted in New England as it was elsewhere in the country. Where the element of local color made such a definite impression on American short story writing, New England found herself brought very much to light in the realm of short fiction and her geographical locality was made so definite and so minutely real that it may be reckoned with as one of the characters.

Miss Jewett has had a large share in depicting New England life concretely, but her art is not limited by local boundaries. Her work is essentially American, and it is among American short fiction artists that we wish to give her a place. Others may have had more to tell and may have told it more grandly and eloquently, but where, in American fiction, can we find a short story writer whose artistry is any more nearly perfect than Miss Jewett's?

Simplicity itself is the keynote of her method, and the stories seem almost to write themselves. She herself once said

8. Esenwein, Writing the Short Story, p. 30.
that her head was "full of dear old houses and dear old women, and when an old house and an old woman came together in her brain with a click, she knew a story was under way." Of course we know that this was said in jest and that Miss Jewett really planned her stories very carefully. It was this careful planning and delicate artistry which gives them the air of spontaneity and freshness and makes them so delightfully naive. They are unornamented, yet every line is designed for a purpose, and everything furtherers that purpose, so that they have organic, living simplicity and directness.

Miss Jewett had a charming relationship with her stories and characters, and even though she sometimes grew weary of writing and wanted, instead, to "paint things and drive things and kiss things", she always held the children of her brain in enlacement. Because they were so near and dear to her is perhaps the reason she has been able to make them live before the reader.

It is in people that she is interested especially, and it is about people that she writes. What they do is not her primary concern, and for that reason, she pays less attention to plot than many other writers, and emphasizes character. This tendency accounts for the sketch-like character of many of her stories in which plot is only an incidental consideration. It is not the action in The Country of the Pointed Fire which marks its greatness. In the whole volume, there is not as much action as some authors put

into one short story, and yet its characterizations are delightful, its settings charming, and we feel after reading it, that we have looked at life intimately.

If we were to attempt to guide a reader to the best things that Miss Jewett wrote, **The Country of the Pointed Fire** would certainly take its place among them. The most important character, the inimitable Mrs. Todd, has already been quoted several times in these pages, and around her we find a whole host of other interesting characters. There is her mother, Mrs. Blackett, who lives on Green Island and whose "hospitality is something exquisite"; there is her shy brother William, who carries on a strange courtship and makes a yearly visit to his beloved; there is the beloved, the gentle Esther, who tends sheep and cares for her peevish mother; there is Mrs. Nedick, who is "dreadful good company", and old Elijah Tilley who knits all winter, and "poor Joanna" who lives in a hermitage on Shell Heap Island, and a whole array of lesser characters who open to us the very heart and soul of the simple life of New England.

Turning from this series of sketches to the short story proper, we find in the *Collection, Tales of New England*, a fair example of Miss Jewett’s art at its best. This volume does not contain all of her best stories, of course, but it does include a great many of them, such as "Miss Tempy’s Watchers", "The Dulham Ladies", "An Only Son", "Barah Rosemary", "A White Heron", "Law Lane", "A Lost Lover", "The Courting of Sister Wisby" and "The Town Poor". To this list we could add "The Flight of Betsey Lane", "The Only Rose", "The Guests of Mrs. Timms", "The Hiltons’ Holiday", "A
Native of Winby" and "A Winter Courtship" as delightful and outstanding stories from other volumes of her works. It is rather arbitrary to say that any story is "the best" work of an author, but from this extensive list of better ones, any reader should be able to choose one to meet his individual tastes. The list does not begin to cover the worthwhile productions from Miss Jewett's pen, for she wrote comparatively little that was absolutely worthless.

Her greatest merit, as we have said, lies in the field of the short story, and if anything we have said will lead any reader to a greater knowledge and appreciation of her stories and sketches we shall indeed be glad. We consider Miss Jewett's stories among the best of their type that have been produced in America, and we sincerely hope that they may be kept alive to delight future generations of Americans with their pictures of a New England which no longer exists.

There is, in Miss Jewett's tribute to Longfellow, much which fittingly applies to her own life and work. Like him, she "stays in this world always to be known and loved,— to be a helper and a friend" to her fellow men. Her life was not shut in to her own household or "kept to the limits of every-day existence". She did much for the world, and the news of her death took away nothing of her life. Her work "stands like a great cathedral in which the world may worship and be taught to pray, long after its tired architect goes home to rest."

12. Letters, p. 15.
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