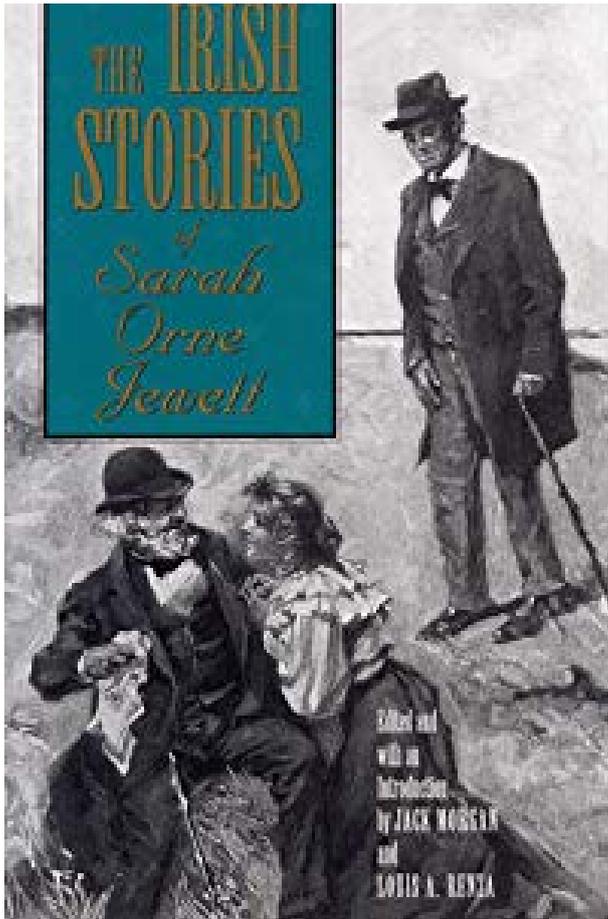


# The Irish Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett



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Originally published in Scribner's, The Cosmopolitan, McClure's, and Lippincott's, Sarah Orne Jewett's stories about Irish immigrant figures constitute a neglected corner of her oeuvre, despite the fact that Jewett herself entertained the possibility of collecting them into a volume to be called *Transplanted Shamrocks*. Because the proposed collection never appeared, Jewett's tales of the Irish in America, stories that constitute an invaluable historical and literary record, appear together for the first time in this anthology.

These eight stories represent the first serious treatment of the Irish in America by an important literary figure.

After a visit to Ireland in 1882, this superior nineteenth-century New England writer expanded the scope of her interests to provide fictional portraits of the newly arrived Irish population. She told the sometimes happy and more often sad tales of their acculturation in "The Luck of the Bogans" (1889), "A Little Captive Maid" (1891), "Between Mass and Vespers" (1893), "The Gray Mills of Farley" (1898), "Where's Nora?" (1898), "Bold Words at the Bridge" (1899), "A Landlocked Sailor" (1899), and "Elleneen" (1901). For Jewett, the Irish comprised a unique and fascinating addition to the New England local color figures it was her life's work to represent in literary fiction. She believed the Irish immigrant brought a new vitality and charm to the New England landscape. In their introduction, editors Jack Morgan and Louis A. Renza point out that in these

stories Jewett displayed a remarkable empathy for the Irish. Undoing the "Paddy" stereotype favored in nineteenth-century Yankee discourse, Jewett exhibited an understanding of the immigrant psyche unheard of among her fellow writers— including Emerson and Thoreau, both of whom wrote disdainfully of the Irish. Morgan and Renza further discuss the stories in the context of contemporary multicultural and ethnic concerns, showing that Jewett's Irish stories demonstrate a renewal—a redefining, questioning, and expanding of cultural boundaries within concentrated American communities, her own New England area in particular. As such, the editors contend, the stories constitute important documents in the history of a country still engaged with the multiethnic as well as the multi-individualist paradox of "E pluribus unum." Above all, however, these stories are touching and deeply felt treatments of subjects dear to her heart by one of our major writers.