

ITALIAN SKETCHES

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Italian Sketches by Sophie Jewett

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SOPHIE JEWETT

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SOPHIE JEWETT

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in Italy"**

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FOREWORD

To Miss Jewett's love of Italy and all things Italian many of her poems bear witness, as do the sketches collected in this volume. Miss Katharine Lee Bates, in a memorial sketch in the *Boston Transcript*, says: "Italian art and literature were especially congenial to Miss Jewett, and she spent many months, at one time or another, in journeying among the hill towns of Umbria and the small, out-of-the-way cities of Northern Italy. Her sympathy with the Latin races, in whom, she says, one finds commonly 'the expectant temperament that brings a touch of idealism to all but the abjectest poverty,' is shown very sweetly in a sketch entitled 'The Land of Lady Poverty' (in the *Outlook*, August 26, 1905). Yet she went on these pilgrimages only when in such sore need of rest that she shrank from poetic enterprises, lest her weariness should do her theme dishonor, and wrote what she had strength to write in her firm and sensitive prose, seen at its best in 'The Fate of Francesco' (in *Scribner's*, July, 1905), and in 'The Lover of Trees in Italy' (in *Scribner's*, June, 1903). The element of accident, too, entered in. On her last leave of absence she had undertaken to make a translation of De Amicis's 'Cuore,' and her observations of Italian children,

for the purposes of her prefatory sketch, led on to 'Bettina', a true and touching story of a little Italian girl (in *The Churchman*, November 22, 1902) and possibly had some influence in deciding her to write a child's life of St. Francis. This ran as a serial in *The Churchman* (January to April, 1903) under the title of 'God's Troubadour.' Snatches from her Italian letters are significant in more ways than one:

'But the sunset is just as beautiful as if there were no crimes in the world. * * Yesterday was a glory, and the sheep and shepherds arrived

* * The lambs look like Horace, and Lucretius, and Gray, and 'The Intimations of Immortality,' only I can't understand how any of the poets could take them seriously. They look to me like a comical blunder * * I want you to come and play with these ridiculous little lambs and see how pretty the flocks and the sleeping shepherds look in the moonlight. * * The grass is full of little pink-tipped daisies, and the woods of rosy cyclamen. It is a beautiful world. * * With the sky so blue behind the cypresses, it is easy to be thankful for beauty, and for 'sweet love remembered.' * * To-night we reached Assisi, with a red sunset, and a full moon, and the long blue valley filled with Italian summer haze. I can't bear any more beauty. I want to come home and work hard.'

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