Separating Apples, Potatoes and Peaches: Jessie Brown Pounds, Advocate of the Social Gospel in Cleveland 1880–1920

Dr. Sandra Parker
Hiram College
"They's no sense in folks, when they come on a little patch o' comfort right in the path o' duty, a goin' to scourgin' themselves an' tryin' to be mis'rable. . . . What the Lord set himself aginst was folks follerin' after pleasure—chasin' around the world an'scramblin' for apples o' Sodom, instead o' tendin' their gardens an' mendin' their fences. He didn't forbid their tasin' o' the big ripe Baldwins that grewed on their own farms."

Uncle Nathan, A Woman's Doing (1886)

Jessie Brown Pounds' philosophy grew out of her life on the Western Reserve of Ohio. She might be likened to Uncle Nathan's Baldwin apple—born in 1861 in Hiram, growing up on Cleveland's west side, and spending most of her life there. Briefly, she attended Hiram College, worked in Cincinnati, and lived, after her marriage in 1896 to John E. Pounds, in Indianapolis. In 1906 they "retired" to Hiram where she died in 1921.

This sounds like a very ordinary life, but in fact, this Clevelander was most extraordinary. She was nationally famous as a poet/lyricist, who wrote over 800 sacred songs, for example among her hymns copyrighted in the 1890's were, "The Touch of His Hand," "The Way of the Cross Leads Home," and "Beautiful Isle" a hymn President McKinley requested for his funeral, which took place in September 1901. In fact, the propriety of her theology in this song was later criticized by Woodrow Wilson during his 1913 campaign for the presidency (Kingsley 7).

The majority of Jessie Brown Pounds' hymns were written when she was a young woman with music usually added by J. H. or Fred A. Fillmore. She loved their lyrical beauty, expression of religious aspiration, and ability to move a congregation, but as a mature writer addressed the form's "intellectual limitations" ("Concerning Hymns" 84). In retrospect, it is ironic that these dated, minor achievements have overshadowed her real accomplishments as a writer, for, beyond being a lyricist and poet, Jessie Brown Pounds' most valuable literary production is found in her prose.

Over a career that spanned four decades, she wrote dozens of essays, over 70 stories, and seven novels. Pounds' fiction ranges in setting between the urban streets of Cleveland and the rural homes of the Western Reserve. Her prose style reflects the narrative traditions of the day, namely domestic fiction, and Pounds' most admired mentors were ethical authors like Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Her finest short stories adapt Local Color style, a tradition employed by such American women writers as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Alice Cary
and Sarah Orne Jewett. Unlike other, more famous Ohio women authors, such as Woolson and Cary, who sought mainstream audiences and then emigrated to the East, Jessie Brown Pounds remained dedicated to her Midwestern roots and never submitted materials for publication in journals other than those sponsored by the religious movement to which she was committed, the Disciples of Christ. Their Standard Publishing Company printed her anthologies and novels; Pounds' editorial work was all within their journals, which by the turn of the century was limited to a readership of some 120,000 Disciples.

Changing taste, questions of sectarianism, debates about matrifocal literature, all these issues complicate evaluations of the literary merit of a Victorian author like Jessie Brown Pounds, but any case, her contribution to our Western Reserve heritage may be investigated in another direction—her long career as a social activist and editor. Between 1880 and 1920, Jessie Brown Pounds was a contributing editor for three important religious journals, The Christian Standard, The Christian Evangelist, and The Christian Century. Prodigious engeric, she contributed to and edited many other publications as well, including the Disciple of Christ, Ohio Christian Missionary, and children's magazines such as The King's Builders and Our Young Folks. Jessie Brown also served as an editor for the short-lived Disciple of Christ (1884-1887), which serialized her first novel, A Woman's Doing, and ran several of her poems and stories. This magazine was supposedly too high-brow for its Reserve readers and ceased publication for "lack of support" (Shaw 266).

In addition to writing and editing, Pounds was active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Red Cross, King's Daughters, Young Peoples' Society of Christian Endeavor, and Christian Woman's Board of Missions, for which she was a State Secretary and public speaker; in 1917 Jessie Brown Pounds was hailed as a "Leader and Helper of the Ohio CWBM" ((Wilcox 243). Talented, idealistic, but humble, Jessie Brown Pounds never sought personal fame. Today her career has been neglected but deserves to be placed within the perspectives of Cleveland's late Victorian social movements.

Jessie Brown Pounds grew into these commitments through her family. She was the daughter of a Disciple of Christ minister and followed in the footsteps of her mentors, for example George Eliot who wrote about women's adult place in the world and Harriet Beecher Stowe whose 1851 Uncle Tom's Cabin and subsequent magazine writing ardently advocated women's co-partnership with ministers. Indeed, it has been said that it is impossible to overestimate "the influence of Harriet Beecher Stowe on the women writers who succeeded her . . . [which] comprises a major chapter in American literary history" (Ammons 156). Stowe developed religious justifications for women's obligation to write and act so that they might reinforce matrifocal values in such areas as
slavery, temperance, and social justice. The writer-minister teamwork she advocated has been called the century's "most important religious, cultural and political event" (Welter 143).

Following in the footsteps of Stowe and influenced by such Ohio predecessors as Julia Dumont, Alice Cary, and Constance Fenimore Woolson, Jessie Brown Pounds became a significant regional writer. Her fiction depicts the urban and rural landscape of northeast Ohio and embodies an ethical critique of the era's progressive social agenda. Pounds' fiction was always polemical in the sense that it served her goal of educating readers about what came to be termed by historians the "Social Gospel." Indeed, her fiction was written to serve the journals which she edited. This explains why Jessie Brown Pounds in the 1890 census described her occupation as "Magazine Editor." Thus she was a woman writer who joined with the effort of Protestant ministers after the Civil War to work toward Christianizing America. In this broadest sense, then, Jessie Brown Pounds' lasting significance is probably ultimately neither her writing or editorial work, but her role as a public figure and passionate spokeswoman for social advocacy.

Overall, Jessie Brown Pounds' life embodies Victorian America's tradition of the "new woman" who was a transitional figure between the domesticity of the Northwest Territory's frontier days and the flappers of the Gilded Age. To adapt the subtitle of her final, 1904 novel about the settling of the Western Reserve, Rachael Sylvestre, Jessie Brown Pounds' family represents a "story of the pioneers." Born the year that Abraham Lincoln became President and the Civil War broke out, 1861, and dying in 1921 after the First World War ended and women received the vote, Jessie Brown Pounds' life spans an important transitional era in America's history.

In fact, the tradition from which Jessie Brown Pounds grew provides a microcosm of our Western Reserve heritage. Her ancestors were pilgrims from England; Peter Brown came to Plymouth in the Mayflower in 1620. Descendent Frederick Brown emigrated to Wadsworth in 1816, founding the town and serving as Postmaster and Judge until 1832. Jessie Brown's father, Holland, came to Wadsworth in 1824 with his family where they were converted by Alexander Campbell. Jessie Brown's mother, Jane Abell, was a descendant of a Vermont family which immigrated to Cleveland in 1837; at age 13 the girl taught in a log cabin schoolhouse and by 1845 married Holland Brown.

The couple left Cleveland and moved to Hiram where they farmed, ran a student boarding house and raised five children. Holland Brown was a part-time Campbellite preacher and an Abolitionist who in the 1850's entertained Sojourner Truth. But when Jessie was a tiny child, Holland Brown's family moved back into Cleveland where he preached in Brooklyn and then the
Franklin Circle Church of Christ. In 1885 when he died the family lived at 33 Woodbine Street; eleven years later, his accomplished youngest daughter, Jessie, married another Disciples Minister, John E. Pounds.

Her husband, like her father, was also a liberal Disciple minister who accepted her as an equal. John E. Pounds preached at the Aetna Street Christian Church, later known as the Broadway Church, which was noteworthy in the 90's for its controversial Sunday School work with German immigrant children (Shaw 304). He also served the Rocky River Church of Christ, since renamed the Lakewood Christian Church, sometimes working with the title "City Evangelist," and John E. Pounds also was Superintendent of City Missions in Cuyahoga County for the Ohio Christian Missionary Society.

Jessie Brown Pounds' Yankee heritage helps to explain her commitment to rationality and provides clues to her identity. Like her Protestant ancestors, this descendent was democratic and dedicated to education and religion; she was a product of Puritanism, thrifty, patriotic, conservative, conscientious, and principled. The bookish culture of the early Western Reserve settlers was transmitted through her schoolteacher mother and preacher father; their enterprise, resolution and shrewdness were among her dominant traits. Born in the "New England of the West," in an area which was to become "the scene of extraordinary religious events" (Venable 226), Jessie Brown Pound was surrounded by people preoccupied with issues of individualism and freedom.

The leaders of what has been called America's largest indigenous religious movement, Thomas Campbell, who emigrated from Scotland in 1807, and his son Alexander, could be credited with providing the distinguishing flavor of Jessie Brown Pounds' life. Campbellism was the religious movement which rocked Wadsworth when the Browns were first in Ohio; the Campbells caused the disbanding of the Mahoning Valley Baptist Association and spread their religious vision throughout the Western Reserve, inspiring Jessie Brown's parents who knew them. The Pounds' daughter was affected by these elders through family stories and education, which culminated in her adult admiration for the "prophetic."

Alexander Campbell was an evangelist who drew followers from Protestants in Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Ohio. He debated and argued in 1830: "where the Scriptures speak, we speak; when the Scriptures are silent, we are silent" (McAlister & Tucker 110). With his friend Walter Scott, Alexander Campbell scoured the Western Reserve countryside, seeking converts, who, like Holland Brown, would became lay preachers. These nondenominational Christians had over 12,000 followers in 1830. Within a few decades, however, this group became a burgeoning denomination
called the Disciples of Christ.

Jessie's birth could be said to mark the second phase of Disciples' tradition. By the time Jessie Brown, the 49 year-old minister's daughter, was born and the Civil War broke out, the Disciples of Christ needed a new kind of minister. When the founder died in 1866, there were feuding conservative and liberal factions within the church, Northern and Southern viewpoints which often led to conflicts about such questions as whether there should be music in churches, tolerance of slavery, missionary outreach, or women's active church leadership. In order to settle these debates, education was increasingly a concern for the Campbellites whose faith was based upon one's intelligent interpretation of the Bible.

Institutions were established, such as Alexander Campbell's Bethany College (1840) and the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (1850) which had Holland Brown among its supporters. Another founder was his good friend Isaac Erret, minister at New Lisbon and later Warren, who served for many years as a Trustee. Among the early personalities attached to the Institution were the teacher Almeda Booth and her students which included James A. Garfield and a Wadsworth native, Burke Aaron Hinsdale. Young Hinsdale boarded with the Brown family in Hiram, and Jane Abell Brown wrote to his discouraged parents, urging them to leave the boy in school, a move credited by historians with "saving" his potential career.

After James A. Garfield returned from the War, he and Hinsdale, who now taught at the Institute, became concerned with the Disciples' future—questions were raised about competing regional factions, the need for leadership, and the challenge to journalism. At Hiram's Eclectic Institute, Garfield and Hinsdale were accused by conservative religious sectarians of being liberals, overly tolerant "secularists"; nonetheless, as secularists they stood up for religious tolerance and humanism, struggling to provide new opportunities to educate members of the Disciples of Christ. James A. Garfield noted that Alexander Campbell's journal, The Millennial Harbinger, which continued until 1887, was losing its vigor after Campbell's death. Anticipating the impact of the deceased founder's loss, in 1870 Garfield approached Isaac Erret about beginning a new, liberal magazine which would reclaim the original intellectual level of Campbell's journal. Their magazine was to solidly support liberal Disciples' positions and promote missionary work. Thus, Errett became Editor of The Christian Standard, a position he held until he died in 1888. Later Disciples of Christ historians would say "Disciples do not have bishops, they have editors," meaning that "editors filled the leadership vacuum left by the passing of the first generation restorers" (Harrell, "Restorationism" 852).
Under the motto: "Set up a Standard, Publish and Conceal Not," the magazine began at 97 Bank Street, Cleveland. James A. Garfield served as a contributor, and Burke Aaron Hinsdale was assistant editor with a prose style labelled "compact, terse, factual and discriminating" (Davis 71). Running the "Book Table" section, Hinsdale for a number of years continued to write for the paper, even after it briefly moved to Alliance and then, in July 1869, to Cincinnati.

The Christian Standard dealt with historical problems and literary criticism, as well as theology; it was known as a seminal journal, for some time labelled the "most influential religious paper in all the world" (Wilcox 45). Hinsdale began his work on evolution and economic determinism at this time, work that is reflected in A. S. Hayden's History of the Disciples of the Western Reserve (1876) and later was given mature development in The Old Northwest (1888).

Jessie Brown Pounds began writing for The Christian Standard when she was a mere teenager. She attended Hiram College as part of the class of 1884 and become a member of the Olive Branch, the liberal literary society founded by Almeda Booth, but after a few months ill health forced her home, without obtaining a degree. Educated by her mother, Jessie Brown was well trained in English classics and the Bible; moreover, her wits were sharpened by listening to and eventually joining her family's and friends' discussions of theology, politics and community issues. Isaac Errett, whom she always called her "second father," was often in the Browns' home and urged the precocious teenager to submit her poems and prose to his magazine. In her early twenties, after having twice attended Hiram College, renamed in 1867 from the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute, she left home to live in Cincinnati and apprenticed on the editorial staff of The Christian Standard. Her work area was a corner of Errett's desk in the Editor's Office, and his standards were high, insisting as he did on "great clearness, vigor, logical arrangement, profound insight, chaste and delicate humor." Errett was, therefore, a rigorous teacher and stiff taskmaster because there was "not a line entered in the Standard which did not pass three times under his eye" (Wade 101).

Jessie Brown was Isaac Errett's protegé but committed to her own ideas, for instance self-development for women. She knew that Alexander Campbell had cited 1 Timothy, 2:12, "I suffer not a woman to teach" in reference to reinforcing "the cult of true womanhood," thus restricting women's sphere amongst Disciples. Campbell trusted the Bible's injunction for women's silence, but more liberal Disciples leaders like Isaac Errett had greater sympathy and were more aware of the need for women's active participation in church leadership. As early as 1874, Errett, fearing the collapse of the fledgling mission outreach program, was among those who urged the Disciples of Christ to organize the
Christian Women’s Board of Missions.

In accord with this optimistic view of women’s abilities, this gentle patriarch gave Jessie Brown challenging assignments during her two years as Assistant Editor of his magazine, such as covering the Ohio State Missionary Convention in Cleveland in May 22, 1880. Errett particularly urged her to promote the Christian Women’s Board of Missions. Of course, Jessie Brown learned many diverse aspects of journalism, contributing obituaries, poems and even a short story, "Mrs. Ormsby’s Thanksgiving" (Nov. 22, 1886). During the years before Errett’s death, she also wrote a series of novels: A Woman’s Doing (1886), Norman MacDonald (1888), and Roderick Wayne (1888) which was serialized in The Christian Standard (June 1888-Jan. 1889).

There is no question that Jessie Brown Pounds was, in specific, devoted to increasing women’s role in the Disciples, as well as improving their social leadership in America, in general. A single "career woman" for much of her adult life, as early as 1888 she developed an argument in The Christian Standard for "Christian Womanhood," which in 1893 she relabelled "New Womanhood." This progressive term was gradually gaining currency in America with historians describing the term "new woman" as an expression that allowed the exclusion of women’s rights "fanatics" like free-love advocate Woodhull or anti-clerical Elizabeth Cady Stanton, while providing for its goals—suffrage, ordination, and reform activities (Welter 152). Jessie Brown Pounds defined herself as a "new woman"; her career can be viewed as modifying America’s Victorian "cult of true womanhood" which restricted women to the domestic life of passive and pious purity. Pounds believed that some women were called to work within the world’s sphere. This she identified as a "vocation" which meant giving "herself to her work as deliberately and completely" ("The Life" 4) as possible; such women did not cease having what she called "the home instinct." Pounds particularly advocated women's freedom to develop and contribute to society in such roles as teachers, ministers' helpmates, writers, editors, and social reformers. Thus, the audacious "new woman" rubric in The Christian Standard proclaims Pounds' justification of her own progressive, untraditional women's interests that took her into meetings, editorial offices, lecture halls and conventions—all in the public sphere. In addition to her paid work that constituted a public career, Jessie Brown Pounds continued to be an active member of several northeast Ohio nondenominational women's organizations that helped children, the poor and other women—temperance, missions and medicine were their concerns. Today these would be labelled "social action groups."

Around the turn of the century Jessie Brown Pounds was occupied with writing, promoting missions and temperance, and performing new tasks implied by taking on the role, "minister’s wife." For a while she focused her energies upon promoting
religious education for the young, contributing to children's publications, such as Our Young Folks and The King's Builders, which served the Christian Women's Board of Missions. She continued working as a novelist, essay writer, editor and advisor, as well as promoting the nondenominational concerns of the Young Peoples' Society of Christian Endeavor, a movement begun in 1881 by Francis E. Clark, a Congregational Minister. The Y.P.S.C.E. had interested Pounds since the late 1880's when she completed The Ironclad Pledge (1890), one of two novels which demonstrate her commitment to the Endeavorers.

Jessie Brown Pounds served as a Contributing Editor for the Christian Standard until 1893. Between 1888 and 1893 she concentrated on short fiction and contributed over 70 stories to The Christian Standard, some which were originally published in A Woman's Doing and Other Stories (1886), as well as the serialized 1889 novel, The Ironclad Pledge. She also reported on Disciples Conventions, such as those in Ohio and Ontario in 1891, and wrote numerous essays about such figures as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, John Greenleaf Whittier and Alfred Lord Tennyson. In the 1890's, after she was married and living in Indianapolis, her editorial duties diminished, though the Christian Standard published her vivid local color story in 1901, "At Clemm's Corners," and in 1904 serialized her last novel, a masterfully written fictional "autobiography" about the founding of the Western Reserve, Rachael Sylvestre, A Story of the Pioneers. By the early years of the new century, the only other contributions Jessie Brown Pounds made to The Christian Standard were limited to bland commentaries about missionary work and articles about advocacy activities in Hiram.

In the years following Errett's death in 1888, The Christian Standard became increasingly conservative; liberal Disciples were more effectively served by a new journal which appeared in 1882, The Christian Evangelist, which was formed by merging James Harvey Garrison's Christian with B. W. Johnson's Evangelist. Years later, after 1912, J. H. Garrison edited the Christian Evangelist which declared itself the "official weekly periodical of the brotherhood."

The Christian Evangelist between 1901 and 1902 serialized Pounds' fine novel The Young Man from Middlefield and between 1910 and 1913 ran a dozen of her short stories. These include the memorable local color stories, "Hillsbury Folks (1911), which were written under a pseudonym, "Auris Leigh." Jessie Brown Pounds was also writing short moralistic tales for children and finally turned her attention back to serious writing for adults. Her editorial energies now went into the liberal Christian Evangelist, in which for several years she edited and wrote for a department called "Woman's Realm."
But Jessie Brown Pounds and other Disciples liberals were still disappointed in the Evangelist in terms of its protective sectarianism. She was looking for an outlet worthy of her editorial energies and found it in yet another new publication that grew out of the ongoing debate between conservative and liberal Disciples of Christ leaders. The background of this new newspaper is particularly interesting; the liberal Disciples' position was strengthened in 1893 when Herbert L. Willett suggested that the Disciples of Christ make a seminary connection with the University of Chicago—the "Rockefeller endowed citadel of liberalism." The Disciples Divinity House was soon formed, but Dean Willett found that neither The Christian Standard nor the Christian Evangelist was sufficiently supportive, so he and his associates formed another paper, the Christian Century. As the title suggests, its editors believed that the twentieth century would be a Christian era, and they pledged a fifth of its profits to support missions. The magazine had two purposes its editors announced: reporting church news and developing other topics to reach "outside our own ranks."

In 1908 Charles Clayton Morrison bought the paper and instituted his own editorial policy: "frank and open commitment to liberalism." This stance attracted nondenominational Christians but alienated many conservative Disciples, like J. H. Garrison, editor of The Christian Standard, who battled with Morrison on his editorial pages. The Christian Century became America's most widely read interdenominational journal of opinion with a circulation of more than 40,000 weekly. By 1918 it ceased denominational ties and became "undenominational." Committed to creating a better society, The Christian Century has been called the "foremost organ of liberal Christianity in America" (Harrel 953), and the "outstanding advocate of liberal thought and ecumenical unity in American Protestantism" (Murch 239).

Jessie Brown Pounds began contributing to Morrison's Christian Century on March 27, 1919 when she was featured on the cover for her essay "Old Clothes." On March 4, 1920, she was named Contributing Editor and continued work until the day she died. Morrison was a brilliant mentor for the mature Pounds. Like her, he was committed to the Social Gospel in so far as it emphasized pragmatic sympathy for the lower classes. For example, as early as 1891 liberal Disciples discussed the merits of social settlements. In 1896, their first, Hiram House, was established in Cleveland. "It long remained a model for Disciples social work" and was "in many ways, the climax of liberal humanitarianism among Disciples in the nineteenth century" (Harrel, Social Sources 103).

Jessie Brown Pounds contributed over 33 essays to Morrison's journal, and these reveal the mature tenor of her mind. The essays are witty, clever and challenging with content that ranges over modern society, rejecting some Campbellite tenants but
revering their spirit, moving beyond their provincial origins to larger, contemporary questions about how an adult wisely lives this life.

It is ironic that many of her contemporaries could not see that Jessie Brown Pounds' pragmatic approaches to social improvement, in fact, reflect Alexander Campbell's original commitment to personal liberty. She warned, "those who profess gratitude to Alexander Campbell will miss the best he taught if . . . they concern themselves chiefly with details of church organization . . . and fail to find the big underlying principles of the man" ("Forward" 8). After the turn of the century, questions over dated "restorationism" or ecumenism thus become focused in Jessie Brown Pounds' mature commitment to liberal advocacy.

Joining the University of Chicago based editorial staff of the nation's outstanding undenominational journal that advocated the Social Gospel was the perfect culmination for Jessie Brown Pounds' life. She was finally home, encouraged to use her personal voice to promote liberal theology and the Social Gospel; in the pages of the Christian Century, Pounds crystallizes her lifelong concerns for such issues as improving children's welfare, invigorating the ministry and, moreover, preserving civilized culture. Her pleas in The Christian Century are for new ideas, mental effort, the love of beauty, and revivified Christian vision.

Thus as a liberal advocate Jessie Brown Pounds grew beyond the conservative tone of early Disciples theology as conveyed in such journals as The Christian Standard and Christian Evangelist. By joining the Christian Century, Pounds truly took her place on the national scene as a significant figure who could help to lead ecumenical and liberal Christians in issues like women's rights, education, and social reform. This domestically founded zeal for reform fulfilled Pounds' early belief that, "The philanthropic movements of new womanhood" undergird women's loyalty to the home ("New" 354).

In an essay written shortly before she died, "Woman in a New World," Jessie Brown Pounds looked back two decades to reassess women's progress; her final thought was that women must separate the role of "personal ambition" from the role of genuine "social service" (7). Pounds' argument, as one scholar says, was essentially that humble women, like herself, could, indeed, "combat the evils that threatened domestic felicity" (Bailey 12).

In Cleveland during the 1890's Jessie Brown Pounds had watched her beloved Hiram College associates aid slum victims on Orange Avenue at its new Hiram House. She saw the opportunities that the Disciples' theology of the Social Gospel, a "concept of the kingdom of God based on the brotherhood of man," do its work
as immigrants were given opportunity in this flooded tenement district. As a writer, editor, and activist, she was unusually fortunate to see such fruits appear as apparent justifications of her life’s philosophy.

Modern historians who label 1870-1920 the "Age of the Social Gospel," describe Charles Clayton Morrison’s distinguished magazine as the conclusion of an idealistic phase of America’s history. Indeed, The Christian Century’s optimism precisely reflects the undenominational Christian idealism of Clevelander Jessie Brown Pounds’ life and writing. Too frail to herself be a missionary or a teacher, she wrote, edited, organized, traveled, lectured, and supported other activists’ work. Some groups she promoted, for example the "slum brigades," or Salvation Army, which she describes in an 1892 story situated in Public Square called "Praying Kate," were, indeed, unable to solve the urban problems they confront. Jessie Brown Pounds’ realistic fiction does not sheer away from this painful fact. She did not expect that Ladies Aid Societies could restructure society, but she had seen the apparent triumph of Frances Willard’s Women’s Christian Temperance Union which led in 1920 to the Constitution’s Nineteenth Amendment, and Pounds even saw women receive the vote. The Social Gospel in America seemed to be triumphing when she died suddenly in 1921.

Charles Clayton Morrison’s eulogy for Jessie Brown Pounds described her as a "civic and social leader . . . a monitor of exceptional wisdom and vision" ("Jessie" 6). A realistic idealist, Jessie Brown Pounds died as a "Social Christian" who believed that potatoes might be changed into peaches, to use a metaphor she develops on her first novel, a partly autobiographical bildungsroman about a frustrated young woman who, thwarted in missionary work, becomes educated and empowered to help others by opening a westside Cleveland mission. A peach herself, Pounds grew from a humble potato, nourished in the farlands of the Western Reserve. This garden imagery aptly reflects the contented simplicity of a "new woman" whose life remarkably demonstrates her cherished ideal of human equality.

Bibliography


