

THREE DOCTORS IN FICTION.

THE fact that such writers as Mr. Howells, Miss Phelps, and Miss Jewett should within four years so carefully study what is practically the same subject, makes it worth while to compare their stories closely, says the *New York Evening Post*. Passing any question of relative literary merit, and taking them all as widely read and much liked books, there are remarkable points both of likeness and difference between them. In the first place no one of the heroines works for her living. Dr. Breen "was rich enough to have no need of her profession as a means of support." Of Dr. Zay it is said "loftily" by the old lady, "Doctor is quite independent of her practice." Between Dr. Leslie and her aunt, Nan Prince is sure of a fortune. They are all beautiful. Mr. Howells gives us "the tender curve of her cheek, the soft round of her chin." Dr. Zay "was the idolon of glorious health." "There was a sort of golden halo round Nan's pretty head." In costume and carriage they are all of the choicest. Dr. Breen only studied simplicity, but "she did not finally escape distinction in dress and manner." Dr. Mulbridge "grew more and more conscious of her elegance and style, now that she stood before him." Dr. Zay has almost a superfluity of violet muslin, of skin of seal and leopard; she has "a glorious poise," and moves "with a swift and splendid motion." As Nau walked up the broad aisle of St. Anne's Church "the rows of heads all looked commonplace by contrast. . . . There was something so high and serene in Anna Prince's simplicity and directness." They are further alike that each has had the best special training for her career that the times afforded. That they count two out of three for homœopathy may go for what it is worth.

As to motive, we come to marked differences. Dr. Breen turned to her study in the heart-sick reaction from the treachery of her friend, the faithlessness of her affianced. She is watching her first patient at Jocelyn's. Dr. Zay "always had a taste for science, she inherited it besides." Her father was a physician, but died when she was only fifteen. She has practiced four years in a Maine village. "She don't fall short of three thousand every year of her life," is the assertion. Nan's father, whom she never knew, was also a physician, but it was her constant sympathy, her affectionate admiration for her guardian, the "country doctor,"

which determined the restless longing of her finely endowed nature toward the same career as his own. Either motive is a likely one, but the last is the more natural and more healthful.

Once more a difference, Mr. Howells may not quite have intended it, but his heroine first turns to her lover in the profound dejection of the discovery of failure in herself — her heart, her strength, are not equal to her demand upon them. Dr. Zay's lover gains his advantage when she is physically exhausted with a night of watching and a struggle with delirium tremens. Does this mean that neither would have yielded if she had been strong? Nan stands waiting in all the success of her hope. Yet Miss Jewett has felt obliged to supply even her with another motive than the love of her profession for refusing marriage. Nan believes that inherited tendencies bar her from it. "*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse.*" Does not this amount to an agreement among the three that home and hope of children draw a woman more strongly than anything else can.

Space fails us for the inferences this extended comparison suggests. Supposed cases are not logical arguments: they are only illustrations; but when in-

dependent illustrations strikingly agree, it is more than an accidental coincidence. To put the case fully in all its bearings, Dr. Breen should be successful; Nan's lover should be a strong, masterful, yet tenderly sympathetic man. But the great fact remains, no one yet ventures to represent a woman struggling as most men struggle to gain a footing in the professions. No one ventures to present her without the attractions that are distinctly feminine, and the want of which (that is, those that correspond) would be only a temporary hindrance to the man. There is a deep and — considering the future — an almost painful significance in the conviction, put concretely in Dr. Breen's case, implied throughout "Doctor Zay," and stated so plainly and so appealingly by Nan, that the duties of home, as falling upon the wife and mother, are incompatible with the practice of a profession. We believe all experience proves it, and what may seem examples to the contrary are either where the possession of wealth or powers so exceptional as to be outside all rules have smoothed the way, or where the profession has been taken up after the home had been made, its traditions developed, its happiness secured.