

can be roughly indicated in one sentence, nor in several sentences. The general purport of Dr. Chew's summary is here, as often, essentially that of Mr. F. C. Hedgecock's extensive study in his thesis for the French doctorate. But while Dr. Hedgecock has probably pushed his generalizations farther than the plain facts warrant, he has given his evidence in great detail and has made distinctions and qualifications that put the matter in a very different light.

There is one point in which Dr. Chew has probably been unduly affected by academic prepossessions. While he gives only about one third as much space to the poetry as to the prose of Hardy, he regards the poetry as of greater importance, and of *The Dynasts* he says that it is "now held by all good judges to be the greatest work of literature produced within this generation." He does little to justify this confident contention except to classify the subject-matter of the poems, to sketch the philosophy, and to laud the sincerity of Hardy and—here Dr. Chew is at his best—his uncompromising pursuit of the truth.

The relative greatness of Hardy's prose and verse must be determined, one would suppose, by the fact that his verse, however powerful and individual, is obviously inferior as verse to his prose as prose. Or is it assumed that, even in our day, verse is a nobler medium than prose, and that epic and poetic drama are necessarily greater genres than that used by Tolstoy and Thackeray? The epic was the product of certain human conditions, long since passed away, and was no doubt the finest product of those conditions. But is it not likely that our greatest work will be produced in a genre more generally cultivated in our day and more characteristic of it? There are many types of work to be considered. There are, for two examples, *Queen Victoria* and *The Education of Henry Adams*. There are France and Russia and Denmark to be reckoned with. And above all there are, in England, *The Egoist* and Lord Jim and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH.

Mary Wollstonecraft

Portrait of Mrs. W., by Josephine Preston Peabody.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$1.75.

THIS play has been written to frame a portrait. The portrait is Opie's painting of Mary Wollstonecraft which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London. In the studio of the Cornish painter, delicately perfumed by lilacs, crumpets, and tea, we are introduced to a group of famous people who figured in Mary's life about the time of her marriage to Godwin. Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Siddons, John Kemble, and Robert Southey have come to view the picture. Holcroft, to the disappointment of some readers, has been kept away, as he is working "desperately on his tragedy." Imlay is naturally absent—he belonged to Mary's past. But to dismiss him as a libertine, as the author does in the preface, is to take refuge in a categorical definition which tells us nothing. The mysterious stranger from America, deathlessly faithful to Mary and sponsor for all the ideal values of love, was evidently created by the author as a contrast and a compensation for the errant Imlay. It is hard to believe, however, that the graceful sublimations of the idealistic Mr. Symes would have

had a very strong appeal for the real Mary Wollstonecraft.

With this radiant, vital creature, the present play has little to do. The episodes of her history, even the tragic death bed scene, have slight vividness or poignancy. A quaint eighteenth century atmosphere is maintained, through which the characters move as if stepping in a minuet. It is not an atmosphere in which Mary Wollstonecraft belongs.

She is of the strain of Medea and Penthesilea, and refuses an embodiment composed of curtsies, old English songs, and sentimental motherhood.

Perhaps it is tempting failure anyway to try to write imitation dialogue for a genius who expressed herself in writing so fearlessly and adequately while she was about it. Is not the better drama in the circumstances to be expected of the biographer? It exists, so far as Mary Wollstonecraft is concerned, in Stirling Taylor's biography published in 1911 and now regrettably out of print. This book has captured something of the true character of the author of *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Her fire, her intellect, her tenderness, her inconsistencies,—all her intriguing complexity is handled with a keen yet delicate appreciation. It is a thousand pities that so good a book should be allowed to languish.

KATHARINE ANTHONY.

Contributors

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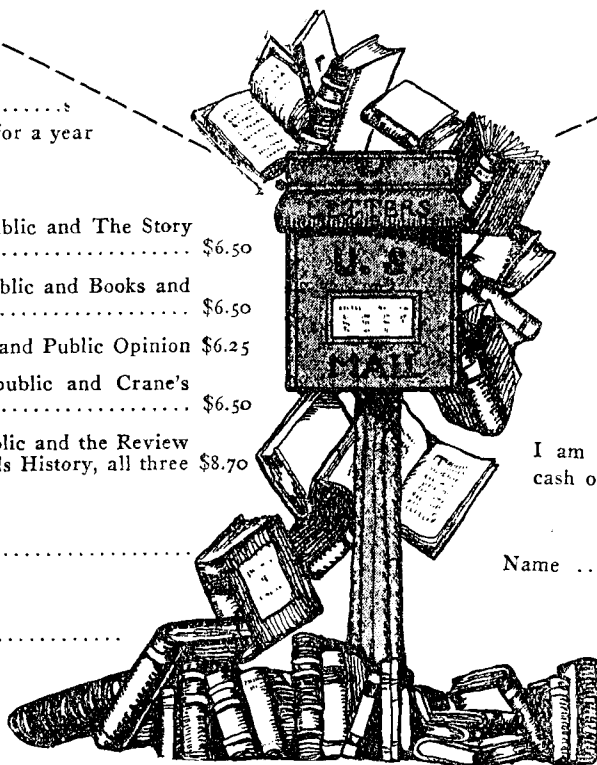
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