

January 2016

# Carl J. Weber Correspondence

Carl Jefferson Weber 1894-

Maine State Library

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WEBER, CARL JEFFERSON

Baltimore, Maryland, January 20, 1894 -

WEBER, Carl Jefferson, English literature; b. Baltimore, Md., Jan. 20, 1894; s. Adam S. and Lora (Jefferson) W.; grad. Baltimore City Coll., 1901; B.A., Johns Hopkins, 1914; Rhodes Scholar at Queen's Coll., Oxford U., 1914-17, B.A., 1916, M.A., 1920; m. Clara W. Carter, of Jefferson, Me., June 23, 1921; children - David Carter, Dorothy Carter. Instr. and asst. prof. English, Colby Coll., 1918-20; asst. in English, Johns Hopkins, 1920-21; instr. in English, U.S. Naval Acad., 1920-22; instr. in lit., Johns Hopkins Summer Sch., 3 summers, 1923-28; University of Maine Summer School, 1932; with Colby Coll. since 1922 successively assistant prof., assoc. prof. and prof. English until 1928, Roberts prof. English lit. since 1928. Mem. Oxford U.O.T.C., 1917; mem. 2d O.T.C., Ft. Meyer, Va., 1917; 1st lt. 312th F.A., 1917-18; adj. 69th F.A., 1918; capt. O.R.C., 1919; resigned 1921. Mem. consulting com. Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, 1925; lit. and travel guide (Armstrong Ednl. Tours), summers 1926, 29. Mem. Nat. Council Teachers of English, Modern Lang. Assn. America, Phi Beta Kappa. Congregationalist. Author: (or compiler) Browning Questions, 1924; Four Centuries of Literature (in collaboration), 1925; English Versification, 1926; Footprints of A.J. Roberts, 1928; The Best of Browning, 1930; In the Land of the D'Urbervilles, 1933; Unconsidered Trifles, 1933. Contbe. many articles to mags. Home: Waterville, Me.

--WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA, 1934-1935

March 21, 1936

Professor Carl J. Weber  
Colby College  
Waterville, Maine

Dear Mr. Weber:

We notice that we have none of your books in our Maine Author Collection, and wonder why we have been so lax -- surely with a writer in our state who has published such works as yours on Browning and Hardy, we can scarcely be excused for not having at least one of your books!

The Maine Author Collection, with which you may not be familiar, was started some years ago, and is an exhibit collection of books by those writers born in this State, or residing here. Nearly all the volumes are presented and inscribed, and together form a most valuable and interesting background of Maine's contribution to the literature of our country.

We do hope that you will want to inscribe at least one of your admirable literary achievements for this Collection, and we assure you that we will appreciate whatever you may be inclined to present, for we are deeply grateful for the interest and assistance of our authors.

Please accept our best wishes for continued success, and also a very cordial invitation to visit the Maine Author Collection when you are in Augusta.

Very truly yours

Maine State Library

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Secretary

## Interesting Literary Find, Colby Professor

For one of the most interesting books of the year from a literary standpoint we are indebted to the professor of English at Colby College, Carl J. Weber. This is "An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress, by Thomas Hardy, first published in America with introduction and notes by Carl J. Weber, Roberts Professor of English in Colby College." The volume is published by the Johns Hopkins University Press.

It may not be generally known that, largely thru the interest and work of Prof. Weber, Colby College has built up one of the most extensive collections of Hardy and Hardina in America.

Long an admirer and student of Thomas Hardy, Professor Weber is the author of several monographs concerning this English novelist, as well as a number of articles which have appeared in scholarly journals in America, England and France, and he has edited a new edition of Hardy's "Tess of the D'Ubervilles" with annotations for classroom use.

Professor Weber was educated in Johns Hopkins University and in Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. He has been head of the department of English at Colby College since 1922.

The Portland Sunday Telegram published this account of Prof. Weber's discovery of the long lost Thomas Hardy novel:

**Dismembered, disguised and liv-**

ing under an assumed name for more than half a century, the first and supposedly unpublished novel of Thomas Hardy has been identified by Carl J. Weber, professor of English at Colby College, who describes in a book just published, the literary detective work leading up to the discovery of the lost novel by the great English writer.

It has long been known by scholars that Hardy's first novel was never published and the statement has been made that the manuscript of this early attempt at literature was destroyed by the author. For years, admirers of Hardy have wondered about that youthful novel and have wished that it might have been preserved, even though it probably lacked the excellence of his later works. Now, thanks to Professor Weber, anyone can study the greater part of this missing story.

First and last, there already existed a considerable amount of miscellaneous information concerning this first novel of Hardy. For example, the published letters of Alexander MacMillan, the London book publisher, contained correspondence in which MacMillan criticized this manuscript by Hardy and explained his refusal of it. Again shortly after Hardy's death in 1928, Sir Edmund Gosse wrote an article describing a conversation with the famous author, then in his 81st year, who told Gosse something about his first attempt at novel writing.

Hardy outlined something of the plot and characters, altho he was unable to remember just how the story turned out. He said that he "got rid of it" and that it "would never see the light." Thus, it was generally assumed that he had himself destroyed the manuscript, altho apparently he never specifically stated that he had done so.

Other references to this first novel occur in various writings. Altogether, there were 100 clues which the Colby professor combed from every imaginable source in this Country and England. Those which had to do with the subject matter of the story were arranged in the apparent sequence of the plot and thus the general outline of the lost story appeared.

Then came a startling discovery. Altho little known, a rather inferior story by Thomas Hardy was published in 1878 in an obscure periodical known as The New Quarterly Magazine. Only three copies of this have been located in America, and Professor Weber examined one of these which is in the Brooklyn Public Library. Suddenly it dawned upon him that in point after point, this story paralleled much of the hypothetical reconstruction of Hardy's lost novel. Some changes had been made in names as, for instance, the Hon. Fay Allemont of the original version appears as Foy Allenville in the magazine. Also, the hero becomes a successful novelist instead of a successful architect. But the plots, which treat of the love of a poor teacher for the squire's daughter and their subsequent secret marriage and her tragic death, are identical in both pieces of fiction.

To make a long story short, Professor Weber in the role of "literary detective," reconstructs the "crime" in the following manner. Thomas Hardy wrote "The Poor Man and the Lady," his first attempt at a full length novel, in 1868. He submitted it to two publishers, MacMillan and Chapman & Hall, who rejected the manuscript, but wrote Hardy criticizing certain parts and praising other aspects of the work. Hardy revised it somewhat, but, conscious of its defects, did not submit it again to a publisher. However, and this is the most astonishing part of the story, he did not want to waste all of the effort and travail which had gone into this novel. Therefore he deliberately found opportunities to use sections of it in later works. These, Professor Weber has identified, including much of the first eight chapters in "Under the Greenwood Tree." The parts which had been particularly criticized by the publishers, Hardy threw away. All that was left, he revised slightly and sold to The New Quarterly Magazine, changing the title to: "An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress." By reading this story, together with the passages which have been identified in other books, the student can now read the greater part of Hardy's first novel.

This, then, is the ingenious solution to the mystery of the missing manuscript which is given by the Colby professor in his book.

If you are ever in Waterville, I'll be glad to have you stop at the English Dept. office in Colby College, and get whatever I may be able to contribute to the collection you write about.

Sincerely yours,

*Caroline Fisher*

April 4, 1936.

April 8, 1936

Professor Carl J. Weber  
Colby College  
Waterville, Maine

Dear Mr. Weber:

Thank you for your note of April 4,  
and your generous offer. We will be very  
glad to call at the English Department,  
and will be sure to let you know in advance,  
that we may be certain of seeing you.  
Your interest is greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours  
Maine State Library

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Secretary

February 6, 1947

Dr. Carl J. Weber, Editor  
Colby Library Quarterly  
Colby College  
Waterville, Maine

Dear Dr. Weber:

It is exceedingly kind of you to remember the Maine Author Collection with a copy of the intensely interesting February Quarterly, and to make it possible for our Robinson section to include the "first", which is his Octave.

Please accept our most appreciative thanks.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of  
Maine Author Collection

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