

Charles J. Cameron's Emendations and Annotations to *Lyrics on Freedom, Love and Death* by George Frederick Cameron

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The Spring, 1987, issue of the *Canadian Literature Catalogue* from Donaldson and Co. Books of Nanaimo, B.C., contains the following intriguing item (No. 53):

CAMERON (GEORGE FREDERICK). LYRICS ON FREEDOM, LOVE AND DEATH. Kingston, 1887. Lewis Shannon. Decorated cloth. An inscription on the flap of this book indicates it was owned by the brother of the poet, Charles Cameron, who edited the book. There are some emendations to the text in pen which appear to be his. Very good. [\$]25.00. (5)

The book referred to is, of course, the only published volume of poems by George Frederick Cameron (1854-1885), the Nova Scotia-born writer whom Archibald Lampman regarded as "of a higher order of excellence" than Charles G.D. Roberts if "judged from the purest standpoint of some very remarkable qualities of feeling and expression. . . ."¹ My interest piqued by the possibility that the Donaldson copy of *Lyrics of Freedom, Love and Death* did indeed contain "emendations" by the poet's brother and editor, I immediately ordered the book and, on its arrival, read of its provenance in the following entry, headed "Prince Rupert, B.C." and signed "W.H. Wilson-Murray" on its "f[ront] f[ree] e[nd] p[aper]":

Given to me by Mrs. Chas Cameron wife of my very dear friend Dr. Chas J. Cameron who passed suddenly away November 16th. 1926, at Prince Rupert.

In addition to the "emendations" mentioned in the Donaldson *Catalogue*, the copy of George Frederick Cameron's poems that I acquired contains several annotations of a referential and circumstantial nature, annotations which, among other things, help

¹ "Two Canadian Poets," with a Prefatory Note by E.K. Brown, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 13 (July 1944): 409-10.

to identify the subject of a number of the love poems in the volume as one M. McGregor.² Since Charles J. Cameron's emendations and annotations to *Lyrics of Freedom, Love and Death* have considerable editorial and biographical importance, they are here reproduced in full. Preceding the "]" in each of the following entries is the location of the emendation or annotation by page number and poem title in *Lyrics of Freedom, Love and Death*. Following the "]" is a description of the precise location and direction of the note, together with a transcription, in quotation marks, of the note itself. Unless otherwise indicated, all the notes are in ink. Where necessary ampersand has been silently changed to "and". All additions to Cameron's notes are placed in square brackets.

Charles J. Cameron's Emendations and Annotations

- n.p., "Contents", To—. . .169"] Between "To—" and "169":
"A.C. Swinburne".
- n.p., "His Life"] The "2" in 1872 (ten lines from the top) has been stroked through in pencil and "1875-76" written (again in pencil) beside it in the right-hand margin. Below this, and apparently in reference to the sentence "After graduation, he entered the law office of Dean, Butler and Abbot in the same city [Boston]" is written (once again in pencil) "77-78". There are other, illegible annotations in pencil in the same margin. All the annotations on this page appear to be in the same hand, which may or may not be that of Charles J. Cameron.
- [1], "Dedication"] In the final line of the poem, "keep" has been stroked through and "wear" written below it.
- 51, "In After Days"] In the final line of the third stanza on this page "say" is stroked through and "hold/" written in the margin.
- 51, "In After Days"] A dash and a comma have been stroked through in the last two lines of the final stanza on this page to make the lines read: "Who hate a tyrant, be he you—/A people — sultan, czar, or queen!"
- 52, "In After Days"] In the first line of the last stanza of "In After Days" the words "rabid" and "and" have been

² None of the annotations gives the name in full, but "To M. McGregor" appears as the title of a poem in Rochelle Farquhar, "George Frederick Cameron, 1854-1885, An Inventory of his Papers in University of British Columbia Library Special Collections Division" (1986), p.11, which was kindly sent to me by George Brandak, Curator of Manuscripts in the Special Collections Division at U.B.C. The published criticism on Cameron makes no mention of M. McGregor, whom, it is plausible to speculate, the poet knew and loved when he was a young man in Boston—where he lived between 1869 (when, at the age of 14, he moved there with his family) and 1882 (when, at the age of 27, he moved to Kingston, Ontario and entered Queens University). Support for this speculation is found in another document kindly copied for me by George Brandak: a series of poems to "Eolene", one dedicated "To M. McG" and another dated "Oct. 1876. Boston. Age 21" (Box 1, folder 5). See also the annotation for page 116, above.

- stroked through and "communists," inserted between "When" and "fanatics". As emended, the line reads: "When communists, fanatics, those"
- 58, "Our Hero Dead"] Below the final stanza of "Our Hero Dead", there is written in pencil: "I was captain of Co F. Boston Latin School Brigade and was with my Co. and the whole Brigade present — as George was — on this day Lt Col. MacLelland Moore was also present."³ The note is signed "C.J.F.", and below it (and also in pencil) is the following postscript: "It was the year of my grad[uation]n fr[om] the B.L.S."
- 62, "Thou Goest Thy Way"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M—".
- 66, "Forgive Thee"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M—".
- 67, "Remember Thee"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M—".
- 72, "Epimetheus"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M—".
- 75, "Thou Hast Done It — Not I"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M—".
- 76, "I Thought that Time"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M—".
- 82, "In Dreams"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M—".
- 92, "The Dreams that Have Faded"] Above the title: "M—".
- 93, "Apart"] Above the title and in pencil: "M. McG.-".
- 97, "Thou Art Like Earth"] Below and to the left of the final stanza: "April 20/77."
- 107, "By the Fountain"] Below and to the right of this poem: "We — George and I — had been discussing — I started it — alliteration and Swinburne — I had heard one of his presumed friends say, 'Yes he's a genuis and a poet— but see how simple his language is — none of the alliteration of Swinburne.' I told George and he laughed — alliteration is only a trick' he said. Easy, easy. My 'simple' songs will live when all that is forgotten. But, since you want it, I'll write you one. And this is what he wrote. C.J.C."
- 113, "What New Found Pain is This?"] Between the title and the first stanza: "(M. McG— on news of her marriage)".
- 115, "Would I Drink It"] Between the title and the first stanza: "(ref to M. McG.)."

³ MacLelland Moore was the poet's "brother-in-law"; see George Frederick Cameron, *Lyrics on Freedom, Love and Death*, ed. Charles J. Cameron (Kingston: Lewis W. Shannon; Boston: Alexander Moore, 1887), 261 and 263.

- 116, "The Common Fate"] Cameron has stroked through the penultimate stanza of this poem and written beside it in the right-hand margin: "(a) Inserted by George as an afterthought, that people might not guess to whom it refers." Below the final stanza of this poem, Cameron has written: "(b) the above refers to the marriage of his school boy sweetheart — M. McG. As to the 4th verse see my note above. C.J.C.". Clearly, "(a)" and "(b)" refer respectively to the fourth and fifth stanzas of the poem. At a later date, Cameron has written in the left-hand margin beside these two stanzas: "Stet [underlined] C.J.C. . Pay no attention to the notes (a) and (b)."
- 117, "My Love - compelling Love"] Between the title and the first stanza: "To M. (McG.—)".
- 120, "'Away from Me'"] The exclamation point after "free" in the second line of the final stanza of this poem has been stroked through and replaced with a comma.
- 127, "Bring a Fitting Shroud"] Between the title and the first stanza: "(After M. McG's death)".
- 147, "Lyrics in Pleasant Places and Other Songs"] Above the first stanza on this page: "Song" [twice underlined].
- 156, "With a Faith"] In the final two lines of the last stanza of "With a Faith", "yet" has been stroked through and replaced with "though", and "Would be" has been stroked through and replaced with "Had been". As emended, the lines read: "Calm as a love-lit dream, though living I/Had been — a slave."
- 162, "The Mayflower"] "Liberty's" (stanza two, line two) has been underlined and an "x" placed beside it in the right-hand margin. Below the "x" is written: "—x i.e. America's — shore of U.S.A.". Below the poem is written: "Boston, Banquet of Mechanics Assn.".
- 165, "Quid Refert?"] Below the poem: "Kingston. '82(?)".
- 168, "On McDonald Clarke"] Below the poem: "N.Y. 1979. C. ."
- 169, "To—"] Along the dash in the title of the poem: "Swinburne".
- 189, "My Faith"] In the second line of this poem the word "in" is scored through and "from" is written beside it in the margin.
- 191, "The Poet's Reason"] In the second line of the second stanza of this poem the word "must" is scored through and the word "may" is written above it. The emendation is signed "C.J.C.".
- 198, "Sic Transit"] Below the poem: "From considering (too deeply C.J.C.) the mere fragments of the old Greek of [?] poets that remain to us today and so fearing the final loss

- of his own". The annotation is signed "Charles" and dated "Aug 24/[19]24 2 am."
- 207, "Oh, Never May the Shadow of the Past"] After the "To—" between the title and first stanza of the poem: "M. McG— (after her marriage)".
- 208, "As Some Swift Star"] After the "To—", between the title and first stanza of this poem: "Tennyson."
- 211, "Ere the Moon that Wanes"] The title of the poem is scored through and "Per ardua—ad astra [underlined]" is written above it.
- 211, "Ere the Moon that Wanes"] In the fifth line of the second stanza the capital "H" of "him" is written over with a lower case "h".
- 212, "Ere the Moon that Wanes"] In the third line of the second stanza "best" is scored through and "worst" is written above it. The emendation is signed "C.J.C."
- 223, "The Land of Dreams"] Between the title and the first stanza: "(M)".
- 239, "Ysolte"] In the third line from the top of the page a "?" has been inserted after "life".
- 240, "Ysolte"] In the fifth line of the second stanza on this page the word "him" is scored through and "her" is written adjacent to it in the right-hand margin. The dash at the end of this line is deleted and between the fifth and sixth lines is written: "The gold his father left behind:" As emended, the lines read: "Which I could tell her that would dim/The gold his left father behind:/But, no! . . ."
- 252, "Rest"] Below the poem: "George was not 20 years old when he wrote this—".
- 258, "Dead!"] Between the title and the first stanza: "M. McG."
- 264, "In Memoriam"] Below the word "river" in stanza II is an asterisk, and below the stanza another asterisk with the note: "The Charles River, Boston".
- 274, "From the Sea"] There is an asterisk after the final word of the first stanza of this poem. Below the poem is the note: "Capt Charles Sutherland — his grandfather. C.J.C."
- 275, "Sacred"] In the right-hand margin beside the second stanza of this poem: "When mother tried to check him when writing poetry on Sunday— 128 Main St. Kingston."
- 277, "Lord God Almighty"] The dot of the semi-colon at the end of the second line of the second stanza ("flock;") has been obliterated.
- 283, "Beyond the Utmost Doubts and Deepes"] In the stanza that begins near the bottom of the page, the following punctuation has been added: a colon after "her" in "I

dreaded her but then. . ."; a semi-colon after "men" at the end of the second line; and a comma after "comforter" at the end of the fourth line.

- 285, "To God, the Auditor of All Accounts"] In the last line of this poem the "it" of "Benedicite" has been scored through so that the word would read "Benedice".
- 288, "What Matter It"] In the first line of stanza VI, a period has been added after "rest" and the "t" of "the" capitalized. As emended, the line reads: "For we shall rest. The brain that planned. . . ."

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