

# Letters to Carman, 1890-92, from Campbell, Lampman, and Scott

Edited and with an Introduction by Tracy Ware

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On February 19, 1890, Bliss Carman signed a contract to become the literary editor of the New York weekly, the *Independent*, where he remained for the next two years.<sup>1</sup> That event marked the beginning of Carman's editorial career, the importance of which we are only beginning to recognize.<sup>2</sup> It was also an important event for the other Confederation poets, on whose behalf Carman worked tirelessly, soliciting and publishing their work, offering encouragement and criticism, and printing notices of their publications in other forums.

In the Carman Papers at Smith College, a good deal of Carman's editorial and personal correspondence from this period survives.<sup>3</sup> The letters from Roberts have now been published,<sup>4</sup> but there are also twenty-five letters from the other Confederation poets: three from William Wilfred Campbell, and eleven each from Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott. These letters afford interesting perspectives on Carman's editorial activities and critical interests and on their authors at crucial stages in their careers. Collectively, the letters point to an impressive solidarity among the Confederation poets, who truly were a "school" of poets at this time.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the letters reveal the extent of the other poets' indebtedness to Carman, who was now becoming the most influential of them all.

As H. Pearson Gundy notes, Carman must have had reservations about signing a contract that began with these words: "I find myself so far in sympathy with the views of the *Independent* relating to temperance, smoking, card playing and of matters of Social Reform generally, that I feel I can heartily give to the paper that active support in work and in my personal example which you desire in your subordinates."<sup>6</sup> Although such severe moral views are evident in the *Independent* throughout Carman's tenure, the literary contributions are often impressive. The contributors include Arthur Symons, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Thomas Hardy, Edmund Gosse, William Sharp, Richard Hovey, James Whitcomb Riley, and John Greenleaf Whittier, along with previously unpublished posthumous work from Emily Dickinson, Thomas De Quincey, and Charles Lamb. Carman regularly provided the "Literary Notes," which are sometimes of considerable interest for students of Confederation poetry. According to Gundy, "Carman was not temperamentally suited to long office hours and short vacations. His own poetry suffered, and he became increasingly out of sympathy with the puritanical views of the journal's owner."<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, his experience at the *Independent* was invaluable to him, and he left with a new confidence in his own abilities.

The years 1890-92 were less fulfilling for Campbell, Lampman, and Scott. To varying degrees, they all envied Carman's active literary life, though they found a partial remedy for their sense of isolation

in the *Mermaid Inn* column that they wrote for *The Globe* from February 6, 1892 to July 1, 1893. Campbell's plight was especially pathetic: for reasons that he makes abundantly clear in Letter 7, Campbell was soon to leave the Anglican Church, joining Lampman and Scott in Ottawa in May of 1891, where he entered the civil service. In many ways, Campbell was the most demanding of these three correspondents, wanting the details of notices of his work (Letter 2), recalling a previous submission (Letter 7), and pleading for "the earliest possible publication" (Letter 11). Evidently Carman was able to provide consolation of several kinds. On March 23, 1890, he suggests that Campbell paid too much attention to his critics:

It would be better if *nothing* were ever said about us until we were dead. You who have all the fire and calm beauty of the lakes in your very heart, what is it to you whether this reviewer or that can see the beauty of it too? I say your *true self* is sufficient judge, sufficient audience, sufficient world of fame.<sup>8</sup>

Campbell responds with thanks for the "noble manly advice" (Letter 2), which Carman must have continued to offer. It is therefore ironic that Campbell turned on Carman in the summer of 1895, when his charges of imitation and favouritism instigated "The Battle of the Poets" in the Toronto newspapers.<sup>9</sup> Campbell's three letters here tend to confirm what many have suspected: that Campbell's strongest motive in attacking Carman was jealousy. The letters show an instability that Scott hints at when he refers to Campbell's "wild eye" (Letter 16).

No such cantankerousness appears in Lampman's letters, which show Lampman's diffidence towards his own work even while he praises Carman's. Time and again Lampman wonders if the poems he has submitted deserve publication (see particularly Letter 20). Nonetheless, Lampman offered as much encouragement as he received. Like Campbell, but unlike Scott and Carman, Lampman had collected his poems in book form, and he persistently urges Carman to do the same (Letters 4, 17, and 19). At least in part because of such good advice,<sup>10</sup> Carman published *Low Tide on Grand Pr* in 1893. For the most part, Lampman's letters contain less criticism than Scott's: thus in Letter 13, he refuses to elaborate on Carman's remarks on the two sonnet forms. In two letters, however, Lampman suggests that his habitual reticence has concealed some reservations about Carman's poetry. In Letter 8, and despite his praise in previous letters, Lampman writes: "I will confess that none of your poems that I have seen heretofore has completely satisfied me as a *whole*, but 'Pulvis et Umbra' does." In Letter 24, Lampman uses the same tactic, preferring Carman's new work to the older poems that he had been praising all along. Lampman's admiration is sincere but critical.

Scott's attitude towards Carman is much less critical. Perhaps the most striking revelation in these letters is the extent of Scott's indebtedness to Carman. After E.K. Brown, who was himself influenced by a much older Scott, the traditional view has been that Scott went his own way from the beginning. In Brown's words, Roberts, Lampman, and Carman "were drawn to many of the same kinds of subjects and to forms if not the same at least closely akin. Where one was known and approved, the others needed only to be known to be approved also. Scott was never to be wholly at home in their world. . . ." <sup>11</sup> Brown

made his strategy clear in a letter to Scott: "our literary history must be rewritten, and some of the landmarks removed. Carman and Roberts will no longer do as landmarks."<sup>12</sup> Almost fifty years later, the publication of these letters shows what Brown excluded. Not only does Scott consistently admire Carman, he also explicitly states that Carman is a salutary influence: in Letter 3 he writes, "I find your work has that quality that continues to impress one and moreover it awakens in one the desire to work wh[ich] I think is a strong proof of the worth and power of it"; in Letter 25, Scott states that Carman's latest poems "had their usual effect upon me and I was constrained to sit down and do something myself." In this context, it is not surprising to find Scott writing Carman that "no one values you more highly than I do" (Letter 25). There are other reasons why Scott's letters are the most valuable here: they are the longest and the most literary, and they combine criticism of specific works with reflections on matters of general interest. They give us a new and superior view of Scott just before he published his first book of poetry, *The Magic House* (1893).

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I have transcribed these letters exactly as they appear in manuscript. I am grateful to Ruth Mortimer and her wonderful staff, Rare Books, Smith College Library, Northampton, Massachusetts, for repeatedly helping me with the Bliss Carman Papers; to Smith College, H. Pearson Gundy, and John G. Ayles, for permission to publish; to Hazen Allen, Dartmouth College Storage Library, Hanover, New Hampshire, for making the *Independent* available; to the Research and Publications Committees, Bishop's University, for grants; and to Brenda Reed, who helped with the transcription and verification.

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### Notes to the Introduction

1. In the Bliss Carman Papers, Smith College Library, Northampton, Massachusetts, is a copy of Carman's contract, which is dated February 19, 1890. On April 28, 1892, Henry C. Bowen, owner and publisher of the *Independent*, asked for Carman's resignation, to be effective as of June 1 or July 1 of that year. [\[back\]](#)
2. See Wendy Clauson Schlereth, *The Chap-Book: A Journal of American Intellectual Life in the 1890s* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982). Schlereth's focus is on *The Chap-Book*, with which Carman was associated, but she has a good deal of information on Carman's milieu. [\[back\]](#)
3. Carman's sister Muriel married William F. Ganong, a professor of botany at Smith College, to which she left her fine collection of her brother's papers. [\[back\]](#)
4. In *The Collected Letters of Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone, introd. Fred Cogswell (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1989). [\[back\]](#)
5. In 1901, Duncan Campbell Scott had this to say about the group: "The term, School of Canadian Poetry, might be accepted with

- hesitation and some diffidence had not various competent critics, adopted it uniformly. As applied to the group of writers usually mentioned under the appellation it may be too pretentious. It is valuable in that it conveys the idea of nationality. . . ." See "A Decade of Canadian Poetry," rpt. from *The Canadian Magazine* (1901) in *Twentieth-Century Essays on Confederation Literature*, ed. and introd. Lorraine McMullen (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1976), p. 112. [\[back\]](#)
6. The contract is rpt. in *Letters of Bliss Carman*, ed. Gundy (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), p. 35. [\[back\]](#)
  7. See *Letters of Carman*, p. 34. For Carman's mood on leaving the *Independent*, see "To Muriel Carman Ganong," 17 May 1892, Letter 61, *Letters of Carman*, pp. 45-46. [\[back\]](#)
  8. Letter 44, *Letters of Carman*, p. 36. The annotation to this letter is the only occasion I know of where Gundy is mistaken. He believes that Campbell had first written Carman about an article in the *Independent*, 13 May 1890, but Campbell had to have written before March 23, for the *Independent* was not erratic in its publication. Gundy also adds that Campbell "was not mollified by Carman's letter," whereas Campbell's letter shows that he was. [\[back\]](#)
  9. The dispute is described in D.M.R. Bentley, "Columns and Controversies Among the Confederation Poets," rev. of *At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott in The Globe 1892-93*, ed. and introd. Barrie Davies, *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews*, 7 (Fall/Winter 1980), pp. 94-95. [\[back\]](#)
  10. Carman received similar advice from Arthur Symons, who asked, "When are you going to publish a volume? I want the pleasure of reviewing it." See his letter of 5 December 1890, Carman Papers, Smith College. [\[back\]](#)
  11. "Duncan Campbell Scott", rpt. from *On Canadian Poetry* (1943) in *Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism* ed. and introd. Stan Dragland (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1974), p. 75. I have discussed both Carman's influence on Scott and Brown's criticism in "The Beginnings of Duncan Campbell Scott's Poetic Career," *English Studies in Canada*, 16 (June 1990), 215-31. [\[back\]](#)
  12. "To Duncan Campbell Scott," 17 July 1943, Letter 56, *The Poet and the Critic: A Literary Correspondence between D. C. Scott and E. K. Brown*, ed. and introd. Robert L. McDougall (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983), p. 70. *On Canadian Poetry* makes Lampman, Scott, and Pratt "the main landmarks" (p. 70). In his correspondence with Brown, Scott has some ironic comments on Carman, though not without this qualification (29 March 1947, Letter 171, pp. 188-89): "but I must say that he was generous to other Canadian writers when he was in a position to be generous." [\[back\]](#)
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P. O. Department  
Ottawa, 13 Mch. 90

My dear Mr. Carman,

Thanks for your friendly letter. You must pardon me for not having made any acknowledgement of the printed pieces you have sent me. I had always intended to do so. I had enjoyed the poems exceedingly with their curious reaches of fancy, strange touches and admirable workmanship. The lines of Marian Drurie are often ringing in my head.<sup>1</sup>

I congratulate you on your appointment at the *Independent*, which I suppose is very satisfactory to you. I had already heard of it.

When I have any pieces which appear to be suitable I will send them to you as you suggest. I have nothing just now.

Yours very Sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 2

St. Stephen March 29-90

Dear Carman:

Yours to hand, — with the beautiful poem from the *Atheneum* [sic].<sup>2</sup> I enjoy it more than I can express;

Your noble manly advice is taken in the spirit with which it is given. It is a pity — that we have querulous times, when the spirit is wont to cry out — I write in haste.— So excuse this scrawl. Kindly let me know number of *Atheneum*, that notice of my work appeared in. I have never seen it. If I knew the number I might send and get a copy — as I know of no one who takes it. also I would be glad at any time when you have an extra copy review of your own, or Robert[s] — or Lampman's work, to see it. I have heard of Sharp's review<sup>3</sup> but have not seen it. — I again thank you for your brotherly sympathy, which I appreciate very much indeed —

Your Friend  
W. W. Campbell

Letter 3

Ottawa  
May 10. 1890.

Dear Mr. Carman.

I have had your card with the ballad for some days and have not

until the present had the opportunity of writing to you. — In the interim I have had time to read the poem many times with growing pleasure. I find your work has that quality that continues to impress one and moreover it awakens in one the desire to work wh[ich] I think is a strong proof of the worth and power of it. It is not possible that I c[ou]ld say anything that would lead you to improve it; I think in all the main features it remains unique. You have I think created a style in working wh[ich] is different from anything we have in verse and wh[ich] is intensely charming and fascinating — Such things as "Guendolen" and this "Kelpie Riders" have such repose and serenity;<sup>4</sup> they seem to glow with their own colour not with something laid on or reflected. As your poems are always original I have tried to read them by their own law. If one is not impressed by a poem it has failed. But if one is moved the thing is justified for ever. I don't know that I would call the "Kelpie Riders" a ballad because some of those people whose life is to find fault will compare it with the older forms and tell you it is not plain enough and does not move straight ahead telling a connected tale. I think these same will try to discover a connection between the III & IV parts wh[ich] will give them trouble. But as I said before I have judged this by its own law. I find the artistic impression perfectly clear but there are one or two points I would like to understand better — I cannot get a clear idea of the meaning of the last 5 couplets of the III section. Commencing "Ah God! not me": Again I have stumbled over that couplet "To make the nape of your neck grow chill." It seems to me that this is not a physical impression of desire and that when you read it you expect something else and have a feeling of incongruity between it & the real warmth of the companion line — Am I far astray.

Then the word "harridan" ("Then came that harridan of woe") seems to me too harsh, it makes a good line but I think it alienates sympathy. These things are the only ones I c[oul]d say anything adverse to, and having taken your liberty of criticism in one regard I must do so in the other and point out some of the things I specially like —

I don[']t think you c[ou]ld improve on the working of your couplets they are full of variety

"For raven hair & eyes like the sun  
"Are merry but dour to look upon —

Now that is nice enough for anything — There is much of the singular inner music of your muse that none but a person who has worked in that way can appreciate at its value. I like like [sic] the humping effect you get with the "Kelpie, Kelpie Kelpie come" lines. I think the whole of your IV section as lovely a thing as I have read.

I hope you have some time for work. As for me I have little enough time and the responsibility of my office takes the best of my hours. The Scribner[']s have some verses of mine to print called "The Magic House[.]"<sup>5</sup> Will you take time to read them when they come out —? Do you enjoy your work on the *Independent*? We have taken the paper for some years, I see it every week. —

Thanking you for the pleasure you  
have



given me  
I am yours truly  
D.C. Scott

Letter 4

P.O. Dept., Ottawa  
29 May 1890

My dear Mr. Carman,

I am much obliged to you for the copy of "The Kelpie Riders," which you sent me. I derived from it the same exquisite pleasure which I have had in reading almost everything of yours that has fallen in my way. You can hardly be too much praised for the delightful perfection of your workmanship, and the fine musical quality which causes your lines to take so permanent a hold of the memory.

I hope that before long you will let us have your poems in a collected shape. They would certainly produce a very strong impression.

I beg to thank you for a cheque for \$5.00 I received the other day; also for the cuttings of my sonnet which you enclosed.<sup>6</sup>

Yours very sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 5

Department of Indian Affairs  
Canada  
[letterhead]  
Ottawa  
June 20. '90

Dear Mr. Carman

I have again considered the words you don't like in the "Farm on the Hill[.]"<sup>7</sup> I'm going to be stubborn enough not to change them as they are just what I want[.] "Distorted" conveys to me the cry of the cuckoos suddenly disturbed at night when his note is quite unnatural and twisted out of shape. To my ears there is always something of effort in the whippoorwill's song or notes, something forced, — I am glad you liked the thing and I feel sure those words are what I want — In printing it if you could put "To A.P.S." under the title it would gratify me and help one acknowledge a friendship.

You are entirely right about the four rhymes in the August piece and I will alter them.<sup>8</sup>

Yours as Ever  
D.C. Scott

Letter 6

Department of Indian Affairs  
Canada  
[letterhead]  
Les Eboulements<sup>9</sup>  
August 6th 90

Dear Mr. Carman

You perceive I am not in Ottawa. My sojourn here is nearly up. Lampman & I have been down here with a party of friends for three weeks

— It is quiet but exceedingly picturesque — I have been neglecting my duty in not giving you the amended lines for that piece but I put them on another sheet[.] I think they are better. They will have to do anyway.

Do they give you a good holiday and are you coming to Ottawa or Canada[?] But I suppose the American beaches are the place to recuperate[.]

Yours Sincerely  
D C Scott

Letter 7

St. Stephen Aug. 27—90

My Dear Carman,

Mr. Scudder has kindly reconsidered that poem "Pan the Fallen," so I will have to ask you to send it back.<sup>10</sup> I have remodeled the whole poem anyhow from the copy I had here, and changed many words, even whole lines, and have made the changes you suggested. I am sorry I left the copy with you in N.Y. as I did in such a crude condition, but I was not well at the time, and very much flustered. I have not been well since I came home, and have been very much downhearted and lonesome. Can you not write me a letter and cheer me up. it is very disheartening to be alone in a place like this. — I would like to go over and see Roberts but — I have spent so much money on my New York trip that I cannot afford it.

I feel that I should have written you some time ago but was too sick to do so. I wish I could get out of the church and into something else. You have no idea of the hideousness of petty parish broils and jars. I envy you your position in a congenial avocation.

I was glad to see your fine poem "The Wayfaring" in last week's *Independent*.<sup>11</sup> There is a haunting beauty to me in the lines —

"But waiting in the fields for them,



I see the ancient Mother stand,  
With the old courage of her smile,  
The patience of her sunbrown hand.

They heed her not until there comes,  
A breath of sleep upon their eyes."

I also liked Roberts' strong sonnet.[12](#)

Please send me the MS. of Pan at once and oblige

Your Sincere Friend  
W.W. Campbell

I will send you a copy of poem as remodeled as soon as I get it to my liking. I am ever so much obliged to you for your kindness to me in N. York. Let me know also — how many other MSS. you have of mine; whether 2 or 3 and titles of them.

W.W.C.

I wish that when you come north you could come and stay for a week with me if you have the time. There is a river near St. George that is worth seeing, and, I would like to run it with you. The scenery is exceedingly fine, so different from the St. Stephen scenery.

Letter 8

P.O. Dept. Ottawa  
29 October 1890

My dear Mr. Carman

I must thank you for the poems and most especially for "Pulvis et Umbra."[13](#) I will confess that none of your poems that I have seen heretofore has completely satisfied me *as a whole*, but "Pulvis et Umbra" does. It seems to me that in this poem you have managed not only to retain, but to heighten your peculiar effects, and at the same time to give to the whole piece a greater freedom & clearness of expression. Lines of "Pulvis et Umbra" have been forcing themselves upon my memory for the past day or two so persistently that I have had to postpone some work of my own that I had in hand — and it is a strong thing to say of a piece of writing — that it confronts the reader with another individuality in a manner so forcible & attractive, as for a while to shake him from his own. I like the other pieces too, but not so extremely well.

You sent me a little while ago a copy of the *Independent*, containing a paragraph, I suppose written by you in reference to an article in the Sept. number of *The New England* magazine.[14](#)

As a close personal friend of Mr. Roberts, I know that you are jealous for his fame, and you will like to know that I perfectly agree with what you say in the paragraph in question. I do not imagine that anyone who has been conversant with literary matters in this country for any length of time questions Roberts' position among us. I understand that Mr. Harte is not a Canadian & has been comparatively a

short time in Canada. No doubt like most writers of American magazine articles he has not made any very great effort to arrive at the exact truth of things.

Yours very sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 9

Department of Indian Affairs  
Canada  
[letterhead]  
Ottawa  
November 1st—1890.

My dear Mr. Carman.

I was glad to get your last things. As usual they gave me that distinctive pleasure which I have come to look for from you. I like them all but "Pulvis et Umbra" best. This piece has all your peculiar art, the ideas are subtle and expressed unfalteringly and beautifully — that Cleopatra idea for instance what could be more subtle or more perfectly expressed; it has the required mystery in the statement.<sup>15</sup> I spotted "Wayfaring" when it appeared in the *Independent* over the "L.N." signature. I admired it then and now. "The End of the Trail" was new to me and next to the "Pulvis et Umbra" I like it best. The personal note is charming[.] I wish we could live more in the woods[.] the cities are a hideous failure — But Ottawa is not as bad as New York. Here ten minutes will take you out of the city into as delightful a country as one can wish — I hope the city will not weary you and spoil you of the memory of your native places — I hope you will always be writing poems like these — By the way was the remark made by that unfortunate person true that we were to have a book of these good things or did he lie — If the spirit of prophecy touched him obey the warning voice —

I am yours as ever  
D.C. Scott.

Letter 10

Ottawa  
Decr 16 '90

My Dear Mr. Carman —

I have been trying to get time to send you a line but I have so much to attend to now that whenever I have time to write I am sick of the feel of the pen in my hand. I must thank you again for your expressed and open opinion of "The Reed Player" (a title wh[ich] I filched from you by the way)[.]<sup>16</sup> You are making an obligation by your kindness wh[ich] I won't be able to repay — I had a good word from Mr. Roberts on the same piece wh[ich] pleased me much — I enclose

some things — The last time you wrote you asked for some *good* things  
— but —

Yours faithfully  
D.C. Scott.

Letter 11

Friday [otherwise undated]

Blessed one of the Queermen: [17](#)

I know not if you got the story. If you did, & should you want it, I wish old man that you would give it the "priority & preference" of the earliest possible publication, so that even the proceeds might be used to ferry me back, & put a cheap coat on my shoulders. Now for the sake of the Lord who died on Calvary, even for your sake, damn you, don[']t lose sight of this.

I got the two slips of song. The shorter to me the diviner, & all divine. The other I have not been able to study as I have done the glorious "End of the Trail." But "Pulvis et Umbra" gets there old man, & all men shall believe it too[.] The old man tells me you have cut it. [18](#) You know best.

That is a fine & true estimate of you by B. Hart[e], but it does not save him for his crime against Roberts, I see, by reading Mr. Bowen's paper! Ah old man but you got the stuff damn you again, & God bless you[.]

W.W. Campbell

Letter 12

Memorandum  
Post Office Department, Canada  
[letterhead]  
Ottawa, 21 Feby 1891

My dear Mr. Carman,

I sent you a couple of sonnets which are offered for the *Independent* if you care to have them. [19](#)

I suppose you would not care to print my "Meadow" a rather long piece included in the printed sheet issued by myself and Scott at Christmas. If you would I will send a copy.

Yours sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 13

Post Office Canada  
[letterhead]  
23 February 1891  
P.O. Dept. Ottawa

My dear Carman,

I enclose a copy of the "The Meadow," and am very glad you like the two sonnets, for they are special favourites of my own[.] I had never given much thought to the question whether the Italian or the Shakespearean form was preferable for that kind of work; but I dare say you are right in your opinion, though as in everything else one form or the other will immediately occur to the writer as applicable to the picture he has in mind, he can hardly define why.

I get the same pleasure from "The Last Watch" as I get from your other later pieces. There are some fine things; some long marches of sound like

"Down the bourneless slopes of sea room  
With the long gray wake behind."<sup>20</sup>

I am much obliged to you for the copy.

[unsigned by Lampman]

Letter 14

Ottawa  
March 4 '91

My Dear Mr. Carman.

I had intended writing you sometime ago but unfortunately I was taken sick during the first week in January and am only now feeling well enough to be engaged in the ordinary affairs of life. — I spent three weeks in Montreal trying to gain strength but any change of air of that kind is hardly so beneficial as one to a warmer climate. I am rapidly improving now and another week will find me quite recovered. I was sent the last piece of yours which I read many times and with a great pleasure. It is not so *important* amongst your work as the last pieces but it is worthy. It is very direct and has a development.

I had done some new things before I was ill but I haven't looked at them since to see whether they be good or bad. — You printed one of the pieces I sent you,<sup>21</sup> what became of the others, did you keep them or return them? If the latter I think they must have gone astray —

I hope you are well and enjoying life.

Yours faithfully

D.C. Scott.

Letter 15

Ottawa  
Oct 22. '91

My Dear Mr. Carman.

I send you herewith some things some of wh[ich] you might care for — The children[']s rhyme I thought might do for the children[']s corner. I must thank you for the last poem you sent me[;] that I did not do so before does not argue that I did not appreciate the work. Have you printed anything since. Your method of sending your poems in that way is interesting and keeps up a constant knowledge of what you are doing — I wish if you have any of the sheet with the "Wraith of the Red Swan"<sup>22</sup> if you would send me one also any of the older mss. I did not get. —

I met with a severe domestic affliction early this month in the loss of my father — he met with an accident and died very suddenly of heart failure just as we thought he was surely recovering — This has been a great shock and sorrow to me — I am now left alone with my mother and two sisters. Excuse me for digressing into these more personal matters but as we are totally unknown to one another so far as that side of our lives is concerned I was minded to tell you — the other day I had some photos taken and you may have one if you will exchange.

I enclose stamps and will you kindly send me the remainder if you keep any — You know I am always your admiring friend

D.C. Scott.

Letter 16

Ottawa  
Nov 2. 1891

My Dear Mr. Carman.

Well, I would call a dog Brandy & Soda or Bunker Hill; if he had spirit enough the first would suit or if he had independence enough the second would suit — I called a maltese cat I got this summer, "Barto Rizzo" after the "Great Cat" in Vittoria but he proved as hard to hold as the original Barto and he is called by some commoner name now if he is called at all. Murvey's [?] is a place here where there is a bridge and some water and a hill and that[']s all I can say about it. The title is merely perverse and will be altered — As for the last verse, you are quite correct — it is quite bad altho' that was not what you said — Besides it's a lie which is almost as bad as being *bad verse* — I must have written it when something was not working inside — We will have it changed also and in sometime, short

I hope, I will send you a new head and tail — so don't give the printer a chance to fix it —<sup>23</sup> As for sonnets I will match hates with you; the difference between us is, that I am weak enough to write them — or to try to write them. Nowadays we don[']t seem to have the right sort of ideas to make sonnets out of — A sonnet should be like one of those crystal spheres — perfectly clear in expression beautiful in thought — absolute in form and with that unnameable quality wh[ich] will allow us to turn it about and peer through it without ever losing a certain *awe* of it — The sonnets written nowadays are a good deal like mushrooms — Did you ever notice how many of them that commence well, fritter away at the end?; like the monkey playing man you think him quite a swell until you suddenly see his tail — But — thank you for liking these poor things of mine and of hoping greatly of me[.] I do not know how short I will fall, but in the meantime I live and life is singularly fair to me even with its trials and confusions. as for the rest I am careless I only try to work out of the fullness of my heart. As for yourself I will not allow you to applaud, the figure of you content to applaud while standing by and saying and seeing other people try to do what you could so easily do yourself! I won't permit it — You must never let your great gift lie by. Of course you think your work tentative and imperfect every one that has an inner vision does so but content yourself with knowing that it is beautiful wh[ich] I tell you now — Very often my last work is not what I meant at the time but only came so as if it had built itself with my mind ranging alongside — I heard, I did not see, that they have been celebrating you in the *Dominion Illustrated*<sup>24</sup> — I hope it was nothing foolish, some of these people are so assish. I heard that Campbell had carried his wild eye to you when he was in New York[.] You asked me whether I read Emerson — Yes I do. I read something all the time. I have one book upstairs and one down stairs — in the morning I go down stairs and read the one and in the evening I come upstairs and read the other; the one *down* is Motley[']s *Rise of the Dutch Republic* the one *up* is Browne[']s *Religio Medici* <sup>25</sup> — I read all sorts of things — and I have read much and often in Emerson. I must cut off this ramble: you brot [sic] it upon yourself by your fine letter wh[ich] gave me such a genuine start of feeling — I will not try to thank you. Only you must come and see me some day — there is plenty of room in my house and you wouldn't find Ottawa a bad place to wait awhile in — You know how welcome you would be or I have tried to let you know.

I am as ever yours  
D.C. Scott.

Letter 17

P.O. Department  
Ottawa, 11 Nov., 91

My dear Carman,

I am much obliged to you for the Photograph, and trust that you have received one I sent you in return.

I have seen paragraph statements from time to time that you had in mind to publish a book of poems. Is it not so? It would be a great

pleasure to many of us to have your work in a collected shape.

Is there room in the *Independent* for the enclosed?<sup>26</sup> You stated a little while ago that you were overstocked with these kind of things. If that is so still, return it.

Yours sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 18

Ottawa  
Jan 12 '92

My Dear Mr. Carman.

I enclose a sort of story wh[ich] I thought you might use for your "Young & Old" Dept. I wrote it sometime ago but never sent it anywhere — If you can't use it send it back to me for wh[ich] I send the necessary stamps — The poem you sent at Xmas suited me finely and it has been a favorite with all those who know a good thing when they hear it. I liked its grave, lofty tone and the clear light of the lines wh[ich] you carried to the last without faltering — Roberts objects to my word "horizon" but I had been taught to say it so — I think his stand is right and "it shall be changed."

I am yours.  
D.C.S.

Letter 19

Post Office Department,  
Ottawa, 8 Feby '92

My dear Carman,

I thank you very heartily for your exceedingly kind letter and the copy of the *Independent*. I feel your approval to be something very pleasant and very saluable [sic], and the fact that my poem has given you satisfaction enables me to regard it with greater favour than I had before done.<sup>27</sup> Your attributing to it the quality of simplicity pleases me better than anything else, for I had cut and changed and rewritten the verses many times in order to reduce the formal and some what cataloguing effect that they seemed to me to have, and I was afraid that they still produced an unpleasant impression of that kind.

Your good words are very encouraging to me, although I feel that the stanzas do not merit the full measure of your praise.

Mr. Campbell, my nextdoor neighbour, tells me that you have not decided upon publishing a volume of your poems. I think you ought to do so, even though you may not yourself be entirely satisfied with them. You would find the publishing of them and gathering them before



the *worthy* public, limited though it be, a help to you, and an encouragement.

Yours very sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 20

P.O. Dept., Ottawa,  
28 March, 1892

My dear Carman

If the enclosed piece of verse is not too long, and too dull and if it suits the *Independent*, I offer it as a contribution.<sup>28</sup> I shall not be grieved, however, if you return it. Perhaps indeed I should be rather surprised if you accept it.

Duncan and I are worrying along as usual in regard to our outward affairs. I myself have endured a sharp experience or two just recently. In January I had a little daughter born to me — my only child — and the poor little person is just recovering from an almost fatal attack of inflammation of the lungs. I am therefore considerably shaken up.

You have yet to go through those sort of things. They try one a little, but they bring a man somewhat nearer to the heart of humanity [.]

Yours very sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 21

P.O. Dept. Ottawa.  
6 Apl. 1892

Dear Carman,

The line about the dome [?] I confess was pretty bad. I may observe that there is an obscure streak of Irish in me, and it occasionally comes out. I have replaced the line with another that is harmless, if nothing better. The 2d line in the 4th stanza was miswritten a little.<sup>29</sup> I fear it is rather a foolish line also, but I do not see my way to put any thing in its place just now. If I think of anything soon I will send it. I like the Olaf Hj ~~ward~~ward much,<sup>30</sup> especially some things in it, which are very solemnly beautiful [.]

Yours most sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 22

108 Lisgar Street.  
Ottawa  
[letterhead]  
May 10. 1892.

My Dear Mr. Carman.

I find there has been an inexcusable delay in my thanks for the "Olaf" which gave my [sic] rare pleasure. It contains many beautiful things and some things you will not easily surpass — The real outgush of it is not even hampered by the absence of rhyme. but the lyrical ring is always there. Now and again we catch a scriptural touch an accent with something of the austerity and calmness of the old prophets — For example I mean such a passage as the one commencing "More to me than kith or kin"<sup>31</sup> — You know an admirer in me; one on whom you may count — I hope you continue to do such work in that New York desert — I am not entirely stopped; the spring lets a drop ooze now and then and sometimes there comes a spurt — I wish I could let you see some new things when you had your editorial cap off and were in your proper poetic mind — Not that I dread the former but I have a fancy that the latter is somehow different. By the way I wish you would work off those pieces of mine *if* you want them.<sup>32</sup>

I am as ever yours.  
D.C. Scott.

Letter 23

P.O. Dept. Ottawa  
10 June 1892

Dear Carman

What do you think of the enclosed?<sup>33</sup> If by any chance it is suitable for the *Independent*, I should be glad to dispose of it.

I had hoped to be able to make a visit to your big city this year, but I fear that I shall have to stay at home. Some summer I shall do so however.

I look forward to having a talk with you some time — among other things about Collins.<sup>34</sup> I have never been able to get any information in regard to the circumstances of his death.

Yours sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 24

P.O. Dept. Ottawa

10 October '92

Dear Carman,

I am even more grateful than formerly for those last copies of poems. I am unable to express to you the pleasure they gave me. Hitherto I may confess that I had always been conscious of a certain reservation in my appreciation of your work & manner of writing but your last pieces have carried me away and conquered me completely, and I surrender at discretion. All of them to my mind are marvelously beautiful and especially I consider "The Master of the Isles" a most noble poem.<sup>35</sup> The two last stanzas in their large feeling & triumphant sweep are unsurpassable. You show a wonderful advance in grasp and power of expression. I suppose that although as in the case of almost every man you may not consider that you are situated in the best circumstances for developing poetic gifts, yet things are not very much against you. You must have many encouraging influences about you, and many inspiring ones, else you would not gather strength as you do.

We here — employed as we are in this deadly routine, and obliged to depend wholly upon nature & ourselves — find it difficult to maintain intellectual activity — to keep from retrograding — to advance is hard indeed!

Yours very Sincerely  
A. Lampman

Letter 25

108 Lisgar Street.  
Ottawa.  
[letterhead]  
Oct. 20.92

My Dear Mr. Carman:

My delay in thanking you for the last poems you sent me has been unwarrantable but I trust you will overlook it. I was mighty glad to get the pieces wh[ich] showed such activity on your part and such a sustained excellence. They had their usual effect upon me and I was constrained to sit down and *do* something myself. Of course of the poems themselves I have my favourites and I think "The Master of the Isles" is the prime one. This piece seems to me perfectly complete & effective — and everything on that sheet I like — And "Marjory Darrow"<sup>36</sup> — You know perhaps that name has been bandied about in our press a good deal of late and people have heard a great deal about B.C. and his "goings on." I don't think the talk has done you any harm and perhaps has done some real genuine good. I began the thing in the "Globe" by mildly demanding that *The Week* sh[oul]d publish Marjory in full — Our country is full of shaggy wild asses and there was a good deal of braying of one kind and another after the well known assinine manner but it seems to be all over now. The most dolorous thing written was I think the letter wh[ich] was said to have been sent to *The Week* by some friend of yours who had got a boring [?], at least to my mind a totally wrong and tamey commonplace idea of the story but

altho' I would have liked to have made my exposition of it I refrained fearing that just there the difference of opinion might be received with undue levity. I am sorry I have no way by which you can see much of my work and I have some I wish you could see; but I wish you would remember that no one values you more highly than I do. So I am as ever yours sincerely

D.C. Scott

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### Notes to Letters

For bibliographical details I am indebted to the following works: Jacob Blanck, "William Bliss Carman 1861-1929," *Bibliography of American Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), II, pp. 42-76, hereafter cited as "Blanck" followed by the item number; Laurel Boone, ed. and introd., *William Wilfred Campbell: Selected Poetry and Essays* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1987); L.R. Early, "A Chronology of Lampman's Poems," *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews*, 14 (Spring / Summer 1984), pp. 75-87; and Leon Slonim, "A Critical Edition of the Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott," Diss. Toronto 1978.

1. "Marian Drurie" was privately printed in 1889 (Blanck, 2605). When Carman added it to the second edition of *Low Tide on Grand Pr* (1894), he changed the spelling to "Marian Drury." [\[back\]](#)
2. Carman's "The Country of Har: For the Centenary of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence'" appeared in *The Athenaeum*, 3251 (February 15, 1890), 213. As noted in my introduction, Campbell responds to Carman's letter of March 23, 1890. He had moved to St. Stephen, New Brunswick, in the summer of 1888 to become the rector of Trinity Church. [\[back\]](#)
3. William Sharp (1855-1905), English writer (his pseudonym was "Fiona Macleod") who was interested in the Confederation poets. He had visited Roberts in Windsor, Nova Scotia, in 1889. As Michael Gnarowski and Helen Lynn note, Sharp "gave the commission for *Songs of the Great Dominion* to W.D. Lighthall. . . ." See their foreword to "The Letters of Lampman to Lighthall (1888-1898)," *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews*, 23 (Fall / Winter 1988), p. 65, note 4. [\[back\]](#)
4. According to Carman (cited in Blanck, 2564), "Guendolen" was privately printed in October 1889, and never reprinted. "The Kelpie Riders" was printed in December, 1889 (Blanck, 2567), and collected in *Ballads of Lost Haven* (1897). [\[back\]](#)
5. "The Magic House," *Scribner's Magazine*, VII, No. 6 (June 1890), 713-14. This poem became the title poem of Scott's first volume. [\[back\]](#)
6. Lampman's sonnet "River-Dawn" appeared in *Independent*, XLII, No. 2164 (May 22, 1890), p. 1. The poem was retitled "A Dawn on the Li 鑽re" when it appeared in *The Poems of Archibald Lampman* (1900). [\[back\]](#)

7. "From the Farm on the Hill" appeared in *Independent*, XLII, No. 2170 (July 3, 1890), p. 1, and later in *The Magic House* (1893), both times with a dedication "To A.P.S." As Slonim notes (pp. 387-88), "A.P.S." probably refers to Arthur Percy Saunders (1869-1953), whose friendship with Scott is discussed in Elsie M. Pomeroy, *William Saunders and His Five Sons: The Story of the Marquis Wheat Family*, introd. W. Sherwood Fox (Toronto: Ryerson, 1956). See 11. 18-19: "A cuckoo utters / A distorted cry"; and 11. 21-22: "A whippoorwill wanders, / Forcing his monotonous song." [\[back\]](#)
  
8. "In August," *Independent*, XLII, No. 2178 (August 28, 1890), p. 1. The poem was not collected. [\[back\]](#)
  
9. Gnarowski and Lynn (see note 3) note that Les Eboulements is a scenic area "located on the north shore of the St. Lawrence river, between Baie St. Paul and La Malbaie, and just off to the north-east of Ile aux Coudres," celebrated in poetry by Lampman and Scott (note 1, p. 73). [\[back\]](#)
  
10. Horace E. Scudder (1838-1902) was editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, where "Pan the Fallen" appeared in December, 1890. [\[back\]](#)
  
11. "Wayfaring" appeared in *Independent*, XLII, No. 2177 (August 21, 1890), under the pseudonym "Louis Norman." Campbell quotes all of the ninth and part of the tenth stanzas. The poem was later included in *Low Tide on Grand Pr* (1893). [\[back\]](#)
  
12. Roberts' sonnet "The Mowing" appeared on the same page of the *Independent* as "Wayfaring." Roberts later included it in *Songs of the Common Day* (1893). [\[back\]](#)
  
13. "Pulvis et Umbra" appeared with "Wayfaring" and "The End of the Trail" on a privately-printed broadsheet, which Blanck tentatively dates 1890 (2585). All three poems appeared in *Low Tide on Grand Pr* (1893). [\[back\]](#)
  
14. 14 In "Literary Notes," *Independent*, XLII, No. 2180 (September 11, 1890), p. 19, Carman responds as follows to W. Blackburn Harte, "Some Canadian Writers of To-day," *New England Magazine*, 3 (September 1890), pp. 21-40: "It should be distinctively borne in mind that all the younger Canadians, whom Mr. Harte praises with so much insight.. are only following in Roberts's larger footsteps; and that the spirit of patriotism and poetry within them owes its first stir of life to the stalwart manliness which achieved success in *Orion*, while they were yet all boys together." Clearly an enthusiasm for *Orion* (1880), Roberts' first volume, was a major unifying force among the Confederation poets. For Lampman's well-known response, see "Two Canadian Poets: A Lecture, 1891," in *Masks of Poetry: Canadian Critics on Canadian Verse*, ed. and introd. A.J.M. Smith (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), p. 26. For Scott's response, see "A Decade of Canadian Poetry," rpt. from *The Canadian Magazine* (1901) in *Twentieth-Century Essays on Confederation Literature*, ed. and introd. Lorraine McMullen (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1976), p. 111. [\[back\]](#)
  
15. See stanza 9 of "Pulvis et Umbra," addressed to a moth:

In the hush when Cleopatra  
Felt the darkness reel and cease,  
Was thy soul a wan blue lotus  
Laid upon her lips for peace?[\[back\]](#)

16. Carman expressed his opinion of "The Reed-Player" in "Literary Notes," *Independent*, XLII, No. 2192 (December 4, 1890), p. 23: "It was reserved for the editors of *Scribner's Magazine*, however, to produce the best poem of the month, a poem full of feeling and music, exquisitely modulated, and serene as a night in late spring. Since Mr. Boner's lyric on Poe's cottage at Fordham, published in *The Century* a year ago, our periodical literature has contained nothing to match 'The Reed-Player,' by Mr. Duncan Campbell Scott." The poem appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*, VIII, No. 6 (December, 1890), 720. When it appeared in *The Magic House* in 1893, Scott added a dedication "To B.C." that is absent from the text in *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (1926). [\[back\]](#)
17. When "Wayfaring" appeared in the *Independent* (see note 10), it featured an epigraph (probably fictitious) from *Queerman's Travels*. Since Campbell mentions Carman's response to Harte (see note 14), he must have written this letter some time after September 1890. [\[back\]](#)
18. The "old man" is Roberts, who advises Carman to revise "Pulvis et Umbra" in a letter of 9 September 1890, *The Collected Letters of Charles G.D. Roberts*, ed. Laurel Boone, introd. Fred Cogswell (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1989), p. 124. Mr. Bowen is Henry C. Bowen, owner and publisher of the *Independent*. [\[back\]](#)
19. Two of his sonnets appeared in *Independent*, XLIII, No. 2205 (March 5, 1891), p. 1: "Winter-Break" and "In March," both later published in *Alcyone* (1899). "The Meadow" appeared in *Independent*, XLIII, No. 2210 (April 9, 1891), p. 1, and later in *Lyrics of Earth* (1895). [\[back\]](#)
20. "The Last Watch" was privately printed on January 15, 1891 (Blanck, 2568), and later collected in *Ballads of Lost Haven* (1897). Lampman has slightly altered the first line, which should read "Down the boundless slopes of sea-room." [\[back\]](#)
21. "Memory," *Independent*, XLIII, No. 2198 (January 15, 1891), p. 1, is Scott's only publication in this journal in 1891. The poem was later collected in *The Magic House* (1893). [\[back\]](#)
22. Blanck (2598) tentatively dates the broadsheet with "The Wraith of the Red Swan" 1887 or 1888. This sheet includes such poems as "Low Tide on Grand Pr ,," "In Apple Time," and "Shelley." [\[back\]](#)
23. Scott's only forthcoming work is "The Voice and the Dusk," *Independent*, XLIV, No. 2249 (January 7, 1892), p. 1. The poem bears little resemblance to Scott's comments in the letter. Barto Rizzo, nicknamed "The Great Cat," is a conspirator in *Vittoria* (1866), George Meredith's novel of Italy in 1848. [\[back\]](#)
24. W.G. Macfarlane, "New Brunswick Authorship, Part II," *The Dominion Illustrated*, VII, No. 174 (October 31, 1891), 424-25.



[\[back\]](#)

25. Scott refers to John Lothrop Motley, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856), and Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (1643). Scott discusses Browne in Section II of "Wayfarers," *The Circle of Affection and Other Pieces in Prose and Verse* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1947), pp. 85-88. [\[back\]](#)
26. Probably "Sunset," *Independent*, XLIII, No. 2244 (December 3, 1891), p. 1, and later in *Lyrics of Earth* (1895). [\[back\]](#)
27. Since Lampman has nothing forthcoming until April, he probably refers to "Sunset." [\[back\]](#)
28. Probably "The Poet's Song," *Independent*, XLIV, No. 2264 (April 21, 1892), p. 1. and later in *Alcyone* (1899). [\[back\]](#)
29. The second line in the fourth stanza of "The Poet's Song" is printed as "Of glare and shadow, day and night." [\[back\]](#)
30. "Olaf Hj ǫ́ward" appeared in *Independent*, XLIV, No. 2261 (March 31, 1892), p. 1. It was later revised as "Andrew Straton" in *By the Aurelian Wall* (1898). [\[back\]](#)
31. Scott refers to the sixth section of "Olaf Hj ǫ́ward." [\[back\]](#)
32. Probably "To the Hills," *Independent*, XLIV, No. 2277 (July 21, 1892), p. 1. As Slonim notes, this poem was reprinted in *Current Literature* (Sept. 1892), but it was not included in any of Scott's books (p. 376). [\[back\]](#)
33. One Lampman poem appeared this summer: "At the Ferry," *Independent*, XLIV, No. 2282 (August 25, 1892), p. 1, later collected in *Lyrics of Earth* (1895). [\[back\]](#)
34. Lampman refers to Joseph Edmund Collins (1855-1892), a Canadian writer who died in New York of alcoholism. Carman had offered him support in his last months. See John Coldwell Adams, "Roberts, Lampman, and Edmund Collins," *The Charles GD. Roberts Symposium*, ed. and introd. Glenn Clever (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1984), pp. 5-13. [\[back\]](#)
35. "The Master of the Isles" was privately printed on a broad-sheet with other poems in September, 1892 (Blanck, 2574), and later collected in *Ballads of Lost Haven* (1897). [\[back\]](#)
36. "Majory Darrow," *Independent*, XLIV, No. 2283 (September 1, 1892), p. 1. For Scott's column in *The Globe* of September 24, 1892, see *At The Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott in The Globe 1892-3*, ed. and introd. Barrie Davies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 154-55. The controversy began in an editorial comment on the obscurity of "Marjory Darrow" in *The Week*, IX, No. 42 (September 16, 1892), 660. Scott's demand that the editors publish the poem in full was met in *The Week*, IX, No. 44 (September 30, 1892), 699. The same issue contains an editorial comment on the poem's obscurity (691) and a letter to the editors (by "E.") agreeing with them and



parodying "Marjory Darrow" (699). After another attack on the poem by J.A.T. Lloyd, "Onomatopoeia and Mr. Bliss Carman," *The Week*, IX, No. 45 (October 7, 1892), 709, the editors felt compelled to give the other side, and thus they published a defence of "Marjory Darrow" by citing a letter from Carman's "friend" in *The Week*, IX, No. 46 (October 14, 1892), 723-24. For Scott this was the "most dolorous thing written" in the whole affair. Four weeks later, a "Pastor Felix" writes to reveal that he was the friend quoted in the editorial of October 14, and to add that he has since received a lengthy and critical letter from Carman, quoted here; see "'Marjory Darrow' Again," *The Week*, IX, No. 50 (November 11, 1892), 793-94. In *A Checklist of Literary Materials in The Week (Toronto, 1883 -1896)* (Ottawa: Golden Dog, 1978), p. 145, D.M.R. Bentley and Mary Lynn Wickens identify "Pastor Felix" as a pseudonym for Arthur John Lockhart. [\[back\]](#)