Page 1 of the surviving typescript of “The High Cost of Macaroni.”
The cancelled title is “What Price Macaroni?”
Princeton University Libraries.
LAST KISS

* * *

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Edited by

JAMES L. W. WEST III
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J. L. W. W. III
ILLUSTRATIONS

(Beginning on p. 461)

Frontispiece. Page 1, typescript of “The High Cost of Macaroni.”

1. Page 12, typescript of “The High Cost of Macaroni.”
3. Title page, Fitzgerald’s copy of The American Credo.
ABBREVIATIONS


Last Kiss is a miscellany, a gallimaufry, a florilegium. It brings together items that have not found a place in any of the earlier volumes in the Cambridge Fitzgerald Edition. This volume presents writings in a range of genres: Fitzgerald’s Thoughtbook, an adolescent diary of sorts; The Vegetable, his only published play; the five poems that he published after he became a full-time author; twelve book reviews, all published between 1921 and 1923; seven short stories from the last decade of his career; seventeen public letters, ten of which appeared in Princeton University publications; six items of journalism, in four of which Fitzgerald attempts to explain the “flapper” phenomenon; and twenty-eight miscellaneous pieces, including a self-interview, several short autobiographical exercises, an essay on the movie business, and an unfinished reminiscence about his father.

The most important writings in Last Kiss are the Thoughtbook and The Vegetable. The Thoughtbook, set down by Fitzgerald at the ages of thirteen and fourteen, is a private document in which he recorded the romantic crushes and competitions for popularity among a group of boys and girls from his dancing classes. The Thoughtbook is a remarkable piece of writing; it reveals young Scott Fitzgerald’s urge, already strong in his adolescent years, to observe and put down on paper the inner workings of a social group—the impermanent affections and shifts in status that would interest him as an adult, and would appear repeatedly in his fiction.

The Vegetable is an anomaly in Fitzgerald’s career. It is his only published play—indeed, his only effort to write professionally for the stage—and his greatest failure. Fitzgerald should have been able to produce a Broadway hit. Much of his apprentice work was in the dramatic line: four plays written as a teenager for a local theatrical group in his home town of St. Paul, three musical
comedies at Princeton for which he supplied book and/or lyrics, and a handful of one-act playlets that he published early in his career as a magazinist. Fitzgerald knew that a successful play could be profitable. (“I am concieving a play which is to make my fortune,” he wrote to Harold Ober, his literary agent, late in 1921.) The box office returns from a long run on Broadway followed by the receipts from a road production could provide steady income, money that would free him from the toils of magazine work and make it possible for him to write his novels.

Fitzgerald produced a preliminary script of his play, first entitled “Gabriel’s Trombone,” in the early months of 1922. He revised the text in the summer of that year and revised it further in the fall. Early in 1923 he decided to publish the play, now called *The Vegetable*, in book form, hoping to interest a producer in taking it on. In a January 1923 letter to Maxwell Perkins, his editor at Charles Scribner’s Sons, Fitzgerald called this published version “a book of humor” that was “written to be read.”\(^2\) The Broadway producer Sam H. Harris signed a contract with Fitzgerald to mount a stage production. Harris gave Fitzgerald a $500 advance and agreed to pay him 5 percent of the first $5000, 7.5 percent of the next $2500, and 10 percent thereafter—all payments to be calculated on gross receipts. Fitzgerald retained the book, serial, magazine, newspaper, and musical rights. If the play ran for fifty performances, Harris and Fitzgerald would divide stock, amateur, and repertoire receipts fifty–fifty.\(^3\)

None of this came to pass. Fitzgerald labored further on the play in the summer and fall of 1923 and participated in the rehearsals for a one-week tryout in Atlantic City. The play opened on 19 November at Nixon’s Apollo Theatre. In Zelda Fitzgerald’s words,
Introduction

it “flopped as flat as one of Aunt Jemima’s famous pancakes.”
Fitzgerald attempted repairs, but the play never reached Broadway.

The text of The Vegetable in Last Kiss is that of the published version, issued by Scribners in a single printing of 7,650 copies on 27 April 1923. This is the text that was “written to be read.” In 1976 Charles Scribner III produced an expanded edition of the play, also published by Scribners, comprising an offset reproduction of the 1923 text, an introduction, and unpublished scenes and corrections taken from Fitzgerald’s marked copy of The Vegetable and from other addenda among his papers at Princeton. These materials anticipated a possible second production of the play, a production that never materialized.

Two other genres that Fitzgerald abandoned—poetry and book reviews—are represented in Last Kiss. In the early part of his career he thought of himself as a man of letters who might excel in several kinds of writing, but as the years passed he learned to concentrate his efforts on fiction and autobiography. His book reviews are lively and combative, but book reviews (for which he was usually paid a pittance) absorbed time better spent on short stories and novels. The book reviews reprinted in Last Kiss provide a glimpse of Fitzgerald as literary critic. They record his reactions to the writings of several important authors of his time, including H. L. Mencken, John Dos Passos, Aldous Huxley, Booth Tarkington, Shane Leslie, Sherwood Anderson, and Thomas Boyd.

The following stories have been omitted from the Cambridge Edition: “Shaggy’s Morning,” Esquire 3 (May 1935); “The Passionate

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Eskimo," Liberty 12 (8 June 1935); “‘Send Me in, Coach,’” Esquire 6 (November 1936); “The Honor of the Goon,” Esquire 7 (June 1937); “Strange Sanctuary,” Liberty 16 (9 December 1939); and the four Count of Darkness stories: “In the Darkest Hour,” Redbook 63 (October 1934); “The Count of Darkness,” Redbook 65 (June 1935); “The Kingdom in the Dark,” Redbook 65 (August 1935); and “Gods of Darkness,” Redbook 78 (November 1941). Scottie Fitzgerald, the author’s daughter, judged these stories to be so far below the level of writing that her father was capable of that they should not be reprinted. These stories are available online or through interlibrary loan. Also omitted are the four plays that Fitzgerald wrote for the Elizabethan Dramatic Club, a teenage theatrical group in St. Paul. A scholarly edition of these plays is available: Alan Margolies, ed., F. Scott Fitzgerald’s St. Paul Plays, 1911–1914 (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1978). The four blurbs produced by Fitzgerald during his career have been reprinted in Matthew J. Bruccoli and Jackson Bryer, eds., F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time: A Miscellany (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1971). The collaborations with Zelda Fitzgerald are available in Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed., Zelda Fitzgerald: The Collected Writings (New York: Scribners, 1991). The St. Paul Daily Dirge, a spoof newspaper produced by Fitzgerald and distributed to friends on Friday, 13 January 1922, has been facsimiled in F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time (p. 233), and in Matthew J. Bruccoli, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Descriptive Bibliography, rev. ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), p. 36. Fitzgerald’s screenwriting survives in manuscripts and typescripts housed at the Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library, University of South Carolina. His final unpublished stories have recently been published in Anne Margaret Daniel, ed., I’d Die for You (New York: Scribners, 2017).

The several editorial strategies employed in this volume have been selected to suit the materials presented. The Thoughtbook is rendered in a line-by-line type facsimile, in diplomatic text, without substantive emendation and with all misspellings and other irregularities preserved. This approach captures, as nearly as possible, the
flavor of the original handwritten pages. The Vegetable has been edited in documentary style with only two substantive emendations, both recorded in the apparatus. The spelling and punctuation of the published text has not been altered. Obvious typographical errors have been silently corrected in the poems, book reviews, public letters, journalism, and miscellaneous writings. No attempt has been made to restyle the punctuation, orthography, or word division of these items. Two passages have been restored to “The High Cost of Macaroni”; both are identified in the Record of Variants.

The seven short stories in Last Kiss have been edited according to the principles and practices employed in previous volumes of this series. All extant prepublication versions of the texts have been examined; these versions have been compared (or collated when appropriate) with the first-published texts. Surviving typescripts are described in the apparatus for each story. No evidence of bowdlerization has emerged. Emendations are listed in the apparatus.

Within each section, items are arranged chronologically by date of first publication or, in the case of the short stories, by date of composition. Citations to first appearances in print, together with explanatory information about the composition of certain items, will be found in headnotes or in other annotations. The history of subsequent publication is recorded in the revised edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Descriptive Bibliography.

7 The Thoughtbook was originally published as a facsimile, with commentary by John Kuehl, in the Princeton University Library Chronicle 26 (Winter 1965): 102–08 and unpaginated plates. A separately bound edition of this facsimile was issued by Princeton University Library in April 1965. A new edition of the Thoughtbook, with the text typeset, and with an introduction and afterword by Dave Page, was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2013.