
William Parks, Public Printer of Maryland and Virginia

School, Annapolis, was the first distinctly literary production of the Maryland press, and although it has this interest of priority in Maryland literary bibliography, yet its subject matter is of small concern to modern readers. It must have been indeed, even at the time of its translation, that its magniloquence was related only distantly to the interests of the Maryland people.¹ After its publication Lewis remained in Maryland for some years, during which he continued, through the medium of the Parks press, to display his respectable talent for poetical expression. One of his most praiseworthy effusions was an ode, entitled "Carmen Seclare," in which, in well-turned lines, packed with a description of Maryland and an abstract of its history,² he welcomed Charles Lord Baltimore on the occasion of that dignitary's visit to the Province in the year 1732. A very minor poet indeed, Richard Lewis is yet not a figure to be despised as the founder of a literary tradition.

Of greater importance perhaps than the work of the elegant and conventional Lewis was the satirical verse of Ebenezer Cooke, Gent., who published in London in the year 1708 a poem entitled *The Sot-Weed Factor; or a Voyage to Maryland. A Satyr. . . . In Burlesque Verse.*³ No details remain by which may be identified this cruel satirist, who came out to Maryland, he tells us, as a tobacco, or "Sot-Weed" factor, and who, as distaste for the crude life of the country mingled with his grievances against its inhabitants, wrote in a trahiliar fluid a poem in which the wit was almost obscured by the bitterness and scurrility which appeared in every line. The picture of men and manners which he presented in *The Sot-Weed Factor* was colored by his mood, but so patently correct are its background and drawing that the student of Maryland social history must always turn to the contemplation of it as an important element in his studies.

With the passing of the years, Cooke's spleen subsided. In the year 1730, there was written by "E. C. Gent.," and printed by William Parks, a satire, *The Sotweed Redivivus*, in which there was less wit than was apparent in the earlier work, and less scurrility, and in which bitterness was supplanted by a spirit of constructive criticism of local politics and trade. That at this time, however, Cooke was not in any sense repentant of his earlier and more vindictive criticism of the Province, appears from the fact that in 1731 he republished *The Sot-Weed Factor* in a volume entitled *The Mary-*

¹ In referring to it in his *Diary*, Hearne noted under date of August 7, 1732, "Twas printed at Annapolis that year and is one of the first things ever printed in that Country." In *The Remains of Thomas Hearne*, Bliss ed. London, 1869, 3: 90.

² A large portion of this ode was reprinted in *American Museum* for 1789, 6: 413, under title of "A Description of Maryland." For an account of the original edition, see bibliographical appendix of the present work.

³ See Maryland Historical Society Fund Pub. No. 36, *Early Maryland Poetry*, edited by Bernard C. Steiner.