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The Sot-Weed Factor

Ebenezer Cook

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INTRODUCTION

"It's a good thing to be shifty in a new country."

-Some Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs, Johnson Hooper (1845)

We do not know a great deal about Ebenezer Cook. To most of us he is the protagonist of a contemporary novel, *The Sot-Weed Factor*, by John Barth. The real Ebenezer Cook was born probably in London, probably about 1670. He apparently had experiences similar to those of the poem's protagonist. He seems to have traveled to Maryland, where he had inherited property and to have sold it there in 1717. We assume that "The Sot-Weed Factor" reflects the Cook's own impressions of the barbarous colonial frontier—the strange manners and dress, the outlandish food and eating habits, the prodigious drinking, the rough practical jokes, the fighting and admixture of law with violence, and the general intellectual poverty and lack of education.

All these elements would appear again and again in our literature, but here it all is at the very beginning.

(1) The poem stands as one of our earliest examples of debunking and disillusionment⁽²⁾, in the most exact sense of that word. For various reasons, one of them being the need to lure and recruit settlers to populate exploitable territories, a spate of bonanza or "come-on" literature appeared, promotional tracts or "pamphlets of news" touting the "Good News" of America. Our unfortunate sot-weed factor-or Cook himself-might well have picked up a pamphlet like the one published in 1616 by one George Alsop, who had been an indentured servant in Maryland. It was entitled, "A Character of the Province of Maryland," in which it was stated that "Tobacco is the current Coin of Mary-Land, and will sooner purchase Commodities from the Merchant, than money."

The hero of "The Sot-Weed Factor" is an easy mark in this new world. When he is defrauded of all his wealth and property, he seeks out a lawyer. But the lawyer turns out to be "an ambodexter quack," who poses as either solicitor or physician, and sometimes confuses the two professions. The impostor is one of the first in a long line of confidence men, scam artists and tricksters who make up a recurring theme in American humor and literature. Hooper's Simon Suggs is but one of a long line that includes the clever stranger who fills Jim Smiley's jumping frog, Dan'l Webster, with buckshot and Mark Twain's irrepressible pair of scalawags, the Duke and the Dauphin in *Huckleberry Finn*, wonderful masters of what Faulkner's narrator in *The Hamlet* would call "the art and pastime of skulduggery." The type naturally has its avatars in our own century; witness, in that novel, Pat Stamper, champion horse trader of Yoknapatawpha Country and, of course, that archangel of deceit, Flem Snopes. When characters like Sgt. Milo Minderbinder of *Catch-22* appear, we recognize the archetype.

What a new country, a frontier, a "West," afforded was a perfect happy hunting ground for such human predators as the "ambodexter quack," shifty strangers who could easily invent themselves on the spot as the main chance demanded. Requiring little or nothing by way of credentials, having no brand or mark or record of past depredations, they could assume a myriad of disguises, establish authority by putting up a sign or asserting a claim. Herman Melville's confidence man, in the book of that name, turns up on a Mississippi steamboat-the very kind that Mark Twain piloted-in a variety of shapes: as a crippled Negro, a businessman, a philosopher, a soldier, and more. There is a song about the West that goes

What was your name in the States?
Was it Johnson or Thompson or Bates?
Did you murder your wife?
Did you run for your life?
What was your name in the States?

For better and for worse, all this openness to possibilities is fundamental to the American experience and character. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*, from far west of West Egg, Long Island "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself." As for Ebenezer Cook, it is believed that his destiny was the very opposite of poor Crèvecoeur's, that, despite his hero's horrendous initiation and despite the "Dreadful Curse" at the end of the poem, the poet himself returned to America and made a go of it.

Arthur Kay
Tucson, AZ 1998

Notes on the introduction (by Arthur Kay):

1. If it is important to categorize precisely, Cook's poem probably belongs to English literature, the poet being in fact an Englishman writing in the form and style of his time. More specifically, the form and style are those of a celebrated 17th Century satire, Samuel Butler's "Hudibras" (1663). Cook's diction is typical: tea is not sweetened, but "dulcify'd"; bear meat is referred to as "Orson's flesh," and England is "Albion."

2. Sad is the case of Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur-the name itself means "heartbreak"-who settled in America and wrote enthusiastically optimistically about it in *Letters From an American Farmer* (1782). Returning from an official trip in France, he found his wife dead, his home burned, and his children living with strangers. He spent the rest of his life in Europe.

THE SOTWEED FACTOR

OR

A VOYAGE TO MARYLAND⁽³⁾

A SATYR

By Ebenezer Cook

Condemn'd by Fate to way-ward Curse,
Of Friends unkind, and empty Purse:
Plagues worse than fill'd *Pandora's* Box,
I took my leave of *Albion's* Rocks:
With heavy heart, concern'd that I
Was forc'd my Native soil to fly.
And the *Old World* must bid good-buy.
But Heav'n ordain'd it should be so.
And to repine is vain we know:
Freighted with Fools, from *Plymouth* sound,

To *Mary-Land* our ship was bound.
 Where we arriv'd in dreadful Pain,
 Shock'd by the Terrours of the Main:
 For full three Months, our wavering Boat.
 Did thro' the surley Ocean float.
 And furious storms and threat'ning Blasts,
 Both tore our Sails and sprung our Masts:
 Wearied, yet pleased, we did escape
 Such ills, we anchor'd at the *Cape*.
 But weighing soon, we plough'd the *Bay*,
 To Cove⁽⁴⁾ it in *Piscato-way*,⁽⁵⁾
 Intending there to open Store
 I put myself and Goods a-shore:
 Where soon repair'd a numerous Crew,
 In Shirts and Drawers of *Scotch-cloth* ⁽⁶⁾Blue.
 With neither Stockings, Hat, nor Shooe.
 These *Sot-weed* Planters Crowd the Shoar,
 In Hue as tawny as a Moor:
 Figures so strange, no God design'd,
 To be a part of Humane Kind:
 But wanton Nature, void of Rest,
 Moulded the brittle Clay in Jest.
 At last a Fancy ver odd
 Took me. this was the Land of *Nod*.
 Planted at first, when Vagrant *Cain*,
 His Brother had unjustly slain:
 then conscious of the Crime he'd done,
 From Vengeance dire, he hither run;
 And in a Hat supinely dwelt,
 The first in *Furs* and *Sot-weed* dealt.
 And ever since his Time, the Place,
 Has harbour'd a detested Race;
 Who when they cou'd not live at Home,
 For Refuge to these Worlds did roam;
 In hopes by Flight they might prevent,
 The Devil and his fell intent;
 Obtain from Tripple Tree reprieve,
 And Heav'n and Hell alike deceive:
 but e're their Manners I display,
 I think it fit I open lay
 My Entertainment by the way:
 That Strangers well may be aware on,
 What homely Diet they must fare on.

To touch that Shoar, where no good Sense is found,
 But Conversation's lost, and Manners drown'd.
 I crost unto the other side,
 A River whose impetuous Tide,
 The Savage Borders does divide;
 In such a shining odd invention,
 I scarce can give its due Dimension.
 The *Indians* call this watery Waggon
Canoo,⁽⁷⁾ *a Vessel none can brag on;*
 Cut from a *Popular-Tree*, or *Pine*,
 And fashioned like a trough for swine:
 In this most noble Fishing-Boat,
 I boldly put myself afloat:
 Standing Erect with legs stretch'd wide,
 We paddl'd to the other side:
 Where being Landed safe by hap,
 As *Sol* fell into *Thetis* Lap
 A ravenous Gang bent on the stroul,
 Of Wolves⁽⁸⁾ for Prey, began to howl;
 This put me in a pannick Fright,
 Least I should be devoured quite:
 But as I there a musing stood,
 And quite benighted in a Wood.
 A Female Voice pierc'd thro'my Ears.
 Crying, *You Rogue drive home the Steers*
 I listen'd to th'attractive sound,
 And straight a Herd of cattel found
 Drove by a Youth, and homewards bound:
 Cheer'd with the sight, I straight thought fit,
 To ask where I a Bed might get.
 The surley Peasant bid me stay,
 And ask'd from whom I'de run away.⁽⁹⁾
 Surprized at such a saucy Word,
 I instantly lugged out my Sword:
 Swearing I was no Fugitive.
 But from *Great-Britain* did arrive.
 In hopes I better there might Thrive.
 To which he mildly made reply
I beg your Pardon, Sir that I
Should talk to you Unmannerly;
But if you please to go with me
To yonder House, you'll welcome be.
 Encountring soon the smoaky Seat,

The Planter old did thus me greet:
"Whether you come from Goal or Colledge,
"You're welcome to my certain Knowledge;
"And if you please all Night to stay,
"My Son shall put you in the way."
Which offer I most kindly took.
And for a Seat did round me look:
When presently amongst the rest,
He plac'd his unknown *English* Guest,
Who found them drinking for a whet,
A Cask of Syder on the Fret,
Till supper came upon the Table,
On which I fed whilst I was able.
So after hearty Entertainment,
Of Drink and Victuals without Payment;
For Planters Tables, you must know,
Are free for all that come and go.
While Pon⁽¹⁰⁾ and Milk, wit h Mush⁽¹¹⁾ well stoar'd
In wooden Dishes grac'd the board;
With Homine⁽¹²⁾ and Syder-pap,⁽¹³⁾
(Which scarce a hungry Dog would lap)
Well stuff'd with Fat, from Bacon fry'd,
Or with *Molossus* dulcify'd.
Then out our Landlord pulls a Pouchn,
As greasy as the Leather Couch
On which he sat, and straight begun
To load with Weed his Indian Gun;
In length, scarce longer than one's Finger,
Or that for which the Ladies linger:
His Pipe smoak'd out with awful Grace,
With aspect grave and solemn pace;
The reverend Sire walks to a Chest,
Of all his Furniture the best,
Closely confin'd within a Room,
Which seldom felt the weight of Broom;
From thence he lugs a Cag of Rum,
And nodding to me, thus begun:
I find, says he, you don't much care,
For this our *Indian* Country Fare;
But let me tell you, Friend of mine,
You may be glad of it in time,
Tho' now your Stomach is so fine;
And if within this Land you stay,

You'll find it true what I do say.
This said, the Rundlet up he threw,
And bending backwards strongly drew:
I pluck'd as stoutly for my part,
Altho' it made me sick at Heart,
And got so soon into my Head
I scarce cou'd find my way to Bed;
Where I was instantly convey'd
By one who pass'd for Chamber-Maid;
Tho' by her loose and sluttish Dress,
She rather seem'd a *Bedlam*-Bess.
Curious to know from whence she came,
I prest her to declare her Name
She Blushing seem'd to hide her Eyes,
And thus in Civil Terms replies:
In better Times, e'er to this Land,
I was unhappily Trapann'd,
Perchance as well I did appear,
As any Lord or Lady here,
Not then a Slave for twice two Year.⁽¹⁴⁾
My Cloaths were fashionably new,
Nor were my Shifts of Linnen Blue
But things are changed now at the Hoie,
I daily work, and Bare-foot go.
In weeding Corn or feeding Swine,
I spend my melancholy Time.
Kidnap'd and Fool'd, I hither fled,
To shun a hated Nuptial Bed.⁽¹⁵⁾
And to my cost already find,
Worse Plagues than those I left behind.
Whate'er the Wanderer did profess.
Good-faith I cou'd not choose but guess
The Cause w;hich brought her to this place.
Was supping e'er the Priest said Grace,
Quick as my Thoughts, the Slave was fled,
(Her Candle left to shew my Bed)
Which made of Feathers soft and good,
Close in the Chimney-corner ⁽¹⁶⁾stood;
I threw me down expecting Rest,
To be in golden Slumbers blest:
But soon a noise disturb'd my quiet.
And plagu'd me with nocturnal Riot:
A Puss which in the ashes lay,]

With grunting Pig began a Fray:
And prudent Dog, that Feuds might cease,
Most strongly bark'd to keep the Peace.
This Quarrel scarcely was decided,
By stick that ready lay provided:
But *Reynard* arch and cunning Loon.
Broke into my Apartment soon:
In hot pursuit of Ducks and Geese,
With fell intent the same to seize:
Their Cackling Plaints with strange surprize,
Chac'd Sleeps thick Vapours from my eyes:
Raging I jump'd upon the Floar,
And like a Drunken Saylor swore;
With sword I fiercely laid about,
And soon dispers'd the Feather'd Rout:
The Poultry out of Window flew,
And *Reynard* cautiously withdrew:
The Dogs who this Encounter heard,
Fiercly themselves to aid me rear'd,
And to the Place of Combat run,
Exactly as the Field was won.
Fretting and hot as roasting Capon,
And greasy as a Flitch of Bacon;
I to the Orchard did repair,
To Breathe the cool and open Air,
Expecting there the rising Day,
Extended on a Bank I lay;
But Fortune here, that saucy Whore,
Disturb'd me worse and plagu'd me more,
Than she had done the night before.
Hoarse croaking Frogs ⁽¹⁷⁾did 'bout me ring,
Such Peals the Dead to Life wou'd bring,
A Noise might move their Wooden King.
I stuff'd my ears with Cotten white
For fear of being deaf out-right,
And curst the melancholy Night:
But soon my Vows I did recant,
And Hearing as a Blessing grant;
When a confounded Rattle-Snake,
With hissing made my Heart to ake:
Not knowing how to fly the Foe,
Or whether in the Dark to go;
By strange good Luck, I took a Tree,

Prepar'd by Fate to set me free;
Where riding on a Limb a-stride,
Night and the Branches did me hide,
And I the Devil and Snake defy'd.
Nor yet from Plagues, exempted quite,
The curst Muskitoes did me bite;
Till rising Morn' and blushing Day,
Drove both my Fears and Ills away;
And from Night's Errors set me free.
Discharg'd from hospitable Tree;
I did to Planters Booth repair,
And there at Breakfast nobly Fare,
On rashier broil'd of infant Bear:
I thought the Cub delicious Meat,
Which ne'er did ought but Chesnuts eat,
Nor was young Orsin's flesh the worse,
Because he suck'd a Pagan Nurse.
Our Breakfast done, my Landlord stout,
Handed a Glass of Rum about;
Pleas'd with the Treatment I did find,
I took my leave of Host so kind;
Who to oblige me, did provide,
His eldest Song to be my Guide.
And lent me Horses of his own,
A skittish Colt, and aged rhoan,
The four-leg'd prop of his wife *Joan*.
Steering our barks in Trot or Pace,
We sail'd directly for a place
In *Mary-Land* of high renown,
Known by the name of *Battle-Town*.
To view the Crowds did there resort.
Which Justice made, and Law their sport,
In that sagacious country Court:
Scarce had we enter'd on the way,
Which thro' thick Woods and Marshes lay;
But *Indians* strange did soon appear,
In hot persuit of wounded deer;
No mortal creature can express,
His wild fantastick Air and Dress;
His painted Skin in colours dy'd,
His sable Hair in Satchel ty'd,
Shew'd Savages not free from Pride:
His tawny Thighs, and Bosom bare,
Disdain'd a useless Coat to wear,

Scorn'd Summer's Heat, and Winters Air;
 His manly Shoulders such as please,
 Widows and Wives, were bath'd in Grease
 Of Cub and Bear, whose supple Oil,
 Prepar'd his Limbs 'gainst Heat or Toil.
 Thus naked Pict in Battel faught,
 Or undisguis'd his Mistress sought;
 And knowing well his Ware was good,
 Refus'd to screen it with a Hood:
 His Visage dun, and chin that ne'er
 Did Raizor feel or Scissors bear,
 Or knew the ornament of Hair,
 Look'd sternly Grim, surpriz'd with Fear,
 I spur'd my Horse as he drew near:
 But Rhoan who better knew than I,
 The little Cause I had to fly;
 Seem'd by his solemn steps and pace,
 resolv'd I shou'd the Specter face,
 Nor faster mov'd, tho' spur'd and lick'd,
 Than *Balaam's* Ass by Prophet kick'd.
Kekicknitop⁽¹⁸⁾ *the Heathen cry'd;*
 How is it Tom. My friend replyd,
 Judging from thence the Brute was civil,
 I boldly fac'd the Courteous Devil;
 And lugging out a Dram of Rum,
 I gave his Tawny worship some;
 Who in his language as I guess,
 (My Guide informing me no less,)
 Implored the Devil⁽¹⁹⁾, me to bless.
 I thank'd him for his good Intent,
 And forwards on my Journey went,
 Discoursing as along I rode,
 Whether his Race was framed by God
 Or whether some Malignant pow'r,
 Contriv'd them in an evil hour
 And from his own Infernal Look;
 Their Dusky form and Image took:
 From thence we fell to Argument
 Whence Peopled was the Continent.
 My friend suppos'd *Tartarians* wild,
 Or *Chinese* from their Home exiled;
 Wandering thro' Mountains hid with Snow,
 and Rills did in the valleys flow,

Far to the South of Mexico:
 Broke thro' the Bars which Nature cast,
 and wide unbeaten Regions past,
 Till near those Streams the humane deluge roll'd,
 Which sparkling shin'd with glittering Sands of Gold,
 And fetch *Pizarro*⁽²⁰⁾ from the *Iberian*⁽²¹⁾ Shoar,
 To Rob the Natives of their fatal Stoar.
 I Smil'd to hear my young Logician,
 Thus Reason like a Politician;
 Who ne're by Fathers Pains and Earning
 Had got at Mother *Cambridge* learning;
 Where Lubber youth just free from birch
 Most stoutly drink to prop the Church:
 Nora with *Grey Grout*⁽²²⁾ had taken Pains
 To purge his Head and Cleanse his Reines:
 And in obedience to the Colledge
 Had pleas'd himself with carnal Knowledge:
 And tho' I lik'd the youngster's Wit,
 I judg'd the Truth he had not hit;
 And could not choose but smile to think
 What they could do for Meat and Drink,
 Who o'er so many Desarts ran,
 With Brats and Wives in *Caravan*:
 Unless perchance they'd got the Trick,
 To eat no more than Porker sick;
 Or could with well contented Maws.
 Quarter like Bears⁽²³⁾ u pon their Paws.
 Thinking his Reasons to confute,
 I gravely thus commenc'd Dispute,
 And urg'd that tho' a *Chinese* Host,
 Might penetrate this *Indian* Coast;
 Yet this was certainly most true,
 They never cou'd the Isles subdue;
 For knowing naot to steer a Boat,
 Thjey could not on the Ocean float,
 Or plant their Sunburnt Colonies,
 In Regions parted by the Seas:
 I thence inferr'd *Phœnicians*⁽²⁴⁾ old,
 Discover'd first with Vessels bold
 These Western Shoars, and planted here,
 Returning once or twice a Year,
 With *Naval Stoars* and Lasses kind,
 To comfort those were left behind;

Till by the Winds and Tempest toar,
From their intended Golden Shoar;
They suffer'd Ship-wreck, or were drown'd,
And lost the World so newly found.
But after long and learn'd Contention,
We could not finish our dissention:
And when that both had talk'd their fill.
We had the self same Notion still.
Thus Parson grave well real and Sage,
does in dispute with Priest engage;
The one protests they are not Wise,
Who judge by Sense and trust their Eyes;
And vows he'd burn for it at Stake,
That Man may God his Maker make;
The other smiles at his Religion,
And vows he's but a learned Widgeon⁽²⁵⁾:
And when they have empty'd all their stoar
From Books and Fathers, are not more
Convinc'd or wiser than before.
Scarce had we finish'd serious Story,
But I espy'd the Town before me,
And roaring Planters on the ground,
Drinking of Healths in Circle round:
Dismounting Steed with friendly Guide,
Our horses to a Tree we ty'd,
and forwards pass'd amongst the Rout,
to chuse convenient *Quarters* out:
But being none were to be found,
we sat like others on the ground
Carousing Punch in open Air
Till Cryer did the Court declare;
The planting Rabble being met,
Their Drunken Worships likewise set:
Cryer proclaims that Noise shou'd cease,
And streight the Lawyers broke the Peace:
Wrangling for Plaintiff and Defendant,
I thought they ne'er wou'd make an en on't:
With nonsense, stuff, and false quotations,
With brazen Lyes and Allegations;
And in the splitting of the Cause,
They us'd such motion with their Paws,
As shew their zeal was strongly bent,
In Blows to end the Argument.

A reverend Judge, who to the shame
Of all the Bench, cou'd write his Name⁽²⁶⁾;
As Petty-fogger took offence,
And wonder'd at his Impudence.
My Neighbour *Dash* with scorn replies,
And in the face of Justice flies:
The Bench in fury streight divide,
And Scribbles take, or Judges side;
The Jury, Lawyers, and their Clyents,
Contending, fight like earth-born Gyants:
Bust Sheriff wily lay perdue,
Hoping indictments wou'd ensue,
And when...
A Hat or Wig fell in the way,
He seiz'd them for the *Queen* as stray:
The court adjourn'd in usual manner,
In Battle Blood and fractious Clamour;
I thought it proper to provide,
A Lodging for myself and Guide,
So to our Inn we march'd away,
Which at a litle distance lay;
Where all things were in such Confusion,
I thought the World at its conclusion:
A Herd of Planters on the ground,
O'er-whelm'd with Punch, dead drunk we found:
Others were fighting and contending.
Some burnt their Cloaths to save the mending.
A few whose Heads by frequent use,
Could better bare the potent Juice,
Gravely debated State Affairs.
Whilst I most nimbly trip'd up Stairs;
Leaving my Friend discoursing oddly,
And mixing things Prophane and Godly.
Just then beginning to be Drunk,
As from the company I slunk,
To every Room and Nook I crept,
In hopes I might have somewhere slept;
But all the bedding was possest
By one or other drunken Guest:
But after looking long about,
I found an antient Corn-loft out.
Glad that I might in quiet sleep,
And there my bones unfractur'd keep.

I lay'd me down secure from Fray,
And soundly snor'd till break of Day:
When waking fresh I sat upright,
And found my Shoes were vanished quite,
Hat, Wig, and Stocking, all were fled
From this extended *Indian* Bed:
Vext at the Loss of Goods and Chattel,
I swore I'd give the Rascal battel,
Who had abus'd me in this sort.
And Merchant Stranger made his Sport.
I furiously descended Ladder:
No Hare in March was ever madder:
In vain I search'd for my Apparel.
And did with Host and Servants quarrel;
For one whose Mind did much aspire
To Mischief⁽²⁷⁾, threw them in the Fire;
Equip't with neither Hat nor Shooe,
I did my coming hither rue,
And doubtful thought what I should do:
Then looking round, I saw my Friend
Lie naked on a Tables end;
A Sight so dismal to behold,
One wou'd have judg'd him dead and cold;
When wringing of his bloody Nose,
By fighting got we my suppose;
I found him not so fast asleep,
Might give his Friends a cause to weep:
Rise *Oronooko*⁽²⁸⁾, rise, said I,
And from this Hell and Bedlam fly.
My Guide starts up, and in amaze,
With blood-shot Eyes did round him gaze;
At length with many a sigh and groan,
He went in search of aged Rhoan;
But Rhoan, tho' seldom us'd to falter,
Had fairly this time slipt his Halter;
And not content at Night to stay
Ty'd up from Fodder, ran away:
After my Guide to ketch him ran,
And so I lost both Horse and Man;
Which Disappointment, tho' so great,
Did only Mirth and Jests create:
Till one more Civil than the rest,
In Conversation for the best,

Observing that for want of Rhoan,
 I should be left to talk alone;
 Most readily did me intreat,
 To take a Bottle at his Seat;
 A Favour at that time so great,
 I blest my kind propitious Fate;
 And finding soo a fresh supply,
 Of Cloaths from Stoar-house kept hard by,
 I mounted streight on such a Steed,
 Did rather curb, than whipping need;
 And straining at the usual rate,
 With spur of Punch which lay in Pate,
 E'er long we lighted at the Gate;
 Where in an antient *Cedar* House,
 Dwelt my new Friend, a Cokerouse⁽²⁹⁾;
 Whose Fabrick, tho' 'twas built of "Wood,
 Had many Springs and Winters stood;
 When sturdy Oaks, and lofty Pines
 Were level'd with Musmelion⁽³⁰⁾ Vines,
 And Plants eradicated were,
 By Hurricanes into the air;
 There with good Punch and apple Juice,
 We spent our Hours without abuse;
 Till Midnight in her sable Vest,
 Persuaded Gods and Men to rest;
 And with a pleasing kind surprize,
 Indulg'd soft Slumbers to my Eyes.
 Fierce *Æthon*⁽³¹⁾ courser of the Sun,
 Had half his Race exactly run;
 And breath'd on me a fiery Ray,
 Darting hot Beams the following Day,
 When snug in Blanket white I lay:
 But Heat and *Chinces* rais'd the Sinner,
 Most opportunely to h⁽³²⁾is Dinner;
 Wild Fowl and Fish delicious Meats,
 As good as *Neptune's* Doxy eats,
 Began our Hospitable Treat;
 Fat Venson follow'd in the Rear,
 And Turkies wild Luxurious Chear.⁽³³⁾
 But what the Feast did most commend,
 Was hearty welcom from my Friend.
 Thus having made a noble Feast,

And eat as well as pamper'd Priest,
 Madera strong in flowing Bowls,
 Fill'd with extream, delight our Souls;
 Till wearied with a purple Flood,
 Of generous Wine (the Giant's blood,
 As poets feign) away I made,
 For some refreshing verdant Shade;
 Where musing on my Rambles strange,
 And Fortune which so oft did change;
 In midst of various Contemplations
 Of Fancies ould, and Meditations,
 I slumber'd long....
 Till hazy Night with noxious Dews,
 Did Sleep's unwholsom Fetters lose;
 With Vapours chil'd and misty air,
 To fire-side I did repair,
 Near which a jolly Female Crew
 Were deep engag'd at *Lanctre-Looe*,
 In Nightrails white, with dirty Mein,
 Such sights are scarce in *England* seen:
 I thought them first some Witches bent
 On Black Designs in dire Convent.
 Till one who with affected air,
 Had nicely learn'd to Curse and Swear:
 Cryid Dealing's lost is but a Flam,
 And vow'd by G-d she'd keep her *Pam*.
 When dealing through the board had run,
 They ask'd me kindly to make one;
 Not staying often to be bid,
 I sat me down as others did:
 We scarce had play'd a Round about,
 But that these *Indian* Froes fell out.
 D-m you, says one, tho' now so brave,
 I knew you late a Four-Years Slave;
 What if for Planters Wife you go,
 Nature design'd you for the Hoe.
 Rot you replies the other streight,
 The Captain kiss'd you for his Freight;
 And if the Truth was known aright,
 And how you walk'd the Streets by night,
 You'd blush (if one cou'd blush) for shame,
 Who from *Bridewell* or *Newgate* came.
 From Words they fairly fell to Blows,
 And being loath to interpose,

Or meddle in the Wars of Punk,
 Away to Bed in hast I slunk.
 Waking next day, with aking Head,
 And Thirst that made me quit my Bed;
 I rigg'd myself, and soon got up,
 to cool my Liver with a Cup
 Of *Succahana*⁽³⁴⁾ fresh and clear,
 Not half so good as *English Beer*;
 Which ready stood in Kitchin Pail,
 And was in fact but *Adam's Ale*;
 For Planters Cellars you must know,
 Seldom with good *October* flow,
 But Perry Quince and Apple Juice,
 Spout from the Tap like any Sluce;
 Until the Cask's grown low and stale,
 They're forc'd again to Goad⁽³⁵⁾ and Pail.
 The soathing drought scarce down my throat,
 Enough to put a ship a float,
 With Cockerouse as I was sitting,
 I felt a Feaver Intermitting:
 A fiery Pulse beat in my Veins,
 From Cold I felt resembling Pains:
 This cursed seasoning I remember
 Lasted from *March* to cold *December*:
 Nor would it then its *Quarters* shift,
 Until by *Cardus* turn'd a drift.
 And had my Doctress wanted skill,
 Or Kitchin Physick at her will,
 My Father's Son had lost his Lands,
 And never seen the *Goodwin-Sands*:
 But thanks to fortune and a Nurse
 Whose Care depended on my Purse,
 I saw myself in good Condition,
 Without the help of a Physitian:
 At length the shivering ill relieved,
 Which long my Head and Heart had grieved;
 I then began to think with Care,
 How I might sell my British Ware,
 That with my freight I might comply,
 Did on my Charter party lie:
 To this intent, with Guide before,
 I tript it to the Eastern Shoar;
 While riding near a Sandy Bay,

I met a *Quaker*, *Yea* and *Nay*:
A Pious conscientious rogue,
As e'er wear Bonnet or a Brogue,
Who neither Swore nor kept his Word.
But cheated in the Fear of God:
And when his Debts he would not pay,
By Light within he ran away.
With this sly Zealot soon I struck
A Bargain for my *English* Truck,
Agreeing for ten thousand weight,
Of *Sot-weed* good and fit for freight,
Broad *Oronooko* bright and sound.
The growth and product of his ground;
In Cask that should contain compleat,
Five hundred of Tobacco neat
The contract thus betwixt us made,
Not well acquainted with the Trade,
My goods I trusted to the Cheat,
Whose crop was then aboard the Fleet;
And going to receive my own,
I found the Bird was newly flown:
Cursing this execrable Slave,
This damn'd pretended Godly Knave;
On due Revenge and Justice bent,
I instantly to Counsel went,
Unto an ambodexter *Quack*,⁽³⁶⁾
Who learnedly had got the knack
Of giving Glisters, making Pills,
Of filling bonds, and forging Wills;
And with a stock of Impudence,
Supply'd his want of Wit and Sense;
With Looks demure, amazing People,
No wiser than a Daw in Steeple;
My Anger flushing in my Face,
I stated the preceeding Case:
And of my Money was so lavish,
That he'd have poyson'd half the Parish,
And hang'd his Father on a Tree,
For such another tempting Fee;
Smiling, said he, the Cause is clear,
I'll manage him you need not fear;
The Case is judg'd, good Sir, but look
In *Galen*, No--in my Lord *Cook*,

I vow to God I was mistook:
 I'll take out a Provincial Wit;
 Upon my Life we'll win the Cause,
 With all the ease I cure the *Yaws*.⁽³⁷⁾
 Resolv'd to plauge the holy Brother,
 I set one Rogue to catch another;
 To try the Cause then fully bent,
 Up to *Annapolis*⁽³⁸⁾ I went,
 A City situate on a Plain,
 Where scarce a House will keep out Rain;
 The buildings fram'd with Cyprus rare,
 Resembles much our *Southwark* Fair:
 But Stranger here will scarcely meet
 With Market-place, Exchange, or Street;
 And if the Truth I may report,
 'Tis not so large as *Tottenham* Court.
St. Mary's once was in repute,
 Now here the Judges try the Suit,
 And Lawyers twice a Year dispute:
 As oft the Bench most gravely meet,
 Some to get Drunk, and some to eat
 A swinging share of Country Treat.
 But as for Justice right or wrong,
 Not one amongst the numerous throng,
 Knows what they mean, or has the Heart,
 To give his Verdict on a Stranger's part:
 Now Court being call'd by beat of Drum,
 The Judges left their Punch and Rum,
 When Pettifogger Docter draws,
 His Paper forth, and opens Cause:
 And least I shou'd the better get,
 Brib'd *Quack* supprest his Knavish Wit.
 So Maid upon the downy Field,
 Pretends a Force, and Fights to yeild:
 The Byast Court without delay,
 Adjudg'd my Debt in Country Pay:
 In Pipe staves, Corn, or Flesh of Boar,⁽³⁹⁾
 Rare Cargo for the *English* Shoar:
 Raging with Grief, full speed I ran,
 To join the Fleet at *Kicketan*,⁽⁴⁰⁾
 Embarqu'd and waiting for a Wind,
 I left this dreadful Curse behind.

May Canniballs transported o'er the Sea

Prey on these Slaves, as they have done on me:
May never Merchant's, trading Sails explore
This Cruel, this Inhospitable Shoar;
But left abandon'd by the World to starve,
May they sustain the Fate they well deserve:
May they turn Savage, or as *Indians* Wild,
From Trade, Converse, and Happiness exil'd:
Recreant to Heaven, may they adore the Sun,
And into pagan Superstitions run
For Vengeance ripe...
May Wrath Divine then lay those Regions wast
Where no Man's Faithful⁽⁴¹⁾, nor a Woman Chast.

15 Januar, 1707 (8)

Notes on the poem (by Ebenezer Cook):

3. Sot-weed factor: a dealer in tobacco.
4. To Cove is to lie at Anchor safe in Harbour.
5. The Bay of *Piscata-way*, the usual place where our Ships come to an Anchor in *Mary-Land*.
6. The Planters generally wear Blue *Linnen*.
7. A *Canoo* is an Indian Boat, cut out of the body of a Popler-Tree.
8. Wolves are very numerous in *Mary-Land*.
9. 'Tis supposed by the Planters, that all unknown Persons are run away from some Master.
10. Pon is Bread made of *Indian-Corn*.
11. Mush is a sort of Hasty-pudding made with Water and Indian Flower.
12. Homine is a Dish that is made of boiled *Indian* Wheat, eaten with Molossus or Bacon Fat.
13. Syder-pap is a sort of Food made of Syder and small Homine, like our Oatmeal.

14. 'Tis the custom for Servants to be obliged for four Years to very servile Work; after which time they have their Freedom.
15. These are the general Excuses made by *English* Women, which are sold, or sell themselves to *Mary-Land*.
16. Beds stand in the Chimney-corner in this Country.
17. Frogs are called *Virginea* Bells, and make, (both in that Country and *Mary-Land*) during the Night, a very hoarse ungrateful Noise.
18. *Kekicknitop* is an Indian Expression, and signifies no more than this, *How do yo do?*
19. These *Indians* worship the Devil, and pray to him as we do to God Almighty, 'Tis suppos'd , That *America* was peopl'd from *Scythia* or *Tartaria*, which Borders on *China*, by reason the *Tartarans* and *Americans* were very much agree in their manners, Arms and Government. Other Persons are of Opinion, that the *Chinese* first peopled the *West Indies*; imagining *China* and Southern part of *America* to be contiguous. Others believe that the Phœnicians, who were very skillful Mariners, first planted a Colony in the Iles of *America*, and supply'd the Persons left to inhabit there with Women and all other Necessaries; till either the Death or shipwreck of the first Discoverers, or some other Misfortune occasioned the loss of the Discovery, which had been purchased by the peril of the first Adventurers.
20. *Pizzaro* was the Person that conquer'd *Peru*, a Man of a most bloody Disposition, base, treacherous, covetous, and revengeful.
21. *Spanish Shoar*
22. There is a very bad Custom in some Colledges, of giving the Students *A Groat and purgandus Rhenes*, which is usually employ'd to the use of the Donor.
23. Bears are said to live by sucking of their Paws, according to the Notion of some learned Authors.
24. The *Phœnicians* were the best and boldest Saylor's of Antiquity, and indeed the only Persons in former Ages, who durst venture themselves on the Main Sea.
25. The Priests argue, That our Senses in the point of *Transubstantiation* ought not to be believed, for tho' the Consecrated Bread has all the accidents of Bread, yet they affirm, 'tis the Body of Christ, and not Bread but Flesh and Bones.
26. In the County-Court of *Mary-land*, very few of the Justices of the Peace can write or read.
27. 'Tis the Custom of the Planters, to throw their own, or any other Persons Hat, Wig, Shooes or

Stockings in the Fire.

28. Planters are usually call'd by the Name of *Oronooko*, from their Planting *Oronooko-Tobacco*.
29. *Cockerouse*, is a Man of Quality.
30. *Musmelion* Vines are what we call Muskmillion Plants.
31. *Æthon* is one of the Poetical Horses of the Sun.
32. *Chinces* are a sort of Vermin like our *Bugs* in *England*.
33. Wild Turkies, are very good Meant, and prodigiously large in *Mary-land*.
34. *Succahana* is water.
35. A *Goad* grows upon an Indian Vine, resembling a Bottle, when ripe is hollow; this the Planters make use of to drink water out of.
36. This Fellow was an Apothecary, and turn'd an Attorney at Law.
37. The *Yaws* is the *Pox*.
38. The chief of *Maryland*, containing about twenty four *Houses*.
39. There is a Law in this Country, the Plaintiff may pay his Debt in Country pay, which consists in the produce of the Plantation.
40. The homeward bound Fleet meets here.
41. The Author does not intend by this, any of the English Gentlemen resident here.

Edited by Arthur Kay, Tucson, Arizona, February 1998.

