

# Writers Of Baltimore Say Thrills Attended Their Literary Debuts: The ...

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## Writers Of Baltimore Say Thrills Attended Their Literary Debuts

The Exciting Moment When Their Names First Appeared In Print Under The Titles Of Their Maiden Literary Efforts Was Only Equaled By That Other Moment When Their First Checks Arrived.

By EMILY EMERSON LANTZ.

OWEN MEREDITH says in "Lucile" that mankind may forget almost anything in life save the hour of dining. But there is another unforgettable hour, an hour that comes but once in a lifetime—and then with a never-to-be-forgotten thrill. It is the hour when a Heaven-inspired editor first accepts one's literary offering and his publishing house pays for it.

Writers, like painters and sculptors, work for the work's sake. They may write for a livelihood or for glory in later years, but the beginning of their writing is not for the sake of compensation hoped-for, but to afford outlet for an inspired impulse. Writers paint in words as artists paint in colors and with the same creative joy. Through a colorless medium they evolve visions as radiantly colorful as the hues of sunset, as fairy-like and delicate as the silken sheen of a soap bubble, as stern of aspect as the dull gray of a battleship.

And so, when the god in the editorial chair recognizes a gleam of genius, a sun ray of divine fire in an humble manuscript and accepts it, paying for it in coin of the realm, he often opens the gate of opportunity to an eager suppliant who, had there been no response to his timorous knock at literary portals, might have turned sorrowfully away and never mustered the necessary courage to knock again. It is not the money received that occasions the joy that accompanies this first exchange of literary inspiration. It is the wonderful discovery that through the medium of his pen a man may give to the world something that a usually unknown and always impartial judge decides has a cash value.

This brief article attempts no estimate of the exceptionally fine literary work accomplished by Maryland writers. Dr. Henry E. Shepherd in his discriminating book, "The Representative Authors of Maryland," has done this in truly scholarly way. This is but a backward glance to that first shining hour when enters

of now established reputations were timorous peri standing outside a literary Paradise—peri who had passed the first penitential test necessary to admittance to higher literary life. By the exchange of ideas for money they had taken the first upward step.

The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore has proved itself a nucleus of literary interest to many women. It is joyous to recall pleasant memories at Yuletide. Therefore a small group of writers who are mostly friends, one with another, in our midst, have exchanged these heart-to-heart confidences as it were beneath Christmas boughs. They were suggested by the remarks of one who observed that she expects to get into the Kingdom of Heaven because of her many great tribulations resultant from the fact that she is the sister of a literary woman. A writer in the house, she considers, more troublesome than any baby ever born to plague its mother. She has the profoundest sympathy with Aaron and Hur because of their task of holding up the hands of the exhausted prophet, Moses, while Joshua fought with Amalek. It has been her job to sustain the fluctuating spirit of a journalist while the literary battle of life was waged.

"My troubles began," she said, "with the first money—just \$2—which my sister—the alternate plague and pride of my life—ever earned. It was paid her by Babyhood, a New York magazine, for a poem entitled 'The Baby's Question.' She promptly turned the money over as a gift to me, and I resolved to buy something I could keep all my life.

"Of course, it had to be something durable, something costing exactly \$2 and something I liked. I set out joyously one afternoon to buy it. But to find something that fitted these three conditions was more difficult than I had anticipated. Twilight fell, with me still wandering from shop to shop, grasping my precious \$2 bill. Finally, almost in despair, I drifted into a jeweler's and asked him to show me lace pins. One, very simple, but of good design, was priced \$2.50. I told the jeweler the sad story of my quest. His heart was touched. He agreed to fall 25 cents; but, alack! that was not enough. I entreated him to make it an even \$2.

But that was asking too much, and both of us knew it. Mournfully, I laid the pin back on its velvet cushion. Almost fearfully he replaced the tray in the case. As I left the shop, I bethought me of an unpaid gas bill. I opened my purse and looked at it. It was just \$2. With my sister's first literary earnings I hurried and paid the gas bill. I have been paying gas bills and a few other trifles with her earnings ever since."

Dean Among Maryland Writers.

Dr. Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, dean among writers of Baltimore, was born in Charleston, S. C., in 1831 and was already an author of international reputation when he was called to occupy the chair of Greek at Johns Hopkins University in 1876. He was one of the group of brilliant men who composed the initial faculty of the university and continued in that office until 1915, when he was retired because of his advanced years. Now, past his 90th birthday anniversary, Dr. Gildersleeve is known and beloved of thousands of students to whom he has bequeathed his heritage of knowledge and cherished by the whole city in the still lusty winter of his life. Dr. Henry E. Sheperd has accorded Dr. Gildersleeve the distinction of being "the foremost representative of classical scholarship in America" and one "who has won an assured, as well as a constantly expanding, literary fame."

Dr. Gildersleeve says of his maiden literary effort:

"The first money I ever earned for literary work came from an article published in the Southern Methodist Review of Richmond, Va., some time in 1855—if I am not mistaken. I do not remember any detail thereto over the consideration, that was \$25."

Introduced By New York Post.

There is no writer of successful novels with whom Baltimore literary folk are better acquainted than with Mrs. Helen Reimensnyder Martin—our near-neighbor of Harrisburg, Pa.—who is an honorary member of the Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore and a frequent visitor to this city. Born and brought up in Lancaster, Pa., she was in daily contact with the Pennsylvania Dutch, whom she has immortalized in fiction and through whom she has introduced to American literature a new and distinctive type. Her Mennonite stories are classics and in "Erstwhile Susan," the gifted actress, Mrs. Fiske, created a most successful rôle.

"My very first paid-for writings," said Mrs. Martin, "were a series of 10 sketches about life among the Pennsylvania Dutch written when I was 17, a high school pupil. They were bought by the New York Evening Post at the rate of \$10 a column—10 columns in all. I felt like a Vanderbilt! No success of later life ever equaled that one. Of course, I was only a child and for years after that I never published anything at all, though I was always writing. Couldn't help it, it was in my blood. It was not until after my marriage that I 'hit it' with two short stories of the Pennsylvania Dutch which I sent to the Ladies' Home Journal, for which they

paid me .75 each. That check for \$150 looked bigger to me than any I've received since! For a long time I always sold my stories in pairs. But

hold! You only want the first sale. So I'm done."

St. Luke's Choir First Patron.

Miss Katharine Pearson Woods, author of forceful novels, such as "Metzerott Shoemaker," and historical works, such as "The True Story of Captain John Smith," is a vigorous and interesting writer of both fiction and verse. She lives in Walbrook and her activities and interest range from telling fairy tales to children to the Emmanuel Movement in churches and the Mountain Whites of North Carolina. She assisted in founding the Psychological Club and admits she was introduced to literary fame and fortune through the medium of St. Luke's Church.

"In 1873," she said, "two choir boys of St. Luke's Church started a paper called 'The Young Idea.' To increase the circulation they offered a prize for the best poem sent in. I offered one called 'Missing' and won the prize, which was an engraving, evidently cut out of an ancient magazine, of 'Shakespeare at the Court of Queen Elizabeth.'"

"The first money payment for work was from St. Nicholas, some years later, for an article on 'Historical Novels,' giving title, author and period, with short synopsis of the story of each. For this I received \$30. I wish I had had a more dramatic experience of accept-

ance; as regards rejections, I could make out a better story."

Mr. Folger McKinsey, beloved "Bentztown Bard" of Maryland, is, like THE SUN, known and welcomed in every home in this State—not to speak of Virginia and sister States. Indeed, like David and Jonathan of Bible story, or those inseparable pals of the Little Tycoon, THE SUN and the Bard "always go together." They may be met wending casual cheery way across the Sierras of the Pacific Coast, along the Mexican border or sledding in Alaska. The joyous "Good Morning" of the one, and "Have You Heard the News?" from the other, is sufficient preliminary anywhere to lasting friendship.

Mr. McKinsey, having been corralled, led to his desk and heart-to-heart confession demanded of him, admitted that he did remember his first literary experience and its financial results. "My first literary effort for which I received real money," he said, "was a happy piece of luck rather than an achievement in authorship. I was a kid in Philadelphia, doing a kid's job in the car record offices of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, at Fourth and Walnut streets. One evening, on my way home, I passed the office of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin and saw by a placard in the window that that paper was offering a cash prize for the solution of a word puzzle printed in its columns, the words

to form the title of a well-known work in English literature.

"I rushed home with a copy of the paper, sat down at the puzzle, and in five minutes had the solution—Sir Walter Scott's 'Lady of the Lake.' I took my answer down to the office, and, being the first one there, won the prize. My first actual writing for which I received pay was in the early days of the old Woman's Home Companion. I submitted an essay on Bayard Taylor and his work, which was accepted by them as the best in a contest they were holding, and they sent me \$5 for it. The Bulletin prize money was \$2.50. You see now why authors grow so rich. The first poem for which I received pay was 'The Palace of Czar Ivan,' founded upon a legend of early Russia, and sold to and printed in the Boston Transcript in 1888."

Miss Lizette Woodworth Reese, whose poetic vision is the pride and boast of Baltimore, whose verses are like a whiff of most fragrant apple blossom or old-fashioned lavender overhung with humming bees, said: "I can't remember, to save my life, where my first paid poem was published. I think it was in the Travelers' Record, a paper printed in the interest of the Travelers' Insurance Company of Hartford, Conn. I remember nothing about the title of the poem. If the pay were \$5, that was all. The first poem that I really remember being paid

for was a sonnet called 'Consolation,' which came out in the Century. I think I received \$10. I have no record of the date. The poem appeared in my book, 'A Quiet Road.' Of course, I was highly elated—it was to me the beginning of a new world. My first stories were put in the Independent. I don't remember the first one—'White Lilies,' perhaps. The pay was about \$20. My first paid essay was in the Atlantic Monthly—Contributors' Club—at \$10.

"Now, this is absolutely all I know. I wish I could tell you something 'blithe,' as you say. There is nothing 'blithe,' however, about art; it is hard work, a lesson which I think the new writers are finding rather difficult to learn. The quantity of 'easy' verse and prose that is poured out nowadays upon a confiding public is appalling. And popular novels! Rather than read one, I would take to the woods."

(Continued next Sunday.)