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Reverend Burden Contemplates Francis DeLacey, Publisher of the Gold Creek *Optimist*

Robert Cooperman

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Reverend Burden Contemplates Francis DeLacey,
Publisher of the Gold Creek *Optimist*

by Robert Cooperman

A free and forthright press?
Nothing forthright
about the claws
that whiskey-breathed devil
sinks into me:
nosing out about Mary,
who I saved from whoredom;
set her up in a cottage
away from the weasel eyes
of them that spread gossip
like rancid honey
on moldy bread.

Mary needed a haven,
her bosoms heaving
penitence the first time
she offered me her jewel.
But that's between me and her:
my true wife in the Lord,
her ripening belly my altar.

But DeLacey's snouted us out;
I'll have to pay and pay,
to keep his tattling rag
from burning off the press
like the dirty hand of Satan
had set the type
and smeared the ink.
But I'll repay him,
no forgiveness for a bearer
of false witness.

Just as there's none
for Lavinia, barren as Egypt.

