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Father Galen's Forilege or a Symposy of Diseases

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POETRY

FATHER GALEN'S FLORILEGE,
OR A SYMPOSY OF DISEASES

Science

THE BARGAIN

Costly as granite's pale façade
And knowledgeable as is God,
In office chaste awaits our tryst
The famous dermatologist,
Whose patients neither die nor lure
Him forth by night nor show a cure,
And who will not, while he treats me,
Abate his mercenarity.

Graduates of such schools as man
Establishes who robustly can,
And versed in science, which is not
Averse to blowing cold and hot,
The learned doctor dressed in starch,
Mincing and pasty-faced and arch,
Will peer at poison under skin
And call his subterfuges in,

Which run as follows: "Eczema
Is a disturbance caused by a
Disturbed condition of a part
Which might be brain or soul or heart.

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Likewise with dermatitis, which
May prompt no sense, yet much may itch.
Finally, rot, the bane of flesh,
Sets in where sun nor rain is fresh."

For these, my payment to the sage
Will buy him food and keep his age.
I, the sick poet, starved and old,
Find out what words will fetch in gold.

**Intelect**

**THE COMPATIBLES**

I

A dry and utterly chaste affair
Between a man whose type of wit
Annoys a woman who gets in his hair
(And much good may they get of it)

And her, thus briefly characterized,
Takes place, as it were, on the cerebral cortex
Of both. They sit in chairs devised
By a harsh carpenter, and approach a vortex

Of windless whisking blowing down the world.
(Faster and faster, faster, faster—stop!
Lest Plato spin, or Hymen blow his top.)

II

It is time now to count up the books and desks,
Unshelve the journals, and unwall the sheep's
Framed contributions to a biped's masks.
These halls should give us the most holy creeps.

What class in English ever shall unvair
The emperor Thought, whose stab is past repair?
Look, look—the spring! It is of all outdoors. Marbled and warmer, the not distant skies Weep like a pair of academic eyes, And shower on the scholar and his chores. He writes a piece for Dr. Blank’s Review, And is no man—nor, neither, dear, are you.

**Specialization**

**SONNET: THE STOLEN WILL**

The private papers of Esau Oriflame, Late Bumpkin Professor of Sex in the U. of Dreams, Fill six steel cabinets. These his heirs annex.

The world is sometimes not the world it seems, For on going over the contents, file by file, His heirs discover the bulk consists of matter Remote from his profession. The mind resists The picture given: a tough soul, hard to flatter:

In one folder, letters from grateful students; But he gave his time—his ten thousand leisure hours— To something other. A seizure of imprudence Compelled him to stocks; on these he spent his powers:

No money, mind you—but every quotation clipped As a monk might hoard his ineffable manuscript.

**Freedom**

**THE LESSON**

I wished to pick the fruit while green Which theretofore I had not seen, And bitter was its pulp, indeed, But pick the fruit I surely did.
The seeds were soft, the flesh was hard;  
I chewed the rind my teeth had scarred  
As though it might be food for me  
With all the world my enemy.

Hog-wild in the suggestive orchard,  
My mouth rejoiced, my belly tortured,  
Set in a primaveral scene,  
I tasted juice as sour as sin.

The trees no longer grow so high  
To hang their fruit against the sky;  
Yet now it is beyond my reach  
Unless I pick it from the ditch.

I neither stretch nor do I stoop.  
My appetite is eaten up.

\textit{Senility}

\textbf{THE OLD GARDENER IN PRISON}

\textit{A story from Boccaccio}

I live in a high cell alone,  
With one small window in the stone.  
It needs no bars, it is so high,  
And here I stay until I die.

All round about me gardens lie  
I may not till though I may eye,  
While that I have I may not own,  
For else my manliness were known.

When I was young, to this I came  
Which has no future and no name.  
Now gray and veined as the oak,  
I cry not out who never spoke.
One morning as the sun awoke,
I lay awake. An ancient joke
Kept running through my head like flame,
For now I had become the same.

Green are the lawns the sisters keep
Below the tower where I sleep,
And crystal streams, I fancy, flow
Among the flowers far below;

Yet from the sky I see the snow
Sparkle toward winter. Now I go
Six steps along my wall—so deep
My space—and when I turn I weep.

Backsliding

ROBERT OF SICILY

To fall asleep in a church is no great matter,
Save when the spheres intend a revolution.

But to awake; to find the bronze doors closed,
Each jumbled scene and panel facing out;
All blank within, cold, high, too heavy to swing;
To escape at last by a small door fit for priests,
The self divested of its crusted robes;
Show a bare knuckle where the signet was,
And through the city beg and be denied;
Do penance, cringe, accept the usurping angel,
And so return, finally, to the lost throne:

A royal matter, shameful to be known.
Morrison Wood at the Keyboard

The things that horrify me most
I will set down as simple fact,
Portraying Satan and his host
Engaging in the naked act,

Defying Suessenguth to say
I have not been around as he,
Or Boyce, who knows the interplay
Of century on century,

Because I see, which way I turn,
The universals taking form,
Like brothel customers who burn
Perfect as snowflakes in a storm

Before my eye hexagonal,
As if to say, "Catch us who can!"—
The famous in the casual,
Where all are lost, and each is man.

Such dreadful deeds as mind dreams up
I will keep by me, page on page,
Till Asia lap my labors up,
An incident of the wrong age—

Myself devoted to the truth
As seen by me, and in my youth.

Demagogy

The Reformer

Last night a civic meeting claimed my time,
And a young bride, a sociologist's wife,
Split hairs of conflict, breast and thigh for knife.
I was enchanted, old as yet I am.
Behind her shape upon the platform moving,
There moved the age, tooth buried in fat vein.
The under dog was up, and out for gain,
While here this carcass, ripe and fit for loving.

Squirming uneasy on the wooden seats,
I thought of Bryan, Christ, and Luther loud.
A wave of heat surged forward from the crowd:
*In the days of the tyrant the fishers spread their nets.*

*Impiety*

**THE GIANTS**

The summer is wet, but warm as always, steams
In the rich fields. The mold thrives in the city,
In the cellars of houses, where the stones bear up the beams.
The nights glisten, and like tears shed of pity,
On the whole length of Broad Street falls the unharmed rain:
On the State Capitol Building; on the Asylum for Insane.

Over a small area, on paving-brick or clod,
The rain of heaven descends to us from God;
While man, who differs in this from other cattle,
That he thinks or reasons, and implements will with hands,
Brings down on his head a rain at Bikini Atoll
Enough to drench a multitude of lands.

*Immortality*

**EPITAPH FOR A PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT**

Ryder is dead, and therefore happy,
Having his life completed, spent
Neither in boozing at the nappy
Nor fumbling for a vast intent,
But well on letters, and in lore
His like will not provide us more.
For—lest you may not this have guessed—
The time is short, the world is small,
Where Ryder, by oblivion blessed,
Need not observe its end at all.

Not Cherniss, for his classroom’s north,
Shall summon sleeping Ryder forth.

Art

THE CHINESE PRINT

The wood is deep green, but beyond,
Two butterflies above a pond
Gather the sunlight from the mist
That is the water’s only frond.

To the pond’s edge, in rain or fair,
The drownèd general’s men repair,
To see if yet perchance he floats
Who—moons have gone—was sunken there.

Myron H. Broomell

MASSACHUSETTS SUMMER

The city all winter long worked in us
Ferment of insecurity by day,
The city pallor spreading our faces;
By night its paroxysms of transport
Sifted our dreams with devastation.
But when spring came we who were fortunate
Caught sunlight in the small grass, in the leaves
Sword bright knife-thin
Fast to their stems.