

# Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

BY ROBERT BROWNING

Gr-r-r--there go, my heart's abhorrence!

Water your damned flower-pots, do!

If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,

God's blood, would not mine kill you!

What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?

Oh, that rose has prior claims--

Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?

Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together;

*Salve tibi!* I must hear

Wise talk of the kind of weather,

Sort of season, time of year:

*Not a plenteous cork crop: scarcely*

*Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt;*

*What's the Latin name for "parsley"?*

What's the Greek name for "swine's snout"?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,

Laid with care on our own shelf!

With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,

And a goblet for ourself,  
Rinsed like something sacrificial  
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps--  
Marked with L. for our initial!  
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

*Saint*, forsooth! While Brown Dolores  
Squats outside the Convent bank  
With Sanchicha, telling stories,  
Steeping tresses in the tank,  
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,  
--Can't I see his dead eye glow,  
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?  
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refecton,  
Knife and fork he never lays  
Cross-wise, to my recollection,  
As do I, in Jesu's praise.  
I the Trinity illustrate,  
Drinking watered orange pulp--  
In three sips the Arian frustrate;  
While he drains his at one gulp!

Oh, those melons! if he's able

We're to have a feast; so nice!  
One goes to the Abbot's table,  
All of us get each a slice.  
How go on your flowers? None double?  
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?  
Strange!--And I, too, at such trouble,  
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,  
Once you trip on it, entails  
Twenty-nine district damnations,  
One sure, if another fails;  
If I trip him just a-dying,  
Sure of heaven as sure can be,  
Spin him round and send him flying  
Off to hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel  
On grey paper with blunt type!  
Simply glance at it, you grovel  
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe;  
If I double down its pages  
At the woeful sixteenth print,  
When he gathers his greengages,  
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there's Satan!--one might venture

Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave

Such a flaw in the indenture

As he'd miss till, past retrieve,

Blasted lay that rose-acacia

We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine...*

'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratia*

*Ave, Virgo!* Gr-r-r--you swine!