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The Graduate Student's Tragedy, or Babel Revisited

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THE GRADUATE STUDENT'S TRAGEDY
or Babel Revisited

Into this room potential scholars come--
the academic lame and halt and dumb--
each wrestling with a problem so assigned
for maximum confusion of the mind;
each to discover, lacking any clue,
the answer the instructor always knew.
Each can quote critics whose professed intent
values A's guess on what B really meant,
and some shrewd veterans of other courses
may actually have read primary sources.
Any faint sign of thought, of true research,
receives the verbal instructorial birch,
and woe betide the student who may blunder
and choose the shell the pea is not hid under!
Here students are apprenticed to be dull
and learning turned from goddess into trull.
Hail to thee, worthy Theobald! Cibber, praise!
Thou art at last relieved of thy bays.