

Indexes Past

The anatomy of melancholy

Robert Burton's *The anatomy of melancholy*, first completed in 1621, appears to be a medical work, but is described in the Tudor edition of 1927 by Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (Tudor Publishing Company, New York) as 'a sort of literary cosmos, an omnium gatherum, a compendium of everything that caught the fancy of the scholar . . . abounding in quaint conceits, excerpts and quotations'. The 52-page index to the 984-page text reflects this anecdotal profusion.

The prefatory note includes, 'When other information is unavailable, Burton's own biographical and bibliographical remarks are sometimes given. Many obvious historical and classical and most geographical items are omitted', and concludes, 'It is believed that the abbreviations will explain themselves'.

The same insouciance is shown in some lists of page references, where the compiler has simply found it too tedious to assemble them all. The following entries all appear *sic*:

David 31, 32, 33, 47, 60, 113, 115, 156, 157, &c.

Devil the, 878, 938, &c.

Esay (Isaiah) 33, 60, 115, &c.

Galen and Paracelsus each have three lines of page references before the abrupt, weary '&c.'

We give below sample entries to give the flavour of the work—all in full, and *sic*.

Biarmi, high priests who sanctify the wombs of the wives of the kings of Calicut, 856

Bilia, who took it for granted that all men had bad breaths like her husband (the story is St. Jerome's example of a truly modest wife), 853

Bulco Opiliensis, who did what he list, 927

Cabbage brings heaviness to the soul, 192

Calis, who would wash in no common water, 397

Climate, a cause of lust & jealousy, 827, 828

Dibrensens, their strange aversion to unclean water, 907

Fish discommended, 192; defended, 398

Genesis, thought unadvisable reading, 771

Hart, a meat that hath an evil name, 190

Hilary's term (St. Hilary's feast was in January; a term at Oxford and in the Eng. judicial sitting was named for it, but why Hilary's term should be proverbially hilarious does not appear), 252

Kisses, honest and otherwise, 701 *et seq.*

Non-natural things, the six, defined, 189

Nunnery, tricked by the Earl of Kent, 707

Pasquil (Pasquin was a bitter-tongued cobbler in 15th c. Rome; a statue gratuitously supposed to be in his likeness was set up at the end of that c. opposite Cardinal Caraffa's palace, and lampoons on public personages & events were there pasted up; in the 16th c. another statue, of Morfirio, a river god, was set up, and the pasquinades became question and answer dialogues between Morfirio & Pasquil), 290

Pirckheemerus, Bilibaldus (Willibald Pirckheimer, German humanist, 16th c.; his Praise of Gout, or the Gout's Apologie, was pub. London, 1617), 500, &c.

Pork, naught for quasy stomachs, 190

Prosper (of Aquitaine, Christian writer, 5th c.), who advised young men not to read the Song of Solomon, 771

Purly hunter ("purle" is defined by Halliwell's Dict. of Archaic Words as "to prowl about for prey"), 318

Roman courtesans, their elegance of speech, 699

Sappho (An Sappho publica fuerit? Seneca, Epist. 88, alludes scornfully to a tract with this title by Didymus Chalcenterus, as an example of trivial and useless discussion), 96

Spider in a nutshell, medicine for ague, 596

Statues, love in, 649

Thais, him that can paint (now called a beauty-doctor), 55

Trismegistus, Hermes (The Greek name for the Egyptian God Thoth, to whom all sacred bks. were ascribed, & hence called Hermetic; there were supposed to be 42 of these, and many mystical, astrological & Neoplatonic writings of the first centuries A.D. were attributed to this distinguished authorship), 63, 142, 158, 165, 167, 338, 382, 423, 797, 882, 889, 901

Vaughan, Mr. (Sir William Vaughan, Eng. poet & colonial pioneer, 17th c., auth. The Golden Fleece, a bk. written to coax emigrants to his settlement in Newfoundland; he wrote under the name of Orpheus Junior), 416, 812

Venison, a melancholy meat, 190

Verjuice and oatmeal is good for a parrot, 80 note

Wearish (withered, wizen, shrunk), 12