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Poems by doctors

Eliot Slater

Doppelgänger

Behind the edge of what I see
There sits a little man of grey.
My friends, they say good night to me;
He does not go away.

He watches me, dull, drunk, polite,
Without a smile, without a sneer.
I wake and shiver in the night
To whispers in my ear.

And when I fell in love with you
And there was neither night nor day,
You did not know you slept with two,
He did not go away.

Re-Encounter

They are not changed, those indiscreet
Young limbs of but two years ago;
But clothes you now from head to feet
The certainty I used to know.

Now you your half-forgetful smile
Remembering another give,
And welcome, telling me the while
That I was young once – and yet live.

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Eliot Slater (1904–1983) is best known for his seminal applications of rigorous basic statistical and genetic research methodologies to the study of mental health problems and for demonstrating that temporal lobe epilepsy was associated with schizophrenia-like psychoses. Yet strong literary interests and associations ran through his life. He married Lydia Pasternak, the sister of the Russian poet and novelist, and was himself a published poet. In retirement he undertook and completed a PhD (later published) in which he made a strong case for Shakespeare as author of an early play of disputed authorship (*Edward III*), by the use of sophisticated numerical measures (cliometrics). He was also an Editor of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* (1961–1972) who introduced the yellow colour for the cover.

Friend

I must admire, we are so closely grown,
His little elegance of thought and pen,
Integrity that trips but now and then,
His very failings such I would condone.

One day he will be put upon the shelf
And my solicitude will have to end.
It will be mine no more to serve my friend,
So changed I shall no longer know myself.