

Reading Room Rules at the Tumbril Library

*A poem occasioned by the poet, a glass of water at his elbow,
having the Rules of the Reading Room expounded to him
by the Reference Librarian.*

Among those dry-stored documents
I didn't oughta
Among prized succulents
Commit an offence making sense
By having by a glass of water.

And I'm not allowed to try
To look at a book
While eating a pie.

I'm sadly mistaken and in disgrace
Should I have taken to mark my place
With a nice slice of the Best Bacon.
The Librarian, chewing his thumb,
Would get didactical
Should I be practical
And use chewing-gum.

No use to say I'd never dream
Of mixing Milton and ice-cream,
And the Librarian pronounces doom
Should I blow a bugle in the room.

The Tumbril says Be nicely led,
It's not time yet to lose your head.
No reading, please, anything obscene
On your way to the guillotine.
It would make the Library Association
Blanch and bleach in consternation.

No, I daren't defy it,
This Cathedral of fine quiet.
Forfend that I should cough:
In meditation may nod off.
But, thunder! should I snore
Politely they'd show me to the door,
The wavering lift quavering
Nevermore.

DENIS GLOVER