

The New Kid on the Block

It was the year before the famine
All the fungi were in place
Although they hadn't planned it
They would soon starve the Irish Race

The sporangia from the cull piles
Would fly out across the fields
And while the farmers didn't know it
These would destroy the tuber yields

In time the men of science
Would take up the farmers' plight
And those we call phytopathologists
Would solve the potato blight

But like the war to end all wars
The fight continues yet
Disease is still a problem
And the foe must still be met

With Mendel's contributions
And the likes of Bordeaux mix
We have checked the beastly pathogen
And put him in a fix

But genes are friends and foes alike
And fungi have their share
In fact their adaptability
Is more than crops can bear

In pre-environmental times
When cells were all the rage
Epidemiology and disease control
Were just a nasty phrase

These were the prison years, you see
The Grantors ruled the coup
And looking from within their cells
The Grantees jumped the hoop

But hard upon Ms Carson's heels
Did Van der Plank emerge
And he and others like him
Carried out a needed purge

Then to analyze the system
Was the new kid on the block
And simulators tried their best
The plant disease to mock

We modeled this and modeled that
And quantified disease
But still we could hardly get
The pests to stand at ease

So while the battle has been won
The war could yet be lost
There is the thing call EPA
One wonders what's the cost

Now Borlaug's Revolution Green
Has given food to sup

But Paddock heeds another tune
And locks his knowledge up

And now they say disease
Is but a fleeting thing
And yield-loss is the entity
Of which the Grantors sing

In our desperation
Since the energy is almost spent
We integrated Plant Pathology
It's called Pest Management.

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Although PLANT DISEASE does not normally publish poetry, we think this poem is appropriate. Dr. Schmidt uses the poem in his classes, and other plant pathologists may also wish to use it in their classes.—*The Editors*