

Flow of wine, and flight of cork,
Stroke of knife, and thrust of fork:
But, where'er the board was spread,
Grace, I ween, was never said!

Pulling and tugging the Fisherman sat; 150
And the priest was ready to vomit,
When he hauled out a gentleman, fine and fat,
With a belly as big as a brimming vat,
And a nose as red as a comet.
“A capital stew,” the fisherman said, 155
“With cinnamon and sherry!”
And the abbot turned away his head,
For his brother was lying before him dead,
The mayor of St. Edmund's Bury!

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks, 160
As he took forth a bait from his iron box:
It was a bundle of beautiful things —
A peacock's tail, and a butterfly's wings,
A scarlet slipper, an auburn curl,
A mantle of silk, and a bracelet of pearl, 165
And a packet of letters, from whose sweet fold
Such a stream of delicate odors rolled,
That the abbot fell on his face, and fainted,
And deemed his spirit was half-way sainted.

Sounds seemed dropping from the skies, 170
Stifled whispers, smothered sighs,
And the breath of vernal gales,
And the voice of nightingales:
But the nightingales were mute,
Envious, when an unseen lute 175
Shaped the music of its chords
Into passion's thrilling words:

“Smile, lady, smile! — I will not set
Upon my brow the coronet,
Till thou wilt gather roses white 180
To wear around its gems of light.
Smile, lady, smile! — I will not see

Rivers and Hastings bend the knee,
Till those bewitching lips of thine
Will bid me rise in bliss from mine. 185
Smile, lady, smile! — for who would win
A loveless throne through guilt and sin?
Or who would reign o'er vale and hill,
If woman's heart were rebel still?"

One jerk, and there a lady lay, 190
A lady wondrous fair;
But the rose of her lip had faded away,
And her cheek was as white and as cold as clay,
And torn was her raven hair.
"Ah ha!" said the fisher, in merry guise, 195
"Her gallant was hooked before;"
And the abbot heaved some piteous sighs,
For oft he had blessed those deep blue eyes,
The eyes of Mistress Shore!

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks, 200
As he took forth a bait from his iron box.
Many the cunning sportsman tried,
Many he flung with a frown aside;
A minstrel's harp, and a miser's chest,
A hermit's cowl, and a baron's crest, 205
Jewels of lustre, robes of price,
Tomes of heresy, loaded dice,
And golden cups of the brightest wine
That ever was pressed from the Burgundy vine;
There was a perfume of sulphur and nitre, 210
As he came at last to a bishop's mitre!
From top to toe the abbot shook,
As the fisherman armed his golden hook;
And awfully were his features wrought
By some dark dream or wakened thought. 215
Look how the fearful felon gazes
On the scaffold his country's vengeance raises,
When the lips are cracked and the jaws are dry
With the thirst which only in death shall die:
Mark the mariner's frenzied frown 220
As the swaling wherry settles down,

When peril has numbed the sense and will,
Though the hand and the foot may struggle still:
Wilder far was the abbot's glance,
Deeper far was the abbot's trance: 225
Fixed as a monument, still as air,
He bent no knee, and he breathed no prayer;
But he signed — he knew not why or how —
The sign of the Cross on his clammy brow.

There was turning of keys, and creaking of locks, 230
As he stalked away with his iron box.
“O ho! O ho!
The cock doth crow;
It is time for the fisher to rise and go.
Fair luck to the abbot, fair luck to the shrine! 235
He hath gnawed in twain my choicest line;
Let him swim to the north, let him swim to the south,
The Abbot will carry my hook in his mouth!”

The abbot had preached for many years,
With as clear articulation 240
As ever was heard in the House of Peers
Against Emancipation;
His words had made battalions quake,
Had roused the zeal of martyrs;
Had kept the Court an hour awake, 245
And the King himself three quarters:
But ever, from that hour, 'tis said,
He stammered and he stuttered,
As if an axe went through his head
With every word he uttered. 250
He stuttered o'er blessing, he stuttered o'er ban,
He stuttered, drunk or dry;
And none but he and the fisherman
Could tell the reason why!

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