

him, passing the evenings in the most agreeable conversation imaginable; the adventures of the good fisherman and the prodigious lies he told, being a never-failing source of admiration and delight to Lazzaro. For the fisherman's skill extended far beyond his art, and the rogue contrived to insinuate himself into the good graces of his patron, until the latter was hardly ever easy out of his company.

Thus having one day treated his rustic friend to a noble feast, they began to talk over their wine of the various modes of fishing, all of which was explained to the satisfaction of the host. None, however, seemed to take his fancy so much as the description of the diving net, on which the fisherman dwelt with uncommon enthusiasm, as the most useful and delightful invention in the world. It inspired Lazzaro of immediately witnessing a specimen of this part of the piscatory art, in which great fish can be caught, not with the nets and lines merely but with the very mouth, a drag-net hanging round the neck of the diving fisherman!

"Oh, let us go now! Let us go now!" exclaimed the happy Lazzaro, while, the guest, as usual, expressed himself ready to attend his patron. As it happened to be the middle of summer, nothing could be better; and finishing their dessert, Gabriello took his drag-nets and they went out together.

They bent their way through the Parta a Mere directly towards the Arno, along the fence of poles, above the great bank crowned with alder trees, spreading a most delicious shade. There the fisherman begged his patron to sit down and refresh himself while he observed the manner in which he should proceed.

Having just stripped himself, he bound the nets round his arms and neck, and then, boldly plunging into the river, down he went. But being a complete adept at his business, he rose again very shortly to the surface, bringing up with him at one drag, eight or ten great fish, all of the best kind. This was a real miracle in the eyes of Lazzaro, who could not divine how he could possibly see to catch them under water, and he resolved to ascertain the manner in which it was done. With this view, being a hot summer day, and thinking that a cold bath might refresh him, he prepared, with Gabriello's assistance, to step in.

He was conducted by Gabriello to a shallow part, and when about up to his knees Gabriello left him to his own discretion, only warning him that though the bottom shelved down very gradually, he had better go no further than where a certain post rose above the rest; and pointing it out to him once more, he pursued his business. Lazzaro felt singular pleasure in being thus left to himself, and splashing about, performed all sorts of antics in the water. His eyes were often fixed in admiration upon his friend Gabriello, who every now and then rose from the bottom with a fish in his mouth the better to please his patron, who at this sight could no longer restrain his applause.

"It is very plain now," he cried, "that it must be light under the water, or he could never have seen how to catch that fish in his mouth, besides all the fish in his net. I wish I knew how."

So saying, the next time that he saw Gabriello dive, he imitated the motion by ducking his head, and at the same time losing his footing, slipped gently down, till he not only reached the post, but passed it with his head still under water.

When he fairly got out of his depth, still trying whether he could see it appeared a strange thing to him; for he could no longer get his breath, and he endeavored in vain to fight his way up again, the water pouring in at his mouth and ears, at his nose and eyes, in such a way that he could see nothing. In short, the current catching him, bore him away in perfect amazement, and he was too far gone to cry for help.

Gabriello was in the meantime employed in diving down into a hole he had discovered near the stakes, full of fish, which he was handing into his net with the greatest alacrity while his poor friend and patron was already more than half dead, having now come up and gone down again for the third time, and at the fourth he rose no more.

Just at this moment, Gabriello, with a prodigious draught, again appeared, and turning round with a joyous face to look at Lazzaro, what was his surprise and terror when he found that his master was gone!

Gazing around with the hope of perceiving him somewhere, he only found his clothes, just as he had left them. In the utmost alarm he ran again to the water, and in a short time