



## The Virgin of the Fishes.

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*By R. F. O' Connor.*



It was the dawn, — a sweet Spring dawn, with all its fresh fragrance and coolness. The sky was not yet blue, and the moon's silvery disk continued shining amid the palling stars. In the distance, fishing boats with spreading sails were gliding over the amethyst — colored sea, steering toward the shore with their nets full of fish caught by moonlight.

The fishmongers were gathering in the vast square of the city, coming from every quarter, — some from Wondello, others from Acqua Santa and Falsa but particularly from Sferracavallo. Here and there they go, with their supple bodies and hamstrings of steel, carrying on their brown heads hampers full of the product of the fishing, clad in no other garment than a simple bright colored shirt, and large trousers of coarse white cloth tucked up above the knee.

The gathering is complete. Each one stands before his basket of fish still palpitating with a remnant of life. Suddenly the crier's voice is heard, — a sonorous voice which rings through the pure air loud as a trumpet. The marketing is quickly done: buyers and sellers are in a hurry to get home, where the little family is anxiously awaiting father's return.