

THE FISHERMAN

Translated from the German of Goethe

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The waters swirled, the waters rose,
A fisherman sat there,
With rod and line in calm repose,
All tranquil was his air.

He sat at ease in peaceful mood,
Then saw before his eyes
The waters part and from the flood
A gleaming mermaid rise.

Softly she sang with tears and smiles
"Why lure my children sweet
By cunning arts and human wiles
Up to this deadly heat?"

Ah! if you knew that life so fair
Of fish on the sea's floor,
You'd soon come down, those joys to share
And walk the earth no more.

Do not the sun and moon both have
Their beauty in the sea,
Shine not their faces from the wave
In two-fold majesty?

Has that deep sky for you no call?
Does not that liquid blue
Reflect your face, your soul enthrall
In the eternal dew?"

The waters swirled, the billows broke,
Upon his naked feet,
And longing in his heart awoke
As if his love he'd greet.

She sang to him, her words were sad,
Doomed was the luckless swain,
She drew him down, he sank half-glad,
And was not seen again.

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