

The Monks of St. Mark

Thomas Love Peacock

Table of Contents

<u>The Monks of St. Mark</u>	1
<u>Thomas Love Peacock</u>	1

The Monks of St. Mark

Thomas Love Peacock

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

'Tis midnight: the sky is with clouds overcast;
The forest—trees bend in the loud—rushing blast;
The rain strongly beats on these time—hallow'd spires;
The lightning pours swiftly its blue—pointed fires;
Triumphant the tempest—fiend rides in the dark,
And howls round the old abbey—walls of St. Mark!

The thunder, whose roaring the trav'ler appals,
Seems as if with the ground it would level the walls:
But in vain pours the storm—king this horrible rout;
The uproar within drowns the uproar without;
For the friars, with Bacchus, not Satan, to grapple,
The refect'ry have met in, instead of the chapel.

'Stead of singing Te Deums, on ground—pressing knees,
They were piously bawling songs, catches, and glees:
Or, all speakers, no hearers, unceasing, untir'd,
Each stoutly held forth, by the spirit inspir'd,
Till the Abbot, who only the flock could controul,
Exclaim'd: "Augustine! pr'ythee push round the bowl!"

The good brother obey'd; but, oh direful mishap!
Threw its scalding contents in Jeronimo's lap!
And o'er his bare feet as the boiling tide stream'd,
Poor Augustine fretted, Jeronimo scream'd,
While Pedro protested, it vex'd him infernally,
To see such good beverage taken "externally!"

The Abbot, Francisco, then feelingly said:
"Let that poor wounded devil be carried to bed:
And let Augustine, who, I boldly advance,
Is the whole and sole cause of this fatal mischance,
If e'er to forgiveness he dare to aspire,
Now bear to his cell the unfortunate friar."

He rose to obey, than a snail rather quicker,

The Monks of St. Mark

But, finding his strength much diminish'd by liquor,
Declar'd, with a hiccup, he scarcely could stand,
And begged brother Pedro to lend him a hand.
Brother Pedro consented, but all was not right,
Till Nicholas offer'd to carry a light.

By the head and the feet then their victim they held,
Who with pain and with fear most tremendously yell'd;
And with one little lamp that scarce shone through the gloom,
In path curvilinear march'd out of the room,
And, unheeding the sound of the rain and the blast,
Through the long dismal corridor fearlessly pass'd.

From the right to the left, from the left to the right
Brother Nicholas reel'd, inconsiderate wight!
For not seeing the stairs to the hall-floor that led,
Instead of his heels he soon stood on his head:
He rolls to the bottom, the lamp-flame expires,
And darkness envelopes the wondering friars!

He squall'd, for the burning oil pour'd on his hand;
Bewilder'd did Pedro and Augustine stand:
Then loud roar'd the thunder, and Pedro in dread,
Abandon'd his hold of Jeronimo's head,
And Prone on the floor fell this son of the cowl,
And howl'd, deeply-smarting, a terrible howl!

Poor Augustine's bosom with terror was cold,
On finding his burthen thus slide from his hold:
Then, cautiously stealing, and groping around,
He felt himself suddenly struck to the ground;
Yells, groans, and strange noises, were heard in the dark,
And, trembling and sweating, he pray'd to St. Mark I

Meanwhile, the good Abbot was boosing about;
When, a little alarm'd by the tumult without,
Occasion'd by poor Brother Nich'las's fall
From the corridor-stairs to the floor of the hall,
Like a true jolly friend of good orderly laws,
He serpentin'd out to discover the cause.

Bewilder'd by liquor, by haste, and by fright,
He forgot that he stood in great need of a light;
When hiccuping, reeling, and curving along,
And humming a stave of a jolly old song,
He receiv'd a rude shock from an object unseen,
For he came in full contact with Saint Augustine!

By Jeronimo's carcass tripp'd up unawares,
He was instantly hurl'd down the corridor-stairs;
Brother Nicholas there, from the floor cold and damp,

The Monks of St. Mark

Was rising with what yet remain'd of his lamp;
And, the worthy superior's good supper to spoil,
Regal'd his strange guest with a mouthful of oil!

Thence sprung the dire tumult, which, rising so near,
Had fill'd Augustine with confusion and fear:
But the sons of St. Mark, now appearing wit tapers,
At once put an end to his pray'rs and his vapors;
They reel'd back to their bowls, laugh'd at care and foul weather,
And were shortly all under the table together.