

Robert Southey (1774-1843)

2 *Bishop Bruno*

Bishop Bruno awoke in the dead midnight,  
And he heard his heart beat loud with affright:  
He dreamt he had rung the Palace bell,  
And the sound it gave was his passing knell.

Bishop Bruno smiled at his fears so vain, 5  
He turned to sleep and he dreamt again;  
He rang at the palace gate once more,  
And Death was the Porter that open'd the door.

He started up at the fearful dream,  
And he heard at his window the screech-owl scream; 10  
Bishop Bruno slept no more that night, . .  
Oh! glad was he when he saw the day-light!

Now he goes forth in proud array,  
For he with the Emperor dines to-day;  
There was not a Baron in Germany 15  
That went with a nobler train than he.

Before and behind his soldiers ride,  
The people throng'd to see their pride;  
They bow'd the head, and the knee they bent,  
But nobody blest him as he went. 20

So he went on stately and proud,  
When he heard a voice that cried aloud,  
"Ho! ho! Bishop Bruno! you travel with glee, . .  
But I would have you know, you travel to me!"

Behind and before and on either side, 25  
He look'd, but nobody he espied;

And the Bishop at that grew cold with fear,  
For he heard the words distinct and clear.

And when he rang at the Palace bell,  
He almost expected to hear his knell; 30  
And when the Porter turn'd the key,  
He almost expected Death to see.

But soon the Bishop recover'd his glee,  
For the Emperor welcomed him royally;  
And now the tables were spread, and there 35  
Were choicest wines and dainty fare.

And now the Bishop had blest the meat,  
When a voice was heard as he sat in his seat, . .  
"With the Emperor now you are dining with glee,  
But know, Bishop Bruno! you sup with me!" 40

The Bishop then grew pale with affright,  
And suddenly lost his appetite;  
All the wine and dainty cheer  
Could not comfort his heart that was sick with fear.

But by little and little recovered he, 45  
For the wine went flowing merrily,  
Till at length he forgot his former dread,  
And his cheeks again grew rosy red.

When he sat down to the royal fare  
Bishop Bruno was the saddest man there; 50  
But when the masquers enter'd the hall,  
He was the merriest man of all.

Then from amid the masquers' crowd  
There went a voice hollow and loud, . .  
"You have past the day, Bishop Bruno, in glee; 55  
But you must pass the night with me!"

His cheek grows pale, and his eye-balls glare,  
And stiff round his tonsure bristled his hair;  
With that there came one from the masquers' band,  
And took the Bishop by the hand. 60

The bony hand suspended his breath,  
His marrow grew cold at the touch of Death;  
On saints in vain he attempted to call,  
Bishop Bruno fell dead in the palace hall.

1798

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