

Thomas Hood (1799-1845)

15 *The Supper Superstition*

A Pathetic Ballad

'Oh flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified!' — *Mercutio*.

I

'Twas twelve o'clock by Chelsea chimes,
When all in hungry trim,
Good Mister Jupp sat down to sup
With wife, and Kate, and Jim.

II

Said he, 'Upon this dainty cod 5
How bravely I shall sup' —
When, whiter than the table-cloth,
A GHOST came rising up!

III

'O, father dear, O mother dear, 10
Dear Kate, and brother Jim, —
You know when some one went to sea, —
Don't cry — but I am him!

IV

'You hope some day with fond embrace 15
To greet your absent Jack,
But oh, I am come here to say
I'm never coming back!

V

'From Alexandria we set sail, 20
With corn, and oil, and figs,
But steering "too much Sow," we struck
Upon the Sow and Pigs!

VI

'The ship we pump'd till we could see
Old England from the tops;
When down she went with all our hands,

Right in the Channel's Chops.

VII

'Just give a look in Norey's chart, 25
The very place it tells;
I think it says twelve fathom deep,
Clay bottom, mix'd with shells.

VIII

'Well, there we are till "hands aloft," 30
We have at last a call;
The pug I had for brother Jim,
Kate's parrot, too, and all.

IX

'But oh, my spirit cannot rest, 35
In Davy Jones's sod,
Till I've appear'd to you and said, —
Don't sup on that 'ere Cod!

X

'You live on land, and little think 40
What passes in the sea;
Last Sunday week, at 2 p.m.,
That Cod was picking me!

XI

'Those oysters, too, that look so plump,
And seem so nicely done,
They put my corpse in many shells,
Instead of only one.

XII

'O, do not eat those oysters then, 45
And do not touch the shrimps;
When I was in my briny grave,
They suck'd my blood like imps!

XIII

'Don't eat what brutes would never eat, 50
The brutes I used to pat,

They'll know the smell they used to smell,
Just try the dog and cat!

XIV

The Spirit fled — they wept his fate,
And cried, Alack, alack!
At last up started brother Jim, 55
'Let's try if Jack was Jack!'

XV

They call'd the Dog, they call'd the Cat,
And little Kitten too,
And down they put the Cod and sauce,
To see what brutes would do. 60

XVI

Old Tray licked all the oysters up,
Puss never stood at crimps,
But munch'd the Cod — and little Kit
Quite feasted on the shrimps!

XVII

The thing was odd, and minus Cod 65
And sauce, they stood like posts;
O, prudent folks, for fear of hoax,
Put no belief in Ghosts!

1839

(From *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hood*. Ed.
with Notes by Walter Jerrold. Oxford UP, 1911)