

Possesses a smooth back, will strive and sweat
 Between the looser meshes of the net 30
 And with much slippery writhing get away
 And spoil the catch, finding for all a way.
 The lazy, hairy polypus will stick
 To the rocks, escaping capture by this trick.
 He'll change his colour to accommodate
 His own surroundings; greedily the bait
 He'll grab and on the line he finally
 Loosens his arms, now raised above the sea.
 And vomits forth the hook. The angler's prey
 The mullet with his tail will strike away 40
 And gather as it falls. The pike will race,
 Inflamed by violent anger, and will chase
 The waves, borne here and there, and toss his head
 Until the wound is widened, gaping red,
 And the fierce barb drops out. The lamprey knows
 Hi own ability to harm his foes –
 He'll bite them at close quarters, threatening
 Even when caught. The anthias will bring
 His powers to bear with weapons on his spine –
 By turning on his back he cuts the line 50
 And the implanted hook, while all the rest
 Of the beasts in dense woods empty fears infest
 Or drive insane or force them all to face
 Impossible odds. They're bidden to give chase
 Or closely fight by their own nature. Lo!
 The impetuous lion will leap to overthrow

The hunter's ranks and brave their weapons ; he
Approaches with more ardent bravery,
Tossing his muscles, rage joined with his might,
Then falls, his strength leading to endless night. 60

From his Lucanian den, with waddling gait,
The ugly bear comes with his lumbering gait
And stolid fierceness. The hunted boar declares
His anger with his bristles and prepares
To face the steel, yet dies when spears are thrust
Straight through his vitals. Other animals trust
Their speed, like tawny hinds and hares in flight.

We see the steed's greater mobility
And highborn grace, who gain the victory 70
Through courage as they revel in the prize.

Through seven laps he gains the crown, his eyes
Raised high, applauded by the crowds. Now decked
In a lion's skin, he courts the mob's respect,
Swelling with pride, and tramples haughtily
The ground and then returns, now heavily
Laden with spoils. What is the chief prowess
Of dogs? It is their great courageousness,
Their fortitude and their sagacity

In the pursuit, they sniff the air, they see, 80
Their muzzles down, the tracks and drive their prey
With barks, and, should the animal get away
From him once battle has been joined, the hound
Pursues over both flat and hilly ground.

On skill our toils depends – all hope lies there.
Yet I would not encourage you to fare

Upon the sea or try the ocean wide:

Between these two extremes your line will guide

More profitably, whether these waters be

Studded with rocks (such a locality

90

Needs pliant rods; the open coastline, though,

Needs nets), or whether to the sea below

Mountains and shivery shadows (some fish flee,

Some seek, the bait) or whether the shallow sea

Is green with grass beneath and breeds delays

And waves the soft seaweed. In various ways

Nature has built the dwellings of the deep,

Nor has she wished that all the fish must keep

Together. Some fish, like the mackerel,

Swift carp and turbot, are content to dwell

100

In the open sea – the black-backed gannard, too,

An expensive sturgeon, a fish who

Is unknown to the seas of Italy,

And the fierce swordfish whose atrocity

Is like a sword-thrust, the remora, too,

The tiny sucking-fish (which yet can do

A lot of harm to ships, strange to relate)

And, rudder-ship, you who are the vessel's mate,

Friend of the line they chase across the sea,

Always dogging the shining foam, and he

110

Who lurks at the edge of rocks, the adventurous

Pinnace, as well as the bream, so nauseous

In taste, and the stone-brass of similar hue,

The mullet that glows red amid the blue

Of the water, and the sargus commonly

Known for its marks, the rockfish, too, that we
 Know well, the bream whose gilded neck shines bright,
 The tawny synodons, that hermaphrodite,
 The self-conceiving channe, father and mother
 To its own self, and then there is another 120
 Breed of rockfish, small-mouthed and green of hue,
 The painted mormyrs, and the Gilt-Head, too,
 Mimicking gold, the bluish umber, fleet
 Pike, perch, goat-fish, blacktail whose tail can beat
 Most others in renown, then, with a sheen
 Of glowing gold, the lamprey, and the green
 Sea-carp, and the conger which inflicts upon
 Its own kind cruel wounds, the scorpion
 Who, caught, will sting you, and the bluefish we
 Won't see on summer days; contrarily 130
 There are those who in grassy sand delight –
 The scar, for instance, who alone will bite
 Once-eaten food, fish whose fecundity
 Is great, the Maenae; and the lamyri;
 The picarel; foul chromis; salpa, who
 Is rightly held most worthless; phycis, too,
 Who imitates birds' nests beneath the main;
 The tenuous-blooded mullet; then again
 The bright soles; and the sparrow-fish whose hue
 Is similar; the excellent turbot, too, 140
 That lives upon the Adriatic shore;
 The broad hares; soft-backed frog-fish; and one more,
 The slippery gudgeon which upon its back
 Has more than one spine with which to attack;

And sinuous prawns; the donkey-fish (the name
Is undeserved); and sturgeon, you whose fame
In foreign seas is great...