
*The Canterbury Tales and
Other Poems
Part 4: The Reeve's Tale*



by Geoffrey Chaucer

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THE PROLOGUE

When folk had laughed all at this nice case
Of Absolon and Hendy Nicholas,
Diverse folk diversely they said,
But for the more part they laugh'd and play'd¹;
And at this tale I saw no man him grieve,
But it were only Osewold the Reeve.
Because he was of carpenteres craft,
A little ire is in his hearte laft²;
He gan to grudge³ and blamed it a lite⁴.
"So the⁵ I," quoth he, "full well could I him quite⁶
With bearing⁷ of a proude miller's eye, (*Note 1*)
If that me list to speak of ribaldry.
But I am old; me list not play for age; (*Note 2*)
Grass time is done, my fodder is now forage.
This white top⁸ writeth mine olde years;
Mine heart is also moulded⁹ as mine hairs;
And I do fare as doth an open-erse¹⁰; (*Note 3*)
That ilke¹¹ fruit is ever longer warse,
Till it be rotten in mullok or in stre¹².
We olde men, I dread, so fare we;
Till we be rotten, can we not be ripe;
We hop¹³ away, while that the world will pipe;
For in our will there sticketh aye a nail,
To have an hoary head and a green tail,
As hath a leek; for though our might be gone,

¹were diverted.

²left.

³murmur.

⁴little.

⁵thrive.

⁶match.

⁷dimming.

⁸head.

⁹grown mouldy.

¹⁰medlar.

¹¹same.

¹²on the ground or in straw.

¹³dance.

Our will desireth folly ever-in-one¹⁴.
 For when we may not do, then will we speak,
 Yet in our ashes cold does fire reek¹⁵. (Note 4)
 Four gledes¹⁶ have we, which I shall devise¹⁷,
 Vaunting, and lying, anger, covetise¹⁸.
 These foure sparks belongen unto eld.
 Our olde limbes well may be unweld¹⁹,
 But will shall never fail us, that is sooth.
 And yet have I alway a coltes tooth, (Note 5)
 As many a year as it is passed and gone
 Since that my tap of life began to run;
 For sickerly²⁰, when I was born, anon
 Death drew the tap of life, and let it gon:
 And ever since hath so the tap y-run,
 Till that almost all empty is the tun.
 The stream of life now droppeth on the chimb. (Note 6)
 The silly tongue well may ring and chime
 Of wretchedness, that passed is full yore²¹:
 With olde folk, save dotage, is no more. (Note 7)

When that our Host had heard this sermoning,
 He gan to speak as lordly as a king,
 And said; "To what amounteth all this wit?
 What? shall we speak all day of holy writ?
 The devil made a Reeve for to preach,
 As of a souter²² a shipman, or a leach²³. (Note 8)
 Say forth thy tale, and tarry not the time: (Note 9)
 Lo here is Deptford, and 'tis half past prime: (Note 10)
 Lo Greenwich, where many a shrew is in.
 It were high time thy tale to begin."

"Now, sirs," quoth then this Osewold the Reeve,
 I pray you all that none of you do grieve,
 Though I answer, and somewhat set his hove²⁴, (Note 11)
 For lawful is force off with force to shove²⁵.
 This drunken miller hath y-told us here
 How that beguiled was a carpentere,
 Paraventure²⁶ in scorn, for I am one:
 And, by your leave, I shall him quite anon.

¹⁴continually.

¹⁵smoke.

¹⁶coals.

¹⁷describe.

¹⁸covetousness.

¹⁹unwieldy.

²⁰certainly.

²¹long.

²²cobbler.

²³surgeon.

²⁴hood.

²⁵to repel force by force.

²⁶perhqps.

Right in his churlish termes will I speak,
I pray to God his necke might to-break.
He can well in mine eye see a stalk,
But in his own he cannot see a balk." (*Note 12*)

NOTES TO THE PROLOGUE

1. "With blearing of a proude miller's eye": dimming his eye; playing off a joke on him.
2. "Me list not play for age": age takes away my zest for drollery.
3. The medlar, the fruit of the mespilus tree, is only edible when rotten.
4. Yet in our ashes cold does fire reek: "ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires."
5. A colt's tooth; a wanton humour, a relish for pleasure.
6. Chimb: The rim of a barrel where the staves project beyond the head.
7. With olde folk, save dotage, is no more: Dotage is all that is left them; that is, they can only dwell fondly, dote, on the past.
8. Souter: cobbler; Scottice, "sutor;" from Latin, "suere," to sew.
9. "Ex sutore medicus" (a surgeon from a cobbler) and "ex sutore naucleus" (a seaman or pilot from a cobbler) were both proverbial expressions in the Middle Ages.
10. Half past prime: half-way between prime and tierce; about half-past seven in the morning.
11. Set his hove; like "set their caps;" as in the description of the Manciple in the Prologue, who "set their aller cap". "Hove" or "houfe," means "hood;" and the phrase signifies to be even with, outwit.
12. The illustration of the mote and the beam, from Matthew.

THE TALE

(Note 1)

At Trompington, not far from Cantebrig²⁷,
There goes a brook, and over that a brig,
Upon the whiche brook there stands a mill:
And this is very sooth²⁸ that I you tell.
A miller was there dwelling many a day,
As any peacock he was proud and gay:
Pipen he could, and fish, and nettes bete²⁹,
And turne cups, and wrestle well, and shete³⁰.
Aye by his belt he bare a long pavade³¹.
And of his sword full trenchant was the blade.
A jolly popper³² bare he in his pouch;
There was no man for peril durst him touch.
A Sheffield whittle³³ bare he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camuse³⁴ was his nose. (Note 2)
As pilled³⁵ as an ape's was his skull.
He was a market-beter³⁶ at the full.
There durste no wight hand upon him legge³⁷,
That he ne swore anon he should abegge³⁸.
A thief he was, for sooth, of corn and meal,
And that a sly, and used well to steal.
His name was hoten deinous Simekin³⁹
A wife he hadde, come of noble kin:
The parson of the town her father was.
With her he gave full many a pan of brass,

²⁷Cambridge.

²⁸complete truth.

²⁹prepare.

³⁰shoot.

³¹poniard.

³²dagger.

³³small knife.

³⁴flat.

³⁵peeled, bald.

³⁶brawler.

³⁷lay.

³⁸suffer the penalty.

³⁹called "Disdainful Simkin".

For that Simkin should in his blood ally.
 She was y-foster'd in a nunnery:
 For Simkin woulde no wife, as he said,
 But she were well y-nourish'd, and a maid,
 To saven his estate and yeomanry:
 And she was proud, and pert as is a pie⁴⁰.
 A full fair sight it was to see them two;
 On holy days before her would he go
 With his tippet⁴¹ y-bound about his head;
 And she came after in a gite⁴² of red, (Note 3)
 And Simkin hadde hosen of the same.
 There durste no wight call her aught but Dame:
 None was so hardy, walking by that way,
 That with her either durste rage or play⁴³,
 But if⁴⁴ he would be slain by Simekin
 With pavade, or with knife, or bodekin.
 For jealous folk be per'lous evermo':
 Algate⁴⁵ they would their wives wende so⁴⁶
 And eke for she was somewhat smutterlich⁴⁷,
 She was as dign⁴⁸ as water in a ditch,
 And all so full of hoker⁴⁹, and bismare⁵⁰.
 Her thoughte that a lady should her spare⁵¹,
 What for her kindred, and her nortelrie⁵²
 That she had learned in the nunnery.

One daughter hadde they betwixt them two
 Of twenty year, withouten any mo,
 Saving a child that was of half year age,
 In cradle it lay, and was a proper page⁵³.
 This wenche thick and well y-grown was,
 With camuse⁵⁴ nose, and eyen gray as glass;
 With buttocks broad, and breastes round and high;
 But right fair was her hair, I will not lie.
 The parson of the town, for she was fair,
 In purpose was to make of her his heir
 Both of his chattels and his messuage,

⁴⁰ magpie.

⁴¹ hood.

⁴² gown.

⁴³ use freedom.

⁴⁴ unless.

⁴⁵ unless.

⁴⁶ so behave.

⁴⁷ dirty.

⁴⁸ nasty.

⁴⁹ ill-nature.

⁵⁰ abusive speech.

⁵¹ not judge her hardly.

⁵² nurturing, education.

⁵³ boy.

⁵⁴ flat.

And strange he made it⁵⁵ of her marriage.
 His purpose was for to bestow her high
 Into some worthy blood of ancestry.
 For holy Church's good may be dispended⁵⁶
 On holy Church's blood that is descended.
 Therefore he would his holy blood honour
 Though that he holy Churche should devour.

Great soken⁵⁷ hath this miller, out of doubt,
 With wheat and malt, of all the land about;
 And namely⁵⁸ there was a great college
 Men call the Soler Hall at Cantebreg, (*Note 4*)
 There was their wheat and eke their malt y-ground.
 And on a day it happed in a stound⁵⁹,
 Sick lay the manciple⁶⁰ of a malady, (*Note 5*)
 Men weened wisly⁶¹ that he shoulde die.
 For which this miller stole both meal and corn
 An hundred times more than befor.
 For theretofore he stole but courteously,
 But now he was a thief outrageously.
 For which the warden chid and made fare⁶²,
 But thereof set the miller not a tare⁶³;
 He crack'd his boast⁶⁴, and swore it was not so.

Then were there younge poore scholars two,
 That dwelled in the hall of which I say;
 Testif⁶⁵ they were, and lusty for to play; (*Note 6*)
 And only for their mirth and revelry
 Upon the warden busily they cry,
 To give them leave for but a little stound⁶⁶
 To go to mill, and see their corn y-ground:
 And hardily⁶⁷ they durste lay their neck,
 The miller should not steal them half a peck
 Of corn by sleight, nor them by force bereave⁶⁸
 And at the last the warden give them leave:
 John hight the one, and Alein hight the other,
 Of one town were they born, that highte Strother, (*Note 7*)
 Far in the North, I cannot tell you where.

⁵⁵he made it a matter of difficulty.

⁵⁶spent.

⁵⁷toll taken for grinding.

⁵⁸especially.

⁵⁹suddenly.

⁶⁰steward.

⁶¹thought certainly.

⁶²fuss.

⁶³he cared not a rush.

⁶⁴talked big.

⁶⁵headstrong.

⁶⁶short time.

⁶⁷boldly.

⁶⁸take away.

This Alein he made ready all his gear,
 And on a horse the sack he cast anon:
 Forth went Alein the clerk, and also John,
 With good sword and with buckler by their side.
 John knew the way, him needed not no guide,
 And at the mill the sack adown he lay'th.

Alein spake first; "All hail, Simon, in faith,
 How fares thy faire daughter, and thy wife."
 "Alein, welcome," quoth Simkin, "by my life,
 And John also: how now, what do ye here?"
 "By God, Simon," quoth John, "need has no peer⁶⁹
 Him serve himself behoves that has no swain⁷⁰,
 Or else he is a fool, as clerkes sayn.
 Our manciple I hope⁷¹ he will be dead,
 So workes aye the wanges⁷² in his head: (Note 8)
 And therefore is I come, and eke Alein,
 To grind our corn and carry it home again:
 I pray you speed us hence as well ye may."
 "It shall be done," quoth Simkin, "by my fay.
 What will ye do while that it is in hand?"
 "By God, right by the hopper will I stand,"
 Quoth John, "and see how that the corn goes in.
 Yet saw I never, by my father's kin,
 How that the hopper waggis to and fro."
 Alein answered, "John, and wilt thou so?
 Then will I be beneath, by my crown,
 And see how that the meale falls adown
 Into the trough, that shall be my disport⁷³:
 For, John, in faith I may be of your sort;
 I is as ill a miller as is ye."

This miller smiled at their nicety⁷⁴,
 And thought, "All this is done but for a wile.
 They weenen⁷⁵ that no man may them beguile,
 But by my thrift yet shall I blear their eye, (Note 9)
 For all the sleight in their philosophy.
 The more quaint knackes⁷⁶ that they make,
 The more will I steal when that I take.
 Instead of flour yet will I give them bren⁷⁷,
 The greatest clerks are not the wisest men,
 As whilom to the wolf thus spake the mare: (Note 10)
 Of all their art ne count I not a tare."

⁶⁹equal.

⁷⁰servant.

⁷¹expect.

⁷²cheek-teeth.

⁷³amusement.

⁷⁴simplicity.

⁷⁵think.

⁷⁶odd little tricks.

⁷⁷bran.

Out at the door he went full privily,
 When that he saw his time, softly.
 He looked up and down, until he found
 The clerkes' horse, there as he stood y-bound
 Behind the mill, under a levesell⁷⁸: (Note 11)
 And to the horse he went him fair and well,
 And stripped off the bridle right anon.
 And when the horse was loose, he gan to gon
 Toward the fen, where wilde mares run,
 Forth, with "Wehee!" through thick and eke through thin.
 This miller went again, no word he said,
 But did his note⁷⁹, and with these clerkes play'd, (Note 12)
 Till that their corn was fair and well y-ground.
 And when the meal was sacked and y-bound,
 Then John went out, and found his horse away,
 And gan to cry, "Harow, and well-away!
 Our horse is lost: Alein, for Godde's bones,
 Step on thy feet; come off, man, all at once:
 Alas! our warden has his palfrey lorn⁸⁰.
 This Alein all forgot, both meal and corn;
 All was out of his mind his husbandry⁸¹.
 "What, which way is he gone?" he gan to cry.
 The wife came leaping inward at a renne⁸²,
 She said; "Alas! your horse went to the fen
 With wilde mares, as fast as he could go.
 Unthank⁸³ come on his hand that bound him so
 And his that better should have knit the rein."
 "Alas!" quoth John, "Alein, for Christes pain
 Lay down thy sword, and I shall mine also.
 I is full wight⁸⁴, God wate⁸⁵, as is a roe.
 By Godde's soul he shall not scape us bathe⁸⁶. (Note 13)
 Why n' had thou put the capel⁸⁷ in the lathe⁸⁸?
 Ill hail, Alein, by God thou is a fonne⁸⁹."
 These silly clerkes have full fast y-run
 Toward the fen, both Alein and eke John;
 And when the miller saw that they were gone,
 He half a bushel of their flour did take,
 And bade his wife go knead it in a cake.
 He said; I trow, the clerkes were afeard,

⁷⁸arbour.

⁷⁹business.

⁸⁰lost.

⁸¹careful watch over the corn.

⁸²run.

⁸³ill luck, a curse.

⁸⁴swift.

⁸⁵knows.

⁸⁶both.

⁸⁷horse.

⁸⁸barn.

⁸⁹fool.

Yet can a miller make a clerkes beard⁹⁰, (Note 15)
 For all his art: yea, let them go their way!
 Lo where they go! yea, let the children play:
 They get him not so lightly, by my crown."
 These silly clerkes runnen up and down
 With "Keep, keep; stand, stand; jossa⁹¹, warderere.
 Go whistle thou, and I shall keep⁹² him here."
 But shortly, till that it was very night
 They coulde not, though they did all their might,
 Their capel catch, he ran alway so fast:
 Till in a ditch they caught him at the last.

Weary and wet, as beastes in the rain,
 Comes silly John, and with him comes Alein.
 "Alas," quoth John, "the day that I was born!
 Now are we driv'n till hething⁹³ and till scorn.
 Our corn is stol'n, men will us fonne⁹⁴
 Both the warden, and eke our fellows all,
 And namely⁹⁵ the miller, well-away!"
 Thus plained John, as he went by the way
 Toward the mill, and Bayard⁹⁶ in his hand.
 The miller sitting by the fire he fand⁹⁷.
 For it was night, and forther⁹⁸ might they not,
 But for the love of God they him besought
 Of herberow⁹⁹ and ease, for their penny.
 The miller said again, "If there be any,
 Such as it is, yet shall ye have your part.
 Mine house is strait, but ye have learned art;
 Ye can by arguments maken a place
 A mile broad, of twenty foot of space.
 Let see now if this place may suffice,
 Or make it room with speech, as is your guise¹⁰⁰."
 "Now, Simon," said this John, "by Saint Cuthberd
 Aye is thou merry, and that is fair answer'd.
 I have heard say, man shall take of two things,
 Such as he findes, or such as he brings.
 But specially I pray thee, hoste dear,
 Gar (Note 16) us have meat and drink, and make us cheer,
 And we shall pay thee truly at the full:

⁹⁰cheat a scholar.

⁹¹turn.

⁹²catch.

⁹³mockery.

⁹⁴fools.

⁹⁵especially.

⁹⁶the bay horse.

⁹⁷found.

⁹⁸go their way.

⁹⁹lodging.

¹⁰⁰fashion.

With empty hand men may not hawkes tull¹⁰¹.
Lo here our silver ready for to spend."

This miller to the town his daughter send
For ale and bread, and roasted them a goose,
And bound their horse, he should no more go loose:
And them in his own chamber made a bed.
With sheetes and with chalons¹⁰² fair y-spread, (*Note 17*)
Not from his owen bed ten foot or twelve:
His daughter had a bed all by herselfe,
Right in the same chamber by and by¹⁰³.
It might no better be, and cause why,
There was no roomer herberow¹⁰⁴ in the place.
They suppen, and they speaken of solace,
And drinken ever strong ale at the best.
Aboute midnight went they all to rest.
Well had this miller varnished his head;
Full pale he was, fordrunken, and nought red¹⁰⁵.
He yoxed¹⁰⁶, and he spake thorough the nose,
As he were in the quakke¹⁰⁷, or in the pose¹⁰⁸.
To bed he went, and with him went his wife,
As any jay she light was and jolife¹⁰⁹,
So was her jolly whistle well y-wet.
The cradle at her beddes feet was set,
To rock, and eke to give the child to suck.
And when that drunken was all in the crock¹¹⁰ (*Note 18*)
To bedde went the daughter right anon,
To bedde went Alein, and also John.
There was no more; needed them no dwale. (*Note 19*)
This miller had, so wisly¹¹¹ bibbed ale,
That as a horse he snorted in his sleep,
Nor of his tail behind he took no keep¹¹².
His wife bare him a burdoun¹¹³, a full strong; (*Note 20*)
Men might their routing¹¹⁴ hearen a furlong.
The wenche routed eke for company.
Alein the clerk, that heard this melody,
He poked John, and saide: "Sleepest thou?"

¹⁰¹allure.

¹⁰²blankets.

¹⁰³side by side.

¹⁰⁴roomier lodging.

¹⁰⁵without his wits.

¹⁰⁶hiccuped.

¹⁰⁷grunting.

¹⁰⁸catarrh.

¹⁰⁹jolly.

¹¹⁰pitcher.

¹¹¹certainly.

¹¹²heed.

¹¹³bass.

¹¹⁴snoring.

Heardest thou ever such a song ere now?
 Lo what a compline (*Note 21*) is y-mell¹¹⁵ them all.
 A wilde fire upon their bodies fall,
 Who hearken'd ever such a ferly¹¹⁶ thing? (*Note 22*)
 Yea, they shall have the flow'r of ill ending!
 This longe night there tides me¹¹⁷ no rest.
 But yet no force¹¹⁸, all shall be for the best.
 For, John," said he, "as ever may I thrive,
 If that I may, yon wenche will I swive¹¹⁹.
 Some easement¹²⁰ has law y-shapen¹²¹ us
 For, John, there is a law that sayeth thus,
 That if a man in one point be aggriev'd,
 That in another he shall be reliev'd.
 Our corn is stol'n, soothly it is no nay,
 And we have had an evil fit to-day.
 And since I shall have none amendement
 Against my loss, I will have easement:
 By Godde's soul, it shall none, other be."
 This John answer'd; Alein, advise thee¹²²:
 The miller is a perilous man," he said,
 "And if that he out of his sleep abraid¹²³,
 He mighte do us both a villainy¹²⁴."
 Alein answer'd; "I count him not a fly.
 And up he rose, and by the wench he crept.
 This wenche lay upright, and fast she slept,
 Till he so nigh was, ere she might espy,
 That it had been too late for to cry:
 And, shortly for to say, they were at one.
 Now play, Alein, for I will speak of John.

 This John lay still a furlong way (*Note 23*) or two,
 And to himself he made ruth¹²⁵ and woe.
 "Alas!" quoth he, "this is a wicked jape¹²⁶;
 Now may I say, that I is but an ape.
 Yet has my fellow somewhat for his harm;
 He has the miller's daughter in his arm:
 He auntred¹²⁷ him, and hath his needes sped,
 And I lie as a draff-sack in my bed;

¹¹⁵among.

¹¹⁶strange.

¹¹⁷comes to me.

¹¹⁸matter.

¹¹⁹enjoy carnally.

¹²⁰satisfaction.

¹²¹provided.

¹²²have a care.

¹²³awaked.

¹²⁴mischieff.

¹²⁵wail.

¹²⁶trick.

¹²⁷adventured.

And when this jape is told another day,
 I shall be held a daffe¹²⁸ or a cockenay (*Note 24*)
 I will arise, and aunte¹²⁹ it, by my fay:
 Unhardy is unsely, (*Note 25*) as men say."
 And up he rose, and softly he went
 Unto the cradle, and in his hand it hent¹³⁰,
 And bare it soft unto his beddes feet.
 Soon after this the wife her routing lete¹³¹,
 And gan awake, and went her out to piss
 And came again and gan the cradle miss
 And groped here and there, but she found none.
 "Alas!" quoth she, "I had almost misgone
 I had almost gone to the clerkes' bed.
 Ey! Benedicite, then had I foul y-sped."
 And forth she went, till she the cradle fand.
 She groped alway farther with her hand
 And found the bed, and thoughte not but good¹³²
 Because that the cradle by it stood,
 And wist not where she was, for it was derk;
 But fair and well she crept in by the clerk,
 And lay full still, and would have caught a sleep.
 Within a while this John the Clerk up leap
 And on this goode wife laid on full sore;
 So merry a fit had she not had full yore¹³³
 He pricked hard and deep, as he were mad.

This jolly life have these two clerkes had,
 Till that the thirde cock began to sing.
 Alein wax'd weary in the morrowing,
 For he had swonken¹³⁴ all the longe night,
 And saide; "Farewell, Malkin, my sweet wight.
 The day is come, I may no longer bide,
 But evermore, where so I go or ride,
 I is thine owen clerk, so have I hele¹³⁵."
 "Now, deare leman¹³⁶," quoth she, "go, fare wele:
 But ere thou go, one thing I will thee tell.
 When that thou wendest homeward by the mill,
 Right at the entry of the door behind
 Thou shalt a cake of half a bushel find,
 That was y-maked of thine owen meal,
 Which that I help'd my father for to steal.
 And goode leman, God thee save and keep."

¹²⁸coward.

¹²⁹attempt.

¹³⁰took.

¹³¹stopped snoring.

¹³²had no suspicion.

¹³³for a long time.

¹³⁴laboured.

¹³⁵health.

¹³⁶sweetheart.

And with that word she gan almost to weep.
 Alein arose and thought, "Ere the day daw
 I will go creepen in by my fellow:"
 And found the cradle with his hand anon.
 "By God!" thought he, "all wrong I have misgone:
 My head is totty of my swink¹³⁷ to-night,
 That maketh me that I go not aright.
 I wot well by the cradle I have misgo';
 Here lie the miller and his wife also."
 And forth he went a twenty devil way
 Unto the bed, there as the miller lay.
 He ween'd¹³⁸ t' have creeped by his fellow John,
 And by the miller in he crept anon,
 And caught him by the neck, and gan him shake,
 And said; "Thou John, thou swines-head, awake
 For Christes soul, and hear a noble game!
 For by that lord that called is Saint Jame,
 As I have thries in this shorte night
 Swived the miller's daughter bolt-upright,
 While thou hast as a coward lain aghast¹³⁹."
 "Thou false harlot," quoth the miller, "hast?
 Ah, false traitor, false clerk," quoth he,
 "Thou shalt be dead, by Godde's dignity,
 Who durste be so bold to disparage¹⁴⁰
 My daughter, that is come of such lineage?"
 And by the throate-ball¹⁴¹ he caught Alein,
 And he him hent¹⁴² dispiteously¹⁴³ again,
 And on the nose he smote him with his fist;
 Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast:
 And in the floor with nose and mouth all broke
 They wallow, as do two pigs in a poke.
 And up they go, and down again anon,
 Till that the miller spurned¹⁴⁴ on a stone,
 And down he backward fell upon his wife,
 That wiste nothing of this nice strife:
 For she was fall'n asleep a little wight¹⁴⁵
 With John the clerk, that waked had all night:
 And with the fall out of her sleep she braid¹⁴⁶.
 "Help, holy cross of Bromeholm," (*Note 26*) she said;
 "In manus tuas! (*Note 27*) Lord, to thee I call.

¹³⁷giddy from my labour.

¹³⁸thought.

¹³⁹afraid.

¹⁴⁰disgrace.

¹⁴¹Adam's apple.

¹⁴²seized.

¹⁴³angrily.

¹⁴⁴stumbled.

¹⁴⁵while.

¹⁴⁶woke.

Awake, Simon, the fiend is on me fall;
 Mine heart is broken; help; I am but dead:
 There li'th one on my womb and on mine head.
 Help, Simkin, for these false clerks do fight"
 This John start up as fast as e'er he might,
 And groped by the walles to and fro
 To find a staff; and she start up also,
 And knew the estres¹⁴⁷ better than this John,
 And by the wall she took a staff anon:
 And saw a little shimmering of a light,
 For at an hole in shone the moone bright,
 And by that light she saw them both the two,
 But sickerly¹⁴⁸ she wist not who was who,
 But as she saw a white thing in her eye.
 And when she gan this white thing espy,
 She ween'd¹⁴⁹ the clerk had wear'd a volupere¹⁵⁰;
 And with the staff she drew aye nere¹⁵¹ and nere¹⁵²,
 And ween'd to have hit this Alein at the full,
 And smote the miller on the pilled¹⁵³ skull;
 That down he went, and cried, " Harow! I die."
 These clerkes beat him well, and let him lie,
 And greithen¹⁵⁴ them, and take their horse anon,
 And eke their meal, and on their way they gon:
 And at the mill door eke they took their cake
 Of half a bushel flour, full well y-bake.
 Thus is the proude miller well y-beat,
 And hath y-lost the grinding of the wheat;
 And payed for the supper every deal¹⁵⁵
 Of Alein and of John, that beat him well;
 His wife is swived, and his daughter als¹⁵⁶;
 Lo, such it is a miller to be false.
 And therefore this proverb is said full sooth,
 "Him thar not winnen well¹⁵⁷ that evil do'th,
 A guiler shall himself beguiled be:"
 And God that sitteth high in majesty
 Save all this Company, both great and smale.
 Thus have I quit¹⁵⁸ the Miller in my tale.

¹⁴⁷apartment.

¹⁴⁸certainly.

¹⁴⁹supposed.

¹⁵⁰night-cap.

¹⁵¹nearer.

¹⁵²nearer.

¹⁵³bald.

¹⁵⁴make ready, dress.

¹⁵⁵every bit.

¹⁵⁶also.

¹⁵⁷he deserves not to gain.

¹⁵⁸made myself quits with.

NOTES TO THE TALE

1. The incidents of this tale were much relished in the Middle Ages, and are found under various forms. Boccaccio has told them in the ninth day of his "Decameron".

2. Camuse: flat; French "camuse", snub-nosed.

3. Gite: gown or coat; French "jupe."

4. Soler Hall: the hall or college at Cambridge with the gallery or upper storey; supposed to have been Clare Hall. (Transcribers note: later commentators identify it with King's Hall, now merged with Trinity College)

5. Manciple: steward; provisioner of the hall. See also note 47 to the prologue to the Tales.

6. Testif: headstrong, wild-brained; French, "entete."

7. Strother: Tyrwhitt points to Anstruther, in Fife: Mr Wright to the Vale of Langstroth, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Chaucer has given the scholars a dialect that may have belonged to either district, although it more immediately suggests the more northern of the two. (Transcribers note: later commentators have identified it with a now vanished village near Kirknewton in Northumberland. There was a well-known Alein of Strother in Chaucer's lifetime.)

8. Wanges: grinders, cheek-teeth; Anglo-Saxon, "Wang," the cheek; German, "Wange."

9. See note 1 to the Prologue to the Reeves Tale

10. In the "Cento Novelle Antiche," the story is told of a mule, which pretends that his name is written on the bottom of his hind foot. The wolf attempts to read it, the mule kills him with a kick in the forehead; and the fox, looking on, remarks that "every man of letters is not wise." A similar story is told in "Reynard the Fox."

11. Levesell: an arbour; Anglo-Saxon, "lefe-setl," leafy seat.

12. Noth: business; German, "Noth," necessity.

13. Bathe: both; Scottice, "baith."

14. Capel: horse; Gaelic, "capall;" French, "cheval;" Italian, "cavallo," from Latin, "caballus."

15. Make a clerkes beard: cheat a scholar; French, "faire la barbe;" and Boccaccio uses the proverb in the same sense.

16. "Gar" is Scotch for "cause;" some editions read, however, "get us some".

17. Chalons: blankets, coverlets, made at Chalons in France.

18. Crock: pitcher, cruse; Anglo-Saxon, "crocca;" German, "krug;" hence "crockery."

19. Dwale: night-shade, *Solanum somniferum*, given to cause sleep.

20. Burdoun: bass; "burden" of a song. It originally means the drone of a bagpipe; French, "bourdon."

21. Compline: even-song in the church service; chorus.

22. Ferly: strange. In Scotland, a "ferlie" is an unwonted or remarkable sight.

23. A furlong way: As long as it might take to walk a furlong.

24. Cockenay: a term of contempt, probably borrowed from the kitchen; a cook, in base Latin, being termed "coquinarius." compare French "coquin," rascal.

25. Unhardy is unsely: the cowardly is unlucky; "nothing venture, nothing have;" German, "unselig," unhappy.

26. Holy cross of Bromeholm: A common adjuration at that time; the cross or rood of the priory of Bromholm, in Norfolk, was said to contain part of the real cross and therefore held in high esteem.

27. In manus tuas: Latin, "in your hands".