
*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

THE PROLOGUE

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

¹were diverted.

²left.

³murmur.

⁴little.

⁵thrive.

⁶match.

THE PROLOGUE

With blearing⁷ 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*)

⁷dimming.

⁸head.

⁹grown mouldy.

¹⁰medlar.

THE PROLOGUE

That ilke¹¹ fruit is ever longer
 werse,
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,

¹¹same.

¹²on the ground or in straw.

¹³dance.

THE PROLOGUE

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, cov-
etise¹⁸.

These foure sparks belongen unto
eld.

Our olde limbes well may be un-

¹⁴continually.

¹⁵smoke.

¹⁶coals.

¹⁷describe.

¹⁸covetousness.

THE PROLOGUE

weld¹⁹,
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.

¹⁹unwieldy.

²⁰certainly.

THE PROLOGUE

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,

²¹long.

THE PROLOGUE

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 Ose-
wold the Reeve,

I pray you all that none of you do
grieve,

Though I answer, and somewhat
set his hove²⁴, (*Note 11*)

²²cobbler.

²³surgeon.

²⁴hood.

THE PROLOGUE

For lawful is force off with force to
shove²⁵.

This drunken miller hath y-told us
here

How that beguiled was a carpen-
tere,

Paraventure²⁶ in scorn, for I am
one:

And, by your leave, I shall him
quite anon.

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

²⁵to repel force by force.

²⁶perhqps.

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 nauclerus" (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 Can-
tebrig²⁷,

²⁷Cambridge.

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

²⁸complete truth.

²⁹prepare.

³⁰shoot.

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.

³¹poniard.

³²dagger.

³³small knife.

³⁴flat.

³⁵peeled, bald.

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

³⁶brawler.

³⁷lay.

³⁸suffer the penalty.

³⁹called "Disdainful Simkin".

was.

With her he gave full many a pan
of brass,

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

⁴⁰magpie.

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

⁴¹hood.

⁴²gown.

⁴³use freedom.

⁴⁴unless.

With pavade, or with knife, or
bodekin.

For jealous folk be per'lous ev-
ermo':

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 bis-
mare⁵⁰.

⁴⁵unless.

⁴⁶so behave.

⁴⁷dirty.

⁴⁸nasty.

⁴⁹ill-nature.

⁵⁰abusive speech.

Her thoughte that a lady should
her spare⁵¹,
What for her kindred, and her
nortelrie⁵²
That she had learned in the nun-
nery.

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-
growen was,

⁵¹not judge her hardly.

⁵²nurturing, education.

⁵³boy.

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 mes-
suage,
And strange he made it⁵⁵ of her
marriage.
His purpose was for to bestow her
high

⁵⁴flat.

⁵⁵he made it a matter of difficulty.

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 Church 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

⁵⁶spent.

⁵⁷toll taken for grinding.

⁵⁸especially.

college
Men call the Soler Hall at Cante-
brege, (*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 mal-
ady, (*Note 5*)
Men weened wisly⁶¹ that he
shoulde die.
For which this miller stole both
meal and corn
An hundred times more than be-
forn.

⁵⁹suddenly.

⁶⁰steward.

⁶¹thought certainly.

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;

⁶²fuss.

⁶³he cared not a rush.

⁶⁴talked big.

Testif⁶⁵ they were, and lusty for to
play; (*Note 6*)
And only for their mirth and rev-
elry
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

⁶⁵headstrong .

⁶⁶short time.

⁶⁷boldly.

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.

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.

⁶⁸take away.

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,

⁶⁹equal.

⁷⁰servant.

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

⁷¹expect.

⁷²cheek-teeth.

stand,"
Quoth John, "and see how that the
corn goes in.
Yet saw I never, by my father's kin,
How that the hopper waggess to
and fro."
Alein answered, "John, and wilt
thou so?
Then will I be beneathe, 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."

⁷³amusement.

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 philoso-
phy.

The more quaint knackes⁷⁶ that
they make,
The more will I steal when that I
take.

Instead of flour yet will I give them

⁷⁴simplicity.

⁷⁵think.

⁷⁶odd little tricks.

bren⁷⁷,
 The greatest clerks are not the wis-
 est men,
 As whilom to the wolf thus spake
 the mare: (*Note 10*)
 Of all their art ne count I not a tare."
 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,

⁷⁷bran.

⁷⁸arbour.

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

⁷⁹business.

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 hus-
bandry⁸¹.
"What, which way is he gone?" he
gan to cry.
The wife came leaping inward at a

⁸⁰lost.

⁸¹careful watch over the corn.

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

⁸²run.

⁸³ill luck, a curse.

⁸⁴swift.

⁸⁵knows.

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

⁸⁶both.

⁸⁷horse.

⁸⁸barn.

⁸⁹fool.

take,
And bade his wife go knead it in a
cake.
He said; I trow, the clerkes were
afeard,
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 chil-
dren play:
They get him not so lightly, by my
crown."
These silly clerkes runnen up and
down
With "Keep, keep; stand, stand;

⁹⁰cheat a scholar.

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

⁹¹turn.

⁹²catch.

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 fel-
lows 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

⁹³mockery.

⁹⁴fools.

⁹⁵especially.

⁹⁶the bay horse.

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

⁹⁷found.

⁹⁸go their way.

⁹⁹lodging.

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,

¹⁰⁰fashion.

And we shall pay thee truly at the
full:

With empty hand men may not
hawkes tull¹⁰¹.

Lo here our silver ready for to
spend."

This miller to the town his daugh-
ter 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*)

¹⁰¹allure.

¹⁰²blankets.

Not from his owen bed ten foot or
twelve:
His daughter had a bed all by her-
selve,
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.

¹⁰³side by side.

¹⁰⁴roomier lodging.

Well had this miller varnished his
 head;
 Full pale he was, fordrunken, and
 nought red¹⁰⁵.
 He yoxed¹⁰⁶, and he spake thor-
 ough 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 jo-
 life¹⁰⁹,
 So was her jolly whistle well y-wet.

¹⁰⁵without his wits.

¹⁰⁶hiccuped.

¹⁰⁷grunting.

¹⁰⁸catarrh.

¹⁰⁹jolly.

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,

¹¹⁰pitcher.

¹¹¹certainly.

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 com-
pany.

Alein the clerk, that heard this
melody,

He poked John, and saide: "Sleep-
est thou?"

Heardest thou ever such a song ere
now?

¹¹²heed.

¹¹³bass.

¹¹⁴snoring.

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

¹¹⁵among.

¹¹⁶strange.

¹¹⁷comes to me.

¹¹⁸matter.

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 ag-
 griev'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 ease-
 ment:

¹¹⁹enjoy carnally.

¹²⁰satisfaction.

¹²¹provided.

By Godde's soul, it shall none,
other be."

This John answer'd; Alein, avise
thee¹²²:

The miller is a perilous man," he
said,

"And if that he out of his sleep
abraid¹²³,

He mighte do us both a vil-
lainy¹²⁴."

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

¹²²have a care.

¹²³awaked.

¹²⁴mischief.

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

¹²⁵wail.

¹²⁶trick.

harm;
 He has the miller's daughter in his
 arm:
 He aunted¹²⁷ him, and hath his
 needes sped,
 And I lie as a draff-sack in my bed;
 And when this jape is told another
 day,
 I shall be held a daffe¹²⁸ or a cock-
 enay (*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

¹²⁷ adventured.

¹²⁸ coward.

¹²⁹ attempt.

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'

¹³⁰took.

¹³¹stopped snoring.

bed.

Ey! Benedicite, then had I foul y-
sped."

And forth she went, till she the cra-
dle 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

¹³²had no suspicion.

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 morrow-
ing,
For he had swonken¹³⁴ all the
longe night,

¹³³for a long time.

¹³⁴laboured.

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 home-
ward by the mill,
Right at the entry of the door be-
hind

¹³⁵health.

¹³⁶sweetheart.

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."
And with that word she gan almost
to weep.
Alein uprose 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

¹³⁷giddy from my labour.

¹³⁸thought.

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

¹³⁹afraid.

dignity,
Who durste be so bold to dispar-
age¹⁴⁰
My daughter, that is come of such
lineage?"
And by the throate-ball¹⁴¹ he
caught Alein,
And he him hent¹⁴² dispi-
teously¹⁴³ 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

¹⁴⁰disgrace.

¹⁴¹Adam's apple.

¹⁴²seized.

¹⁴³angrily.

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

¹⁴⁴stumbled.

¹⁴⁵while.

she braid¹⁴⁶.

"Help, holy cross of Bromeholm,"
(*Note 26*) she said;

"In manus tuas! (*Note 27*) Lord, to
thee I call.

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

¹⁴⁶woke.

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.

¹⁴⁷apartment.

¹⁴⁸certainly.

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

¹⁴⁹supposed.

¹⁵⁰night-cap.

¹⁵¹nearer.

¹⁵²nearer.

¹⁵³bald.

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

¹⁵⁴make ready, dress.

¹⁵⁵every bit.

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.

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".