

THE MILLER'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

When that the Knight had thus his tale told In all the rout was neither
young nor old, That he not said it was a noble story, And worthy to be
drawen to memory; *recorded* And *namely the gentles*
every one. *especially the gentlefolk* Our Host then laugh'd and swore,
"So may I gon,* *prosper This goes aright; *unbuckled is the mail;*
the budget is opened Let see now who shall tell another tale: For truly
this game is well begun. Now telleth ye, Sir Monk, if that ye conne*,
know Somewhat, to quiten with the Knighte's tale." *match
The Miller that fordrunken was all pale, So that unnethes* upon his horse
he sat, *with difficulty He would avalen* neither hood nor hat,
uncover Nor abide no man for his courtesy, *give way to
But in Pilate's voice<1> he gan to cry, And swore by armes, and by blood,
and bones, "I can a noble tale for the nones* *occasion,
With which I will now quite* the Knighte's tale." *match Our Host
saw well how drunk he was of ale, And said; "Robin, abide, my leve* brother,
*dear Some better man shall tell us first another: Abide, and let us worke
thriftyly." By Godde's soul," quoth he, "that will not I, For I will speak, or
elles go my way!" Our Host answer'd; "*Tell on a devil way*; *devil
take you!* Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome." "Now hearken," quoth the
Miller, "all and some: But first I make a protestatioun. That I am drunk, I
know it by my soun': And therefore if that I misspeak or say, *Wite it* the ale
of Southwark, I you pray: *blame it on*<2> For I will tell a legend
and a life Both of a carpenter and of his wife, How that a clerk hath *set the
wrighte's cap*." *fooled the carpenter* The Reeve answer'd and saide,
"*Stint thy clap*, *hold your tongue* Let be thy lewed drunken harlotry.
It is a sin, and eke a great folly To apeiren* any man, or him defame,
*injure And eke to bringe wives in evil name. Thou may'st enough of other
thinges sayn." This drunken Miller spake full soon again, And saide, "Leve
brother Osewold, Who hath no wife, he is no cuckold. But I say not therefore
that thou art one; There be full goode wives many one. Why art thou angry
with my tale now? I have a wife, pardie, as well as thou, Yet *n'old I*, for the
oxen in my plough, *I would not* Taken upon me more than
enough, To deemen* of myself that I am one; *judge I will
believe well that I am none. An husband should not be inquisitive Of

Godde's privity, nor of his wife. So he may finde Godde's foison* there,
*treasure Of the remnant needeth not to enquire."

What should I more say, but that this Millere He would his wordes for no
man forbear, But told his churlish* tale in his mannere; *boorish,
rude Me thinketh, that I shall rehearse it here. And therefore every gentle
wight I pray, For Godde's love to deem not that I say Of evil intent, but that I
must rehearse Their tales all, be they better or worse, Or elles falsen* some
of my mattere. *falsify And therefore whoso list it not to
hear, Turn o'er the leaf, and choose another tale; For he shall find enough,
both great and smale, Of storial* thing that toucheth gentiless,
*historical, true And eke morality and holiness. Blame not me, if that ye
choose amiss. The Miller is a churl, ye know well this, So was the Reeve,
with many other mo', And harlotry* they tolde bothe two.
*ribald tales *Awise you* now, and put me out of blame; *be
warned* And eke men should not make earnest of game*. *jest,
fun

Notes to the Prologue to the Miller's Tale

1. Pilate, an unpopular personage in the mystery-plays of the middle ages, was probably represented as having a gruff, harsh voice.
2. Wite: blame; in Scotland, "to bear the wyte," is to bear the blame.