

## THE TALE.<1>

At Trompington, not far from Cantebrig,\* \*Cambridge There goes a brook, and over that a brig, Upon the whiche brook there stands a mill: And this is \*very sooth\* that I you tell. \*complete truth\* A miller was there dwelling many a day, As any peacock he was proud and gay: Pipen he could, and fish, and nettes bete\*, \*prepare And turne cups, and wrestle well, and shete\*. \*shoot Aye by his belt he bare a long pavade\*, \*poniard And of his sword full trenchant was the blade. A jolly popper\* bare he in his pouch; \*dagger There was no man for peril durst him touch. A Sheffield whittle\* bare he in his hose. \*small knife Round was his face, and camuse\* was his nose. \*flat <2> As pilled\* as an ape's was his skull. \*peeled, bald. He was a market-beter\* at the full. \*brawler There durste no wight hand upon him legge\*, \*lay That he ne swore anon he should abegge\*. \*suffer the penalty

A thief he was, for sooth, of corn and meal, And that a sly, and used well to steal. His name was \*hoten deinous Simekin\* \*called "Disdainful Simkin"\* 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, 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 pie\*. \*magpie A full fair sight it was to see them two; On holy days before her would he go With his tippet\* y-bound about his head; \*hood And she came after in a gite\* of red, \*gown <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 play\*, \*use freedom\* \*But if\* he would be slain by Simekin \*unless With pavade, or with knife, or bodekin. For jealous folk be per'lous evermo': Algate\* they would their wives \*wende so\*. \*unless \*so behave\* And eke for she was somewhat smutterlich\*, \*dirty She was as dign\* as water in a ditch, \*nasty And allso full of hoker\*, and bismare\*\*. \*ill-nature \*\*abusive speech Her thoughte that a lady should her spare\*, \*not judge her hardly What for her kindred, and her nortelrie\* \*nurturing, education 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 page.\*                                        \*boy This wenche thick and well y-grown  
 was, With camuse\* nose, and eyen gray as glass;                                        \*flat 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, And \*strange he made  
 it\* of her marriage.                                        \*he made it a matter His purpose was for to  
 bestow her high                                        of difficulty\* Into some worthy blood of  
 ancestry. For holy Church's good may be dispended\*                                        \*spent  
 On holy Church's blood that is descended. Therefore he would his holy  
 blood honour Though that he holy Churche should devour.

Great soken\* hath this miller, out of doubt,                                        \*toll taken for grinding With  
 wheat and malt, of all the land about; And namely\* there was a great college  
 \*especially Men call the Soler Hall at Cantebrege,<4> There was their wheat  
 and eke their malt y-ground. And on a day it happed in a stound\*,  
 \*suddenly Sick lay the manciple\* of a malady,                                        \*steward <5>  
 Men \*weened wisly\* that he shoulde die.                                        \*thought certainly\* 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 fare\*,  
 \*fuss But thereof \*set the miller not a tare\*;                                        \*he cared not a rush\* He  
 \*crack'd his boast,\* and swore it was not so.                                        \*talked big\*

Then were there younge poore scholars two, That dwelled in the hall of  
 which I say; Testif\* they were, and lusty for to play;                                        \*headstrong  
 <6> And only for their mirth and revelry Upon the warden busily they cry,  
 To give them leave for but a \*little stound\*,                                        \*short time\* Togo to  
 mill, and see their corn y-ground: And hardily\* they durste lay their neck,  
 \*boldly The miller should not steal them half a peck Of corn by sleight, nor  
 them by force bereave\*                                        \*take away 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,<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. 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 peer\*.  
 \*equal Him serve himself behoves that has no swain\*,                                        \*servant  
 Or else he is a fool, as clerkes sayn. Our manciple I hope\* he will be dead,  
 \*expect So workes aye the wanges\* in his head:                                        \*cheek-teeth <8>



clerkes beard,\*            \*cheat a scholar\* <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; jossa\*, warderere.            \*turn Go whistle thou, and  
 I shall keep\* him here."            \*catch 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 hething\* and till scorn.            \*mockery Our corn is stol'n, men will  
 us fonnes\* call,            \*fools Both the warden, and eke our fellows all,  
 And namely\* the miller, well-away!"            \*especially Thus plained  
 John, as he went by the way Toward the mill, and Bayard\* in his hand.  
 \*the bay horse The miller sitting by the fire he fand\*.            \*found  
 For it was night, and forther\* might they not,            \*go their way But for  
 the love of God they him besought Of herberow\* and ease, for their penny.  
 \*lodging 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 guise.\*"  
 \*fashion "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 <16> us have meat and drink, and make us cheer, And we  
 shall pay thee truly at the full: With empty hand men may not hawkes tull\*.  
 \*allure 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 chalons\* fair y-  
 spread,            \*blankets<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 by\*:  
 \*side by side\* It might no better be, and cause why, There was no \*roomer  
 herberow\* in the place.            \*roomier lodging\* 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 red\*.            \*without his wits\* He yoxed\*, and he  
 spake thorough the nose,            \*hiccuped As he were in the quakke\*,  
 or in the pose\*\*.            \*grunting \*\*catarrh To bed he went, and with him  
 went his wife, As any jay she light was and jolife,\*            \*jolly 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 crock\*                    \*pitcher<18> To bedde went the daughter right anon,  
 To bedde went Alein, and also John. There was no more; needed them no  
 dwale.<19> This miller had, so wisly\* bibbed ale,                    \*certainly  
 That as a horse he snorted in his sleep, Nor of his tail behind he took no  
 keep\*.                    \*heed His wife bare him a burdoun\*, a full strong;  
 \*bass <20> Men might their routing\* hearen a furlong.  
 \*snoring

The wenche routed eke for company. Alein the clerk, that heard this melody,  
 He poked John, and saide: "Sleepest thou? Heardest thou ever such a song  
 ere now? Lo what a compline<21> is y-mell\* them all.                    \*among  
 A wilde fire upon their bodies fall, Who hearken'd ever such a ferly\* thing?  
 \*strange <22> Yea, they shall have the flow'r of ill ending! This longe night  
 there \*tides me\* no rest.                    \*comes to me\* But yet no force\*, all shall  
 be for the best.                    \*matter For, John," said he, "as ever may I  
 thrive, If that I may, yon wenche will I swive\*.                    \*enjoy carnally  
 Some easement\* has law y-shapen\*\* us                    \*satisfaction \*\*provided 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 thee\*: \*have a  
 care\* The miller is a perilous man," he said, "And if that he out of his sleep  
 abraid\*,                    \*awaked He mighte do us both a villainy\*."  
 \*mischief 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 <23> or two, And to himself he made ruth\*  
 and woe.                    \*wail "Alas!" quoth he, "this is a wicked jape\*;  
 \*trick 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 auntred\* him, and  
 hath his needes sped,                    \*adventured And I lie as a draff-sack in  
 my bed; And when this jape is told another day, I shall be held a daffe\* or a  
 cockenay <24>                    \*coward I will arise, and auntre\* it, by my fay:  
 \*attempt Unhardy is unsely, <25> as men say." And up he rose, and softly  
 he went Unto the cradle, and in his hand it hent\*,                    \*took And  
 bare it soft unto his beddes feet. Soon after this the wife \*her routing lete\*,  
 \*stopped snoring\* 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 away farther with her hand And found the bed, and  
 \*thoughte not but good\*      \*had no suspicion\* 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 yore\*.      \*for a long time\*  
 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 swonken\* all the longe  
 night,      \*laboured 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 hele.\*"      \*health "Now,  
 deare leman\*," quoth she, "go, fare wele:      \*sweetheart Butere 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." 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 swink\*  
 to-night,      \*giddy from my labour\* 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'd\* t' have creeped by his fellow John,      \*thought 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 aghast\*."      \*afraid "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  
 disparage\*      \*disgrace My daughter, that is come of such  
 lineage?" And by the throate-ball\* he caught Alein,      \*Adam's apple  
 And he him hent\* dispiteously\*\* again,      \*seized \*\*angrily 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  
 spurned\* on a stone,      \*stumbled And down he backward fell  
 upon his wife, That wiste nothing of this nice strife: For she was fall'n asleep  
 a little wight\*      \*while With John the clerk, that waked had all  
 night: And with the fall out of her sleep she braid\*.      \*woke "Help,  
 holy cross of Bromeholm," <26> she said; "In manus tuas! <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 walle to and fro To find a staff; and she start up  
also, And knew the estres\* better than this John,                         \*apartment  
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 sickerly\* she wist not who was who,  
\*certainly But as she saw a white thing in her eye. And when she gan this  
white thing espy, She ween'd\* the clerk had wear'd a volupere\*\*;  
\*supposed \*\*night-cap And with the staff she drew aye nere\* and nere\*,  
\*nearer And ween'd to have hit this Alein at the full, And smote the miller on  
the pilled\* skull;                                     \*bald That down he went, and cried,"  
Harow! I die." These clerkes beat him well, and let him lie, And greithen\*  
them, and take their horse anon,                 \*make ready, dress 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 deal\*                                     \*every bit Of  
Alein and of John, that beat him well; His wife is swived, and his daughter  
als\*;                                     \*also Lo, such it is a miller to be false. And therefore  
this proverb is said full sooth, "\*Him thar not winnen well\* that evil do'th,  
\*he deserves not to gain\* A guiler shall himself beguiled be:" And God that  
sitteth high in majesty Save all this Company, both great and smale. Thus  
have I quit\* the Miller in my tale.                 \*made myself quits with