

THE
CANTERBURY TALES.

THE MILLERES PROLOGUE.

WHAN that the Knight had thus his tale told, 3111
In all the compaignie n'as ther yong ne old,
That he ne said it was a noble storie,
And worthy to be drawen to memorie;
And namely the gentiles everich on.
Our Hoste lough and swore, So mote I gon,
This goth aright; unboked is the male;
Let see now who shal tel another tale:
For trewely this game is wel begonne.
Now telleth ye, sire Monk, if that ye conne, 3120
Somwhat, to quiten with the knightes tale.

The Miller that for-dronken was all pale,
So that unnethes upon his hors he sat,
He n'old avalen neither hood ne hat,
Ne abiden no man for his curtesie,
But in Pilates vois he gan to crie,
And swore by armes, and by blood, and bones,
I can a noble tale for the nones,
With which I wol now quite the knightes tale. 3129

Our Hoste saw that he was dronken of ale, 3130
And sayd; abide, Robin, my leve brother,
Som better man shall tell us first another:
Abide, and let us werken thriftily.

By Goddes soule (quod he) that wol not I,
For I wol speke, or elles go my way.

Our Hoste answerd; Tell on a devil way;
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome.

Now herkeneth, quod the Miller, all and some:
But first I make a protestatioun, 3139
That I am dronke, I know it by my soun:
And therefore if that I misspeke or say,
Wite it the ale of Southwerk, I you pray:
For I wol tell a legend and a lif
Both of a carpenter and of his wif,
How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.

The Reve answerd and saide, Stint thy clappe.
Let be thy lewed dronken harlotrie. 3147
It is a sinne, and eke a gret folie
To apeiren any man, or him defame,
And eke to bringen wives in swiche a name.
Thou mayst ynough of other thinges sain.

This dronken Miller spake ful sone again,
And sayde; Leve brother Osewold,
Who hath no wif, he is no cokewold.
But I say not therfore that thou art on; 3155

Ther ben ful goode wives many on. 3156
Why art thou angry with my tale now?
I have a wif parde as wel as thou,
Yet n'olde I, for the oxen in my plough,
Taken upon me more than ynough
As demen of myself that I am on;
I wol beleven wel that I am non.
An Husbond shuld not ben inquisitif
Of Goddes privite, ne of his wif. 3164
So he may finden Goddes foison there,
Of the remenant nedeth not to enquere.

What shuld I more say, but this Millere
He n'olde his wordes for no man forbere,
But told his cherles tale in his manere,
Me thinketh, that I shal rehearse it here.
And therefore every gentil wight I pray,
For Goddes love as deme not that I say 3172
Of evil entent, but that I mote rehearse
Hir tales alle, al be they better or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my matere.
And therfore who so list it not to here,
Turne over the leef, and chese another tale,
For he shal find ynow bothe gret and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentillesse,
And eke moralite, and holinesse. 3180