

The
Merry Tales of the
Cobler of Canterburie.

As he passed from Billings-gate to
Graves-end.

WITH
Invective against Tarltons newes out of Purgatory.

TOGETHER
With his description of the eight orders
of Cuckolds.

Newly published at his owne cost: without the helpe
of the Shoemakers

LONDON:
Printed for Nathaniel Butler, and are to be sould at the
signe of the Pide-Bull neere to Saint Austins gate.
1614

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The Coblers Epistle to the Gentlemen Readers.

A Hall, a Hall (Gentlemen) roome for a Cobler, here comes the quaintest Squire in all Kent; The Cobler of Canterbury, armed with his Aull, his Lingell, and his Last, presents himselfe a iudiciall Censor of other mens writings: but mee thinks for my saucinesse, I heare Appeles boy crying, Ne Sutor vltracrepidam. If I doe see his master mend the fault in the legge, Ile abide their frumps, and when he hath done, Ile say, this had not beene corrected but for the Cobler. Becomes not many a Tinkar a tall Pratler? and haue not men of my trade waded so deepe in the secrets of Theologie, that they haue sought to correct Magnificat? and then (by your leaue Gentlemen) may not the Cobler of Kent, who hath beene the patron of many good companions, & tost ouer a paire of Cards at Trump from morning till night, now to be admitted so farre as to finde fault with Richard Tarltons newes out of Purgatory? Yes, and if he that writ it will not amend the latchet, Ile on with my night-cap and my spectacles, and make him shape the legge righter ere I haue done.

I confesse tis a Book, and so the Colliers Iade of Croydon a horse, as well as the Courtiers

Courser: yet my my faith it hath a faire Title: but if Diogenes saw it he would cry out as he did against Minda, stop your Citie that it runne not out of the gates; and infer a like inuective against the books, for that the title containes more then the Pamphlet: but yet in faith there is pretty stuffe in it, but vnworthy Dick Tarltons humore: somewhere too low iests, somewhere too high for stile: if I distinguish like a Scholler, Gentlemen, thinke that I was borne when the Popes butter-flies were abroad & it may be some Frier was my father: and the rather I gesse it, for that nature hath wrought that vpon my crowe, that he had on his by Art: for before I was twenty I had a bald pate. Well, howsoeuer, I haue found fault, & therefore I haue attempted to amend it, not in the correcting of his worke, but in setting out one more pleasant, & more full of delightfull tales for all mens humors; except those which are so humerous that they count nothing gracious; but that is too graue. What? a dog hath a day: Semel in anno rides Apollo. Longer liues a merry man than a sad; a Cobler hath lesse cres then a King: and an houre past in honest mirth, is worth a tunne full of melancholy. Why were Tauernes inuented, but to ripen mens wits? And why were tales deuised, but to make men pleasant? Tush, when Redde ratione comes, I feare me there will be lesse account to be giuen for honest recreation, then eyther for enuious practices that solemne Saturnists ruminat; or for the sundry schismes the melancholy michers doe publish. If my principles be false, let no man take

exceptions, but passe them ouer with a smile for tis but Cobles Philosophie. But I digress, and therefore to my Books, wherein are contained the tales that were tolde in the Barge betweene Billingsgate and Garues-end: imitating herein old Father Chaucer, who with the like Method set out his Canterbury Tales; but as there must be admitted no compare betweene a cup of Darby Ale, and a dish of durty water: So sir Jeffery Chaucer is so high aboue my reach, that I take Noli altum sapere for a warning; and onely looke at him with honour and reuerence. Here is a gallimaufrie of all sorts, the Gentlemen may finde Salem, to sauour their cares with iests, and Clownes plaine Dunstable dogrell to make them laugh, while their leather buttons slie off. When the Farmer is set in his Chaire turning (in a winters euening) the Crabbe in the fire, here he may heare how his sonne can reade, and when hee hath done, laugh while his belly akes. The old wines that wedded themselues to the profound histories of Robin Hood, Clim of the Clough, and worthy sir Isembras, may here learne a tale to tell amongst their gossips. Thus haue I sought to feed all mens fancies: which if I doe, was it not well done of a Cobler: IF I offend, and they thinke there is in it neither rime nor reason, why a Cobler did it, and there's and end.

Farewell, from my Shop
wheresoeuer it be.

Robin Good-fellowes Epistle.

A Cobler become a corrector! ho, ho, ho: it was not so when Robin Good-fellow was a Ruster, & helpt the Country wenches to grinde their Mault: Then Gentlemen, the Plough swaine medled with his Temae: te Gentleman with his Hound and his Haulke: the Artficer with his labour: and the Sholler with his Booke: euery degree contented im within his limits. But now the world is growne to that passe, that Pierce Plow-man will prie into law, nay into Diuinitie, and his duncerie must needs bee doctrine: ush, what of higher powers? what of Uniuersities? the text doth put downe them, Babes & Sucklings, and no more. This makes Robin Good-fellow that was so merrie a spirit of the buttery, to leave all, and keepe himselfe in Purgatory, for Hospitalitie is so cleane runne out of the country, that he needs not now helpe the maydes to grinde their mault, for the drinke is so small, that it needs little Corne: and if he should helpe them, where he was want to finde a messe of creame for his labour, scarce get a dish of float Milke. Why see you not how canke the Cobler is, that will forsooth correct Dick Tarltons doings, a man fameus in his life for merry conceits, and especially for a booke of my publishing? Well Gentlemen, if you suffer it, and Dick Tarlton pocket it vp without reuenge, or a drie blow at his breech, Robin Good fellow makes a vow, to haunt him in his sleeps: and after his olde merry humor, so to play the knaue with the Cobler, that he shall repent he medled so farre beyond his latchet: but I will carry my friend these news to Purgatory, where I know for anger, he almost breake his taber, and will not rest till he haue reuenged: we will lay both our wits together, to put downe the prattling Cobler, and here I make a vow, either to get the conquest, else neuer to come in your sight: and to say as I was wont: What, Himp and Hamp? here will I neuer more grinde nor stamp.

Yours in choler, Robin
Good-fellow.

Sitting in the Barge at Billingsgate, exspecting when the tide would serue for Graues-end, diverse passengers of all sorts resorted thither to goe downe: at last it began to ebbe, and then they cryed always, when Icame to the staires, though I was resolved to goe downe in a Tilt boat, yet seeing what a crew of mad companions went in the Barge and perceiuing by the winde, there was no feare of raine, I stept into the Barge and tooke vp my seate amongst the thickest: with that the Barge men put from the staires, and hauing a strong ebbe, because there had much raine water fallen before, they went the more merrily downe, and scarce had we gotten beyond Saint Katherines, but that a perry of winde blew something loud, that the watermen hoyst vp sailes, and laid by their Oares from labour. Being thus under Saile going so smngly downe, it made vs all so merry that we fell to that, some of one thing and some of another, all of mirth, than, of knauery, that if Cato Censorius had bane there, he would either haue laughed at their knauish heresies, or rise at the confusion of their prattles, which seamed like a very Chaes of sandry conceites. As thus euery man was sensing to passe away the time pleasantly, a Gentleman puld out of his sleeue, a little pamphlet, and began to reede to himselfe: amongst the rest, my selfe was so bold, as to aske him what booke it was: mary quoth he a foolish toy, called Tarltons newes out of Purgatorie: at they fell to descusing of the booke, some commended it highly, and sayd it was good inuention, and fine tales: tush quoth another, most of them are stolne out of Boccace Decameron: for all that, quoth the third, it is pretie and wittie. As they were thus commending and discommending, there sate by an antient man that was a Cobler in Canterburie: Masters, quoth hee, I haue read the booke, and tis indifferent, like a cup of bottle ale, halfe one and halfe the other: but tis not merrie enough for Tarltons baine, nor stuffed with his fine conceits: therefore shall passe for a booke, and no more. No, no, what say you to old father Chaucer? how like you of his Canterbury tales: are not they

pleasant to delight, and wittie to instruct, and full of conceited learning to shew the excellencie of his wit. All men commend Chaucer, as the father of English Poets, and said, that he shot a shoote which man haue aymed at, but neuer reacht too.

Well, quoth the Cobler, now that we are going to Graues-end, and so (I thinke) most of vs to Canterburie, let vs tell some Tales, to passe away the time till we come off the water, and we will call them Canterburie Tales. To this motion, the whole companie willingly consented, and onely they stood upon this, who should begin: If it be no offence, quoth the Cobler, to other gentlemen that be here, I my selfe will be ring-leader: to this they all agreed, and the Cobler began to settle himselfe: yet before I begin, I will (as neare as I can) describe unto you what manner of man he was.

The description of the Cobbler.

His stature was large and tall,
His limbs well set withall,
Of a strong bone, and a broad chest,
He was wide and wildesome in the brest,
His forehead hie and a balde pate,
Well I wot hee was a mate
That loued well a bonny lasse,
For the Clownes eyes were as gray as glasse:
And oft haue I heard my mother say,
The waton eye is e're most gray.
He loued well a cup of strong Ale,
And his nose was nothing pale:
But his snout and all his face,
Was as red as Rubyor Topace:
A voice he had cleare and loud,
And well he can sing to a crowd.
He was a stout sturdy squire:
And loued eke day good compire:
Drinke he would with euery man,
In cup, cruze, glasse or kan:

And what euery day hee got
Hee hoorded vp in the Ale-pot,
That all Canterburie gan leere,
To talke of this merry Cobleere:
Therefore now marke mee well,
For thus his tale began to tell.

The Cobblers Tale.

Containing the iests that passed betweene the Prior
of Canterburie, and a Smith of Saint Austins.

The Prior of Canterburie had a conment of Friars Augustines, that were endued with great livings from the king, and hae himselfe had great reueneives, that hee liud like a Potentate, and hee was had in great estimation, throughout al the Citie: Liuing thus at ese pampred by with delicatges and iolenes, the two nursis to Lechery, he minded not so much his Booke, but that passing one day through the streetes, he glanced his eyes to see where he might finde some hansom Irull that might be his paramour: many he saw, and many he liked, but at iast comming by a Smiths Forge, he spyed a proper tall woman meanly attired, after the pouertie of hier husband, but of such a beautiful visage, and faire countenance that shee pleased greatly the Priors eye,