

Miller's Tale from Chaucer
Inscrib'd to
N. Rowe, Esq;

By Mr. Cobb

Edited by Robert Simola

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THE
Miller's TALE,
FROM
CHAUCEER.

Inscrib'd to
N. ROWE, Esq;

By Mr. *COBE.*



L O N D O N:
Printed in the Year MDCCLXXV.

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The ARGUMENT.

Nicholas, a Scholar of Oxford, practiseth with Alison,
the Carpenter's Wife of Osney, to deceive her Husband;
but in the End is rewarded accordingly.

London:
Printed in the Year MDCCXXV

Whilom in Oxford an old Chuff did dwell,
A carpenter by Trade, as Stories tell:
Who by his Craft had heap'd up many a Hoard,
And furnish'd Strangers both with bed and Board.
With him a Scholar lodg'd, of slender Means,
But notable for Sciences and Sense,
Yet, tho' he took Degrees in Arts, his Mind
Was mostly to Astrology inclin'd:
A Lad in Divination skill'd and shrew'd,
Who by Interrogations could conclude,
If Men should ask him, at what certain Hours
The droughty Earth would gape for cooling Show'rs,
When it should rain, or show, what should befall
Of fifty Things; I cannot reckon all.

 This learned Clerk had got a mighty Fame
For Modestly, and NICHOLAS, his Name.
Subtile he was, well taught in Cupid's Tarde,
But seem'd as meek and bashful as a Maid.
A Chamber in this Hostelry he kept,
Alone he study'd, and alone he slept.
With sweet and fragrant Herbs the Room was drest,
But he was ten Times sweeter than the best;
His Books of various Size, or great, or small,
His Augrim Stones to cast Accompts withal;
His Astrolabe and Almagist¹ apart,

With twenty more hard Names of cunning Art,
On several Shelves were couched night his Bed,
And the Press cover'd with a folding Red.
Above, an instrument of Musick lay,
On which sweet Melody he us'd to play,
So wond'rous sweet, that all the Chambers rung,
And *Angelus ad Virginem*² he sung;
Then would he chant in good King David's Note,
Full often blessed was his merry Throat.
And thus the Clerk in Books and Musick spent
His Time, and Exhibitions yearly Rent.

This Carpenter had a new-married Wife,
Lov'd as his Eyes, and dearer than his Life.
The buxom Lass had twice nine Summers seen,
And her brisk Blood ran high in ev'ry Vein.
The Dotard, jealous of so ripe an Age,
Watch'd her, and lock'd her, like a Bird in Cage:
For she was wild, and in her lovely Prime; But he, poor
Man! walk'd down the Hill of Time,

He knew the Temper of a youthful Spouse,
And oft was seen to rub his aking Brows.
He knew his own weak Side, and dreamt in Bed,
She had, or would be planting on his Head.
He knew not Cato, for his Wit was rude,
That Men should wed with their Similitude.

Like should with Like, in Love and Years engage,
For Youth can never be a Rhime to Age.
Hence Jealousies create a nuptial War,
And the warm Seasons with the frigid Jar:
But when the Trap's once down, he must endure
His Fate, and Patience is the only Cure.
Perhaps his Father, and a hundred more
Of honest Christians, were thus serv'd before,
Fair was his charming Comfort, and withal
Slender her Waste, and like a Weasel's small.
She had a Girdle barren all with Silk,
And a clean Apron, white as Morrow Milk.
White as her Smock, embroider'd all before,
Which on her Loins in many Plates she wore.
Broad was her silken Fillet, set full high,
And oft she twinkled with a liquorish Eye.
Her Brows were arched like a bended Bow.
Like Marble smooth, and blacker than a Sloe,
She softer far than Wool or fleecy Snow.
Where you to search the Universe around,
So gay a Wench was never to be found.
With greater Brightness did her Colour shine,
Than a new Noble of the freshest Coin.
Shrill was her Song, and loud her piercing Note,
No Swallow on a Barn had such a Throat.
Or Kid, of Calf, when they pursue their Dam:

Sweet as Metheglin³ was her Honey Lip,
Or Hoard of Apples which in Hay are kept.
Wincing she was, as is a jolly Colt,
:Long as a Mast, and upright as a Bolt.
Above her Ancles laced was her Shoe;
She was a Primrose and a Pigsny⁴ too!
And fit to lig⁵ by any Christian's Side,
Or a Lord's Mistress, or a Yeoman's Bide.

Now, Sir, what think you how the Case befell?
This Nicholas, (for I the Truth will tell)
Was a meer Wag, and on a certain Day,
When the good Man, the Husband, was away,
Began to sport and wanton with his Dame,
(For Clerks are fly, and very full of Game)
And privily he caught her by That same.
My Lemman Dear⁶, (quoth he) I'm all on Fire,
And perish, if you grant not my Desire.
He clasp'd her round, and held her fast, and cry'd,
O let me, let me—never be deny'd.
At this she wreath'd her Head, and sprung aloof,
like a young frisking Colt, whose tender Hoof
Ne're felt the Farrier's Hand, and never knew
The Virgin Burden of an Iron Shoe.
Fie, Nicholas, away your Hands, quoth she,
Is this our Breeding and Civility?
Foh! Idle Sot! What means th'unmanner'd Clown,

To teaze me thus, and toss me up and down?
I vow I'll tell, and bawl it o'er the Town.
You're rude, and will you not be answer'd, No!
I will not kiss you—prithee, let me go.

Here Nicholas, a young, designing Knave.
Began to weep, and cant, and Pardon crave.
So fair he spoke, and importun'd so fast,
This seeming modest Spouse consents at last;
By good St. Thomas⁷ swore, her usual Oath,
That she would meet his Love tho' mighty loth,
“If you said she, convenient Leisure wait,
“(You know my Husband has a jealous Pate)
“I will requite you, for if once the Beast
“Should chance to find us out, and smell the Jest,
“I must be a dead Woman at the least.

Let that, quoth Nicholas, ne'er vex our Head;
He must be a meer learned Ass indeed,
And very foolishly besets his Wile,
Who cannot dull Carpenter beguile.
And thus they were accorded, thus they swore
To wait the time, as I have said before.
And now, when Nicholas had wore away
The pleasant Time in harmless am'rous Play,
To his melodious Psaltery he flew,
Play'd Tunes of Love, by which his Passion grew,
Then printed on her Lips a dear Adieu.

It happen'd thus, I cannot rightly tell
If it on Ester, or on Whitson fell;
That on a Holiday, this modest Dame
To Church with other honest Neighbours came,
In a good Fit, to hear the Parson preach
What the divine Apostles us'd to teach.
Bright was her Forehead, and no Summer's Day
Shone half so clear, so tempting, and so gay.

Now to this Parish did a Clerk belong,
Who man a Time had rais'd a holy Song.
His Name was Absalon, a silly Man,
Who curl'd his Hair, which strutted like a fan,
And from his jolly, pert, and empty Head,
In Golden Ringlets on his Shoulders spread.
His Face was red, his Eyes as grey as Goose,
With St. Paul's Windows figur'd on his Shoes.
Full properly he walk'd in Scarlet Hose;
But light and Silver-colour'd were his Cloaths,
And Surplice white as Blossoms on the Rose.
Thick Poynts and Tassels did the Coxcomb please,
And fet'ously they dangled on his Knees.
He could set Blood, and shave your Beard and Head,
But a meer Barber-Surgeon by his Trade,
Nay, he could write and read, and that is more
Than twenty Parish-Clerks could do before,
Nay, he could fill a Bond, and learnt from France,

In thirty Motions, how to trip and dance;
Could frisk and toss his twirling Legs in Air,
Nice were his Feet, and trod it to a Hair.
Songs would he play, and not to hide his Wit,
Would squeak a Treble to his squaling Kit.
His Dress was finical, his Musick queer,
And pleas'd a Tapster's Eyes, or Drawer's Ear,
No Tavern, Brew-House, Ale-House, in the Town
Was to the gentle Absalon unknown:
But he was very careful of his Wind,
And never let it sally out behind.
To gie the Devil his due, he had an Art,
By civil Speech, to win a Lady's Heart.
This Absalon, so jolly, spruce and gay,
Went with the Censor on the Sabbath-Day.
He swung the Incense Pot with comely Grace,
But chiefly would he fume a pretty Face.
His wanton Eye, which ev'ry where he cast,
Dwelt on the Carpenter's fine Dame at last.
So sweet and proper was his lovely Wife,
That he could freely gaze away his Life.
Were he a Cat, this pretty Mouss would feel
Too soon his Talons, a delicious Meal.
And now had Cupid shot a piercing Dart,
And wet the Feathers in is wounded Heart.
No Off'ring of the handsome Wives he took,

He wanted nothing but a smiling Look.
The Parish Fees, refus'd, and said, the Light
Of the fair Moon shines brightest in the Night.
Soon as the Cock had bid the Morning rise,
The smitten Lover to his Fiddle flies
A hideous Noise his squeaking Trilloes make,
And all the drowsy Neighbourhood awake.
At the lov'd House some am'rous Tunes he play'd
And thus with gentle Voice he sung, or said,
Now, dear Lady, if thy Will be,
I pray you that you'll pity me.
And twenty such complaining Notes he sung,
Alike the Musick of his Kit and Tongue.
At this the staring carpenter awoke,
And thus his Wife (fair Alison) bespoke:
Art thou asleep, or art thou deaf, my Dear?
And cannot Absalon at Window hear?
How with his Serenade he charms us all,
Chanting melodiously beneath our Wall?
Yes, yes, I hear him Alison reply'd,
Too well, God wot; and then she turn'd aside.
Thus went Affairs, 'till Absalon, alas!
Was a lost Creature, a meer whining Ass.
All Night he wakes, and sighs, and wears away
On his broad Locks and Dress the live long Day.
To such a Height his doating Fondness grew,

To kiss the ground, and wipe her very Shoe.
Where'er she went, he like a Slave pursu'd,
With spiced Ale, and sweet Metheglin⁷ woo'd.
All Dainties he could rap and rend he got,
And sent her Tarts and Custards piping hot.
He spar'd no Cost for an expensive Treat,
Of Mead and Cyder, and all sorts of Meat.
Throbbing he sings with his lamenting Throat,
And rivals Philomels's mournful Note.
With Rigour some, and some with gentle Arts,
Have found a Passage to young Ladies Hearts:
Some Wealth have won, and some have had the Lot
To fall enamour'd with a treating Sot.

Sometimes he Scaramouched it on high,
And Harlequin'd it with Activity;
Betrays the Lightness of his empty Head,
And how he could cut Capers in a Bed.
But neither this nor that the Damsel move,
For Nicholas has swept the Stakes of Love.
The Parish-Clerk has nothing met but Scorn,
And ay go fiddle now, or blow his Horn.
Thus gentle Absalon is made her Jape:
For Nicholas is always in her Eye;
True, says the Proverb, that the *Nigh are fly*.
A distant Love may Disappointment find,
For out of Sight is ever out of Mind.

The Scholar was at Hand, as I have told,
And gave the Parish-Clerk *the Dog to hold*.
Now, Nicholas, thy Craft and Cunning try,
That Absalon may *de profundis* cry.

Now when this Carpenter was call'd away,
To work at Osney on a certain Day;
The subtile Scholar, and the wanton Spouse,
Were decently contriving for his Brows:
Agreed, that Nicholas should shape a Wife,
Her addle-pated Husband to beguile.
And if so be the Game succeeded right,
She then would sleep within his Arms all Night:
For both were in this one Desire concern'd
Alike they suffer'd, and alike they burn'd.
Straight a new Thought leap'd cross the Scholar's Head,
Who at that Instant to his Chamber fled:
But to relieve his Thirst and Hunger, bore
Of Meat and Liquor, a substantial Store,
And victuall'd it for a long Day or more.
Alce, should your Husband ask for Us, quoth he,
Reply, in Scorn, what's Nicholas to Me?
Am I his Keeper? Help your silly Heat!
Perhaps the Man is mad, asleep, or dead.
My Maid indeed has thump'd this Hour or more,
And knock'd as if she'd thunder down the Door.
But he, a moaping Drone, no Answer gave,

Fast as a Church, and silent as the Grave.

Thus did one Saturday entire consume,
Since Nicholas had lock'd him in is Room.
Nor was he idle, for no Lent he kept,
But eat like other Men, and drank, and slept.
Did what he list, till the next Sun was new,
And went to Rest as common Mortals do.

This Carpenter was in a grievous Pain,
Lest Nicholas should over-work his Brain:
By Study lose his Reason, or his Life.
Well, by St. Thomas, I don't like it, Wife.
The world we live in is a ticklish Place,
And sudden Death has often stopp'd our Race;
I saw a Corps, as to the Church it past
And the poor Man at work but Monday last.
Run, Dick, quoth ne, run speedily up Stair,
Thump at the door, and see how stands Affairs.
Up strait he runs, like any Tempest flies,
And knocks, and bawls, and like a Madman cries,
Ho! Master Nicholas, what mean you, thus
To sleep all Night, and Day, and frighten us?
He might as well have whistled to the Wind,
As from good Nicholas an Answer find.
At last he spy'd a Hole full low and deep,
Where usually the Cat was wont to creep;
Here was discover'd to his wond'ring Sight

The Scholar gazing with his Eyes upright,
As if intent upon the Stars and Moon;
And down runs he to tell his Master soon,
In what Array he saw this studious Man:
The Carpenter to cross himself began;
And cry'd St. Frideswid, help us one and all!
Little we know what Fate shall us befall.
This Man with his Astronomy is got
Into some Frenzy, and stark mad, God wot:
This comes of poring on his cunning Books,
Of his Moon-snuffing, and Star-peeping Looks.
Why should a silly Earth-born Mortal pry
On Heav'n, and search the Secrets of the Sky?
Well fare those Men who no more Learning need,
Than what's contain'd in the Lord's Pray'r, and Creed,
Scholars sufficient, if they can but read.
Thus far'd a sage Philosopher⁸ of old,
Who walking out, as 'tis in Story told,
Was so much with Astronomy bewitch'd,
That his star-gazing Clerkship was beditch'd.
Ill Luck attends the Man who looks too high,
And can a Star, but not a Marlpit⁹ spy.
But, by St. Thomas, this shall never pass;
Too well I love this gentle Nicholas:
I'll ferret him, unless the devils' in it,
From his brown Fit of Study in a Minute

Robin, let's try if that an Iron Pur¹⁰,
And your strong Back, can make this Scholar stir.
Now Robin was a Lad of Brawn and Bones,
And by the Hasp heav'd up the Door at once;
Which in the Chamber fell with dreadful Sound,
As would a Man like you or me astound.
But Nicholas did nothing do but stare,
And, like a Statue, gape into the Air,

 This Carpenter was in a piteous Fear,
Because he did not, or he would not, hear;
Thought some deep Melancholly had imapir'd
His Brain, and that of Mercy he despair'd'
For which the Student in his Arms he took
With Might and Main, and by the Shoulders shook;
Cry'd Nicholas, awake! What, not a Word?
Look down, despair not—think upon the Lord!
Then the Night Spell he mumbled to himself:
Bless thee from Fiends, and ev'ry wicked Elf!
He crost the Threshold, where the Devil might creep,
And each small Hole, through which an Imp might peep:
With solemn *Pater-nosters* blest the Door,
And *Ave-Mary's*, after and before.
At this the Clerk sent forth a heavy Sigh,
With Tears, and woful Tone began to cry—
And shall this World be lost so soon? sure thou art beside
Thy self: Serve God, as we poor Lab'ers do

And then no Harm, no Danger will ensue.
Ah! Friend, quoth Nicholas, you little think
What I can tell; but first let's have some Drink,
Then, my dear Host, thou shalt in private learn
Some certain Things which thee and me concern:
It shall no Mortal but your self avail;
Then fetch a Winchester¹¹ of mighty Ale.
And now when both had drank an equal Share,
Cries Nicholas, sit down, and draw your Chair:
But first, sweet Landlord, you must take a Oath,
To no Man living to betray the Troth;
For, trust me, what I'm going to relate
In Revelation, and as sure as Fate:
And if you tell, this Vengeance will ensue,
No Hare in March will be so mad as you.

Nay, quoth mine Host, I am no Blab, not I,
And hang me, if you catch me in a Lie.
I would not tell, tho' 'twere to save my Life,
To Chick, or Child, to Man, or Maid, or Wife.

Now, John, quoth Nicholas, I will not hide
What by my Art I have of late descry'd;
How as I por'd upon fair Cythia's Light,
Should fall on Monday next, at Quarter-Night,
A Rain so sudden, and so long to boot,
That Noah's Flood was but a Spoonful to't.
This World, within the Compass of an Hour

Shall all be drown'd; so hideous is the Show'r,
As will the Cattle and Mankind devour.
Cries then this Man, Alas, my Wife!
My Bosom-Comfort, and my better Life!
And must she drown and perish with the rest?
My Alison, the Darling of my Breast.
At this well night he swoon'd, o'erwhelm'd wth Grief,
Fetch'd a deep Sigh, and is there no Relief,
No Remedy, he cry'd, no Succour left?
Are we, alas! of ev'ry Hope bereft?
No, by no Means, quoth this designing Clerk,
Be of good Heart, and by Instruction work:
For if by Nicholas you will be led,
And build no Castles in your own wild Head,
None so secure; for Solomon Says true,
Work all by Counsel, and you cannot rue.
If you'll be govern'd, and be rul'd by me,
I'll undertake to save thy Wife and Thee;
By my own Art against the Flood prevail,
And make no Use of either Mast or Sail.
Have you not heard how, when the World was naught,
Noah by heavenly Inspiration taught—
Ay, ay, quoth John, I've in my Bible found,
That once upon a Time the World was drown'd.
Hast thou not heard how Noah was concern'd
For his dear Wife, and how his Bowels yearn'd,

Till he had built and furnish'd out a Bark,
And lodg'd her with her Children in the Ark?
Now, Expedition is the Soul and Life
Of Business; if you love your Self, or Wife,
Run, fly—for in this Case it is a Crime
To loiter, or to lose an Inch of Time.
For Alison, yourself, and me, provide
Three Kneading-Troughs¹², to fail upon the Tide:
But take most special Care that they be large,
In which a Man may swim as in a Barge.
Let them be victuall'd well, and see you lay
Sufficient Stores against a rainy Day;
Enough to serve you twenty Hours and more,
For then the Flood will 'swage, and not before,
But one Thing let me whisper in your Ear,
Let not thy sturdy Servant, Robin, hear,
Nor bonny Gillian know what I relate;
I must not utter the Decrees of Fate.
Ask me not Reasons why I cannot save
Your trusty serving Maid, and honest Knave:
Suffice it thee, unless thy Wits be mad,
To have as great a Grace as Noah had.
Do you make haste, and mind the grand Affair;
To save your Wife shall be my proper Care.
But when these Kneading-Tubs are readymade,
Which may secure us when the Floods invade;

See that you hang them in the Roof full high,
That none our providential Plot descry;
And when thou hast convey'd sufficient Store
Of Meat and Drink, as I have said before,
And put a sharpen'd Ax in ev'ry Boat,
To cut the Cord, and set us all afloat: The thro' the
Gable of the House, which lies
Above the Stable, and the Garden spies,
Break out a Hole, so very large and wide,
Thro' which our Tubs may sail upon the Tide.

Then wilt thou so much Mirth and Pleasure take
In swimming, as the white Duck and the Drake,
Then will I cry, Hl! Alison and John,
Be merry, for the Flood will pass anon.
Then wilt thou answer, Master Nicholay,
Good-morrow, for I see it is broad Day,
Then shall we reign as Emperors for Life,
O'er all the World, like Noah and his Wife.
But one Thing I almost forget to tell,
Which now comes in my Head, (and mark me well)
That on that very Night we go aboard,
All must be hush'd, and whisper not a Word;
But all the Time employ our holy Mind
In earnest Pray'rs, for thus has Heav'n enjoyn'd.

You and our Wife must take a sep'rate Place,
Nor is there any Sin in such a Case.

To-morrow Night, when Men are fast asleep,
We to our Kneading-Tubs will slyly creep;
There will be sit each in his Ship apart,
And wait the Deluge with a patient Heart.
Go now; I have no longer Time to spare
In sermoning, use expeditious Care.
Your Apprehension needs no more Advice;
One single Word's sufficient for the Wife:
And none, dear Landlord, can our Wit inform:
Go, save our Lives from this impending Storm.
Away hies John, with melancholy Look,
And sigh'd and groan'd at ev'ry Step he took:
To Alison he does his Fate deplore,
And tells a Secret which she knew before:
But yet she trembled like an Aspen Leaf,
An seem'd to perish with dissembled Grief;
Crying, Alas! what shall I do?—Be gone—
Help us t'escape, or we are all undone:
I am thy true and very wedded Wife,
Go, dear, dear Spouse, and help to save my Life.
What strong Impressions does Affection give!
Bu Fancy Men have often caus'd to live.
Howe'er absurd Things in themselves appear,
Weak Minds ae apt to credit what they fear.
This silly Carpenter is almost Wood,
And thinks of nothing else but Noah's Flood:

Believes he sees it, and begins to quake,
And all for Alison his Honey's Sake.
He's over-run with Sorrow, ad with Fear,
And sends forth many a Groan, and many a Tear,
A Kneading-Trough, a Tub, and Kemeling,
He gets by Stealth, and sends 'em to his Inn.
He makes three Ladders, whence he climbs aloof,
And privately he hangs them in the Roof.
But first he victuall'd them, both Trough and Tub,
With Bread and Cheese, and Bottles full of mighty Bub;
Enough o'Conscience to relieve their Fast,
And be sufficient for a Day's Repast.

But e'er this Preparation had been made,
He sent to London both his Man and Maid,
On Certain Matters which concern'd his Trade.

And now came on the fatal Monday Night,
Barr'd are the Doors, out goes the Candle-light;
And when all Things in Readiness were set,
These Three their Ladders take, and up they get.
Now *Pater-noster*, clum,¹³ said Alison,
And clum, quoth Nicholas, and clum, quoth John.
This Carpenter his *Orisons* did say,
For Men in Fear are very apt to pray.
Silent he waited, when the Skies would pour
This unaccountable and dismal Show'r.
And now at Curfew¹⁴ Time, dead Sleep began

to fall upon this easy simple Man;
Who, after so much Care and Business past,
And spent with sad Concern, was quickly fast.
Soft down the Ladder stole this lovely Pair,
Good Nicholas, and Alison the Fair:
Then, without speaking, to the Bed they creep,
Of John, poor Cuckold! who was fast asleep;
There all the Night they revel, sport, and toy,
And act the merry Scene of am'rous Joy;
Till that the Bell of Luds began to ring,
And the fat Fryers in the Chancel sing.

The Parish-Clerk, this am'rous Absalon,
Who over Head and Ears in Love is gone,
At Osney happen'd, with a jovial Crew,
To spend the Monday as they us'd to do;
There pulls a certain Fryer by the Sleeve,
With Pardon begg'd, and, Father, by your Leave,
When saw you John the Carpenter, he cries.
Last Saturday, the Cloisterer replies,
Since when I have not seen him with these Eyes.
Perhaps abroad he's playing fast and loose,
Or fetching timber for the Abbot's Use,
And lodges at the Graunge a Day or two;
Or else at Home—I know no more than you.

This made Nab's boiling Blood with Pleasure start,
The News rejoic'd the Cockles of his Heart.

Now is m Time thinks he, the Moon is bright,
Nor care I, if I travel all the Night;
For at his Door, since Day began to spring,
I've seen, like him, no kind of Man or Thing.

It is resolv'd—to Alison I'll go
When the first Morning Cock begins to crow;
And to her Window privately repair,
Then knock, and tell her my tormenting Care:
I'll open all my Breast, and ease my Heart,
For 'tis too much to bear Love's stinging Smart,
Some little Comfort sure I shall not miss,
At least she'll grant the Favour of a Kiss:
My Mouth has itch'd all Day, from whence it seems
That I shall kiss; besides my pleasant Dreams
Of Feasts and Banquets, whence a Man may guess
That I may haply meet with some Success:
But for an Hour or two before I go,
I'll first refresh me with a Nap or so.

Now the first Cock had wak'd from is Repose
The jolly Absalon, and up he rose.
But first he dresses finical¹⁵ and gay,
And looks like any Beau at Church or Play,
And brisk as Bridegroom on a Wedding Day.
Nicely he combs the Ringlets of his Hair,
And, wash'd with Rose-water, looks fresh and fair:
Then with his Finger e her Window twang'd,

Whisper'd a gentle Tone, an thu harangu'd,
Sweet Alison, my Honeycomb, my Dear,
My bird, my Cinamon, your Lover hear:
Awake, and speak one Word before I part;
But one kind Word, the Balsam to my Heart.
Little you think, alas! the mighty Woe,
Which for the Love of thee I undergo:
For thee I swelter, and for thee I sweat,
And mourn as Lambkins for the Mother's Teat.
Nor false my Grief, nor does the Turtle Dove
Lament more truly, or more truly Love.
I cannot eat nor drink, and all for thee—
Get from my Window, you Jack Fook, said she;
I love another of a diff'rent Hue
From such a silly Dunder-head as you.
If you stand talking at that foolish Rate,
My Chamber-pot shall be about your Pate.
Be gone, you empty Sot, and let me sleep.
At this poor Absalon began to weep,
And his hard Fate with Sighs and Groans deplore,
Was ever faithful Love thus serv'd before?
Since, then, my Sweet, what I desire's in vain,
Let me but one small Boon, a Kiss obtain.
And will you then be gone, nor loiter here,
Quoth Alison? Ay certainly, my Dear.
Make ready then—Now, Nicholas, lye still;

‘Tis such a Jest that you shall laugh your fill.
Ravish’d with Joy, Nab fell upon his Knees,
The happiest Man alive in all Degrees.
In silent Raptures he began to cry,
No Lord I Europe is so blest as I.
I may expect more Favours; for Kiss
Is an Assurance of a farther Bliss.

The Window now unclasp’d, with slender Voice
Cries Alison, be quick, and make no Noise;
I would not for the World our Neighbours hear,
For they’re made up of Jealousy and Fear.

Then silken Hankerchief from Pocket came,
To wipe his Mouth full clean to kiss the Dame.
Dark was the Night as any Coal or Pitch,
When at the Window she clapp’d out her Breech.
The Parish-Clerk ne’er doubted what to do
But ask’d no Questions, and in haste fell to:
On her blind Side full favour’ly he prest
A loving Kiss e’er he smelt out the Jest.
Aback he starts, for he knew well enough
That Women’s Lips are smooth, but these were rough:
What have I done? quoth he, and rev’d and star’d,
Ah me! I’ve kiss’d a Woman with a Beard.
He curs’d the Hour, and rail’d against the Stars,
That he was born to kiss my Lady’s Arse.
*Tehea*¹⁶ she cry’d, and clapp’d the Window close,

While Absalon with Grief and Anger goes
To meditate Revenge; and to requite
The foul Affront, he would not sleep that Night.
And now with Dust, with Sand, with Straw, with Chips
He scrubs and rubs the Kisses from his Lips.
Oft would he say, Alas? *O basest Evil!*
Than meet with this Disgrace so damn'd uncivil,
I rather had went headlong to the Devil.
To kiss a Woman's Breech! Oh, it can't be born!
But by my Soul I'll be reveng'd by Morn.
Hot Love, the Proverb says, *grows quickly cool*,
And Absalon's no more an am'rous Fool,
For, since his Purpose was so fondly crost,
He gains his Quiet, tho' his Love is lost:
And, cur'd of his Distemper, can defy
All whining Coxcombs with a scornful Eye:
But for meer Anger, as he pass'd the Street,
He wept, as does a School-boy when he's beat.
In a soft doleful Pace, at last he came
To an old Volcan, Jarvis was his Name,
Who late and early at the Forge turmoil'd,
In hammering Iron bars and Plough-shares toil'd.
Hither repair'd, by one or two a-Clock
Poor Absalon, and gave an easy Knock.
Who's there, that knocks so late, Sir Jarvis cries?
'Tis I, the pensive Absalon replies,

Open the Door, *What*, Absalon, (quoth he)
The Parish-Clerk! Ah! Benedicite.
Where hast thou been? Some pretty Girl I wot
Has led you out so late upon the Trot.
Some merry Meeting on the wenching Score.
You know my Meaning—but I'll say no more.

This Absalon another Distaff drew,
And had more Tow to spin than Jarvis knew:
He minded not a Bean of all he said,
For other Things employ'd his careful Head.
At last he Silence breaks, *dear Friend* he cries,
Lend's that hot Pur, which in the Chimney lies:
I have Occasion for't no Questions ask,
To bring it back again shall be my Task.
With all my Heart, as I'm an honest Smith,
I'll lend it thee; but what wilt do therewith?
For that, quoth Absalon, nor Care, nor Sorrow,
I'll give a good Account of it To-morrow.
Then up the Culter in his Hand he caught,
Tripp'd out with silent Pace and wicked Thought.
Red-hot it was, as any burning Coal,
With which to John the Carpenter's he stole.
There first he cough'd, and as his usual Wont,
Up to the Window came, and tapp'd upon't.
Who's there, quoth Alison? Some Midnight Rook,
Some Thief, I warrant, with a hanging Look.

Ah! God forbid, quoth this dissembling Elf,
'Tis Absalon, my Life, my better Self!
A rich Gold Ring I've to my Darling brought,
By a known Graver Exquisitely wrought:
Beside a Posie, most divinely writ
By a fam'd Poet and notorious Wit.
My Mother gave it me, ('tis Wond'rous fine)
She clapp'd it on my Finer, I on thine,
If thou wilt deign the Favour of a Kiss—
Now Nicholas by chance rose up to piss:
Thinking to better and improve the Jest,
He should salute his Breech before the rest.
With eager Haste and secret Joy he went,
And his Posteriors out at Window sent.
Here Absalon the Wag, with subtile Tone,
Whispers, my Love! my Soul! my Alison!
Speak, my sweet Bird, I know not where thou art—
At this the Scholar let a rousing Fart;
So loud the Noise, as frightful was the Stroke
As Thunder, when it splits the sturdy Oak.
The Clerk was ready, and with hearty Gust,
The red-hot Iron in his Buttocks thrust.
Strait off the Skin, like shrivel'd Parchment flew,
His Breech as raw a Saint Bartholomew:
The Cutler had so fing'd his Hinder-part,
He thought he should have dy'd for very Smart.

In a mad Fit about the Room he ran,
Help, Water, Water, for a dying Man.
The Carpenter, as one beside his Wits,
Starts at the dreadful Sound, and up he gets:
The Name of Water rous'd him from his Sleep;
He rubb'd his Eye-lids, and began to peep.
Alas! thought he, now comes the fatal Hour,
And from the Clouds does Noah's Deluge pour.
Up takes his Ax, and smites the Cord in two.
Down goes the Bread, and Ale, and Cheese, and all,
And John himself had a confounded Fall:
Dropt from the Roof upon the Floor astound,
He lies as dead, and swims upon the Ground.

Then Nicholas, to play the Counterfeit,
With Alison, cries Murder in the Street.

In came the Neighbours pouring like the Tide,
To know the Reason why was Murder cry'd.
There they beheld poor John, a gasping Man;
Shut were his Eyes, his Face was pale and wan:
Batter'd his Sides, and broken was his Arm,
But stand it out he must, to his own Harm;
For when he aim'd to speak in his Defence,
They bore him down, and baffled all his Sense.
They told the People that the Man was Wood,
And dream'd of nothing else but Noah's Flood.
His heated Fancy of this Deluge rung,

That to the Roof three Kneading-Troughs he hung,
With which in Danger he design'd to swim,
And we, forsooth, must carry on the Whim;
He begg'd and pray'd, and so we humour'd him.

At hearing this, the sneering Neighbours gave,
An universal Shout and hideous Laugh.
Now on the Roof, and now on John they gape,
And all his Earnest tur'd into a Jape.
He swore against the Scholar and his Wife,
And never look'd so foolish in his Life.
Whate'er he speaks the People never mind;
His Oaths are nothing, and his Words are Wind.
Thus all consent to scoff each serious Word,
And John remain'd a Cuckold of Record.

Endnotes

1. Almagist: The Name of a Book of Astronomy, written by Ptolomy.
2. *Angelus ad Virginem* : The Angel's Salutation to the Virgin Mary.
3. Metheglin: a spiced or medicated variety of mead, associated particularly with Wales.
4. {Pigsney} One specially cherished; a darling, pet; commonly used as an endearing form of address; Chiefly applied to a girl or woman.
5. Lig: [Lie] obs. and dialect variant.
6. Lemman Dear: Mistress
7. Metheglin: a spiced or medicated variety of mead, associated particularly with Wales.
8. Sage Philosopher: Thales
9. Marlpit: A pit where marl is dug. Marl is an unconsolidated sedimentary rock or soil consisting of clay and lime, formerly used as fertilizer.
10. Pur: pure
11. Wincheser: a Winchester quart is a bottle holding 4 pints.
12. Kneading-Troughs: A brewer's vessel
13. Clum: A note of silence

14. Curfew. William the Conqueror, in the first year of his reign, commanded, that in every town and village, a bell should be rung every night at eight of the clock; and that all people should then put out their fire and candle, and go to bed. The ringing of this bell was call's curfew, that is cover fire.
15. Finical: another word for finicky
16. Tehea: a note of laughter