

DESCRIPTION OF A MILLER [2]

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, "The Reeve's Tale," lines 71-87 and 133-147.

Modern English Version

A miller was there dwelling, many and many a day;
As any peacock he was proud and gay.
He could mend nets, and he could fish, and flute,
Drink and turn cups, and wrestle well, and shoot;
75 Always in his leathern belt he did parade
A sword with a long trenchant blade.
In his pocket he carried a pretty knife;
No man who dared to touch him, on loss of life.
A long knife from Sheffield he carried in his hose;
80 Round was his face and turned-up was his nose.
As bald as any ape's head was his skull;
He was a quarrelsome swaggerer to the full.
No man dared a hand on him to lay,
Because he swore he'd make the beggar pay.
85 A thief he was, it's true, of corn and meal,
And sly at that, accustomed well to steal.
His name was known as arrogant Simpkin.

Large tolls this miller took, beyond a doubt,
With wheat and malt from all the lands about;
135 Of which I'd specify among them all
A Cambridge college known as Soler Hall;
He ground their wheat and all their malt he ground.
And on a day it happened, as they found,
Their manciple lay very sick in bed
140 That all men surely thought he would be dead.
Whereon this miller stole both wheat and flour
A hundredfold more than he used to cheat before;
For theretofore he stole but cautiously,
But now he was a thief outrageously,
145 At which the warden scolded and raised hell;
The miller snapped his fingers, truth to tell,
And bluffed and boosted and denied it all.