

# THE MONK /

AND

## The Miller's Wife.

A COMIC TALE.



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## THE MONK AND THE MILLER'S WIFE.

[Ramsay borrowed the plot of this tale from "The Freirs of Berwick," a much superior composition of the fifteenth century, usually attributed to Dunbar. The Benedictine, in the preface to "The Abbot," intimates the opinion of Scott that the story might probably have been derived by the last mentioned author from some collection of *fabliaux* of the thirteenth or fourteenth century.]

Now lend your lugs, ye benders fine,  
Wha ken the benefit o' wine;  
And you wha laughing seud brown ale,  
Leave jinks a wec, and hear a tale.

An honest miller won'd in Fife,  
That had a young and wanton wife,  
Wha sometimes thol'd the parish priest  
To mak her man a twa-horned beast.  
He paid right mony visits till her;  
And to keep in wi' Hab the miller,  
H' endeavour'd aft to mak him happy,  
Where'er he kent the ale was nappy.  
Sic condescension in a pastor  
Knit Halbert's love to him the faster  
And by his converse, troth 'tis true,  
Hab learn'd to preach when he was fou.

When equal is the night and day,  
And Ceres gies the schools the play,  
A youth, sprung frae a gentle *pater*,  
Bred at St Andrew's *alma-mater*,  
Ac day gaun hameward, it fell late,  
And him benighted by the gate:  
To lye without, pit-mirk did shore him,  
He couldna see his thumb before him:  
But, clack—clack—clack, he heard a mill,  
Whilk led him by the lugs theretill  
To tak the thread of tale along,  
This mill to Halbert did belang;

Not less this note your notice claims—  
The scholar's name was Master James.

Now smiling muse, the prelude past,  
Smoothly relate a tale shall last  
As lang as Alps and Grampian hills,  
As lang as wind or water-mills.

In enter'd James, Hab saw and kenn'd him,  
And offer'd kindly to befriend him  
Wi' sic guid cheer as he could make  
Baith for his ain and father's sake.

The scholar thought himsel right sped,  
And gae him thanks in terms weel bred.

Quoth Hab, "I canna leave my mill  
As yet; but step ye west the kill  
A bowshot, and ye'll find my hame:  
Gae warm ye, and crack wi' our dame,  
'Till I set aff the mill, syne we  
Shall tak what Betsy has to gie."

James, in return, what's handsome said,  
Ower lang to tell; and aff he gaed.

Out o' the house some light did shine,  
Whilk led him till't as wi' a line:

Arriv'd, he knock'd, for doors were steekit;  
Straight thro' a window Betsy keekit,  
And cries, "Wha's that gies fouk a fright  
At sic untimous time o' night?"

James wi' guid humour maist discreetly,  
'Tauld her his circumstance completely.

"I dinna ken ye," quoth the wife,  
"And up and down the thieves are rife;

Within my lane I'm but a woman,  
Sae I'll unbar my door to nae man;

But since 'tis very like, my dow,  
That a' ye're telling may be true,

Hae, there's a key, gang in your way  
At the neist door—there's braw ait strae:

Streak down upon't my lad, and learn  
They're no ill lodg'd that get a barn."

Thus, after meikle clitter clatter,  
 James fand he couldna mend the matter;  
 And since it might nae better be,  
 Wi' resignation took the key,  
 Unlock't the barn, clam up the mou,  
 Where was an opening near the hou,  
 Through whilk he saw a glent o' light,  
 That gae diversion to his sight:  
 By this he quickly could discern  
 A thin wa' sep'rate house and barn,  
 And thro' this rive was i' the wa',  
 A' done within the house he saw:  
 He saw (what ought not to be seen,  
 And scarce gae credit to his een)  
 The parish priest, of reverend fame,  
 In active courtship with the dame—  
 He saw the wife, as fast as able,  
 Spread a clean servite on the table,  
 And sync frae the ha' fire, bring ben  
 A pyping het young roasted hen,  
 And twa guid bottles stout and clear—  
 Ane o' strong ale, and ane o' beer.

But, wicked luck! just as the priest  
 Shot in his fork in chucky's breast,  
 Th' unwelcome miller gae a roar,  
 Cried "Bessy, haste ye ope the door."  
 Wi' that the haly traitor fled,  
 And darn'd himsel' behint a bed,  
 While Bessy huddl'd a' things by,  
 That nought the miller might espy;  
 Syne loot him in—but out of tune,  
 Spcer'd why he left the mill sae soon,  
 "I come," said he, "as manners claims,  
 To crack and wait on master James,  
 Whilk I should do, tho' ne'er sae bizzy:  
 I sent him here gnidwife, where is he?"  
 "Ye sent him here," quoth Bessy, grumbling,  
 "Kenn'd I this James? A cheil cam rambling

But how was I assur'd, when dark,  
 That he had been nae thievish spark,  
 Or some rude rambler gotten a dose,  
 That a weak wife could ill oppose?"

"And what cam o' him? speak nae langer,"  
 Cries Halbert in a Highland anger.  
 "I sent him to the barn," quoth she:  
 "Gae quickly bring him in," quoth he.  
 James was brought in—the wife was bawked—  
 The priest stood close—the miller cracked—  
 Then ask'd his sulken gloomy spouse,  
 What supper had she in the house,  
 That might be suitable to gie  
 Ane o' their lodger's qualitie?  
 Quoth she, "Ye may weel ken, guidman,  
 Your feast comes frae the pottage-pan:  
 The stoved and roasted we afford,  
 Are aft great strangers on our board."  
 "Pottage!" quoth Hab, ye senseless tawpie!  
 Think ye this youth's a gillie-gawpie?  
 And that his gentle stamock's master  
 To worry up a pint o' plaster?  
 Like our mill-knaves that list the laiding,  
 Whase kytes can streek out like raw plaiding.  
 Swith roast a hen, or fry some chickens;  
 And send for ale frae Maggy Pickens."  
 "Hout I," quoth she, "ye may weel ken,  
 'Tis ill brought butt that's na there ben;  
 When but last owk, nae farder gane,  
 The laird gat a' to pay his kain."  
 Then James, wha had as guid a guess  
 O' what was in the house as Bess,  
 Wi' pawky smile, this plea to end,  
 'To please himsel' and ease his friend,  
 First open'd wi' a slee oration,  
 His wondrous skill in conjuration.  
 Said he, "By this fell art I'm able  
 To whop aff any great man's table

Whate'er I like to mak a mail of,  
 Either in part or yet the hail of—  
 And if ye please I'll shaw my art."  
 Cries Halbert, "Faith wi' a' my heart!"  
 Bess sain'd hersel'—cried, "Lord be here!"  
 And near hand fell a-swoon for fear.  
 James leugh, and bade her naething dread,  
 Syne to his conj'ring went wi' speed:  
 And first he draws a circle round,  
 Then utters mony a magie sound  
 O' words, part Latin, Greek, and Dutch,  
 Enow to fright a very witch:  
 That done, he says, "Now, now, 'tis come,  
 And in the bole beside the lum:  
 Now set the board; guidwife, gae ben,  
 Bring frae yon bole a roasted hen."  
 She wadna gang, but Habby ventur'd;  
 And soon as he the aumry enter'd,  
 It smell'd sae weel he short time sought it,  
 And wond'ring, 'tween his hands he brought it,  
 He view'd it round, and thrice he smelt it,  
 Syne wi' a gentle touch he felt it,  
 Thus ilka sense he did convey,  
 Lest glamour had beguil'd his een;  
 They all in an united body,  
 Deelar'd it a fine fat how-towdy.  
 "Nae mair about it," quoth the miller,  
 "The fowl looks weel, and we'll fa' till her."  
 "Sae be't," says James; and in a doup,  
 They snapt her up baith stoup and roup.  
 "Neist, oh!" cries Halbert, "could your skill  
 But help us to a waught o' yill,  
 I'd be oblig'd t'ye a' my life,  
 And offer to the deil my wife;  
 To see if he'll disreeter mak her,  
 But that I'm fleed he winna tak her."  
 Said James: "Ye offer very fair,  
 The bargain's hadden—sae nae mair."

Then thrice he shook a willawand,  
 Wi' kittle words thrice gae command;  
 That done, wi' look baith learn'd and grave,  
 Said, "Now ye'll get what ye wad have—  
 Twa bottles o' as nappy liquer  
 As ever ream'd in horn or bicker;  
 Behind the ark that hauds your meal;  
 Ye'll find them standing corkit weel."  
 He said, and fast the miller flew,  
 And frae their nest the bottles drew,  
 Then first the scholar's health he toasted,  
 Whase art had gart him feed on roasted.  
 His father's neist—and a' the rest  
 O' his guid friends that wish'd him best,  
 Which were ower langsome at the time,  
 In a short tale to put in rhyme.

Thus, while the miller and the youth  
 Were blythely stock'ning o' their drowth,  
 Bess, fretting, scarcely held frae greeting—  
 The priest enclos'd, stood vex'd and sweating.

"O wow!" said Hab, "if ane might speer,  
 Dear Master James, wha brought our cheer?  
 Sic laits appear to use sae awfu',  
 Wi' hardly think your learning lawfu'."

"To bring your doubts to a conclusion,"  
 Says James, "ken I'm a Rosicrucian;  
 Ane o' the set that never carries  
 On traffic wi' black deils or fairies;  
 There's mony a sp'rit that's no a deil,  
 That constantly around us wheel.  
 There was a sage call'd Albumazor,  
 Whase wit was gleg as ony razor:  
 Frae this great man we learn'd the skill  
 To bring these gentry to our will  
 And they appear when we've a mind,  
 In ony shape o' human kind;  
 Now, if you'll drap your foolish fear,  
 I'll gar my Pacolet appear."

Hab fidg'd and leugh, his elbock clew,  
 Baith fear'd and fond a sp'rit to view :  
 At last his courage wan the day—  
 He to the scholar's will gae way.

Bessy be this began to smell  
 A rat, but kept her mind to 'rsell :  
 She pray'd like howdy in her drink,  
 But meantime tipt young James a wink.  
 James frae his eye an answer sent,  
 Which made the wife right weel content :  
 Then turn'd to Hab, and thus advis'd,  
 " Whate'er you see, be nought surpris'd,  
 But for your saul move not your tongue,  
 And ready stand wi' a great rung,  
 Syne as the sp'rit gangs marching out,  
 Be sure to lend him a sound rout :  
 I bidna this by way o' mocking,  
 For nought delytes him mair than knocking."

Hab got a kent—stood by the hallan,  
 And straight the wild mischievous callan  
 Cries, " Radamanthus Husky Mingo,  
 Monk, Horner, Hipöck, Jinko, Jingo,  
 Appear in likeness o' a priest,  
 No like a deil in shape o' beast,  
 Wi' gaping chafts to fleg us a' :  
 Wauk forth, the door stands to the wa'."

Then frae the hole where he was pent,  
 The priest approach'd right weel content,  
 Wi' silent pace strade ower the floor,  
 'Till he was drawing near the door ;  
 Then to escape the cudgel ran,  
 But was nae miss'd by the guidman,  
 Wha lent him on the neek a lounder,  
 That gart him ower the threshold founder.  
 Darkness soon hid him frae their sight—  
 Ben flew the miller in a fright ;  
 " I trow," quoth he, " I laid weel on ;  
 But, wow! he's like our ain Mess John!"