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Poems

Poems on several occasions

Gay, John

Edinburgh, 1773

Tales. An answer to the Sompner's prologue of Chaucer

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TALES.

An Answer to the Sompner's Prologue of Chaucer.

In Imitation of Chaucer's Style.

THE Sompner leudly hath his prologue told,
And faine on the freers his tale japing and bold;
How that in hell they searchen near and wide,
And nae one freer in all thilke place espyde,
But lo! the devil turn'd his erse about,
And twenty thousand freers went in and out.
By which in Jeoffry's rhyming it appears,
The devil's belly is the hive of freers.
Mow listneth lordings! forthwith ye shall hear,
What happen'd at a house in Lancashire.
A misere that had londs and tenement,
Who raketh from his villaines taxes and rent,
Owned a house which empty long y-stood,
Full deeply sited in a derkning wood,
Murm'ring, a shallow brook runneth along,
Mong the round stones it maken doleful song.
Now there spreading a rumour that everich night
The rooms ihaunted been by many a sprite;

The miller avoucheth, and all there about,
That they full oft' hearen the hellish rout;
Some saine they hear the jingling of chains,
And some hath yheard the psautries straines,
At midnight some the headless horse imeet,
And some espien a corse in a white sheet,
And oother things, faye, elfin and elfe,
And shapes that fear createn to it selfe.
Now it so hapt, there was not ferre away,
Of gray freers a fair and rich abbaye,
Where liven a freer ycleped Pere Thomas,
Who daren alone in derke through church-yerds pass.
This freer would lye in thilke house all night,
In hope he might espyen a dreadful sprite.
He taketh candle, beades, and holy watere,
And legends eke of saintes, and books of prayere.
He entereth the room, and looketh round about,
And haspen the door, to haspen the goblin out.
The candle hath he put close to the bed,
And in low tone his *ave marye* said.
With water now besprinkled hath the floore,
And maken cross on key-hole of the doore.
Ne was there not a mouse-hole in thilke place,
But he y-crossed hath by God his grace:
He crossed hath this, and eke he crossed that,
With *benedicite*, and god knows what.
Now he goeth to bed and lieth adown,
When the clock had just stricken the twelfth soun;
Bethinketh him now what the cause had ibeen,
Why many sprites by mortals have been seen.
Hem remembereth how Dan Plutarch hath y-sed
That Caesar's sprite came to Brute his bed;

Of chains that frighten erſt Artemidore,
The tales of Pline, Valere, and many more.
Hem thinketh that ſome murdere here been done,
And he mought ſee ſome bloodye ghoſt anone,
Or that ſome orphlines writings here be ſtor'd,
Or pot of gold laine deep beneath a board:
Or thinketh hem, if he might ſee no ſprite,
The abbaye mought buy this houſe cheap outright.
As hem thus thinketh, anone aſleep he lies,
Up ſtarten Sathanas with ſaucer eyes.
He turned the freer upon his face downright,
Diſplaying his nether cheeks full broad and white.
Then quoth Dan Sathanas as he thwacked him ſore,
Thou didſt forget to guard thy poſtern-door.
There is an hole which hath not croſſed been:
Farewel, from whence I came, I creepen in.
Now plain it is ytellen in my verſe,
If devils in hell bear freers in their erſe,
On earth the devil in freers doth y-dwell;
Were there no freers, the devil mought keep in hell.