## THE CANTERBURY TALES.

## THE PROLOGUE.

WHEN that Aprilis, with his showers swoot\*, \*sweet The drought of March hath pierced to the root, And bathed every vein in such licour, Of which virtue engender'd is the flower; When Zephyrus eke with his swoote breath Inspired hath in every holt\* and heath \*grove, forest The tender croppes\* and the younge sun \*twigs, boughs Hath in the Ram <1> his halfe course y-run, And smalle fowles make melody, That sleepen all the night with open eye, (So pricketh them nature in their corages\*); \*hearts, inclinations Then longe folk to go on pilgrimages, And palmers <2> for to seeke strange strands, To \*ferne hallows couth\* in sundry lands; \*distant saints known\*<3> And specially, from every shire's end Of Engleland, to Canterbury they wend, The holy blissful Martyr for to seek, That them hath holpen\*, when that they were sick. \*helped

Befell that, in that season on a day, In Southwark at the Tabard <4> as I lay, Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage To Canterbury with devout corage, At night was come into that hostelry Well nine and twenty in a company Of sundry folk, \*by aventure y-fall \*who had by chance fallen In fellowship\*, and pilgrims were they all, into company.\*<5> That toward Canterbury woulde ride. The chamber, and the stables were wide, And \*well we weren eased at the best.\* \*we were well provided And shortly, when the sunne was to rest, with the best\* So had I spoken with them every one, That I was of their fellowship anon, And made forword\* early for to rise, \*promise To take our way there as I you devise\*. \*describe, relate

But natheless, while I have time and space, Ere that I farther in this tale pace, Me thinketh it accordant to reason, To tell you alle the condition Of each of them, so as it seemed me, And which they weren, and of what degree; And eke in what array that they were in: And at a Knight then will I first begin.

A KNIGHT there was, and that a worthy man, That from the time that he first began To riden out, he loved chivalry, Truth and honour, freedom and courtesy. Full worthy was he in his Lorde's war, And thereto had he ridden, no man farre\*,

\*farther As well in Christendom as in