

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE. <1>

"IN faith, Squier, thou hast thee well acquit, And gentilly; I praise well thy wit," Quoth the Franklin; "considering thy youthe So feelingly thou speak'st, Sir, I aloue* thee, *allow, approve *As to my doom,* there is none that is here *so far as my judgment Of eloquence that shall be thy peer, goes* If that thou live; God give thee goode chance, And in virtue send thee continuance, For of thy speaking I have great dainty.* *value, esteem I have a son, and, by the Trinity; *It were me lever* than twenty pound worth land, *I would rather* Though it right now were fallen in my hand, He were a man of such discretion As that ye be: fy on possession, *But if* a man be virtuous withal. *unless I have my sone snibbed* and yet shall, *rebuked; "snubbed." For he to virtue *listeth not t'intend,* *does not wish to But for to play at dice, and to dispend, apply himself* And lose all that he hath, is his usage; And he had lever talke with a page, Than to commune with any gentle wight, There he might learen gentilless aright."

Straw for your gentilless!" quoth our Host. "What? Frankelin, pardie, Sir, well thou wost* *knowest That each of you must tellen at the least A tale or two, or breake his behest."* *promise "That know I well, Sir," quoth the Frankelin; "I pray you have me not in disdain, Though I to this man speak a word or two." "Tell on thy tale, withoute wordes mo'." "Gladly, Sir Host," quoth he, "I will obey Unto your will; now hearken what I say; I will you not contrary* in no wise, *disobey As far as that my wittes may suffice. I pray to God that it may please you, Then wot I well that it is good enow.

"These olde gentle Bretons, in their days, Of divers aventures made lays, <2> Rhymeden in their firste Breton tongue; Which layes with their instruments they sung, Or elles reade them for their pleasance; And one of them have I in remembrance, Which I shall say with good will as I can. But, Sirs, because I am a borel* man, *rude, unlearned At my beginning first I you beseech Have me excused of my rude speech. I learned never rhetoric, certain; Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain. I slept never on the mount of Parnasso, Nor learned Marcus Tullius Cicero. Coloures know I none, withoute dread,* *doubt But such coloures as