

THE PARDONER'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

OUR Hoste gan to swear as he were wood; "Harow!" quoth he, "by nailes
and by blood, <1> This was a cursed thief, a false justice. As shameful death
as hearte can devise Come to these judges and their advoca's.*
advocates, counsellors Algate this sely** maid is slain, alas!
*nevertheless **innocent Alas! too deare bought she her beauty. Wherefore I
say, that all day man may see That giftes of fortune and of nature Be cause
of death to many a creature. Her beauty was her death, I dare well sayn;
Alas! so piteously as she was slain. [Of bothe giftes, that I speak of now Men
have full often more harm than prow,*] *profit But truely,
mine owen master dear, This was a piteous tale for to hear; But natheless,
pass over; 'tis *no force.* *no matter* I pray to God to save thy
gentle corse,* *body And eke thine urinals, and thy jordans,
Thine Hippocras, and eke thy Galliens, <2> And every boist* full of thy
lectuary, *box <3> God bless them, and our lady Sainte
Mary. So may I the',* thou art a proper man, *thrive And
like a prelate, by Saint Ronian; Said I not well? Can I not speak *in term?**in set form* But well I wot thou dost* mine heart to erme,** *makest
**grieve<4> That I have almost caught a cardiacle:* *heartache
<5> By corpus Domini <6>, but* I have triacle,** *unless **a remedy
Or else a draught of moist and corny <7> ale, Or but* I hear anon a merry
tale, *unless Mine heart is brost* for pity of this maid.
*burst, broken Thou *bel ami,* thou Pardoner," he said, *good
friend* "Tell us some mirth of japes* right anon." *jokes "It
shall be done," quoth he, "by Saint Ronion. But first," quoth he, "here at this
ale-stake* *ale-house sign <8> I will both drink, and biten on a cake."
But right anon the gentles gan to cry, "Nay, let him tell us of no ribaldry. Tell
us some moral thing, that we may lear* *learn Somewit,* and
thenne will we gladly hear." *wisdom, sense "I grant y-wis,"* quoth
he; "but I must think *surely Upon some honest thing while
that I drink."