

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE.<1>

THE PROLOGUE

Our Host upon his stirrups stood anon, And saide; "Good men, hearken every one, This was a thrifty* tale for the nones. *discreet, profitable
Sir Parish Priest," quoth he, "for Godde's bones, Tell us a tale, as was thy
forword yore: *promise formerly* I see well that ye learned men in
lore Can* mucche good, by Godde's dignity." *knowThe
Parson him answer'd, "Ben'dicite! What ails the man, so sinfully to swear?"
Our Host answer'd, "O Jankin, be ye there? Now, good men," quoth our
Host, "hearken to me. I smell a Lollard <2> in the wind," quoth he. "Abide,
for Godde's digne* passion, *worthy For we shall have a
predication: This Lollard here will preachen us somewhat." "Nay, by my
father's soul, that shall he not, Saide the Shipman; "Here shall he not
preach, He shall no gospel glose* here nor teach. *comment upon
We all believe in the great God," quoth he. "He woulde sowe some difficulty,
Or springe cockle <3> in our cleane corn. And therefore, Host, I warne thee
beforn, My jolly body shall a tale tell, And I shall clinke you so merry a bell,
That I shall waken all this company; But it shall not be of philosophy, Nor of
physic, nor termes quaint of law; There is but little Latin in my maw."*
*belly