

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." *know
The 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