

Notes to the Prologue to the Shipman's Tale

1. The Prologue here given was transferred by Tyrwhitt from the place, preceding the Squire's Tale, which it had formerly occupied; the Shipman's Tale having no Prologue in the best manuscripts.

2. Lollard: A contemptuous name for the followers of Wyckliffe; presumably derived from the Latin, "lolium," tares, as if they were the tares among the Lord's wheat; so, a few lines below, the Shipman intimates his fear lest the Parson should "spring cockle in our clean corn."

3. Cockle: A weed, the "Agrostemma githago" of Linnaeus; perhaps named from the Anglo-Saxon, "ceocan," because it chokes the corn. (Transcriber's note: It is also possible Chaucer had in mind Matthew 13:25, where in some translations, an enemy sowed "cockle" amongst the wheat. (Other translations have "tares" and "darnel".))