CHAUCER'S TALE OF MELIBOEUS.

THE PROLOGUE.

"No more of this, for Godde's dignity!" Quoth oure Hoste; "for thou makest me So weary of thy very lewedness,* *stupidity, ignorance <1> That, all so wisly* God my soule bless, *surely Mine eares ache for thy drafty* speech. *worthless <2> Now such a rhyme the devil I beteche:* *commend to This may well be rhyme doggerel," quoth he. "Why so?" quoth I; "why wilt thou lette* me *prevent More of my tale than any other man, Since that it is the best rhyme that I can?"* *know "By God!" quoth he, "for, plainly at one word, Thy drafty rhyming is not worth a tord: Thou dost naught elles but dispendest* time. *wastest Sir, at one word, thou shalt no longer rhyme. Let see whether thou canst tellen aught *in gest,* *by way of Or tell in prose somewhat, at the least, narrative* In which there be some mirth or some doctrine." "Gladly," quoth I, "by Godde's sweete pine,* *suffering I will you tell a little thing in prose, That oughte like* you, as I suppose, *please Or else certes ye be too dangerous.* *fastidious It is a moral tale virtuous, *All be it* told sometimes in sundry wise *although it be* By sundry folk, as I shall you devise. As thus, ye wot that ev'ry Evangelist, That telleth us the pain* ofJesus Christ, *passion He saith not all thing as his fellow doth; But natheless their sentence is all soth,* *true And all accorden as in their sentence,* *meaning All be there in their telling difference; For some of them say more, and some say less, When they his piteous passion express; I mean of Mark and Matthew, Luke and John; But doubteless their sentence is all one. Therefore, lordinges all, I you beseech, If that ye think I vary in my speech, As thus, though that I telle somedeal more Of proverbes, than ye have heard before Comprehended in this little treatise here, *T'enforce with* the effect of my mattere, *with which to And though I not the same wordes say enforce* As ye have heard, yet to you all I pray Blame me not; for as in my sentence Shall ye nowhere finde no difference From the sentence of thilke* treatise lite,** *this **little After the which this merry tale I write. And therefore hearken to what I shall say, And let me tellen all my tale, I pray."