## 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 \*suffering I will you tell a little thing in prose, That sweete pine,\* 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\* of Jesus 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 be seech, 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 \*with which to And though I not the same wordes say mattere, 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."