

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

"Ho!" quoth the Knight, "good sir, no more of this; That ye have said is right enough, y-wis,* *of a surety And muche more; for little heaviness Is right enough to muche folk, I guess. I say for me, it is a great disease,* *source of distress, annoyance Where as men have been in great wealth and ease, To hearken of their sudden fall, alas! And the contrary is joy and great solas,* *delight, comfort As when a man hath been in poor estate, And climbeth up, and waxeth fortunate, And there abideth in prosperity; Such thing is gladsome, as it thinketh me, And of such thing were goodly for to tell."

"Yea," quoth our Hoste, "by Saint Paule's bell. Ye say right sooth; this monk hath clapped* loud; *talked He spake how Fortune cover'd with a cloud I wot not what, and als' of a tragedy Right now ye heard: and pardie no remedy It is for to bewaile, nor complain That that is done, and also it is pain, As ye have said, to hear of heaviness. Sir Monk, no more of this, so God you bless; Your tale annoyeth all this company; Such talking is not worth a butterfly, For therein is there no sport nor game; Therefore, Sir Monke, Dan Piers by your name, I pray you heart'ly, tell us somewhat else, For sickerly, n'ere* clinking of your bells, *were it not for the That on your bridle hang on every side, By heaven's king, that for us alle died, I should ere this have fallen down for sleep, Although the slough had been never so deep; Then had your tale been all told in vain. For certainly, as these clerkes sayn, Where as a man may have no audience, Nought helpeth it to telle his sentence. And well I wot the substance is in me, If anything shall well reported be. Sir, say somewhat of hunting, <1> I you pray."

"Nay," quoth the Monk, "I have *no lust to play;* *no fondness for Now let another tell, as I have told." jesting* Then spake our Host with rude speech and bold, And said unto the Nunne's Priest anon, "Come near, thou Priest, come hither, thou Sir John, <2> Tell us such thing as may our heartes glade.* *gladden Be blithe, although thou ride upon a jade. What though thine horse be bothe foul and lean? If he will serve thee, reck thou not a bean; Look that thine heart be merry evermo'."

"Yes, Host," quoth he, "so may I ride or go, But* I be merry, y-wis I will be