

## THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE. <1>

### THE PROLOGUE.

WHEN ended was the life of Saint Cecile, Ere we had ridden fully five mile,  
<2> At Boughton-under-Blee us gan o'ertake A man, that clothed was in  
clothes black, And underneath he wore a white surplice. His hackenay,\*  
which was all pomely-gris,\*\*           \*nag \*\*dapple-gray So sweated, that it  
wonder was to see; It seem'd as he had pricked\* miles three.  
\*spurred The horse eke that his yeoman rode upon So sweated, that  
unnethes\* might he gon.\*\*           \*hardly \*\*go About the peytrel <3>  
stood the foam full high; He was of foam, as \*flecked as a pie.\*  
\*spotted like a magpie\* A maile twyfold <4> on his crupper lay; It seemed  
that he carried little array; All light for summer rode this worthy man. And  
in my heart to wonder I began What that he was, till that I understood How  
that his cloak was sewed to his hood; For which, when I had long advised\*  
me,                   \*considered I deemed him some Canon for to be. His hat  
hung at his back down by a lace,\*                   \*cord For he had ridden  
more than trot or pace; He hadde pricked like as he were wood.\*  
\*mad A clote-leaf\* he had laid under his hood,                   \* burdock-leaf For  
sweat, and for to keep his head from heat. But it was joye for to see him  
sweat; His forehead dropped as a stillatory\*                   \*still Were full  
of plantain or of paritory.\*                   \*wallflower And when that he was  
come, he gan to cry, "God save," quoth he, "this jolly company. Fast have I  
pricked," quoth he, "for your sake, Because that I would you overtake, To  
riden in this merry company." His Yeoman was eke full of courtesy, And  
saide, "Sirs, now in the morning tide Out of your hostelry I saw you ride,  
And warned here my lord and sovereign, Which that to ride with you is full  
fain, For his disport; he loveth dalliance." "Friend, for thy warning God give  
thee good chance,"\*                   \*fortune Said oure Host; "certain it woulde seem  
Thy lord were wise, and so I may well deem; He is full jocund also, dare I  
lay; Can he aught tell a merry tale or tway, With which he gladden may this  
company?" "Who, Sir? my lord? Yea, Sir, withoute lie, He can\* of mirth and  
eke of jollity                   \*knows \*Not but\* enough; also, Sir, truste  
me,                   \*not less than\* An\* ye him knew all so well as do I,  
\*if Ye would wonder how well and craftily He coulde work, and that in  
sundry wise. He hath take on him many a great emprise,\*                   \*task,  
undertaking Which were full hard for any that is here To bring about, but\*  
they of him it lear.\*\*                   \*unless \*\*learn As homely as he rides amonges