THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

Awake, thou Cook," quoth he; "God give thee sorrow What aileth thee to sleepe *by the morrow?* *in the day time* Hast thou had fleas all night, or art drunk? Or had thou with some quean* all night y-swunk,** *whore **laboured So that thou mayest not hold up thine head?" The Cook, that was full pale and nothing red, Said to Host, "So God my soule bless, As there is fall'n on me such heaviness, I know not why, that me were lever* *rather Than the best gallon wine that is in Cheap." sleep, "Well," quoth the Manciple, "if it may do ease To thee, Sir Cook, and to no wight displease Which that here rideth in this company, And that our Host will of his courtesy, I will as now excuse thee of thy tale; For in good faith thy visage is full pale: Thine eyen daze,* soothly as me thinketh, *are dim And well I wot, thy breath full soure stinketh, That sheweth well thou art not well disposed; Of me certain thou shalt not be y-glosed.* *flattered See how he yawneth, lo, this drunken wight, As though he would us swallow anon right. Hold close thy mouth, man, by thy father's kin; The devil of helle set his foot therein! Thy cursed breath infecte will us all: Fy! stinking swine, fy! foul may thee befall. Ah! take heed, Sirs, of this lusty man. Now, sweete Sir, will ye joust at the fan?<4> Thereto, me thinketh, ye be well y-shape. I trow that ye have drunken wine of ape, <5> And that is when men playe with a straw."

And with this speech the Cook waxed all wraw,* *wrathful And on the Manciple he gan nod fast For lack of speech; and down his horse him cast, Where as he lay, till that men him up took. This was a fair chevachie* of a cook: *cavalry expedition Alas! that he had held him by his

ladle! And ere that he again were in the saddle There was great shoving bothe to and fro To lift him up, and muche care and woe, So unwieldy was this silly paled ghost. And to the Manciple then spake our Host: "Because that drink hath domination Upon this man, by my salvation I trow he lewedly* will tell his tale. *stupidly For were it wine, or old or moisty* ale, *new That he hath drunk, he speaketh in his nose, And sneezeth fast, and eke he hath the pose <6> He also hath to do more than enough To keep him on his capel* out of the slough; *horse And if he fall from off his capel eftsoon,* *again Then shall we alle have enough to do'n In lifting up his heavy drunken corse. Tell on thy tale, of him *make I no force.* *I take no account* But vet, Manciple, in faith thou art too nice* *foolish Thus openly to reprove him of his vice; Another day he will paraventure Reclaime thee, and bring thee to the lure; <7> I mean, he speake will of smalle things, As for to *pinchen at* thy reckonings, *pick flaws in* That were not honest, if it came to prefe."* *test, proof Quoth the Manciple, "That were a great mischief; So might he lightly bring me in the snare. Yet had I lever* paye for the mare *rather Which he rides on, than he should with me strive. I will not wrathe him, so may I thrive) That that I spake, I said it in my bourde.* *jest And weet ve what? I have here in my gourd A draught of wine, yea, of a ripe grape, And right anon ye shall see a good jape.* *trick This Cook shall drink thereof, if that I may; On pain of my life he will not say nay." And certainly, to tellen as it was, Of this vessel the cook drank fast (alas! What needed it? he drank enough beforn), And when he hadde *pouped in his horn,* *belched* To the Manciple he took the gourd again. And of that drink the Cook was wondrous fain, And thanked him in such wise as he could.

Then gan our Host to laughe wondrous loud, And said, "I see well it is necessary Where that we go good drink with us to carry; For that will turne rancour and disease* *trouble, annoyance T'accord and love, and many a wrong appease. O Bacchus, Bacchus, blessed be thy name, That so canst turnen earnest into game! Worship and thank be to thy deity. Of that mattere ye get no more of me. Tell on thy tale, Manciple, I thee pray." "Well, Sir," quoth he, "now hearken what I say."