

1380

CANTERBURY TALES

PROLOGUE TO SIR THOPAS

Geoffrey Chaucer

Chaucer, Geoffrey (1343-1400) - English poet, known as the most important writer of Middle English. His *Canterbury Tales* (~1380) are told by traveling pilgrims who meet at a tavern and have a storytelling contest to pass the time. Each tale is preceded by an introductory prologue. Prologue to *Sir Thopas* - Introduces Sir Thopas, a character whose story is partially told by Chaucer.

PROLOGUE TO SIR THOPAS

The Merry Words of the Host to Chaucer

When told was all this miracle, every man
So sober fell 'twas wonderful to see,
Until our host in jesting wise began,
And for the first time did he glance at me,
Saying, "What man are you?"- 'twas thus quoth he-
"You look as if you tried to find a hare,
For always on the ground I see you stare.

"Come near me then, and look up merrily.
Now make way, sirs, and let this man have place;
He in the waist is shaped as well as I;
This were a puppet in an arm's embrace
For any woman, small and fair of face.
Why, he seems absent, by his countenance,
And gossips with no one for dalliance.

"Since other folk have spoken, it's your turn;

Tell us a mirthful tale, and that anon."
"Mine host," said I, "don't be, I beg, too stern,
For of good tales, indeed, sir, have I none,
Save a long rhyme I learned in years ago."
"Well, that is good," said he; "now shall we hear
It seems to me, a thing to bring us cheer."

Explicit

THE END