

1380

CANTERBURY TALES

THE FRIAR'S PROLOGUE

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. The Friar's Prologue- Introduces Huberd, the Friar, who knows barmaids better than the sick and has a reputation as a beggar.

THE FRIARS PROLOGUE

This worthy limiter, this noble friar,
 He turned always a lowering face, and dire,
 Upon the summoner, but for courtesy
 No rude and insolent word as yet spoke he.
 But at the last he said unto the wife:
 "Lady," said he, "God grant you a good life!
 You have here touched, as I may prosperous be,
 Upon school matters of great difficulty;
 You have said many things right well, I say;
 But, lady, as we ride along our way,
 We need but talk to carry on our game,
 And leave authorities, in good God's name,
 To preachers and to schools for clergymen.
 But if it pleases all this company, then,
 I'll tell you of a summoner, to make game.
 By God, you could surmise it by the name
 That of a summoner may no good be said;
 I pray that no one will be angry made.
 A summoner is a runner up and down
 With summonses for fornication known,
 And he is beaten well at each town's end."
 Our host then spoke: "O sir, you should attend
 To courtesy, like man of your estate;
 In company here we will have no debate.
 Tell forth your tale and let the summoner be."
 "Nay," said the summoner, "let him say to me
 What pleases him; when it falls to my lot,
 By God I'll then repay him, every jot.
 I'll then make plain to him what great honour
 It is to be a flattering limiter;
 I'll certainly tell him what his business is."
 Our host replied: "Oh peace, no more of this!"
 And after that he said unto the friar:
 "Tell now your tale to us, good master dear."

HERE ENDS THE FRIAR'S PROLOGUE