

1380

CANTERBURY TALES

THE PRIORESS'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 Prioress' Prologue - Introduces Madame Eglentyn, the Prioress, a pious woman of conscience.

THE PRIORESSS PROLOGUE

The Merry Words of the Host to the Sailor
and to My Lady Prioress

Well said, by corpus dominus," said our host,
"Now long time may you sail along the coast,
Sir gentle master, gentle mariner!
God give this monk a thousand years bitter!
Aha, comrades, beware of such a jape!
The monk put into that man's hood an ape,
And in the wife's too, by Saint Augustine!
Invite no more monks to your house or inn.
"But let that pass, and let us look about
To see who shall be next, of all this rout,
To tell a tale."
And after that he said,
As courteously as it had been a maid:
"My lady prioress, and by your leave,

So that I knew I should in no way grieve,
I would opine that tell a tale you should,
The one that follows next if you but would.
Now will you please vouchsafe it, lady dear?"
"Gladly," said she, and spoke as you shall hear.

Explicit