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**GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S
THE CANTERBURY TALE**

Ediție critică



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Geoffrey Chaucer is the author of *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories in a frame story, between written 1387 and 1400. It is the story of a group of thirty people travelling as pilgrims to Canterbury. The pilgrims are people that come from various layers of society and tell stories to each other while they travel to Canterbury to Thomas a Becket's shrine. According to the General Prologue, Chaucer intended that each pilgrim should tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two tales on the way back, but he did not finish that huge project. *The Canterbury Tales* is the best and most renowned work of Geoffrey Chaucer, a poet of the fourteenth-century England. Not much is known about Chaucer's personal life or his education, but the existing records are enough document his professional life.

Fragment I (Group A)

The Canterbury Tales begins with a General Prologue in which the poet tells us how he happened to meet these "nine and twenty" pilgrims on the way to Canterbury, how they agreed to tell the tales at the suggestion of the landlord of The Tabard (the inn where they stopped in Southwark in south London), and how they all appeared to the poet: their habits, their speech, their clothes, their attitudes, and so on. His account of the pilgrims here, before any of them gets to tell a tale, is a verbal portrait gallery with word pictures of the individuals who will later tell the famous tales. It has often been remarked, and it is worth remarking again, that this portrait gallery provides a wonderful cross section of fourteenth-century English society. Not a complete and comprehensive survey, for Chaucer is a poet not a sociologist, but one remarkable for its diversity: there are men and women, clerics and laymen; young, middle aged and old; people who differ widely in their spiritual lives, their economic status, their tastes in clothes, books, and food; those who need to travel constantly and those for whom this will be the one major journey of their life. There are rogues and innocents, introverts and show-offs, saints (few) and sinners (many). The people in this varied group tell an equally varied selection of tales, some of them dealing with "gentleness, morality and holiness" as Chaucer says himself. Many are also highly comic, including the tale of the Miller and the Prologue of the Wife of Bath. And one of the most surprising tellers of a moral tale is that ugly and immoral man the Pardoner. "God's plenty" the poet Dryden later called it.

General Prologue

The Canterbury Tales begins in the Tabard Inn, in Southwark, where a group of 30 pilgrims meet by chance, and agree to travel together to Canterbury. The Host of the inn, Herry Bailey (Harry Bailly), offers to travel with them "at my own cost", acting as guide and judge of the tales he bids them tell. He suggests that each of the 30 pilgrims tell two tales going to Canterbury, two tales coming back, and that the teller of the best of these receive a dinner at his inn on their return, for which the whole company would pay. He will choose the best tale by considering both meaning and pleasure, "best sentence," and "most solaaas." The following day they set off, and shortly thereafter, whether by chance, luck or fate, the Knight draws the lot to begin the contest.

When that April with his showers soote
The drought of March hath pierced to the root
And bathed every vein in such liquor
Of which virtúe engendered is the flower;
5 When Zephyrus eke with his sweetë breath
Inspirèd hath in every holt and heath
The tender croppes, and the youngë sun
Hath in the Ram his halfë course y-run,
And smalle fowlës maken melody
10 That sleepen all the night with open eye
(So pricketh them Natúre in their couráges),
Then longen folk to go on pilgrimáges,
And palmers for to seeken strangë strands
To fernë hallows couth in sundry lands,
15 And specially from every shire's end
Of Engeland to Canterbury they wend
The holy blissful martyr for to seek,
That them hath holpen when that they were sick.
Befell that in that season on a day

its showers sweet

rootlet / liquid

*West Wind also
grove & field
young shoots / Spring sun
in Aries / has run
little birds*

*Who sleep
N. spurs t. in t. spirit
people long
pilgrims / shores
distant shrines known
county's*

*go
St. Thomas Becket
Who has helped them
It happened*

20 In Southwark at The Tabard as I lay
 Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage
 To Canterbury with full devout couraġe,
 At night was come into that hostelry
 Well nine and twenty in a company
 25 Of sundry folk by aventure y-fall
 In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all
 That toward Canterbury woulden ride.
 The chambers and the stables weren wide
 And well we weren easēd at the best.
 30 And shortly, when the sunnē was to rest,
 So had I spoken with them every one
 That I was of their fellowship anon,
 And madē forward early for to rise
 To take our way there as I you devise.
 35 But natheless, while I have time and space,
 Ere that I further in this talē pace,
 Methinketh it accordant to reason
 To tell you all the condition
 Of each of them so as it seemēd me,
 40 And which they weren, and of what degree
 And eke in what array that they were in;
 And at a knight then will I first begin.
 A KNIGHT there was and that a worthy man
 That from the timē that he first began
 45 To riden out, he lovēd chivalry,
 Truth and honōur, freedom and courtesy.
 Full worthy was he in his lordē's war,
 And thereto had he ridden--no man farre
 As well in Christendom as Heatheness
 50 And ever honoured for his worthiness.
 At Alexandria he was when it was won.
 Full often time he had the board begun
 Aboven allē natiōns in Prussia.
 In Lithow had he reisēd and in Russia
 55 No Christian man so oft of his degree.
 In Gránad' at the siege eke had he be
 Of Algesir and ridden in Belmarie.
 At Leyēs was he and at Satalie
 When they were won, and in the Greatē Sea
 60 At many a noble army had he be.
 At mortal battles had he been fifteen
 And foughten for our faith at Tramissene
 In listēs thricē, and ay slain his foe.
 This ilkē worthy knight had been also
 65 Sometimē with the lord of Palatie
 Against another heathen in Turkey,
 And ever more he had a sovereign prize,
 And though that he was worthy he was wise,
 And of his port as meek as is a maid.

*inn name / lodged
 to go
 spirit, heart
 inn
 fully 29
 by chance fallen
 Into company
 wished to
 were roomy
 entertained
 sun had set*

*agreement
 I shall tell you
 nevertheless
 Before I go
 It seems to me
 circumstances
 to me
 And who / social rank
 also / dress*

*lorde's = king's or God's
 farther
 heathendom*

*captured
 table*

*Lithuania / fought
 rank
 Granada / also*

Mediterranean

*combat 3 times & always
 same*

*valiant / sensible
 deportment*

70 Ne never yet no villainy he said
 In all his life unto no manner wight.
 He was a very perfect gentle knight.
 But for to tellen you of his array:
 His horse was good; but he was not gay.
 75 Of fustian he wearëd a gipoun
 All besmotered with his habergeon,
 For he was late y-come from his voyáge,
 And wentë for to do his pilgrimáge.
 With him there was his son, a youngë SQUIRE,
 80 A lover and a lusty bachelor
 With locks curled as they were laid in press.
 Of twenty years he was of age, I guess.
 Of his statúre he was of even length,
 And wonderly deliver and of great strength,
 85 And he had been sometime in chivachy
 In Flanders, in Artois and Picardy,
 And borne him well as in so little space⁵
 In hope to standen in his lady's grace.
 Embroidered was he as it were a mead
 90 All full of freshë flowers white and red.
 Singing he was or fluting all the day.
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gown with sleevës long and wide.
 Well could he sit on horse and fairë ride.
 95 He couldë songës make and well endite,
 Joust and eke dance, and well portray and write.
 So hot he lovëd that by nightertale
 He slept no more than does a nightingale.
 Courteous he was, lowly and serviceable,
 100 And carved before his father at the table.
 A YEOMAN he had and servants no more²
 At that timë, for him listë ridë so,
 And he was clad in coat and hood of green.
 A sheaf of peacock arrows bright and keen
 105 Under his belt he bore full thriftily.
 Well could he dress his tackle yeomanly—
 His arrows droopëd not with feathers low,
 And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.
 A not-head had he with a brown viságe.
 110 Of woodcraft could he well all the uságe.
 Upon his arm he bore a gay bracér
 And by his side a sword and a bucklér
 And on that other side a gay daggér
 Harnessed well and sharp as point of spear.
 115 A Christopher on his breast of silver sheen.
 A horn he bore, the baldrick was of green.
 A forester was he soothly as I guess.
 There was also a nun, a PRIORESS,
 That of her smiling was full simple and coy.
 120 Her greatest oath was but by Saint Eloy,

rudeness
no kind of person

well dressed
coarse cloth / tunic
stained / mail
just come / journey

as if in curlers

moderate height
very athletic
on campaign

conducted / time
good graces
meadow

whistling?

ride well
write words & music
also / draw
night(time)

it pleased him to

neatly
care for

cropped head
knew all the skills
elaborate armguard
shield
fine, splendid
Finely wrought
St C. medal / bright
cord
truly
head of a convent
modest

And she was clepēd Madame Eglantine.
 Full well she sang the servicē divine
 Entunēd in her nose full seemēly.
 And French she spoke full fair and fetisly
 125 After the school of Stratford at the Bow,
 For French of Paris was to her unknow.
 At meatē well y-taught was she withall:
 She let no morsel from her lippēs fall,
 Nor wet her fingers in her saucē deep.
 130 Well could she carry a morsel and well keep
 That no drop ne fell upon her breast.
 In courtesy was set full much her lest:
 Her over lippē wipēd she so clean
 That in her cup there was no farthing seen
 135 Of greasē, when she drunkēn had her draught.
 Full seemēly after her meat she raught,
 And sikerly she was of great desport
 And full pleasánt and amiable of port,
 And painēd her to counterfeitē cheer
 140 Of court,⁴ and be estately of mannér,
 And to be holden digne of reverence.
 But for to spoken of her conscience:
 She was so charitable and so pitous
 She wouldē weep if that she saw a mouse
 145 Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
 Of smallē houndēs had she that she fed
 With roasted flesh or milk and wastel bread,
 But sore wept she if one of them were dead
 Or if men smote it with a yardē, smart;
 150 And all was conscience and tender heart.
 Full seemēly her wimple pinchēd was,
 Her nose tretis, her eyen grey as glass,
 Her mouth full small and thereto soft and red,
 But sikerly she had a fair forehead.
 155 It was almost a spannē broad, I trow,
 For hardily she was not undergrow.
 Full fetis was her cloak as I was `ware.
 Of small coral about her arm she bare
 A pair of beads gauded all with green,
 160 And thereon hung a brooch of gold full sheen
 On which was written first a crownēd A
 And after: Amor Vincit Omnia.
 Another Nunnē with her haddē she
 That was her chapēlain, and priestēs three.
 165 A MONK there was, a fair for the mastery,
 An outrider that lovēd venery.
 A manly man to be an abbot able,
 Full many a dainty horse had he in stable,
 And when he rode, men might his bridle hear
 170 Jingle in a whistling wind as clear
 And eke as loud as does the chapel bell

called

nicely

meals / indeed

handle

So that

v. much her interest

upper lip

small stain

reached for her food

certainly / charm

behavior

imitate the manners

thought worthy

sensitivity

moved to pity

fine bread

a stick smartly

headdress pleaded

handsome / eyes

and also

certainly

handsbreadth / I guess

certainly / short? thin?

elegant / aware

bore, carried

A rosary decorated

shining

Love Conquers All

nun

companion

a very fine fellow

horseman / hunting

And also

There as this lord is keeper of the cell.
 The rule of Saint Maur or of Saint Bennett
 Because that it was old and somedeal strait
 175 This ilkē monk let oldē thingēs pass
 And held after the newē world the space.
 He gave not of that text a pullēd hen
 That says that hunters be not holy men
 Nor that a monk, when he is reckless,
 180 Is likened to a fish that's waterless,
 That is to say, a monk out of his cloister.
 But thilkē text held he not worth an oyster.
 And I said his opiniōn was good;
 What! Should he study and make himselfen wood
 185 Upon a book in cloister always to pore?
 Or swinken with his handēs and labōur
 As Austin bids? How shall the world be served?
 Let Austin have his swink to him reserved.
 Therefore he was a prickasour aright.
 190 Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl in flight.
 Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
 Was all his lust, for no cost would he spare.
 I saw his sleevēs purfled at the hand
 With gris, and that the finest of the land,
 195 And for to fasten his hood under his chin
 He had of gold y-wrought a full curious pin —
 A love knot on the greater end there was.
 His head was bald, that shone as any glass
 And eke his face, as he had been anoint.
 200 He was a lord full fat and in good point,
 His eyeen steep and rolling in his head
 That steamēd as a furnace of a lead,
 His boots supple, his horse in great estate.
 Now certainly he was a fair prelate.
 205 He was not pale as he is a forpined ghost.
 A fat swan loved he best of any roast.
 His palfrey was as brown as any berry.
 A FRIAR there was, a wanton and a merry,
 A limiter, a full solēmpnē man.
 210 In all the orders four is none that can
 So much of dalliance and fair language.
 He had made full many a marriage
 Of youngē women at his ownē cost.
 Unto his order he was a noble post.
 215 Full well beloved and familiar was he
 With franklins over all in his country,
 And eke with worthy women of the town,
 For he had power of confession
 (As said himself) more than a curate,
 220 For of his order he was licentiate.
 Full sweetēly heard he confession
 And pleasant was his absolution.

*Where / annex
 [monastic] rule
 somewhat strict
 This same / go
 modern ways now
 plucked*

careless of rules

*monastery
 this saying he thought
 I = narrator
 himself mad*

*or work
 St Augustine*

hunter, for sure

*tracking
 his passion
 edged at the wrist
 fur*

very elaborate

*also / as if oiled
 in good health
 eyes prominent
 lead furnace
 in great shape
 a fine cleric
 tortured*

*horse
 lively
 licensed beggar / v. impressive
 knows
 smooth manners*

pillar

*landowners
 And also*

*parish priest
 licensed*

He was an easy man to give penáncē
 There as he wist to have a good pittáncē,
 225 For unto a poor order for to give
 Is signē that a man is well y-shrive,
 For if he gave, he durstē make avaunt
 He wistē that a man was répentaunt,
 For many a man so hard is of his heart,
 230 He may not weep though that he sorē smart.
 Therefore, instead of weeping and [of] prayers
 Men may give silver to the poorē freres.
 His tipet was ay farsēd full of knives
 And pinnēs for to given fairē wives.
 235 And certainly he had a merry note—
 Well could he sing and playen on a rote.
 Of yeddings he bore utterly the prize.
 His neck was white as is the fleur de lys;
 Thereto he strong was as a champion.
 240 He knew the taverns well in every town
 And every hosteler and tappester
 Bet than a lazar or a beggester,
 For unto such a worthy man as he
 Accorded not as by his faculty
 245 To have with sickē lazars ácquaintance.
 It is not honest, it may not advance
 For to dealen with no such poraille,
 But all with rich and sellers of vitaille.
 And overall there as profit should arise,
 250 Courteous he was and lowly of service;
 There was no man nowhere so virtuous.
 He was the bestē beggar in his house
 252a And gave a certain farmē for the grant.
 252b None of his brethren came there in his haunt.
 For though a widow hadde not a shoe,
 So pleasant was his "In Principio"
 255 Yet he would have a farthing ere he went.
 His purchase was well better than his rent.
 And rage he could as it were right a whelp.
 In lovēdays there could he muchel help,
 For there he was not like a cloisterer
 260 With a threadbare cope as is a poorē scholar,
 But he was like a master or a pope.
 Of double worsted was his semi-cope,
 And rounded as a bell out of the press.
 Somewhat he lispēd for his wantonness
 265 To make his English sweet upon his tongue,
 And in his harping when that he had sung,
 His eyen twinkled in his head aright
 As do the starrēs in the frosty night.
 This worthy limiter was clept Huberd.
 270 A MERCHANT was there with a forkēd beard,

expected / offering

*confessed
dared / boast
knew*

it hurt him sharply

*friars
hood was always packed
pretty*

*stringed instrument
ballad songs
lily
But also / fighter*

*innkeeper & barmaid
Better ... leper or beggar*

*Didn't suit his rank
lepers
proper / profit
poor people
food
everywhere that
humbly useful*

district

*his blessing
1/4 of a penny*

*frolic like a puppy
mediation days*

cloak

*short cloak
the mold
affectation*

*eyes
stars
was called*

In motley, and high on horse he sat,
 Upon his head a Flandrish beaver hat,
 His boots claspèd fair and fetisly.
 His reasons he spoke full solémpnëly,
 275 Sounding always the increase of his winning.
 He would the sea were kept for anything
 Betwixt Middleburgh and Orëwell.
 Well could he in Exchangë shieldës sell.
 This worthy man full well his wit beset —
 280 There wistë no wight that he was in debt,
 So stately was he of his governance
 With his bargains and with his chevissance.
 Forsooth he was a worthy man withal,
 But sooth to say, I n'ot how men him call.
 285 A CLERK there was of Oxenford also
 That unto logic haddë long y-go.
 As leanë was his horse as is a rake,
 And hewas not right fat, I undertake,
 But lookëd hollow, and thereto soberly.
 290 Full threadbare was his overest courtepy,
 For he had gotten him yet no benefice
 Nor was so worldly for to have office,
 For him was lever have at his bed's head
 Twenty bookës clad in black or red
 295 Of Aristotle and his philosophy
 Than robës rich or fiddle or gay psalt'ry.
 But albeit that he was a philosopher,
 Yet haddë he but little gold in coffer,
 But all that he might of his friendës hent
 300 On bookës and on learning he it spent,
 And busily gan for the soulës pray
 Of them that gave him wherewith to scholay.
 Of study took he most care and most heed.
 Not one word spoke he morë than was need,
 305 And that was spoke in form and reverence,
 And short and quick and full of high sentënce.
 Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,
 And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.
 A SERGEANT of the law, wary and wise
 310 That often haddë been at the Parvise
 There was also, full rich of excellence.
 Discreet he was and of great reverence;
 He seemëd such, his wordës were so wise.
 Justice he was full often in assize
 315 By patent and by plain commissiön.
 For his sciënce and for his high renown
 Of fees and robës had he many a one.
 So great a purchaser was nowhere none;
 All was fee simple to him in effect.
 320 His purchasingë might not be infect.

*from Flanders
 neatly
 solemnly
 profits
 he wished*

*currency
 used his brains
 no person knew
 management
 money dealings
 Truly / indeed
 truth I don't know
 Oxford
 gone*

*he=the Clerk
 gaunt & also
 outer cloak
 parish
 secular job
 For he would rather
 bound*

*stringed instrument
 although
 chest
 get*

*regularly prayed for
 study*

lofty thought

*A ranking lawyer
 lawyer's meeting place*

judge / circuit court

knowledge & fame

*(pun) easy money, complete rights
 faulted*