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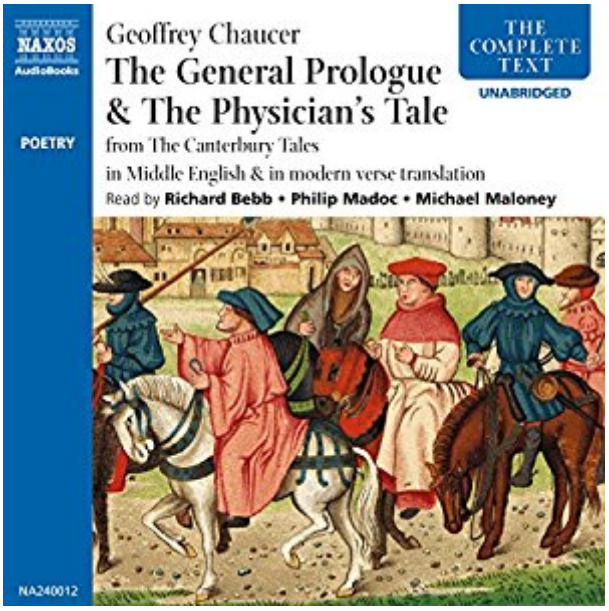
The General Prologue And The Physician's Tale



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Synopsis

The Canterbury Tales, written near the end of Chaucer’s life and hence towards the close of the 14th century, is perhaps the greatest English literary work of the Middle Ages: Yet it speaks to us today with almost undimmed clarity and relevance.How do we know what Chaucer’s English sounded like? The simplest way for the present reader to learn what Chaucer’s pronunciation sounded like is to listen to Richard Bebb’s superb reading of the current recording of The General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales. The knowledge it represents has been built up by the work of many scholars over centuries, which is now available in many competent studies and editions of Chaucer’s poems.The Physician’s Tale is in origin a primitive folk tale about an "honor killing" that Chaucer found in Livy and elsewhere and enhanced. The wicked judge Apius wishes to abduct and rape the beautiful and virtuous Virginia, aged 14. Her father cannot save her. Rather than be dishonored, she allows him, to his utter grief, to behead her. But the people rise up against the cruel and wicked judge so that he is banished and his subordinates hanged. The rather strange moral drawn is that your sin will always find you out.Presented in Middle English and in modern verse translation.

Book Information

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