

Section

THE STUDENT of literature who reads the character portrait of the Prioress is most likely to single her out as the pilgrim most deserving of respect and awe. For one reason, she was one of the three women who formed a notable minority in the group of men. For another, she easily stood out in the feminine group with her courtly ways and stately dignity and her

world, she grew up "ful simple and coy" and never had a chance to deal much with such vulgar characters as the Summoner or the Miller. Otherwise, the coths that escaped her lips would have been worse than the mild "St. Loy". Eglyentye was "of greet disport" but took her lessons with such seriousness that in no time "French she spok ful faire and fetisly."

She found no difficulty in accepting the stringent discipline of the novitiate since at home a strict-laced mother had taught her the graceful table etiquette that forbade her to "wette hir fingres in his sauce depe". Indeed,

was relieved by a variety of occupations.

Eglyentye's mild disposition and very pleasant manners, her aristocratic bearing, and physical attraction made her very popular with the nuns. They saw a woman of good background and breeding so that it was no surprise at all that, after some years they chose her for the office of prioress. The new position, while giving her a number of convenient privileges a simple nun could not enjoy, entailed many responsibilities, among which were looking after the discipline of the convent and taking care of money matters.

Madame EGLENTYNE: THE NUN PRIORESS

by LEONOR S. BORROMEO

religious gorb.

One imagines how she must have caught the pilgrims' eyes and given rise to unspoken admiration with

*Her nose tretys;
hir eyes gray as glas;
Hir mouth ful smal,
and ther-to softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde
a fair forehead;
It was almost a spanne;
brood, I trowe.*

Such patrician beauty must have awed even the Miller and the Summoner and ignited sparks of womanly envy in the Wife of Bath to whom nature had not been very generous.

But that is all that meets the eye. With characteristic good sense and mellow humor, Chaucer presents Madame Eglyentye as a blameless little nun "ful plesaunt, and amiable of port."

In all likelihood, the girl Eglyentye entered the Benedictine nunnery in London when she was barely in her teens, so that un-schooled in the ways of the outside

*Wel coude she carie a
morsel and wel kepe,
That no drope ne fille
upon hir brest.*

She took such delight in these niceties that she impressed many a clumsy nun who could not drink without leaving traces of grease on her cup or who reached out for her food unbecomingly.

Eglyentye showed marked aptitude for singing. Very often her voice would rise above the voice of the choir in the convent chapel as
*... she song the sevice duyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely.*

In the afternoons in summer, Eglyentye and her sisters would either do brain work or spin and embroider altar vestments; at times they would do garden work or go out haymaking. These activities were followed by periods of relaxation. Of course, the religious services formed an important part of the monastic schedule. Thus, the monotonous regularity of the offices

The responsibilities were too head-breaking to suit her, but the privileges more than made up for the ordeal of having to solve the various problems inherent in the office. As head of the convent she did not have to account to anybody for her actions except the bishop who came around only on visitations. She could go out of the convent to see how the estates were getting along, and whenever she did there was one nun who was with her as companion and assisted her in every little way. Then, too, a couple of priests came along, for a nun was not allowed to go out of convent walls alone. Thus, in this Canterbury pilgrimage she was in the company of her chaplain and three priests.

As prioress Madame Eglyentye had to entertain visitors, especially paying guests in the convent, like wives of crusaders who were away in heathen lands or pilgrims on their way to some distant shrine. Quite naturally, these boarders with their

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MADAME EGLENTINE...

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worldly trappings and pet animals gave the cloistered women frivolous ideas. The bishops raised eyebrows at these incursions into the convents, but no ban could be enforced since the nunneries needed the money badly.

Madame Eglentyne and her nuns did not exactly close their eyes or turn deaf ears to the influence of their worldly boarders. Thus, our prioress diverted a part of the congregation's money to entertainment at New Year or Christmas, to games, and contests which must have included dancing.

For the womanly vanities of clothing and jewelry Madame Eglentyne had a soft spot in her heart, for

*Ful semely hir wimple
pinched veas;
and
Ful fetis was hir cloke,
as I was war.*

Of course, these lines could only mean she was a fastidious lady who insisted on being meticulously prim. But then,

*Of smul coral aboute
hir arm she bar
A paire of bedes,
gawded al with grene;
And there — on heng a
broche of gold ful shene.*

These definitely run counter to monastic rules. A nun was not supposed to wear jewelled brooches nor reveal her broad forehead.

Contrary to the bishop's injunction on pet animals, Madame Eglentyne lavished maternal care on her small dog which

*... she fedde
With roasted flesh, or milk
and venaed — breed,
But sore weep she if
oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with
a yerde smerte.*

If small dogs could move her tender heart, what was to keep her from showering as much tenderness on a snow-white rabbit or a twittering little bird (or birds) in a cage in some shady nook of the nunnery bowser?

Madame Eglentyne's presence at this pilgrimage shows very little discretion on her part, considering the vehement objections of the Church to wanderings of nuns, except in very exceptional cases. A papal bull had made it quite clear that pilgrimages for nuns did not

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stars in her eyes or the offbeat tempo of a rhythm. whatever it is, if it answers a restless need of finding yourself, you've found it and you'll never really lose it for its possession is an eternal answer.

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there is an old old gem of wisdom in the age-old saying that "you must take people for what you find them and not for what other people say" that makes up our little song of life. this is one rung up to help us grow in understanding even with the sceptre of our fallible human nature hanging like a sword over us, pulsating clay.

The Warriors' Following (Cont'd from page 36)

Agapito Rogado, the old reliable of the team is an artist in his own way. His body twists when making sneak-in shots, much like a calypto dancer. Often, he bumps into someone's back, with the result that he does a one-point bottom landing. In one game he did this stance so many times that the groans of the sympathetic audience could be heard for miles. Balodoy Borromeo, the magic ball-hawking skeleton, teamed up with Rogado is something to see with his outside shooting, the happiest shooter of the team.

The strange behavior of the men around the court in shorts can only be understood by the few followers who sit and watch them cavort dally and gaily.

Carolinian rooters are few with the result that what they lack in number they make up for in noise. The school's population just doesn't cater to the idea of being seen whopping it up. Some students do not just give a hoot about moral support.

But let us, if for one moment, talk about a man. Let us pick him who turned the tables on a highly-touted team. Dodong is a genial man with a hearty relish for lusty cracks. Some of his more colorful "shorts" has put him in not-so-good standing with his fellow tutors. He has that easy touch of comradeship that makes his boys give back all he has taught. The boys now present to their mentor... the 1956 Loving Cup! The laughter now is on our side, our coach has shown to the public his worth, the prediction of our honored sports hacks have gone to the mud, but then, the writers' consolation is: "When good predictions are made, they do not come from sportswriters or, for that matter, a weatherman."

SPECIAL TREAT . . .

Three members of the 1946 National Champion Warriors who have gone into mentorship have each bagged a championship prize. First is our Juan "Dodong" Aquino who took the CCAA crown; next is Jimmy Bas of the CIT Wildcats who tamed UV to grab the zone VII Championship and last but by no means least is Lauro "The Lord" Mumar, coach of the FEATI Hi-Flyers, CALM champions in Manila.

fall under the category of exceptional cases.

One is inclined to believe that the prioress must have used some amount from the convent coffers to cover the expenses of the pilgrimage, an amount which could have filled more pressing needs. She was

really more human than the average reader would think. Nevertheless, the host of the Tabard Inn, not being wise to her share of imperfections, regarded her with much more consideration than the other pilgrims.

(To be continued)