

**THOMAS DELONEY: HIS  
THOMAS OF READING:  
AND THREE BALLADS  
ON THE SPANISH ARMADA**

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**THOMAS DELONEY & CHARLES  
ROBERTS ALDRICH & LUCIAN SWIFT KIRTLAND**

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© THOMAS DELONEY  
HIS  
Thomas of Reading  
AND  
THREE BALLADS ON THE  
SPANISH ARMADA  
*Edited with Notes and Introduction*  
BY  
CHARLES ROBERTS ALDRICH  
AND  
LUCIAN SWIFT KIRTLAND



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**Introduction to  
Thomas of Reading.**





**The Lamentation of Mr. Pages Wife**  
Of Plymouth, who, being forc'd to wed him, consented to his  
Murder, for the love of G. Strangwidge: for  
which they suffered at Barnstable  
in Devonshire.

*The Time is Fortune my Foe, &c.*

**T**HE ENGLISH NOVEL, as a distinct literary form, practically dates from the age of Elizabeth. Not that the needful materials had not long been present in literature: it was simply that much time had to pass before these materials were combined, according to certain ideas and purposes of art, into this particular shape. Many romances of adventure had come and gone; and one, the *Morte Darthur*, had come to stay. This lacks only form: from its substance many novels might be made — “For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin.” In his earnest, straightforward way Malory had set down not only the heroic ideals of knighthood: he had given examples of great episodes of passion, such as the stories of Tristram and Isoud and Launcelot and Guenever—stories destined to live in all subsequent literature.

Pub. 1485.

In contrast with the serious idealism of the *Morte Darthur* was the humorous realism of the *fabliaux*. These were short verse-narratives, probably very numerous and very popular in 15th Century.

## Introduction

their day. As an example of their view-point it may be noted that one surviving specimen, Dame Siriz, satirizes the morals of clerks, the timidity and gullibility of women, and the methods of witches.

Some unity of structure had been added by Gower when he rewrote stories with an eye to moral purpose; but it was Chaucer who developed the art of construction. With his gentle humor, true pathos, his power of character-delineation, and his keen insight into the workings of heart and mind, Chaucer's tales might be redacted into admirable novels. But the great Story-teller preferred verse; and in so doing he was following a national tendency. The love of metre and the preference for foreign themes and sources are two of the most striking characteristics of the pre-Elizabethan authors.

In spite of this rich accumulation of literary materials the first half of the sixteenth century was barren of prose fictions. More's *Utopia*, the single work of importance, was written in Latin. Men still read Malory and Chaucer; but civil disturbance repressed creative work, and there was no time to follow their lead. It was not until the period of Elizabeth that energy was again turned into literary channels.