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

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Thomas Deloney: His Thomas of Reading: And Three Ballads on the Spanish Armada by Thomas Deloney & Charles Roberts Aldrich & Lucian Swift Kirtland

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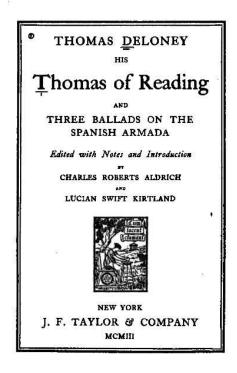
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THE WESTMINSTER PREM, NEW YORK

Introduction to Thomas of Reading.

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The Lamentation of Mr. Pages Mile

Of Plimouth, who, being fort'd to wed him, contented to his Murder, for the love of G. Strangwidge : for which they fuffered at Baruftable in Devonthite.

The Tune is Fortune my Foe, Sec.

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THE 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 Pub. 1485. 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 Tristam and Isoud and Launcelot and Guenever-stories destined to live in all subsequent literature.

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 ^{agth Cantury,}

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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.

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Some unity of structure had been added by , 1385-1408. 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.