

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SIR THOMAS MALORY

? 1406–71

Le Morte d'Arthur

(Probably finished in 1469–70; Caxton edition published in 1485)

BOOK XXI. CHAPTER IX

HOW SIR LAUNCELOT DEPARTED TO SEEK THE QUEEN
GUENEVER, AND HOW HE FOUND HER AT ALMESBURY

... [THEN Sir Launcelot] departed and rode westerly, and there he sought a seven or eight days; and at the last he came to a nunnery, and then was Queen Guenever ware of Sir Launcelot as he walked in the cloister. And when she saw him there she swooned thrice, that all the ladies and gentlewomen had work enough to hold the queen up. So when she might speak, she called ladies and gentlewomen to her, and said: Ye marvel, fair ladies, why I make this fare. Truly, she said, it is for the sight of yonder knight that yonder standeth; wherefore I pray you all call him to me. When Sir Launcelot was brought to her, then she said to all the ladies: Through this man and me hath all this war been wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world; for through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, wit thou well I am set in such a plight to get my soul-heal; and yet I trust through God's grace that after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at domesday to sit on his right side, for as sinful as ever I was are saints in heaven. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH PROSE, 1400-1900

ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage; and I cōmmand thee, on God's behalf, that thou forsake my company, and to thy kingdom thou turn again, and keep well thy realm from war and wrack; for as well as I have loved thee, mine heart will not serve me to see thee, for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed; therefore, Sir Launcelot, go to thy realm, and there take thee a wife, and live with her with joy and bliss: and I pray thee heartily, pray for me to our Lord that I may amend my misliving. Now, sweet madam, said Sir Launcelot, would ye that I should now return again unto my country, and there to wed a lady? Nay, madam, wit you well that shall I never do, for I shall never be so false to you of that I have promised; but the same destiny that ye have taken you to, I will take me unto, for to please Jesu, and ever for you I cast me specially to pray. If thou wilt do so, said the queen, hold thy promise, but I may never believe but that thou wilt turn to the world again. Well, madam, said he, ye say as pleaseth you, yet wist you me never false of my promise, and God defend but I should forsake the world as ye have done. For in the quest of the Sangreal I had forsaken the vanities of the world had not your lord been. And if I had done so at that time, with my heart, will, and thought, I had passed all the knights that were in the Sangreal except Sir Galahad, my son. And therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection, I must needs take me to perfection, of right. For I take record of God, in you I have had mine earthly joy; and if I had found you now so disposed, I had cast to have had you into mine own realm. [Chapter x] But sithen

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SIR THOMAS MALORY

I find you thus disposed, I ensure you faithfully, I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if I may find any hermit, either gray or white, that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me and never no more. Nay, said the queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works: and they departed. But there was never so hard an hearted man but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made; for there was lamentation as they had been stung with spears; and many times they swooned, and the ladies bare the queen to her chamber. And Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all night in a forest, weeping.

JOHN BOURCHIER, LORD BERNERS

1467–1533

Sir John Froissart: Of the Chronicles of
England, France, Spain, Portugal,
Scotland, Brittany, Flanders,
and other places adjoining

Translated out of French into our maternal English tongue, by John Bouchier Knight, Lord Berners: at the commandment of our most high redoubted sovereign Lord King Henry VIII, King of England and of France, and high Defender' of the Christian Faith etc.

(First edition 1523–5)

HOW KING RICHARD YIELDED HIMSELF TO THE EARL OF
DERBY TO GO TO LONDON. VOL. II, PART IV, CAP. CCXLII

IN the mean season while the king sat at dinner, who did eat but little, his heart was so full that he had no lust to eat.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH PROSE, 1400-1900

All the country about the castle was full of men of war. They within the castle might see them out at the windows, and the king when he rose from the table might see them himself. Then he demanded of his cousin what men they were that appeared so many in the fields. The earl answered and said, the most part of them be Londoners. What would they have quoth the king? They will have you quoth the earl, and bring you to London and put you in the Tower, there is none other remedy, ye can scape none otherwise. No quoth the king and he was sore afraid of those words, for he knew well that the Londoners loved him not, and said. Cousin, can you not provide for my surety: I will not gladly put me into their hands. For I know well that they hate me and have done long, though I be their king. Then the earl said, Sir, I see none other remedy, but to yield yourself as my prisoner: and when they know that ye be my prisoner they will do you no hurt, but ye must so ordain you and your company to ride to London with me, and to be as my prisoner in the Tower of London. The king who saw himself in a hard case, all his spirits were sore abashed, as that he doubted greatly that the Londoners would slay him. Then he yielded himself prisoner to the earl of Derby and bound himself, and promised to do all that he would have him to do. In likewise all other knights, squires, and officers yielded to the earl, to eschew the danger and peril that they were in, and the earl then received them as his prisoners, and ordained incontinent horses to be saddled and brought forth into the court and the gates opened; then many men of arms and archers entered. Then the earl of Derby caused a cry to be made,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

JOHN BOURCHIER, LORD BERNERS

on pain of death, no man to be so hardy to take away anything within the castle, nor to lay any hands upon any person, for all were under the earl's safeguard and protection: which cry was kept; no man durst break it. The earl had the king down into the court talking together, and caused all the king's whole household and estate to go forward, as of custom they had done before, without changing or minishing of any thing. While everything was a-preparing, the king and the earl communed together in the court, and were well regarded by the Londoners. And as it was informed me, King Richard had a greyhound called Mathe, who always waited upon the king, and would know no man else. For whensoever the king did ride, he that kept the greyhound did let him loose, and he would straight run to the king and fawn upon him, and leap with his forefeet upon the king's shoulders. And as the king and the earl of Derby talked together in the court, the greyhound who was wont to leap upon the king, left the king and came to the earl of Derby, duke of Lancaster, and made to him the same friendly countenance and cheer, as he was wont to do to the king. The duke who knew not the greyhound, demanded of the king what the greyhound would do. Cousin, quoth the king, it is a great good token to you, and an evil sign to me. Sir, how know you that quoth the duke. I know it well quoth the king. The greyhound maketh you cheer this day as King of England, as ye shall be, and I shall be deposed: the greyhound hath this knowledge naturally, therefore take him to you, he will follow you and forsake me. The duke understood well those words and cherished the greyhound, who would

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH PROSE, 1400-1900

never after follow King Richard, but followed the duke
of Lancaster.

SIR THOMAS MORE

1478-1535

Utopia

(Originally published in Latin in 1516; and in the translation of
Ralph Robynson in 1551)

The Second Book of the 'Communication of Raphael Hythlodaye', concerning the best state of a common wealth, containing the description of Utopia, with a large declaration of the politic government, and of all the good laws and orders of the same island.

V. OF THEIR LIVING AND MUTUAL CONVERSATION
TOGETHER

... BUT now again to the conversation of the citizens among themselves. The eldest . . . ruleth the family. The wives be ministers to their husbands, the children to their parents, and to be short, the younger to their elders. Every city is divided into four equal parts. In the middle of every quarter there is a market place of all manner of things. Thither the works of every family be brought in to certain houses. And every kind of thing is laid up several in barns or store houses. From hence the father of every family or every householder fetcheth whatsoever he and his have need of, and carrieth it away with him without money, without exchange, without any gage or pledge. For why should any thing be denied unto him seeing there is abundance of all things, and that it is not to be feared lest any man will ask more than he needeth. For why should

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SIR THOMAS MORE

it be thought that that man would ask more than enough, which is sure never to lack? Certainly in all kinds of living creatures, either fear of lack doth cause covetousness and ravin, or in man only pride; which counteth it a glorious thing to pass and excel others in the superfluous and vain ostentation of things. The which kind of vice among the Utopians can have no place . . .

Moreover every street hath certain great large halls . . . [where] dwell the Syphogrants. And to every one of the same halls be appointed thirty families, of either side fifteen. The stewards of every hall at a certain hour come in to the meat markets, where they receive meat according to the number of their halls. . . .

To these halls at the set hours of dinner and supper cometh all the whole Syphogranty or ward, warned by the noise of a brazen trumpet; except such as be sick in the hospitals or else in their own houses. Howbeit, no man is prohibited or forbid, after the halls be served, to fetch home meat out of the market to his own house. For they know that no man will do it without a cause reasonable. For though no man be prohibited to dine at home, yet no man doth it willingly, because it is counted a point of small honesty. And also it were a folly to take the pain to dress a bad dinner at home, when they may be welcome to good and fine fare so nigh hand at the hall. In this hall all vile service, all slavery and drudgery, with all laboursome toil and business, is done by bondmen. But the women of every family by course have the office and charge of cookery, for seething and dressing the meat and ordering all things thereto belonging. They sit at three tables or

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH PROSE, 1400-1900

more according to the number of their company. The men sit upon the bench next the wall, and the women against them on the other side of the table: that, if any sudden evil should chance to them, as many times happeneth to women with child, they may rise without trouble or disturbance of anybody, and go thence into the nursery.

The nurses sit several alone with their young sucklings in a certain parlour appointed and deputed to the same purpose, never without fire and clean water, nor yet without cradles; that when they will they may lay down the young infants, and at their pleasure take them out of their swathing clothes, and hold them to the fire, and refresh them with play. Every mother is nurse to her own child, unless either death or sickness be the let. When that chanceth, the wives of the Syphogrants quickly provide a nurse. And that is not hard to be done. For they that can do it do proffer themselves to no service so gladly as to that. Because that there this kind of pity is much praised; and the child that is nourished ever after taketh his nurse for his own natural mother.

RICHARD HAKLUYT

? 1552-1616

Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation

(First edition 1589; enlarged edition 1598-1600)

A report of the Voyage, and success thereof, attempted in the year of our Lord 1583, by Sir Humfrey Gilbert, Knight, with other gentlemen assisting him in that action, intended to discover and to plant Christian inhabitants in place convenient, upon those large and

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

RICHARD HAKLUYT

ample countries extended northward from the Cape of Florida, lying under very temperate climes, esteemed fertile and rich in minerals, yet not in the actual possession of any Christian prince. Written by Mr Edward Hayes, gentleman, and principal actor in the same voyage, who alone continued unto the end, and by God's special assistance, returned home with his retinue safe and entire.

... LEAVING the issue of this good hope unto God, who knoweth the truth only, and can at His good pleasure bring the same to light, I will hasten to the end of this tragedy, which must be knit up in the person of our General. And as it was God's ordinance upon him, even so the vehement persuasion and entreaty of his friends could nothing avail to divert him of a wilful resolution of going through in his frigate; which was overcharged upon the decks with fights, nettings, and small artillery, too cumbersome for so small a boat that was to pass through the ocean sea at that season of the year, when by course we might expect much storm of foul weather. Whereof indeed we had enough.

But when he was entreated by the captain, master, and other his well-willers of the *Hind* not to venture in the frigate, this was his answer: *I will not forsake my little company going homeward, with whom I have passed so many storms and perils.* And in very truth he was urged to be so over hard by hard reports given of him that he was afraid of the sea; albeit this was rather rashness than advised resolution, to prefer the wind of a vain report to the weight of his own life. Seeing he would not bend to reason, he had provision out of the *Hind*, such as was wanting aboard his frigate. And so we committed him to God's protection, and set him aboard his pinnace, we being more than 300 leagues onward of our way home.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-55425-2 - An Anthology of English Prose 1400-1900

Edited by Eirian James

Excerpt

[More information](#)

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH PROSE, 1400-1900

By that time we had brought the Islands of Azores south of us; yet we then keeping much to the north, until we had got into the height and elevation of England, we met with very foul weather and terrible seas, breaking short and high, pyramid-wise. The reason whereof seemed to proceed either of hilly grounds high and low within the sea, as we see hills and vales upon the land, upon which the seas do mount and fall, or else the cause proceedeth of diversity of winds, shifting often in sundry points, all which having power to move the great ocean, which again is not presently settled, so many seas do encounter together, as there had been diversity of winds. Howsoever it cometh to pass, men which all their lifetime had occupied the sea never saw more outrageous seas. We had also upon our mainyard an apparition of a little fire by night, which seamen do call *Castor* and *Pollux*. But we had only one, which they take an evil sign of more tempest; the same is usual in storms.

Monday, the 9th of September, in the afternoon, the frigate was near cast away, oppressed by waves, yet at that time recovered; and giving forth signs of joy, the General sitting abaft with a book in his hand, cried out to us in the *Hind*, so oft as we did approach within hearing, *We are as near to heaven by sea as by land*. Reiterating the same speech, well beseeming a soldier resolute in Jesus Christ, as I can testify he was.

The same Monday night, about twelve of the clock, or not long after, the frigate being ahead of us in the *Golden Hind*, suddenly her lights were out, whereof as it were in a moment we had lost the sight, and withal our watch cried *the General was cast away*, which was too true. For in that