A list of English tales and prose romances printed before 1740

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ENGLISH TALES AND ROMANCES.
A LIST OF ENGLISH TALES
AND PROSE ROMANCES PRINTED
BEFORE 1740.

BY ARUNDELL ESDAILE.

PART I. 1475–1642.
PART II. 1643–1739.

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PREFACE.

THE following list of English Tales and Romances is divided into two parts, the first containing all books which appeared up to the year 1642, the outbreak of the Civil War, the second containing all books which first appeared between that date and 1740. This plan has been adopted, primarily in order that Part I may fall into line with the Lists of English Plays and Translations from the Classics already issued by the Society; and secondarily in the hope that the division of the mass of material may sensibly diminish the "incongruous juxtapositions inevitable in any author-catalogue, and may thus bring into light the historical perspective, which is still to a great extent, and would otherwise have been entirely, obscured by the alphabetical arrangement under the authors' names.

It may be well to add here that in the references to libraries, etc., given at the end of each entry, the following order of precedence is observed: (1) British Museum, (2) Bodleian, (3) University Library, Cambridge, (4) any other public library, preferably in England, (5) catalogued and accessible private libraries, such as the Bridgewater or Huth collections (the latter now no longer appropriate to this category), (6) other private libraries, and (7), failing an accessible copy, a reference to some authority for the book's present or past existence. A reference to a library means that a copy has not been found in a library higher in the list (as regards the later period a reference to a source placed lower may not always exclude the presence of a copy in the University Library, Cambridge);
but it does not imply that copies may not exist in any or all of the classes
named below it; thus, "B.M." does not mean that the book may not also
be in "Bodl." or "U.L.C.," but "U.L.C." does mean that it is not
in "B.M." or "Bodl." But I am not so sanguine as to suppose that
I have been quite consistent.

In the time, by now unduly protracted, in which this compilation has
been accumulating in my hands, I have experienced my full share of that
"mutual help and comfort," which it is the honourable tradition of librarians
and other students of literature to afford. Of the Society's two Hon.
Secretaries it is Mr. Pollard who first suggested and assisted the com-
 mencement of the collection, and Mr. McKerrow who has edited the result.
Our Treasurer, Mr. Graves, very kindly gave me entries for books
preserved at Britwell, and Mr. Collmann settled some queries relating to
them for me. Dr. Henry Thomas gave useful help in dealing with transla-
tions from the Spanish. At Oxford and Cambridge I owe thanks to most
members of the libraries' staffs, but especially to Miss F. O. Underhill
of the Bodleian, and at Cambridge to Mr. C. E. Sayle of the University
Library, and for Pepysian entries to Mr. S. Gaselee; while Mr. Martin
Hardie has helped me with notes on books in the Forster and Dyce
collections at South Kensington, and Mr. W. K. Dickson with the
Arbuthnot tracts in the Advocates' Library. At a rather early stage
Professor F. Ives Carpenter, of Chicago, examined the whole of my
material, and made many additions; and my proofs of Part I were very
kindly read by Professor Friedrich Brie, of Freiburg, who, I hope, found in
them some suggestions, in return for those that he made, towards his forth-
coming work on that period.
INTRODUCTION.

A LIST of earlier English Tales and Romances may seem at first sight to have a well-defined scope; but on many sides it needs definition, and it is necessary to draw round it frontier-lines, which, like those of kingdoms, are at times natural and at times arbitrary. Even the distinction between prose and verse becomes occasionally, as in some mixed Elizabethan pamphlets, not very easy to follow; this limitation, by excluding the early-printed mediaeval verse-romances, has very much reduced both the labour and the value of this list. A harder line to draw is that between books of tales and books of anecdotes. Jest-books are only included when they have at least one unity, that of a single hero; this admits Howelgia and the fests of Skelton and Peele, among others, which border too closely on the picaresque stories to be excluded. Fables are also admitted. But the most essential limitation lies in the fact that these are early English Tales and Romances. The adjective early, like other adjectives, is relative; it was necessary to find some closing limit of date if possible less arbitrary than others. This limit was really fixed for me at 1740 by the critics, more numerous perhaps than eminent, who have called Richardson's Pamela, which appeared in that year, the first English novel; the Society now has before it, as a corrective to this opinion, a sufficiently substantial list of the English novels which preceded the first. But a better limit, as increased familiarity with the material shews, would have been the Revolution of 1688, or if a year could have been chosen, about a decade earlier, 1675 perhaps, the bicentenary of Caxton's Troy book. The long French
romances had run their course, and the flood of scandalous novelettes
had not begun. The consolation for the presence of these and other
valueless trifles must be found in headings such as those of Bunyan,
Defoe, and Swift.

The discussion of the date at which such a collection as this should
end might well be interminable; but the date at which it should begin is
simple; it begins with the first book printed in the English language.
Caxton did well in choosing the tale of Troy divine for the first work of his
press. For the period of nearly three centuries that we are now concerned
with his version of it never lost hold of the English mind. His Bruges
edition was followed by Wynkyn de Worde’s of 1502–3, then, after a long
gap which we must suppose to have been filled by lost editions of
de Worde, Copland and East as well as by Copland’s extant edition of 1553;
it was reissued by Creede in 1596, “newly corrected, and the English much
amended.” After this there followed at regular intervals no fewer than
eighteen editions, and in 1728 it was rewritten, being distinguished by the
title the New History of the Trojan Wars, and a drama on the subject
added. Caxton’s next choice was not so happy; from Le Fèvre’s Recueil
he turned to the same author’s History of Jason, of his version of which
there are only two extant editions, the second being printed in 1492 at
Antwerp by Gerard Leeu. The mediæval Godfrey of Bouillon, which
followed in 1481, was never reprinted; but Reynard the Fox, which
appeared in the same year, was a better selection; for a reprint by Caxton
himself survives, Pynson printed it twice, probably near the turn of the
century, and then, after one surviving edition and two appearances in the
licences of the Stationers’ Company (in 1560 and 1586), it reappears in
1620, like the Troy book revised, and was constantly reprinted to the end
of the period. Degulleville’s allegory, The Pilgrimage of the Soul, 1483,
came next, but was not reprinted. Caxton’s success with the famous
beast-fable of Reynard may perhaps have contributed to encourage him to
return to this kind of book, which he did in the next year, 1484, by trans-
slating and printing the fables of Æsop; but the celebrity of Æsop as an
elementary Latin reading-book (almost the only amusing one then
known) makes it rather to be wondered at that it did not precede the others.
Caxton's version, which also contains the fables of Avianus, Alphonso and
Poggio ("Poge the Florentine"), held the field for a century, and was
printed so late as 1700 among all the rival versions which multiplied as
time went on, from that "in tru Ortography with Grammar-nötz" by
William Bullokar in 1585 to those by Hoole and L'Estrange. In the next
year, 1485, came three mediæval romances, Charles the Great, which was
not reprinted, Paris and Vienne, and, most important of all Caxton's prose
books, Malory's Morte d'Arthur, the only perfect copy of which has
recently changed hands. Paris and Vienne was reprinted at Antwerp by
Gerard Leeu in 1492, and by Wynkyn de Worde and Pynson early in the
next century, and then (though it was licensed in 1586) no edition is
extant till those of Mainwaring's Jacobean version, of which there were
three editions between 1621 and 1650. Malory's book had a more
continuous popularity, unless the explanation of the fact that a greater
number of editions of it are extant be merely that its greater bulk has
preserved more copies from destruction; it was reprinted in 1498, 1529,
1557, twice about 1580, and, once more, in the revision of 1634. Except
for two editions of a chapbook abridgement by the industrious John
Shurley, entitled Britain's Glory, which appeared just half a century later,
in 1684, this was the last to be heard of Malory till his revival in the
nineteenth century.

After this valuable gift to English readers, Caxton produced only three
more books which concern this list; they are all undated, but all were
printed about 1489 or 1490. These are two more mediæval romances,
Blanchardine and Eglantine and The Four Sons of Aymon, and Eneydos,
a condensation in prose of the Aeneid. This last was never reprinted, so
far as we know, but we have an edition of Blanchardine and Eglantine by
Wynkyn de Worde and then, as in the case of so many of these early books,
two revised editions at the end of the sixteenth century, while of The Four
Sons of Aymon there were reprints in 1504 and 1554 and licences
in 1581–2 and 1598–9, whether more than merely provisional there is no copy extant to tell us.

On the whole, then, we may say that our first printer showed good judgment of the public favour as well as good personal taste when he selected his books for printing. Only Godfrey of Bouillon, Charles the Great, Eneydos, and Degulleville's Pilgrimage of the Soul were not reprinted; though the last was re-written in verse thirty years later, and one, Lefevre's Jason, did not survive the fifteenth century. All the rest were really popular, and form a noble contribution to our national literature.

Caxton's followers, Wynkyn de Worde, Pynson, Wyer, and Copland, produced for the most part, apart from their reprints, less important books; it is not easy to see why Caxton did not himself venture on some of them, which were certain of a sale, though of course it is always quite possible that he did and that his editions of them are lost to us. This is specially the case with Mandeville's Ways to the Holy Land, which would have paired not unworthily with the Morte d'Arthur; apparently it was left to Wynkyn de Worde, whose edition of 1499 is the first known. Indeed, with Caxton's business, his mantle as producer of romances had fallen on de Worde; we owe to him The Three Kings of Cologne and Robert the Devil, both about 1500, The Destruction of Jerusalem (of which, however, there is an edition, also undated, by Pynson), Ponthus of Galice, 1511, Helyas, 1512, Joseph of Arimathea, the Gesta Romanorum, and the Seven Wise Masters, all undated but of about this time, the last two being surely notable omissions on the part of Caxton, and Oliver of Castile, 1518. The most striking feature of this list is perhaps its complete mediaevalism. Renaissance literature has not begun in England yet, except for More's Utopia and Elyot's Book of the Governor, not much of an exception, for the former was published abroad in Latin in 1518, and the latter's interest for us is confined to the presence in it of Boccaccio's tale of Titus and Gisippus. Before the turn of the fashion, which came rather after the middle of the century, we have a few more older books to chronicle. Jan van Doesborgh printed five of these