



A Book of English Prose: Character and Incident, 1387-1649 (Classic Reprint)

William Ernest Henley

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Excerpt from A Book of English Prose: Character and Incident, 1387-1649

It is not the object of this Book of Prose to illustrate the history of the English language, or to trace the development of the English sentence. Still less has it been our purpose to collect within two covers any such purple patches of diction as the taste and fashion of the past have marked out for admiration. Our bias is neither philological nor fantastical. Beyond the essential resolve to maintain a scrupulous standard of style, we have been guided in our selection by two definite principles: (1) that each passage should be complete in itself; (2) that each should relate a single incident or unfold a single character. It seemed that these principles, liberally interpreted, would at once give the book a concordant character, and ensure for every extract a separate and individual interest. Moreover, since our anthology is for young as well as for old, we have preferred before the prose of reflection and analysis the prose of adventure and romance - surely the best motives for sound and spirited English?

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