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Sir Kay's Inadequacy in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*

The Knights of the Round Table are among the most venerated and "worshypfull" knights in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. Comprised of such household names as Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, not to mention having King Arthur at its head, the Round Table's prestige leads these knights to often be held as the standard for true, valiant knighthood and the role models for living a life of chivalry and courtesy. If they do not abide by these codes, they are not worthy of knighthood—and certainly not at the Round Table. Perhaps the most telling sign of a false knight, then, is one who, measured against the standards of a Round Table knight, does not seem suited to knighthood. However, this assessment is complicated when a false knight *is* a Round Table knight. While most, if not all, true knights still fail in strict adherence to their code, they are likely to do so with humility and shame and must still attempt to keep to the code as closely as possible. A lack of effort in achieving this standard can be more condemning than an outright failure to do so, as evidenced in Sir Kay the Seneschal. Lacking in the areas of chivalry which set the very basis for knighthood, Sir Kay seems not to fit in at the Round Table at all. Through examining Sir Kay's actions and speech in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* and specifically placing them beside Gilbert Hay's "Chivalry in Principle," Sir Kay's inadequacy as a knight becomes distinctly apparent and begs the following question: Had the positions of seneschal and Round Table knight not been given to him, could Sir Kay ever have been a true enough knight to earn them?

Scholarship on Sir Kay's character and role in Arthurian legend demonstrates that he has not always been portrayed negatively in literature but instead has gained his bad reputation as the legend has been translated and transformed over time. In her book *Cei and the Arthurian Legend*, Linda M. Gowans sets out to determine "why the deterioration of both [Sir Kay's] status and his personality took place" by examining his origins in "the Welsh Cei" (1). She studies his shifting roles from a worshiped "hero of the early type" in early Welsh literature, to his presence in Chrétien de Troyes's romances as the "type of seneschal…whose proximity to the king earned [him] the hatred of the great lords," to the despised, largely background character he is in Malory's text (5, 46). W. T. H. Jackson focuses specifically on de Troyes's negative portrayal of Sir Kay in "The Nature of Romance." Jackson discusses de Troyes's romances as they have become the "standard by which others should be judged" and explores the development of the genre and de Troyes's treatment of Arthurian characters (12). Concerning Sir Kay, Jackson states that he "exercises his privileges as a knight without deserving them" and "becomes a parody of a knight" in his failure to demonstrate the qualities expected of and necessary for his position (20). De Troyes, among other French writers and adaptors of Arthurian legend, effectively established this image of Sir Kay and dissociated him from the positive, heroic depiction of Cei in Welsh tales. Through his heavy reference to the French traditions and literature, Sir Thomas Malory further solidifies the negative image through his own depiction of Sir Kay: a rude, bad-tempered, inept knight and seneschal unfit for either title yet, somehow, able to gain both.

Sir Kay gains his position as seneschal of King Arthur's lands not through his own power or merit but directly through his father, Sir Ector, and indirectly through Merlin, advisor to Arthur's biological father, King Uther (and eventually to King Arthur himself). Upon Arthur's birth, Merlin advises King Uther to have Arthur reared by Sir Ector and his wife, which in turn

makes Sir Kay a foster brother to Arthur and allows him the opportunity to develop "ties of friendship and kinship" with Arthur (Malory 6.22-33; Dean 129). However, as Christopher Dean goes on to say, any "suggestion of a special family relationship between Arthur and Kay or of any unusual depth of feeling is absent"; in fact, the first glimpse of their relationship is Sir Kay treating Arthur like a squire (130). Nonetheless, because of this familial connection, Malory's Sir Kay is in a position where Sir Ector can reasonably make a request of the soon-to-be king. When Arthur first learns that he will be the new king after King Uther's passing, he tells Sir Ector that "yf ever hit be Goddes will that I be Kynge, as ye say, ye shall desire of me what I may doo, and I shalle not faille yow" (Malory 10.3-5). Knowing the value of such an offer, Sir Ector accepts and responds, "I will aske no more of yow but that ye wille make my sone, your foster broder Syre Kay, senceall of alle your landes" (10.6-8). Sir Ector seizes the opportunity to advance his son's position in the realm, and King Arthur's "strong commitment to personal honor" as king and example to his knights ensures that he "keep[s] his promise" and "lete make Syr Kay Sencial of Englond" (Condren 440; Malory 11.30-31). Yet holding a title does not automatically make one fit for the duties it entails; this is true of both seneschal and knight. While perhaps he does earn the title of knight, Sir Kay gains the position of seneschal through no effort of his own; and in his words and deeds while in those positions, he reveals himself unworthy of either.

From his beginnings as a knight, Sir Kay shows himself to be less than equal to the task. The common mark of a knight is his possession and wearing of armor, which Gilbert Hay states must be "halde…cleine and faire, and wele at point" (779). He must see to the condition and maintenance of his armor, the means by which he can go forth on quests and in jousts; however, this is an impossible task if he lacks his armor to begin with. In his first act of knighthood, Sir Kay, Sir Ector, and young Arthur "rode to the justes-ward, [and] Sir Kay had lost his suerd, for

he had lefte it at his faders lodging" (Malory 8.39-40). Sir Kay leaves behind the weapon by which he can protect himself and his company and by which he can participate in the joust he seeks to attend. His failure to "halde his armouris" then leads to his inability "till haunte justis and tournaymentis," for he cannot fight—and certainly cannot win—weaponless (Hay 779, 778). Additionally, a knight's success in jousts and tournaments brings worship to him, his fellowship, and his king; yet Sir Kay cannot even participate, and a knight without his sword may instead be seen as not a knight at all. Sir Kay begins his knighthood poorly, making himself a "military incompetent" in Dean's words, with a simple but significant mistake (125). Yet Sir Kay's next offense is intentional and further reveals that he is unsuitable for the title and role of knight.

A true knight tends to his inward character as well as his outward appearance. Knights are called to possess many "vertues touchand to wisedome," one of which is "veritee"; they must be true, including both honesty and faithfulness to the order overall (Hay 778). Sir Kay's second act of knighthood proves a failure of this principle when he initially omits the truth of how he gains the famed sword in the stone. While searching for a sword to replace the one Sir Kay has forgotten, young Arthur, still unwitting of his parentage, "cam to the chircheyard" where the sword was being protected and, having "found no knyghtes there,….he handled the swerd by the handels, and lightly and fiersly pulled it out of the stone…and delyverd [Sir Kay] the swerd" (Malory 9.6, 8-10). Arthur is also clearly unwitting of the significance of the sword or of his retrieving it, not seeing the "letters…wryten in gold about the swerd that saiden thus: 'WHOSO PULLETH OUTE THIS SWERD OF THIS STONE AND ANVYLD IS RIGHTWYS KYNGE BORNE OF ALL ENGLOND'" (8.9-13). Had he understood, he would have been at least likely to question the sword or his actions and not simply give the sword to Sir Kay for a joust. However, immediately upon receiving the sword, Sir Kay "wist wel it was the swerd of the

stone”; rather than revealing to Arthur the truth and significance of his feat, Sir Kay “rode to his fader Syr Ector and said, ‘Sire, loo! here is the swerd of the stone—wherfor I must be kyng of thys land!” (9.13-15). An example of “Kay’s craftiness,” he uses the situation to his advantage without committing a blatantly shameful act, but his craft is what condemns him (Herman 3). Sir Kay does not explicitly state that he pulled the sword from the stone, yet he still acts falsely in hiding the truth and in seeking to claim the throne for himself.

Though Sir Kay does admit the truth, the motives behind his actions remain inexcusable and lacking verity. He only reveals the truth when Sir Ector presses him, for “anon he made Sir Kay to swere upon a book how he came to that swerd. ‘Syr,’ said Sir Kay, ‘by my broder Arthur, for he brought it to me’” (Malory 9.17-19). Solely at the risk of outright deception, Sir Kay reveals the truth behind his possessing the sword. Before this, he is fully prepared not only to take the throne by default and claim it untruthfully but also to betray his “nourished broder” to achieve this (8.37). These events precede Sir Ector’s request for Arthur to make Sir Kay seneschal, depicting Sir Kay unfavorably as a knight and making him an undesirable candidate to “manetene and governe landis and policy, and to defend thame” on behalf of all of England (Hay 778). While Sir Kay could possibly have achieved maintenance of some land by his own efforts, his attempted deception of Sir Ector and Arthur—which, if successful, would have led to a deception of the realm—would make his achievements questionable. If Sir Kay is willing to deceive his foster brother and would-be king, his likelihood to truly “defend his naturale lord, and manetene him,” rather than “have his lord put doune, that he mycht have sum part of the lordschip,” is doubtful even before Sir Kay officially has a lord to defend (777). Nonetheless, as he becomes part of a new fellowship in King Arthur’s court, Sir Kay receives new opportunities to prove himself worthy of knighthood and, surprisingly, rises to the challenge.

As if he suddenly realizes and accepts the charge of his new position, Sir Kay briefly proves himself to be successful both as a knight and as seneschal in King Arthur's first battle. In the beginnings of King Arthur's rule, Sir Kay, Sir Baudwin, and Sir Brastias are "the men of moost worship that were with hym," and in this first battle they "slewe on the right hand and on the lyfte hand" (Malory 13.12-13, 31-32). Temporarily a "central figure" in the Round Table, Sir Kay is mentioned regularly, being prominent among King Arthur's first fellowship of knights and even appearing to be "a noble and valiant knight" (Herman 2, 1). He is entirely able both to defend his natural lord and to maintain, govern, and defend England's lands as evidenced by his repeated success in battle. Dean states that Sir Kay is "consistently loyal to Arthur…and he is one of the knights that closely protects the king while his claim to the throne is still challenged"; if the nature of their relationship is unspoken, it is at least demonstrated in Sir Kay's constant attendance beside his king (126). By successfully fighting alongside and defending King Arthur, Sir Kay illustrates both King Arthur's rightful claim to the throne and his claim to knighthood.

Similarly, Sir Kay proves his ability not only to "till haunte justis" but to also perform worshipfully in them. When King Arthur "lette cry both turnementis and justis," Sir Kay "dud that day many mervalyous dedis of armys, that there was none that dud so welle as he that day" and he receives a prize (Malory 16.15-16; 17.5-6, 20-21). Whereas before Sir Kay forgot his sword on the way to joust, now he succeeds above all others in the tournament. In his early days as seneschal, Sir Kay gains both King Arthur and himself worship and redeems his initial failings as a knight, excepting his lack of truthfulness. Even Queen Guinevere praises him, saying "What lady that ye love, and she love you nat agayne, she were gretly to blame" (81.18-19). Thus, Sir Kay is not a man just to be feared in battle but also to be loved—Queen Guinevere asserts herself that he is deserving of this love. During this period Sir Kay excels at knighthood and appears fit

for the role after all, serving his king and earning the praise of his queen through his worshipful deeds. Yet, as Ann F. Howey states, "no where [sic] else in Malory is Kay portrayed so heroically," and in fact he quickly begins his "gradual denigration into [a] sharp-tongued, often incompetent churl" (116). His success is short-lived, and the skill that he seems to suddenly possess as a knight disappears just as suddenly, reverting back to and revealing his original ineptitude as a Knight of the Round Table.

Rather than being unable to slay men on every side, Sir Kay loses the ability to simply defend himself. In the tale of "Sir Launcelot du lake," Sir Lancelot sees Sir Kay being attacked by three knights, in danger of being defeated, and must step in to save him. This near-defeat indicates not only Sir Kay's loss of fighting skill but his failure as a good knight. He is almost overcome by three knights, yet Hay states that "a thousand men, suppos thai be never sa stark, may nocht ourecum na ven a gude knychtis curage" (778). Were Sir Kay still a good and courageous knight, he would certainly have no difficulty fending off only three knights; instead, in this encounter "Kay is not established as a worthy opponent—indeed there is no mention of Kay's fighting ability," and he thus requires saving by a knight who has what Sir Kay lacks (Herman 10). Upon defeating the knights, Sir Lancelot commands them, "[Y]elde you unto thys knyght; and on that covenaunte I woll save youre lyvys, and else nat"; but they are initially willing to risk death rather than yield themselves to Sir Kay, saying, "Fayre knyght, that were us loth" (Malory 167.2-4, 5). Having nearly triumphed over Sir Kay, the knights are understandably hesitant to then claim an unskilled, uncourageous knight as victor over them. Yet Sir Kay demonstrates a lack of courage even when he is not directly under attack. While he is sleeping, Sir Lancelot arms himself in the former's armor and leaves his own armor for Sir Kay to travel without the risk of being attacked again. Sir Kay's chances of escaping an ambush are so

unlikely that he cannot—will not—travel while he is identifiable. Rather than desiring or even considering to boldly face his potential ambushers, he "exemplifies the opposition of the knightly ideal" by deciding to hide from conflict (Howey 115). He is complacent with hiding his identity and is pleased that he will avoid "distroublaunce and malese" and instead "shall ryde in pease" (Hay 778; Malory 167.43). The reason for Sir Kay's danger is yet unknown, but Sir Lancelot's encounters while dressed as Sir Kay reveal more fully the cause of that danger and of the three knights' loathing—which is not of yielding to Sir Kay but of Sir Kay himself.

Not only does Sir Kay lose his ability to fight, but he seems also to lose the love that Queen Guinevere had so confidently declared he deserves. The three knights do not state their reason for attacking Sir Kay, allowing for the belief that perhaps they are simply false knights seeking to destroy others. However, Sir Kay proves to be the provoker of these and many knights, to himself be the "inymy of knychthede" (Hay 778). He admits that while Sir Lancelot is wearing his armor, "on hym knyghtes woll be bolde and deme that hit is I" (Malory 167.40-41). Passing knights will see Sir Lancelot and, thinking he is Sir Kay, boldly attack him; however, when this happens, it becomes distinctly clear that the attacks are motivated by Sir Kay's own falsehood. Seeing Sir Lancelot "whan he was paste,…three knyghtes knew hym and seyde hit was the proude Sir Kay: 'He wenyth no knyght so good as he—and the contrary is oftyn proved!'…'I woll ryde aftir hym and assay hym for all his pryde'" (168.10-12, 14). These knights desire to fight Sir Kay and through defeat down his pride. He is not in danger because of false knights but is both in danger and a danger because he is a false knight, for a "knycht suld be meke and full of clemencé, and nocht prydy…for oft tymes of pryde…cummys injuré and discensioun" (Hay 780). Thus, not only has Sir Kay failed to maintain the external aspects of knighthood but the internal, as well. Unable to gain either worship in battle or fellowship from

other knights, Sir Kay is neither "accordit better to the body na to the saule" in knighthood but fails on all accounts due to his lack of verity and combative skill, and now his possession of pride (778). And, as Hay warns will occur, Sir Kay's pride often leads to his injury and downfall.

Armor simply marks the appearance of a knight; a true knight, especially when he is otherwise unidentifiable, is courteous in his treatment of others both equal to him and seemingly "lesser" than he is. Not only are knights called and expected to be courteous to everyone, but they must also "manetene and defend," among the women they meet, "pore miserable personis and piteable" (778-779). As defenders of the land and the people therein, they should desire to fulfill this task without regard to someone's "worthiness." Moreover, in his examination of the role of speech in one's courtesy and honor, Mark D. Johnston asserts states that "courtesy and the courteous use of language" are necessary in the "pursuit of chivalric conduct" towards others (32-33). In direct violation of this order of knighthood and Johnston's ideal of chivalric pursuit, in the tale of "Sir Gareth of Orkeney," Sir Kay meets a man of unknown background and humble appearance and treats him with disrespect solely due to his apparent lack of nobility. When King Arthur presents this unknown man to Sir Kay, himself instructing Sir Kay to give the man "all maner of fyndynge as though he were a lordys sonne," Sir Kay rudely and insubordinately replies, "That shall lytll nede…to do suche coste uppon hym, for I undirtake he is a vylane borne, and never woll make man" (Malory 179.1-2). Furthering his insult, he names the man "Beawmaynes" for his fair hands and "scorned and mocked hym" (179.8, 12). Beaumains does nothing in this meeting to offend Sir Kay, and King Arthur fully intends to treat him with the respect that he would give any noble guest; yet merely his appearance moves Sir Kay to scorn and reject Beaumains. Sir Gawain and Sir Lancelot repeatedly advise Sir Kay to "leve his mockyng," and Sir Lancelot specifically attests, "I dare ley my hede he shall preve a man of

grete worshyp" (179.13-15). Both of these knights, abiding by the code of chivalry and the inherent expectation of courtesy, do not see Beaumains's base appearance as grounds for treating him poorly and increasing their own pride. Instead, they uphold the orders they have taken as true knights and determine to respect Beaumains and even to see his potential for knighthood; Sir Kay clearly makes no such determination and stands in direct contrast to these knights, himself as false as they are true.

Again placed beside Sir Lancelot, Sir Kay appears even more unfit for knighthood in his failure to demonstrate the principles that Sir Lancelot so naturally displays in his manners. Eventually, Sir Lancelot's instincts also prove to be as correct as those manners, for Beaumains reveals, "My name is Garethe, and brothir to Sir Gawayne of fadir syde and modir syde" (182.24-25). Thus, not only is Beaumains in fact nobly born but, as a brother to Sir Gawain, he is also nephew to King Arthur. However, even without this revelation, Sir Kay's "absence of courtly conduct [is] more striking" than it would be in Beaumains because Sir Kay is already known to be noble, in blood if not in nature (Herman 9). He is expected to exhibit courtesy, but because he responds as he sees fit rather than as his chivalric order dictates, Sir Kay unknowingly debases a noble man and direct relative of his king out of pride for his seemingly superior position. Sir Kay's "ill-manners," according to Dean, "throw into relief the courtesy and good behaviour" of Sir Lancelot, emphasizing both Sir Lancelot's success in chivalry and Sir Kay's continual failure (133). As a result of his arrogance and pride, when Sir Kay gives insult to others, he gains injury for himself.

Sir Kay's desire to continually embarrass and demean Beaumains once again confirms his inadequacy and falsehood as a knight. He decides, "I woll ryde aftir [him] to wete whether he woll know me for his bettir," but in this exchange Beaumains rightfully and accurately answers,

"Yee, I know you well for an unjantyll knyght of the courte, and therefore beware of me" (Malory 181.18-20, 28-29). Without saying it, Beaumains fully comprehends the disadvantage at which Sir Kay, lacking self-awareness, puts himself and the injury he invites through his pride. Accordingly, when they fight, Sir Kay, lacking skill in combat, receives his comeuppance: "Beawmaynes com as faste upon hym with his swerde and with a foyne threste hym thorow the syde, that Sir Kay felle downe as he had bene dede. Than Beawmaynes alight downe and toke Sir Kayes shylde and his speare…. And than [Sir Lancelot] bade his dwarff sterte uppon Sir Kayes horse" (181.32-38). Sir Kay so firmly believes in his superiority and Beaumains's baseness that he even considers himself, so recently having needed to be rescued by Sir Lancelot, able nonetheless to succeed in combat against a "nobody." Instead, he fails further as a fighter and overall as a knight, who can neither attend his armor nor "se wele to the governaunce of his hors"—the outward symbols of knighthood that he sees Beaumains lacking yet that are taken from him by Beaumains and Sir Lancelot (Hay 779). Unable now to fight in battles, defend himself, succeed in combat, or maintain possession of his armor and horse, Sir Kay neither looks nor acts the part of a knight, even less so than the "lowborn" Beaumains.

The contrast between the two men is apparent past this discrepancy of appearance and into their respective characters and courtesies, or Sir Kay's lack thereof. Beaumains's only "offense" is that he "merely withholds his name," while Sir Kay acts intentionally out of scorn by giving him "a name designed as an insult" (Norris 83). Further, Beaumains neither responds to nor returns Sir Kay's insults but simply "endures Kay's scornful jibes with stoic fortitude" and silence, only pursuing combat when first pursued by Sir Kay; in response—truly in disregard—Sir Kay unceasingly "mocks [Beaumains's] exploits and potential" and rightfully brings mockery and shame upon himself (Dimassa 22). In his attempt to debase Beaumains, Sir Kay

reveals his own baseness and unworthiness of being seneschal, knight, or even nobly born. His falsehood now fully exposed, the extent to which Sir Kay demonstrates himself unfit for knighthood increases with each subsequent look into his actions and words.

As reprehensible as Sir Kay's treatment of Beaumains is to the order of knighthood, the severity of the violation increases with the knowledge that this is Sir Kay's second offense of this kind. When Sir Gawain and Sir Lancelot admonish Sir Kay for his mocking of Beaumains, they warn him, "Yett beware…so ye gaff the good knyght Brunor…a name, and ye called hym La Cote Male Taylé—and that turned you to anger aftirwarde" (Malory 179.17-19). He commits the same mistake against another man out of pride and again displays his lack of regard or concern for practicing the "worshipful behaving and fair language" (Johnston 34). Despite the advice of his fellow knights and the defeat he suffered from Beaumains, Sir Kay does not changes his ways because he cannot; courtesy is expected of a true knight, and Sir Kay is clearly false.

When the newcomer arrives at King Arthur's court in the tale of "Syr Trystrams de Lyones," Sir Kay does not hesitate to disparage him however possible. Breunor le Noire is described as "comyn of goode kynne" and "rychely beseyne…but his overgarmente sate overthwartely, howbeit hit was ryche cloth of golde" (Malory 280.7, 2-4). Because of the slight disarray of Breunor le Noire's appearance, Sir Kay quickly dismisses his nobility, saying, "Hit may well be…but in mockynge ye shall be called 'La Cote Male Taylé'—that is as muche to sey 'The Evyll-Shapyn Cote!'" (280.8-10). Unlike Beaumains, who arrives anonymously at King Arthur's court, La Cote Male Taile introduces himself by name and relates his noble blood; yet, like with Beaumains, Sir Kay treats La Cote Male Taile poorly based solely on his lack of noble appearance and Sir Kay's own inaccurate estimation of himself. Worse still, his encounter with Beaumains is mirrored in his encounter with La Cote Male Taile, displaying equal disregard for

his chivalric call to “mekenes, and clemencé, and humilitee” as for the other orders of his position (Hay 780). Sir Kay intends to maintain his pride despite the fall, and the shame, he continues to bring upon himself.

A creature of increasingly negative habit, Sir Kay follows up his characteristic mocking by becoming a “troublemaker” and seeking to destroy La Cote Male Taile’s reputation as a knight (Herman 8). When the latter departs on his first quest with a damsel, Sir Kay “ordayned Sir Dagonet, Kynge Arthurs foole, to…profyr hym to juste….so Sir La Cote Male Taylé smote Sir Dagonet ovir hir horse croupyn,” unwitting of any foul play (Malory 282.19-22). However, the damsel then “mocked La Cote Male Taylé and seyde, ‘Fye for shame! Now arte thou shamed in Kynge Arthurs courte, whan they sende a foole to have ado with the, and specially at thy fyrste justys’” (282.24-26). By seeking to shame and ruin La Cote Male Taile as he begins his pursuit of knighthood, Sir Kay exposes the depth of his disregard for his position and his apparent concern with pursuing falsehood and disrepute instead. This is further evidenced in a third offense that Sir Kay commits out of his perception, distorted though it must be, of “unknightly” skill in addition to unknightly appearance.

Without poor appearance or base blood obvious enough for him to scorn, Sir Kay must find another means of insult—for his prior behavior suggests that he is unable to interact any other way. As Sir Tristram rides down a lane, he “mette with Sir Kay…and there Sir Kay asked Sir Trystramys of what country he was. He answerde…Cornwaile. ‘Hit may well be,’ seyde Sir Kay, ‘for as yet harde I never that evir good knyght com oute of Corwayle’” (296.5-9). Sir Kay attacks this stranger based on nothing he says or does but because of Sir Kay’s own prideful disdain of Sir Tristram’s home land. However, he does nothing to recommend the knights of England through his discourtesy toward Sir Tristram, especially as seneschal of the land. Yet Sir

Tristram dismisses Sir Kay's insult and returns a truth of his own, one that is overwhelming apparent in Sir Kay's person. Upon learning Sir Kay's name, Sir Tristram responds, "Now wyte you well that ye ar named the shamefullyst knyght of your tunge that now ys lyvynge—howbeit ye are called a good knyght, but ye ar called unfortunate and passing overthwart of youre tunge" (296.13-16). Sir Tristram upbraids Sir Kay's prideful character, describing the fullness of Sir Kay's offense to knighthood by calling him the most shameful knight alive. Yet Sir Tristram's claim that Sir Kay is called a good knight is more appropriate when phrased as a question—for how is it that Sir Kay can ever be called, or considered, a good knight?

An in-depth look at his resounding failures in every aspect of knighthood illustrate that it is only through the efforts of others that Sir Kay ever achieves fellowship with the Round Table and rule over the lands of England. The scorn that Sir Kay so freely and abundantly has for others is even more so engendered for himself, such that "all men scorned Sir Kay" (Malory 182.33). His blatant disrespect of the positions granted to him, utter disregard for the standards within those positions, and complete despise for men who strive to honestly achieve that same order are blatant in his every word and deed. Though Sir Kay briefly appears to be fit to knighthood, to ruling England's lands, and to the Round Table, this success quickly degrades to ineptitude and a shame that, once beginning, only degrades further with each opportunity Sir Kay receives. Through examining Sir Kay's acts of false knighthood, it is distinctly clear that his position of seneschal and his seat at the Round Table are bought by his father Sir Ector, paid by King Arthur, and in no way earned by himself.

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