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THE HISTORY OF OVER SEA

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**T**he History  
of Over Sea

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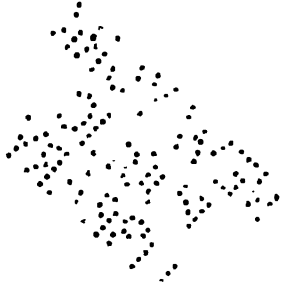
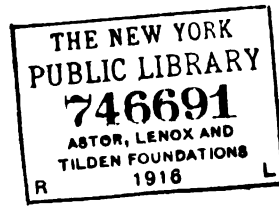


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Louis Rhead

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## THE HISTORY OF OVER SEA



N years bygone was a Count of Ponthieu, who loved much chivalry and the world, and was a much valiant man and a good knight.

In the same times was a Count of St. Pol, who held all the country, and was lord thereof, and a man much valiant. He had no heir of his flesh, whereof he was sore grieving; but a sister he had, a much good dame, and a valiant woman of much avail, who was Dame of Dontmart in

Ponthieu. The said dame had a son, Thibault by name, who was heir of the country of St. Pol, but a poor man so long as his uncle lived; he was a brave knight and a valiant, and good at arms; noble he was, and goodly, and was much honoured and loved of good folk; for a high man he was, and gentle of blood.

Now the Count of Ponthieu, with whom beginneth this tale, had a wife, a much good dame: of the said dame he had a daughter, much good and of much avail, the which waxed in great beauty and multiplied in much good; and she was of well sixteen years of age. But within the third year of her birth, her mother died, whereof sore troubled she was and much sorrowful.

The Count, her father, wedded him right speedily thereafter, and took a high lady and a gentle; and in a little while the Count had of the said lady a son, whom he loved much. The said son waxed in great worth and in great goodness, and multiplied in great good.

The Count of Ponthieu, who was a valiant man, saw my lord Thibault of Dontmart, and summoned him, and retained him of his meyny; and when he had him of his meyny he was much joyous thereat, for the Count multiplied in great good and in great avail by means of him.

As they returned from a tournament, the Count called to him Messire Thibault, and asked of him and said: "Thibault, as God may help thee, tell me what jewel of my land thou lovest best?" "Sir," said Messire Thibault, "I am but a poor man, but, as God may help me, of all the jewels of thy land I love none so much as my damosel, thy daughter." The Count, when he heard that, was much merry and joyful in his heart, and said: "Thibault, I will give her to thee if she will." "Sir," said he, "much great thank have thou; God reward thee."

Then went the Count to his daughter, and said to her: "Fair daughter, I have married thee, save by thee be any hindrance." "Sir," said she, "unto whom?" "A-God's name," said he, "to a

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much valiant man, of much avail: to a knight of mine, who hath to name Thibault of Dontmart." "Ha, sir," said she, "if thy country were a kingdom, and should come to me all wholly, forsooth, I should hold me right well wedded in him." "Daughter," said the Count, "blessed be thine heart, and the hour wherein thou wert born."

So the wedding was done; the Count of Ponthieu and the Count of St. Pol were thereat, and many another good valiant man. With great joy were they assembled, in great lordship and in great mirth; and in great joy dwelt those together for five years. But it pleased not our Lord Jesus Christ that they should have an heir of their flesh, which was a heavy matter to both of them.

On a night lay Messire Thibault in his bed, and pondered sore, and said: "God! of whom it cometh that I love so much this dame, and she me, and forsooth no heir of our flesh may we have, whereby God might be served, and good be done to the world." Therewith he thought on my lord St. Jacque, the apostle of Galicia, who would give to such as crave aright that which by right they crave, and he behight him the road thither in his heart.

The dame was a-sleeping yet, and whenas she awoke he held her betwixt his arms, and prayed her that she would give him a gift. "Sir," said the dame, "and what gift?" "Dame," said he, "thou shalt wot that when I have it." "Sir," she said, "if I may give it, I will give it, whatso it may be." "Dame," he said, "I crave leave of thee to go to my lord St. Jacque the apostle, that he may pray our Lord Jesus Christ to give us an heir of our flesh, whereby God may be served in this world, and the Holy Church refreshed." "Sir," said the dame, "the gift is full courteous, and much debonairly will I grant it thee."

In much great joy were they for long while: wore one day, and another, and a third; and it befell that they lay together in bed on a night, and then said the dame: "Sir, I pray and require of thee a gift." "Dame," said he, "ask, and I will give it, if give it I may." "Sir," she said, "I crave leave of thee to go with thee on thy journey."

When Messire Thibault heard that, he was much sorrowful, and said: "Dame, grievous thing would it be to thine heart, for the way is much longsome, and the land is much strange and much diverse." She said: "Sir, doubt thou nought of me, for of such littlest squire that thou hast, shalt thou be more hindered than of me." "Dame," said he, "a-God's name, I grant it thee."



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Day came, and the tidings ran so far till the Count of Ponthieu knew it, and sent for Messire Thibault and said: "Thibault, thou art vowed a pilgrim, as they tell me, and my daughter also?" "Sir," said he, "that is sooth." "Thibault," said the Count, "concerning thee it is well, but concerning my daughter it is heavy on me." "Sir," said Messire Thibault, "I might not naysay her." "Thibault," said the Count, "bestir ye when ye will; so hasten ye your palfreys, your nags, and your sumpter-beasts; and I will give you pennies and havings enow." "Sir," said Messire Thibault, "great thank I give thee."

So then they arrayed them, and departed with great joy; and they went so far by their journeys, that they drew nigh to St. Jacque by less than two days.

On a night they came to a good town, and in the evening Messire Thibault called his host, and asked him concerning the road for the morrow, what road they should find, and what like it might be; and he said to him: "Fair sir, at the going forth from this town ye shall find somewhat of a forest to pass through, and all the day after a good road." Therewith they held their peace, and the bed was apparelled, and they went to rest.

The morrow was much fair, and the pilgrims rose up at daybreak and made noise. Messire Thibault arose, and found him somewhat heavy, wherefore he called to his chamberlain, and said: "Arise now, and do our meyny to truss, and go their ways, and thou shall abide with me and truss our harness; for I am somewhat heavy and ill at ease." So that one commanded the sergeants the pleasure of their lord, and they went their ways.

But a little while was ere Messire Thibault and his wife arose and arrayed them, and got to the road. The chamberlain trussed their bed, and it was not full day, but much fair weather. They issued out of the town, they three, without more company but only God, and drew nigh to the forest; and whenas they came thither, they found two ways, one good, and the other bad. Then Messire Thibault said to his chamberlain: "Prick spur now, and come up with our folk, and bid them abide us, for ugly thing it is for a dame and a knight to wend the wild-wood with little company."

So the chamberlain went his ways speedily; and Messire Thibault came into the forest, and came on the sundering ways, and knew not by which to wend. So he said: "Dame, by which way go we?" "Sir," said she, "by the good way, so please God."

But in this forest were certain strong-thieves, who wasted the good

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way, and made the false way wide and side, and like unto the other, for to make pilgrims go astray. So Messire Thibault lighted down, and looked on the way, and found the false way bigger and wider than the good; so he said: "Come, dame, a-God's name, this is it." So they entered therein, and went a good quarter of a league, and then began the way to wax strait, and the boughs to hang alow; so he said: "Dame, meseemeth that we go not well."

When he had so said, he looked before him, and saw four strong-thieves armed, upon four big horses, and each one held spear in hand. And when he beheld them, he looked behind him, and saw other four in other fashion armed and arrayed; and he said: "Dame, be not abashed at anything thou mayst see now from henceforward." Then Messire Thibault greeted those first come, but they held them all aloof from his greeting. So thereafter he asked them what was their will toward him; and one thereof said: "That same shall we tell thee anon."

Therewith the strong thief came against Messire Thibault with glaive in rest, and thought to smite him amidst of the body; and Messire Thibault saw the stroke a-coming, and if he doubted thereof, no marvel was it; but he swerved from the stroke as best he might, and that one missed him; and as he passed by him Messire Thibault threw himself under the glaive, and took it from the strong thief, and bestirred him against those three whence that one was come, and smote one of them amidst the body, and slew him; and thereafter turned about, and went back, and smote him who had first come on him amidst of the body, and slew him.

Now it pleased God that of the eight strong-thieves he slew three, and the other five encompassed him, and slew his palfrey, so that he fell adown on his back without any wound to grieve him: he had neither sword nor any other armour to help him. So the strong-thieves took his raiment from him, all to his shirt, and his spurs and shoon; and then they took a sword-belt, and bound his hands and his feet, and cast him into a bramble-bush much sharp and much rough.

And when they had thus done, they came to the Lady, and took from her her palfrey and all her raiment, right to her smock; and she was much fair, and she was weeping tenderly, and much and of great manner was she sorrowful.

Then one of the strong-thieves beheld her, and said thus to his fellows: "Masters, I have lost my brother in this stour, therefore will



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I have this Lady in atonement thereof." Another said: "But I also, I have lost my cousin-german; therefore I claim as much as thou herein; yea, and another such right have I." And even in such wise said the third and the fourth and the fifth; but at last said one: "In the holding of this Lady ye have no great getting nor gain; so let us lead her into the forest here, and do our will on her, and then set her on the road again and let her go." So did they even as they had devised, and set her on the road again.

Messire Thibault saw it well, and much sorrowful he was, but nought might he do against it; nor none ill will had he against the Lady for that which had befallen her; for he wotted well that it had been perforce and against the will of her. The Lady was much sorrowful, and all ashamed. So Messire Thibault called to her and said: "Dame, for God's sake come hither and unbind me, and deliver me from the grief wherein I am; for these brambles grieve me sore and anguish me."

So the Lady went whereas lay Messire Thibault, and espied a sword lying behind there of one of the strong-thieves who had been slain. So she took it, and went toward her lord, full of great ire and evil will of that which was befallen. For she doubted much that he would have her in despite for that he had seen her thus, and that he would reprove her one while and lay before her what had her betid. She said: "Sir, I will deliver thee anon."

Therewith she hove up the sword and came to her lord, and thought to smite him amidst of the body; and when he saw the stroke coming he doubted it much, for he was all naked to his shirt and breeches, and no more. Therefore so hardly he quaked, that the hands and the fingers of him were sundered; and in such wise she smote him that she but hurt him a little, and sheared the thongs wherewith he was bound; and when he felt the bonds slacken, he drew to him and brake the thongs, and leapt to his feet, and said: "Dame, so please God, no more to-day shalt thou slay me." But she said: "Of a surety, sir, I am heavy thereof."

He took the sword of her, and put it back into the scabbard, and thereafter laid his hand on her shoulder, and brought her back on the road whereby they had come. And when he came to the entry of the wood, there found he a great part of his company, which was come to meet him; and when they saw them thus naked, they asked of him: "Sir, who hath thus arrayed you?" But he told them that they had fallen in with strong-thieves, who had thus ensnared them. Much great dole they made thereof; but speedily

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were they clad and arrayed, for they had well enough thereto; so they gat to horse and went their ways.

That day they rode, and for nought that had befallen Messire Thibault made no worsen semblance unto the Lady. That night they came unto a good town, and there they harboured. Messire Thibault asked of his host if there were any house of religion anigh thereto, where one might leave a lady, and the host said: "Sir, it befalleth well to thee; hard by without is a house much religious and of much good dames."

Wore the night, and Messire Thibault went on the morrow into that house and heard mass, and thereafter spake to the abbess, and the convent, and prayed them that they would guard that Lady there till his coming back; and they granted it to him much willingly. Messire Thibault left of his meyny there to serve the Lady, and went his ways, and did his pilgrimage the best he might. And when he had done his pilgrimage fair and well, he returned, and came to the Lady. He did good to the house, and gave thereto of his havings, and took the Lady unto him again, and led her into his country with as much great honour as he had led her away, save the lying a-bed with her.

When he was gotten aback into his land, much great joy did they make of him, and of the Lady. At his home coming was the Count of Ponthieu, the father of the Lady, and there also was the Count of St. Pol, who was uncle unto my lord Thibault. A many was there of good folk and valiant at their coming. The Lady was much honoured of dames and of damsels.

That day the Count of Ponthieu sat, he and Messire Thibault, they two together, at one dish, and so it fell out that the Count said to him: "Thibault, fair son, he who long way wendeth heareth much, and seeth of adventures, whereof nought they know who stir not; tell me tale, then, if it please thee, of some matter which thou hast seen, or heard tell of, since ye departed hence."

Messire Thibault answered him that he knew of no adventure to tell of; but the Count prayed him again, and tormented him thereto, and held him sore to tell of some adventure, insomuch that Messire Thibault answered him: "Sir, since tell I needs must, I will tell thee; but so please thee, let it not be within earshot of so much folk." The Count answered and said that it so pleased him well. So after dinner, whenas they had eaten, the Count arose and took Messire Thibault by the hand, and said to him: "Now would I that thou say thy pleasure, for here is not a many of folk."

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And Messire Thibault fell to telling how that it had betid to a knight and a lady, even as ye have heard in the tale told; but he told not the persons unto whom it had befallen; and the Count, who was much sage and right thoughtful, asked what the knight had done with the Lady; and he answered that the knight had brought and led the Lady back to her own country, with as much great joy and as much great honour as he had led her thence, save lying in the bed whereas lay the Lady.

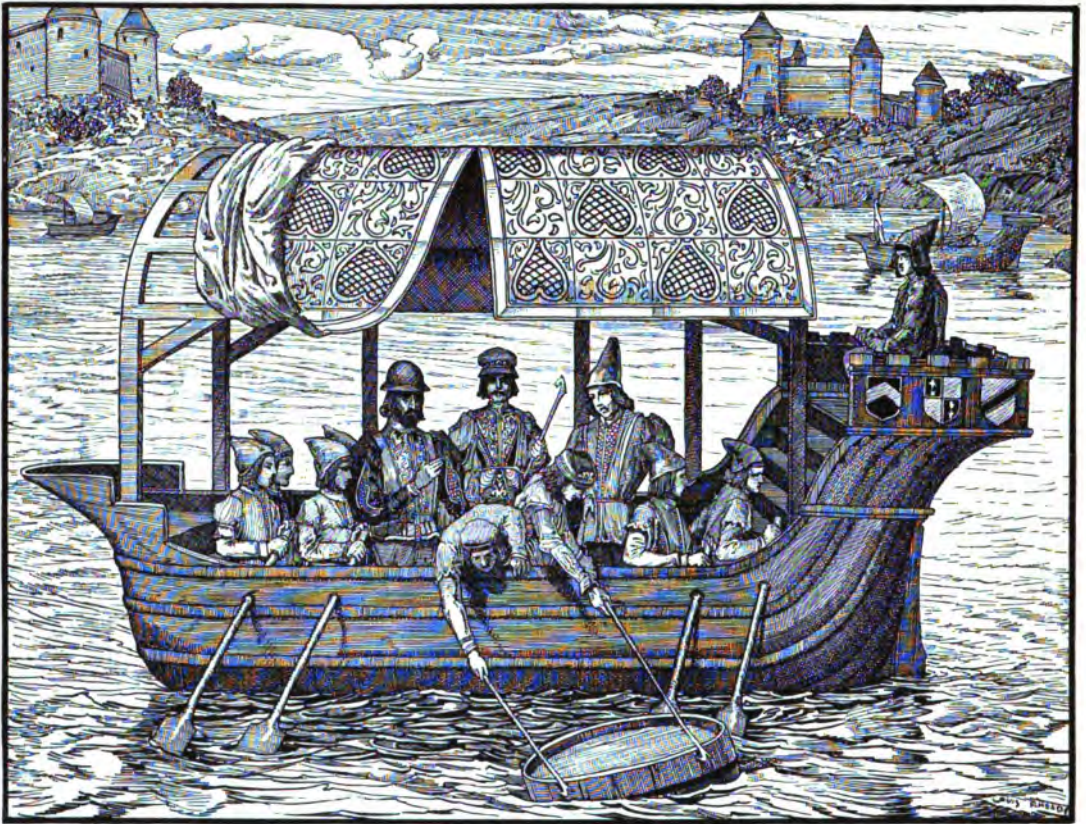
“Thibault,” said the Count, “otherwise deemed the knight than I had deemed; for by the faith which I owe unto God, and unto thee, whom much I love, I would have hung the Lady by the tresses to a tree or to a bush, or by the very girdle, if none other cord I might find.” “Sir,” said Messire Thibault, “nought so certain is the thing as it will be if the Lady shall bear witness thereto with her very body.” “Thibault,” said the Count, “knowest thou who was the knight?” “Sir,” said Messire Thibault, “yet again I pray thee that thou acquit me of naming the knight to whom this adventure betid: know of a verity that in naming him lieth no great gain.” “Thibault,” said the Count, “know that it is not my pleasure that thou hide it.” “Sir,” said Thibault, “then will I tell the same, since I may not be acquitted thereof, as willingly I would be if it were your pleasure; for in telling thereof lieth not great avail, nor great honour.” “Thibault,” said the Count, “since the word has gone so far, know that I would wot straightway who was the knight unto whom this adventure betid; and I conjure thee, by the faith which thou owest to God and to me, that thou tell me who was the knight, since thou knowest thereof.”

“Sir,” said Messire Thibault, “by that wherewith thou hast conjured me withal, I will tell thee. And I would well that thou shalt know of a verity that I am the knight unto whom this adventure betid. And wot thou that I was sore grieving and abashed in my heart; and wot thou well that never erst have I spoken thereof to any man alive; and, moreover, with a good will had I put aside the telling of it, if it had but pleased thee.”

But when the Count had heard tell this adventure, much grieving was he, and abashed, and held his peace a great while, and spake no word; and when he spoke, he said: “Thibault, then to my daughter it was that this adventure betid?” “Sir,” said he, “of a verity.” “Thibault,” said the Count, “well shalt thou be avenged, since thou hast brought her back to me.”

And because of the great ire which the Count had, he called for his





daughter, and asked her if that were true which Messire Thibault had said; and she asked, "What?" and he answered: "This, that thou wouldest have slain him, even as he hath told it?" "Sir," she said, "yea." "And wherefore," said the Count, "wouldest thou have done it?" "Sir," said she, "hereto, for that yet it grieveth me that I did it not, and that I slew him not."

So the Count let all that be, and abode till the Court was departed. Thereafter was he at Rue-on-Sea, and Messire Thibault with him, and the son of the Count; and the Count let lead with him the Lady. Then the Count let array a strong craft and a trim, and did





do the Lady enter therein; and withal let lay therein a tun, all new, strong, and great, and thick. Then they entered into the said ship, all three, without fellowship of other folk, save the mariners who rowed the ship. Then did the Count cause them to row a full two leagues out to sea; and much marvelled each one of what he thought to do, but none durst ask him.

But when they were so far forth in the sea as ye have heard, the Count let smite out one head of the tun, and took the Lady, who was his daughter, and who was much fair and well attired, and made her to enter in the tun, would she, would she not; and then let head up the tun again straightway, and dight it well, and let re-do the staves, and stop it well, that the water might not enter in no manner. Then the Count let put it overboard the ship, and he laid hand thereto with his very own body, and thrust the tun into the sea, and said: "I commend thee unto the winds and the waves."

Much grieving was Messire Thibault thereat, and the brother of the Lady withal; yea, and all they that saw the same; and they fell all at the feet of the Count, and prayed him mercy, that from out of that tun they might take her and deliver her. But the Count, who was much wroth and full of ire, would not grant it them for any thing that they might do or pray. So they let it be, and prayed to Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Father, that he, of his exceeding great goodness, would have pity of her soul, and do her pardon of her sins.

Thus have they left the Lady in great mischief and great peril, even as ye have heard the tale tell afore, and thus they returned thence. But our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Sovereign Father of us all, and who willeth not the death of sinners, be they he or she, but that they may turn them from their sins and live (every day he showeth it unto us openly by works, by examples, and by miracles), sent succour unto the Lady, even as ye may hear further on.



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For the history testifieth us, and telleth of a verity, that a merchant ship which came from the parts of Flanders, before the Count and his fellows were well come aland, saw the tun floating even as the winds and waves led it. So said one of the merchants to his fellows: "Masters, lo there a tun, and it shall come our way, meseemeth; and if we draw it aboard, well shall we have some avail of it in any case."

Now know ye that this ship was wont to go to the Land of the Saracens for cheaping. So the mariners drew thither where was the tun, and did so much, what by wile, what by force, that they gat the tun on to their ship. And when the tun was laid on their ship, they looked much thereon, and much marvelled what it might be; and so much, that they beheld how one of the heads of the said tun was newly arrayed. Wherefore they unheaded it, and found the Lady therein, in such case as though her hour were waning, for air failed her. Her body was big, her visage all swollen, and her eyes ugly and troubled. But when she saw the air, and felt the wind, she sighed a little, and the merchants stood about her and called unto her, but she had no might to speak. But at last the heart came aback to her, and speech withal, and she spoke to the merchants and other folk whom she saw around her; and much she marvelled when she found herself in such wise amidst of the merchants; but when she saw of them that they were Christians and merchants, the more at ease she was, and much she praised Jesus Christ therefor in her heart, and thanked him of his goodness, whereas he had so done by her that she yet had a space of life. For she had much great devotion in her heart, and much great desire to amend her life toward God, and toward others, of the misdeeds she had done, whereof she doubted mightily.

The merchants asked her of whence she was, and she hid the matter from them, and said that a wretched thing she was, and a poor sinner, even as they might behold; and that by much cruel adventure was she thither come; and for God's sake let them have mercy upon her: and they answered that even so would they. And she ate and drank, and became much fair.

Now so far went the ship of the merchants, that they came to the Land of the Saracens, and took haven by Aumaric. Galleys of the Saracens came to meet them, and they answered that they were merchants who led divers merchandise by many lands; and that they had the safe-conduct of princes and high barons, and that they might go into all lands surely, to seek chaffer and lead their goods.

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So they brought the Lady aland, and were with her. And one asked the other what they should do with her; and one said that they should sell her; and another said: "If I may be trowed, we shall give her as a gift to the rich Soudan of Aumarie, and then will our matter be mightily amended."

Thereto they accorded all, and they took the Lady and brought her to the Soudan, who was a young man: but first they did do attire and array the Lady much richly, and so gave her to the Soudan, who received the Lady much joyously and with much good-will, for right fair was she. The Soudan asked of them what she was, and they said: "Sir, we wot not; but by marvellous adventure did we find her."

Much good-will had the Soudan to them of this gift, and much good he did to them therefor. Much he loved the Lady withal, and he let serve her honourably. Well was she heeded, and the colour came again unto her, and she became marvellous fair.

The Soudan fell to coveting the Lady and to loving of her; and he let ask her by Latiners of what folk she was, but no sooth thereof would she tell him or let him know. Thereof was he heavy, whereas he saw of her that she was a high woman and of gentle lineage. He let ask of her if she were Christian, and that if she would leave her law he would take her to wife, for no wife had he as yet. She saw well that better it were to come thereto by love than by force, so she answered that so would she do of a good-will; and when she had renied her, and had left her law, the Soudan took her to wife according to the manner and wont of the Land of the Saracens. He held her right dear, and honoured her much, and waxed of great love towards her.

But a little while was she with the Soudan ere she was big of a son, and lay in at her time; the Soudan was right glad, and made much great joy. And the dame was ever of good fellowship with the folk, and much courteous and of good will toward them, and learnt so much that she knew the Saracen tongue.

But a little while wore in the years whereas she had the son, ere she conceived and had a daughter, who anon became much fair and much wise, and in all lordliness she let nourish her. Thus was the Lady abiding a two years in much joy and mirth.

But now the story leaves telling of the Lady and the Soudan till after, as ye shall come to hear, and returneth to the Count of Ponthieu, and to the son of the Count, and to Messire Thibault of Dontmart, who were sore grieving for the Lady who had been

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thuswise cast into the sea, even as ye have heard, and knew no tidings of her, what was become of her, and trowed more that she were dead than alive.

Now saith the history, and the sooth beareth witness thereto, that the Count was in Ponthieu, and his son, and Messire Thibault. The Count was in sore great sadness, and heavy thought of his daughter, and much he doubted him of the sin which he had done. Messire Thibault durst not to wed him; nor did the son of the Count either, because of the dolour wherein he saw his friends abiding. Neither would the son of the Count become knight, though he were well of an age thereto, had he the will.

On a day the Count forethought him much of the sin which he had done to his daughter, and he betook him to the Archbishop of Rheims and confessed to him, and said to him all the deed, as he had done it. He took the cross of Over Sea, and crossed him. And whenas Messire Thibault saw his lord the Count crossed, he confessed him and crossed him withal. Likewise, when the son of the Count saw his father crossed, and Messire Thibault also, whom he loved much, he also crossed himself. And when the Count saw his son crossed, he was much grieved, and said: "Fair son, wherefore art thou crossed? Now shall the land abide void of lord." But the son answered and said: "Father, I am crossed for God's sake first before all things, and for the saving of my soul, and to serve God and honour him to my power, so long as I shall have the life in my body."

So the Count arrayed him speedily and bestirred him, and went and took leave; but withal he looked to it who should ward his land. And Messire Thibault and the son of the Count dight their matters, and they took to the way with much great safe-conduct. They came in the Land of Over Sea safe of body and havings, and there they did their pilgrimage much holily in all the places whereas they wotted that it ought to be done, and God to be served.

And when the Count had so done, he bethought him that he would well to do yet more; so he gave himself to the service of the Temple for one year, him and his company; and then when it came to the end of the year, deemed that he would go visit his land and his country. Wherefore he sent unto Acre and let array his journey, and he took leave of them of the Temple, and of the land, and much they thanked him for the honour which he had brought them. He came to Acre with his fellows, and they went



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aboard ship, and departed from the haven with right good wind at will; but it endured but for a little; for when they were on the high sea, then did a wind mighty and horrible fall upon them unawares; and the mariners knew not whitherward they went, and every hour they looked to be drowned; and so great was their distress that they bound themselves together, the son to the father, the nephew to the uncle, yea, one to the other, even as they were intermingled. The Count and his son and Messire Thibault bound themselves together so that they might not sunder.

But a little way had they gone in this wise ere they saw land; and they asked the mariners what land it was, and they answered that it was the Land of the Saracens; and they called it the Land of Aumarie, and said unto the Count: "Sir, what is thy pleasure that we do? for if we go yonder, we shall be all taken and fall into the hands of the Saracens." The Count said to them: "Let go according to the will of Jesus Christ, who shall take heed to our bodies and our lives; for of an eviller or uglier death we may not die than to die in this sea."

So they let run along Aumarie, and galleys and craft of the Saracens came against them. Wot ye well that this was an evil meeting; for they took them and brought them before the Soudan, who was lord of that land and country. So they made him a present of the Christians and of all their havings: the Soudan departed them, and sent them to divers places of his prisons. The Count of Ponthieu and his son and Messire Thibault were so strongly bound together that they might not be sundered. The Soudan commanded that they should be laid in a prison by themselves, where they should have but little to eat and little to drink; and it was done even as he commanded. There were they a while of time in great misease, and so long that the son of the Count was much sick, insomuch that the Count and Messire Thibault had fear of his dying.

Thereafter it fell out that the Soudan held court much mightily, and made great joy for his birthday; and this was after the custom of the Saracens.

After dinner came the Saracens unto the Soudan, and said to him: "Sir, we require of thee our right." He asked them what it was, and they said: "Sir, a captive Christian to set up at the butts." So he granted it to them whereas it was a matter of nought, and he said to them: "Go ye to the gaol, and take him who has the least of life in him."





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To the gaol they went, and drew out the Count, all bedone with a thick beard; and when the Soudan saw him in so poor estate, he said to them: "This one hath little might to live; go ye, lead him hence, and do ye your will on him."

The wife of the Soudan, of whom ye have heard, who was daughter of the Count, was in the place whereas the Count who was her father was being led to the death, and so soon as she saw him, the blood and the heart was stirred within her, not so much for that she knew him, but rather that nature constrained her. Then said the Lady to the Soudan: "Sir, I am French, wherefore I would willingly speak to yonder poor man before he dieth, if it please thee." "Yea, dame," said the Soudan, "it pleaseth me well." So the Lady came to the Count, and drew him apart, and caused the Saracens to draw aback, and asked him of whence he was, and he said: "Lady, I am of the kingdom of France, of a land which is called Ponthieu." When the Lady heard that, all the blood of her stirred within her, and straightway she asked of what kindred he was. "Certes, dame," said he, "it may not import to me of what kin I be, for I have suffered so many pains and griefs since I departed, that I love better to die than to live; but so much can I tell thee of a sooth, that I was the Count of Ponthieu."

When the Lady heard that, she made no semblance, but forthwith departed from the Count and came to the Soudan, and said: "Sir, give me this captive, if it please thee, for he knoweth the chess and the tables, and fair tales withal, which shall please thee much; and he shall play before thee and learn thee." "Dame," said the Soudan, "by my law, wot that with a good will I will give him thee; do with him as thou wilt."

Then the Lady took him and sent him into her chamber, and the gaolers went to seek another, and led out Messire Thibault, who was the husband of the Lady; and in sorry raiment was he, for he was dight with long hair, and had a great beard; he was lean and fleshless, as one who had suffered pain and colour enough. When the Lady saw him, she said unto the Soudan; "Sir, again with this one would I willingly speak, if it



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please thee." "Dame," said the Soudan, "it pleaseth me well." So the Lady came to Messire Thibault, and asked him of whence he was, and he said: "I am of the land of the old warrior whom they led before thee e'en now: and I had his daughter to wife; and I am a knight." The Lady knew well her lord, so she went back unto the Soudan, and said to him: "Sir, great goodness wilt thou do unto me if thou wilt give me this one also." "Dame," said he, "with a good will I will give him to thee." So she thanked him, and sent him into her chamber with the other.

But the archers hastened and came to the Soudan, and said: "Sir, thou doest us wrong, and the day is a-waning." And therewith they went to the gaol and brought out the son of the Count, who was all covered with his hair and dishevelled, as one who had not been washen a while. Young man he was, so that he had not yet a beard; but so lean he was, and so sick and feeble, that scarce might he hold him up. And when the Lady saw him, she had of him much great pity. She came to him and asked of him whose son, and whence he was, and he said he was the son of the first worthy. Then she wotted well that he was her brother, but no semblance she made thereof.

"Sir, certes," said she to the Soudan, "thou wilt now do me great goodness if thou wilt give me this one also; for he knows the chess and the tables, and all other games, which much shall please thee to see and to hear." But the Soudan said: "Dame, by my law, were there an hundred of them I would give them unto thee willingly."

The Lady thanked him much, and took her brother, and sent him straightway into her chamber. But the folk betook them anew to the gaol, and brought forth another; and the Lady departed thence, whereas she knew him not. So was he led to his martyrdom, and our Lord Jesus Christ received his soul. But the Lady went her ways forthwith; for it pleased her not, the martyrdoms which the Saracens did on the Christians.

She came to her chamber wherein were the prisoners, and when they saw her coming, they made as they would rise up, but she made sign to them to hold them still. Then she went close up to them, and made them sign of friendship. And the Count, who was right sage, asked thereon: "Dame, when shall they slay us?" And she answered that it would not be yet. "Dame," said they, "thereof are we heavy; for we have so great hunger, that it lacketh but a little of our hearts departing from us."

Thereat she went forth and let array meat; and then she brought

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it, and gave to each one a little, and a little of drink. And when they had taken it, then had they yet greater hunger than afore. Thuswise she gave them to eat, ten times the day, by little and little; for she doubted that if they ate all freely, that they would take so much as would grieve them. Wherefore she did them to eat thus attemperly.

Thuswise did the good dame give them might again; and they were before her all the first seven days, and the night-tide she did them to lie at their ease; and she did them do off their evil raiment and let give them good and new. After the eighth day, she had strengthened them little by little and more and more; and then she let bring them victuals and drink to their contentment, and in such wise that they were so strong that she abandoned to them the victuals and the drink withal. They had chequers and tables, and played thereon, and were in all content. The Soudan was oftentimes with them, and good will he had to see them play, and much it pleased him. But the dame refrained her sagely toward them, so that never was one of them that knew her, neither by word nor deed of hers.

But a little while wore after this matter, as telleth the tale, ere the Soudan had to do, for a rich soudan, who marched on him, laid waste his land, and fell to harrying him. And he, to avenge his trouble, summoned folk from every part, and assembled a great host. When the Lady knew thereof, she came into the chamber whereas were the prisoners, and she sat down before them, and spoke to them, and said: "Lords, ye have told me of your matters a deal; now would I wot whether that which ye have told me be true or not; for ye told me that thou wert Count of Ponthieu on the day that thou departest therefrom, and that that man had had thy daughter to wife, and that the other one was thy son. Now, I am Saracen, and know the art of astronomy: wherefore I tell you well, that never were ye so nigh to a shameful death as now ye be, if ye tell me not the truth. Thy daughter, whom this knight had, what became of her?" "Lady," said the Count, "I trow that she be dead." "What wise died she?" quoth she. "Certes, Lady," said the Count, "by an occasion which she had deserved." "And what was the occasion?" said the Lady.

Then the Count fell to tell, sore weeping, how she was wedded, and of the tarrying, whereby she might not have a child; and how the good knight promised his ways to St. Jacque in Galicia, and how the Lady besought him that she might go along with him, and he granted it willingly. And how they bestirred them with great joy

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and went their ways, and so far that they came unto a place where they were without company. Then met they in a forest robbers well armed, who fell upon them. The good knight might do nothing against all them, for he was lacking of arms; but amidst all that he slew three, and five were left, who fell upon him and slew his palfrey, and took the knight and stripped him to the shirt, and bound him hand and foot, and cast him into a briar-bush: and the Lady they stripped, and took from her her palfrey. They beheld the Lady, and saw that she was full fair, and each one would have her. At the last, they accorded betwixt them hereto, that they should lie with her, and they had their will of her in her despite; and when they had so done they went their ways, and she abode, much grieving and much sad. The good knight beheld it, and said much sweetly: "Dame, now unbind me my hands, and let us be going." Now she saw a sword, which was of one of the slain strong-thieves; she took it, and went towards her lord, who lay as aforesaid; she came in great ire by seeming, and said: "Yea, unbind thee I will." Then she held the sword all bare, and hove it up, and thought to smite him amidst the body, but by the good mercy of Jesus Christ, and by the valiancy of the knight, he turned upso down, and she smote the bonds he was bound withal, and sundered them, and he leaped up, for as bound and hurt as he was, and said: "Dame, if God will, thou shalt slay me not to-day."

At this word spake the Lady, the wife of the Soudan: "Ha, sir! thou sayest the sooth; and well I know wherefore she would to do it." "Dame," said the Count, "and wherefore?" "Certes," quoth she, "for the great shame which had befallen her."

When Messire Thibault heard that, he fell a-weeping much tenderly, and said: "Ha, alas! what fault had she therein then, Lady? So may God give me deliverance from this prison wherein I am, never should I have made worse semblance to her therefor, whereas it was maugre her will."

"Sir," said the Lady, "that she deemed nought. Now tell me," she said, "which deem ye the rather, that she be quick or dead?" "Dame," said he, "we wot not." "Well wot I," said the Count, "of the great pain we have suffered, which God hath sent us for the sin which I did against her." "But if it pleased God," said the Lady, "that she were alive, and that ye might have of her true tidings, what would ye say thereto?" "Lady," said the Count, "then were I gladder than I should be to be delivered out of this prison, or to have so much riches as never had I in my life."

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“Dame,” said Messire Thibault, “may God give me no joy of that which I most desire, but I were not the gladder than to be king of France.” “Dame,” said the varlet who was her brother, “certes none could give me or promise me thing whereof I should be so glad as of the life of my sister, who was so fair a dame, and so good.”

But when the Lady heard these words, then was the heart of her softened; and she praised God, and gave him thanks therefor, and said to them: “Take heed now, that there be no feigning in your words.” And they answered and said that none there was. Then fell the Lady a-weeping tenderly, and said to them: “Sir, now mayest thou well say that thou art my father, and I thy daughter, even her on whom thou didest such cruel justice. And thou, Messire Thibault, thou art my lord and my baron. And thou, sir varlet, art my brother.”

Therewith she told them how the merchants had found her, and how they gave her as a gift to the Soudan. And when they heard that, they were much glad, and made much great joy, and humbled them before her; but she forbade them that they should make any semblance, and said: “I am Saracen, and renied, for otherwise I might never endure, but were presently dead. Wherefore I pray you and bid you, for as dear as ye hold your lives and honours, and your havings the greater, that ye never once, whatso ye may hear or see, make any more fair semblance unto me, but hold you simply. So leave me to deal therewith. Now shall I tell you wherefore I have uncovered me to you. The Soudan, who is now my lord, goeth presently a-riding; and I know thee well” (said she to Messire Thibault) “that thou art a valiant man and a good knight: therefore I will pray the Soudan to take thee with him; and then if ever thou wert valiant, now do thou show it, and serve the Soudan so well that he may have no evil to tell of thee.”

Therewith departed the Lady, and came unto the Soudan, and said; “Sir, one of my prisoners will go with thee, if it please thee.” “Dame,” said he, “I would not dare trust me to him, lest he do me some treason.” “Sir,” she said, “in surety mayest thou lead him along; for I will hold the others.” “Dame,” said he, “I will lead him with me, since thou counsellest me so, and I will give him a horse much good, and arms, and all that is meet for him.”

So then the Lady went back, and said to Messire Thibault: “I have done so much with the Soudan, that thou shalt go with him. Now bethink thee to do well.” But her brother kneeled before her, and

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prayed her that she would do so much with the Soudan that he also should go. But said she: "I will not do it, the matter be over open thereby."

The Soudan arrayed his matters and went his ways, and Messire Thibault with him, and they went against the enemy. The Soudan delivered to Messire Thibault arms and horse. By the will of Jesus Christ, who never forgetteth them who have in him trust and good faith, Messire Thibault did so much in arms, that in a little while the enemy of the Soudan was brought under, whereof much was the Soudan rejoiced; he had the victory, and led away much folk with him. And so soon as he was come back, he went to the Lady, and said: "Dame, by my law, I much praise thy prisoner, for much well hath he served me; and if he will cast aside his law and take ours, I will give him wide lands, and richly will I marry him." "Sir," she said, "I wot not, but I trow not that he will do it." Therewith they were silent, so that they spake not more. But the Lady dighted her business straightway after these things the best she might, and she came to her prisoners, and said:

"Lords, now do ye hold ye wisely, that the Soudan perceive not our counsel; for, if God please, we shall yet be in France and the land of Ponthieu."

Now came a day when the Lady moaned much, and complained her, and came before the Soudan, and said: "Sir, I go with child, well I wot it, and am fallen into great infirmity, nor ever since thy departure have I eaten aught wherein was any savour to me." "Dame," said he, "I am heavy of thy sickness, but much joyous that thou art with child. But now command and devise all things that thou deemest might be good for thee, and I will let seek and array them, whatsoever they may cost me."

When the Lady heard that, she had much great joy in her heart; but never did she show any semblance thereof, save that so much she said: "Sir, my old prisoner hath said to me, that but I be presently upon earth of a right nature, I am but dead and that I may not live long." "Dame," said the Soudan, "nought will I thy death: look to it, then, on what land thou wouldest be, and I will let lead thee thereto." "Sir," she said, "it is of no matter to me, so that I be out of this city."

Then the Soudan let array a ship fair and stout, and let garnish her well with wine and victual. "Sir," said the Lady to the Soudan, "I will have with me my old prisoner and my young one, and they shall play at the chess and the tables; and my son will I take



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to pleasure me." "Dame," said he, "it pleaseth me well that thou do thy will therein. But what hap with the third prisoner?" "Sir," said she, "thou shalt do thy will herein." "Dame," said he, "I will that thou take him with thee; for he is a valiant man, and will heed thee well on land and sea, if need thou have thereto."

Therewith she prayed leave of the Soudan, and he granted it, and much he prayed her to come back speedily. The ship was apparelled, and they were albout; and they went aboard, and departed from the haven.

Good wind they had, and ran much hard: and the mariners called to the Lady, and said to her: "Dame, this wind is bringing straight to Brandis; now command us thy pleasure to go thither or elsewhere." And she said to them: "Let run hardily, for I know well how to speak French and other tongues, and I will lead you through all."

Now so much they ran by day and by night, through the will of Jesus Christ, that they are come to Brandis: there they took harbour in all safety, and lighted down on the shore, and were received with much great joy. The Lady, who was much wise, drew towards the prisoners, and said to them: "Lords, I would that ye call to mind the words and agreements which ye said to me, and I would be now all sure of you, and have good surety of your oaths, and that ye say to me on all that ye hold to be of God if ye will to hold to your behests, which ye have behight me, or not; for yet have I good might to return."

They answered: "Lady, know without doubt that we have covenanted nought with you which shall not be held toward you by us loyally; and know by our Christendom and our Baptism, and by whatsoever we hold of God, that we will hold to it; be thou in no doubt thereof."

"And I will trow in you henceforth," said the Lady. "Now, lords," said she, "lo here my son, whom I had of the Soudan; what shall we do with him?" "Dame, let him come to great honour and great gladness." "Lords," said the Lady, "much have I misdona against the Soudan, for I have taken from him my body, and his son whom he loved much."

Then she went back to the mariners, and called and said to them: "Masters, get ye back and tell to the Soudan that I have taken from him my body, and his son whom he loved much, and that I have cast forth from prison my father, my husband, and my brother."

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And when the mariners heard that, they were much grieving; but more they might not do; and they returned, sad and sorrowful for the Lady, and for the youngling, whom they loved much, and for the prisoners, who were thus lost without recoverance.

But the Count apparelled himself, whereto he had well enough, by means of merchants and by Templars, who lent him of their good full willingly. And when the Count and his company had sojourned in the town so long as their pleasure was, they arrayed them and went their ways thence, and came to Rome. The Count went before the Apostle, and his fellowship with him. Each one confessed him the best that he could; and when the Apostle heard it, he was much glad, and much great cheer he made of them. He baptized the child, and he was called William. He reconciled the Lady, and set her again in right Christendom, and confirmed the Lady and Messire Thibault, her baron, in right marriage, and joined them together again, and gave penitence to each of them, and absolved them of their sins.

After that, they abode no long while ere they departed from Rome and took their leave of the Apostle, who much had honoured them; and he gave them his blessing, and commended them to God. So went they in great joy and in great pleasance, and praised God and his mother and the hallows, both carl and quean, and gave thanks for the goods which they had done them.

And so far they journeyed, that they came into the land where they were born, and were received in great procession by the bishops and the abbots, and the people of religion and the other clerks, who much had desired them.

But above all other joys made they joy of the Lady who was thus recovered, and who had thus delivered her father, her husband, and her brother from the hands of the Saracens, even as ye have heard. But now leave we of them in this place, and tell we of the mariners who had brought them, and of the Saracens who had come with them. The mariners and the Saracens who had brought them to Brandis returned at their speediest; they had good wind, and ran till they came off Aumarie. They lighted down on shore sad and sorrowful, and went to tell the tidings to the Soudan, who was much sorrowful thereof, and in great dole abode; and for this adventure the less he loved his daughter, who had abided there, and honoured her the less. Notwithstanding, the damsel became much sage, and waxed in great wit, so that all honoured her and loved her, and prized her for the good deeds which they told of her.

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But now the history holds its peace of the Soudan, who made great dole for his wife and his prisoners who thus had escaped, and it returneth to the Count of Ponthieu, who was received into his land with great procession, and much honoured as the lord that he was.

No long while wore ere his son was made knight, and great cheer folk made of him. He was a knight much worthy and valiant, and much he loved the worthies, and fair gifts he gave to poor knights and poor gentle dames of the country, and much was prized and loved of poor and of rich. For a worthy he was, and a good knight, and courteous, and openhanded, and kind, and nowise proud. Yet but a little while he lived, which was great damage, and much was he bemoaned of all.

After this adventure it befell that the Count held a great court and a great feast, and had a many of knights and other folk with him; and therewithal came a very noble man and knight, who was a much high man in Normandy, who was called my lord Raoul de Preaux. This Raoul had a daughter much fair and much wise. The Count spake so much to my lord Raoul and to his friends, that he made the wedding betwixt William his nephew, son to the Soudan of Aumarie, and the daughter of my lord Raoul, for no heir had he save that daughter. William wedded the damsel, and the wedding was done much richly, and thereafter was the said William lord of Preaux.

Long time thence was the land in peace and without war: and Messire Thibault was with the Lady, and had of her sithence two man-children, who thereafter were worthies and of great lordship. The son of the Count of Ponthieu, of whom we have told so much good, died but a little thereafter, whereof was made great dole throughout all the land. The Count of St. Pol lived yet, and now were the two sons of my lord Thibault heirs of those two countries, and thereto they attained at the last. The good dame their mother lived in great penitence, and much she did of good deeds and alms; and Messire Thibault lived as the worthy which he was, and much did he of good whiles he was in life.

Now it befell that the daughter of the Lady, who had abided with the Soudan her father, waxed in great beauty and became much wise, and was called the Fair Caitif, because her mother had left her thus as ye have heard: but a Turk, much valiant, who served the Soudan (Malakin of Baudas was he called), this Malakin saw the damsel to be courteous and sage, and much good had heard tell of her; wherefore he coveted her in his heart, and came to the

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Soudan and said to him: "Sir, for the service which I have done thee, give me a gift." "Malakin," said the Soudan, "what gift?" "Sir," said he, "might I dare to say it, because of her highness, whereof I have nought so much as she, say it I would."

The Soudan, who wise was and clear-seeing, said to him: "Speak in all surety that which thou willest to speak; for much I love thee and prize thee; and if the thing be a thing which I may give thee, saving my honour, know verily that thou shalt have it." "Sir," said he, "well I will that thine honour shall be safe, and against it nought would I ask of thee: but if it please thee, give me thy daughter, for I pray her of thee, and right willingly would I take her."

The Soudan held his peace and thought awhile; and he saw well that Malakin was a worthy, and wise, and might well come to great honour and great good, and that well he might be worthied; so he said: "Malakin, by my law, thou hast craved me a great thing, for I love much my daughter, and no heir else have I, as thou wottest well, and as sooth is. She is born and come from the most highest kindred and the most valiant of France; for her mother is daughter of the Count of Ponthieu; but whereas thou art valiant, and much well hast served me, I will give her to thee with a good will, if she will grant it." "Sir," said Malakin, "against her will would I do nothing."

Then the Soudan let call the damsel, and she came, and he said to her: "My fair daughter, I have married thee, if so it please thee." "Sir," she said, "well is my pleasure therein, if thou will it." Then the Soudan took her by the hand, and said: "Hold Malakin! I give her to thee." He received her gladly, and in great joy and in great honour of all his friends; and he wedded her according to the Saracen law; and he led her into his land in great joy and in great honour. The Soudan brought him on his road a great way, with much company of folk, so far as him pleased; then returned, and took leave of his daughter and her lord. But a great part of his folk he sent with her to serve them.

Malakin came into his country, and much was he served and honoured, and was received with great joy by all his friends; and they twain lived together long and joyously, and had children together, as the history beareth witness.

Of this dame, who was called the Fair Caitif, was born the mother of the courteous Turk Salahadin, who was so worthy and wise and conquering.

Here ends the Story of Over Sea, done out of ancient French into English by William Morris.













