

# **THE HISTORY OF OVER SEA: DONE INTO ENGLISH**

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The History of Over Sea: Done Into English by William Morris

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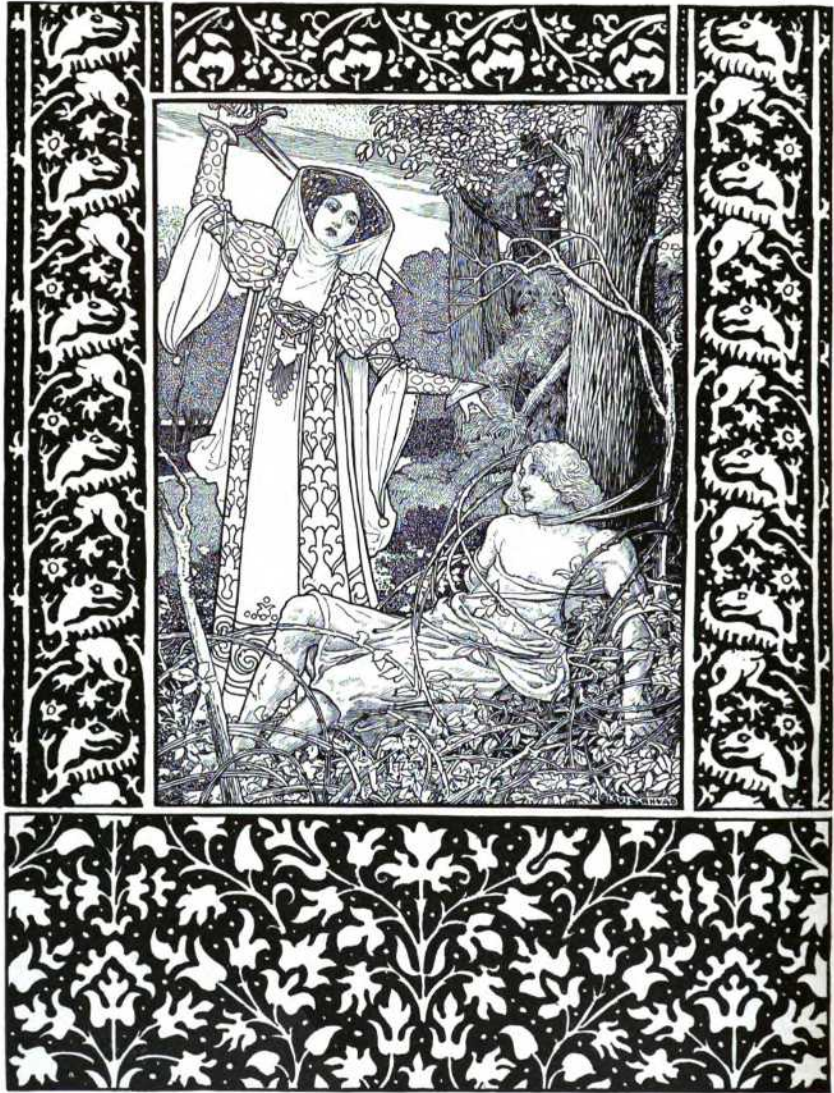
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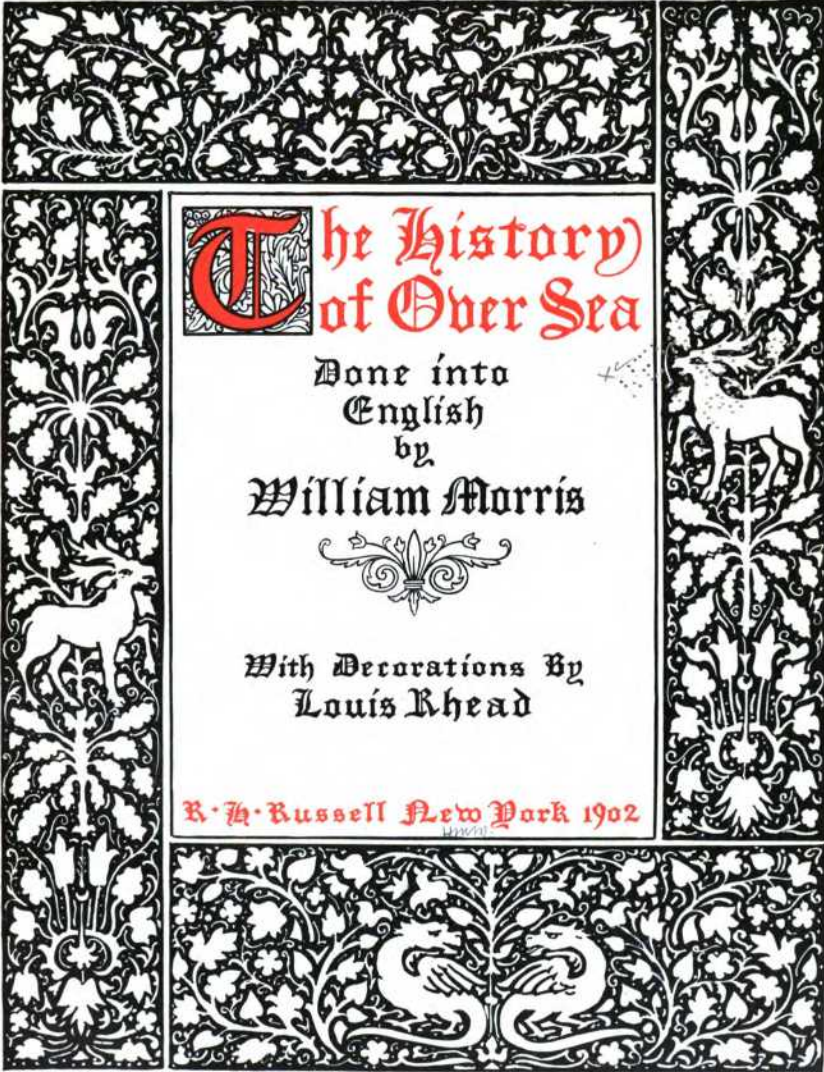
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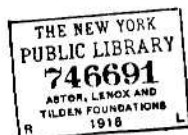
William Morris



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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 beight 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