

(Translation from an old MSS. of the 10th Century)

THERE is a land named Noelles which lies beyond the sea where lived a gallant knight and a very glorious lady. Now the name of the knight was Foward of Neerwold and that of the lady was Winfred of Hauteparque. And they were very happy together in this land beside the sea until there came a great lord from the court of St. Tomase where lay the king with all his power.



And to this lady Comte Vingtoine spoke fair and she went with him to the great court at St. Tomase nor did she return for many weary months. And Foward was very proud and would have none of her although he loved her with all his heart. Now when she had returned to Noelles beyond the sea she was not happy. For she would have loved Foward of Neerwold but could not — and she would have the castles and rich fiefs of Vingtoine de la Foret but she bare no love for him — or so the story tells.

Now would Foward have wooed her with love and the guerdon of joy that love would bring in the years to come.

And Winfred would have trod again the highroad of Noelles toward the stars — but somehow the stars were gone and there was only blackness darker than despair. For between them was a wall which they would fain have torn away but could not. And this wall was only the memory of the Court at St. Tomase — of the life and joy and colour that is there.

So the heart of Foward brake within him, and he could not bear again the pain of her presence. So he spake to her one day in this wise:

“Well have I loved you, and long, Lady. And you have loved me, else your eyes lied and the stars lied. But you do not love me now — try you ever so hard. Nor can you ever love me again, for you will not. So I would have no more of you Lady Winfred; nor the lips that are not mine, nor the soft arms that are only a lie.

Get you back to St. Tomase, lady — and that colour and plaisance that is your life. I have only a great love to offer you — but that is a poor thing against land and castles. So is my gift overbalanced on the scale.

Now the tale is that Foward of Neerwold went into other lands but he was never happy. For he loved this lady until he died and always he recalled the sweetness of her lips and the round wonder of her arms and the white, warm glory of her

(The story breaks off here. The edges are charred by fire.)

