

ESTIS IN CECO FIDELIS

# The Time AND Witness

## CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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**THE LION OF FLANDERS;**  
OR,  
**THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN SPURS.**

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.  
CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)

Then, as if on the instant recalling something which for a moment she had forgotten, she checked herself suddenly, her countenance assumed a grave expression, and she threw herself upon her knees before the crucifix at the head of the bed. There with joined hands she poured forth a long thanksgiving to the Lord, who had brought back her friend and brother Adolf from the shadow of death.

Then rising, she once more fixed her eyes on the knight, and in a glad voice said to him:

"Keep still, Sir Adolf, and move not; that is what Master Roger strictly enjoins you."

"What have you done for me, illustrious daughter of my lord?" replied Adolf. "How constantly have your prayers sounded in my ears! How often has your voice of comfort cheered my heart! Yes; in my half-consciousness it seemed to me as though one of God's angels was standing by my bedside, and warding off death from it; an angel that propped my head, that quenched my burning thirst with cooling drinks, that constantly assured me that death should not yet have dominion over me! God grant me health and strength again, that I may one day be able to pour out my blood for you!"

"Sir Adolf," answered the maiden, "you have risked your life for my father; you love him as I love him; does it not, then, become me to care for you as for a brother? The angel you saw was, without doubt, St. Michael, to whom I have constantly prayed in your behalf. Now I will hasten and call your good sister Maria, that we may rejoice together over your health."

She then left the knight, but in a few moments returned, accompanied by his sister. Joy at this sudden improvement in Adolf's condition was visible, not only upon her countenance, but in her whole air and bearing. Her movements were quicker and lighter, her tears no longer flowed; and now she could find cheerful words for her favourite. Immediately on her return to the room with Maria, she took her hawk from the back of the chair upon her hand, and so drew near to Adolf's bed.

"My good brother," cried Maria, "kissing his pale cheek, "you are better! Now I shall be rid of those frightful dreams! O, how glad I am! How often have I wept by your bedside with bitter pain of heart! How often have I thought that death could surely not be far from you! But now my heart is lighter. Will you drink, my brother?"

"No, my good Maria," answered Adolf, "I have never had to suffer thirst; so anxiously has my generous Lady Matilda cared for me. As soon as I am strong, enough to reach St. Cross, I will go and pray to God for blessings upon her head, and that sorrow may ever be far from her."

Matilda, meanwhile, was busily employed in whispering the good news to her bird, which now, seeing its mistress in recovered spirits, was dressing and pluming itself; and seemed to be making ready for the chase.

"Look, my faithful friend," she said, turning the creature's head towards Adolf, "look! now is Sir Adolf in the way of recovery; after we have so long seen him lying helpless there. Now we may speak together again, and not be always sitting in the dark. Our fear for him is all gone; and he thinks shall our other griefs pass away too, now."

"A village near Bruges, formerly a noted place of pilgrimage,

that God has shown us His mercy and favour. Yes, my beautiful bird, so also shall have an end the sad captivity of—"

But here Matilda felt that she was about to say what the sick knight had better not be made aware of but as she broke off, the word 'captivity' had sounded strangely in Adolf's ear. The tears, too, which on awaking he had perceived on the maiden's cheek, filled him now with anxious foreboding.

"What say you, Matilda?" he exclaimed. "You weep! Heavens! What, then, has happened? of whose imprisonment did you speak?"

Matilda dared not answer; but Maria, more self-possessed, stooped down and whispered in his ear: "Of her poor aunt Philippa's. But let us drop the subject; for she is always weeping about it. Now you are better, I shall, as soon as Master Roger allows it, have to talk to you of things of weight, but which are not for Matilda's ear; besides I am at this moment expecting Master Roger. Be still awhile, and I will take her away into another chamber."

The knight laid his head upon the pillow, and feigned to sleep; upon which Maria turned to Matilda, and said:

"I think, Lady Matilda, we had better now leave my brother alone, that he may sleep, and not be tempted to speak too much; which the desire of expressing his gratitude to you, might, I fear, lead him to do."

The two damsels left the room together; and presently afterwards the surgeon presented himself at the door, and was conducted by Maria to her brother.

"Well, Sir Adolf," said Roger cheerfully, "how goes it with you? Better I see. Now all the danger is over, and you are safe for this time. There is no need of my dressing your wound again at present: only drink copiously of this beverage, keep as quiet as you can, and in less than a month you and I will take a walk together. That is my prognosis, if no unforeseen accident retard your recovery. Meanwhile, as your mind is in better case than your body, I have no objection to Lady Maria informing you of the sad events that have happened while you have been confined to your bed; but I pray you, do not lose your self-command, and keep yourself calm."

Maria now drew forward two chairs, upon which she and Master Roger took their places at the head of the bed, while Adolf regarded them with the greatest curiosity and with an evident expression of anxiety upon his countenance.

"Let me finish what I have to say," began Maria "without interrupting me and bear yourself like a man, my brother.—In that evening which was so unlucky for you, our Count called his faithful vassals together, and declared to them that he had resolved to set out for France, and cast himself at King Philip's feet. So it was determined, and Guy of Flanders journeyed with his nobles to Compiègne; but no sooner had they arrived than they were all arrested and cast into prison, and now our land is under French rule. Raoul de Nesle governs Flanders."

The effect which this short narration produced upon the knight was not so violent as might have been expected. He made no answer, and seemed deeply sunk in thought.

"What a calamity! is it not?" added Maria at last.

"O God!" exclaimed Adolf "what felicity hast thou then in store for Guy of Flanders, that he must reach it through such miseries and humiliations?—But tell me, Maria, is our Lion also a prisoner?"

"Yes, my brother, Lord Robert de Bethune is in prison at Bourges, and Lord William at Rouen. Of all the nobles that were with the Count, one alone has escaped this unhappy lot—the cunning Diederik."

"Now I understand the unfinished sentence and the constant tears of the unhappy Matilda. Without father, without family, the daughter of the Count of Flanders has to seek shelter with strangers."

And as he spoke, his eyes lighted up, and a glow of indignation passed over his countenance. After a short pause he went on:

"The precious child of my prince and master has watched over me as a guardian-angel! She is deserted—unhappy—and exposed to persecution; but I will remember what I owe to the Lion, and watch over her as the apple of mine eye. O, what a great and glorious mission is it which has fallen to my lot! How precious to me now is the life which I can devote to her service!"

Then, after a short moment of deep meditation, a cloud suddenly passed over his countenance; he cast a look of supplication on his physician, and said:

"O heavens, how grievous are my wounds to me now! how intolerable this confinement! My worthy friend, Master Roger, do for the love of God, hasten my recovery all you can, that I may be able to do something for her who has so lovingly tended me on my bed of pain. Spare no expense, whatever drugs are costliest, procure them, if only I may the sooner rise from my bed; for now I feel as if I could rest no longer."

"But, Sir Adolf," answered Roger, "there is no possibility of hastening your recovery from such a wound; nature must have time to unite the several parts. Patience and rest will do more for you than all the drugs in the world. But this is not all that we had to say to you. You must know that the French are masters throughout the land, and are strengthening themselves in it every day. Hitherto we have succeeded in concealing our young Lady Matilda from them; but we dread every day lest she should be discovered; and then she too might fall into the hands of the wicked Queen of France."

"Truly you are right, Master Roger," exclaimed Adolf; "they will have no pity upon her. But what shall we do? O, what a misery, to lie stretched out here, when all the strength I have, all the help I can give, is so much wanted!"

"I know a place," observed Roger, "where Matilda would be safe enough."

"Your words relieve me. But where, then, is this place, my brother?"

"I know it well," replied Adolf; "it is a place of safety and in peace with her cousin, William, the Count of Flanders."

The knight was evidently not a little disconcerted at this question. "Must he let Matilda depart for a

foreign land? Shall he render it impossible for himself to aid and defend her? To that he could by no means bring his mind; for he had already in his heart charged himself with the task of restoring Matilda to her father, and preserving her from every wrong and insult.

He strained, therefore, all his powers of invention to devise some other plan which would not remove her so far from him; and thinking he had hit upon such a one, he answered, with an expression of joy lighting up his countenance:

"Certainly, Master Roger, there could not be a safer retreat for her; but, according to what I hear from you, there are bodies of French troops dispersed in different garrisons throughout the whole of Flanders, which seems to me to render the journey a dangerous one for her. It would be impossible to furnish her with a proper escort, for that would only make the matter worse; and I cannot possibly allow Robert de Bethune's daughter to set out alone accompanied only by a few servants. No! I must watch over her as my soul's salvation, that I may not be ashamed to appear before my Lord Count Robert when he demands his daughter at my hands."

"But, Sir Adolf, bethink you! you expose her to still greater danger by keeping her in Flanders. Who is there to protect her here? Not you, for you have not the power. The city magistrates will not; they are all body and soul given up to France. The French may easily get scent of her; and what would become of the poor girl then?"

"I have bethought me of a protector for her," answered Adolf. "Maria, send a servant to the Dean of the Clothworkers, and pray of him to come and see me here. Master Roger, what think you if we place our young lady under the protection of the commons? Is not that a happy thought?"

"Well enough, indeed, if only it were practicable; but the people are to the last degree embittered against all that calls itself noble, and will have nothing to do with any such. And in good truth, Sir Adolf, one cannot blame them for it; for most part of the nobles hold with the enemy, and think of nothing but how most effectually to destroy the rights and liberties of the commons."

"I shall not allow such considerations to turn me from my purpose; of that assure yourself, Master Roger. My father was ever the good friend of the city of Bruges; it is to his intervention that they owe many of their privileges, and I do not think that the Dean of the Clothworkers and his company have forgotten it. And, after all, if I fall here, we can but look about for an opportunity of sending away our young lady quietly to Juliers."

After a space of some half an hour, which they spent in discussing their projects, Master Peter Deconinck, Dean or chief of the guild of Clothworkers at Bruges, arrived, and was immediately introduced into Adolf's chamber.

A long gown or overcoat of brown woollen stuff covered him from neck to feet; and being totally without any kind of trimming or ornament, strikingly contrasted with the gay dresses of the nobles. It was easy to see that the Dean of the Clothworkers, in affecting this plainness of apparel, wished to make ostentatious display of his estate in life, and so to oppose pride to pride; for, in truth, this coarse woollen gown covered the most powerful man in Flanders. On his head he wore a flat cap, from under which his hair hung down half a foot long over his ears. A leathern belt drew in the wide folds of the gown about his body, and the hilt of a cross-handled knife glittered at his side.—An excessive paleness, high cheek-bones, and a wrinkled forehead, threw an air of deep thought over his countenance; while the loss of an eye gave a somewhat unpleasant expression to his features. On common occasions there was nothing to distinguish him from ordinary men; but no sooner was he moved or interested than his glance became lively and penetrating; beams of intelligence and manly spirit shot from his remaining eye, and his bearing was proud and even imperious. On first entering the room, he cast a mistrustful glance on all present, especially Master Roger, in whom he at once perceived more of worldly craft than in the other two.

"Master Deconinck," commenced Adolf, "be pleased to draw near to me. I have something to ask of you that you must not refuse me, for I have no other hope but in you; only you must first give me your solemn assurance that you will never divulge to any human being that which I am about to communicate."

"The just dealings and good offices of the lords of Nieuwland are not yet forgotten by the Clothworkers," answered Deconinck; "and you, noble sir, may ever count upon me as your faithful servant. Nevertheless, sir, allow me first to warn you, that if what you have in hand is in any way contrary to the rights of the commons, you will do well to keep it to yourself, and tell me nothing of it."

"Since when, then," cried Adolf, somewhat sternly, "have the Nieuwlands touched you in your rights? Such language is injurious to my honor!"

"Forgive me, sir, if my words have offended you," replied the Dean; "it is so hard to distinguish the evil from the good, that one is obliged to mistrust all. Allow me to ask you only one question, the answer to which will remove all doubt from my mind at once; are you a Lilyard, noble sir?"

"A Lilyard!" cried Adolf indignantly, "no, Master Deconinck! in my breast beats a heart that has nothing but abhorrence for our enemies; and the very scheme about which I wished to consult you is directed against them."

"Speak freely then, noble sir; I am at your service."

"Well, then, you know that our Count Guy is in prison, with all his faithful nobles; but there is still in Flanders one to whom all true Flemings owe their best and readiest aid—one who now needs it greatly because of her utter helplessness, and to whom it is due both on account of what she is, and of the sore trouble which oppresses her."

"You speak of the Lady Matilda, daughter of the Lord Robert de Bethune," observed Deconinck. "How know you that?" inquired Adolf surprised.

"I know yet more," said the Lady Matilda, who had not trouble to her house so privately, but that Deconinck knew it, nor could she have left again unknown to me. But be not alarmed, for I can assure

you that but few besides myself at Bruges are in the secret."

"You are a wonderful man, Master Deconinck. But now to the point. I feel that I may trust in your magnanimity to defend this young daughter of our Lion, if need be, against any violence from the French."

Sprung from among the people, Deconinck was one of those rare geniuses who come before the world from time to time as the leaders of their age and country. No sooner had years ripened his capacity, than he called forth his brethren out of the bondage in which they slumbered, taught them to understand the power which lies in union, and rose up at their head against their tyrants. The latter now found it impossible to resist the awakened energies of their former slaves, whose hearts Deconinck had so roused and kindled by his eloquence, that their necks would no longer bear the yoke. Yet sometimes the fortune of war would favour the nobles, and the people for a time submitted, while Deconinck seemed to have lost at once his eloquence and his sagacity. Nevertheless she slumbered not, but still worked upon the spirits of his comrades with secret exhortations, till a favourable moment came; then the commons rose again against their tyrants, and again broke their bonds. All the political machinations of the nobles vanished into smoke before the keen intellect of Deconinck, and they found themselves thus deprived of all their power over the people, without any possibility of permanently holding their ground. With truth it might be said, that a chief share in the reform of the political relations between the nobles and the commons belonged to Deconinck, whose waking thoughts and sleeping dreams were devoted solely to the aggrandisement of the people, who had so long groaned, so to say, in the dark dungeon and heavy chains of feudal bondage.

It was with a smile of satisfaction, then, that he listened to Adolf of Nieuwland's appeal in behalf of the young Matilda; for it was a great triumph for the people whose representative he was. In an instant he counted over the advantages which might be derived from the presence of the illustrious maiden for the execution of his great project of deliverance.

"Sir Adolf of Nieuwland," he answered, "I am greatly honoured by this application. I will spare no effort which may contribute to the safety of the illustrious daughter of the Flemish prince."

Desirous of bringing the matter more entirely into the hands of the commons, he added, with cautious hesitation: "But might she not easily be carried off from hence before I could come to her aid?"

This remark was somewhat displeasing to Adolf; for he thought he saw in it a disinclination on the Dean's part to take up Matilda's cause with heart and soul. He therefore replied: "If you cannot yourself give me efficient aid, I pray you, master, to advise us as to what is the best that can be done for the safety of our noble Count's daughter."

"The Clothworkers' Company is strong enough to stand between the lady and all fear of insolence," rejoined Deconinck; "I can assure you that she may live as peacefully and safely at Bruges as in Germany, if you will take counsel of me."

"What is your difficulty, then?" asked Adolf.

"Noble sir, it is not for such as me to make arrangements for the daughter of my prince; nevertheless, should she be pleased to do as I shall recommend her, I will undertake to be answerable for her safety."

"I hardly understand you, master. What have you to ask of the Lady Matilda? you would not carry her to another place?"

"O, no; all I desire is, that she should on no account leave the house without my knowledge, and should on the other hand, at all times be ready to accompany me, should I judge it necessary. Moreover, I leave it to you to withdraw this trust from me the moment you feel any doubt of the loyalty of my intentions."

As Deconinck was universally held in Flanders as one of their ablest heads, Adolf doubted not that his demand was founded on good reasons, and therefore made no difficulty in granting all he asked, provided he would undertake to be himself answerable for Lady Matilda's safety; and, as he was not yet personally acquainted with her, Maria went to request her presence.

On her entering the room Deconinck made a low and humble obeisance before her, while the princess looked at him with considerable astonishment, not in the least knowing who he could be. But while he thus stood before her, and she awaited an explanation of the scene, suddenly a noise of loud disputing was heard in the passage.

"Wait then!" cried one of the voices, "that I may inquire whether you can be admitted."

"What?" cried another voice of much greater power, "shall the Butchers be shut out while the Clothworkers are let in? Quick, out of the way, or you shall rue it!"

The door opened, and a young man of powerful limbs and handsome features entered the chamber. His dress was made like that of Deconinck, but with more of taste and ornament; the great cross-handled knife hung at his girdle. As he passed the threshold he was in the act of throwing back his long fair hair from his face; but the sight that met his eyes checked him suddenly in the door-way. He had thought to find there the Dean of the Clothworkers and some of his fellows; but now seeing this beautiful and richly-dressed lady, and Deconinck bowing thus low before her, he knew not what to think. However, he did not allow himself to be disconcerted, either by the unexpected presence in which he found himself, or by the inquiring look of Master Roger. He uncovered his head, bowed hastily all round; and went straight up to Deconinck; then seizing him familiarly by the arm, he exclaimed:

"Ha, Master Peter! I have been looking for you these two hours; I have been running all over the town after you, and nowhere were you to be found. Know you what is happening, and what news I bring?"

"Well, what is it, then, Master Breydel?" inquired Deconinck impatiently.

"Come, don't stare at me so with your cat's eyes," Master Dean of the Clothworkers, cried Breydel; "you know well enough that I am not afraid of it. But that is all one!" "Well, then," King Philip the

Fair, and the accursed Joanna of Navarre, are coming to Bruges to-morrow; and our fine fellows of city magistrates have ordered out a hundred clothworkers, forty butchers, and I know not how many more of the rest, to make triumphal arches, cars for a pageant, and scaffolding."

"And what is there so wonderful in that, that you should waste your breath about it?"

"What, Master Dean! what is there in that? more than you think; for certainly not a single butcher will put his hand to the work, and there are three hundred clothworkers standing in front of your hall waiting for you. As far as I am concerned, it will be long enough before I wag a finger for them. The good-days stand ready, the knives are sharp; every thing is in order. You know, Master Dean, what that means when I say it."

All present listened with curiosity to the bold words of the Dean of the Butchers. His voice was clear, and even musical, though with nothing of womanish softness in it. Deconinck's cooler judgment, meanwhile, soon perceived that Breydel's designs would, if executed, only be injurious to the cause, and he answered:

"I will go with you, Master Jan; we will talk over the necessary measures together; but first, you must know that this noble lady is the Lady Matilda, the daughter of Lord Robert de Bethune."

Breydel, in much surprise, threw himself on one knee before Matilda, lifted his eyes to her, and exclaimed:

"Most illustrious lady, forgive me the random speech I have heedlessly used in your presence. Let not the noble daughter of our lord the Lion remember it against me."

"Rise, master!" answered Matilda graciously; "you have said nothing I could take amiss. Your words were inspired by love for our country, and hatred against its enemies. I thank you for your faithful allegiance."

"Gracious Countess," pursued Breydel, rising, "your ladyship cannot imagine how bitter are my feelings against the Lilyards and French taxgatherers. O that I could avenge the wrongs of the House of Flanders!—O that I could! But the Dean of the Clothworkers here is always against me; perhaps he is right, for late is not never; but it is difficult for me to keep back. To-morrow the false Queen Joanna comes to Bruges; but unless God gives me other thoughts than I have now, she shall never see France again."

"Master," said Matilda, "will you promise me what I am going to ask of you?"

"Promise you, lady? say rather that you command me, and I will obey. Every word of yours shall be sacred to me, illustrious princess."

"Then I desire of you that you shall do nothing to break the peace whilst the new princes are in the city."

"So be it," answered Breydel, sorrowfully. "I had rather your ladyship had called upon me to use my arm or my knife; however, it's a long lane that has no turning, and if to-day is for them, to-morrow may be for us."

Then, once more bowing his knee before the princess, he added:

"I beg and pray of you, noble daughter of our Lion, not to forget your servant Breydel, whenever you have need of strong arms and stout hearts. The Butchers' Company will keep their 'good-days' and knives ready ground for your service."

The maiden started somewhat at an offer which savoured so much of blood; but nevertheless she replied in a tone of satisfaction.

"Master," she answered, "I will not forget to make you my faithful friend to my lord and father, when God shall restore him to me; for myself, I cannot sufficiently express my thanks to you."

The Dean of the Butchers rose, and taking Deconinck by the arm, they went out together. Long after they had left the house this unexpected visit formed a topic of conversation for its inmates.

As soon as the two Deans were in the street Deconinck began:

"Master Jan, you know that the Lion of Flanders has always been the friend of the people; it is therefore our bounden duty to watch over his daughter as a sacred deposit."

"What need of so many words about it?" answered Breydel; "the first Frenchman that dare but look askance at her shall make acquaintance with my cross knife. But, Master Peter, would it not be the best plan to close the gates, and not let Joanna into the town? All my butchers are ready, the 'good-days' stand behind the doors, and at the first word every Lilyard will be packed to—"

"Beware of any violence!" interrupted Deconinck. "To receive one's prince magnificently is the custom every where; that can do no dishonour to the commons. It is better to reserve our strength for occasions of more importance. Our country is at present swarming with foreign troops, and we might very easily get the worst of it."

"But, master, this is terribly slow work! Let us just cut the knot with a good knife, instead of taking this time to unite it; you understand me."

"I understand you well enough; but that will not do. Caution, Breydel, is the best knife: it cuts slowly, but it never blunts and never breaks. Suppose you do shut the gates, what have you gained then? Listen, and take my word for it, let the storm go by a little, and things get quiet; let us wait till a part of the foreign troops are gone back to France; let the French and the Lilyards have their own way a little, and then they will be less on their guard."

(TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.)

"The name given to a kind of halbert, from the greeting it was calculated to bestow on an enemy."

"The county of Grey is greatly agitated on the passage of the Dunkin Act. A by-law is to be submitted to the ratepayers on the 20th September to put this Act in force throughout the country."