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## CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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### THE LION OF FLANDERS;

OR,

### THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN SPURS.

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER XX.—(CONTINUED.)

While the butchers were roaring with laughter at the words of their dean, a fine old guildsman entered, whose grey beard attested his advanced age.— One of them called out to him:

"And you, Jacob, do you think you can still manage to give a good bite?"

"My teeth may not be quite so good as yours," growled the old butcher; "but for all that, the old dog has not forgotten how to use them. I am quite ready to stake twenty bottles of wine, which of us two will give most Frenchmen a bloody bravo."

"Bravo!" cried the others; "and we will join in drinking them out. Let us fetch them at once."

"Ho! ho!" interposed Breydel; "can't you keep yourselves quiet? Drink to-morrow, if you please; but whoever of you drinks to-night shall be shut up in Courtrai, and shall have no share in the fight."

"This threat had a wonderful effect on the butchers; their jaws died away on their lips; they did not even dare to sing a song; the old guildsman alone ventured to speak.

"By the beard of our dean!" said he, "rather than suffer that, I would be roasted at this fire, like Messire St. Lawrence; for I can never expect to witness such another feast."

Breydel remarked that his threat had rather damped the spirits of his companions, for which he was sorry, as he was himself inclined to merriment. Anxious to restore their cheerfulness, he raised the cask, and, filling a bumper, he held up his can, and said:

"Well, my men, why are you so silent? There, take that, and drink that you may find your tongues. I am vexed to have spoken so to you.— Do I not know you well? Do I not know that the true butchers' blood flows in your veins? Well, then, here's to you, comrades!"

An expression of satisfaction burst from the company, and they broke out into a loud cheery laugh when they found that the threat of their dean had no serious meaning.

"Drink again!" continued Breydel, filling his can afresh; "the cask is yours, and you may drink it to the dregs. Your comrades who are on guard shall have another supplied to them. Now we see that succours are arriving from every city, and that we are so strong, we may well be merry."

"I drink to the disgrace of the men of Ghent!" cried a guildsman. "We have good reason to know that he who puts any trust in them leans on a broken staff. But it is no matter; they may stay at home now; and so our own good city of Bruges will have gained unshared the glory of the conflict and the liberation of our fatherland."

"Are they Flemings, those men of Ghent?" said another. "Does their heart beat for freedom?— Are there any butchers left in Ghent? Bruges for ever! You have, the true blood there."

"I do not know," added Breydel, "why Count Guy so earnestly desires their arrival. Our camp is not over-stocked with provisions, and it is scarcely prudent to invite more guests to the meal. Does the Count imagine that we shall lose the game? One can easily see that he has been used to Namur; he knows not the men of Bruges, or he would not long so much for those of Ghent. I hope they will stay quietly at home; we shall do very

well without them; and we want no cowards amongst us."

Like a genuine citizen of Bruges, Breydel bore no love to the men of Ghent. The two leading cities of Flanders kept up an hereditary rivalry, and almost enmity, with each other; not that the one boasted braver citizens than the other, but simply that each did his best to ruin or divert the trade and traffic of the other. And the same jealousy still continues. So impossible is it to root out the feelings which are inborn in the mass of the people, that, notwithstanding their many revolutions, and the changes of the times, this spirit has been perpetuated to our own day.

The butchers continued their conversation in this strain for a long time, and many an execration was uttered against the men of Ghent, when suddenly a peculiar noise excited their attention: they heard a sound of quarrelling and wrestling at some little distance, as if two men were struggling together. All sprang up to see what it meant, but, before they could leave the tent, one of the butchers, who had been on guard, entered it, dragging a man with him by main force.

"Masters," said he, pushing the stranger into the tent, "this roving minstrel I found behind the camp; he was listening at all the tents, and slinking about in the dark like a fox. I have been tracking him for some time; and I am convinced there is some treason at the bottom of it, for look how the rascal is trembling!"

The man thus dragged into the tent wore a blue cloak, and had on his head a small cap adorned with a plume; a long beard covered half of his face. In his left hand he held a small musical instrument, which had somewhat the appearance of a harp; and he made as if he would like to play some little piece to the assembled company. Yet he trembled with fright, and his face was pale as though his last hour were come. He evidently wished to avoid the eye of Jan Breydel; for he kept his head turned in the opposite direction, so that the dean might not see his features.

"What are you doing in the camp?" exclaimed Breydel. "Why are you listening at the tents? Answer me instantly."

The minstrel answered in a language which bore some resemblance to German; so that it was evident he came from another part of the country:

"Master, I come from Luxemburg, and have brought a message from Messire van Lonchyn. I had been told that some of my brothers were in the camp, and I came to find them out. I am overcome with shame and vexation that the sentinel should take me for a spy; but I hope that you will do me no injury."

Breydel felt his heart touched with compassion for the minstrel. Bidding the sentinel stand back, he offered a chair to the stranger, and said:

"You are surely weary of your long journey.— There, my good minstrel, sit down and drink; the can is yours. Now sing us a few songs, and we will let you go in peace. Courage, man; you are amongst good friends."

"Excuse me, master," answered the minstrel; "I cannot remain here, for Messire van Lonchyn awaits me. I am sure you would not wish to disappoint the noble knight by detaining me."

"We must have a song!" cried the butchers.— "You shall not go hence until you have sung us a song."

"Quick, then," said Breydel; "for I promise you that if you do not sing us something, you will be kept here until morning. If you would only have sung at once and with good will, you would have finished ere this. Now sing, I bid and command you."

The terror of the stranger was sensibly increased by this peremptory speech. It was with difficulty that he could hold his harp; and he trembled so violently that the strings, touched by his clothes, gave forth some confused sounds. This yet further whetted the appetite of the butchers for a lay.

"Are you going to play or sing to us at once?" exclaimed Breydel. "I assure you, that if you don't make haste, you will have cause to rue it."

The minstrel, in mortal fear, proceeded to touch the strings of the harp with trembling fingers; but he drew forth only false and discordant tones.— The butchers saw at once that he could not play at all.

"Here it is! here it is!" exclaimed one of the butchers, who had thrust his hand between the doublet and the breast of the stranger; "here is the treason!"

Hedrew out his hand, and produced a piece of parchment, folded three or four times over, and tied with a thread of flax, from which hung a seal. The minstrel, good-against, as though he saw his end approaching; he looked at the dean with anxiety and terror, and muttered a few indistinct words to aplych the butchers paid no attention whatever; but Breydel seized the parchment; and, eagerly as he gazed on it, its contents remained unknown to him, for he could not read.

"What is it, villain?" exclaimed the dean.

"A letter for Messire van Lonchyn," stammered the confounded minstrel, with hesitating and interrupted words.

"We shall soon see that," continued Breydel; then taking his cross-handled knife, he cut the flax which was wound around the seal. As soon as he beheld on this seal the lilies, the escutcheon of France, he sprang wrathfully up, seized the unknown one by the beard, and roared out:

"Is that a letter for Messire van Lonchyn, traitor? No! it is due to the castellan Van Lens; and you are a spy. A bitter death shall you die!"

While speaking, he tugged so violently at the beard, that the ribbons by which it was fastened gave way; in an instant Breydel recognised the miscreant, and thrust him away so violently, that the spy fell against one of the poles of the tent.

"O Brakels! Brakels! your last hour is come!" exclaimed the astonished dean.

The cries of the butchers had attracted a crowd from the surrounding tents, and all began to de-

mand, with loud and angry clamour, that the traitor should be delivered up to their vengeance. Brakels fell on his knees and with clasped hands begged for mercy; he crawled to the feet of Breydel, and implored him:

"O master! have compassion on me! I will serve our fatherland so loyally... spare me! do not put me to death!"

Breydel looked down on him with rage and contempt; and, in lieu of other answer, kicked him with his foot, so that he rolled to the other end of the tent. Meanwhile, the butchers had the greatest difficulty in restraining the crowds, who were raging around the tent, and filling the air with cries of vengeance.

"Give us the scoundrel!" was their wild cry. "Into the fire with him! throw him into the fire!"

"I care not," said Breydel, with an authoritative look at his comrades, "that your axes should be stained with the blood of this viper. Give him up to the crowd!"

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when a man strode forth from the crowd, and threw a cord round the neck of Brakels; then, the other end being seized by a thousand hands, he was hurled to the ground and dragged out of the tent. His shrieks of agony mingled fearfully with the cries of the infuriated crowd. They dragged him round and round the camp, and then returning to the fire, still yelling and shouting, they drew him through it again and again, until the flames had obliterated every feature of his countenance. Then on they rushed in their mad race, and vanished in the darkness with the lifeless corpse trailing behind them. Long were their cries heard on the breeze; but at length, wearied and sated with revenge, they hung the mingled body of the traitor on a pole close to the fire; then every one betook himself to his tent; and an hour later a profound silence had succeeded to this hideous uproar.

CHAPTER XXI.

Guy had issued orders that the whole army, under its several captains, should muster on the Grouningen Place, in front of the camp, on the following morning; he wished to pass them all in review. In obedience to these orders, the Flemings were drawn up in square on the appointed place. They stood like the four foundation-walls of some mighty edificed, each troop being composed of eight closely compacted divisions. Deconinck's four thousand clothworkers formed the front of the right wing. The first file of his troops consisted of archers, whose heavy cross-bows hung diagonally over their shoulders; while a quiver, filled with steel pointed shafts, was suspended at their side. They wore no other defensive armour than an iron plate, which was fastened over their breasts by four straps of leather. Over the six other divisions, thousands of spears arose ten feet high into the air. This weapon, the renowned "good day," was with reason much dreaded by the French; for with it a horse might easily be pierced through and through. No armour could withstand its formidable stroke; the knight on whom it fell was inevitably unhorsed.

On the same side stood also the light troops of Ypres; their advanced division was composed of five hundred men, whose apparel was red as coral. From their graceful helmets downy plumes waved low as their shoulders; massive clubs, armed with points of steel, stood with the butt-end at the feet of each soldier; whilst the bill, grasped by their strong fists, rest d against their loins. Small plates of iron were buckled around their arms and thighs. The other divisions of this gallant host were all clothed in green, and their trusting bows of steel reared themselves high above their heads.

The left wing was entirely composed of the ten thousand men furnished by Breydel. On one side of it the countless axes of the butchers flashed before the eyes of their companions in arms, so that they were obliged to turn away their heads from time to time,—so keen and dazzling were the rays of the sun reflected from these mirrors of steel. The butchers were not heavily equipped; short brown trousers, and a jerkin of the same colour, formed their only clothing. Their arms were bare to the elbows, according to their custom; for they took pride in displaying their compact and brawny muscles. Many were of fair complexion, but embrowned by exposure to the sun; huge scars, records of former combats, crossed their faces like deep furrows, and these they regarded as the laurel wreaths which attested their bravery. The features of Breydel formed a strong contrast to the sombre sharp-cut faces of his followers; for while the ferocious expression of most of these filled the beholder with terror, Breydel's appearance was pleasing and noble. Fine blue eyes glowed beneath his bushy eyebrows; his fair hair fell in long wavy curls over his shoulders; and a short and delicate beard lengthened still more the graceful oval of his countenance. The contour and expression of his features were most pleasing when, as at this moment, he was full of joy and content; but when excited by passion, no lion's face could surpass his countenance in hideous expressiveness; his cheeks would gather in folds and wrinkles, he would grind his teeth with fury, and his eyebrows would meet over his flashing eyes.

In the third wing were the men of Furnes, with the vassals of Arnold of Oudenarde and Baldwin of Paperode. The guildsmen of Furnes had sent a thousand slingers and five hundred halberdiers; the former stood in the front rank, and were clothed entirely in leather, that they might wield their slings without impediment. About their loins was fastened a white leather girdle, which held the round pebbles with which they supplied their slings, and in their right hands they carried a leather thong, in the middle of which was a hollow depression. These were the slings,—a fearful weapon,—which they wielded with such fatal precision, that the massive stones which they discharged at the foe very seldom missed their aim. Behind these stood the halberdiers; they were sheathed in iron and wore heavy helmets on their heads. Their weapons were a battle-axe, with a long, sharp-pointed, and above the steel of the axe was a thick, sharp-edged piece of iron, with which they were accustomed to pierce both helmet and armour, so that they galled the name of helmet-cleavers. The men of Oudenarde and Paperode, who were ranged on the same side, bore weapons of all kinds. The first two ranks, indeed, consisted entirely of archers, but

the others carried spears, clubs, or broadswords. The last wing, which completed the square, comprised all the cavalry of the army (eleven hundred well-mounted men), whom Count John of Namur had sent to his brother Guy. These horsemen seemed as though they were made of steel and iron; nothing else was to be seen except the eyes of the rider flashing through the vizor, and the feet of his steed, which appeared beneath his trappings of mail. Their long broadswords rested on their mailed shoulders, and their graceful plumes fluttered behind them in breeze.

The army was thus drawn up, in obedience to the command of their general. A deep silence reigned throughout the host; the few questions of curiosity asked by the men-at-arms were in so low a tone, that they reached no further than the ears to which they were addressed. Guy and all the other knights who had contributed no troops were still in Courtrai; and although the whole army was drawn up in position, none of them had as yet made his appearance.

Suddenly the banner of Count Guy was descried beneath the gate of the city. Messire van Renesse, who commanded the troops in the absence of the general-in-chief, gave the word: "To arms! Close together! heads up! Silence!"

At the first word of the noble knight Van Renesse, every man brought his weapon into its proper position; then they closed their ranks, and stood in perfect order. Scarcely was this done, when the cavalry opened its ranks to allow the general and his numerous suite to pass into the centre of the square.

In advance rode the standard-bearer with the banner of Flanders. The Black Lion on his golden field floated gracefully over the head of his horse; and he seemed to the joyous Flemings as though he were stretching out his claws as omens of victory. Immediately behind the banner came Guy and his nephew William van Gulick. The youthful general wore a magnificent suit of armour, on which the escutcheon of Flanders was skilfully embossed; from his helmet a gorgeous plume fell down over the back of his horse. The armour of William van Gulick bore only a broad red cross; from beneath his coat-of-mail his white priestly vestment fell down over the saddle. His helmet bore no plume, and his whole equipment was simple and unadorned. Immediately after these illustrious lords followed Adolf van Nieuwland. His armour was perfect in its grace and finish. Gilded studs concealed the joints of his coat-of-mail; he bore a plume of green, and his gloves were plated with silver. Over his shirt-of-mail might be discerned a green veil, the gaudon bestowed on him by the daughter of the Lion in token of her gratitude. Near him rode Matilda, on a palfrey white as driven snow. The noble maiden was still pale; but the arrival of her brother Adolf had put her sickness to flight. A sky blue riding habit of costly velvet, embroidered with silver lions, fell in long folds over her feet to the ground, and the silken veil which was fastened to the point of her peaked hat swept the mane of her palfrey.

Behind them followed a troop of about thirty knights and noble damsels, all adorned with costly magnificence, and with countenance serene and joyous as though they were riding to a tournament. The procession was closed by four squires on foot; the first two bore each a rich suit of armour and a sword, while the others carried each a helmet and a shield. Amidst the solemn silence of the whole army, this brilliant cavalcade reached the middle of the square, when all halted.

Guy beckoned to him his herald-at-arms, and gave him a parchment, the contents of which he was to publish to the assembled host.

"Only add to it," said he, "the warlike name of the Lion of Flanders; for that always gladdens our good folks of Bruges."

The curiosity of the soldiers was manifested by a slight movement, followed by silence of deepest attention; they saw that some mystery lay hidden in all these forms of solemnity, for it was not for nothing that the daughters of their nobles wore their richest adornments. The herald advanced sounded his trumpet thrice, and then proclaimed aloud:

"We, Guy of Namur, in the name of our Count and our brother, Robert de Bethune, the Lion of Flanders, to all who shall read or hear this proclamation, greeting and peace!"

In consideration—

He paused suddenly; a low murmur ran throughout the various divisions of the army; and while each was eagerly grasping his weapon, the archers strung their crossbows, as though danger were at hand.

"The foe! the foe!" echoed on all sides. In the distance were seen numerous troops of men advancing; thousands of warriors were approaching in dense masses; there seemed no end of their numbers. Still were all in doubt whether it could be the enemy, for no cavalry was visible amongst them. Suddenly a horseman was observed to leave the unknown host, and to ride at full gallop towards the encampment. He bent so low over the neck of his horse, that his features could not be distinguished, though he was already at no great distance. When he had come quite close to the astonished troops, he raised his head and shouted:

"Flanders and the Lion! Flanders and the Lion! here come the men of Ghent!" The old warrior was at once recognised; joyous acclamations answered his shout, and his name passed quickly from mouth to mouth.

"Hail Ghent! Hail Messire John Borlout! welcome good brother!"

When the Flemings saw their numbers increased by this unexpected reinforcement of troops so numerous, their impetuous joy could no longer be restrained; their commanders could scarcely keep them in their ranks. They moved about in violent commotion, and seemed beside themselves with pleasure; but Messire John Borlout cried:

"Be of good courage, my friends, Flanders shall be free! I bring you five thousand well-armed and intrepid warriors!"

And then answered the whole host with irrefragable enthusiasm:

"Hail! hail to the hero of Woeringen! Borlout! Borlout!"

Messire Borlout then drew near to the young Count, and would have greeted him with courtly ceremony; but Guy hastily interrupted him.

"Spare these words of ceremony, Messire John; give me your friendly right hand. I am so glad that you are come; you who have passed your days in arms, and are so rich in experience. I was beginning to be troubled at your not arriving; you have delayed long."

"O yes, noble Guy," was the answer, "longer than I wished; but those dastardly Liliards have kept me back. Would you believe, noble lord, that they had actually formed a conspiracy in Ghent to bring back the French again? They would not let us leave the town to go to the aid of our brethren; but, God be thankful! their plot did not succeed; for the people's hatred and contempt of them exceeded all bounds. The men of Ghent drove their magistrates into the citadel, and demolished the gates of the city. So here I am with five thousand intrepid men, longing for the fight more eagerly than for their dinners, though they have touched nothing this day as yet."

"I thought assuredly that some great obstacle must have detained you, Messire Borlout, and I even feared that you would not come at all."

"What, noble Guy! could I stay away from Courtrai? I, who have shed my blood for strangers, was I not to stand by my fatherland in its hour of need? The French shall soon know this to their cost. I feel myself quite young again; and my men, noble lord, await only the day of battle to let you see how the French shall fall before the White Lion of Ghent!"

"You gladden my heart, Messire Borlout; our men are full of fury and impetuous ardour; should we lose the fight, I can assure you very few Flemings will see their homes again."

"Lose the fight, say you? lose it, Count Guy? Never will I believe it; our men are all animated with too noble a courage, and Breydel—victory sits beaming already on his very countenance. Look you, my lord; I will wager my head, that if you would only allow Breydel to do what he likes, he and his butchers would cut these two-and-sixty thousand to pieces just as easily as they would mow down a field of corn. But be of good courage; God and Messire St. George will be our aid. But, I pray you excuse me, Lord Guy; there are my men—I must leave you for a moment."

The men of Ghent had now reached the Grouningen Place; they were wearied and covered with dust, for they had made a forced march under the burning sun. Their weapons were of various kinds; and amongst them were all the classes of troops we have already described. About forty nobles rode in advance, for the most part friends of the old warrior, John Borlout; and in the midst of the host floated the banner of Ghent with its white lion. Then the men of Bruges, who felt how unjustly they had reproached their brethren of Ghent, shouted again and again:

"Welcome, brothers, welcome! Hurrah for Ghent!"

In the meantime John Borlout drew up his men in front of the left wing of the square; he wished to make a good display of them, that the men of Bruges might see that they did not yield to them in love of their common fatherland. At Guy's command he then left the camp and entered Courtrai, that he might give his men the repose and refreshment which they so much needed. As soon as the men of Ghent had withdrawn, John van Renesse advanced into the square and cried:

"To arms! Silence!"

The group in the middle of the square returned to its former position; every one held his peace at the command of Messire van Renesse, and the attention of all was fixed on the herald, who again sounded the trumpet thrice, and then proceeded to read with a loud voice:

"We, Guy of Namur, in the name of our Count and our brother Robert de Bethune, the Lion of Flanders, to all who shall read or hear this proclamation, greeting and peace. In consideration of the good and loyal service rendered to the whole county of Flanders, and to ourselves, by Master Deconinck and Master Breydel of Bruges,—we, willing to bestow on them, in presence of all our subjects, a token of our grace and favour,—willing moreover, especially to requite their noble-hearted love of our fatherland in such wise as is meet and fitting, that their loyal services may be held in everlasting remembrance; and whereas our Count and father, Guy of Flanders, hath thereto empowered us, we announce and declare that Peter Deconinck, Dean of the Clothworkers, and Jan Breydel, Dean of the Butchers, both of our good city of Bruges, and their descendants after them for all time, shall be, and shall be held to be, of noble blood, and enjoy all the rights and privileges appertaining to nobles in our land of Flanders. And in order that they may be enabled to support this dignity honourably, we assign to each of them one twentieth part of our good city of Bruges, for the maintenance of his house."

Long ere the herald had made an end, his voice was drowned in the joyous acclamations of the Clothworkers and Butchers. The great favour conferred on their deans was, as it were, the reward of their own bravery, an honour which was reflected upon their guilds. Had not the loyalty and patriotism of the deans been so well known, their elevation to the rank of nobles would undoubtedly have been received with suspicion and displeasure, as a strangeness of the nobility. They would have said: "These feudal lords are depriving us of the assertsors of our rights, and are seducing our leaders by these manifestations of favour." In any other case the suspicion would not have been unfounded; for men, for the most part, are easily perverted and seduced by the love of honour. Hence it is not to be wondered at that the people cherished a bitter hatred against such of their brethren as allowed themselves to be thus raised in dignity; for, instead of noble-minded friends of the people, they became, for the most part, fawning and craven flatterers, and upheld the power to which they owed their elevation. They knew that, with it they must stand or fall; for they saw that the people whom they had forsaken regarded them with abhorrence and contempt as deserters and apostates.

But the guilds of Bruges reposed too lofty a confidence in Deconinck and Breydel to admit of reflections such as these at that moment. Their deans were noble; they had now two men who were admitted to the councils of their count, who dared look the enemies of their rights in the face,