

THE LION OF FLANDERS.

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER XVII.

Behind the village of St. Cross, at some few bowshots from Bruges, rose a little wood, in summer a favorite Sunday resort of the citizens. The trees were so planted as to afford ample space between them, and a soft turf covered the ground with its flowery carpet. This was the appointed place of rendezvous, and at 2 o'clock in the morning, Breydel was there. The night was impenetrably dark, the moon was hidden behind dense clouds, a gentle wind sighed among the foliage, and the monotonous rustling of the leaves added a mystic terror to the scene.

In the wood itself, at the first glance nothing was discernible; but upon more attentive observation numerous shadowy figures might be perceived, as of men extended side by side upon the ground, each with a strangely glimmering light close to its making the turf look like a faint reflex of the starry heaven above, so thickly was it studded with luminous points; which, in truth, were naught else but the bright blades of the axes, reflecting from their polished steel the few wandering rays which they could gather amid the darkness. More than two thousand butchers lay thus in rows, and file upon the earth; their hearts beat quick, their blood bounded in their veins; for the long yearned-for hour, the hour of vengeance and liberation, was at hand. The deepest silence was maintained by this vast multitude; and all conspired to throw a veil of necromantic horror over the mysterious band.

Breydel himself had his place deep in the interior of the wood; beside him reclined one of his comrades, whom for his well-tryed courage he especially affected; and thus in suppressed whispers, the two discoursed together as they lay:

"The French dogs little expect the routing up they will get this morning," began Breydel; "they sleep well; for they have heard consciences—the villains! I am curious to see the faces they'll make when they wake up and see my axe, and their death upon its edge."

"Oh! my axe cuts like a lancet; I whittled it till it took off a hair from my arm; and I mean to blunt it this night, or never to sharpen it again."

"Things have gone too far, Martin. They treat us like so many dumb beasts, and think that we shall crouch beneath their tyranny. They fancy we're all like those accursed Lillards; but they little know us."

"Yes, the villains cry, 'France for ever!' and tawn upon the tyrants; but they shall have something for themselves too. I didn't forget them when I took so much pains about sharpening my axe!"

"Oh, no, Martin; no; no Flemish blood must be shed," Deconinck has strictly forbidden it."

"And John van Gistel, the cowardly traitor! he is to come if not free?"

"John van Gistel is to hang; he must pay for the blood of Deconinck's old friend. But he must be the only one."

"What! and the other false Flemings are to escape scatheless? Master Breydel, Master Breydel, that's too much for me; I cannot away with it."

"They'll have punishment enough; disgrace will be their portion; shame in their hearts, and contempt on the lips and countenances of all good men. Were it nothing, think you, that each comer should throw coward and traitor in your face? That's what remains for them."

"Faith, master, you make my blood run cold; a thousand deaths were better than that. What a hell upon earth for them, if only they had one spark of the true Fleming in their souls! They were now silent for a few moments; listening attentively to a sound as of distant footsteps which caught their ears; but it soon died away, and then Breydel resumed:

"The French savages have murdered my poor aged mother. I saw with my own eyes how the sword had pierced her heart through and through—that heart so full of love for me. They had no pity on her, because she had given birth to a right unbending Fleming; and now I will have no pity on them; so I shall avenge my country and my own blood together."

"Shall we give quarter, master? Shall we make prisoners?"

"May I perish, if I make a single prisoner, or grant one single man his life! Do they give quarter? No, they murder for murder's sake, and trample the corpses of our brethren under their horse's hoofs. And think you, Martin, that I, who have the bloody shade of my dear mother ever before my eyes, can so much as look upon a Frenchman without breaking into a fit of downright madness? Oh! I should tear them with my teeth, were my axe to break with the multitude of its victims! But that can never be; my good axe is the long tried friend and faithful partner of my life."

"Listen, master, again there's a noise in the direction of Damme. Wait a moment."

He put his ear to the ground, then raised his head again:

"Master, the weavers are not far off," he said; "may be some four bowshots."

"Come, then, let us up! Do you pass quietly along the ranks, and take care that the men lie still. I will go and meet Deconinck, that he may know what part of the wood is left open for his people."

In a few moments four thousand weavers advanced from different sides of the wood, and immediately lay down upon the ground in silence, according to the orders they had received. The stillness was but little broken by their arrival, and all was soon perfectly quiet again. A few men only might have been seen to pass from company to company, bearing the order to the captains to meet at the eastern end of the wood.

Further, accordingly, they all prepared, and grouped themselves round Deconinck to receive instructions, who proceeded thus to address them:

"My brothers, this day's sun must shine upon us as freemen or light us to our graves. Arm yourselves, therefore, with all the courage which the thought of country and liberty can kindle in your bosoms; bethink you that it is for the city in which the bones of our father's rest, for the city in which our own cradles stood, that we are this day in arms. And remember the quarter Kill, in the word; death to every Frenchman who falls into your hands! It is not a root of foreign tares may remain to choke our wheat. We or they must die! Is there one among you that can entertain a spark of compassion for those who have so cruelly murdered our brothers, on the gallows and under the hoofs of their horses? For the traitorous foes who have imprisoned our lawful Count in foul breach of faith and poisoned his innocent child?"

A low, sullen, terrible murmur followed, and seemed to hover for a moment under the over-arching branches. "They shall die!" was the universal response.

"Well, then," pursued Deconinck, "this day we shall once more be free. But that is not enough; we shall still need stout hearts to make good our freedom; for the French king will soon have a new army in the field against us; of that doubt not."

"So much the better," interrupted Breydel; "there will only be so many more children weeping for their fathers, as I do now for my poor murdered mother. God rest her soul!"

The interruption had broken the flow of Deconinck's harangue; lest, therefore, time might fall him, he proceeded anew to give the necessary instructions:

"Well, then," he said, "now hear what we have to do. As soon as the clock of St. Cross strikes three, you must get your men upon their feet, and bring them into the road in close order; I shall be on before you under the city walls, with a body of my own people. The gates will almost instantly be opened to us by the Clawards inside; do you then march in as quietly as possible, and each of you take the direction I shall now give you. Master Breydel, with the butchers, will occupy the Spy Gate, and then all the streets round about Saggaert's Bridge. Master Lindens, do you take possession of the Clawards Gate, and advance your men into the adjacent streets up to Our Lady's Church. The curriers and shoemakers are to occupy the Giant Gate, and from thence to the Castle. The other guilds, under the Dean of the maons, will hold the Damme Gate, and all the neighbourhood of St. Donatus' Church. I, with my two thousand men, will proceed to the Bouverie Gate and cut off the whole quarter from thence to the Asses' Gate, including the Great Market place. When once we have surprised all the gates, then each keep your stations as quietly as possible; for we must not wake the French up before all is ready. But as soon as you hear our country's cry—the Lion for Flanders!—let every man repeat it, that you may know one another in the darkness. And then, at them! Break open the doors of all the houses where the French are quartered, and make as short work as you can of them."

"But, master," remarked one of the captains, "we shall not know the French from our own townspeople, finding them, as we shall, almost all in bed and undressed."

"Oh, there is an easy way to avoid all mistakes on that score. Whenever you can't make out at the first glance whether it's a Frenchman or a Fleming make him say, 'Schild en vriend!' (shield and friend). Whoever cannot pronounce those words properly has not a French tongue, and down with him!"

At this moment the clock of St. Cross resounded thrice over the wood.

"One word more," added Deconinck hastily. "Remember, all of you, that Messire de Mortenay's house is under my especial protection, and I charge you to see it most strictly respected; will no one set his foot over the threshold of our noble foe's dwelling. Now to your companies with all the speed you can; give your men the necessary orders, and in all things do exactly as I have told you. Quick! and as little noise as possible, I pray you."

Thereupon the captains returned to their companies, which they immediately led forward in order to the edge of the road, while Deconinck advanced a large body of weavers to within a moderate distance of the city walls. He himself approached till nearer, and endeavored with his eye to penetrate the darkness; a burning portfire, the end of which he concealed in the hollow of his hand, shed its red glow from between his fingers. So he walked on, keeping a sharp look-out, till at last he espied a head peering over the wall; it was that of the clothworker Gerard, whom he had visited the evening before. The Dean now produced a bundle of flax from under his garment, laid it upon the ground, and blew vigorously upon the port fire. Soon a clear flame shot up, and gleamed over the plain, and the head of the clothworker disappeared from the wall. A moment more, and the sentinel who was posted on the rampart fell heavily forward, with a single sharp cry, and lay dead at his feet. Then followed a confused noise behind the gate,—the clash of arms mingled with cries of the dying; and then all was still,—still as the grave.

The gate was opened; in deepest all once the guildsmen defiled into the city; and each captain drew off his company to the station assigned him by Deconinck. A quarter of an hour later all the sentinels on duty at the gates had been surprised and cut off, each guild had taken up its position, and at the door of every house occupied by a Frenchman stood eight Clawards, ready to force an entrance with hammers and axes. Not a single street was unoccupied; each division of the city swarmed with Clawards, eagerly awaiting the signal of attack.

Deconinck was standing in the middle of the Friday market-place; at a moment of deep thought, he pronounced the doom of the French with the words, "The Lion for Flanders! Whoso is French is false; (Wat Walsch is, valsch is) strike home!"

This order, the doom of the alien, was echoed by five thousand voices; and it is easy to imagine the fearful cries, the appalling tumult that followed. The Clawards, thirsting for revenge, rushed into the bed-chambers of the French, and slaughtered all who could not pronounce the fatal words, "Schild en vriend." In many of the houses there were more Frenchmen than could be reached in so short a time, so that many had time to dress themselves hurriedly, and seize their weapons; and this was the case especially in the quarter occupied by De Chastillon and his numerous guards.

In spite of the furious rapidity of Breydel and his comrades, about six hundred Frenchmen had collected in this manner. Many also, although wounded, contrived to escape from the fray; and the number of the fugitives was thus so much increased, that they resolved to stand, and sell their lives as dearly as they could. They stood in a compact mass in front of the houses, and defended themselves against the butchers with the energy of despair. Many of them had cross-bows, with which they shot down some of the Clawards; but the sight of their fallen companions only increased the fury of the survivors. De Chastillon's voice was every where heard, "So much the better, so much the better!" and De Mortenay was especially conspicuous, his long sword gleaming like a lightning flash in the darkness.

Breydel raged like a madman, and dealt his blows right and left among the French. So many of the foe had fallen before him, that he already stood raised some feet above the ground, his sword flashing in streams between the dead bodies; and the cry, "The Lion for Flanders! strike home!" mixed its terrible sound with the groans of the dying. Jan van Gistel was, of course, amongst the French. As he knew that his death was inevitable if the Flemings gained the victory, he showed incessantly, "France for Flanders!" hoping thus to sustain the courage of his troops.

But Jan Breydel recognized his voice. "Comrades," said he, wild with rage, "I must have the soul of this traitor. Forwards! he has lived long enough. Whoso loves me, let him follow me close."

With these words, he threw himself with his axes among the French, and soon struck down every foe within reach of his arm. So furious was their onslaught, that they soon drove the enemy back against the walls of the houses; and five hundred of them fell beneath the axes of the butchers. In this moment of extreme peril, of terrible agony, De Mortenay remembered the word and promise of Deconinck. Rejoicing that he yet had the power to save the governor-general, he cried:

"I am De Mortenay, let me pass." Immediately the Clawards made way for him with every token of respect, and opposed no obstacle to his passage. This way, this way; follow me, comrades! cried he, to the surviving Frenchmen, hoping thus to rescue them from their fate.

But the Flemings closed in again upon them, and dealt their blows pitilessly around. The number of the fugitives was so small, that, besides De Chastillon, not more than thirty reached De Mortenay's house; and he, resting lay weltering in their blood.

Here and there a Frenchman, with his axes raised, and his blood entering; he invested it on all sides, so that no man might escape, and himself kept guard at the entrance.

While this fray was going on, Deconinck was occupied in hunting out the few remaining Frenchmen in the Stone street, near St. Salvator; and the swarms of men following in example in the quarters assigned to them. Dead were thrown from the houses; and the streets were soon so obstructed that it was scarcely possible to traverse them in the gloom. Many of the soldiers had disguised themselves, hoping thus to escape through one or other of the gates; but this was of no avail, for the Clawards were everywhere; and the words, "Schild en vriend," at the first sound of their foreign accent, and they fell groaning to the earth. From every quarter of the city resounded the shout, "The Lion for Flanders! Whoso is French is false; strike home! Here and there a Frenchman fled before a Fleming; but only to meet his death, a few steps farther on, from the weapon of another foe.

This scene of vengeance lasted until the sun stood high in the heavens; it shone on the dead bodies, and dried the flowing blood, of five thousand of the French. Yes, in this night five thousand aliens were offered to the shades of the murdered Flemings; it is a bloody page in the chronicles of Flanders, that wherein this number is written.

Before the dwelling of De Mortenay was a strange and appalling sight. A thousand butchers lay spread out on the ground, with their axes in their hands, and their threatening, revengeful eyes riveted on the door. Their naked arms and their jerkins were smeared with blood; and around them were piled heaps of uncounted slain. But of all this they took no heed. Here and there amongst the butchers passed guildsmen, seeking amongst the slain for the dead bodies of the Flemings, that they might receive honourable burial.

Although their hearts were full of rage, yet no word of reviling escaped the lips of the butchers. The dwelling of De Mortenay was to them sacred, in virtue of their plighted word. They respected Deconinck's pledge, and, moreover, a great esteem for the governor of the city, so they contented themselves with investing the entire quarter, and keeping careful watch.

Messire de Chastillon and Jan van Gistel the Lillard had taken refuge in De Mortenay's house. They were overpowered by an extreme dread; for an inevitable death hovered before

their eyes. De Chastillon was a man of courage, and availed his fate with coolness; but the face of Jan van Gistel was bloodless, and his whole frame quaked with fear. Notwithstanding all his efforts, he was unable to conceal his terror, and excited the pity of the Frenchmen—even of De Chastillon, who was in equal peril. They occupied an upper room, overlooking the street; and from time to time they ventured to the window, and gazed with awe on the butchers, who lay in wait about the door, like a pack of wolves lurking for their prey. Once, as Jan van Gistel bowed himself a moment at the window, Jan Breydel caught sight of him, and threatened him with his axe. An angry, impetuous movement arose amongst the butchers; all raised their axes towards the traitor, whose death they had sworn.

The heart of the Lillard throbbed with anguish, as he saw in the gleam of these thousand axes his doom of death; and, turning to his companions, he said, in a tone of despair:

"We must die, messires; there is no mercy for us, for they thirst for our blood like famished hounds. You will never leave this place. My God, what shall we do?"

"It is a disgrace," replied De Chastillon, "to meet one's death at the hands of this rabble; rather would I be slain sword in hand. But so it must be."

The coolness of De Chastillon distinguished Van Gistel's stiller face. From the midst of the crowd rose a white standard; on the waving folds of which was wrought in blue silk, a lion rampant. It was the great banner of the city of Bruges, which had for so long a time disappeared before the lilies of France. Once more it came forth from its concealment into the light of day; now it waved over the prostrate bodies of its foes; and the restoration of this holy standard was greeted with ten thousand shouts of rejoicing.

A man of small stature bore the banner, and with his arms crossed over his breast pressed it to his heart, as though it inspired him with the deepest love. Abundant tears flowed down his cheeks—tears of joy and sadness; and an innumerable expression of happiness beamed from his every feature. He who had shed no tear for his greatest personal misfortunes, now wept when he brought back the Lion to the city of his fathers—to the altar of freedom.

All eyes were turned towards this man; and the cries, "Long live Deconinck! Hail to the Blue Lion!" were echoed and re-echoed ever louder and louder. As the Dean of the Clothworkers drew near to the Friday Market place holding aloft the standard, an inexpressible joy filled the hearts of the butchers; they, too, swelled the exulting shout of victory, and clapped their hands with an impetuous outburst of love. Breydel rushed eagerly to meet the banner and stretched his impatient hands towards the Lion. Deconinck resigned it to him and said:

"There, my friend, this hast thou this day won;—the palladium of our freedom. Breydel answered nothing; his heart was too full. Trembling with emotion, he embraced the drapery of the standard and the Blue Lion. He hid his face in the folds of silk, and wept; for a few moments he remained motionless; then the banner fell from his grasp, and he sank exhausted by his transport on Deconinck's breast.

While the two Deans held each other in this warm embrace, the people ceased their shouts; loud exulting cries poured from the lips of all, and their quick and impassioned gestures attested the rapturous gladness of their hearts. The Friday Market place was too small to contain the thronging citizens. In the Stone street far away to St. Salvator's, were clustering swarms of men; the Smiths' street and Bouverie street were crowded with women and with children.

The Dean of the Clothworkers turned himself towards the centre of the market-place, and advanced to the gallows. The bodies of the Flemings who had been hanged had been already taken down and buried; but the eight ropes had been purposely left dangling in the air as signs and memorials of the tyranny which had put them to death. The standard which the Lion of Bruges was planted close to the apparatus of murder, and greeted afresh with cries of joy. After regarding for a few moments in silence the re-occupied banner, Deconinck slowly bent his knee, bowed his head, and prayed with folded hands.

When one throws a stone into still water, the movement spreads in treacherous circles over the entire surface, and awakens the ripples of the whole lake; so the thought and the act of Deconinck communicated themselves to the crowd of citizens, although but few could positively see him. First, those who were immediately near to him knelt silently down; then the movement extended itself further and further amongst the more distant, until every head was bowed in prayer; the voices of those in the centre of the vast circle were first hushed, and so further and further spread the silence, until it pervaded the whole multitude. Eight thousand knees touched the yet bloody earth, eight thousand heads humbled themselves before the God who had created them for freedom. What a harmony must have swelled up to the Throne of the Most High in that moment! How grateful to Him must have been that solemn prayer, which, like a cloud of fragrance, was wafted upwards to His Footstool!

After a short time Deconinck arose, and availed himself of the unbroken stillness to address the following words to his assembled fellow-citizens:

"Brothers! this day the sun shines on us with fairer splendour, the breeze of heaven is purer and more exhilarating in our city; the breath of the foreigner pollutes it no more. The hungry Frenchman seemed that we were their slaves forever; but they have learned, at the price of their lives, that our Lion may indeed slay a bear awhile—die it never can. Again

groom sank with his horse, and was drowned.

The butchers had pursued the flying Frenchmen as far as the gate; but when they saw the enemies they armed most detested disappear between the trees in the distance, they raged and yelled in blind wrath; for now their revenge seemed to them unattainable. After remaining some moments gazing on the spot where De Chastillon had disappeared from their view, they left the wall and returned to the Friday Market-place. Soon another tumult arrested their attention. From the centre of the city arose a shout of mingled voices, filling the air with prolonged sounds of rejoicing, as though a prince were making his festive entry. For some time the butchers could not distinguish the triumphant crowd, for they came from too great a distance; but by degrees the exulting crowd drew nearer and nearer, and the shouts became intelligible:

"Lo give the Blue Lion! long live our Dean! Flanders is free!"

An innumerable multitude, consisting of all the inhabitants of Bruges, poured itself through the streets in dense throng. The acclamations of the liberated Flemings echoed back from the houses, and filled the city with the booming of thunder. Women and children ran contentedly amongst the armed guildsmen; and the joyous clapping of their hands mingled with and harmonized the uninterrupted shouting "Hail hall to the Blue Lion!"

From the midst of the crowd rose a white standard; on the waving folds of which was wrought in blue silk, a lion rampant. It was the great banner of the city of Bruges, which had for so long a time disappeared before the lilies of France. Once more it came forth from its concealment into the light of day; now it waved over the prostrate bodies of its foes; and the restoration of this holy standard was greeted with ten thousand shouts of rejoicing.

A man of small stature bore the banner, and with his arms crossed over his breast pressed it to his heart, as though it inspired him with the deepest love. Abundant tears flowed down his cheeks—tears of joy and sadness; and an innumerable expression of happiness beamed from his every feature. He who had shed no tear for his greatest personal misfortunes, now wept when he brought back the Lion to the city of his fathers—to the altar of freedom.

All eyes were turned towards this man; and the cries, "Long live Deconinck! Hail to the Blue Lion!" were echoed and re-echoed ever louder and louder. As the Dean of the Clothworkers drew near to the Friday Market place holding aloft the standard, an inexpressible joy filled the hearts of the butchers; they, too, swelled the exulting shout of victory, and clapped their hands with an impetuous outburst of love. Breydel rushed eagerly to meet the banner and stretched his impatient hands towards the Lion. Deconinck resigned it to him and said:

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While the two Deans held each other in this warm embrace, the people ceased their shouts; loud exulting cries poured from the lips of all, and their quick and impassioned gestures attested the rapturous gladness of their hearts. The Friday Market place was too small to contain the thronging citizens. In the Stone street far away to St. Salvator's, were clustering swarms of men; the Smiths' street and Bouverie street were crowded with women and with children.

The Dean of the Clothworkers turned himself towards the centre of the market-place, and advanced to the gallows. The bodies of the Flemings who had been hanged had been already taken down and buried; but the eight ropes had been purposely left dangling in the air as signs and memorials of the tyranny which had put them to death. The standard which the Lion of Bruges was planted close to the apparatus of murder, and greeted afresh with cries of joy. After regarding for a few moments in silence the re-occupied banner, Deconinck slowly bent his knee, bowed his head, and prayed with folded hands.

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"Brothers! this day the sun shines on us with fairer splendour, the breeze of heaven is purer and more exhilarating in our city; the breath of the foreigner pollutes it no more. The hungry Frenchman seemed that we were their slaves forever; but they have learned, at the price of their lives, that our Lion may indeed slay a bear awhile—die it never can. Again

groom sank with his horse, and was drowned.

The butchers had pursued the flying Frenchmen as far as the gate; but when they saw the enemies they armed most detested disappear between the trees in the distance, they raged and yelled in blind wrath; for now their revenge seemed to them unattainable. After remaining some moments gazing on the spot where De Chastillon had disappeared from their view, they left the wall and returned to the Friday Market-place. Soon another tumult arrested their attention. From the centre of the city arose a shout of mingled voices, filling the air with prolonged sounds of rejoicing, as though a prince were making his festive entry. For some time the butchers could not distinguish the triumphant crowd, for they came from too great a distance; but by degrees the exulting crowd drew nearer and nearer, and the shouts became intelligible:

"Lo give the Blue Lion! long live our Dean! Flanders is free!"

An innumerable multitude, consisting of all the inhabitants of Bruges, poured itself through the streets in dense throng. The acclamations of the liberated Flemings echoed back from the houses, and filled the city with the booming of thunder. Women and children ran contentedly amongst the armed guildsmen; and the joyous clapping of their hands mingled with and harmonized the uninterrupted shouting "Hail hall to the Blue Lion!"

From the midst of the crowd rose a white standard; on the waving folds of which was wrought in blue silk, a lion rampant. It was the great banner of the city of Bruges, which had for so long a time disappeared before the lilies of France. Once more it came forth from its concealment into the light of day; now it waved over the prostrate bodies of its foes; and the restoration of this holy standard was greeted with ten thousand shouts of rejoicing.

A man of small stature bore the banner, and with his arms crossed over his breast pressed it to his heart, as though it inspired him with the deepest love. Abundant tears flowed down his cheeks—tears of joy and sadness; and an innumerable expression of happiness beamed from his every feature. He who had shed no tear for his greatest personal misfortunes, now wept when he brought back the Lion to the city of his fathers—to the altar of freedom.

All eyes were turned towards this man; and the cries, "Long live Deconinck! Hail to the Blue Lion!" were echoed and re-echoed ever louder and louder. As the Dean of the Clothworkers drew near to the Friday Market place holding aloft the standard, an inexpressible joy filled the hearts of the butchers; they, too, swelled the exulting shout of victory, and clapped their hands with an impetuous outburst of love. Breydel rushed eagerly to meet the banner and stretched his impatient hands towards the Lion. Deconinck resigned it to him and said:

"There, my friend, this hast thou this day won;—the palladium of our freedom. Breydel answered nothing; his heart was too full. Trembling with emotion, he embraced the drapery of the standard and the Blue Lion. He hid his face in the folds of silk, and wept; for a few moments he remained motionless; then the banner fell from his grasp, and he sank exhausted by his transport on Deconinck's breast.

While the two Deans held each other in this warm embrace, the people ceased their shouts; loud exulting cries poured from the lips of all, and their quick and impassioned gestures attested the rapturous gladness of their hearts. The Friday Market place was too small to contain the thronging citizens. In the Stone street far away to St. Salvator's, were clustering swarms of men; the Smiths' street and Bouverie street were crowded with women and with children.

The Dean of the Clothworkers turned himself towards the centre of the market-place, and advanced to the gallows. The bodies of the Flemings who had been hanged had been already taken down and buried; but the eight ropes had been purposely left dangling in the air as signs and memorials of the tyranny which had put them to death. The standard which the Lion of Bruges was planted close to the apparatus of murder, and greeted afresh with cries of joy. After regarding for a few moments in silence the re-occupied banner, Deconinck slowly bent his knee, bowed his head, and prayed with folded hands.

When one throws a stone into still water, the movement spreads in treacherous circles over the entire surface, and awakens the ripples of the whole lake; so the thought and the act of Deconinck communicated themselves to the crowd of citizens, although but few could positively see him. First, those who were immediately near to him knelt silently down; then the movement extended itself further and further amongst the more distant, until every head was bowed in prayer; the voices of those in the centre of the vast circle were first hushed, and so further and further spread the silence, until it pervaded the whole multitude. Eight thousand knees touched the yet bloody earth, eight thousand heads humbled themselves before the God who had created them for freedom. What a harmony must have swelled up to the Throne of the Most High in that moment! How grateful to Him must have been that solemn prayer, which, like a cloud of fragrance, was wafted upwards to His Footstool!

After a short time Deconinck arose, and availed himself of the unbroken stillness to address the following words to his assembled fellow-citizens:

"Brothers! this day the sun shines on us with fairer splendour, the breeze of heaven is purer and more exhilarating in our