

THE LION OF FLANDERS.

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER XIV.

After the destruction of the Castle of Male, a short march brought the Dean of the Butchers and his comrades back to St. Cross. Already, on their way thither, they had received intelligence from Bruges that the French garrison was under arms, and prepared to fall upon them as they entered the city; but elated by their recent victory, and deeming themselves sufficiently strong to oppose any force the enemy could bring against them, they nevertheless continued their march. Scarcely, however, had they passed St. Cross, when an unexpected obstacle presented itself, and brought them suddenly to a stand. From the villa to the city gate, the whole road was covered with a multitude of people pressing forward in the opposite direction and so dense was the throng, that all further progress on the part of the Butchers became impossible.

Notwithstanding the obscurity of the night, the latter at once perceived, by the confused hubbub of voices and the dark masses moving before them, that a large portion of the population was leaving the city. Surging onward came the multitude; and Breydel and his men, full of wonder at the sight, ranged themselves on one side, so as to allow them to pass. The retreat of the fugitives, however, had none of the appearance of a disorderly flight; each family walked on by itself, forming a separate group, and keeping itself distinct from all the rest, without any appearance of mingling or confusion. In the centre of one of these groups might be seen a mother, weeping as she went, the grey-headed grandfather leaning upon her for support, an infant at her breast, and the younger children, crying and weeping, clinging about her knees, while the elder ones followed behind, toiling under the weight of furniture or other property which they carried upon their backs. Group after group followed each other, in what seemed an interminable succession. Some few among them had carts or other vehicles loaded with goods; others, though these were but rare exceptions, were themselves mounted.

It may easily be imagined that Breydel was not long in seeking to ascertain the cause of this strange procession; but the lamentations with which he was everywhere greeted in answer to his inquiries were far from affording him any satisfactory explanation.

"Master," cried one, "the French would have burned us alive; we are flying from a miserable death."

"O Master Breydel!" exclaimed another, in a still more piteous tone, "for your life go not back to Bruges; there is a gallows waiting for you at the Smiths Gate."

As the Dean was about to pursue his inquiries, in the hope of obtaining some clearer information, a wild cry was heard in the rear, and a voice, strong and powerful, but hoarse with terror, shouted aloud:

"Forward! forward! the French men at arms are upon us!"

Then there was a general rush onward, and the living tide rolled by with incredible rapidity. Suddenly, from a multitude of voices, there arose the cry:

"Woe! woe! they are burning our city! See, our houses are in flames! Oh, woe to us! woe to us!"

Breydel, who up to this time had remained motionless and silent from sheer astonishment, now directed his eyes towards the city; and there, indeed, ever and anon, might be seen red jets of flame shooting up amidst volumes of lurid smoke curled high above the walls. Rage at anguish now combined to rouse him from his stupor, and pointing to the city, he exclaimed:

"What! men of Bruges! is there one among you coward enough thus to abandon your city to destruction? No! never shall our foes make merry round that bonfire! Room here! room! Let us pass through, and then—"

Thus saying, and followed by his comrades, he dashed with resistless impetuosity through the crowd, throwing it aside right and left, while a burst of shrieks arose from the terrified multitudes, who in their terror imagined that now indeed the French troops were upon them. Regardless of the alarm he had excited, Breydel rapidly pursued his way, now and then glancing back at the men of warlike age who were to be seen among the throng, when all at once his progress was arrested by a body of guildsmen who were advancing towards him in regular order. It was a band of Clothworkers, all armed, but not all armed alike; some had cross-bows, others halberds, others axes—such arms, in fact, as each man had been able to lay hands upon at the moment; many had only their knives. Onward they came with measured tread, their leader at their head, stopping the way as completely as a fixed barrier; while beyond them again, and following close upon their steps, other similar bodies might be seen issuing successively from the gate. They amounted in all to five thousand men. Breydel was on the point of addressing himself to the leader of the troop for an explanation, when far in the rear, above the din of arms and the heavy tramp of the guildsmen, resounded the well-known voice of Deconinck.

"Steady, my men," he cried; "courage. Keep well together. Forward third division! Close up, rear ranks! Fall in there on the left!"

Instantly Breydel pushed forward till he came within call of his friend. "What means all this?" he exclaimed. "A pretty time you have chosen for your drill! Is this a day you are about while the city is burning? I running away like a set of cowards after the women and children?"

"Ever the same! ever hot and impatient!" was the answer. "What is it you say about the city? Take my word for it, the French dogs shall burn nothing there."

"But, Master Deconinck, are you blind? Do you not see the flames blazing up above the walls?"

"Oh, that is what you mean, is it? That only too many of us are so, that we might not be hindered in getting our waggons through the gates. The city is safe enough, my friend; set your mind at ease, and come back with me. I have important tidings to communicate to you. You know that I look at things coolly, and so it often happens that I am right. Take my advice now, and order your men to face about, and proceed along with us to St. Cross. Will you?"

"In truth, Master Peter, it is the only thing I can do, as I do not yet know what is on foot. But your people must halt for a moment."

Deconinck gave the necessary order to the subordinate officers; and immediately afterwards was heard in loud, clear tones, the voice of Breydel:

"Butchers, face about and then forward! keep your ranks, and be quick!"

Then, after personally superintending the execution of the manoeuvre, he added:

"Now, Master Deconinck, I am at your orders."

"Na, Master Breydel," replied the Dean of the Clothworkers, "now that you are here, you must take the command; you will make a better general than I shall."

Not a little pleased at this flattering recognition of his abilities, the Dean of the Butchers lost no time in taking possession of his office. "Butchers and Clothworkers, forward!" he thundered out; "steady and not too fast!"

Upon this the guildsmen set themselves in motion, the little army advanced steadily along the road, and in a short time reached St. Cross, where they found the women and children, with the baggage, waiting for their arrival. Singular, indeed, was the appearance presented by this confused encampment. A wide range of plain was thickly dotted with groups, each consisting of a single family. The night was so dark that it would have been impossible to distinguish objects beyond the distance of a few yards; but the numerous fires which already lighted up the scene, showed the unfortunate wanderers crouching round them; or, in more extended circles illuminated the remote background with their flickering glare. Sad and strange as was the sight presented to the eye, the sounds that struck upon the ear were not less wild and mournful. The cries of the children, the low wailing of the mothers, weighed upon the heart like the last sigh of a dying friend. But above the universal din might be heard the shouts of those who had strayed from their companions, or were calling to the missing ones; and louder and sharper still was the fierce barking of the dogs, faithfully keeping watch over their master's household, or searching for them amid the confusion of the night.

On their arrival at St. Cross, Deconinck took Breydel apart into a house by the road side, the owners of which received them with the greatest respect, and readily granted them a chamber for more private conference.

Here, by the light of a small lamp, and with every precaution taken against their being overheard or interrupted, the Dean of the Clothworkers proceeded to inform his colleague as to what had taken place in the city during his absence.

"First," he began, "as to the cause of our flying from the city in the manner you see, and at this hour of the night; it is entirely owing to your breach of promise, and your imprudent proceeding at Male. No sooner were the flames of the burning castle seen from the city walls, than the tocsin sounded in the streets, and immediately all the inhabitants flocked together in the utmost terror: for in these troublous times they ever have the fear of death before their eyes. Messire de Mortenay had his men under arms in the market place; but only as a measure of precaution, for no one knew what was going on. At last, some of the French who had escaped from the burning castle came flying into the town, calling aloud for vengeance; then there was no possibility of keeping the troops in the city quiet, and the sword, and Messire de Mortenay had to threaten them pretty sharply with the gallows in order to keep them within bounds. You may imagine that, in such a state of things I had lost no moment in summoning my Clothworkers together, that at least we might not fall without making a determined fight for it. Perhaps you might even have succeeded in driving the French out; but such victory could only have damaged the cause, as I shall presently show you. Then I had an interview with Messire de Mortenay, under safe conduct, and obtained from him a pledge that the city should be respected on condition of our forthwith evacuating it. Any Clawsards found in Bruges after sunrise will be hung."

"What!" cried Breydel, not a little indignant at the cool tone in which his brother Dean recounted a capitulation which appeared to him so scandalous; "What! is it possible? Let your selves be turned out like a herd of sheep! Oh, if I had but been there, our Bruges should not have been—"

"Yes, indeed, if you had been there, then? Bruges would have seen a night of fire and sword, and the morning sun would have risen upon a scene of carnage and desolation! Hear me out, my hasty friend, and I know, in the end, you will say I was right. One thing is certain, that we men of Bruges cannot accomplish our freedom alone; and do you not see that, as long as the other cities of the land lie bound hand and foot, the enemy has his strong places at our very gates? Besides, how can we think only of our city, and forget our country? No, all the Flemish towns must stand or fall together! I doubt not that you have often pondered over all this; only in the moment of action your spirit runs away with you, and you forget all difficulties. There is, however, another important point to be considered: pray answer me this question—who gave you and me the right to kill, burn, and destroy? Who has given us authority to do these things, which we shall one day have to answer for at the judgment-seat of God?"

"But, master," replied Breydel, with a somewhat displeased look, "I suspect you are trying to throw dust in my eyes with all these fine speeches of yours. You gave us a right to kill and burn, say you? And pray, who gave it to the Frenchmen?"

"Who? why the king, Philip. The king that wears a crown takes all responsibility upon himself; a subject does not sin by fidelity and obedience. The blood that is shed cries out against the master who commanded the blow, not against the servant who struck it. But if we go to work on our own account, we are answerable before God and the world, and the blood that is shed lies at our door!"

"But, Master Deconinck, what have we done? What else than defend our life and property, and uphold the right of our lawful prince? For myself, I feel that I have nothing either to be sorry for or ashamed of; and I hope my axe has not yet struck its last blow. But after all, Master Peter, I will not find fault with anything you say or do, though I confess I do not understand you, your thoughts are beyond the ken of mortal man, and that is the truth of it."

"Well, in part you are right; there is something behind more than you know of yet, and that is the knot I am just going to unravel. I know, Master Jan, that you have always thought me too patient and slow of action; but listen now to what I have been doing while you were risking all on a peace of useless vengeance. I have found means to acquaint our rightful lord, Count Guy, with our plans for the liberation of our country, and he has been pleased to confirm them with his princely approbation. So now, my friend, we are no longer rebels, but the generals of our lawful sovereign."

"O master!" interrupted Breydel, in a tone of enthusiasm; "now I understand you; now indeed I thank you! How proudly does my heart beat at that noble title! Yes, now I feel myself a true and worthy soldier; ay, and the French dogs shall feel it too!"

"Of this authority," continued Deconinck, "I have secretly availed myself for the purpose of inviting all the friends of the country to a general rising. This effort has been attended with the fullest success; and at the earliest call every city of Flanders will pour forth its levy of brave Clawsards, as if they sprang forth out of the ground."

Here, in a transport of feeling, he pressed Breydel's hand, while for a moment his voice faltered with emotion: "And then my noble friend, shall the son of freedom rise again for Flanders and not one living Frenchman shall be left upon its soil upon them. Then, too, for very terror of our further vengeance, they will give us back our Lion. And we—we, the men of Bruges, shall have done this,—shall have delivered our country! Does not your spirit swell within you at so proud a thought?"

In a transport of delight Breydel threw his arms around Deconinck's neck. "My friend! my friend!" he exclaimed. "How sweetly do your words fall upon my ear; a joy possesses me such as I never felt before. See, Master Peter, at this moment I would not change my name of Flemish even for the crown of Philip the Fair himself!"

"But, Master Breydel, you do not yet know the whole. The young Guy of Flanders and Count John of Namur are to be with us; Sir John Borlout is to bring up the men of Ghent; at Oudenarde there is the noble Arnold; at Alost Baldwin of Paperode. Sir John of Renesse has promised to come and aid us with all his vassals from Zeeland, and the noble and distinguished nobles will do the like. What say you now to my patience?"

"I can only marvel at you, my friend, and thank God from my heart that He has given you such wisdom. Now it is all over with the Frenchmen; I would not give six groats for the life of the longest liver among them!"

"To-day, at noon of to-morrow in the morning," continued Deconinck, "the Flemish chiefs meet to appoint the day for action. The young Lord Guy remains with us, and takes the command; the rest return to their domains in order to have their vassals in readiness. It would be well that you too should be at the meeting, that you may not through ignorance resort to measures that may be adopted. Will you, then, accompany me to the White Thicket in the Valley?"

"As you will, master; but what will our comrades say to our leaving them?"

"That I have provided for. They are prepared for my temporary absence and Dean Lindens will for the present take the command. It is to proceed with our people to Damme, and there to wait for us. Come, let us start without further delay; for the day is beginning to break."

The Dean of the Clothworkers had taken care to have horses in readiness. Breydel in haste gave the necessary orders to his men, and the two friends set off together. There but little opportunity for conversation during their hasty journey; nevertheless, Deconinck found time, in reply to Breydel's questions, to explain to him in brief terms the proposed scheme of general liberation. After an hour's sharp riding, they at last perceived the shattered towers of a ruined castle peeping out from among the trees.

"That is Neuenhove, is it not?" inquired Breydel, "where the Lion made such havoc of the French?"

"Yes; a little farther, and we are at the White Thicket."

"It must be acknowledged that our noble lord has not got his name for nothing; for a true lion he is when once the word is in his hand."

These words were hardly out of Breydel's mouth, when they arrived at the spot on which the battle had been fought for the rescue of Matilda; there lay the corpses of the slain still weltering in their blood.

"Frenchmen!" muttered Deconinck as he rode by; "come on, master, we have no time to lose."

Breydel looked with fierce delight upon the bloody spectacle; and regard-

less of his companion's remonstrance, drew in his horse the better to contemplate it at his ease; and not only so, but he even urged his unwilling beast to trample the bodies under his hoofs until the Dean of the Clothworkers looking round, also reined in his steed, and turned back to the spot.

"Master Breydel," he exclaimed; "what is this you are doing? For God's sake hold! Surely you are taking a dishonourable revenge!"

"Let me alone," answered Breydel; "you do not know that these are some of the very rascals who struck me on the cheek! But listen! what is that? Don't you hear yonder among the ruins the sound of a woman's cries? The thought is distraction; but it was by this very road that the villains carried off the Lady Matilda!"

With these words he leaped from his horse; and, without even stopping to secure it, started off at full speed towards the ruins. His friend proceeded to follow him without delay; but so much more deliberately, that Breydel was already within the castle-yard before Deconinck had dismounted and fastened the horses to the roadside.

The nearer Breydel drew to the ruins, the more distinctly he heard the lamentations of a female voice; but finding, as he advanced, all further access barred, and unable at the instant to discern any entrance, he bestirred himself upon a heap of rubbish, and obtained a view into the interior of the chamber from which, as he imagined, the sounds proceeded.

At the first glance he recognised Matilda; but the black knight who forcibly held her in his arms, and whom with such desperate energy she sought to repulse (for she was again endeavouring to leave the couch, upon which she lay rather than slumber had for a while retained her) was altogether unknown to him, and could therefore appear to him only in the light of an assailant. Instantly he drew forth his axe from under his garment, climbed upon the window-sill, and dropped like a stone into the chamber.

"Villain!" he cried, advancing upon the knight, "base Frenchman! you have lived your time; you shall not have laid hands unpunished upon the daughter of the Lion, my lord and prince."

The knight stood amazed at the sudden apparition, not having in the instant perceived the manner of the butchery's entrance, and for a moment he made no answer to his threats; quickly recovering himself, however, he replied:

"You are mistaken, Master Breydel; I am a true son of Flanders. Be calm; the Lion's daughter is already avenged."

Breydel knew not what to think; his excited feelings had hardly yet subsided. Nevertheless, the knight's words, spoken in the Flemish tongue, and by one who seemed to know him well, were not without their effect. Matilda, meanwhile, still in her delirium, and accounting the black knight her enemy, welcomed the new-comer with joy as her deliverer.

"Kill him!" she cried, with a laugh of triumph; "kill him! He has shut up my father in prison, and now, false as he is, he is carrying me away to deliver me to the wicked Joanna of Navarre. Flaming, why do you not avenge the child of your ancient lords?"

The black knight looked upon the maiden with sorrowful compassion. "Unhappy girl!" he sighed while tears filled his eyes.

"I see that you love and pity the Lion's daughter," said Breydel, pressing the knight's hand; "forgive me, sir; I did not know you for a friend."

At this moment Deconinck appeared at the entrance of the chamber; but no sooner had his eyes fallen upon the scene which presented itself before him, than throwing up his hands above his head with astonishment, and then casting himself upon his knees at the feet of the black knight, he exclaimed:

"O heavens! our lord and prince, the Lion!"

"Our Lord! our prince! the Lion!" repeated Breydel, hastily following Deconinck's example, and kneeling by his side; "my God! what have I done?"

"Rise, my faithful subject," responded Robert; "I have heard of all your noble efforts in your prince's service." Then raising them, he proceeded:

"Look here upon the daughter of your Count, and think how a father's heart must be torn at such a sight. And yet I have nothing wherewith to supply her needs—nothing save the shelter of these shattered walls, and the cold water of the brook. The Lord is indeed laying heavy trials upon me."

"Be pleased, noble Count," interposed Breydel, "to give me your command; I will procure you all that you require. Accept, I pray, the humble services of your liege subject."

He was already on his way towards the door, when a gesture of command from the Count suddenly arrested him. "Go," said Robert, "and seek a physician; but let it be no Lilyard, and exact from him an oath that he will reveal nothing of what he may see or hear."

"My lord," replied Breydel, with exultation, "I know precisely the man you want. There is a friend of mine, as Clawsards as any in Flanders, who lives hard by, at War-dammo; I will bring him hither immediately."

"Go; but take heed not to utter my name to him; let my presence here remain a secret to all but yourselves."

Breydel hastened away on his errand and the Count took the opportunity of questioning the Dean of the Clothworkers at some length concerning the state of affairs in Flanders. Then he said:

"Yes, Master Deconinck, I have heard in my prison, from Sir Diederik die Vos and Sir Adolf of Neuwland, of your loyal, though as yet fruitless endeavours. It is a great satisfaction to me to find that, although most of our nobles have forsaken us, we still have subjects such as you."

"It is true, illustrious sir," answered the Dean, "that only too many of the nobles have taken part against their country; nevertheless they who remained true are more in number than the renegades. My endeavours, more over, have not been altogether so fruitless as your highness may suppose; and even now the deliverance of Flanders is near at hand. At this very moment the Lord Guy and the Lord John of Namur, and with many other nobles, are met together in the White Thicket in the valley to organize a powerful confederation for that purpose, and are now only waiting my arrival to proceed to the discussion of the necessary measures."

"What say you? So near to these ruins? my two brothers?"

"Yes, noble sir, your two illustrious brothers, and also your faithful friend John of Renesse."

"O God! and I may not embrace them! Sir Diederik die Vos has doubtless told you upon what conditions I have obtained this temporary freedom; and I cannot expose the lives of those to whom I owe it. Nevertheless, I must see my brothers; I will go with you, but with visor down. Should I judge it necessary to make myself known, I will give you a sign, and then you shall demand of all the knights present a solemn pledge of secrecy as to who I am. Till then I will abstain from uttering a word."

"You will still be executed, most noble sir," replied Deconinck; he was assured that you shall have reason to be satisfied with my discretion. But see, the Lady Matilda seems to sleep. May the rest benefit her!"

"She is not really asleep poor child; she does but slumber heavily from exhaustion. But methinks, I hear foot-steps. Remember; my helmet once again upon my head, you know me no longer."

The next instant the physician entered, followed by Breydel. Offering silent and respectful greeting to the knight, he at once proceeded to the patient's side. After a short examination of her state he declared that she must be bled; and this having been done, and the arm bound up, she seemed again to slumber.

"Sir," said the physician, addressing himself to the black knight, who had turned away his face during the operation, "I assure you that the young lady is in no danger; with a moderate period of rest and quiet her senses will return."

Comforted by this assurance, the Count made a sign to the two Deans, who thereupon followed him out of the chamber.

"Master Breydel," he said, "to your care I commit my child; watch over the daughter of your Count until I return. And now, Master Peter, let us make haste to the White Thicket. They quickly reached the appointed place, and here falling in with some dozen knights, who were already anxiously awaiting Deconinck's arrival, the whole party entered the wood together. In this secluded spot were assembled the chief men of the Flemish name and nation; among them John, Count of Namur and the younger Guy, two brothers of Count Robert, William of Juliers, their cousin, a priest, and the provost of Aix la Chapelle; John of Renesse, the brave Zeelander; John Borlout, the hero of Woeringen; Arnold of Oudenarde, and Baldwin of Paperode. These, and others of scarcely less note and consequence were here met together in their country's cause. The presence, however, of a stranger (for such the black knight appeared to be) occasioned them considerable uneasiness, and the looks which they directed towards Deconinck evidently demanded an immediate explanation; this therefore he proceeded at once to give.

"Illustrious sirs," he said, "I bring you here one of the noblest knights which our country can boast; one of the greatest enemies the Frenchman has to dread. Certain weighty reasons—reasons upon which the life and death of one of our best friends depend—forced him for the present from making himself known to you; take it not amiss, therefore, that for the present he keeps his visor down, and maintains a strict silence; for to many of you his voice is no less familiar than his countenance. My long tried fidelity to our common cause will vouch to you sufficiently that I am bringing no false brother among you."

The knights wondered greatly at this strange declaration, and raked their memories for a name which might belong to the unknown knight; but no one thought of the captive Lion—for how was it possible he should be here? Nevertheless, Deconinck's assurance was sufficient for them; and having taken all due precautions against surprise, they proceeded without further delay, to the business of their meeting, which was thus opened by the Dean of the Clothworkers, who addressed his self especially to the two princes:

"I must first tell you noble sirs," said he, "how painfully the men of Bruges have been afflicted at the captivity of your noble father, our lawful Count. True it is that we have often heretofore risen up against him in defence of our rights and liberties, and doubtless some of you may have imagined that we should therefore take part with his enemies; but of this be well assured—never will a free and generous people endure a foreign master. This, indeed, we have clearly shown for almost king Philip's traitorous plot against our rightful lord, ofttimes have we impelled life and goods, and have many a Frenchman died the death in penalty for his king's unprincipled deed, while the streets of Bruges have streamed with Flemish blood. This being so, I have ventured, noble sirs, to kindle in your hearts the hopes that animate my own; for I am convinced that the yoke is now so loosened on our necks, that with our vigorous effort we might cast it from us forever. A fortunate accident has served us in a remarkable manner; the Dean of the Butchers, with his fellows, have destroyed the Castle of Male, whereupon

Messire de Mortenay has driven all the Clawsards out of Bruges, and now there are about five thousand guildsmen in arms at Damme. Among them are seven hundred butchers, who have joined us with their Dean, Jan Breydel, at their head; nor do I hesitate to say, that these bold men may safely be depended upon not to turn their backs before ten times their number; therefore, noble sirs, we have already in the field no despicable army, and may confidently hope to drive out the French, if only you, on your part, can bring to our assistance an adequate force from the remaining towns of Flanders. Such is my proposal; and may it please you, noble sirs, to approve the same, and to take speedy measures accordingly; for, believe me, the moment is most favorable, to place myself entirely in your hands, and am ready, to the best of my ability, to execute your commands as a true and faithful subject of your illustrious house."

"It seems to me," answered John Borlout, "that what we have most to deplore is too great haste. The men of Bruges may be ready, and even now are in arms; but in the other cities things are by no means so forward as yet. For my part, I should gladly see the day of vengeance postponed awhile, that we may collect larger reinforcements for ensuring it. Be assured, that a vast number of Liyards, will flock to the French standard. We must remember that it is the liberty of our country which is at stake, and that, too, on a single die; for if we throw away our present chance, we shall hardly get another. Once fail, and all we can do is to hang up our arms and quietly submit."

As the noble Borlout was universally famed for his skill and experience in war, his speech made a deep impression upon many of his hearers, John of Namur among the rest, Guy, on the other hand, was strongly opposed to the view he took of things.

"But both of you, sirs," he passionately exclaimed, "that each hour of delay is an hour of suffering for my poor aged father, and for so many of our unhappy kindred; think me, my glorious brother Robert is now enduring!—he that could not brook even the suspicion of affront or wrong, and whom we are leaving to wear out his life in bondage, to our own eternal disgrace and shame! Do not our captive brothers call to us from their dungeons, asking us what we have done with our swords, and whether this be the way in which we acquit ourselves of our knightly duty? And what answer can we give them? None! none but the blush of shame! No! I will wait no longer! The sword is drawn! never shall it re-enter the scabbard until it has drunk deep of the blood of our foes! I hope that our noble cousin of Juliers agree with me in this resolution."

"The sooner the better, it seems to me," responded William of Juliers; "we have looked on long enough at the injuries done to our house; longer than it were meet or manly to do without attempting either help or vengeance. I have put on my harness, and will not lay it off till the need for it is over. I go hand and heart with my cousin Guy; and do no procrastination for me!"

"But, noble sirs," resumed John Borlout, "allow me to observe, that we all need time to get our forces on foot, especially if we are to avoid giving the alarm to the enemy. If you hurry on your rising prematurely, you will lose the aid we might otherwise afford you. I only repeat to you what Sir John of Renesse had just been saying to me."

"It will be absolutely impossible for me," observed the knight thus appealed to, "to have my vassals under arms in less than a fortnight; and I cannot but earnestly conjure the Lords Guy and William to acquiesce in the views which the noble Borlout has just expressed. Besides, we must remember that the German men at arms whom we expect can hardly be brought into the field without some delay. What say you, Master Deconinck?"

"So far as the words of so humble a subject as myself can be of any weight with the princes, I would endeavor to persuade them to act for the present with caution and prudence. The number of fugitives from Bruges will certainly increase, and will necessarily betake themselves to our camp; in the meanwhile, these noble gentlemen will have time to assemble their vassals, and the Lord William of Juliers to return with his men-at-arms from Germany."

TO BE CONTINUED.

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