

(CONTINUED FROM SECOND PAGE.)

with which the tent was covered, was powdered with... at the entrance hung the shield of the house of Artois, and outside on a small eminence, waved the royal standard of France.

At the upper end of the table sat Count Robert d'Artois. He was still in the flower and full vigor of life, and a scar which traversed his right cheek, at once gave evidence of his bravery and imparted to his countenance a more forbidding expression.

Close to him, on his right hand, sat Sigis, king of Melinde; age had silvered his hair and bowed his head, yet was he eager for the combat. In that company he felt his martial ardor return, and boasted that he would yet perform glorious feats of arms.

On the left hand of the count sat Balthazar, king of Majorca, an impetuous and daring warrior, the gaze of whose dark eyes it was scarcely possible to endure. A wild gladness lighted up his features; he hoped now to re-conquer his kingdom, which had been seized by the Moors.

Under the hand of the count sat Balthazar, king of Majorca, an impetuous and daring warrior, the gaze of whose dark eyes it was scarcely possible to endure. A wild gladness lighted up his features; he hoped now to re-conquer his kingdom, which had been seized by the Moors.

Desires these were present amongst others, Simon de Piedmont, Louis de Beaujeu, Froid governor of Douay, Alin de Bretagne. At the further end of the table, and apart from them, was a group of knights. It was the least honorable place; and as the French would not admit them to their company, they had found themselves obliged to occupy it.

The knights at off silver dishes, and drank the choicest wines from cups of gold. During the meal a lively conversation went on amongst the knights on the position and prospects of the expedition; and from its tone the fearful doom of Flanders might easily be gathered.

"Most undoubtedly," answered the general to a question of De Chaitillon, "they must be all exterminated. Those cursed Flemings can be tamed only by fire and sword; and why should we let such wretched bores live? Let us make a thorough end of them, messires, that we may not again have to stain our swords with their plebeian blood."

"Right!" said John van Raneel, the Lillard; you say right, Messire d'Artois. We must make no terms with the seditious rascals; they are too rich, and would soon give us trouble again."

"Unless we wish to have a fresh outbreak every day," remarked John van Craendoneck, "all the craftsmen must be put to death; for the survivors will never be quiet; and therefore I am of opinion that Messire d'Artois ought not to spare one of them alive."

"And what are we to do when we have slain all our vassals?" asked the burly Hugo van Archel with a laugh. "By my troth, we shall have to plough our land ourselves; a goodly prospect, truly!"

"Ha!" answered John van Raneel, "I have a good plan to remedy that. When Flanders shall be cleansed of this stiff-necked race, I mean to bring French peasants from Normandy, and establish them on my lands."

"And so we shall make Flanders a genuine province of France; that is a very good notion, and I will mention it to the king; that he may urge the other feudal lords to take the same course. I pledge myself that it will not be at all difficult."

The features of Rodolf de Nesle were working with inward emotion. The conversation greatly displeased him, for his noble heart revolted against such ferocity; and he exclaimed with ardour: "But, Messire d'Artois, I take leave to ask you—are we knights or not? and is it seemly that we should set to work after a worse fashion than Saracens? You are carrying your ferocity too far; and I assure you that we shall become a scorn and a by-word to the whole world. Let us attack and defeat the Flemings; that will be sufficient for us. Let us not call the head of bores; they will give us trouble enough; and then, are they not in arms under the son of their prince?"

"Constable de Nesle," cried d'Artois in anger, "I know that you are exceedingly fond of these Flemings. It is a love which does you honour, of a truth; it is your daughter, surely, who has inspired your breast with such amiable benevolence."

Messire d'Artois, answered Rodolf, "although Adela, the daughter of Raoul de Nesle, was married to William van Dendermonde, one of the sons of the old Count of Flanders."

my daughter dwells in Flanders, that does not hinder me from being as good and true a Frenchman as any one here present,—my sword has given sufficient proof of that; and I shall have to demand a reckoning at your hand for the scornful words you have uttered before these knights. But what now lies nearest my heart is the honour of knighthood itself; and I tell you that you are impeding it by your conduct."

"What mean you?" exclaimed the general; "is it not true that you wish to spare these seditious traitors? Have they not deserved to die, since they have put to death seven thousand Frenchmen without mercy?"

"Beyond a doubt they have deserved death; and therefore will I avenge on them the honour of the crown of my prince; but they shall find their death only on the battle-field, and with arms in their hands. I appeal to these knights whether they deem it fitting that we should stain our swords by doing the work of executioners on poor unarmed people while they are peacefully ploughing their fields."

(TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.)

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