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NO. 15.

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REVEREND J. J. MURPHY,

who lost his life at the fire at Back River on the night of December 4th, 1875. We have just received from our Agents in England a consignment of SERMONS on VARIOUS SUBJECTS, given by THE LATE REV. J. J. MURPHY, IN 1871. Price, \$2.00. Free by mail on receipt of price from D. & J. SALLIER & CO., Catholic Publishers, 275 Notre Dame Street, Montreal.

THE LION OF FLANDERS;

THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN SPURS.

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued)

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 hastily mounted upon a heap of rubbish, and so obtained a view into the interior of the chamber from which, as he imagined, the sounds proceeded. At the first glance he recognized 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 endeavoring to leave the couch, upon which exhaustion rather than slumber had for a while detained 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 butcher'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 catifit that he is, he is carrying me away to deliver me to the wicked Joanna of Navarre. Fleming, 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 eye fallen upon the scene which presented itself before him, than throwing up his hands high 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 subjects," 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 or

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 commands; 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 Lillyard, 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 warm a Claward as any in Flanders, who lives hard by, at Wardaams; 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 to question 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 Nieuwland, of your loyal, though as yet fruitless endeavors. 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 remain true are more in number than the renegades. My endeavors, moreover, 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, 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 my visor down. Should I judge it necessary to make myself known, I will give you a sign, and you shall then 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." "Your will shall be executed, most noble sir," replied Deconinck; "be assured that you shall have reasons 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 methink I hear footsteps. Remember; my helmet once again upon my head, you know me no longer." The next instant the physician entered, followed by Breydel. Offering a 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 Zealander; 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 Frenchmen has to dread. Certain weighty reasons—reasons upon which the life and death of one of our best friends depend,—forbid 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 racked 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 himself 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 since King Philip's traitorous plot against our rightful lord, oftentimes have we imperilled life and goods, and made many a Frenchman die 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 of a speedy and general deliverance; for I am convinced that the yoke is now so loosened on our necks, that with one vigorous effort we might cast it from us for ever. A fortunate accident has served us in a remarkable manner: the Dean of the Butchers, with his fellows, have destroyed the Castle of Male, wherupon Messire de Mortyran has driven all the Clawards 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; they are, indeed, a very band of lions. 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 for 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. I 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 deprecate is too great haste. The men of Bruges may be ready, and even now 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 while that we may collect larger reinforcements for ensuring it. Be assured, that a vast number of Lillyards, those bastard sons of Flanders, 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 fall, 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 bethink 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 what 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 agrees 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 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 your 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 has 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 endeavour 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." The black knight did not seem to share the opinions expressed by the last speakers, to judge at least by the significant movements of his head, which were plainly indicative of dissent; but though evidently labouring under a great desire to speak he still preserved an unbroken silence. At last, the Lords Guy and William, finding the rest unanimous against them, gave way; and it was eventually decided that Deconinck, with the men of Bruges, should encamp at Damme and Ardenburg; while William of Juliers should bring up his forces from Germany, and Guy, the younger, his brother's troops from Namur. John of Renesse agreed to set out for Zealand, and the others each to his own lordship, to make things ready for a general rising. But the moment that they were exchanging their parting greetings, the black knight made signs to detain them: "Noble sirs!" he began. At the first sound of his voice all present started, and each looked hastily round upon the next, as if to see whether he could read his own thought upon his neighbour's countenance. While the others

were interrogating each other's looks, Guy rushed forward and exclaimed: "Oh, blessed hour! my brother! my dearest brother! his voice penetrates my inmost heart." Thus saying, he quickly plucked the helmet from the head of the disguised knight, while he clasped him in his arms with impetuous delight. "The Lion! our noble Count!" was the universal cry. "My unhappy brother," continued Guy, "what sufferings have been yours! how deeply have I mourned for you! but now, O happy moment! now I can once more embrace you; you have broken your chains, and Flanders has regained her Count. Bear with my tears; it is for you they flow, as I think of all you have endured. The Lord be thanked for this unlooked-for happiness!" Robert pressed the young knight affectionately to his heart; then, after turning and embracing his other brother, John of Namur he thus spoke: "There are good and weighty reasons, noble sirs, why I should preserve my incognito for the present; nevertheless, the decision to which you have just come has rendered it still more imperative duty for me to declare myself, that I may, if possible, induce to reconsider your measures. You must know, then, that Philip of France has summoned all the great feudatories of the crown, along with their vassals, to wage war against the Moors. But as the sole ostensible motive of this expedition is to reinstate the King of Majorca in his dominions it seems certain that the real object of the king in collecting so numerous an army is the maintenance of his dominion in Flanders. The time of assembling is appointed for the close of June; so that one month more, and our enemy will have seventy thousand men in the field. Consider, therefore, whether it is not advisable that the day of our liberation should anticipate his preparations, lest afterwards we find it too late. Remember, however, that I am but giving you information and advice; I lay no commands upon you, for to-morrow I must return to my prison." There could be no difference of opinion as to the importance of this intelligence; it was therefore unanimously agreed that the utmost expedition was necessary, and that the plan of operations must be modified accordingly. It was decided that all should proceed immediately to cooperate with Deconinck at Damme, taking with such forces as they could get together on the spur of the occasion. The young Guy, as in Robert's absence, the next representative of the House of Flanders, was to take the chief command of the army, William of Juliers declining the office, as incompatible with his ecclesiastical character, and John of Namur being unable personally to join the Flemings, as his presence at home at this juncture was indispensable for the defence of his own territories. The latter, however, undertook to furnish a considerable contingent of men. The nobles now separated, and Robert was left alone with his two brothers, his cousin William, and the Dean of the Clothworkers. "O Guy!" he began, in a tone of the deepest grief, "O John! I bring you tidings so terrible, that my tongue can hardly find words to utter them, and the mere thought of them blinds my eyes with tears. You know how basely Queen Joanna threw our poor Philippa into prison; how for six long years the unhappy maiden sighed in the dungeons of the Louvre, far from all she loved. Doubtless you think that she still lives, and continue to pray to God for her release. Alas! your prayers are in vain; my poor sister has been poisoned, and her body cast into Seine." For a moment Guy and John of Namur lost all power of speech; they stood pale and confounded, their eyes fixed on the ground. Guy was the first to rouse himself from his stupor: "It is true then," he exclaimed, "Philippa is dead! O soul of my sister, look down upon me, and read in my bosom how my heart mourns for you, how it burns to avenge your death! I,—yes, and you too,—shall be avenged; torrents of blood shall expiate your wrongs." "Let not your grief thus carry you away, my fair cousin," interposed William; "mourn for your sister, pray for her soul's repose, but let your sword be drawn only for the freedom of our country. Blood cannot bribe the jealous grave to restore its victim." "My brothers," interrupted Robert, "and you, my cousin, be pleased to follow me; I will lead you to my poor child Matilda. She is not far from hence, and on the way I have other matters of serious import to communicate to you. Let your attendants wait for you here." Robert now related to them the wonderful manner in which he had rescued his daughter from the French soldiers, and all the anxiety and anguish he had undergone within the ruins of Nieuwenhoeve. On entering the chamber where Matilda was lying, they found her to all appearance in a profound and peaceful slumber, her cheeks white as alabaster, and her breathings so imperceptible that she might almost have been taken for a corpse. Great was the emotion of the knights at the sight of the maiden with her disordered and blood-stained dress. Filled with sorrowful compassion, they stood with hands clasped tightly together, but without uttering a word; for the physician's finger, anxiously pressed upon his lips, had warned them that the most perfect silence was necessary for the welfare of his patient. Guy was not, however, able altogether to repress his feelings. "Can that be the noble daughter of the Lion?" burst from his lips, as in an agony of grief he threw himself upon his brother's bosom. The physician now motioned to the knights to withdraw from the chamber, and then at last he unclosed his lips: "The young lady," he said, "has recovered her senses; but she still suffers greatly from weakness and exhaustion. She woke up in your absence, and recognising Master Breydel, who stood by, she asked him many questions, as though seeking to collect her ideas. He comforted her with the assurance that she should soon see her father; and as in her present state it is very undesirable to disappoint her, I strongly recommend you not to leave her. Meanwhile, no time should be lost in procuring her a change of clothes and a more fitting resting place."

Count Robert having thrown aside his incognito unwillingly, and solely under the pressure of necessity, was still anxious to restrict the knowledge of his presence within the narrowest possible circle; he therefore made no reply for the moment to the physician's recommendations, but returning with his companions to Matilda's side, sat gazing in silent sorrow upon the pale and seemingly lifeless form of his child. Soon her lips began to move, and she uttered from time to time half-audible sounds. Presently she drew a deeper breath; and twice the sweet word "father," distinctly articulated, struck the listening ear of the Count. A long kiss imprinted on the opening lips expressed the parent's delight, and hastened the maiden's awakening; her blood seemed again to flow, the colour returned to her lips, and began even faintly to tinge her cheeks, while her eyes opened to the light with a soft and cheering smile. It would be impossible to describe the expression of the maiden's countenance at the sight which met her returning consciousness; she did not speak, but raised her arms as though to throw them about her father's neck, who, in his turn bent over her to receive her fond embrace. Yet her manner of greeting him was not such as he expected; with fondling tenderness she pressed both her hands over his face, and then gently stroked his cheeks; for the moment father and daughter seemed to be lost in one absorbing dream of happiness. Nor were the bystanders, in their measure, less affected by the moving spectacle; they looked on in profoundest silence, cautiously suppressing every sound or movement that might disturb a scene of almost solemn interest. It was curious, however, to observe how differently the several persons gave expression to their feelings. John of Namur, who had most command over himself, stood gazing fixedly before him; William of Juliers, the priest, with bended knees and folded hands, sought composure in prayer; while, to judge from their varying gestures, and the changeful workings of their countenances, Sir Guy and Jan Breydel seemed to be swayed by fierce desires of vengeance and the tenderest emotions of sympathy. Deconinck, usually so cold in appearance, was now the most deeply moved of all; a stream of tears flowed from under the hand with which his eyes were screened. No living heart in Flanders beat more warmly for his honored lord than that of the patriotic Clothworker of Bruges; all that belonged to the greatness of his father-land was holy in the eyes of this noble citizen. At last Matilda awoke from her trance-like contemplation, clasped her father in her arms, and with a faint voice gave utterance to her feelings in words; to which he, on his part, in tones of heartfelt joy, mingled however with sorrow, as ardently responded. Sir Guy now approached to welcome his niece. "Ha!" she exclaimed, but still without losing her hold on her father, "what is that I see! my dear uncle Guy here, weeping over me! and my cousin William here on his knees, praying! and my uncle John of Namur! Are we, then, at Wynandael?" "My dear, unhappy niece," replied Guy, "my heart is ready to break to behold you thus; let me too embrace you; it will be some alleviation of my grief; and he tenderly drew her from her father's arms into his own. "Come, my good cousin of Juliers, do you too give me a kiss; and you too, my kind uncle John." Thus, as if once more within the bosom of her family, she seemed to forget her sorrows for a moment, and to catch a passing gleam of her old childish happiness. But when William of Juliers approached, she regarded him with astonishment from head to foot, and exclaimed: "Why, how is this, cousin William? You, a servant of God, in harness, and with sword by your side?" "The priest who is in arms for his country is in his holy calling!" was the reply. Deconinck meanwhile, and Breydel, standing with uncovered heads at a little distance from the couch, participated in the general joy. Deeply grateful for the faithful affection they had exhibited towards her, Matilda again drew her father's head to her bosom, and whispered in his ear: "Will you promise me one thing, my dearest father?" "What is it, my child? It will be a delight to me to fulfil any wish of yours." "Well, then, forget not, I pray you, to reward these two good and faithful subjects according to their deserts. Daily have they risked their lives in the cause of our country and our house." "Your desire shall be accomplished, my child.—But loose your arms for a moment from my neck," he added, "that I may speak with your uncle Guy." The two left the chamber together; and when they had reached a convenient spot, the Count said: "My brother, it is fitting that fidelity and affection such as these two good citizens have shown should not be allowed to pass unrewarded; and I charge you with the execution of my wishes in their regard. Remember, then, that it is my desire that, upon the first suitable occasion, with the standard of our house unfurled, and in presence of the guilds drawn up under arms and in battle array, you confer the honor of knighthood upon Peter Deconinck and Jan Breydel, that all may know that it is love for our country which confers the best patent of nobility. Keep this command secret until the time arrives for performing it. And now let us rejoice the rest; for it is high time that I should be gone." They now returned together to the chamber, and Robert, approaching his daughter, took her hand in his. "My child," he said, "you know by what means I have obtained this temporary freedom; a generous friend is risking his life by taking my place the while. Yield not to sadness, my Matilda; strive like me, to bare with patience and—" "I know too well what you would say," she interrupted: "you are about to leave me?" "You have said it, my noble child; I must return to my prison. I have pledged my faith and honor to remain only one day in Flanders. But weep not, these evil days will soon be over." "I will not weep,—that were a grievous sin. I give thanks to God for this consolation which He has sent me, and will endeavor to deserve a renewal