

CATHOLIC **~**HRONICLE.

VOL. XXVII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1876.

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THE LION OF FLANDERS:

or,

THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN SPURS.

-:-0-:-

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE. -:-0-:-

veins, and when he essayed to speak, he could only utter incoherent ejaculations ! than as suddenly, he rushed forward, and clasped the maiden in his arms, exclaiming in tones of mingled love and

anguish : "My own child! my poor Matilda; Have I then left my prison only to find you thus in the 1.35 arms of death ?"

But the naiden pushed him back from her with a

look and gesture of passionate aversion. "Traitor !" she exclaimed, " how dare you deal thus insolently with a daughter of the House of Flanders ? Ab, you think that I am helpless now ! Neither fear nor shame restrain you. But I have still a protector-God, who watches over me There is lightening yet in store for you ;--yes, your punishment is at hand ! Hark, wretch ! hear how the thunder growls ?"

In an agony of grief and terror, Robert de Bethune tore the helmet from his brow. "O my own Matilda !" he cried. " you do not know me : I am your father, whom you love so much, and for whose sorrows you have wept so many bitter tears. Heavens! she trusts me from her !"

A smile of triumph curled Matilda's lip as she exclaimed : "Now you tremble, vile ravisher! now fear seizes upon your base and coward heart! But there is no mercy for you. The Lion, my father, will avenge me; and not with impunity shall you have put affront upon the blood of the Counts of Flanders. Hark ! I hear the Lion's roar ; I hear his tread ; my father comes ! To me he brings his dear

embrace, and death to you." Not one of these words but pierced the father's heart like a venomed arrow, and filled it with uutold anguish. Burning tears ran down his furrowed cheeks; in despair he smote his breast.

"But, my poor child," he cried, "do you not know me? Laugh not so bitterly; you strike my poor soul with death. I am your father,-I am the Lion,-whom you love, whom you call to help you.'

"You the Lion !" she replied in accents of con-tempt ; " you the Lion !--say rather, liar ! Is it not the tongue of the Queen Johanna that I hear you speak with,-the tongue that flatters to betray The Lion, too, went with them. They said, 'Come ; and what found he? A dungeon ! and soon, perhaps, poison and a grave !"

In a transport of grief the knight pressed her in bis arms. "But do you not hear, my child," he cried, "that it is the speech of our fathers that is upon my lips ? What unheard-of-sufferings have thus unhinged your mind? Do you not remember that our friend Sir Adolf of Nieuwland has procured my liberty? Oh, talk not thus; your words wring my very heart!"

At the name of Adolf, the convulsive strain of the features somewhat relaxed, and a soft smile re-place their painful expression, while she answered more gently, and this time without repulsing her

be turned ashy pale, a cold shudder ran all over his comrades back to St. Cross. Already, on their his limbs, his blood seemed turned to ice in his 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 itelf, and brought them suddenly to a stand. From the village to the citygate, the whole road was covered with a multitude of people pressing forward in the opposite direction ; and so dense was the throng, that all farther progress on the part of the butchers became impos-

sible. 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 wearied, 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 no long in seeking to ascertain the cause of this strange procession; but the lamentations with which he was every where 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 Laster Breydel!" exclaimed another, in a still more pitcous tone, "for your life go not back to Bruges; there is a gallows waiting for you at the Smith's 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 denly, from a multitude of voices, there arose the crv:

"Woe! woe! they are burning our city ! See, our houses are in flames! Oh, woe to us! woe ! woe !" 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, which curled high above the walls. Rage and anguish now combined to rouse him from his stupor, and pointing to the city, he exclaimed : "What 1 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 impetnosity through the crowd throwing it aside right and left, while a burst of shricks arose from the affrighted 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, wondering all the while that no men of warlike uge 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 crossbows, others halberds, other 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 D. coninck. "Steady, my men," he cried ; "courage Keep well together. Forward, third division ! Close np, 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 what you are about while the city is buruing? 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 Freuch dogs shall burn nothing there." But, Master Deconiuck, are you blind? Do you not see the flames blazing up above the walts?" "Oh, that is what you mean, is it ? That is only the straw we set fire to, 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. 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 on.do, as I do not yet know what is on foot. But your people must halt for a moment" Deconincki gave the necessary order to the sub-After the destruction of the Castle of Male, a ordinate officers; and immediately afterwards was

"Butchers, face about, and then forward ! keep your ranks, and be quick !" "Then, after personally superintending the execu-

tion of the manœuvre, he added :

" Now, Master Deconinck, I am at your orders." "No, 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 Buchers lost no time in taking possession of his office. "Butchers and Clothworkers, forward 1" 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, awaiting 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 was the sight presented to the eye, the sounds that struck upon the ear were not less wild and mourn. ful. The cries of the children, the low wailings 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 great 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 ab-Sedce.

"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 proceedings 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 living tide rolled by with incredible rapidity. Sud- 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 NO. 14

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 have been risking all on a piece 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

"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 hearth the state of the state that honorable 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 Clawards, as if they sprang forth from 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 sun of freedom rise again for Flanders, and not one living Frenchman shall be left for him to shine upon. 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 possessers me such as I never felt before. Sec, Master Peter, at this moment I would not change my name of Fleming 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 Borlunt 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 Zealand, and several other distinguished nobles will do the like. What say you now to my patience ?"

"I can only marvel at yos, 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 nine o'clock in the morning," con-tinued Deconinck, "the Flemish chiefs meet to ap-point 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 disconcert the measures that may be adopted Will you, then, accompany me to the White Thicket in the Valley ?"

CHAPTER XIII-(Continued)

The black knight, now finding himself master of the field, with no more enemies in view, made haste to dismount, bound his horse to a tree, and proceeded to bestow his care upon the lady he had rescued, and who still lay senseless, under the corpse of the soldier which had fallen upon her, and to which, probably, she in a great measure owed her escape from the hoofs of the horses. Her face covered with mire and blood, her long hair trampled in the mud, her features were totally indistinguishable ; nor, indeed, did her deliverer for the present seek to examine them more closely, his first care being to convey her to some place of greater security. With this object he raised her within his own, and bathed it with his tears ; but carefully from the ground and carried her in his arms within the ruins of Nieuwenhove. Having laid her gently down upon the herbage in the courtyard, he proceeded to investigate the yet remaining portions of the building, if perchance some place of shelter should be found. At last he discovered one chamber of which the vaulting had not fallen in, and which might, in default of better, serve for a place of temporary refuge. The vin low panes were gone, but otherwise the shelter was complete : there were even some tattered remnants of tapestry hanging from the walls, and pieces of broken furniture scattered about the floor, from portions of which he succeeded in putting together a kind of couch, which, rude as it was, was at least better than the cold and damp ground.

Well pleased at the result of his search, he returned to his insensible charge, and carried her to the temporary bed he had prepared for her. Here, with anxious care he laid her down, pillowing her head with a bundle of the tapestry rolled together. This done, he first cautiously satisfied himself that she was alive and uninjured, and that the blood with which she was covered was not her own : then, returning to scene of combat, he filled one of the helmets with water at a neighbouring spring, and led his horse back within the ruins. His next care was to cleanse the lady's hair, face, and hands, from mud and gore, as completely as the means at his disposal and the gloom of the vaulted chamber would allow,-- a gloom, indeed (notwithstanding that the sun was by this time peeping above the horizon), which still rendered her features wholly indistinct, oven though the hideous mask which had concealed them was removed. Having now done all for her that circumstances in which they were placed rendered possible, he left her for a while, in the hopes that rest and nature might gradually restore her.

The knight's attention was next bestowed on his horse and armour ; a considerable time was spent in collecting a heap of forage for the one, and in cleaning the other from the marks of the combat: When this occupation was completed, and the sun stood high in the heavens, and the face of nature. showed in all its varied colours, the sunbeams fell upon the window which lighted the chamber where the maiden lay; and thither the knight now returned, to avail himself of the increased light for making further acquaintance with his charge. He entered ; she was sitting up upon her couch, surveying with an astonished air the bare and blackened walls of her apartments ; but there was a wildness and fixedness in her gaze, which spoke ofdeeper disturbance than mere astonishment, er had the knight looked upon her, than suddenly short march brought the Dean of the Butchers and heard in loud clear tones, the voice of Breytilel :

"Adolf, say you ? Adolf is gone to fetch the Lion. Have you seen him? He told you of the poor Matilda, did he not? Oh, yes! he is my brother ! He has composed a new song for me. Listen! I hear the tones of his harp. How sweet are those sounds! But what is that? Ab, my father comes! I see a ray of light,—a blessed beam of

hope ! Begone. caitiff!" Her words died away into marticulate sounds, while her countenance was overshadowed with an expression of the deepest melancholy. Half distracted with alarm and grief, the knight

felt his heart sink within him, and he knew not what to do. Silently he took the maiden's hand almost instantly she snatched it back, exclaiming : "No: this hand is not for a Frenchman ! A false knight may not touch it. Go, your tears defile it but the Lion will wash out the stain with blood. Look! there is blood upon my garment too,-French blood ! See how black it is !

Again the kuight endeavoured to make his wandering child comprehend who he was; again he took her in his arms, and would have pressed her to his bosom ; but she violently pushed him from

her, while in piercing tones she exclaimed : "Begone! away with those arms! They coil around me like envenomed serpents ; their very touch is dishonour. Release me, villain ! Help! help !"

With a sudden and desperate effort she disengaged herself from her deliverer and sprang shrieking from the couch, the knight hastily pursuing her to prevent her egress from the chamber. A heartrending scene here ensued. Beside himself with grief and alarm, he caught the unhappy maiden in his arms, and strove to carry her back to the couch; while she, nerved by all the energy of delirium and despair, resisted his utmost endeavors. Great as was the strength of the knight, she seemed for a while almost a match for him; but at last making a gigantic effort he succeeded in bearing her back to the couch. She now ceased from all further resistance ; her mood appeared suddenly to change. She sat still; and looking reproachfully on the knight, said with bitter tears :

"It well beseems you to set your strength against that of a maiden, false knight. And why do you delay to complete your crime? No one sees,—only God 1 But God has placed death between us; a yawning grave divides us. Therefore do you wrep, because-

The unhappy father was too much overcome by his grief to catch the last words of the maiden. Full of despair, he had seated himself upon a stone, and was gazing upon her with moist tears, unconscious of aught but a sensation of unntrerable an-

guisb. Presently Matilda's eyes closed, and she appeared to sleep. As he perceived this, a beem of hope lighted up the heart of the afflicted father. Sleep might restore her ; and finding in this thought support and consolation, he sat noiselessly by her sidwatching with tenderness and anxiety every breath na antar e statue. Na antar e statue she drew.

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into the town, calling aloud for vengeance; then there was no possibility of keeping the troops in the city quiet, nothing would satisfy them but fire

and sword, and Messesire de Mortenay had to threaten them pretty sharply with the gallows in order to keep them within bounds. You may imagine that, in such things, I had lost not a moment in summoning my Clothworkers together, that at least we might not fall without making a determined fight for it. Perhaps we might even have succeeded in driving the French out; but such a 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 Clawards 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 : "Wrat! is it possible? let ourselves be turned out like a herd of wheep! Oh, if I had been there ! our Bruges should not have been-----

"Yes, indeed, if you had been there ; know you what would have happened then ? Bruges would have seen a night of fire and sword, and the morning sun would have risen upon a scene of camage 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 canuot accomplish our freedom alone; and do you not see that, as long as the other citics 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 ycu, 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 lestroy? 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. Who gave us a right to kill and burn, say you? And pray, who gave it to the Frenchmen ?" "Who? why their king, Phillp. The head that wdars a crown takes all responsibility upon itself;

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 I's

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

"Well, in pert you are right; there is something behind more :Lun you know of yet, and that is the

"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 ; he is to procoed 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 was 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 Nieuwenhove, is it not ?" inquired Breydel, "where the Lion made such havoc of the French ?"

"Yes; a little further, 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 sword 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."

Bravdel looked with fierce delight upon the bloody spectacle; and regardless 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 dishonorable 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 rains the sound as 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 road-side. (TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR MEXT.)