

THE LION OF FLANDERS.

BY HENRIK CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

The east was reddening with the first doubtful rays of the morning sun, still enveloped with the clouds of night as with a garment, but at the same time making a perfect rainbow in each drop of dew; the blue mist hung like an impenetrable veil on the tops of the trees, and the lower caps opened lovingly to the first beams of the new daylight. The nightingale had more than once repeated his sweet descent in the glimmering dawn; but now the confused chirping of the interior songsters overpowered his contriving melody.

Silently trotted a little band of knights along the plains of West Flanders, near the small town of Ronseleare. The clank of their arms and the heavy tread of their horses broke the rest of the peaceful dews of the woods; for ever and anon sprang a frightened hare from out of the bushes, and fled from the coming danger as on the very wings of the wind.

The dress and arms of these knights were alike costly, as becoming nobles of the very rank and even greater at it than they. Each wore a silken surcoat, which fell in heavy folds over the body; while a silvered helmet, bejeweled with purple and bright-blue feathers, decked his head. The stout scabbard of their gauntlets, and their gold-inlaid knee-pieces, flashed brightly in the beams of the rising sun. The impatient, four-becked steeds stamped their shining bits, and the silver studs and silken tassels which ornamented their trappings glauced and danced right merrily as they went.

Though the knights were not armed at all points in full battle-harness, yet it was easy to see that they were by no means unprovided against a possible attack; for the sleeves of their shirts of mail were not hidden by the sleeveless surcoat. Moreover, their long swords hung down at their saddles, and each one was attended by his squire, bearing his ample shield. Every knight bore his cognisance embroidered upon his breast, so that at a glance the name and descent of each might easily be known. At that early hour of morn'g the travelers were little inclined for conversation. The heavy night-air still weighed upon their eyelids, and it was with the utmost difficulty that they struggled against sleep. All rode on-wards in silence, wrapped in a kind of dreamy half-slumber.

A young man strode along before them in the road. His long wavy hair flowed over his broad shoulders; eyes of heaven's own blue glowed and flashed under his brows; and a young curly beard fringed his chin. He wore a woollen jerkin, drawn in at his waist with a girdle, in which he bore the broad-bladed cross-handled knife in its sheath; and, at the same time, upon his waist he wore a dagger and a sword. He might easily be seen, from the expression of his countenance, that the company to which he was acting as guide was not to his taste. Doubtless his heart was full of some secret design; for from time to time he cast upon the knights a look of peculiar meaning. Lively of stature, and of unusual strength of build, he stepped along so quickly that the horses could hardly keep pace with him at a trot.

They journeyed on thus for a while, till at last one of the horses stumbled over the stump of a tree, so that it came upon its knees, and had well nigh fallen over altogether. The knight fell forward, with his chest upon his steed's neck, and was as near as possible measuring his length on the ground. "How now!" exclaimed he in French; "my horse is gone to sleep under me!"

"Yes, Messire de Chastillon," answered his neighbor, with a smile, "that one of you was asleep is plain enough." "Rejoice over my mishap, evil-jester than you are," returned De Chastillon; "asleep I was not. For these two hours past I have had my eyes fixed on those towers yonder, which are certainly bewitched; for the farther on we ride, the farther off they seem to be. But so it is; the gateway will be our portion ere one hour a good word out of your mouth."

While the two knights thus twisted one another, the others laughed right merrily at the accident, and the whole cavalcade woke up out of its comatose slumber. De Chastillon had meanwhile brought his horse upon its legs again; and, making no further account of the accident which rescued from every side at his expense, drove his sharp spur (after the manner of the time, he wore but one), fiercely into the animal's side, which thereupon set reared in fury, and then passed bounding among the trees, with its mouth the first hundred yards of its wild career. It dashed itself against the stem of a gigantic oak, and sank almost lifeless to the ground.

Well was it for De Chastillon that, as the shock came, he fell or threw himself sideways from the saddle; notwithstanding this, however, he seemed to have had a severe fall, and it was some moments before he moved either hand or foot. His comrades came round him, his mounted, and carefully raised him from the ground. The count, who had been the readiest to make merry over his former mishap, seemed now of all the most tenderly concerned for him, and bore on his countenance an unmistakable expression of real sorrow. "My dear Chastillon," he sighed out, "I am heartily grieved at this. Forgive me my idle words; believe me, there was no harm meant; believe me, leave me in peace," cried the fallen knight, now somewhat recovering himself, and breaking loose from the arms of his companions; "I am not dead this time, my good friends all! Talk you, then, that I have escaped the Saracens, for he says a dog in a Flemish wood? No; God be praised, I am still alive! Yes, St. Pol, I swear to you that you should pay on the spot for your ill-timed gibes, were we not too near in blood for such reckoning between us."

De Chastillon drew back the sleeve from his right arm, and then noticed that a branch had torn the skin. "As I look!" said he, quickly reassured, "this is nothing, a mere scratch. But I do believe that Flemish rascal has brought us into these accursed roads on purpose; I will inquire into that matter; and if it be so, my I forget my name that he shall hang on the very oak of mischief!" The Fleming, who was all the while standing by, looked as if he understood no French, and eyed De Chastillon firmly and proudly in the face. "Gentlemen," said the knight; "only look at that peasant, how he stares at me! Come here, rascal! nearer, come nearer!"

The young man approached slowly; his eyes fixedly bent on the knight. A peculiar expression hovered over his features—an expression in which wrath and cunning were strangely united; something so threatening, and at the same time so mysterious, that De Chastillon could not repress a slight shudder. One of the knights present, meanwhile, turned away, and walked off some paces through the trees, with an evident appearance of dissatisfaction at the whole affair.

"Tell me now," said De Chastillon to the guide, "why have you brought us by such a road? and why did you not warn me, when you saw the stamp in the way?" "Sir," answered the Fleming in bad French, "I know of no other way to Castle Wynandael; and I was not aware that your honor was pleased to be asleep."

And with these words a scornful smile played about his mouth, and it might easily be seen that he was turning the knight into ridicule. "Insolent!" cried De Chastillon; "you laugh—you make jest of me? Here, my men! take this rascal peasant and hang him up! Let him be food for the ravens!" "The youth laughed yet more contemptuously, the corners of his mouth twitched yet more violently, and his countenance became alternately pale and red.

"Hang a Fleming!" he muttered; "wait a little!" Upon this he retreated a few steps, set his back against a tree, stripped off the sleeves of his jerkin to his shoulders, and drew his bright cross-handled knife from its sheath; the mighty muscles of his arms swelled up, and his features became like those of an angry lion.

"Woe to him that touches me!" thundered from his lips; "Flemish ravens will never eat me; French flesh suits their stomachs better!" "Lay hold of him, you cowards!" cried De Chastillon to his men; seize him, and up with him! Look at the poltroon! I am ye afraid of a knife? Must I die by the hands of a peasant! But no, that must not be, I am a noble, and like most to like, so it is your affair! Come, seize him by the collar!"

Some of the knights endeavored to pacify De Chastillon; but most of them took his part, and would willingly have seen the Fleming swing. And as their swords were drawn, and on by their master, would have fallen upon the youth, and in the end overpowered him, had not at this moment the same knight drawn near who had just before gone a few steps aside, and till now had walked up and down absorbed in thought. His dress and armor far surpassed those of all the rest in magnificence; and he wore a blue field embroidered upon his breast, showed that he was of royal blood.

"Hold, there!" cried he, with stern look to the men at arms; while he added turning to De Chastillon: "You seem to have forgotten that it is to me that my brother and our king Philip has given the land of Flanders in fief. The Fleming is my vassal; it is I that am his lord and judge, and you have no right over his life."

"Am I then to submit to be insulted by a common peasant?" asked De Chastillon, angrily. "By my troth, count, I know not why it is that you always take the common man's part against the nobles; in this Fleming there is no escape with the best of having got to scorn a French knight unslain! And you, gentlemen, say has he not richly deserved to die?"

"Messire de Valois," said St. Pol, "I pray you let my brother have the satisfaction of seeing this Fleming hanged to a tree. What difference can it make to you whether the pig headed rascal lives or dies?" "Now listen, gentlemen," cried Charles de Valois, thoroughly roused, "this inconsiderate talk is extremely displeasing to me. I would have you to know that the life of one of my subjects is no small thing in my eyes; and it is my will that this young man go his way unmolested and unharmed. To horse, gentlemen; we waste too much time here."

"Come along, Chastillon," muttered St. Pol, turning to his brother, "take the horse of one of your people, and let us start; after all, De Valois is no true man; he holds with the people." Meanwhile the men-at-arms had replaced their swords in their scabbards, and were now busied in helping their masters to remount. "Are you ready, gentlemen?" asked De Valois. "If so, let us make haste and get on, else we shall be too late for the hunt. And do you, rascal, wait on one side, and tell us when we have to turn. How much farther have we to Wynandael?"

The youth took off his cap, bowed respectfully to his preserver, and answered: "A short horse's ride, my lord." "By my soul, I don't trust the fellow," said St. Pol; "I believe he is but a wolf in sheep's clothing." "That I have long suspected," interposed the chancellor, Peter Flotte; "for he eyes us like a wolf, and listens like a hare."

"Hail now I know who he is!" cried De Chastillon. "Have you never heard of one Peter Deconinck, a weaver of Bruges?" "You are certainly wrong there," observed Raoul de Nesle; "I have just leading through your coat of mail."

Bruges, when I was there; he is a far deeper one than this fellow, though he has but one eye, while our friend here has two, and knows none of the least. Without doubt the lad is attached to the old family, and is not over well pleased at our victorious arrival to thrust them out and take possession—that's all. Surely we may well forgive him his fidelity to his country's princes in their evil days—I pray you let him not fret that we are come as conquerors, and be careful not to embitter his sufferings by any words of affront."

"Think you, Count de Valois," snappishly interposed De Chastillon, "that we know not the rules of knightly good breeding? Think you that I am ignorant that a French knight should be generous in victory?" "You know it, as I hear," replied De Valois, with strong emphasis; "I pray you, therefore, let me see you practice it. It is not in empty words that honor lies, Messire de Chastillon. What avails it that the precepts of knightly bearing come trippingly from the tongue, if they are not put in the same time in the heart? He that is not generous in his dealings with those beneath him, can never be really so with his equals. You understand me, Messire de Chastillon."

This rebuke excited the object of it to the most furious rage, which words of violence but for the interposition of his brother, St. Pol, who held him back, and at the same time whispered in his ear: "Hush, Chastillon, hush; the count is right. It is but due to our honor, that we add no suffering to the old Count of Flanders; he has troubles enough!"

"What! the faithless vassal has made war upon our king, and so offended our niece, Joanna of Navarre, that she has well nigh been irritated into sickness; and now he is to be spared, forsooth?" "Gentlemen," repeated De Valois, "you have heard my request; I do not believe that you will be wanting in generosity. And now, forwards! I already hear the dogs; our approach too has been observed, for the bridge falls, and the porticulis is raised."

The Castle of Wynandael (its ruins may still be seen near Thourout, in West Flanders, and by the village of the same name), built by the noble Count Guy of Flanders, was one of the finest and strongest existing at that day. From the broad moat which encompassed it rose high and massive walls, above which again, on every side, a multitude of watch-towers were conspicuous. The high and narrow windows might be seen gleaming like the eyes of the bowmen and the sharp steel of their arrows. Surrounded by the ramparts rose the pointed roofs of the lord's dwelling, with their gilded weather-cocks glittering in the sun. At the angles of the walls and in the four-corners stood six round towers, which served for both as sentinels of all kinds upon the foe, to keep his aloof from the body of the building. A single drawbridge crossed the moat, and made a way from the island fortress to the surrounding woods and vales.

As the knights drew near, the sentinels gave the sign to the guard within, and immediately the heavy gates created upon their hinges. The tread of the horses was already sounding upon the bridge, and the French knights passed on into the castle, between two rows of Flemish infantry drawn up in arms to receive them. The gates closed, the porticulis fell, and the drawbridge slowly rose behind them.

CHAPTER II. The heaven was colored with so pure a blue, that the eye failed when it sought to measure the sky's depths; the sun rose radiant above the horizon; the loving turtle-dove was slipping the last dewdrops from the verdant foliage. Castle Wynandael resounded with one continual cry of bounds; while the neighing of the horses mingled with the cheery tones of the birds. But the drawbridge was still raised, and the passing countryman could only cough there what was going on within. Names of sentinels with cressets and saluted through the loopholes might be discerned a mighty rattling blither and tinker of a multitude of armed retainers.

At last some of the guardians of the walls made their appearance on the upper platform of the gateway, and let the drawbridge down; and at the same moment the gates opened wide, to give access to the hunting-party which now rode slowly over the bridge. A magnificent cavalcade it was, and of right high and mighty lords and ladies. First rode the old Count Guy of Flanders on a brown steed. His features bore the expression of quiet resignation and unuttered grief. Bowed down by his eighty years and his hard lot, his head being heavily furrowed upon his brow; his cheeks were furrowed over with deep wrinkles. A purple surcoat flowed from his shoulders upon the saddle; his snowy hair wound about with a kerchief of yellow silk, was like a silver vase hooped with gold. Upon his breast, on a heart-shaped shield, might be seen the black lion of Flanders, rampant in his golden field.

This unfortunate prince found himself now, at the end of his days, when rest and peace would have been the fitting need for his long toils and struggles, thrust from his high estate and robbed of all. His children, too, deprived of their inheritance by the face of war, had only a life of poverty and obscurity in prospect—they who should have been the wealthiest among Europe's princes. But though beset with enemies flashed with recent victory, and sorely tried by fortune, the brave old count yielded not to despair one inch of ground in his heart. Beside him, and deep in discourse with him, rode Charles de Valois, brother to the king of France, who seemed desirous of impressing on the old count some views of his own into which the latter did not very readily enter. The battle-wound at the French chief's side had meanwhile given place to another of less formidable proportions, and the

has cost me a good horse and a faithful servant." And now the knight with the lilies on his breast turned to the others and spoke: "This castle, gentlemen, is the abode of the unhappy Count Guy of Flanders—a father whose child has been taken from him, a prince who has lost his land by the fortune of war, which has favored us—I pray you let him not fret that we are come as conquerors, and be careful not to embitter his sufferings by any words of affront."

"Think you, Count de Valois," snappishly interposed De Chastillon, "that we know not the rules of knightly good breeding? Think you that I am ignorant that a French knight should be generous in victory?" "You know it, as I hear," replied De Valois, with strong emphasis; "I pray you, therefore, let me see you practice it. It is not in empty words that honor lies, Messire de Chastillon. What avails it that the precepts of knightly bearing come trippingly from the tongue, if they are not put in the same time in the heart? He that is not generous in his dealings with those beneath him, can never be really so with his equals. You understand me, Messire de Chastillon."

This rebuke excited the object of it to the most furious rage, which words of violence but for the interposition of his brother, St. Pol, who held him back, and at the same time whispered in his ear: "Hush, Chastillon, hush; the count is right. It is but due to our honor, that we add no suffering to the old Count of Flanders; he has troubles enough!"

"What! the faithless vassal has made war upon our king, and so offended our niece, Joanna of Navarre, that she has well nigh been irritated into sickness; and now he is to be spared, forsooth?" "Gentlemen," repeated De Valois, "you have heard my request; I do not believe that you will be wanting in generosity. And now, forwards! I already hear the dogs; our approach too has been observed, for the bridge falls, and the porticulis is raised."

The Castle of Wynandael (its ruins may still be seen near Thourout, in West Flanders, and by the village of the same name), built by the noble Count Guy of Flanders, was one of the finest and strongest existing at that day. From the broad moat which encompassed it rose high and massive walls, above which again, on every side, a multitude of watch-towers were conspicuous. The high and narrow windows might be seen gleaming like the eyes of the bowmen and the sharp steel of their arrows. Surrounded by the ramparts rose the pointed roofs of the lord's dwelling, with their gilded weather-cocks glittering in the sun. At the angles of the walls and in the four-corners stood six round towers, which served for both as sentinels of all kinds upon the foe, to keep his aloof from the body of the building. A single drawbridge crossed the moat, and made a way from the island fortress to the surrounding woods and vales.

As the knights drew near, the sentinels gave the sign to the guard within, and immediately the heavy gates created upon their hinges. The tread of the horses was already sounding upon the bridge, and the French knights passed on into the castle, between two rows of Flemish infantry drawn up in arms to receive them. The gates closed, the porticulis fell, and the drawbridge slowly rose behind them.

CHAPTER II. The heaven was colored with so pure a blue, that the eye failed when it sought to measure the sky's depths; the sun rose radiant above the horizon; the loving turtle-dove was slipping the last dewdrops from the verdant foliage. Castle Wynandael resounded with one continual cry of bounds; while the neighing of the horses mingled with the cheery tones of the birds. But the drawbridge was still raised, and the passing countryman could only cough there what was going on within. Names of sentinels with cressets and saluted through the loopholes might be discerned a mighty rattling blither and tinker of a multitude of armed retainers.

At last some of the guardians of the walls made their appearance on the upper platform of the gateway, and let the drawbridge down; and at the same moment the gates opened wide, to give access to the hunting-party which now rode slowly over the bridge. A magnificent cavalcade it was, and of right high and mighty lords and ladies. First rode the old Count Guy of Flanders on a brown steed. His features bore the expression of quiet resignation and unuttered grief. Bowed down by his eighty years and his hard lot, his head being heavily furrowed upon his brow; his cheeks were furrowed over with deep wrinkles. A purple surcoat flowed from his shoulders upon the saddle; his snowy hair wound about with a kerchief of yellow silk, was like a silver vase hooped with gold. Upon his breast, on a heart-shaped shield, might be seen the black lion of Flanders, rampant in his golden field.

This unfortunate prince found himself now, at the end of his days, when rest and peace would have been the fitting need for his long toils and struggles, thrust from his high estate and robbed of all. His children, too, deprived of their inheritance by the face of war, had only a life of poverty and obscurity in prospect—they who should have been the wealthiest among Europe's princes. But though beset with enemies flashed with recent victory, and sorely tried by fortune, the brave old count yielded not to despair one inch of ground in his heart. Beside him, and deep in discourse with him, rode Charles de Valois, brother to the king of France, who seemed desirous of impressing on the old count some views of his own into which the latter did not very readily enter. The battle-wound at the French chief's side had meanwhile given place to another of less formidable proportions, and the

has cost me a good horse and a faithful servant." And now the knight with the lilies on his breast turned to the others and spoke: "This castle, gentlemen, is the abode of the unhappy Count Guy of Flanders—a father whose child has been taken from him, a prince who has lost his land by the fortune of war, which has favored us—I pray you let him not fret that we are come as conquerors, and be careful not to embitter his sufferings by any words of affront."

"Think you, Count de Valois," snappishly interposed De Chastillon, "that we know not the rules of knightly good breeding? Think you that I am ignorant that a French knight should be generous in victory?" "You know it, as I hear," replied De Valois, with strong emphasis; "I pray you, therefore, let me see you practice it. It is not in empty words that honor lies, Messire de Chastillon. What avails it that the precepts of knightly bearing come trippingly from the tongue, if they are not put in the same time in the heart? He that is not generous in his dealings with those beneath him, can never be really so with his equals. You understand me, Messire de Chastillon."

Immediately after this glittering bevy came a multitude of pages and other attendants, all in silken attire of various colors. Such of them as belonged to Count Guy's court were easily distinguished by the right side of their dresses being black, the left golden yellow. The rest were in purple and green, or red and blue, according to the colors of their respective masters.

Lastly followed the huntmen and falconers. Before the former ran some fifty dogs in leash; sleek-hounds, gazehounds, and dogs of chase of every variety. The impatience of these spirited animals was so great, and they pulled so hard at the leashes, that every now and then the huntmen had to bend forward down to the very muzzles of their horses.

The falconers bore each his bird on portable perches. Hawks of all kinds were there, goshawks and kestrels, goshawks and kestrels, and every one with a red hood over its head and light leather cases on its legs. Besides these, the falconers had their decoys, false birds with moveable wings, by means of which the hawk was lured back from her flight.

The cavalcade once clear of the castle, the way soon grew wider, and the knights mingled promiscuously, without distinction of rank. Each sought out his own friend or comrade, and the time passed merrily in jests and jocular tales; even several of the ladies had found places among the knights.

Count Guy and Charles de Valois were still in front; so no one had ventured to take the lead of those that Robert de Bethune, however, and his brother William, were now riding on the one side of their father; and, in like manner, Raoul de Nesle and De Chastillon had taken place alongside of their prince, who, at this moment, with eyes fixed in deep communion with the white hairs of the old Count and the depressed air of his son William—was thus speaking: "I pray you, noble Count, to believe that your hard lot is a subject of real grief and pity to me. I feel indeed your sorrows as though they were my own. Nevertheless, be still of good cheer; all hope is not yet taken from me. Your noble generosity, noble Sir, will remain recorded in my heart to the last hour of my life; but I am too old to flatter myself now with deceitful hopes. My religion is over—so God has willed it!"

"You know not my royal brother Philip," resumed De Valois; "and it is not as though I seem to witness against him; but I assure you that as feeling and noble as that of a true knight ever should be." But here Robert de Bethune impatiently broke in—"What say you? Noble? Noble, as that of a true knight should be? Does a true knight break his pledged word and plighted faith? What, we, feeling no evil, came with poor sister Philippa to Chateau, your king violate every law of hospitality, and make prisoners of us all? Was this the deed of a true knight or of a traitor? Say yourself!"

"Messire de Bethune!" replied De Valois, stung by the reproach, "I do not believe you intend to affront or annoy me!" "Oh, no!" rejoined Robert, in a tone which bespoke sincerity; "by my faith and honor, that I did not. Your generosity has made you dear to me; but for all that, you cannot with good conscience uphold that your king is a true knight!"

"Listen to us," answered De Valois, "I tell you, say, I swear it to you, that there is not a better heart in the world than that of Philip the Fair; but he is surrounded by a troop of miserable flatterers, and unhappily leads his ear to them. Enguerrand de Marigny is a devil incarnate, who instigates him to all evil; and, then, there is another person who often leads the king astray, whose name respects forbids my uttering; but who, in very truth, answerable for all you have had to suffer."

"Who may that be?" asked De Chastillon, not without design. "You ask what every one knows, Messire de Chastillon," cried Robert de Bethune; "listen to me, and I will tell you. It is your niece, Joanna of Navarre, that holds my unhappy sister in captivity; it is your niece, Joanna of Navarre, that debases the coin in France; it is your niece too, Joanna of Navarre, that has sworn the destruction of the Flemish freedom."

De Chastillon's rage at this report knew no bounds. Fervently wheeling round his horse in front of Robert, he cried out in his face: "You lie! false traitor that you are!" Touched in his honor's tenderest point, Robert backed his horse a few steps, and drew his crooked sword from his scabbard; but in the very moment of making his onset upon De Chastillon, he remarked that his foe was unarmed. With manifold disappointment, he put his sword back into the sheath, and reproaching De Chastillon, said in a smothered voice: "I do not suppose I need throw my gauntlet; you know that your words have cast a blot upon me that can only be washed out with blood; before this sun goes down I will demand an account from you of this insult."

"It is well," replied De Chastillon; "I am ready to maintain my royal niece's honor against all opposers." The two knights resumed their former places in silence. Daring this short

Immediately after this glittering bevy came a multitude of pages and other attendants, all in silken attire of various colors. Such of them as belonged to Count Guy's court were easily distinguished by the right side of their dresses being black, the left golden yellow. The rest were in purple and green, or red and blue, according to the colors of their respective masters.

Lastly followed the huntmen and falconers. Before the former ran some fifty dogs in leash; sleek-hounds, gazehounds, and dogs of chase of every variety. The impatience of these spirited animals was so great, and they pulled so hard at the leashes, that every now and then the huntmen had to bend forward down to the very muzzles of their horses.

The falconers bore each his bird on portable perches. Hawks of all kinds were there, goshawks and kestrels, goshawks and kestrels, and every one with a red hood over its head and light leather cases on its legs. Besides these, the falconers had their decoys, false birds with moveable wings, by means of which the hawk was lured back from her flight.

The cavalcade once clear of the castle, the way soon grew wider, and the knights mingled promiscuously, without distinction of rank. Each sought out his own friend or comrade, and the time passed merrily in jests and jocular tales; even several of the ladies had found places among the knights.

Count Guy and Charles de Valois were still in front; so no one had ventured to take the lead of those that Robert de Bethune, however, and his brother William, were now riding on the one side of their father; and, in like manner, Raoul de Nesle and De Chastillon had taken place alongside of their prince, who, at this moment, with eyes fixed in deep communion with the white hairs of the old Count and the depressed air of his son William—was thus speaking: "I pray you, noble Count, to believe that your hard lot is a subject of real grief and pity to me. I feel indeed your sorrows as though they were my own. Nevertheless, be still of good cheer; all hope is not yet taken from me. Your noble generosity, noble Sir, will remain recorded in my heart to the last hour of my life; but I am too old to flatter myself now with deceitful hopes. My religion is over—so God has willed it!"

"You know not my royal brother Philip," resumed De Valois; "and it is not as though I seem to witness against him; but I assure you that as feeling and noble as that of a true knight ever should be." But here Robert de Bethune impatiently broke in—"What say you? Noble? Noble, as that of a true knight should be? Does a true knight break his pledged word and plighted faith? What, we, feeling no evil, came with poor sister Philippa to Chateau, your king violate every law of hospitality, and make prisoners of us all? Was this the deed of a true knight or of a traitor? Say yourself!"

"Messire de Bethune!" replied De Valois, stung by the reproach, "I do not believe you intend to affront or annoy me!" "Oh, no!" rejoined Robert, in a tone which bespoke sincerity; "by my faith and honor, that I did not. Your generosity has made you dear to me; but for all that, you cannot with good conscience uphold that your king is a true knight!"

"Listen to us," answered De Valois, "I tell you, say, I swear it to you, that there is not a better heart in the world than that of Philip the Fair; but he is surrounded by a troop of miserable flatterers, and unhappily leads his ear to them. Enguerrand de Marigny is a devil incarnate, who instigates him to all evil; and, then, there is another person who often leads the king astray, whose name respects forbids my uttering; but who, in very truth, answerable for all you have had to suffer."

"Who may that be?" asked De Chastillon, not without design. "You ask what every one knows, Messire de Chastillon," cried Robert de Bethune; "listen to me, and I will tell you. It is your niece, Joanna of Navarre, that holds my unhappy sister in captivity; it is your niece, Joanna of Navarre, that debases the coin in France; it is your niece too, Joanna of Navarre, that has sworn the destruction of the Flemish freedom."

De Chastillon's rage at this report knew no bounds. Fervently wheeling round his horse in front of Robert, he cried out in his face: "You lie! false traitor that you are!" Touched in his honor's tenderest point, Robert backed his horse a few steps, and drew his crooked sword from his scabbard; but in the very moment of making his onset upon De Chastillon, he remarked that his foe was unarmed. With manifold disappointment, he put his sword back into the sheath, and reproaching De Chastillon, said in a smothered voice: "I do not suppose I need throw my gauntlet; you know that your words have cast a blot upon me that can only be washed out with blood; before this sun goes down I will demand an account from you of this insult."

"It is well," replied De Chastillon; "I am ready to maintain my royal niece's honor against all opposers." The two knights resumed their former places in silence. Daring this short