

THE LION OF FLANDERS;

OR, THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN SPURS.

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued).

As yet the Flemings had made no attack upon them; they stood motionless and silent, gazing with wonder and awe on the dismal tragedy enacted before them. Their generals proceeded with more skill and more prudence; other warriors would have thought this the fittest moment for a general attack, and so would perhaps have crossed the brook and fallen on the French; but Guy, and John Borlout, his chief adviser, would not relinquish the advantage which their position gave them.

At length both the brooks were filled with dead bodies of men and horses, and Rodolf de Nesle had the good fortune to force a passage with about a thousand horsemen. He formed them in a close squadron, and shouted, "France! France! forward! forward!"

They charged with furious intrepidity into the centre of the Flemish troops; but the latter planted their good-days firmly on the ground, and received the horsemen on the points of these frightful weapons. A large number of the assailants were thrown from their horses by the shock, and quickly despatched. But Godfrey of Brabant, who had also crossed the brook with nine hundred horse, threw himself with such impetuosity on the squadron of William van Gulick, that he overthrew both this and the three first divisions, and so broke the line of the Flemings. And now began a terrible struggle; the French horsemen had thrown away their spears, and rushed on the Flemings with their long battle-swords. The latter defended themselves bravely with their clubs and halberds, and dismounted many a horseman; but still the advantage remained with Godfrey of Brabant; his men had made a clear space all around them, and there was thus a wide breach in the Flemish line. Through this opening poured all the French who had forced the brook, in order to fall on the rear of the Flemish divisions. This was a critical and perilous manœuvre for the Flemings;—were the foe once on their front and in their rear, they would have had no room to wield their good-days; and would have been reduced to defend themselves with halberds, clubs, and swords alone; and this would have given the French an immense advantage; for being mounted, their blows were better aimed, and more deadly in effect; it was easy for them to cleave the heads of those who fought on foot, or to strike them from their bodies.

William van Gulick fought like a lion; he stood alone with his standard-bearer and Philip van Hofstade, surrounded by thirty of the enemy, who strove to capture his banner; but as yet every arm which had been put forth to seize it had been severed by his sword. At this moment, Arthur de Mertelet, a Norman knight, sprang over the brook, with a considerable number of horsemen, and dashed at full speed towards William van Gulick. Their arrival crushed the hopes of the Flemings; for the number of the foe was now too great, and their superiority too manifest; and when the Norman saw William's banner, he charged towards it with the speed of an arrow, and put his lance in rest to pierce the standard-bearer. Philip van Hofstade, perceiving his intention, dashed through the French foot-soldiers to stay the course of De Mertelet. The shock of the meeting of the two knights was so impetuous, that the lance of each pierced the heart of his antagonist; warrior and horse were in one moment bereft of motion; it seemed as though a preternatural influence had suddenly cooled their rage; one would have thought each was leaning on his spear with all his weight, in order to thrust it deeper into the body of his antagonist; but this was but for a moment; De Mertelet's horse made a slight convulsive movement, and the corpses of both fell to the ground.

Messire John van Renesse, who commanded the right wing, seeing the danger of William van Gulick left his position, and, with Broydel and his gildemen, fell back behind the line of battle on the rear of the French. Nothing could resist men like the butchers of Bruges; they exposed themselves to every weapon with naked breast, and before their death-scouring valour every thing gave way. Their axes hewed the legs of the horses, or cleave the skulls of their falling riders. A moment after their arrival, the ground was so cleared that scarcely twenty Frenchmen remained behind the line of battle. Among them was Godfrey of Brabant, who blushed not to fight against those who were his brethren both by birth and by language. When John van Renesse espied him, he shouted to him: "Godfrey, Godfrey! your course is run—you shall die!"

"Apply your words to yourself," replied Godfrey, aiming at the head of Messire John a tremendous blow; but Van Renesse, with a dexterous and rapid movement of his sword from below, struck him so violently under the chin that he rolled out of his saddle to the ground. More than twenty butchers fell immediately upon him, and he received innumerable wounds, the last of which was mortal. Meanwhile Jan Broydel and some of his men had penetrated further and further amongst the enemy, and had fought long enough to win the standard of Brabant; he regained his butchers, defending his prize at every step with furious courage, and then, tearing the banner in pieces and throwing its pole scornfully from him he exclaimed: "Shame and dishonour to the traitors!"

The men of Brabant, burning to avenge this insult, rushed with redoubled rage upon the foe, and made the most extraordinary efforts to gain and to tear in pieces the banner of William van Gulick; but its bearer, John Ferrand, struggled, with the strength of madness, with all who dared to approach him. Four times was he thrown to the ground, and four several times did he rise again, still grasping his banner, though covered with wounds. William van Gulick had already laid dead at his feet a large number of the French; and every fresh blow of his huge broadsword struck down a foe. At length, wearied, covered with wounds, and exhausted by loss of blood, he grew pale, and felt his strength failing him he retired to the rear to refresh himself and rest awhile. John de Vlamynck, his squire, loosed the plates of his armour and stripped him of his heavy mail, that he might breathe more freely. In the absence of William, the French had regained some of the ground they had lost, and the Flemings manifested a disposition to retreat. This threw Van Gulick into an agony of despair, and induced John de Vlamynck to adopt a singular device, which bore witness in its results to the fame of his master's bravery. He hastily put on the armour of Messire William, and threw himself into the thick of the enemy with the cry: "Give way,—back,—men of France! William van Gulick is here again!" He accompanied these words with a shower of well-directed blows, and stretched a considerable number of the bewildered foe on the ground; until at length the French gave way; and thus afforded the disordered troops time to close their ranks again.

Rodolf de Nesle had thrown himself with the utmost impetuosity on the five thousand citizens of Ghent under John van Borlout; but all the efforts

of the courageous Frenchmen to break their line were vain. Thrice had the men of Ghent driven him back with prodigious slaughter, and without his obtaining the slightest advantage. John Borlout thought it too risky to abandon his position in order to pursue the soldiers of Rodolf, and so he thought himself of another plan. He hastily formed his three hundred men into two new battalions, and posted them behind the line of battle, one close in the rear, and the other further back in the meadow. He then ordered the central division to give way before the next attack of the French. When Rodolf de Nesle had collected his scattered troops, and restored order amongst them, he made another vigorous attack upon the men of Ghent; the centre fell back immediately, and the French, thinking that they had at length broken their line, pushed on with shouts of joy. "Noel! Noel! Victory! Victory!"

They pressed forward into the opening made in the line, and thought they had now turned the rear of the army; but every where they found walls of spears and halberds. John Borlout now quickly closed the wings of his division; and thus his five thousand men formed a compact circle, and the thousand Frenchmen were caught as in a net. Then began a fearful slaughter; for a quarter of an hour they were hacking, slashing, piercing, and trampling down one another; horses and men lay in helpless confusion on the ground, shrieking, howling, neighing;—yet they heard nothing, spoke nothing; but proceeded in silence with their work of death.

Rodolf de Nesle continued a long time fighting over the dead bodies of his soldiers, though covered with wounds and besprinkled with the blood of his gallant followers; his death, he saw was inevitable. John Borlout beheld the heroic knight with profound sympathy and compassion, and cried to him: "Surrender, Messire Rodolf; I would fain not see you die!"

But Rodolf was beside himself with rage and despair; he heard, indeed, the words of Borlout clearly and an emotion of thankfulness touched his heart; but the reproach of the seneschal had filled him with such bitter vexation, that he no longer desired to live. He raised his hand and made a sign as if to take a last farewell of him, and then, the same moment, struck dead two of the men of Ghent. At length, a blow from a club stretched him lifeless on the corpses of his brethren in arms. Many other knights, whose horses had been slain under them, would fain have surrendered; but no one listened to them,—not a solitary Frenchman escaped alive from the net.

Meanwhile the battle raged with equal fury all along the line. Here was heard a shout,—"Noel! Noel! Montjoy St. Denis!" and this was an intimation that at that point the French had gained some advantage; and there the cry,—"Flanders! the Lion! all that is French is false! Strike home! to the death!" rose in mighty peals heavenwards,—a sign that there some body of French troops was broken and routed.

The Groeningen brook ran with blood, and was choked with the bodies of the slain. The mournful wail of the dying was scarcely drowned by the clash of arms; it was heard, loud and continuous, like the roll of distant thunder, above the noise of the fight. Spears and clubs flew in pieces; in front of the line the dead lay in crowded heaps. The wounded had no chance of escape; no one thought of rendering them any assistance; and they were either stifled in the marsh, or trampled miserably to death beneath the hoofs of the horses. Hugo van Arckel meanwhile had penetrated, with his eight hundred soldiers, to the very centre of the French army, and was so surrounded by the enemy, that the Flemings had lost sight of him altogether. They fought too valiantly, and kept together too firmly, to allow the enemy to break their small but compact mass; around them lay numbers of the French, and who dared to come near them expiated his temerity by death. At length he fought his way to the banner of Navarre, and wrenched it from the hands of the standard-bearer. The Navarrese, wild with rage, turned upon him, and laid many of his followers low; but Hugo defended the captured banner so well, that the French could not retake it. He had already returned very near to the Flemish camp, when Louis de Forest struck him so tremendous a blow on the left shoulder that his arm was severed, and hung supported only by the shirt of mail. The blood gushed in streams from the wound, and the paleness of death overspread his features; but yet his grasp of the banner was unrelaxed. Louis de Forest was slain by some Flemings, and Hugo van Arckel reached the centre of the Flemish camp, gathered his ebbing strength to utter once more the cry: "Flanders! the Lion!" but his voice failed him, his life's blood was drained, and he sank, still grasping the conquered standard, to rise no more.

On the left wing, in front of Messire Guy's division, the conflict was yet more fierce and deadly. James de Chatillon charged the guilds of Furnes with several thousand horse, and had cut down many hundreds of them. Eustachius Sporkyn lay grievously wounded behind the line, and employed his remaining strength in cheering on his men and urging them to hold their ground; but the impetuosity of the onset was too great,—they were compelled to retreat. Followed by a large number of horsemen, De Chatillon broke the line; and the fight was continued over the prostrate Sporkyn, whose sufferings were soon ended beneath the tramp of the cavalry.

Adolf van Nieuwland alone remained with Guy and his standard-bearer; they were now cut off from the army, and their death seemed certain. De Chatillon made most strenuous efforts to get possession of the great standard of Flanders; but, although Segher Lonke, who bore it, had been many times thrown down, De Chatillon could not succeed in his attempt; he raged around it, and urged on his men, and dealt his blows in every direction upon the three invincible Flemings. Doubtless these could not long have continued to defend themselves against such a cloud of foes; but they had previously made such good use of their weapons, that they stood surrounded and protected by a rampart of slain. Mad with rage and impatience, De Chatillon snatched a long spear from the hand of one of his horsemen, and dashed at full gallop towards Guy. He would infallibly have slain the Count; for, occupied with so many enemies, he did not notice De Chatillon's approach; the spear seemed to be already piercing his neck between the helmet and the gorget, when Adolf van Nieuwland swung his sword round with rapidity of lightning, the spear flew in pieces, and the life of his general was saved.

The same moment, and before De Chatillon had time to seize his sword again, Adolf sprang over the heap of slain, and dealt the French knight so terrible a blow on the head, that his cheek, and the part of the helmet which covered it, were severed, and fell to the ground. The blood streamed from his wound; still he persisted in defending himself; but two mighty blows from Adolf's sword buried him from his saddle under the hoofs of the horses. Some Flemings drew him out; and having carried him to the rear, hewed him in pieces, taunting him the while with his morose ferocity.

While this conflict was pending, Arnold van Oudenarde had come to the succour of the left wing, and changed the fate of the battle. The men of Furnes, thus encouraged, returned with them; and soon the French were thrown into hopeless disorder. Men and horses fell in such numbers, and the confusion of the foe was so great, that the Flemings deemed the battle won, and from the whole line poured forth a loud and exulting shout: "Victory! Victory! Flanders! the Lion! Whoso

is French is false, strike all dead!" And over all the battle-field reared the butchers their arms, their bosoms, and their axes, smeared with gore, their hair streaming wildly, their features rendered undecipherable by mire and blood and sweat, yet fixed in a grim expression of bitterest hatred of the French and intense enjoyment of the conflict.

With the first division of the French army was this standard, and destroyed the Seneschal d'Artois stood in the second division, at a distance from the Flemish camp. As the front of the enemy was not extensive enough to admit of a simultaneous attack with his whole army, he had not thought it necessary to advance. He knew nothing of the fortunes of the battle, but concluded that his troops were certainly victorious; for otherwise, he thought, some of them would have retreated. In the meantime he sent Messire Louis de Clermont with four thousand Norman cavalry through the Neerland wood, to take the left wing of the Flemings in flank. De Clermont had the good fortune to find firm ground on this side; he crossed the brook without losing a man, and fell suddenly on the division of Guy. Attacked in the rear by fresh troops, while they were scarcely able to keep De Chatillon's men in check, they found it impossible to offer any resistance. The first ranks were broken, and cut to pieces; the others were thrown into confusion, and all this part of the Flemish army gave way and retreated. The voice of the youthful Guy, conjuring them by the memory of the fatherland to stand firm, inspired them with courage enough; but this was no avail; the violence of the attack was too great, and all that they could do, in answer to their general's appeal, was to make their retreat as slow and orderly as possible.

At this moment Guy received so violent a blow on his helmet, that he fell forward on the neck of his horse, and his sword dropt from his hand. In this position, stunned and giddy, he could no longer defend himself; and would certainly have perished had not Adolf come to his rescue. The young knight sprang in front of Guy, and wielded his sword so skillfully and so valiantly, that the Frenchmen were effectually prevented from striking at the Count. In a short time his arm waxed weak and weary in this desperate conflict; his blows became ever slower and weaker; the countless strokes that fell on his coat of mail made him feel his whole body bruised and swollen, and he was already on the point of taking a last farewell of the world; for he seemed to see death beckoning to him in the distance. In the meantime Guy had been carried behind the line of battle, and had recovered from his swoon. He now looked with anguish on his perilous position of his deliverer; and seizing another sword, he was in a moment at his side, and fighting with renewed vigour. Many of the most valiant of the Flemings had hastened after him; and the French would have been compelled to retreat, had they not received fresh reinforcements by way of the Neerland wood. The intrepidity of the Flemings could not avail to check the advance of the enemy. The cry "Flanders! the Lion!" was answered by "Noel! Noel! the victory is ours! death to the rebels!"

The Flemings wavered, broke their ranks, and were thrown into inextricable disorder. The marvellous efforts of Guy failed to prevent their retreat; for there were at least ten horsemen to one Fleming, and the horses either trampled them down or drove them back with an irresistible impetus. Half of them fled before the advancing foe; great numbers were slain, and the remainder were so scattered, that they could offer no resistance to the horsemen, and were pursued to the Leye, where many of them were miserably drowned. On the banks of this river Guy continued to form a few of his men in tolerable order; but the numbers of the enemy were too disproportionately great. The men of Furnes, although their ranks were utterly broken, fought on with a mute and steady desperation; the foam stood on their lips, the blood streamed over their bodies from numberless wounds; but their heroic valour was of no avail. Each of them had already slain three or four of the horsemen; yet their numbers diminished moment by moment, while those of the French were continually increasing; and soon there remained but one hope—only thought—to die with honour and avenged.

Guy beheld the destruction of his troops, and deemed the battle lost. He could have wept aloud for anguish; but there was no room for grief in his manly heart—a moody rage had taken entire possession of it. In conformity with his oath, he desired to live no longer, and spurred his horse into the very thick of the exulting enemy. Adolf van Nieuwland and Arnold van Oudenarde kept close to his side; so desperate was their onset, that the foe was appalled by their feats of valour, and the horsemen fell, on all sides, as if by magic, beneath their blows. Yet the Flemings were discomfited and almost all slain: the French continued their shouts of victory; for it seemed that nothing could extricate the remnant of Guy's division from their perilous position.

And now there appeared in the direction of Oudenarde, beyond the Gaver brook, an object that gleamed brightly between the trees; it drew rapidly near, and soon two horsemen might be distinguished in full career towards the field of battle. One was evidently a noble knight, as the magnificence of his armour attested. His coat of mail, and all the steel that enveloped both himself and his horse, were covered with gold, and shone with wonderful brilliancy. An enormous blue plume streamed behind him in the wind, the reins of his horse were covered with silver plates, and on his breast was a red cross, surmounted by the word "Flanders!" flashing in silver letters from a black ground.

No knight in the field was so gorgeously arrayed as this unknown; but what excited most attention was his unusual stature. He was at least a head above the tallest of the knights; and he was so powerfully built, in body and in limbs, that he might well have been taken for a son of the race of giants. The horse he rode was of a size and strength proportioned to those of its rider. Large flakes of foam flew from the mouth of the noble beast, and his breath rolled in two dense clouds from his expanded nostrils. The knight carried no other weapon than a huge axe of steel, which contrasted strangely with the golden splendour of his armour.

The other horseman was a monk, very meanly attired; his mail and helmet were so rusty, that they seemed streaked with red; this was Brother William van Saefstige. In his monastery at Doest he had heard that at Courtrai the Flemings were in conflict with the French; he went at once to the stable, took thence two horses, exchanged one for the rust-eaten steed he wore, and spurred the other at his utmost speed towards the battle-field. He too was extraordinarily strong and brave; a long sword gleamed in his grasp, and the flash of his dark eye showed that he knew right well how to wield it. He had just fallen in with the venerable knight; and as both were bent on the same errand, they had continued their ride together.

The Flemings turned their eyes hopefully and joyfully towards the golden knight as he advanced in the distance. They could not distinguish the word "Flanders," so knew not whether he was friend or foe; but in this their extremity they felt a hope that God had sent them one of his saints, to deliver them. And everything combined to strengthen their hopes—the gorgeous armour—the extraordinary form and stature—the glowing red cross on the breast of the unknown. Guy and Adolf, who were fighting surrounded by foes, looked at each other with beaming joy—they had recognised the golden knight. It seemed to them, as though they heard the death-doom of the French, so absolute was their confidence in the prowess and

skill of the new warrior. They exchanged a look which said:

"O happy chance! there is the Lion of Flanders!" At length the golden knight came near; and before one could ask whom he came to aid, he fell with such impetuosity on the horsemen, and struck such fearful blows with his axe of steel, that the bewildered foe was smitten with a panic, and overthrew one another in their eagerness to escape from the dreaded strokes. Everything fell before his crushing axe—behind him he left a clear space, like the wake of a sailing ship on the waters; and thus, carrying death before him, he reached with marvellous rapidity the bands which were driven back upon the Leye, and cried: "Flanders! the Lion! Follow me! Follow me!"

Repeating this cry, he hurled a number of Frenchmen into the marsh, and performed such prodigies of valor and strength, that the Flemings looked on him with awe as a supernatural being. And now the courage of the Flemings revived; with shouts of joy they rushed forward, and emulated the prowess of the golden knight. The French could no longer withstand the onset of the dauntless sons of the Lion: their front ranks gave way and fled; but they came in collision with those who were behind them, and the rout became general. A frightful slaughter began along the whole length of the line. The Flemings pushed on over heaps of slain. The cry, "Noel! Noel!" was no longer heard: "Flanders! the Lion!" alone resounded triumphantly from every part of the field.

Brother William, the monk, had dismounted, and was fighting on foot. He wielded his sword like a feather, and laughed to scorn every foe who dared to assail him. One would have thought he was playing at some amusing game, so joyous was he and so full of jests. At length he descried Messire Louis de Clermont with his banner at a little distance. "Flanders! the Lion!" shouted Brother William; "the banner is mine!" He fell on the ground like one dead, and crept on his hands and knees between the horses' legs, and suddenly stood by the side of Louis de Clermont, as though he had risen out of the earth. Blows rained on him on all sides; but he defended himself so well, that he received only a few trifling scratches. At first the enemy did not observe that the standard was the object of his attack; but suddenly he turned with the speed of lightning, severed the arm of the standard-bearer at a stroke, and tore the fallen banner in a thousand pieces.

The monk would certainly have been slain, but at that moment began the general rout of the French, and in a short time he found himself surrounded by Flemings, with the golden knight at their head. Guy approached him, and hastily whispered to him:

"O Robert! my brother! how I thank God for sending you to our aid! You have delivered the—"

The golden knight returned no answer, but interrupted him by placing his finger on his mouth, as if to say, "Silence! it is a secret!" Adolf, too, had observed the sign, and bore himself as though he did not recognise the Count of Flanders. Meanwhile the French were completing their own destruction. The Flemings pursued them closely, despatching every fallen horseman with their clubs and halberds. Horses and men were trampled down into the moist ground; the grass of the meadows was no longer visible, nor the Groeningen brook; every where were the ghastly corpses of the slain. The cries of the wounded and dying mingled with the exulting shouts of the Flemings, the flourish of trumpets, the clash of swords upon the coats of mail, and the dismal shrieks of the dying horses. The low rumbling of a volcano on the eve of an eruption may convey some faint notion of the terrors of that scene.

The town clock of Courtrai struck nine ere the routed horsemen of De Nesle and De Chatillon reached the Seneschal d'Artois. Scarcely had the first fugitives brought him tidings of the defeat, when he resolved in his blind rage to attack the Flemings with his still numerous reserve. It was all in vain that some of the knights tried to dissuade him; followed by his men, he dashed wildly through and over the crowd of fugitives. The fury of their attack compelled Guy's army to fall back again behind the Groeningen brook; for there the carcasses of horses formed a sort of breastwork, and impeded the action of cavalry.

The French knights could not keep their footing on the slippery soil; they fell over one another, and buried one another in the morass. Messire d'Artois lost all self-command: with some intrepid knights, he sprang across the brook and fell on the ranks of the Flemings. After a brief conflict, in which many Flemings were slain, he succeeded in seizing the great banner of Flanders, and tore a large piece of it away, with the front part of the Lion on it. A cry of rage ran through the Flemish ranks—"Strike him dead! strike him dead!" The seneschal strove with all his strength to wrench the standard from Segher Lonke; but Brother William, throwing away his sword, sprang towards the horse of Messire d'Artois, threw his sinewy arms round the general's neck, hurled him from his saddle, and both rolled together to the ground. The butchers had now come up; and Jan Broydel, burning to avenge the insults offered by Robert d'Artois to the standard of Flanders, struck his right arm at a blow. The hapless seneschal saw that his end was near, and asked if there was no one of noble blood at hand to whom he might with honour surrender his sword? But his words were unintelligible to the butchers, and were lost in their wild cry of vengeance; they hacked and bowed the luckless knight until death ended his sufferings.

While this was going on, Brother William had hurled the Chancellor Pierre Motte to the ground, and had raised his sword to cleave his skull in twain. The Frenchman implored mercy; but Brother William, with a scornful laugh, struck him so violently on the back of the neck, that he fell dead upon his face. De Tancerville and D'Aspremont perished in like manner beneath the arm of the golden knight; Guy clove the head of Renold de Longueval with a single blow; the kings of Majorca, and Melinde, and more than a hundred nobles, fell beneath the blows of the men of Ghent.

The golden knight was now fighting, on the left wing against a large body of horsemen; at his side were his brother Guy and Adolf van Nieuwland. The latter threw himself every moment upon the enemy; and was so often in eminent danger of death, that it seemed as though he had resolved to die before the eyes of the Lion of Flanders, Matilda's father sees me! thought he; and his breath came more freely, his muscles acquired new strength, and his spirit rose with a loftier contempt of death. The golden knight warned him repeatedly not to expose himself so recklessly; but these warnings sounded in Adolf's ears like the sweetest praise, and made him only more rash and daring. It was fortunate for him that a stronger arm than his own shielded his life, and that one was by his side who had vowed, in true paternal love, to protect him to the utmost of his power.

A single banner alone now remained standing, in all the French host; the royal standard still waved its glittering folds its silver lilies, and all the sparkling jewels with which the arms of France were embroidered. Guy pointed with his hand to the place where it stood, and cried to the golden knight, "Yonder stands our prize!"

They redoubled their efforts to break through the French host; but without avail, until Adolf van Nieuwland, finding a favourable spot, pierced along the masses of the enemy, and fought his way to the great standard. What hostile hand, what envious spirit, impelled the youthful warrior to certain and untimely death? Had they known what

hot and bitter tears were shed for him at that moment, how fervently and with how many repetitions his name came before God on the wings of a maiden's prayers, they could not have thus ruthlessly consigned him to destruction! For the royal banner was circled round by a band of noble and valiant knights, who had sworn, by their truth and by their honour that they would die rather than suffer it to be taken from their keeping. And what could Adolf do against the flower of French chivalry? Words of scornful taunting greeted him, countless swords waved above his head; and, notwithstanding his marvellous intrepidity, he could no longer defend himself. Already his blood streamed from beneath his helm, and his eyes were clouded by the mists of death. Feeling that his last moment had come, he cried, "Matilda! Matilda! farewell!" and gathering up his remaining strength, he threw himself, with the energy of despair, upon the swords of his foes, forced his way through them to the standard, and wrenched it from the standard-bearer; but it was torn from him by innumerable hands, his strength forsook him, he fell forwards on his horse, and the whelming sea of foes closed over him.

The golden knight saw in a moment the danger of Adolf; he thought of the hopeless anguish of the wretched Matilda were her beloved to die by the hand of the enemy; and turning to his men, he cried, with a voice which rose like a thunderclap above the crash of battle: "Forwards, men of Flanders!"

Like the raging sea, which chafes against its embankment with fury irresistible,—like that sea when, under some overmastering wave, the impediment to its mad career has been swept away, and it rolls its foaming billows over the plain, tearing up the trees by their roots, and dashing whole villages to the ground—so sprang forward the herd of Flemish lions at the cry of the unknown knight.

The French were burning with too fierce a courage for the Flemings to hope to overthrow them by one impetuous onset; but the clubs and halberds fell thick and fast as hail upon them. Long and desperate was the struggle; men and horses were mingled together in indescribable confusion; but soon the French knights were so hemmed in that they could not move, and they were driven slowly from their position. The axe of the golden knight had cleared his way to the standard, and he was closely followed by Guy and Arnold van Oudenarde, with a few of the bravest Flemings. He looked anxiously in the direction of the banner for the green plume of Adolf van Nieuwland; but it was not to be seen, and he thought he perceived it further on amongst the Flemings. The forty chosen knights who stood ranged around the standard now rushed upon the golden knight; but he wielded his axe with such effect that not a sword touched him. His first blow crushed the head of Alin de Bretagne, his second broke the ribs of Richard de Falaise; and all around the Flemings emulated his valour. The bearer of the standard now retreated, in order to preserve it from capture; but Robert with one blow thrust aside three or four of his foes, and pursued him some distance into a group of Frenchmen at some distance from the spot where the conflict was raging, and succeeded at length in grasping his prize. A whole troop of knights now assailed him to retake the banner; but the golden knight, placing it as a spear in its rest, dashed impetuously amongst his pursuers. And thus he won his way back to the Flemish army, where he held aloft the captured standard, and cried, "Flanders! the Lion! the victory is ours!"

He was answered by a universal shout of joy; and the courage and strength of the Flemings seemed to increase every moment. Guy de St. Pol was yet posted at the Pottelberg with about ten thousand foot soldiers and a goodly troop of cavalry. He had already packed up all the valuables in the camp; and was about to save himself by flight, when Pierre Lebrun, one of those who had been fighting near the royal standard, dashed up to him, and cried: "What, St. Pol! can you act thus? Can you fly like a dastard, and leave unavenged the deaths of Robert d'Artois and our brethren in arms? Stay, I implore you, for the sake of the honour of France! Let us rather die than endure this shame; advance your troops, and victory may yet be ours."

But Guy de St. Pol would hear nothing of fighting; fear had taken complete possession of him, and he replied: "Messire Lebrun, I know my duty. I will not allow the baggage to be captured; it is better I should lead back the survivors to France, than that I should hurry them to certain destruction."

"And will you, then, abandon to the enemy all who are still fighting bravely sword in hand? Surely this is a traitor's deed; and if I survive this day, I will impeach you before the king for disloyalty and cowardice." "Prudence compels my retreat, Messire Lebrun. I shall go, whatever you may think fit to say of me hereafter; for you are now too much excited to be capable of reflecting on all the circumstances of our position. Rage has bereft you of your reason."

"And you are benumbed and paralysed by cowardice!" retorted Pierre Lebrun. "Do as you will; to show that I am as prudent as yourself, I shall march with my division to cover and assist the retreat."

He then took a troop of two thousand foot-soldiers, and hastened with them to the field of battle. The number of the French was now so much reduced, and there were so many gaps in their line, that the Flemings were enabled to assail them at the same time in front and in rear. The golden knight at once observed Lebrun's movement with its intention; he saw clearly that St. Pol was about to escape with the baggage, and he sprang to the side of Guy to inform him of this plan of the enemy. A few moments after, several Flemish bands dispersed themselves over the plain. Messire John Borlout, with the men of Ghent, hurried along the walls of the city and fell on Lebrun's flank; while the butchers, with their dean, Jan Broydel, made a detour round the castle of Fenermoschere, and fell on the rear of the French camp.

(TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.)

The Divine Right of Kings.

You have often heard of the "divine right of kings." This is not a Catholic doctrine and never will be, but it was once a Protestant doctrine. Only since the Reformation have some kings, such as Henry VIII., Louis XIV., and James I., revived the old pagan idea of the centralization of all power, civil and religious, in one person. In the Catholic ages there were kings. Well, a name is very little; whether you call a ruler, king, prince, or president matters little, but he had to rule according to law, he had to swear to obey the constitution, and cities, towns, and even villages managed their own affairs. There were many republics then, chiefly in Italy, the most Catholic of all the European countries.—There was the great Hunsentia League in Germany. In England we see Archbishop Lafranc at Runnymede obliging King to sign Magna Charta, the great charter of the liberties of England, the great privileges of which we inherit.—Father Coughlin, S.J.

The Simese theory of the tides is somewhat laughable. They think that out in the ocean there is an immense crab; and that, when the globe is in his hole, he forces all the water out, thus making the tide rise. When he comes out the water flows in, and so they have the ebb of the tide.