



Distress Call from Caledonia

Joy Paul

Historical

The Kingdom of Artois spread from Eastern Bavaria to the River Seine in the south. This French Riviera with the most fertile soil would be any Kings ultimate wish for his subjects.

King Jean Marie and his Queen Sofia had two grandsons, the elder Jerome who had a wife Rafael and younger Joel. The old king had acceded his administrative powers to Jerome and made Joel Commander-in-Chief of his armed forces.

Apart from the Royal Family there also lived in the kingdom the family of Peter, the once farmer, his thrifftful wife and their two sons, Mark and Stefan.

With the sincere efforts of their wives, Clare and Jane, Mark and Stefan were now in charge of the administration of two of the bigger provinces of Artois.

Mark and Stefan had proved to be able administrators who were able to make the lives of the people of Artois easier.

All this had brought the families of Mark and Stefan closer to the Royal Family bettering the condition of the family of Peter. Prince Jerome and Prince Joel had started confiding in the brothers in a lot of important matters.

A bond had been formed among the two princes, the brothers and their families which only grew stronger with the passage of time.

The old King Jean Marie and Queen Sofia were very pleased with the two brothers who apart from doing so much for the kingdom as administrators had played a vital role in bringing princes Jerome and Joel safely back

from Mewar, a Hindu prosperous kingdom beyond the Hindu Kush. Ever since the old king and queen had started taking the two young administrators as part of the royal family.

Years passed on and there was peace and prosperity in the kingdom of Artois – till one day. Early morning the royal palace had a visitor from Britannia, from the Kingdom of Caledonia. There was a messenger with message from King Albert of Caledonia. As was customary, the messenger was in no mood to hand over the message scroll to the guards at the palace gates, instead he wanted to hand it straight to Prince Jerome.

A guard was sent in to the rest chamber of Prince Jerome. Prince Jerome, a true warrior, was as usual early to rise from bed. Before sunrise he made it a point to read through ancient texts and scrolls for relevant pieces of wisdom which may come handy while administering the vast kingdom. Later he would spend some time practising swordsmanship with his brother and other able generals of the forces. Lastly he would settle down for some peaceful moments of meditation.

The guard was vary to interrupt the prince who was gazing through ancient texts. The guard some how managed to gather the courage needed and with great deal of caution knocked at the chamber doors. The prince opened the doors and greeted the guard. The guard wasted no time to tell the prince that he had a message from the Kingdom of Caledonia and the messenger was at the palace gates and insisting to deliver the message only to the prince. Prince Jerome sensing the seriousness of the contents of the message promptly accompanied the guard to the palace gates. The messenger in his late teens almost collapsed while he handed over the message scroll to the Prince.

The Prince ordered the guards to take the messenger to the guest chamber to be served by the palace attendants. The messenger was indeed exhausted after the long journey he had made from Caledonia, a small kingdom in north Britannia. Prince Jerome read the scroll which had a distress message. He straight away headed to the chamber of the King. He briefed the King and requested that the King convene a meeting of the Royal Council later in the day.

The meeting was convened and apart from the King, the Queen, the elder prince Jerome, prince Joel, the Chief Minister, all the able ministers, the Advisors and the administrators of the provinces including Mark and Steve were there. The King called upon Prince Jerome to brief the gathering about the message received earlier that day.

The prince had a very confident tone. All the more when he spoke his reassuring voice belittled the seriousness

of the situation. It seemed that things were well within reach. The prince said, the King of Caledonia, King Albert had sent a message that Picts, barbaric uncivilised invaders, had entered their kingdom and were heading towards the Royal Residence – a hill fort. Recently according to the message these invaders had attacked a nearby kingdom and plundered the forts and villages there and any time they were expected to reach the Kings Royal hill fort** . King Albert and the people of Caledonia had sent a distress call to Artois for immediate help to withstand the invasion.

The Chief Minister after showing due respect to the King and Queen started to speak. He said that in the recent past prince Jerome along with the Elite brigade had successfully managed to defeat and free the Kingdom of Portugal from armed invaders from Persia. And it seemed Picts were no different.

The King finally spoke that Prince Jerome should be accompanied by Joel on this trip. They should be accompanied by the administrators Mark and Stefan. The Elite Brigade of Artois, a small army of well trained swordsmen and archers would also accompany the foursome.

So it was decided that they would depart for Caledonia the next day which luckily was a Sunday considered auspicious.

It was a journey of few days on horsebacks to the Kingdom of Caledonia beyond the sea stretch between Artois and Britannia. The team would have to cross several hills and farmlands along popular routes, tread through forests, valleys and plains..

Both the princes were trained swordsmen and very good at horse riding. Prince Jerome and prince Joel commanded the team in turns. After spending a few days travelling the team reached Caledonia just in time as till then the Royal hill fort of the King had not been attacked. The attack was expected any moment.

Prince Jerome saw to it that the Elite Brigade made full use of the available time and had full rest. They were expected to play a vital role against the invaders.

At the Royal hill fort of King Albert, the foursome got a warm welcome. The King seemed very thankful to the princes for arriving so soon. They then sat down to discuss the strategy with the commanders of the forces of Caledonia.

It was known from eyewitnesses that the invaders were barbaric. Their leader Aethelred, a ruthless person, cared least about women and children.

Prince Jerome briefed the commanders of Caledonia that the Persian invaders whom the Elite Brigade defeated in Portugal, fought in small groups. They didn't use traditional fighting techniques. To counter that Prince Jerome had planned to have several small groups for backup providing reinforcements joining the main force in short intervals.

Prince Jerome continued that using the same strategy the Elite Brigade would be divided into smaller groups of six to eight fighters who would charge-in after short intervals. This would have the enemy mesmerised. The enemy would not be able to estimate the strength of the army they were up against. For them it may seem to be an unending sea of fighters.

Prince Joel further continued, the army of Caledonia would only be used in case the invaders posed a serious threat to the Elite Brigade. The meeting ended with King Albert taking the foursome to his chamber. The princes and the brothers Stefan and Mark were served with mouth watering delicacies, cuisines of the region, fresh fruits, lots of syrups and juices. They rested in the chamber for sometime. Their rest was short lived. There was the message that Aethelred and his men had reached the outskirts of the hill fort.

Prince Jerome and Joel quickly put on their battle gear and along with Stefan rushed to the palace lawns where the Elite Brigade had been asked to rest. Prince Joel with his confident tone and reassuring voice belittling the seriousness of the situation urged his brave soldiers to put on their gear and get ready. Prince Jerome then made them aware that they would be using the same strategy they used in Portugal against the Persians.

The invaders were not expecting the Elite Brigade from Artois in Caledonia, and that too under the able leadership of Prince Jerome. The invaders could put up no fight and surrendered very easily.

Most of Aethelred's men were arrested. Aethelred somehow managed to flee the battle scene when he sensed that he might be captured and humiliated.

The news of the defeat of Aethelred spread like wild fire. There was merriment every where in the small kingdoms of the region. The foursome along with the Elite Brigade on reaching the Royal hill fort got a thunderous welcome from the people of Caledonia for whom they were life savers. King Albert hugged Prince Jerome and seemed to be eternally indebted to the heroes from Artois.

To be continued....

** Britannia saw a huge number of hill forts during the time. These were often small ditch and bank combination encircling defensible forts on hill tops.

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com