

Steel 89

Chapter 89: Becoming an Arms Dealer

With the military reforms in place, Berengar began incorporating the militia and professional army into one cohesive force. The men were made to swear an oath under pain of death and damnation that they would protect the realm from all foreign and domestic enemies while also swearing their allegiance to the Viscounty and its Commander in Chief, which at this point was Berengar.

Afterward, roughly 1000 infantry were transferred into the ranks of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Battalions. By doing this, Berengar ensured that the new and possibly disgruntled troops were alongside those that were already completely loyal to him so that they had no chances of turning on him.

As far as the 30 knights under his command were concerned, they were transferred into the ranks of the 1st Cuirassier Battalion, which was growing in numbers by the day. The expense in raising Cavalry was far more than that of infantry or artillery, yet it would be worth the amount as far as Berengar was concerned; thus, he had no qualms about funding such an endeavor.

Though it would take a few months for the new troops to go through basic and specialized training, he was confident by the time the upcoming war broke out that he would have a large well trained, and well-equipped army that was far greater than any force in the world that was equal in size.

Every day the arms factory and the armory worked to produce the necessary equipment for Berengar's army to properly field; as such, he quickly was left with a vast stockpile of the obsolete weapons and armor that kept growing by the day. Eventually, Berengar decided he would sell the equipment to Count Lothar at a discount; considering it was used equipment, and some of it had been especially fitted to certain people, he would never think of gaining full price for it. Nevertheless, it was fully functional equipment and better in quality than basically anything else in the world aside from his own forces.

Thinking of this idea, he personally wrote the letter to Count Lothar, who was more than interested in the offer and absolutely curious why Berengar would be selling such a large amount of steel plate and brigandine. Thus the man made his way to Kufstein as quickly as possible, where he was currently

meeting with Berengar in his armory which housed the equipment, where the two noblemen discussed the exact details of the trade.

Count Lothar was not shy with his questions; he could not think of a reason why Berengar would give up such valuable equipment unless it were faulty.

"So why are you selling such a vast quantity of steel arms and armor? Do you not need it for yourself?"

Berengar began to laugh; he had already planned an excuse for selling his army's obsolete equipment.

"I am currently investing in a massive infrastructure initiative, and I need more capital than I am making on the steel and textile trade. I figured my peasant levies did not need such superior equipment. Thus I decided to sell it and equip them with a much cheaper design of the armor."

Lothar did not even think twice about this answer; it was entirely reasonable, especially since Berengar said this equipment was used to outfit peasant levies. The armorers that Lothar had brought with him began inspecting every piece of equipment to determine if it would hold up. The equipment had only ever seen one battle, and most of the men were completely untouched in that battle; as such, it was in fantastic condition.

While his men were inspecting the equipment, Lothar began discussing terms on the sale of such a vast amount of high-quality arms and armor. Everything except for the pikes used in the previous battle was for sale.

"If my armoires confirm the quality of the equipment, then I would be more than happy to purchase the goods off of your hands; however, because it is used, and much of it will require refitting, I can not offer you full price for the lot."

Considering the equipment was almost entirely brigandine, with steel helmets, and a small number of steel vambraces, and greaves which were thrown into the mix, the value was quite substantial as the manufacture of such a mass amount of equipment was unheard of at this time as such Count Lothar threw out an enticing offer.

"I will pay 10 guldens per set of armor as well as a matching weapon."

The gulden was a gold coin in use for currency, and when considering the price of a steel breastplate by itself was worth a little over 4 guldens brand new, as well as the fact that this was mostly used Brigandine, it was a fair price. However, Berengar would milk Count Lothar for every piece of the equipment's worth and immediately countered his offer with a higher figure.

"15"

Count Lothar frowned at this number and countered offered with a new figure.

"12!"

Berengar shook his head and negotiated with his final offer while wearing a smug smile on his face.

"13, and I'll cover transportation. If you don't accept, I'm sure the Count of Steiermark would be happy to have such fine equipment for his armies..."

Berengar had struck a nerve with Count Lothar; after all, the man was well aware that Count Otto was a loyalist to the main Habsburg line and someone he considered to be a future enemy if Berengar sold his equipment to that man, then it would surely make things difficult for him. After all with this equipment, it would greatly diminish his need to buy raw steel and manufacture it himself.

After careful deliberation, Count Lothar had no choice to accept and cursed at Berengar.

"Dammit! Alright, I accept your terms!"

However, although they shook hands and smiled at one another, Lothar was secretly thinking within his mind.

'What an idiot, he has no idea the danger that is approaching, and he just sold such valuable equipment to his enemy, leaving his armies in a poor state, the Teutonic Order should be able to wipe his army with ease.'

Lothar had no way of knowing that this armor he was being sold, which he thought was the pinnacle of equipment in Europe right now, and possibly the world was already considered obsolete in Berengar's mind and that the young Regent was already in the process of replacing it with better equipment for his forces to use.

Berengar smiled with an arrogant expression as he was all too aware of what Lothar was thinking and could not wait to see the look on his face when his forces were torn asunder by the thunder of Berengar's guns!

With this first step, Berengar had entered the arms trade and made a massive profit of a whopping 13,000 guildens or close to it! He would use some of this profit to invest in the arms trade where he would begin to supply all factions of the upcoming civil war from which he would profit significantly. Only for the factions who bought his equipment to come to the horrific realization that against the might of the flintlock muskets and 12 lb cannons of Berengar's army, the equipment they had been sold was completely and utterly useless.