
I.

THE HAWKWOOD FAMILY. — FIRST ENGAGEMENTS IN FRANCE.

[MORANT, *Hist. of Essex* [1768] which cites the feudal registers of the Earls of Oxford — CAMDEN'S *Britannia* — FULLER, *Worthies of England* [1663] — STOWE, *Annals* — Will of Gilbert Hawkwood existing in the *Harleian Charters* 51, D. 6, pub. in *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol 58, p. 1061 — FILIPPO VILLANI, *Cronica* — AMMIRATO, *Istorie Fiorentine* — SAMUEL SMILES, *Life and Labour* — MATTEO VILLANI, *Cronica* — BECKER, *Adventurous Lives* — LAROUSSE, *Dictionnaire universel du XIX siècle* — FROISSART, *Chroniques* — GUILLELMUS DE NANGIS, *Chronica* — PERRENS, *Histoire de Florence*.]

On the left bank of the little river Colne in Essex, in the parish of Sible Hedingham not far from the ancient city of Colchester, there still exists an old house and estate named Hawkwood Manor, — once a feudal dependance on the Castle of Hedingham belonging to the Earls of Oxford, and which was in the possession of the Hawkwoods as far back as the reigns of John Lack-Land and Edward III.

Tradition says that our John Hawkwood was born here, and we have no reason to doubt it.

The epoch of his birth is not proved: we only know that he died very old in 1394, and that in 1360 he was already a captain of assured reputation; we may therefore conclude that he came into the world in the beginning of Edward the Third's reign, about the year 1320.

John's father was named Gilbert and he was by trade a tanner; a fact perfectly compatible with his well-to-do condition as a landowner.

There are not wanting fabricators of marvellous genealogies, which make Hawkwood's ancestry originate with

Memprecius King of the Frisians. On the other hand Filippo Villani and Ammirato believe Hawkwood to be a personal cognomen, rather than a family surname, recounting that "the mother being about to give birth to a child, had herself carried into a forest, and here the boy was born," — hence the name *hawk* and *wood*.

The Florentine historians were better informed in saying that his parents "were well born although not of grand lineage (*gentil' huomini mercatanti e antichi borghe-si*)." The fact that they used the aristocratic particle "de," and that they possessed lands, goods, and money, is proved by some English documents, among which is the Will of Gilbert de Hawkwood himself.*

1340.

In this his last testament Gilbert de Hawkwood declares his wish to be buried in the church of Sible Hedingham; then in the first place he leaves 2 *solidi* to the building fund of St. Paul's in London; then 17 *marks* 10 *solidi* for his obsequies on the day of the funeral, and on the seventh and thirtieth days after it.

He had three sons: John the elder, John the younger, and Nicholas. The elder no doubt inherited, by right of seniority, the Manor of Hedingham Sible, of which the Will makes no mention, it being only a series of legacies in money, goods or furniture:

to John senior 10 pounds, the cart and six horses, two oxen, 10 quarters of wheat and 10 of oats;

to John junior 20 pounds and 100 *solidi*;

to Nicholas 10 marks;

to each 5 quarters of wheat, 5 of oats, with bed and maintenance for a year.

There were besides four daughters: Agnes and Jane, married; Alice and Margaret still spinsters, to each of

* Tommaseo, in his Comments on the Letters of St. Catherine of Siena, has romanced too much in attributing to "Acuto" the title of Count.

them Gilbert left 100 *solidi* and to the two spinsters 10 pounds besides, with bed and maintenance for a year.

Then follows a long list of petty legacies to priests, menservants, and maidservants, abbesses, and nuns; with a general legacy of "all the remainder" to his executors to be employed in charity and prayers for his soul.

The executors were his sons, the two Johns, and the Vicar of Gosfield: this indicates that those two sons were both at home in 1340; in fact they obtained, after Gilbert's death in that same year, the official documents giving them legal possession and power of administration of the property mentioned in the Will.

Of the three sons, the least favored, Nicholas, embraced the ecclesiastical career, with such success that in 1363 we find him in holy orders, and holding a territorial benefice of such value that it placed him on an equal rank with John senior, who as head of the family was Squire of Sible Hedingham.

The other cadet John junior, being provided with his 20 pounds and 100 *solidi* (in those times a considerable sum), lived for a year at his brother's expense, as legally enjoined, — he might even have prolonged the visit in fraternal fashion, — but after that he began to think, as cadets must do, of making a career for himself.

Now at that time there was war in France, and thither went many Englishmen to seek their fortunes, and gain money, lands, and titles, while King Edward III on his part appropriated whole provinces, — and these temptations induced our hero to become a soldier.

This seems the most probable version of his story; nevertheless the tradition was generally accepted in England that John's first weapons were needle and scissors, and that they were wielded during an apprenticeship to a London tailor. Fuller gives this as a fact adding: "Now that mean men bred in manual and mechanick trades, may

arrive at great skill in martial performances, that Hawkwood, though an eminent, is not the only instance of our English nation."

On this account a popular modern writer, Smiles, registered Hawkwood among the illustrious men of the working classes in his *Life and Labour*.

It is also noteworthy that some French authors give John Hawkwood the cognomen of Jean de L'Aiguille. But all this is not at all authentic, and accords ill with the condition of the family de Hawkwood. As to the real Jean de L'Aiguille, Matteo Villani is our best informant; he says that "after having shewn himself a brave man of great spirit in feats of arms, Gianni della Guglia, English tailor, in the summer of 1359, got together a company of English plunderers and swordsmen; and either pillaging open lands or protecting them for money, he made a great fortune in a few months, and returning to his allegiance to the King of England placed a great part of the wealth he had accumulated at his sovereign's disposal."

When in later times Hawkwood appeared as hero of the Tuscan wars, Filippo Villani, who continued Matteo's history, while trying to throw light on the origin of the Condottiere, does not even dream of identifying Giovanni Acuto with Gianni della Guglia: and Froissart, on his side, assures us that in 1360, Giovanni Hacoude was still "a poor knight, having gained nothing but his spurs."

Skippon, an English writer, on reading in Florence the name of Johannes Acutus,* translated it literally into

* The numberless variations in the spelling of this name in ancient documents, contemporaneous chronicles, and later historians is incredible. Every possible combination of the letters which do or do not compose it, as long as they approximated to the sound of *Hacoud*, were experimented upon by secretaries, and authors, learned or popular. Even his own amanuensis signing for him (as we see in several letters in the Archives of Mantua) indulged in the most fantastic aberrations of orthography. It would be useless to give a long list, suffice it to state that we can ring all the changes between *Aguto* and *Kauchwote* and that S. Antonino constantly calls him *Agostino*.

English as "John Sharp," without even suspecting that it referred to Hawkwood. Some mistake of this sort may have given rise to the metamorphose of "Acuto" into *Giovanni dell'Ago*, and thence to the legend of his exploits in a tailor's shop.

It has been frequently asserted that Hawkwood was enrolled by a press-gang, but it has also been said that he made his own choice of the career of arms, and that he was educated for it by his uncle who was an expert warrior.

Some declare that his first campaign in France in 1343 was made as a vassal of John de Vere, 7th earl of Oxford; and it is probable that he fought in the famous battles of Cressy and Poitiers, for it is an accepted tradition, that he so distinguished himself in those actions, as to win the favour of the Black Prince, and receive from the King the honor of knighthood.

1346, 1356.

All considered however, there is much less documentary proof for the story of his early career than even that of his origin; while the history of his vocation as Captain of Mercenaries is on the contrary sufficiently recounted by the French chronicles.

During the war, many companies of mercenary adventurers had multiplied on the disputed soil of France, some fighting on their own account, others for belligerent potentates.

The peace of Bretigny being concluded, a great number of the troops were dismissed and returned to their homes across the sea. Many of the Englishmen however were too much accustomed to the excitement of fighting and setting ransoms in an enemy's country, to willingly return to peaceful occupations in their own; they preferred following up the career, and finding numerous adherents, — Germans, men of Brabant, Flemings, Gascons, and French, they formed into companies both great and small, known

1360.

1380.

by the common name of *Tards-venus*, to distinguish them from other troops which had preceded them, or to express that they gleaned the little that was left in France, which had already been devastated by so many years of war.*

English captains of the higher rank being laden with spoil and full of honors, after victorious campaigns fought for the right; obeyed the proclamation of peace, and declined to mix themselves up with the *Tards-venus*, who therefore elected new leaders, "choosing," says Froissart, "the worst among them." **

John Hawkwood may have been "a poor knight," but he must have won reputation as a man of war, because one of these companies placed him at their head.

II.

THE ENGLISH IN PIEDMONT. — THE "CONTE VERDE."

THE DEATH OF COUNT LANDO.

[FROISSART, *Chroniques* — MATTEO VILLANI, *Cronica* — BALUZIO, *History of the Popes at Avignon* — MARTENE, *Thesaurus Anecdotorum*, II — *Chronique de Savoie* — AZARIO, *Cronaca* — The slaughter of Savigliano in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 1st series, v. 13 — GUICHENON, *Histoire généalogique de la maison de Savoie*.]

The *Tards-venus* under Bernardo de la Sale, after having desolated Champagne and Burgundy, and made a rendez-

* The ingenuous latin of the chronicler Guillelmus de Nangis is worthy of quotation. Peace proclaimed, he writes, *gaudebant quasi omnes et merito exceptis forsitan illis qui in tempore guerrarum et in factis earum, aliis perdentibus, reperiunt magna lucra, sicut sunt armifactores, et aliqui alii qui rapinas illicitas et opera nefaria in tali tempore, Dei timore postposito, cupiunt exercere, et de rebus non suis sua replere marsupia minus juste; de quibus in die iudicii districtam eis oportebit reddere rationem....*

Item insurrexerunt filii Belial et viri iniqui, videlicet multi guerratores de diversis nationibus, non habentes titulum aliquem neque causam aliquos invadendi, nisi proprio motu sive nequitia affectata sub spe depredandi.

** Perrens would give us to understand that the nucleus of these companies was composed of Gascons and Normans, who had served England and hence the name of English. But from their own documents in Italy we find that the element of real English blood existed, especially in the knights and constables.