

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 perditibus, 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.

vous at Lyons, descend the Rhone by long nocturnal marches, surprise the bridge and fort of Saint Esprit, and take it by assault, thereby gaining both women and spoil; establishing themselves there they command the whole river, and menace Avignon itself; John Hawkwood gives great assistance in this enterprise.

1360.

Decemb. 28.

Pope Innocent VI to defend himself has recourse to arms temporal, spiritual and moral: he fortifies Avignon, proclaims a crusade with liberal indulgences, writes to Conte Verde *atleta e difensore della Chiesa*, and other transalpine princes, that they may oppose the companies, and prevent their passage; for already a troop got together by the Countess of Harcourt to avenge the murder of her husband by the King of France, and another large company of Englishmen are hastening to new prey in Provence.

1361.  
January  
and  
February.

The Cardinal of Ostia succeeds in collecting a few men; but they do not remain staunch, on the contrary several go over to the enemy.

Not being able to brave the storm, the Pope carefully takes the opportunity of turning it aside, by putting his hand in his purse. He comes to an understanding with the Marquis of Montferrat who requires soldiers to fight against the Visconti: so counselled by Conte Verde,\* and backed up by the money of the Church, the Marquis takes into his pay the larger part of the great company of *Tards-venus* as well as the brigand-paladins of the Countess, — in all 6000 horse.

How much did this financial operation cost the Pope, besides the plenary indulgence?

Froissart says that he advanced 60,000 francs in gold,\*\*

\* Lord of Savoy and ancestor of the royal family of Italy. — (*Translator.*)

\*\* It must be specified that in ancient times two kinds of francs were used in France: the silver one of twenty soldi, and the golden one of six Florentine lire. The Florentine florin of that epoch had an intrinsic value of about eleven of the modern francs.

1361. of which 10,000 were paid to Hawkwood's brigade. Baluzio talks of 30,000, Matteo Villani of 100,000 florins: but Martene's document proves only one of the payments, — that of 14,500 florins to be consigned to the Marquis *et per eundem marchionem armigeris qui MAGNA SOCIETAS dicebantur.*

June 6.

Here then we behold the great English band marching towards the sea; attempting in vain to take Marseilles, they set fire to her suburbs, and pass by the Riviera to Nice; cross the Maritime Alps by the feudal estates of Malaspina, favored by Simon Boccanegra doge of Genoa, and enemy to the Visconti; and thus descend into the valley of the Po.

And did Hawkwood go with them? It seems that he did like the Countess of Harcourt, who after conducting her brigade into Piedmont, returned directly into France, for Froissart assures us that our Condottiere was one of the chiefs in command of the English bands, who under Jacques de Bourbon at Brignais vanquished the troops of the French King.

1362. The battle of Brignais, which was a pitched battle, took place on April 6, 1362.\*

The English, superior in number, had the extra advantage of prudence. They dissimulated the real extent of their forces so as to mislead Bourbon's spies, and they also occupied the best positions.

The French troops attempted an assault by an open march, but they were first thrown into confusion by a storm of large stones aimed with singular vigour and precision (the English were expert slingsmen as well as archers), then they were shaken in the flank by a compact

---

\* Froissart, it is true, gives the date April 12, 1361, but Simeon Luce, the learned editor of the famous French chronicler, has shown this to be a chronological error.

mass, bristling with lances six feet long, and finally, routed and disbanded with great loss, they left many important prisoners on the field. Bourbon, mortally wounded, hardly succeeded in flying to Lyons to die, consoled as well as may be, by the tears of the Lyonese dames and maidens.

In fact we perceive by this combat that the French had learned little from the terrible lessons of Cressy and Poitiers, and that the English were possessed of very ripened tactics for those times; even in brigandage they were artists of war.

After this signal victory the companies diffused themselves without obstacles, — some stayed in France, some turned towards the Rhenish provinces, to such effect that Rudolph of Hapsburg had to league eleven imperial cities, to oppose the damages and devices of "those villains vulgarly called English;" a good many more passed or repassed into Italy and among these John Hawkwood.

Va; raccogli ove arato non hai,  
Spiega l'ugne: l'Italia ti do.

(Go, reap where thou hast not sowed,  
Spread thy claws: Italy I give thee.)

The maritime Alps passed, the English left behind them in France their name of *Tards-venus*. It is not certain, however, that they formed immediately, as is generally believed, that single "White Company," or *Compagnia Bianca*, as Matteo Villani calls the largest of the English bands in 1360.

The ancient "Chronique de Savoie" speaks of *aucunes compagnies d'Anglois* which had for leaders Robert Canolle, John Auguth, and Annechin de Bongarden.

As to the last name it is equivocal: Bongarden came with Count Conrad Lando (or Landau) bringing from Apulia two troops of Hungarians and Germans, who were first in the pay of the Marquis of Montferrat, and then hired

by the Conte Verde: finally they passed into the service of the Visconti, Lando first, and Bongarden after a new expedition into Apulia.

On the other hand, Azario, a most valuable contemporaneous eye and ear witness, certifies that the English companies took as general leader a german, Albert Sterz, a man so valorous in the field, as to inspire others with courage (*qui virtuosus ad pugnam omnes alios facit virtuosos*). It was necessary to have a captain, who knew the country, which was new to themselves, and Sterz suited them, not only for his military qualities, but especially because he spoke English.

The fact remains that Piedmont was devastated by the Hungarians, the Germans, and lastly by the newly arrived English, and it is difficult to say which were the worst, the cruel horrors of the slaughter at Savigliano by the first, or the equal horrors perpetrated by the others, in proof of which Azario gives the names of many witnesses.

It is not true that the English brought from beyond the Alps the plague, of which 77,000 people died in Milan alone (?); the pest was already in Piedmont, as it was in Provence, — but they brought violation, burning, extortion, rapine, murder, and torture, illusing women in the presence of their husbands, and fathers, and then demanding ransom; putting men into irons, and drowning those who were not prompt to pay the money demanded.

The only thing in which the English were less brutal than the Hungarians and Germans was in not roasting or mutilating their victims. Azario, however, does not omit to call them *perfidî* and *scelleratissimi* (perfidious and villainous), and from their entrance into Italy they justified the old proverb *Inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato*.\* (An Englishman italianized is an incarnate devil.)

---

\* The origin of this proverb is not known, it dates from before the XVI century when Serdonati registers it in his MS. collection with a note

The "Chronique de Savoie" says coldly almost excusing them, that being many they could not live in Piedmont, without spoiling the country, so that Conte Verde, who had imprudently counselled the Marquis of Montferrat to employ the English, repented, and took arms to defend himself.

They could indeed boast of an illustrious adversary, but nevertheless under Robert Canolles\* they held their own against him, and after having taken, with other places, the town of Lanzo, obliged him to shut himself up in the castle, which they held in siege, till he was reduced to such extremities that he had to make terms through the mediation of Sir William de Grandson, knight of "the Annunziata," and agreed to pay an indemnity. By forfeiting the sum of 180,000 florins, Conte Verde obtained the restitution of his lands, and the English passed on to fight the Milanese, under the Marquis of Montferrat, making their head quarters at Sicciano near Novara. Count Landau was then serving Galeazzo Visconti, who being weak in the field tried to defend himself by fire. He burnt twelve castles and villages, thinking thus to cut off the enemy's provisions; but the English answered by fire, burning fifty-two places, destroying hundreds of others, and sacking all the territory as far as the rivers Ticino and Trebbia.

---

\* English Proverb." It has some analogy with another saying *Inglese hanno coda di serpe* (The English have serpent's tails), referred to by Landino in his commentary on canto XXVII of Dante's "Paradise." Strange contrast between this proverb and Gregory the Great's *Non angli sed angeli si christiani forent*. Which play on words it is curious to find some centuries later in a Turkish poet-Fazilbeg, who speaking of the English in his "book of women," says: *Not anglica, but an angelic creature*. But in the XIV century they were any thing but angels! The Italians of that age could no more say *Gesta Dei per Francos* but *Gesta diaboli per Anglos*.

\* This Roberto Canolles or Knolles, a german of low origin, knight and leader of brigands, had as his motto:

*Qui Robert Canolle prendra  
Cent mille moutons gagnera.*

1362.

In fact the English preliminaries in Italy were terrible, and that first campaign was enough to give them the reputation of being invincible.

September.

They easily occupied Castelnuovo at Scrivia for the Marquis, and then Galeazzo Visconti sent the counts Landau and Nicholas, to Tortona against them with several Germans, and 500 Hungarians, and eventually dispatched Giovanni de' Pepoli to treat with the English. They remained faithful to the Marquis, and the enemy not daring, even with double their forces, to emerge from Tortona, they devastated the surrounding country up to Pavia. Only Luchino dal Verme opposed them with five hundred *barbute*,\* and obliged them to return to the Novara district, where they occupied Romagnano, and five hundred of them died of the plague.

It appears that they were wanting in cross-bow men, a weapon very important in those days, because when the Doge of Genoa placed 30 bands at their disposal, they again took the offensive, and were able to attack with success several places on the right of the Po.

Decemb. 26.

Conte Verde proposed an alliance with Galeazzo Visconti, with the object of driving out the English from their states, and dividing Montferrat, between them, but it must be admitted that the undertaking to rout the English seemed very difficult to Visconti, for he was at the same time attempting to make a treaty of peace with them.

1363.  
January 4.

Albert Sterz feigned to consent, by which means the English succeeded in making a fierce incursion, passing the Ticino, and pushing on to within six miles of Milan. It was night, and people in the castles and villages were keeping the New Year's festivities; while the Milanese nobles were having a merry time, playing at *tabulas et*

---

\* Barbute, the German name for "lances." A barbute consisted of two men, a lance of three. — (Translator.)

*scaccos* (draughts and chess) unsuspecting and undefended, so that they were unable to prevent the robbers from taking anything and everything they chose. Luckily for the ladies and maidens they were in a hurry, and contented themselves with goods and chattels, abstaining from their usual incendiary proceedings. They made prisoners of over 600 nobles, and would have taken more if ropes and time had not failed them. Some of the gang dragged behind them as many as ten nobles, together with their cattle; they could not save them all because they were attacked by Visconti's boats in recrossing the Ticino, but it is said that with the money paid for ransoms, they pocketed about 100,000 florins.

1363.

Having returned to their nest in Romagnano they made fresh efforts to treat with Count Landau, but after their having sacked Briona, the Count lost patience, and met them at the bridge at Canturino, where leaving their horses they came to a hand to hand encounter. It appears that the Hungarians having quarrelled with their German comrades deserted the field, and the Count, mingling in the *mêlée*, had the nose-piece of his helmet broken, and then with a lance-thrust in his face and another under the arm-pit, he was taken prisoner in a dying state.

April 22.

His death was deplored even by the English leaders who hoped by his means to come to terms with the Visconti, when their contract with Montferrat should be fulfilled, but they made good the occasion by crossing the Apennines and carrying their arms into Tuscany.

There were already Pisan Ambassadors at Novara offering to hire the English Company, which was certainly called at that time *Compagnia Bianca* on account of their white flags, white vests, and shining arms. They numbered 3500 horse and 2000 foot, and were still commanded by Sterz.