

FLORENCE MENACED. — HAWKWOOD FAITHFUL TO THE PISANS.

[SOZOMENO, *Istorie* — LEONARDO ARETINO, *Storia fiorentina* — MONALDI, *Diary* — DONATO VELLUTI, *Cronica* — AMIRATO, *Storie* — ANTONIO PUCCI, *La guerra di Pisa* — RONCIONI, *Storie Pisane* — *Archivio storico Italiano* — CANESTRINI'S documents concerning the mercenary companies — Anonymous Pisan Chronicle in MURATORI.]

1364.
February.

In February 1364 the English, in spite of heavy snows, made a sally from Pisa attempting several places, but they found unexpected resistance from the peasants in every part, and the Pistoiese at Seravalle even attacked them with some success.

Many of their men died of the intense cold, so they retired with decided losses, and certainly no gains.

March.

Soon after this a considerable reinforcement arrived at Pisa. Annechin Bongarden, who had gone to Lombardy in the service of Galeazzo Visconti, with the permission of that prince conducted his 3000 German *barbute** to Pisa to share the pay of that Republic, — the Pisan army thus amounted to about 6500 horse, besides a great number of pioneers and native infantry.

April.

In the spring the campaign was resumed in earnest.

In three marches the Pisan soldiers reached Prato, where they had the temerity to occupy the drawbridge. They passed close to Florence, so near that three or four of the boldest rode on and knocked at the Port' a Prato, but the body of the forces pressed on at once to the Mugello.

Here however they encountered the German bands which were in the Florentine pay, led by Pandolfo Malatesta and Count Henri de Montfort, and in a skirmish of

* The English introduced the manner of reckoning their forces by "lances" instead of the older name "barbute." A lance consisted of three men, a barbute of two.

the vanguards forty Florentines defeated a hundred Pisans; one good strong German named Heinrich Paer, with his own lance unhorsed ten Englishmen, killing two of them.

Hawkwood and Bongarden finding some backbone of resistance here, pretended to pass on, but retiring instead, reapproached Florence by the slopes of Monte Morello, where they penetrated into the woody folds of the mountain, leading their horses by the most difficult passes, and sacking and burning.... But from this time forth we may spare ourselves the mention of plunder and incendiarism: they were the rule, and are understood as part of the business in a march of the mercenaries, being always practised in an enemy's country, and often in that of their friends. "There was nothing more terrible than to hear even the name of the English."

It should be noted that the spirited Brunelleschi family victoriously defended their castle at Petraia against three assaults.

Meanwhile Malatesta finding he was not so much master of the situation in Florence, as he had flattered himself he would be, retired, and the sword of command of the German legion was given to the brave Montfort.

Hawkwood and Bongarden occupied the hills of Fiesole while Montfort fortified the suburbs of Florence outside Porta San Gallo, with hastily erected barricades and fences.

April 30.

A fierce battle was fought on the 1st of May, a day which Florence usually gave to popular merry making, and auguries of love. The priors who had to enter office that very day, did so without any of the usual solemnities, — they did not appear on the *ringhiera* outside the palace, no bells were rung, or trumpets blown, because there was fighting at San Gallo. Hawkwood's Englishmen and Bongarden's Germans made a fierce attack on the barricades and breaking them, penetrated as far as the city

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gates, where the fray became bloody. Grimaldi's Genoese cross-bow men on the walls made a great noise and did a little damage; while the English archers, from the houses in the suburb, did a great deal of damage with very little noise; the Count of Montfort paid dearly in his own person, fighting hand to hand with Averard the German.*

In the heat of combat amid smoke, fires, and the ruins of falling houses, Bongarden was created knight and then he conferred the spurs on Averard, and an Englishman named Cook, besides others who distinguished themselves for their valour.

But the brilliant action had little result, the assailants ended by retreating to the hills; and when night came, they celebrated the new-made knights with processions of coloured lamps, with games, song and music on the piazza of Fiesole. Then they took a fancy to send some drummers and trumpeters down to the Port' alla Croce at Florence, who made such a warlike noise that the city was in a tumult, so that the screeching women put lights in the windows, and got heaps of stones ready on the towers as if the enemies had already entered.

The mercenaries employed three days in burning houses on the Fiesole hills,** and on the plain to the right of the Arno, and then crossed the river at a place still called

* Count of Landau, son of Count Conrad who was killed two years before in Lombardy, and brother of Count Lucius, all three dauntless soldiers, and perfect brigands.

** Tradition says that among the castles ruined by the English one was Vincigliata, which belonged successively to the Bisdomini, and to the Albizi, who took the name of Alessandri; it now belongs to John Temple-Leader Esq., who has completely restored the ruins in the style of the 14th century. Cav. Gaetano Bianchi's frescoes in the loggia of the cloister at Vincigliata are entirely in artistic accordance with the medieval style of the castle. The inscriptions in old Italian beneath them would run thus: "John Hawkwood with his company of Englishmen and the Pisan marauders, moves to the injury of the Florentines.—The English with John Hawkwood having taken the hill of Fiesole, disperse over the surrounding country and after having destroyed Vincigliata, depart in May 1364."

"la Sardigna." * For three more days they occupied the hills of Arcetri and Bellosguardo, destroying the orange trees, trampling down the green wheat and barley, robbing farmyards, and renewing daring and useless attacks on the barricades of the suburbs of Legnaia and Verzaia. In this last place the English descended the hill in such a mass that they looked like ants, and discharged a shower of arrows over the walls into the city. The scuffle might have been fierce, if a heavy rain had not separated the combatants.

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May 10.

Thus skirmishing they retreated, and ascended the banks of the Arno to Incisa.

The city of Florence was, or rather had been well defended, but she could not tolerate seeing her enemies masters of all her territories, and not having forces enough to subdue them, she resorted to that "ultima ratio" of Philip of Macedon: — corruption.

The poet-chronicler Pucci, though Florentine himself, clearly confesses it.

Allora i Fiorentin tennon trattato
 Con gli Inghilesi e col detto Annichino,
 E que' che fanno fare ogni mercato,
 Concordia fêr tra loro e 'l Fiorentino.

(Then did the Florentines propose a treaty with the English and with the said Annechin (Bongarden), and some people who would get a profit out of everything, made a peace between them and the Florentines.)

Ammirato gives a name to one of these mercenary agents: "Lapo di Fornaino de Rossi," he writes, "was made Podestà of Prato in consideration of his services in making terms with Bongarden's Company."

Some historians have it that the golden florins were infused into certain flasks of wine, which were sent to those

* An empty space on the left of the river opposite the Cascine.

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leaders whom they wanted to corrupt. This must have been a small payment on account, for the affair cost Florence more than 100,000 florins: i. e. 9000 to Bongarden, 35,000 to his Germans, and 70,000 to the English, of which 5000 were for Belmonte.

It appears that Bongarden deserted the field outright, with his Germans, while Albert Sterz with Belmonte (in spite of his royal blood), Ugo della Zecca (? — perhaps Hugh Mortimer) and the other English leaders limited themselves to agreeing to a truce of five months with Florence.

All were traitors, except John Hawkwood, who tried with bitter reproofs to keep Bongarden to his duty. The fact is certain that when Sterz and Belmonte returned to Pisa with the sanction of Florence to provoke a revolution in favour of Gambacorti who aspired to the tyranny of the city, our hero hastened to warn the "Anziani" of the treachery by a letter. It is true, that with his troops disordered by infidelity, he could no longer continue his tactics on the offensive, the English contingent therefore marched through the territories of Arezzo, Cortona, Siena, Valdinievole, and Lucca, finally halting at San Piero in Campo near Pisa, where they inspected the troops and realized a loss of 600 men.

None were allowed to enter the city except those whom Hawkwood recommended as faithful.

Tornando a Pisa, e non possendo entrare,
 Di fuor la gente d'intorno s'attenda
 E cominciano a Pisa a domandare
 Molta pecunia di paga e di menda,
 Di che i Pisan gli tengono in pastura
 Ed e' guastavan d'intorno alle mura.

(To Pisa come, but not allowed within,
 The men wait round about the city gate
 And to demand imperiously begin
 Large sums for pay, and wrongs to compensate,
 So that the Pisans send them off in haste,
 And all around they lay the lands to waste.)

Thus perfidiously June was passed, the last month of their engagement, when they ought to have been opposing the Count of Montfort who without let or hindrance was domineering the Pisan territories.

Hawkwood with only 800 men remained in the Pisan service, while the greater part of the English, being again free and their compact ended, openly treated with Florence, and took Albert Sterz as their captain.

A solemn act was signed in the Palazzo Vecchio between the "Signoria" and the representatives of the captain, the constables, and marshals (Belmonte was one of the representatives). These agreed to serve the Republic of Florence faithfully (?) for six months, fighting against Pisa and Lucca; they besides swore that after the six months were over, they would observe the peace for six years, towards Florence and all her dependent Communes;— the Florentines on their side promised to treat them "as dear brothers and friends." Albert Sterz reserved to himself the personal faculty of leaving the Company at his pleasure, provided that none of the troops followed him, and that the Company should elect a new captain in his stead. The witnesses on the English side were the Scotsmen Walter and Norman Leslie.

July 28.

Thus the "great White Company" was divided. An anonymous Pisan chronicler observes: "It is certain that if they had not split among themselves, they would have become masters of all Tuscany and all Italy, so brave and powerful were they."

As to Sterz and his men, they might have had the good-will to serve their new masters better than the old, — but in any case they came too late, — for in those very days the final fate of war was decided near Pisa.