

THE DEFEAT AT CASCINA. — THE *DOGE* OF PISA.
THE WANDERING ENGLISHMEN.

[AMBRATO — RONCONI — RANIERI SARDO — Private Letters to the Florentine Council 1364 —
GHIRARDACCI, *Storie Bolognesi*.]

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Before stretching itself across the wide and fruitful plain of Pisa, the winding Arno bathes the feet of that high and steep mountain which bears the very descriptive name of "Verruca" or "Verrucola" (a wart). This rises straight up on the right bank of the river, and was from ancient times crowned by a strong fortress, — no place could be better adapted to survey the whole of the lower Val d'Arno as far as the sea.

There was no passage then between the river and the cliffs of the Verruca, — in modern times a road has been cut in the mountain, — but on the left side of the Arno, a pleasant stretch of land lay between it and the first undulations of the distant hills, and here was the borough of Cascina, a strategic point, predestined to be the scene of several Tuscan battles.

End of July.

Galeotto Malatesta, the new Florentine captain general, was encamped there with Count Montfort's Germans, and many civic volunteers, besides the Genoese cross-bow, in fact with all the force Florence had at her disposal: 11,000 foot and 4000 horse. They encamped in disorder, and lived negligently, but this was supplemented by the zeal and vigilance of Manno Donati who took care to fortify the front of the town, towards Pisa with entrenchments, and to place Grimaldi's skilful Genoese cross-bow in the houses.

Pisa only had in her pay Hawkwood's 800 Englishmen and a few ultramontane brigades, but the approach of

the Florentine army inflamed the warlike ardour of all the citizens; every body took arms who knew how to wield them, and Hawkwood was commissioned to attack the enemy's camp forthwith. He tried to make up for the inferiority of his forces by prudence, and leaving Pisa he encamped at the abbey of San Savino, four miles from Cascina. Here he waited for midday, so that the enemy might have the sun and the dust in their eyes (in the afternoon, a sea wind generally blows from the west across the plain of Pisa), and to deceive them, he precluded the action by three feigned attacks, so that Malatesta believed he did not mean to fight at all. Then he made a move in earnest, sending part of his English troops to the van, and keeping the others with him in the rear. He left his cavalry behind, so that the advance might be less noticeable, and to stir up the energies of his Englishmen he told them that in the Florentine camp they might make prisoners of three or four hundred young nobles, worth from one to two thousand florins of ransom, and besides, in the name of the Republic of Pisa, he promised double pay for a month if they were victorious.

This alluring prospect so fired the courage of the mercenary vanguard, that although they were fatigued by a march of four miles in a suffocating heat, and weighed down by their arms and armour, they did not wait a second command, nor even the reinforcement of the Pisan militia, but rushed to the assault of the trenches.

The horses were unsaddled and the men in the Florentine camp unarmed; Malatesta was asleep, and had told the bell-ringer of the Carroccio, or war chariot, that he was not to ring the bell under any pretence or he would kick him.

There was tremendous confusion, and the English could not be prevented from breaking the trenches, but Grimaldi was watching, and from the temporary loopholes in the

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houses, commenced a very tempest of arrows; Count Montfort was on guard and he bore that day the standard of the *feditori*, the most willing of the Florentine volunteers; Manno Donati was also vigilant and with a corps of chosen men of Florence, and Arezzo, with some mountaineers from Casentino, he sallied unobserved from Cascina, made a circuit and fell on the flank of the assailants, who fought desperately to get out of the trap, but being poorly seconded by the other mercenaries, they were broken and destroyed leaving 30 dead, and 300 wounded men, who had to wait the Pisan doctors before they could get the darts of the Genoese archers out of their flesh.*

The defeat of the advance troops put the Pisan militia into such disorder that the Florentines, now victorious, captured the waggons of wine sent from Pisa to her army.

Seeing the day irretrievably lost, Hawkwood, leaving the citizens in the midst, withdrew with his English rear-guard to San Savino where he gathered together his wounded and followed up the retreat to Pisa in good order.

Malatesta took no trouble to molest him, for he gave his mind to collecting trophies of victory, but though he took 2000 prisoners he merely disarmed the foreigners among them, and set them free. He carried the Pisans (a thousand) back to Florence together with an eagle which had flown from Pisa to the camp where it probably scented prey.

Florence long retained a memento of those Pisan prisoners in the *Loggia dei Pisani* on the Piazza della Signoria, which was constructed by their forced labour. There is too an altar dedicated to S. Victor in the Duomo, and the feast of that Saint, — the patron of the Guelphs, — was for many years celebrated with the *palia* (races) in honor of this victory.

* They had indeed splendid doctors in Pisa, under the care of whom a great many perished in a few days!

The victorious army did not neglect to celebrate the occasion by passing under the walls of Pisa, where they made reprisals, by returning the insults they had received at the gates of Florence the year before, with even greater spirit and opprobrium than the Pisans had done, after which they marched home. It was not long before peace was concluded between these two cities which were starved out to fatten the Germans and English.

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But before peace was concluded, Giovanni Agnello, profiting by the misfortunes of his country, and the ensuing confusion of events, usurped the Lordship of Pisa and took the title of Doge; Hawkwood in his character of Captain being his principal assistant.

August 28.

It is probable that he consented to aid Agnello's arrogant ambition, because he, being a rich merchant, guaranteed the payment of the 30,000 florins required for the stipend of the martial company. To the soldier of fortune everything gave way to the question of pay.

It is certain that Agnello, as the chronicler tells us, had "tuned the lyre" (*temprato la cetera*) with Hawkwood, for having lulled the vigilance of the citizens to sleep, by means of the most absurd dissimulations, he bravely struck his blow by night, while the English soldiers occupied the palace and Piazza for him; and as universal suffrage was unnecessary in those days he declared that the Blessed Virgin had revealed to him in a dream that he must assume the dogeship of Pisa for a year. As soon as the 30,000 florins were paid to the English, and peace concluded with the Florentines, he got himself elected doge for life; moreover in the following year he nominated his sons as his successors, Francesco the second was named *Auti* or *Aukud* after his godfather, the English *condottiere*, so intimate was the friendship between him and the usurper.

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Florence was meanwhile suffering from an *embarras de richesses* in the way of stipendiaries, having engaged a multitude just as the need of them ceased. She sent them into the Lucchese territory where the English White Company, and the German "Company of the Flower" encamped separately. For the good luck of the Florentines, there was an old hostility between these two bands, who were in their ill humour constantly menacing each other.

The Florentines had the wit to keep them on such terms, with each other, that they had neither long truce nor time to quarrel, and when things became serious between English and Germans, Malatesta interfered to pacify them.

September.

Peace assured, the great object was to get them out of the way, — the English were sent to encamp on the Cecina, but they would not stay there. Belmonte and his leaders (Sterz according to his clause in the compact had resigned) complained that their horses suffered in the cold nights of the coming autumn, and they wanted covered quarters.

For the rest they protested their devotion and willingness to fight, saying they would rather take 100,000 florins in war than 300,000 in peace. But it was just peace that was being stipulated.

Nothing could prevent them from coming to encamp near San Miniato. Here they behaved courteously, paying their way and doing no damage; very likely they were afraid of Florence favouring the Germans, and setting them upon them, and so they respected the Florentine territory, and unfurled her standard together with that of their own Captain.

But as to departing, they put it off as long as possible, waiting « their people and things » (*lor gente e cose*) —

probably the women and spoil they left behind when they went away in the spring. — At the end of September they were still on the lower Val d' Elsa, not without some struggles with the peasants of San Miniato, nor losses on each side; it seems in fact that the populace knew so well how to return blow for blow, that the Florentine authorities had to interfere and make them return the horses and other things taken from the mercenaries.

To complicate the situation Belmonte, the Captain, was absent.

Florence at last managed to send Bongarden southward with his Germans. Albert Sterz united with him and they formed a strong band called the "Star Company," which turned towards the Reame (Kingdom of Naples). As to the White Company, just at that moment Cardinal Albornoz received the commission to engage 6000 men for 200,000 florins to fight for the League against Bernabò Visconti, but the project was not carried out; the Florentines had great difficulty in inducing them to go to the Maremma, and to smooth matters with Siena, but all their efforts could not prevent the English from sacking the land. It was of this that Antonio Pucci sang:

Avieno una brigata, che la ferza
 Per insegna portavano, e d'intorno
 Facien più mal dalla mattina a terza
 Che gli altri non facieno in tutto il giorno.
 Veggendo come cotal gente scherza,
 I Sanesi pregâr senza soggiorno
 Il Fiorentin che per Dio gli piacesse
 Di metter quivi accordo, se potesse.

E' Fiorentini allor dimenticando
 Le 'ngiurie ricevute dal Sanese,
 Tosto mandâr gli Ambasciadori e quando
 Si ritrovâr colla gente Inghilese
 Trattaro il concio sì, ch' a posto stando,
 Fecion, che quel Comun fu lor cortese
 Di ventisei migliaja di fiorini,
 Co' quali andarón sopr' a' Perugini.

I non intendo più di seguitare
 Degl'Inghilesi, nè di loro andata;
 Ma prego Iddio, che ogni loro andare
 Possa essere e sia senza tornata.

Which may be thus rendered into English rhyme:

A fine brigade they had, the which a scourge
 For ensign bore, and wrought about its way
 More damage in the three first hours of dawn
 Than other armies worked the live-long day.
 Now when the Sienese perceived their freaks
 The Florentines for love of God they pray
 To draw them off,—to offer terms or pact
 To procure peace at any price in fact.

The men of Florence straightway did forget
 Old injuries which Siena them had wrought
 And sent ambassadors who soon did meet
 And parley with the English host they sought.
 A treaty they arranged, so prompt, that soon
 Siena courteously her peace had bought.
 Twenty six thousand florins did she pay
 And to Perugia rode the bands away.

No more do I intend to follow up
 These Englishmen, nor where they went that day.
 But please the Lord where'er they go or stop
 They'll go and never more return, I pray.

VI.

THE ORGANISM OF MERCENARY COMPANIES.

[Codex of the stipendiaries in the service of the Republic of Florence — FILIPPO VILLANI — AZARIO — MATTEO VILLANI — CANESTRINI, Documents etc. in the *Archivio Storico Italiano* — RICOTTI, *History of mercenary companies* — GREGOROVIVUS, *Hist. of medieval Rome* — Letter of John Swiler to Hawkwood — *State Archives of Florence, Riformazioni* cl. XIII, dist II — GATARO, *Paduan chronicle* in MURATORI [R. I. S.]

We beg the reader to excuse us if we refer at this point to some particulars, which if not directly connected with Hawkwood, are necessary to show with what kind of soldiery he had to deal, and what was the general aspect of war in his days.