

1376. Hawkwood, though enriched by the sale of Faenza, and well furnished with provisions, yet received very tempting proposals from the Bretons: he might even have schemed to have the overtures made to him, as he was not at that time content with his men, nor were they with him. Then the Florentines, Bernabò, and Bologna agreed to make the attempt to break up the English Company and take into their pay as many as seven hundred lances, and three hundred archers. They made a secret understanding with Philip Puer (Power), John Berwick and with another "Messer Giovanni" to bring their men, promising the high pay of from 22 to 24 florins a lance, but these knights only succeeded in bringing two hundred and fifteen lances and ninety two archers. "And this I know, for I enrolled them, being employed in Bologna on behalf of the Comune," says Marchionne Stefani.

To sum up, the Florentines had reason in encouraging the Bolognese to resist, for they sent them as captain the expert Rodolfo da Varano; but they could also persevere with good hope of success in the attempts to deprive the Church of Hawkwood and the English, its best leader, and finest soldiers.

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## XVII.

### THE SLAUGHTER OF CESENA.

#### HAWKWOOD AGAINST THE CHURCH.

[SOZOMENO — POGGIO BRACCIOLINI — ST. ANTONINUS, bishop of Florence — G. GORI, in the *Archivio storico italiano*, new series, v. VIII — RICOTTI, *History of the mercenary companies* — *Sieneſe chronicle* in MURATORI [R. I. S.] — COLUCCIO SALUTATI'S *Letter* written to the *King of France for the Florentines*, quoted in the *Annales mediolanenses* published by MURATORI [R. I. S.], t. XVI — *Chronicles of Bologna, Esteſe, and of Rimini* — *Diary of the ANONYMOUS FLORENTINE* — AMMIRATO — SALUTATI *Epistolæ*.]

If the English Condottiere had more promptly decided to abandon the Pope's service, he would have saved him-

self the shame of figuring as an actor, although repugnantly, in one of the most atrociously bloody deeds recorded in history. It is too true that on this occasion he was still under the orders of Roberto Count of Geneva, a Cardinal-priest of the order of the "Holy Apostles," ugly and deformed of body, whilst in character he could rank first among those Avignonese bishops, who scandalized the world with injustice, simony, avarice, gluttony, lust, luxury, pride, and all the cardinal vices; adding to these, as an especial characteristic, bestial ferocity, so much so, that catholic ecclesiastical history is pleased to be able to classify him amongst the *antipopes*, though it cannot cancel the fact that he was first the legate of the legitimate High Pontiff Gregory XI, and commissioned to restore the temporal power.

1377.

For good sake,  
you don't  
mean it!?!

The Cardinal had failed to enter Bologna, and he revenged himself by putting all the country under the horror of fire or bloodshed; rewarding, and absolving with great rejoicings such of his Bretons as recounted to him the murders they had perpetrated, he even blessed and consecrated their bloodstained swords.

Then he took up his winter quarters with these unbridled soldiers at Cesena, the only city in the Romagna which would receive him with "a joyful and reverent spirit," the only one which "benevolently favored" the head of the ecclesiastics; but the Bretons illtreated the unfortunate Cesena in such a manner as to reduce the citizens to despair. The Cardinal gave no heed to their remonstrances, while the captain-general, Galeotto Malatesta, told them to take justice into their own hands.

The leaders of the Bretons in their turn complained February 1<sup>st</sup>. that provisions were dear, so the Cardinal gave them leave to procure them without payment; the soldiers then fell to and plundered the butchers' shops; — the measure was full, the Cesenese armed themselves and killed a good many

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of the brigands. The Cardinal then matured and carried out an unparalleled scheme of revenge. He made a solemn promise of pardon to those citizens who turned to him with repentance for their rebellion, and for that almost excusable man-slaughter on the sole condition that they should consign their arms; this he swore by his cardinal's hat, and to inspire them with more faith, he asked, and obtained fifty hostages, whom he immediately released again with benign words. Having thus rendered them defenceless (whilst he had called Hawkwood and his Englishmen from Faenza, secretly causing them to enter the fortress known as *la Murata*), as soon as night came he gave orders, for the captain to fall on the city and "administer justice." Hawkwood attempted to lead him to milder measures, declaring himself ready to constrain the citizens to disarm, and to promise obedience, but the Cardinal had already attained this, and wanted quite a different thing: — he explained that by *justice* he meant *blood and more blood*. Hawkwood insisted, showing the Cardinal that he ought to look to the result, but he finished by resigning himself to the reiterated commands.

His repugnance may possibly help to diminish our horror of the part he took in the affair. It arose perhaps from his intention not to compromise the already advanced understanding with the Florentine League, any way it showed that he did not approve of useless ferocities.

On the other hand was he certain of securing the obedience of his Englishmen, if he denied them the chance of a sack? And did not Alberico da Barbiano himself, whose praises are sung by generous spirits and Italian sentiment, take part in the fierce repression of Cesena together with his two hundred lances? In fact, both Bretons and English threw themselves on the defenceless and trusting city. For three days and nights, they made such horrible slaughter of the citizens that the pen refuses to describe the par-

ticulars. It may be admitted perhaps that authors have related it with some exaggeration, — for example how are we to believe the Sienese chronicle which calculates that the little town contained 40,000 inhabitants? But on the whole there is a formidable array of chroniclers, historians, diplomatic documents, and popular poets, all agreeing in describing the slaughter of Cesena as an outburst of insuperable barbarity.

The letter of the Florentines to the King of France written by Coluccio Salutati, chancellor of the Commune, is a circular *manifesto* sent to the different powers, denouncing the horrors committed in the name and defence of the Papal dominion, by two bands of robbers. Even if we doubt the interested eloquence of this witness, we may believe Poggio Bracciolini, the secretary of eight Popes, and we may trust the archbishop St. Antonino. The latter without reserve compares the Cardinal to Herod and Nero, and the Bolognese chronicle says: "People no longer believe either in the Pope or Cardinals, for these are things to crush one's faith."

There is a short latin comedy in four scenes which has been erroneously attributed first to Petrarch, and then to Salutati, the subject of which is a description of "the slaughter of the unhappy city of Cesena." It agrees with many of the chronicles, and asserts that five thousand inhabitants were killed in one day; — the most moderate reports say "about two thousand five hundred Christians." Naturally the men did not let themselves be butchered like lambs: three hundred of the murderers were killed, a few in the town and more disbanded about the country, but the mass of the citizens, being unarmed, were only able to seek safety by flight. Those who did not flee in haste, or were overtaken, found no quarter.

The chronicler of Rimini, who is especially trustworthy from his vicinity, says more than all: "As many men,

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women, and nurselings as they found, they slaughtered, all the squares were full of dead. A thousand drowned themselves in trying to cross the moats — some fled by the gates with the *Bretons* pursuing, who murdered and robbed and committed outrages, and would not let the handsomest women escape, but kept them as spoil; they put a ransom on a thousand little boys and girls, neither man nor woman remained in Cesena.

" Then they methodically began to plunder — sending the best things in cars to Faenza, and selling the rest of the furniture to the people of the neighbouring towns.

" By the 15<sup>th</sup> of April neither corn, nor wine, nor oil, remained, except what the mountaineers supplied them with, and even they took away a load of blankets or clothes, whenever they brought a load of straw, and so the city was undone.

" About eight thousand between great and small came to Rimini, all begging for alms, save a few artisans who found work, and thus the said *Bretons* consumed Cesena inside and out till the 13<sup>th</sup> of August."

It seems then that the worst was done by the Bretons, who, being naturally fierce, were rendered more so by revenge for their lost comrades. St. Antonino specifies that the English preferred plunder above everything, and on this account they urged to flight the people of Cesena. Ammirato confirms this, and the *Cronaca estense* says: " Sir John Hawkwood, not to be held entirely infamous, sent about a thousand of the Cesenese women to Rimini." But even his men did not entirely relinquish atrocities in search of prey. " All the survivors left in the city were constrained by the English to ransom themselves; they barbarously illtreated men and women, to make them reveal where real or supposed treasures were to be found."

To conclude, the slaughter was such that the following year when means were taken for the restoration of the

city, many deep trenches for the conservation of corn, and two large cisterns were found full of corpses. Hawkwood had hastened to inter the dead in that manner, because his Company was quartered at Cesena.

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Remembering his reluctance to execute the Cardinal's orders, it may not be out of place to suppose that disgust at these doings contributed to his resolution to leave the service of such rulers.

It is certain that very soon after this, the negotiations which were already begun, to employ him on the part of the League, were brought to a conclusion. This news seemed to the Florentines "good news, for you have disarmed the power of the Pope and strengthened yourselves."

April 10.

The Pope was so bitter, that he revenged himself by excommunicating and interdicting Florence, and the Florentines replied by obliging their priests to officiate notwithstanding.

*I did this  
a few years before*

We have a rhyming echo of the Florentine joy on the *conversione* of Hawkwood, in a verse of a song composed after the war, by Franco Sacchetti, in which he magnifies twelve great enterprises, achieved by Florence in his days, by comparing them to the labours of the mythic hero, Hercules: \*

Hercole arse il feroce serpente  
 Che, per natura avendo teste molte,  
 Ne rimettea tre, tagliandon'una:  
 Chi combattea con esso era perdente,  
 Ma con fuoco e con stipe assai ricolte  
 Fu morto senza aver potenza alcuna.  
 Fiorenza vaga, quante volte ad una .  
 L'anglico serpentel s'è mosso ad arme  
 Con molte teste, radoppiando sempre:  
 E tu, con dolci tempre,  
 Senza alcun fuoco, a te l'ài sì rivolto  
 Che sotto il tuo vexillo s'è raccolto.

\* Communicated by Sig. Salomone Morpurgo from his monograph on the poet story-teller.—(Hercules was the patron of the Florentine Republic, whose seal bears his figure.—*Translator.*)

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(Brave Hercules doth burn the fearful snake  
 Which nature has endowed with num'rous heads,  
 So that for one cut off, three more awake  
 And he who dares to combat it is dead.  
 But on a fire of gathered sticks he flings  
 That Hydra dread, which dies and no more stings.  
 Fair Florence, ah! how oft thou hast to one—  
 The English serpent—turned thine arms to fight  
 Whose heads increase the oftener they're cut down:  
 But ah! in warm sweet words, how great thy might!  
 Although no fatal fire for him doth burn  
 Beneath thy standard doth the dread one turn.)

Bernabò Visconti, whose influence had been the principal means of gaining Hawkwood, so disposed, that his brigade should be placed at the service of the League between Cesena and Forlì; its stipend was fixed for a year beginning on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, and it was to be composed of eight hundred lances and five hundred archers (of these two hundred with two horses each, and three hundred with one), at the monthly rate of 21 florins each lance, 14 florins for the archers with two horses, and 8 florins for the others, which with 3200 florins for the *provvisioni* and *preminenze* of Hawkwood, of the leaders etc. etc. made a sum of 25,200 florins a month. Of this sum a third was at the cost of Bernabò Visconti, the other two thirds were divided between the Florentines and the other allies; and these were apportioned in the following manner by Florence, who kept the accounts for all, advanced the money, and had, it is said, some trouble in getting it reimbursed: Bologna had to pay 9000 florins, Perugia 4000, Siena 3000, Arezzo 2250, the Prefect of Viterbo 2250, Ascoli 600, Forlì 1500, Urbino 1340, Fermo 1800, Città di Castello 600, Guido da Polenta lord of Ravenna 1200, Bartolomeo di Sanseverino 300, Bertrando Alidosi lord of Imola 450, Rodolfo Varano lord of Camerino 600 florins.

This last, who had been until now captain of the League, took offence at being required to cede the supreme

command to Hawkwood, and went over to the Church \* not returning to his alliance with Florence till after the death of his rival. In any case half Italy was tributary to Hawkwood, and it being an affair of gold, Florence paid for everybody; it was a lucky day for him when he arrived at Bologna to assume the baton of command.

1377.

May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Together with his magnificent pay Bernabò Visconti had adopted another means of seduction; and to make sure of his brave captain, he gave him one of his daughters in marriage — it is true she was illegitimate, but in those times, even the bastard child of the lord of Milan was considered an honorable match for the son of the modest landowner and tanner of Sible Hedingham.

A famous Condottiere, rich in pay, lord of feudal estates, and now become also the son-in-law of the most potent of Italian princes, Sir John Hawkwood here reached the climax of his fortunate career.

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## XVIII.

### MARRIAGE TO DONNINA VISCONTI. IN THE ROMAGNA AGAINST THE BRETONS.

[Suit entered by GALEAZZO Conte di Virtù to the memory of Bernabò Visconti in the *Annales mediolanenses* — LITTA, *Famiglie celebri*. Visconti — BALDUZZI, *Bagnacavallo e Giovanni Hawkwood* in the *Documents and Memorials for the state history of the provinces of the Romagna*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, v. II, p. I — MORANT'S *History of Essex* — BRATLEY and BRITTON'S *Beauties of England and Wales* — WRIGHT'S *History of Essex* — OSIO, *Diplomatic documents of the Milanese Archives* — RAWDON BROWN, *Venetian Calendar*, etc., *Letters of Hawkwood to Gonzaga* lord of Mantua — SALUTATI *Epistolæ* — Carteggio of the Florentine Signory, *Missive*.]

Bernabò Visconti's prolificacy was proportionate to his extremely energetic temperament. His wife Beatrice Scali-

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\* On account of the defection of Rodolfo, the Florentines deprived him of the citizenship, and in several places painted infamous effigies of him with a mitre of devils and with figures of the vices on his face. They sent Count Landau to fight him, but Hawkwood did not go with him, as Litta asserts in his *Famiglie celebri*.