

XXXVII.

THE WAR IN TUSCANY.

[State Archives of Florence, *Consulte e pratiche* of the Commune —
MINERBETTI, *Chronicle* — *Chronicle of Gubbio*.]

With 1200 lances and 1000 bowmen, Hawkwood hurried on by forced marches, crossed the Apennines by the hill of Sambuca, and thence he hastened to San Miniato al Tedesco by way of Pistoia. There Count Giovanni da Barbiano joined him with 600 lances and 700 cross-bowmen from Bologna, and then came 1500 lances and 2000 between foot soldiers and archers, who under Luigi da Capua were fighting for the Florentines against Siena and Perugia, the allies of Visconti. Thus Hawkwood had 3300 lances and 3300 infantry, while Dal Verme reinforced with Sienese and Pisans by the Visconti had 3000 lances, and 5000 infantry; the forces were nearly equal, so it was easy to foresee that neither of the two captains would lightly risk a great battle.

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They faced each other, Dal Verme at Cascina, and Hawkwood at Montopoli; the former passed by a march at the flank to Casoli, the latter distributed his men in the strongholds of Poggibonsi, Colle, and Staggia with the understanding that a single march was to bring them all to him, as soon as the enemy appeared.

Dal Verme ventured to the foot of the fortress of Poggibonsi; Hawkwood, who had 1000 lances there, let him pass, only molesting him with skirmishes, without hindering his sacking, and incendiarism, nor the pitching of his camp on the Elsa. Then quickly gathering all his troops in the plain of Poggibonsi, Hawkwood encamped in a strong position three miles in the rear of the enemy.

The Visconti army raised their camp by night, and the next evening, after a very fatiguing day (being much mo-

1391. lested in their march, and that not without loss), they pitched their tents on the confluence of the Elsa and Arno. And Hawkwood, aiming to cover Florence, took an opposite position between Empoli and Montelupo.

Dal Verme passed the Arno at Fucecchio, crossed the hills of Pietramarina and halted at Poggio a Caiano.

Between
Septemb. 20
and 21.

Hawkwood in his turn traversed the Arno at Signa, and rounding the plain placed his camp at Tizzana. It was a game of chess played by two brave champions, but this procrastination served Hawkwood's purpose, as it gave him a better chance of being reinforced. There was naturally great anxiety in Florence, but they knew how to keep down their impatience. Filippo Corsini said in the

Septemb. 21. *Consulte e pratiche* :

" Let us take measures to save our towns and people. We must press closely on the enemy while reinforcing the camp with foot soldiers, and not oblige the captain to give battle."

And Filippo Cionetti advised: " Let us make a last effort to reinforce the camp, and end the affair honorably. We should collect all the *distrettuali*,* and for this they should send one from each house."

Ranieri di Luigi Peruzzi was of the opinion that " we should reinforce the camp with citizens, peasants and *distrettuali*, and also exhort Hawkwood by reminding him of his own words, that with 500 lances, 2000 infantry, and 1000 cross-bowmen...." here the document is mutilated, but it certainly means to say that those forces would have sufficed for the undertaking.

During the two succeeding days the Florentines sent no less than 10,000 men to reinforce the camp. They were nearly all peasants, but we shall see them behave like spirited and brave soldiers.

* Country militia, called out from all the district of Florence in time of war. — (*Translator.*)

In the night, news was brought to Hawkwood that the enemy was making a move. He thought their march was directed towards Pistoia, and took up his position accordingly, disposing his men in three battalions in the best order, and under their respective ensigns. Day-light proved that the enemy had taken the road up Monte Albano, to pass into the Val di Nievole; so he immediately detached 1000 lances to follow and attack them in the rear; and sent all his infantry by a side route of mountain paths to get in front of them, while he followed more slowly with the main body of lances and archers, in order of battle: and as he was doubtful of some ambuscade he made the troops keep a vigilant look-out.

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and 24.

Taddeo dal Verme, who commanded the rear-guard of the Visconti army, was obliged to face about and give battle; and in a very short time was routed and defeated: 2000 foot, almost all Sienese and Pisans, remained dead on the field; and 1000 were taken prisoners. Of the men-at-arms about 400 were killed, and 200 taken captive, amongst whom were Taddeo himself, Gentile Varano da Camerino, and Vanni d' Appiano.

Meanwhile the Florentine infantry reached the mass of the Visconti army at the foot of Monte Vettolini, and endeavoured to hinder them by skirmishes, but nightfall overtook them sooner than Hawkwood did; — his troops being very tired, and destitute of provisions and forage.

Dal Verme on the other hand spurred on by danger, after having repulsed a last attack of the too spirited infantry at Pieve a Nievole, hastened through the valley at the foot of Montecarlo, where he arrived four hours after sunset. There he halted a short time, and at midnight again marched on. After refreshing his troops at Lucca, he did not pitch his camp till he could fortify himself in the already strong position of Ripafratta.

1391. As soon as day broke Hawkwood presented himself in order of battle at Montecarlo; he found some lame and hamstrung horses, a great deal of baggage, several *bombarde* and tents, but no enemy! They had to stay two days on the Pescian territory to recover themselves, and when they reached Lucca, they found that the enemy was impregnable at Ripafratta. Then having returned into Val d'Arno, Hawkwood thought to guard against any eventuality by encamping under San Miniato, and in fact Dal Verme re-appeared, and fortified himself at Cascina.

At Florence many fires of rejoicing were lit on the palace of the Signoria and all the other prominent places, to celebrate the victory of Tizzana, and a jubilant letter was written to Pope Boniface IX; but as "appetite comes with eating," they now wanted the total destruction of the Visconti army or nearly so.

They did not reflect that Hawkwood might with reason fear an ambush at Tizzana, and even with his extreme daring irreparably lose the day.

As to Dal Verme, after the experience of his marches and counter-marches following the defeat, he must by this time have been convinced that he could not succeed in getting the upper hand, and still wished to attempt a *coup-de-main* by surprising the town of Santa Maria a Monte. He hoped thus to mislead the adversary, and induce him to withdraw his garrison from that place; October 11. he left Cascina, and moved towards Fabbrica. Hawkwood changed to Castel Fiorentino, but took care that a good guard should be kept on all points.

October 14. Dal Verme abandoned Fabbrica by a quick march, crossed the Arno, and vigorously attacked Santa Maria where the garrison held firm; the enemy maintained the siege for four hours, but having suffered serious losses without gaining anything, and fearing lest Hawkwood should come

on them from the rear, they left their scaling ladders on the walls, and recrossed the Arno in haste, encamping between Cascina and Pisa. Hawkwood had in fact returned to San Miniato.

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The chronicle of Gubbio says that Hawkwood had treated with the Bretons who were in Visconti's army, and agreed on a betrayal, that this treaty was discovered, and all the Bretons put to death; but when we remember that the chronicler estimates the Bretons at five thousand, it is time to ask whether Dal Verme had enough faithful soldiers to kill the traitors!

Dal Verme, it is true, could do very little good, and the autumn being now far advanced, he retreated into Liguria; while Sir John Hawkwood took up his quarters in the fortress of Val di Nievole.

Hostilities however did not entirely cease: for not being able to do anything better, Gian Galeazzo Visconti tried to interrupt and injure the Florentine commerce, knowing that would strike them on their most vulnerable part. This he did by means of the Genoese galleys, which cruised before Leghorn and the port of Pisa; and as the Florentines opposed to them, with good success, the galleys of a certain Gargioli, a Florentine pirate, he by favor of the Pisans and Iacopo d'Appiano was allowed to place his troops in the valley of Calci, in Monte Pisano, whence he could easily intercept the road through Val d'Arno between Florence and the sea.

It was therefore Hawkwood's business to guard the road and protect the merchants, and in fact as a large convoy of five hundred pack-horses laden with grain and other merchandise was to go from Pisa to Florence, John Beltoft was sent to escort it with two hundred lances and five hundred foot soldiers, together with Hugh Montfort and about a hundred horsemen.

Decemb. 16.

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The convoy and its escort followed the road which to this day runs along the left of the Arno; the river was very full, however Iacopo d'Appiano informed the Visconti's army, which was esconced beyond, of all that was going on, and indicated to them a ford which though difficult was quite practicable.

The convoy having nearly reached the country-town of Cascina, lo! two thousand of Visconti's cavalry plunged in the stream, and swimming across with great difficulty threatened an attack; and behold! Beltoft without waiting for them, shamefully took to flight with his two hundred English lances, leaving the convoy, infantry and Count Hugh's hundred horsemen in the clutches of the enemy! Montfort opposed a desperate resistance, but was at last taken and his soldiers nearly all killed or captured. Some five hundred loads, and two hundred mules were lost, worth altogether 15,000 florins.

This event was very displeasing to Florence, especially because the Sienese and Pisans rejoiced over it. The brave Count Hugh was ransomed by the Florentines, and received with great honors on his return, while Beltoft, blamed and driven away by them, passed into the service of the Pope, and soon after, being taken by the Orsini, he was beheaded.

Hawkwood too had his share of responsibility in the affair, either for not caring to inform himself of the forces of the Viscontese, or for having sent an insufficient escort. It seems he excused himself to the Signoria by letter, and proposed to vindicate that injury by attacking the Viscontese.

Decemb. 18.

In the *Consulte* Filippo Corsini proposed: "Let us reprove Hawkwood for the error he has committed, but incite him to the enterprise of which he has written, which will recuperate both his honor and that of the Commune; reinforcing him as well as we can. Let him encamp near Cascina."

But Donato Acciaiuoli more calmly counselled: "Let us incite and even commend Hawkwood for what he has written, but moderate him, so that he proceed with caution and prudence, not to put the State of the Commune in peril." 1391.

A general peace was soon after concluded at Genoa, and solemnized in Florence, with fires of joy and illuminations, with a *Mass for peace* in Santa Maria del Fiore (the Duomo), and notice was given of a great tournament which was to come off on the calends of May. 1392. January 20. February 18.

The captains of war gave up their ensigns, and measures were taken to relieve the Florentine tax payers, now almost exhausted by the heavy weight of the 2400 lances and the 3500 infantry then in their pay. By compositions according to the time for which they were hired, the lances were reduced to less than 1000, and the infantry to about the same number. End of February.

However before Hawkwood could take his final rest, he had still to make a last expedition.

The peace left many adventurers unoccupied, and they immediately gave themselves up to brigandage. Azzo da Castello had already formed the nucleus of a company on the territory of Urbino. Broglia, Brandolini, Biordo dei Michelotti, and a great many others being dismissed by Gian Galeazzo, wished to join Azzo as he passed by Bologna from Lombardy, and they commenced their march in that direction. The Bolognese demanded help from the Florentines, who soon sent 500 lances under Hawkwood and Count Hugh. The adventurers took the road by Sarzana and the Maremma, but they hurried so much for fear Hawkwood should overtake them, that they left a great number of their horses by the way. March. April.

Thus the military fatigues of Sir John Hawkwood ended with a modest expedition on behalf of public security, and he retired to quiet life in Florence.