

TWO MEMOIRS

OF

RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

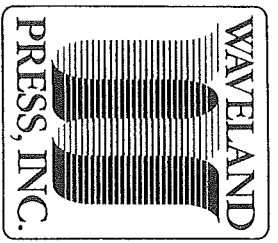
The Diaries of

*Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*

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*"English, French & Dutch"*



Prospect Heights, Illinois

same kidney as the Ciompi in Florence) might rob them too, took arms and managed to subdue them. They then proceeded to take government into their own hands and, together with the *Malloins*, continued the war against their royal lords.

The King and his household withdrew to the wood of Vincennes and took counsel. To prevent the whole kingdom rising against him, they resolved that the King should summon his barons, knights and equeries to assemble with all their men and prepare to follow wherever he might lead them. Yet, although he urged and commanded their presence as insistently as he could, no more turned up than the 10,000 I mentioned before, who were at the battle. After his victory, the saying was borne out whereby nothing succeeds like success. For in the following year, 1383, when he once more summoned his nobles, this time to march against the English who had invaded Flanders—of which I shall tell later on—, he was obeyed by 10,000 knights and more than 16,000 squires who, with their following, amounted to more than 200,000 horsemen, although it is true that there were a number of German lords among them who came out of friendship.

To come back to the King's return to his rebellious city of Paris. He arrived one evening at the Abbey of St. Denis, and the next morning drew up his troops in three divisions as he had done at the battle. On hearing this, the Paris burghers resolved to come before him and beg his pardon. Fully 500 of the most prominent came and, flinging themselves at his feet, begged his forgiveness. The King told them, "Go back to Paris and when I am seated in the place of justice, you will be granted a hearing."

When the King was half a mile from Paris, all the knights, squires and men-at-arms dismounted and formed three divisions. He and his royal household who were in the second division remained on horseback while the rest of us advanced on foot with our helmets on our heads for fear of treachery. We made straight for the great palace where the King dismounted and issued a proclamation command-

ing every citizen or bourgeois, on pain of the gallows, to deliver up his arms, both defensive and offensive, before sundown, at the royal residence, which is a large and attractive fortress in the city of Paris. This order was obeyed fully and promptly. His next order was that all the chains in the city should be removed, and this too was done. I overheard one of the King's equeries ask him if he might have these chains as a gift and the King, who never refused a request, agreed. At the time the chains did not appear to have much value but later it was known that the equery had got about 10,000 gold francs for them.

About forty citizens and *Malloins* who had led the rebellion against the Crown were arrested and beheaded in the square of Les Halles and, after that execution, no further death penalties were pronounced. All the rich burghers were summoned, however, and fines were imposed on each according to his means. Some were assessed as much as 10,000 gold francs and many had to pay 2,000 or more. The King then made these fines payable to the lords and barons who had fought with him in the war. I saw the Duke of Bourbon, to whom the King had allotted 40,000 gold francs' worth of these fines, accept the gift and the following day send for the burghers who were to have paid it and release them from their debt. All the other lords collected their money, however, and the total amounted to about 500,000 francs. After that, the town settled down, and great festivities were organized with jousts, dances and games of chance.

That February, Bernardo di Cino entrusted his nephew Cino with 200 gold francs and with pearls and jewelry to the value of a further 3,000, so that Cino and I might take them to Holland to sell them or play for them with Duke Albert of Bavaria. We got to The Hague and found the Duke, but he would neither buy the jewels nor play for them. The gold francs went in expenses and gambling. By April 1383, we were back in Paris and had returned the jewels to Bernardo.

That year the English landed in France on the border be-

tween Flanders and Picardy. They had a fighting force of about 10,000 archers and men-at-arms, and had soon captured several sizeable towns in Flanders. When the King of France heard this, he sent out a summons to his lords and barons and squires and, by August, was in the field with an army of about 200,000 cavalry including 10,000 knights with golden spurs, as I mentioned earlier.

Being eager to partake once more in such great doings, I pooled resources with a man from Lucca and a Siense. When we had equipped ourselves at our own expense with arms and thirty-six horsemen, we enrolled in the army under the flag and captaincy of the Duke of Burgundy who commanded 20,000 horse. When the army reached Mons, a town of some size in which part of the English forces were garrisoned, the King immediately gave orders for the ground to be levelled so that he might give battle the next day. In the middle of the night, the English tried to escape and, as the townspeople wanted to prevent them, skirmishes broke out in which many were killed. In the end all the English and townsfolk who could fled the city before day-break. When it was light we closed in on the town, cut off all means of retreat, and entered unopposed. Inside we found most of the houses on fire and heaps of dead English and townsfolk. I saw one cruelly horrifying sight: a woman, who appeared from her clothing to be of good class, was sitting with a two-year-old child in her arms, a three-year-old clinging to her shoulders and a five-year-old holding her hand, by the door of a furiously burning house. She was pulled up and moved some distance away to prevent herself and the children coming to harm but, as soon as she was let go, rushed back in the door of the house, despite the great flames which were billowing from it, and was finally burnt inside with her three children. In the end, the whole town was burnt and destroyed.

We spent the day there, and on the morrow moved off in pursuit of the enemy who kept retreating before us. About the hour of vesper, we reached a big town in which the English had taken refuge, and straightaway set about be-

sieging it from all sides with lighted rockets which we threw in so as to set it on fire. The English defended themselves boldly, firing arrows at our troops which wrought havoc among them and wounded many. We withdrew with great loss and little honor. I lost sight of one of my companions and several of our men who had taken part in the siege and could not find them all night, though in truth I was hardly able to look for them but lay exhausted in a ditch until daybreak.

On Sunday morning the Duke of Brittany, who was at the head of 20,000 horse, made an agreement with the English in the King's name, according to which they were to take whatever they could carry and go back to England. The next day they departed bag and baggage from Flanders. The King thereupon returned to France and to Paris and there discharged all the troops but kept the nobles with him to feast and celebrate.

In February 1384, I went to Brussels and from thence to Holland to visit Duke Albert. On my return, I found that my brother Francesco had come up from Florence and was waiting for me in Paris. I spent all that summer and the winter in Paris, returned to Florence in May 1385, and the following October came back to Paris bringing Bernardo de la Fonte with me. In 1386, I went to Florence in May and in September was back in Paris where I heard that the King of France had led a large army into Flanders and was having a fleet built at Sluys so as to cross over to England. Francesco, Berto, and myself equipped ourselves with arms and horses and set out to join the King, for we were of a mind to follow him to England. When we reached Bruges, I met the man from Lucca who had been my companion in the great army. He was with a compatriot, so the three of us pooled our funds and hired a stout ship with which we sailed to Sluys, where the King and his fleet were getting ready to cross to England. Of the 1,200 ships I saw there, I noticed that 600 were cogs with crow's-nests.

After waiting a fortnight for a favorable wind and sea for ~~the crossing~~, the King called a meeting of ship owners