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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DANES, SAXONS AND NORMANS; OR, STORIES OF
OUR ANCESTORS ***

**DANES, SAXONS, AND NORMANS;
OR,
Stories of our Ancestors.**

BY
J. G. EDGAR,
AUTHOR OF "BOYHOOD OF GREAT MEN," "CAVALIERS AND ROUNDHEADS," ETC.

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PREFACE.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to tell in a popular way the story of the Norman Conquest, and to give an idea of the principal personages who figured in England at the period when that memorable event took place; and I have endeavoured, I hope not without some degree of success, to treat the subject in a popular and picturesque style, without any sacrifice of historic truth.

With a view of rendering the important event which I have attempted to illustrate, more intelligible to the reader, I have commenced by showing how the Normans under Rolfganger forced a settlement in the dominions of Charles the Simple, whilst Alfred the Great was struggling with the Danes in England, and have recounted the events which led to a connexion between the courts of Rouen and Westminster, and to the invasion of England by William the Norman.

It has been truly observed that the history of the Conquest is at once so familiar at first sight, that it appears superfluous to multiply details, so difficult to realize on examination, that a writer feels himself under the necessity of investing with importance many particulars previously regarded as uninteresting, and that the defeat at Hastings was not the catastrophe over which the curtain drops to close the Saxon tragedy, but "the first scene in a new act of the continuous drama." I have therefore continued my narrative for many years after the fall of Harold and the building of Battle Abbey, and have traced the Conqueror's career from the coast of Sussex to the banks of the Humber and the borders of the Tweed.

For the same reason I have narrated the quarrels which convulsed the Conqueror's own family—have related how son fought against father, and brother against brother—and have indicated the circumstances which, after a fierce war of succession in England, resulted in the peaceful coronation of Henry Plantagenet, and the establishment of that great house whose chiefs were so long the pride of England and the terror of her foes.

J. G. E.

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DANES, SAXONS, AND NORMANS;

OR,

Stories of our Ancestors.

I.



Hilda's appeal to Harold Harfagher.

ROLFGANGER AND HIS COMRADES.

One day towards the close of the ninth century, Harold, King of Norway, exasperated at the insubordination and contumacy of the chiefs among whom that land of mountain, and forest, and fiord was divided, vowed not to cut his fair hair till he had reduced the whole country to his sovereign authority. The process proved, as he

doubtless foresaw, somewhat difficult and slow. Indeed, the chiefs of Norway, who were, in fact, petty kings, disputed the ground inch by inch, and Harold was occupied for so many years ere consummating his victories, that his hair, growing ridiculously long and thick, led to his receiving the surname of "Hirsute."

Even after having sustained numerous defeats on the land, the fierce chiefs—all Vikings, and, like their adversaries, worshippers of Odin—taking to the sea, ravaged the coasts and islands, and excited the Norwegians to rebellion. Harold, however, resolved to do his work thoroughly, went on board his war-fleet, sailed in pursuit of his foes, and, having sunk several of their vessels, forced the others to seek refuge in the Hebrides, where the exiled war-chiefs—many of them ancestors of the Anglo-Norman nobles—consoled themselves with horns of potent drink, with schemes for conquering kingdoms, and with the hope of better fortune and brighter days.

It appears that in the long and arduous struggle which gave him the sole and undisputed sovereignty of Norway, Harold had been faithfully served by a Jarl named Rognvald; and it was to this Jarl's timber-palace, in Möre, that the victorious King repaired to celebrate the performance of his vow. Elate with triumphs, perhaps more signal than he had anticipated, Harold made himself quite at home; and having, before indulging in the Jarl's good cheer, refreshed himself with a bath and combed his hair, he requested Rognvald to cut off his superfluous locks.

"Now, Jarl," exclaimed Harold, when this operation was over, "methinks I should no longer be called 'Hirsute.'"

"No, King," replied Rognvald, struck with surprise and pleasure at the improvement in Harold's appearance; "your hair is now so beautiful that, instead of being surnamed 'Hirsute,' you must be surnamed 'Harfagher.'"

It happened that Rognvald, by his spouse Hilda, had a son named Rolf, or Roll, who was regarded as the foremost among the noble men of Norway. He was as remarkable for his sagacity in peace, and for his courage in war as for his bulk and stature, which were such that his feet touched the ground when he bestrode the horses of the country. From this peculiarity the son of Rognvald found himself under the necessity of walking when engaged in any enterprise on the land; and this circumstance led to his becoming generally known among his countrymen as Rolfganger.

But the sea appears to have been Rolfganger's favourite element. From his youth he had delighted in maritime adventures, and in such exploits as made the men of the north celebrated as sea-kings; and one day, when returning from a cruise in the Baltic, he, while off the coast of Wighen, shortened sail, and ventured on the exercise of a privilege of impressing provisions, long enjoyed by sea-kings, and known as "strandhug." But he found that, with Harold Harfagher on the throne, and stringent laws against piracy in force, the rights of property were not thus to be set at defiance. In fact, the peasants whose flocks had been carried away complained to the King; and the King, without regard to the offender's rank, ordered him to be tried by a Council of Justice.

Notwithstanding Rognvald's services to the King and his personal influence with Harold Harfagher, Rolfganger's chance of escaping sentence of banishment appeared slight. Moved, however, by maternal tenderness, Hilda, the spouse of Rognvald, made an effort to save her son. Presenting herself at the rude court of Norway, she endeavoured to soften the King's heart.

"King," said she, "I ask you, for my husband's sake, to pardon my son."

"Hilda," replied Harold, "it is impossible."

"What!" exclaimed Hilda, rearing herself to her full height; "am I to understand that the very name of our race has become hateful to you? Beware," continued she, speaking in accents of menace, "how you expel from the country and treat as an enemy a man of noble race. Listen, King, to what I tell you. It is dangerous to attack the wolf. When once he is angered, let the herd in the forest beware!"

But Harold Harfagher was determined to make the laws respected, and, notwithstanding Hilda's vague threats, a sentence of perpetual exile was passed against her tall son. Rolfganger, however, was not a man to give way to despair. Fitting out his ships in some rocky coves, still pointed out, he embarked at an island off the mouth of Stor-fiord, took a last look at his native country, with its rugged scenery, its rapids, cataracts, and fiords, forests of dark pine and mountains of white snow, herds of reindeer and clouds of birds, and, sailing for the Hebrides, placed himself at the head of the banished Norwegians, who speedily, under his auspices, resolved on a grand piratical enterprise, which they did not doubt would result in conquest and plunder.

Having cut their cable and given the reins to the great sea-horses—such was their expression—the Normans made an attempt to land in England, where Alfred the Great then reigned. Defeated in this attempt by the war-ships with which the Saxon King guarded the coast, they turned their prows towards France, and, entering the mouth of the Seine, sailed up the river, pillaging the banks as they proceeded, and, with little delay, found themselves admitted into Rouen, on which they fixed as their future capital.

It was the year 876 when Rolfganger and his comrades sailed up the Seine; and on becoming aware of their presence in France, Charles the Simple, who then, as heir of Charlemagne, wielded the French sceptre with feeble hand, summoned the warriors of his kingdom to stop the progress of the Normans. An army, accordingly, was mustered and sent, under the command of the Duke of France, to encounter the grim invaders. Before fighting, however, the French deemed it prudent to tempt the Normans with offers of lands and honours, on condition of their submitting to King Charles, and sent messengers to hold a parley. But the Normans treated the proposals with lofty disdain.

"Go back to your King," cried they, "and say that we will submit to no man, and that we will assert dominion over all we acquire by force of arms."

With this answer the ambassadors returned to the French camp, and ere long the Normans were attacked in their entrenchments. But Rolfganger and his comrades rushed to arms, and fought with such courage that the French suffered a complete defeat, and the Duke of France fell by the hand of a fisherman of Rouen.

The Normans, after vanquishing the host of King Charles, found themselves at liberty to pursue their voyage; and Rolfganger, availing himself of the advantage, sailed up the Seine, and laid siege to Paris. Baffled in his attempt to enter the city, the Norman hero consoled himself by taking Bayeux, Evreux, and other places, and gradually found himself ruling as a conqueror over the greater part of Neustria. At Evreux, he seized as his prey a lady named Popa, the daughter of Count Beranger, whom he espoused; and, becoming

gradually more civilized, he rendered himself wonderfully popular with the inhabitants of the district subject to his sway.

Meanwhile the French suffered so severely from the hostility of the Normans, that Charles the Simple recognised the expediency of securing the friendship of warriors so formidable. With this object he sent the Archbishop of Rouen to negotiate with Rolfganger, and the result was that the Sea-King consented to become a Christian, to wed Gisla, the daughter of Charles, and to live at peace with France, on condition that the French monarch ceded to him the province of Neustria.

Matters having reached this stage, preparations were made to ratify the treaty in a solemn manner, and for that purpose Charles the Simple and Rolfganger agreed to hold a conference at the village at St. Clair, on the green-margined Epte. Each was accompanied by a numerous train, and, while the French pitched their tents on one side of the river, the Normans pitched theirs on the other. At the appointed hour, however, Rolfganger crossed the Epte, approached the chair of state, placed his hand between those of the King, took, without kneeling, the oath of fealty, and then, supposing the ceremony was over, turned to depart.

"But," said the Frenchmen, "it is fitting that he who receives such a gift of territory should kneel before the King and kiss his foot."

"Nay," exclaimed Rolfganger; "never will I kneel before a mortal; never will I kiss the foot of any man."

The French counts, however, insisted on this ceremony, and Rolfganger, with an affectation of simplicity, made a sign to one of his comrades. The Norman, obeying his chief's gesture, immediately stepped forward and seized upon Charles's foot. Neglecting, however, to bend his own knee, he lifted the King's foot so high in the effort to bring it to his lips, that the chair of state was overturned, and the heir of Charlemagne lay sprawling on his back.



Rolfganger paying homage to Charles the Simple.

At this ludicrous incident the Normans raised shouts of derisive laughter, and the French held up their hands in horror. For a few moments all was confusion, but fortunately no serious quarrel resulted; and soon after, Rolfganger was received into the Christian Church, and married to Gisla, the King's daughter, at Rouen.

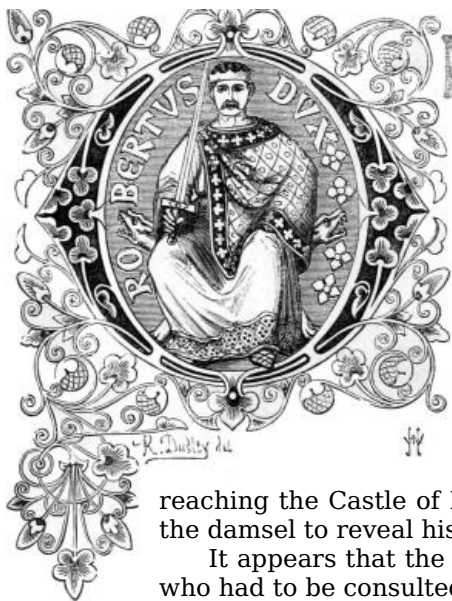
Rolfganger, having begun life anew as a Christian and a Count, divided the territory of Neustria among his comrades, and changed its name to Normandy. Maintaining internal order by severe laws, and administering affairs with vigour, he soon became famous as the most successful justiciary of the age. Such was the security felt under his government, that mechanics and labourers flocked to establish themselves in the newly-founded state, and the Normans applied themselves to the arts of peace with as much ardour as they had previously exhibited in their predatory enterprises.

Gradually adopting the French tongue, and refining their manners, Rolfganger's comrades and their heirs were metamorphosed from a band of pagan sea-kings and pirates into the most refined, the most chivalrous, and the most religious race in Christendom—orators from their cradle; warriors charging in chain mail, with resistless courage, at the head of fighting men; and munificent benefactors to religious houses, where holy monks kept alive the flame of ancient learning, and dispensed befitting charities to the indigent and poor.



II.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.



NE One glorious afternoon in the autumn of the year 1023, some damsels of humble rank were making merry and dancing joyously under the shade of trees in the neighbourhood of Falaise, when, homeward from the chase, accompanied by knights, squires, and grooms, with his bugle at his girdle, his hawk on his wrist, and his hounds running at his horse's feet, came, riding with feudal pride, that Duke of Normandy whom some, in consideration, perhaps, of substantial favours, called Robert the Magnificent, and whom others, in allusion to his violent temper, characterized as Robert the Devil.

Not being quite indifferent to female charms, Duke Robert reined up, and, as he did so, with an eye wandering from face to form and from form to face, the grace and beauty of one of the dancers arrested his attention and touched his heart. After expressing his admiration, and learning that she was the daughter of a tanner, the duke pursued his way. But he was more silent and meditative than usual; and, soon after

reaching the Castle of Falaise, he deputed the most discreet of his knights to go to the father of the damsel to reveal his passion and to plead his cause.

It appears that the negotiation was attended with considerable difficulty. At first, the tanner, who had to be consulted, treated the duke's proposals with scorn; but, after a pause, he agreed to take the advice of his brother, who, as a hermit in the neighbouring forest, enjoyed a high reputation for sanctity. The oracle's response was not quite consistent with his religious pretensions. Though dead, according to his own account, to the vanities of the world, the hermit would seem to have cherished a lingering sympathy with human frailty. At all events, he declared that subjects ought, in all things, to conform to the will of their prince; and the tanner, without further scruple, allowed his daughter to be conducted to the castle of Robert the Devil. In due time Arlette gave birth to a son, destined, as "William the Conqueror," to enrol his name in the annals of fame.

It was the 14th of October, 1024, when William the Norman drew his first breath in the Castle of Falaise. Arlette had previously been startled with a dream, portending that her son should reign over Normandy and England; and no sooner did William see the light than he gave a pledge of that energy which he was in after years to exhibit. Being laid upon the floor, he seized the rushes in his hands, and grasped them with such determination, that the matrons who were present expressed their astonishment, and congratulated Arlette on being the mother of such a boy.

"Be of good cheer," cried one of them, with prophetic enthusiasm; "for verily your son will prove a king!"

At first Robert the Devil did not deign to notice the existence of the boy who was so soon to wear the chaplet of golden roses that formed the ducal diadem of Normandy; but William, when a year old, was presented to the duke, and immediately won the feudal magnate's heart.

"Verily," said he, "this is a boy to be proud of. He is wonderfully like my ancestors, the old dukes of the Normans, and he must be nurtured with care."

From that time the mother and the child were dear to Duke Robert. Arlette was treated with as much state as if a nuptial benediction had been pronounced by the Archbishop of Rouen: and William was educated with more than the care generally bestowed, at that time, on the princes of Christendom. At eight he could read the "Commentaries of Cæsar;" and in after life he was in the habit of repeating a saying of one of the old counts of Anjou, "that a king without letters is a crowned ass."

It happened that, about the year 1033, Robert the Devil, reflecting on his manifold transgressions, and eager to make atonement, resolved on a penitential pilgrimage to Jerusalem. A serious obstacle, however, presented itself. The Norman nobles, with whom the descendant of Rolfganger was in high favour, on being convened, protested loudly against his departure.

"The state," they with one voice exclaimed, "will be in great peril if we are left without a chief."

"By my faith!" said Robert, "I will not leave you without a chief. I have a little bastard—I know he is my son; and he will grow a gallant man, if it please God. Take him, then, as your liege lord; for I declare him my heir, and bestow upon him the whole Duchy of Normandy."

No objections were raised to the Duke's proposal. In fact, everything seems to have gone more smoothly than could have been anticipated. William was formally presented to the assembly, and each feudal lord, placing his hand within those of the boy, took the oath of allegiance with such formalities as were customary.

Having arranged matters to his satisfaction, and placed his son under the protection of the court of France, Duke Robert took the pilgrim's scrip and staff, and, attended by a band of knights, set out for the Holy Sepulchre. On reaching Asia Minor he fell sick, and, dispensing with the company of his knights, hired four Saracens to carry him in a litter onward to Jerusalem. When approaching the Holy City, he was met by a palmer from Normandy, and waved his hand in token of recognition.

"Palmer," cried the duke, "tell my valiant lords that you have seen me carried towards Paradise on the backs of fiends."

The fate of Duke Robert was never clearly ascertained; but from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem it is certain that he did not return to Normandy. Within a year of his departure, indeed, news reached Rouen that the pilgrim-duke had breathed his last at Nice; and the Normans, though without implicitly believing the report, gradually came to think of him as one who had gone to his long home.

With news of the death of Robert the Magnificent came the crisis of the fate of "William the Bastard." Notwithstanding the oath taken with so much ceremony, the Norman barons were in no humour to submit to a boy—and to a boy, especially, who was illegitimate.

It was in vain that the guardians of young William exerted all their energies to establish his power. One pretender after another was put down by the strong hand. But the old Norman seigneurs, who had submitted with reluctance to the rule of legitimate princes, steeled their hearts against the humiliation of bending their knees to a bastard.

Among the nobles of Normandy, by far the haughtiest and most turbulent were the seigneurs of Bessi and Cotentin. These men were proud to excess of their Norwegian descent, and very tenacious of their Scandinavian traditions and customs. Indeed, they treated with something like contempt the conversion of the Normans to Christianity, carried pagan devices on their shields, and rode into battle with the old Scandinavian war-cry of "Thor aide!" Rejoicing, above all things, in the purity of their blood, these ancient seigneurs not only talked with ridicule of the idea of submitting to the son of Arlette, but formed a strong league, marshalled their fighting men, and prepared to display their banners and seize William's person.

When this conspiracy was formed, William had attained his seventeenth year, and, utterly unconscious of his danger, was residing in a castle unprepared for defence. The Counts of Bessi and Cotentin were making ready to mount their war-steeds and secure their prey, when one of their household fools stole away during the night, reached the castle where William was, clamoured for admittance in a loud voice, and would not be silenced till led to the young duke's presence. On getting audience of William, the fool hastily told him of his peril, and warned him to fly instantly.

"What say you?" asked William in surprise.

"I tell you," answered the fool, "that your enemies are coming, and, if you don't fly without delay, you'll be slain."

After some further questioning, William resolved to take the fool's advice, and mounting, spurred rapidly towards the Castle of Falaise. But he was imperfectly acquainted with the country; and he had not ridden far when he missed his way. William reined up his steed, and halted in perplexity and dismay; and his alarm was increased by hearing sounds as of enemies following at no great distance. Fortunately, at that moment, however, he met a peasant, who, by pointing out the way to the fugitive, and setting the pursuers off in a wrong direction, enabled the duke to reach Falaise in safety.

At that time, Henry, grandson of Hugh Capet, figured as King of France, and wore the diadem which his grandsire had torn from the head of the heirs of Charlemagne. In other days, Henry had been protected against the enmity of an imperious mother and a turbulent brother by Robert the Magnificent; and when William hastened to the French court, Henry, moved by the young duke's tale of distress, and remembering Robert's services, promised to give all the aid in his power. Ere long he redeemed his pledge by leading a French army against the insurgents. The result was the defeat of the rebel lords in a pitched battle at the "Val des Dunes," near Caen, and a victory which, for a time, gave security to Arlette's son on the ducal throne of Rollo.

William's youth was so far fortunate. His friends regarded him with idolatry; and his enemies, forced to admit that he seemed not unworthy of his position, became quiescent. The day on which he mounted his horse without placing foot in stirrup was hailed with joy; and the day on which he received knighthood was kept as a holiday throughout Normandy.

As time passed on, William showed himself very ambitious, and somewhat vindictive. He made war on his neighbours in Maine and Brittany on slender provocations, and resented without mercy any offensive allusion to his maternal parentage. One day, when he was besieging the town of Alençon, the inhabitants, to annoy him, beat leather skins on the walls, in allusion to the occupation of his grandfather, and shouted, "Hides, hides!" William, in bitter rage, revenged himself by causing the hands and feet of all his prisoners to be cut off, and thrown by the slingers over the walls into the town.

But, whatever William's faults, he was loved and respected by his friends. Nor could the duke's worst enemy deny that he looked a prince of whom any people might well have been proud. In person he was scarce above the ordinary height; but so grand was his air, and so majestic his bearing, that he seemed to tower above ordinary mortals. His strength of arm was prodigious; and few were the warriors in that age who could even bend his bow. His face was sufficiently handsome to command the admiration of women, and his aspect sufficiently stern to awe men into submission to his will. No prince in Europe was more capable of producing an impression on a beholder than, at the age of twenty-five, was the warrior destined to attempt and accomplish that mighty exploit since celebrated as the Norman Conquest of England.



III.



Sweyn struck by the hand of death.

THE DANES IN ENGLAND.

At the time when William the Norman was making good his claim to the Dukedom won by Rolfganger, the Saxons had been settled in England for nearly six centuries. During that long period, however, the country had frequently been exposed to the horrors of civil war and to the inroads of those ruthless Northmen, who "replunged into barbarism the nations over which they swept."

It was about the year 451 that the Saxons, with huge axes on their shoulders, set foot on the shores of Britain. At that period—when the ancient Britons, left by the Roman conquerors at the mercy of the Picts and Scots, were complaining that the barbarians drove them to the sea, and that the sea drove them back to the barbarians—there anchored off the coast of Kent three bulky ships, commanded by Hengist and Horsa, two Saxon chiefs, who claimed descent from Woden, their god of war, and boasted of some military skill acquired when fighting in the ranks of Rome. From Hengist and Horsa, still worshippers of Thor and Woden, the Britons implored aid against the Picts and Scots; and the Saxon chiefs, calling over a band of their countrymen, speedily drove the painted Caledonians to their mountains and fastnesses.

After having rescued the Britons from their northern neighbours, the Saxons did not exhibit any haste to leave the country which they had delivered. Indeed, these mighty sons of Woden rather seemed ambitious of making Britain their own; and Hengist, having settled in Lincolnshire, gave a great feast. Among other guests who on this occasion came to the Saxon's stronghold was Vortigern, a King among the Britons, and, his eye being arrested and his heart inflamed by the grace and beauty of Rowena, the daughter of Hengist, while she presented the wassail-cup on bended knee, he became so desperately enamoured that he never rested till the fair and fascinating Saxon was his wife. After the marriage of Vortigern and Rowena, the Saxons plainly intimated their intention of being masters of Britain, and, the sword having been drawn, the two races—the Saxons and the Celts—commenced that struggle which lasted for more than a hundred and fifty years, during which King Arthur and the Knights of his Round Table are said to have wrought those marvellous exploits which have been celebrated by chroniclers and bards.

At length, however, the Saxons, in spite of prolonged resistance, established their supremacy, and, during the existence of the Saxon Heptarchy, which included the whole country, subject to seven Princes, the conquerors of Britain became converts to Christianity, and members of the Catholic Church; and, abandoning the worship of Thor and Woden, they endeavoured to show their zeal by erecting churches and monasteries.

As time passed on, Egbert, King of Wessex, in 827 prevailed over all rivals, formed the separate provinces into a single state, and reigned as King of England. But while the Saxons were still engaged in putting down the Celts and cutting each other to pieces, a band of grim adventurers one morning sailed into the port of Teignmouth. In the discharge of his duty, a Saxon magistrate proceeded to the shore to learn whence they came and what they wanted. Without deigning an answer, the strangers slew the magistrate and his attendants, plundered the town, carried the booty to their ships, and then, hoisting their sails, took their departure. This was the first appearance in England of those Danes who were, ere long, to rend the Anglo-Saxon empire in pieces, and place their King on the English throne.

In fact, from the time of this their first visit to the English coast, the Danes were constantly finding their way to England, and signalling their inroads by every kind of barbarity. They were the most reckless of pirates and pagans, calling the ocean their home and the tempest their servant, and delighting to shed the blood of Christian priests, to desecrate churches, and to stable their steeds in chapels. In their cruel inroads, they tossed infants on the points of their spears, and mocked the idea of tears and mourning. For them,

indeed, death had no terrors, for they believed themselves secure, especially if they fell in battle, of being conveyed to Valhalla; and gloried in the prospect of feasting in the halls of Odin, waited on by lovely damsels, and quaffing beer out of huge cups of horn. Settling gradually in Northumberland, East Anglia, and Mercia, the Danes occupied the whole country north of the Thames. Only one province remained to the Saxons, that of Wessex, which then extended from the mouth of the Thames to the Bristol Channel.

Such was the state of affairs when, in 871, a Saxon King, named Ethelred, was slain in a conflict with the Danes, and was succeeded by his son, Alfred, afterwards Alfred the Great, but then a youth of twenty-two. At first, the courage and ability of the young King inspired the Saxons with high hopes. But Alfred, puffed up with conceit of his superior knowledge, despised those whom he governed, and his contemptuous indifference to their opinions and wishes rendered him ere long so very unpopular that when, after having reigned seven years, he was under the necessity of preparing against an inroad of the Danes, he found himself, to his mortification, almost unsupported. In vain the King, after the fashion of his ancestors, sent messengers of war to town and hamlet, bearing the arrow and naked sword, and proclaiming, "Let each man that is not a nothing leave his house and come!" So few obeyed the summons that Alfred, deeply mortified, abandoned his throne, and sought refuge in Cornwall.

It was at this dismal period that Alfred found shelter in the hut of a swineherd, and, while examining his arrows, allowed the cakes to burn. "Stupid man!" cried the swineherd's wife, unaware of his quality, "you will not take the trouble to prevent my bread from burning, though you're always so glad to eat it."

But, ere long, Alfred emerged from his obscure lurking-place, visited the Danish camp disguised as a harper, and, while entertaining the rude Northmen with music and song, became so well acquainted with the situation of affairs that he took immediate steps to restore the old Saxon nationality. Summoning fighting men of the Saxon race from every quarter, Alfred met the Danes in the field, vanquished them in eight battles, and finally reduced them to submission and obedience.

After the death of Alfred the Great, who had, after his restoration, reigned with lustre and glory, Ethelstane, pursuing Alfred's conquests, recovered York, crossed the Tweed, defeated the Danes and Cambrians at Bamborough, and brought the whole island under his dominion. For some time after Ethelstane's triumphs, the Saxons were allowed unmolestedly to sow and reap, to buy and sell, to marry and give in marriage.

In 994, however, Sweyn, King of Denmark, turned his eyes covetously towards England, where Ethelred the Unready then reigned; and forthwith, in company with Olaf, King of Norway, undertook an expedition. Despairing of opposing the invaders with success, Ethelred bribed them with a large sum of money to retire, and both of them withdrew, after having sworn not again to trouble England. Nevertheless, in 1001, Sweyn, in whom the spirit of the pirate was strong, reappeared; and the Saxon King, seeing no way of getting rid of such a foe except by bribery, agreed to pay an annual tribute, to be levied throughout England under the name of "Dane-gold."

Sweyn, to whom an arrangement that was every year to replenish his treasury seemed satisfactory, returned to Denmark. Many Danes, however, remained in England, and conducted themselves with such intolerable insolence that the Saxons projected a general massacre of their unwelcome guests, and fixed on St. Brice's Day, 1002, for the execution of their hoarded vengeance. Ethelred, who, having lost his first wife, Elgira, the mother of Edmund Ironsides, had espoused Emma, sister of the Duke of Normandy, and who deemed himself secure in the alliance of the heir of Rolfanger, unhappily consented to the massacre, and, on the appointed day, the Saxons applied themselves to the work of extermination, little dreaming what would be the consequences.

No sooner did Sweyn hear of the massacre of St. Brice, than he vowed revenge, and, embarking with a mighty force, landed in England, and commenced a work of bloodshed, carnage, sacrilege, destruction, and every kind of enormity. Ethelred, after a vain attempt at resistance, fled to Normandy, with Emma his wife, and their two sons, Alfred and Edward; while Sweyn, left a victor, caused himself to be proclaimed King of England. But he did not live long to enjoy his conquests. One day, while feasting at Thetford, drinking to excess, and threatening to spoil the monastery of St. Edmund, he suddenly felt as if he had been violently struck, and the chiefs, who sat around in a circle, observed that his face underwent a rapid change.

"Oh!" exclaimed Sweyn, gasping for breath, "I have been struck by this St. Edmund with a sword!"

"Nay," said the Danish chiefs, who did not share their King's superstitious feeling, "there is no St. Edmund here."

Death, however, seemed written on Sweyn's face, and horror took possession of his soul. After suffering terrible tortures for three days, he breathed his last, and left his claims and pretensions to his son Canute, who, coming victoriously out of that struggle with Edmund Ironsides, in which the royal Saxon, after repeatedly defeating the Danes, perished by the hand of an assassin, succeeded to the English throne, where he was destined to render his name memorable and his memory illustrious as Canute the Great.

It appears that, during these unfortunate struggles with the Danes, Ethelred and his son Edmund Ironsides relied much on the services of a man whom the Saxon King delighted to honour, and whom English historians have since branded as one of the most infamous traitors that ever breathed English air. This was Edric Streone, who had obtained from Ethelred the Earldom of Mercia, and who evinced his gratitude for that and countless favours by betraying his benefactor and suborning a ruffian to stab his benefactor's son.

After Ironsides' murder, Edric hastened to Canute and claimed a reward. Not unwilling, perhaps, to profit by the treachery, but abhorring the traitor, the Danish conqueror had recourse to dissimulation, and spoke to Edric in language which raised the villain's hopes.

"Depend upon it," said Canute, "I will set your head higher than any man's in the realm;" and, by way of redeeming his promise, he soon after ordered the traitor to be beheaded.

"King," cried Edric, in amazement, "remember you not your promise?"

"I do," answered Canute, with grim humour. "I promised to set your head higher than other men's, and I will keep my word." And having ordered Edric to be executed, he caused the body to be flung into the Thames, and the head to be placed high over the highest of the gates of London.

After having won considerable popularity among the Saxons by the execution of Edric Streone, Canute, who figured as King of Denmark and Norway, as well as England, endeavoured to strengthen his position by a matrimonial alliance. With this view the royal Dane wedded Emma of Normandy, the widow of Ethelred; and

it was supposed that, at his death, Hardicanute, the son whom he had by this fair descendant of Rolfganger, was to succeed to the English throne.

In 1035, however, when Canute the Great went the way of all flesh, and when his remains were laid in the Cathedral of Winchester, there was living in London one of his illegitimate sons, named Harold, who, from his swiftness in running, was surnamed Harefoot. Immediately, Harold Harefoot claimed the crown, and a contest took place between his adherents and those of Hardicanute, who was then in Denmark. Harold Harefoot, however, being favoured by the Danes of London, carried the day; and finding that the Archbishop refused to perform the ceremony of coronation, he placed the crown on his head with his own hand, became an avowed enemy of the Church, lived as one "who had abjured Christianity," and displayed his contempt for religious rites by having his table served and sending out his dogs to hunt at the hour when people were assembling for worship.

After reigning four years, however, he breathed his last, and was buried at Westminster.

When Harold Harefoot died, Hardicanute was at Bruges with his mother, the Norman Emma, and he immediately sailed for England. No attempt seems to have been made to restore the Saxon line. Indeed, Hardicanute found himself received with general joy, and commenced his career as King of England by causing the body of his half-brother to be dug out of his tomb at Westminster and thrown into the Thames. Hardicanute then abandoned himself to gluttony and drunkenness, and scandalously oppressed the nation over which he swayed the sceptre. His career, however, was brief, and his end was so sudden, that some have ascribed it to foul play.

It was the 8th of June, 1041, and Hardicanute was celebrating the wedding of a Danish chief at Lambeth. Nobody expected a catastrophe, for he was still little more than twenty, and his constitution was remarkably strong. While revelling and carousing, however, he suddenly tossed up his arms and dropped on the floor a corpse. Some ascribed the death of Hardicanute to poison, but none lamented his fate; and, by the Saxons, the event was rather hailed as a sign for the restoration of the Saxon line and the heirs of Alfred.

IV.

EARL GODWIN.



ONE morning, at the time when Edmund Ironside and Canute were struggling desperately for the kingdom of England, and when the son of Ethelred had just defeated the son of Sweyn in a great battle in Warwickshire, a Danish captain—Ulf by name—separated from his men, and, flying to save his life, entered a wood with the paths of which he was quite unacquainted. Halting in one of the glades, and looking round in extreme perplexity, he felt relieved by the approach of a young Saxon, in the garb of a herdsman, driving his father's oxen to the pastures.

"Thy name, youth," said Ulf to the herdsman, saluting him after the fashion of his country.

"I," answered the herdsman, "am Godwin, son of Wolwoth; and thou, if I mistake not, art one of the Danes."

"It is true," said Ulf. "I have wandered about all night, and now I beg you tell me how far I am from the Danish camp, or from the ships

stationed in the Severn, and by what road I can reach them."

"Mad," exclaimed Godwin, "must be the Dane who looks for safety at the hands of a Saxon."

"Nevertheless," said Ulf, "I entreat thee to leave thy herd and guide me to the camp, and I promise that thou shalt be richly rewarded."

"The way is long," said Godwin, shaking his head, "and perilous would be the attempt. The peasants, emboldened by victory, are everywhere up in arms, and little mercy would they show either to thee or thy guide."

"Accept this, youth," said the Dane, coaxingly, as he drew a gold ring from his finger.

"No," answered Godwin, after examining the jewel with curiosity, "I will not take the ring, but I will give you what aid I can."

Having thus promised his assistance to Ulf, Godwin took the Danish captain under his guidance, and led him to Wolwoth's cottage hard by, and, when night came, prepared to conduct him, by bye-paths, to the camp. They were about to depart when Wolwoth, with a tear in his eye, laid his hand in that of the Dane.

"Stranger," said the old man, "know that it is my only son who trusts to your good faith. For him there will be no safety among his countrymen from the moment he has served you as a guide. Present him, therefore, to Canute, that he may be taken into your king's service."

"Fear not, Saxon," said Ulf, "I will do more than you ask for your son. I will treat him as my own."

The Dane and Godwin then left Wolwoth's cottage, and, under the guidance of the young herdsman, the Dane reached the camp in safety. Nor was his promise forgotten. On entering his tent, Ulf seated Godwin on a seat as highly-raised as his own, and, from that hour, treated him with paternal kindness.

It was under such romantic circumstances, if we may credit ancient chroniclers and modern historians, that Godwin entered on that marvellous career which was destined to conduct him to more than regal power in England. Presented by Ulf to Canute, the son of Wolwoth soon won the favour of the Danish king; nor was he of a family whose members ever allowed any scrupulous adherence to honour to stand in the way of ambitious aspirations. Indeed, he was nephew of that Edric Streone who had betrayed Ethelred the Unready, and whom Canute had found it necessary to sacrifice to the national indignation; and it has been observed that, "even as kinsman to Edric, who, whatever his crimes, must have retained a party it was wise to conciliate, Godwin's favour with Canute, whose policy would lead him to show marked distinction to any able Saxon follower, ceases to be surprising."

But, however that may have been, Godwin, protected by the king and inspired by ambition, rose rapidly to fame and fortune. Having accompanied Canute to Denmark, and afterwards signalized his military skill by a great victory over the Norwegians, he returned to England with the reputation of being, of all others, the man

whom the Danish King delighted to honour. No distinction now appeared too high to be conferred on the son of Wolwoth. Ere long he began to figure as Earl of Wessex, and husband of Thyra, one of Canute's daughters.

Godwin's marriage with the daughter of Canute did not increase the Saxon Earl's popularity. Indeed, Thyra was accused of sending young Saxons as slaves to Denmark, and regarded with much antipathy. One day, however, Thyra was killed by lightning; soon after, her only son was drowned in the Thames; and Godwin lost no time in supplying the places of his lady and his heir.

Again at liberty to gratify his ambition by a royal alliance, he wedded Githa, daughter of Sweyne, Canute's successor on the throne of Denmark; and the Danish princess, as time passed on, made her husband father of six sons—Sweyne, Harold, Tostig, Gurth, Leofwine, and Wolwoth—besides two daughters—Edith and Thyra—all destined to have their names associated in history with that memorable event known as the Norman Conquest.

Meanwhile, Godwin was taking that part in national events which he hoped would raise him to still higher power among his countrymen, when Canute the Great breathed his last, and was laid at rest in the cathedral at Winchester. Then there arose a dispute about the sovereignty of England between Hardicanute and Harold Harefoot. The South declared for Hardicanute, the North for Harefoot. Both had their chances; but Harold Harefoot being in England at the time, as we have seen, while Hardicanute was in Denmark, had decidedly the advantage over his rival.

Godwin, however, favouring Hardicanute, invited Queen Emma to England. He assumed the office of Protector, and received the oaths of the men of the South. But for once the son of Wolwoth found fortune adverse to his policy; and, having waited till Emma made peace with Harold Harefoot, the potent Earl also swore obedience, and allowed the claims of Hardicanute to rest.

But when time passed over, and affairs took a turn, when Harold Harefoot died, and Hardicanute, having come to England, ascended the throne, excited the national discontent by imposing excessive taxes, and was perpetually alarmed, in the midst of his debaucheries, with intelligence of tax-gatherers murdered and cities in insurrection, it became pretty clear that the Danish domination must, ere long, come to an end. Then Godwin, who had ever a keen eye to his interest, doubtless watched the signs of the times with all the vigilance demanded by the occasion, and marked well the course of events which were occurring to place the game in his hands. Accordingly, when, in the summer of 1041, Hardicanute expired so suddenly at Lambeth, while taking part in the wedding festivities of one of his Danish chiefs, Godwin perceived that the time had arrived for the restoration of Saxon royalty. With his characteristic energy, he raised his standard, and applied himself to the business. His success was even more signal than he anticipated. Indeed, if he had chosen, he might have ascended the throne of Alfred and of Canute. But his policy was to increase his own power without exciting the envy of others. With this view he assembled a great council at Gillingham. Acting by his advice, the assembled chiefs resolved on calling to the throne, not the true heir of England—the son of Edmund Ironsides, who resided in Hungary, and probably had a will of his own—but an Anglo-Saxon prince who had been long absent from England—an exile known to be inoffensive in character as well as interesting from misfortune, and with whom Godwin doubtless believed he could do whatever he pleased. At all events, it was as King-maker, and not as King, that the ennobled son of Wolwoth aspired, at this crisis, to influence the destinies of England.

V.

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

While Duke William was overcoming his enemies in Normandy, and Earl Godwin was putting an end to the domination of the Danes in England, there might have been observed about the Court of Rouen a man of mild aspect and saintly habits, who had reached the age of forty. He was an exile, a Saxon prince, and one of the heirs of Alfred.

It was about the opening of the eleventh century that King Ethelred, then a widower, and father of Edmund Ironsides, espoused Emma, sister of Richard, Duke of Normandy. From this marriage sprung two sons and a daughter. The sons were named Edward and Alfred; the name of the daughter was Goda.

Edward was a native of England, and drew his first breath, in the year 1002, at Islip, near Oxford. At an early age, however, when the massacre of the Danes on the day of St. Brice resulted in the exile of Ethelred, Edward, with the other children of Ethelred and Emma, found refuge at the Court of Normandy. It was there that the youth of Edward was passed; it was there that his tastes were formed; and it was there that, brooding over the misfortunes of his country and his race, he sought consolation in those saintly theories and romantic practices which distinguished him so widely from the princes of that fierce and adventurous period which preceded the first Crusade.

When Ethelred the Unready breathed his last, in 1016, and Canute the Great demanded the widowed queen in marriage, and Emma, delighted at the prospect of still sharing the throne of England, threw herself into the arms of the royal Dane, her two sons, Edward and Alfred, remained for a time securely in Normandy. Indeed, they do not appear to have been by any means pleased at the idea of their mother uniting her fate with a man whom they had regarded as their father's mortal foe. However, as years passed over, the sons of Ethelred received an invitation from Harold Harefoot to visit their native country, and they did not think fit to decline. At all events, it appears that Alfred proceeded to England, and that he went attended by a train of six hundred Normans.

On arriving in England, Alfred was immediately invited by Harold Harefoot to come to London, and, not suspecting any snare, he hastened to present himself at court. No sooner, however, had the Saxon prince reached Guildford than he was met by Earl Godwin, conducted under some pretence into the Castle, separated from his attendants—who were massacred by hundreds—and then put in chains, to be conveyed to the Isle of Ely, where he was deprived of his sight, and so severely treated that he died of misery and pain.

Edward, who had remained in Normandy, soon learned with horror that his brother had been murdered; and when Hardicanute succeeded Harold Harefoot, he hastened to England to demand justice on Godwin. Hardicanute received his half-brother with kindness, promised that he should have satisfaction, and summoned the Earl of Wessex to answer for the murder of Prince Alfred. But Godwin's experience was great, and his craft was equal to his experience. Without scruple, he offered to swear that he was entirely guiltless of young Alfred's death, and at the same time presented Hardicanute with a magnificent galley, ornamented

with gilded metal, and manned by eighty warriors, every one of whom had a gilded axe on his left shoulder, a javelin in his right hand, and bracelets on each arm. The young Danish king looked upon this gift as a most conclusive argument in favour of Godwin's innocence—and the son of Wolwoth was saved.

Edward returned to Normandy, and passed the next five years of his life in monkish austerities. But when the Danish domination came to an end, and the Grand Council was held at Gillingham, Godwin, as if to atone for consigning one of the sons of Ethelred to a tomb, hastened to place the other on a throne. Edward, then in his fortieth year, was accordingly elected king, and, on reaching England, was crowned at Winchester, in that sacred edifice where his illustrious ancestors and their Danish foes reposed in peace together.

It is related by the chroniclers of this period, that when Edward, arrayed in royal robes, and accompanied by bishops and nobles, was on the point of entering the church to be crowned, a man afflicted with leprosy sat by the gate.

"What do you there?" cried the king's friends. "Move out of the way."

"Nay," said Edward, meekly, "suffer him to remain."

"King!" cried the leper, in a loud voice, "I conjure you, by the living God, to have me carried into the church, that I may pray to be made whole!"

"Unworthy should I be of heaven if I did not," Edward replied; and, stooping forward, he raised the leprous man on his back, bore him into the church, and prayed earnestly, and not in vain, for his restoration. Roger Hoveden even asserts that the king's prayers were heard, and that the leper was made whole from that hour. But, in any case, there can be no doubt that on the fierce nobles and people of his realm such a scene as this must have produced a strange impression. It was believed that Edward's sanctity gave him the power to heal; and belief in the influence which his hand was in this way supposed to have, led to the custom of English sovereigns touching for the king's evil.

In fact, however, people soon discovered that Edward was more of a monk than a monarch; and far happier would he have been if he had remained in Normandy, and sought refuge from the rude and wicked world in the quiet of a cloister. It soon appeared, moreover, that the son of Ethelred was intended to be king but in name; and that the son of Wolwoth was to be virtually sovereign of England. The plan was not unlikely to succeed. Indeed, Edward was so saintly and so simple, that Godwin might, to the hour of his death, have exercised all real power, had he not, with the vulgar ambition natural to such a man, risked everything for the chance of his posterity occupying the English throne.

It appears that Godwin, by his marriage with Githa, the Danish princess, had, besides six sons, two daughters, Edith and Thyra. Edith, at the time of the restoration of the Saxon monarchy, is described as having been young, beautiful, and remarkable for her learning. It can hardly be doubted that her character and disposition contrasted favourably with the other members of the family that then domineered in England; and she was praised for not resembling them. "As the thorn produces the rose," people said, "so Godwin produced Edith."

The idea of making his daughter the wife of a king, and perhaps living to see his grandson wear a crown, fired Godwin's imagination; and it is even said that Edward, before leaving Normandy, was forced to swear, in the most solemn manner, that, if elected, he would marry Edith. But however that may have been, the imperious Earl insisted on the meek king becoming his son-in-law; and a man who, even in the days of his youth, had been much too saintly to think of matrimony, was compelled, when turned of forty, to espouse a woman on the hands of whose father was his brother's blood, and to whose family he had, naturally enough, a thorough aversion.



VI.



The judgment of God on Godwin.

THE KING AND THE KING-MAKER.

It was 1042 when Edward—afterwards celebrated as the Confessor—found himself placed by the hand of Godwin on the throne of his ancestors, and provided with a wife and queen in the person of Edith, Godwin's daughter. At first, matters went pleasantly enough, and, indeed, appeared promising. But no real friendship could exist between the Anglo-Saxon king and the man whom he regarded as his brother's murderer. Ere six years passed, Godwin and the king were foes, and England was the scene of discord and disorder.

At that time the prejudice of the Anglo-Saxons against foreigners was peculiarly strong. Before returning to the land of his birth, therefore, Edward was under the necessity of promising that he should bring with him no considerable number of Normans. The condition was observed in so far that few Normans did accompany Edward to England. But no sooner was he seated on the throne, and in a position to grant favours, than his palace was open to all comers; and guests from the court of Rouen flocked to the court of Westminster.

When Edward's Norman friends presented themselves, they met with the most cordial welcome; and being, for the most part, men of adventurous talents, they soon began to look upon the country as their property, and grasped at every office which the king had to bestow. Ere long, Norman priests found themselves bishops in England; Norman warriors figured as governors of English castles; and the court became so thoroughly Normanized, that the national dress, language, and manners, went wholly out of fashion.

The Anglo-Saxon nobles do not appear to have manifested any jealousy of the king's friends. In fact, their inclination was quite the reverse. The polish and refinement of their new associates excited their admiration, and they hastened to adopt the Norman fashions. Throwing aside their long cloaks, they assumed the short Norman mantle, with its wide sleeves; they neglected their native tongue to imitate, as well as they could, the language spoken by Norman prelates and warriors; and, instead of signing their names, as of old, they began to affix seals to their deeds. The Anglo-Saxon dress, manners, and language were no longer accounted worthy of men who pretended to rank and breeding.

Meanwhile, Godwin not only steadily abstained from adopting the Norman fashions, but looked upon the king's foreign friends as mortal foes, and regarded everything about them with hatred. He felt, with pain, that they kept alive the memory of Prince Alfred and their murdered countrymen, and he perceived with uneasiness that each new arrival had the effect of weakening his influence with the king. It was under such circumstances that he set his face against foreigners, and found means of exciting the popular prejudices against the man whom, for selfish purposes, he had, to the exclusion of the true heir, placed on the English throne. The multitude, ever ready to be deluded, took precisely the view Godwin wished, and began to speak of the pampered and overgrown adventurer as a neglected and long-suffering patriot.

"Is it astonishing," said one, "that the author and support of Edward's reign should be indignant at seeing new men from a foreign nation raised above him?"

"And yet," observed another, "never does he utter a harsh word to the man whom he himself created king."

"Curse all Norman favourites!" exclaimed a third.

"And," cried a fourth, "long life to the great chief—to the chief magnanimous by sea and land!"

While such was the situation of affairs, Eustace, Count of Boulogne, happened, in the year 1048, to come as a guest to England. Eustace was husband of Edward's sister, Goda; and the king naturally strove to make the visit of his brother-in-law as pleasant as possible. After remaining for some time at the English court,

however, Eustace prepared to return home; but on reaching Dover, where he intended to embark, an awkward quarrel took place between his attendants and the townsmen. A fray was the consequence; and in a conflict which took place, twenty of the count's men were unfortunately slain. Angry and indignant at the slaughter of his followers, Eustace, instead of embarking, turned back to demand redress, and hastened to lay his complaint before the king, who was then keeping his court in the castle of Gloucester.

Edward, ashamed of the riot, and horrified at the bloodshed, promised that condign punishment should be inflicted on the perpetrators of the outrage, and deputed the duty to Godwin, in whose earldom the town of Dover was included.

"Go without delay," said Edward, "and chastise by a military execution, those who have attacked my relative with arms in their hands, and who have disturbed the peace of the country."

"Nay," said Godwin, "it is not right to condemn, without hearing, men whom it is your duty to protect."

Nettled by the tone of Godwin's refusal, and aware of the refractory spirit by which the earl was animated, Edward gave way to anger, and convoked a great council at Gloucester. Before this assembly Godwin was summoned to answer for his conduct. Instead of appearing, the Earl of Wessex mustered an army with the object of setting Edward at defiance. England seemed on the verge of a civil war, but a peace was patched up by the mediation of Siward, Earl of Northumberland, and Leofric, Earl of Mercia, husband of that Godiva whose equestrian feat at Coventry the grateful citizens have since so often commemorated. But the efforts of Siward and Leofric proved vain. The king and Godwin indeed pretended to be reconciled. But neither was sincere. Ere long, the quarrel broke out afresh with great bitterness; and the earl, finding the king much more resolute than could have been expected, consulted his safety by escaping with his wife and family to Flanders.

Freed from the presence of his imperious father-in-law, and feeling himself at length a king in reality, Edward passed sentence of outlawry on Godwin and his sons, seized on their earldoms, and confiscated their property. Even Edith, the queen, did not escape her share of the adversity of her house. After being deprived of her lands and money she was sent to a convent in Hampshire, and condemned in a cloister to sigh with regret over the ambition that had united her fate with that of a man who had regarded her with a sentiment akin to horror.

"It is not meet," said Edward's Norman friends, ironically, "that while this woman's family undergo all the evils of exile, she herself should sleep upon down."

"But the King's wife!" remonstrated the Anglo-Saxon nobles.

"Tush!" answered the Normans, significantly; "she is his wife only in name."

While Godwin was an exile in Flanders, William, Duke of Normandy, paid a visit to the King of England. Edward received his kinsman with great affection, entertained him magnificently, and treated him with such distinction as encouraged the Norman Duke's most ambitious hopes. Indeed, it has been said that "William appeared in England more a king than Edward himself, and that his ambitious mind was not slow in conceiving the hope of becoming such in reality." Nor did William return to Normandy without tokens of Edward's good will. Magnificent presents of armour, horses, dogs, and falcons were the substantial pledges with which the monk-king accompanied his assurances of friendship for the warrior-duke.

But, meantime, Godwin grew weary of exile and eager for revenge. Impatient to return to England, and to wreak his fury on the Norman favourites, the banished earl resolved, at all hazards, on leaving Flanders. Having obtained ships from Count Baldwin, he sailed from Bruges; and, soon after Edward had witnessed the departure of his martial kinsman for Normandy, the fleet of his outlawed father-in-law sailed up the Thames and anchored at Southwark.

Edward was in London when Godwin's fleet appeared in this menacing attitude; and, assembling his council, the king, with a flash of ancestral spirit, evinced a strong desire to oppose force to force. But, though the Norman courtiers were anxious to come to blows with their mortal foe, the king was the only Englishman who participated in their sentiments. Not only were the citizens of London all ready to take up arms for the outlawed earl; but even Siward and Leofric, the chiefs who had ever stood in opposition to Godwin, were in favour of his restoration; and the soldiers who formed the royal army were animated by such an antipathy to the foreign favourites, that it was felt they could not be depended on in the event of matters being pushed to extremity. In these circumstances, the king reluctantly consented to refer the question to a council of nobles; and this council, presided over by Robert Stigand, Bishop of East Anglia, decided that the whole case should be submitted for judgment to the Witenagemote, the National Council of the Anglo-Saxons.

On learning what had occurred, the Norman courtiers perceived that there was no hope for them but in escape. Without hesitation, therefore, they mounted their horses, and spurred from the palace of Westminster. Headed by Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, and William, Bishop of London, a troop of Norman knights and gentlemen dashed eastward, fought their way through the city, and, making for the coast, embarked in fishing-boats; others fled to northern castles, held by Hugh the Norman, and Osbert, surnamed Pentecost; and thence, with Hugh and Osbert, made for the north, crossed the Tweed, and sought security on Scottish soil. No mercy, they well knew, could be expected at the hands of Godwin, and quite as little at the hands of a multitude believing in his patriotism and exasperated against his foes.

Meanwhile, the Witenagemote having been convoked, and all the best men in the country having assembled to take part in the deliberations, Godwin spoke in his own defence. The proceedings, as had been foreseen from the beginning, resulted in the revocation of the sentence of outlawry against the earl and his sons, and restoration to their lands and honours. An exception was, indeed, made in the case of Godwin's eldest son, Sweyn, who, having debauched the abbess of Leominster, and murdered his kinsman, Earl Beorn, was deemed unworthy of the company of Christians and warriors. But Sweyn relieved his family from all awkwardness on this point by voluntarily undertaking a penitential pilgrimage on foot to the Holy Sepulchre.

Matters having been thus arranged, the king accepted from Godwin the oath of peace; and Godwin, as hostages for his good faith, placed his youngest son, Wolnoth, and Haco, the son of Sweyn, in the hands of the king, who sent them to the court of Rouen. At the same time, William, the Norman Bishop of London, was, by the king's wish, recalled to England; but Robert, the Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, was not so fortunate. Stigand, instituted as Robert's successor, took possession of the pallium which the Norman prelate had left behind in his sudden flight.

When her kinsmen were restored to England, Edith, the queen, brought from her convent in Hampshire,

once more appeared at the palace of Westminster; and the house of Godwin seemed more firmly established than ever. The king, ceasing to struggle against the earl's influence, occupied his attention with completing the abbey which he had been building at Westminster, and Leofric and Siward seemed to bow to their great rival's power and popularity. But the days of Godwin were numbered.

It was the spring of 1054; Edward was holding his court in the castle of Winchester; and Godwin and his sons were among the guests. One day, when the feast was spread, and the king and the earl were seated at the board, an attendant, who was stepping forward to pour wine into a cup, happened to stumble with one foot, and quickly recovered himself with the other. Edward smiled; and Godwin, willing to give a hint to his sons, who were perpetually brawling with each other, turned towards them.

"Well," remarked the earl, "you see how the brother has come to the support of the brother."

"Ay," said the king, in a significant tone; "brother needs the aid of brother; and would to God my brother Alfred yet lived to aid me!"

"Oh, king!" exclaimed Godwin, startled and irritated, "why is it that, on the slightest recollection of your brother, you ever look so angrily on me?"

Edward digned no reply; but his pale brow grew stern, and his withered cheek flushed with resentment.

"If," continued the earl, taking a piece of bread in his hand—"if I contributed, even indirectly, to your brother's death, may the God of Heaven grant this may choke me!"

With these words Godwin put the bread into his mouth; and, as he did so, and as the eyes of the king were bent intently on his countenance, the earl fell from his seat.

"It is the judgment of God!" muttered the courtiers with a shudder.

Tostig and Gurth, two of Godwin's sons, rushed forward, raised him in their arms, and bore him from the hall; and, five days later, the Earl of Wessex was a corpse.

VII.



William's love-making

MATILDA OF FLANDERS.

On the memorable day on which William the Norman, during the exile of Earl Godwin, appeared as an honoured guest in the halls of Westminster, and speculated on the probability of figuring, at no distant period, as King of England, the crown worn by Edward the Confessor was not the only prize on which the young duke had set his mind. In fact, love was blended with ambition in William's heart. He had determined, somewhat in defiance of canon and precedent, to espouse Matilda of Flanders; and no one who visited Bruges and looked upon the fair and intelligent face of that graceful Flemish princess could have wondered that a warrior-duke, not yet thirty, should meditate the indiscretion of defying popes and prelates to enjoy the privilege of calling her his own.

Matilda's pedigree was such as to make her a desirable bride for the struggling son of Duke Robert. She was one of the daughters of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, by Adele, daughter of Robert, King of France; and, through an Anglo-Saxon ancestress, she had in her veins the blood of Alfred the Great. But even with a much less illustrious descent, Matilda would have been highly distinguished among the princesses of the eleventh century. Nature had gifted the daughter of Count Baldwin with beauty and talent, and careful education had rendered her one of the most attractive and captivating among the high-born maidens of whom Christendom could boast. William's ambition and his heart were naturally enough fascinated with the idea of wedding a princess of such rank and beauty; and while yet he found the coronal of Normandy sitting somewhat uneasily on his brow, he sent ambassadors to the Court of Flanders to demand Matilda's hand.

Notwithstanding William's illegitimate birth and disputed title, Count Baldwin expressed no objection to accept him as a son-in-law. Indeed, the count, feeling that William could prove a valuable friend or a

formidable foe, hailed the proposal with gratification. But two obstacles immediately presented themselves—one difficulty was the repugnance of Matilda, the other was the laws of the Church.

Matilda had no stronger objections to being led to the altar than other ladies of her age. In fact, she is understood to have already dreamed of the bridal veil and the marriage vow, and to have been eager to become the spouse of a Saxon nobleman named Brihtrik, who had appeared at her father's court. Perhaps Matilda's thoughts had dwelt on Brihtrik longer than prudence warranted. In any case, when the ambassadors from Rouen presented themselves at Bruges, she set herself decidedly against the proposal of which they were the bearers.

"Why," said Baldwin, "do you object to the Count of the Normans?"

"Mention him not!" exclaimed Matilda, with a disdainful toss of her finely-shaped head. "I will not have a bastard for my husband!"

But William, who feared not man's wrath, was not to be daunted by woman's scorn. Every day he became more convinced of the necessity of uniting himself with some princess capable, by her rank and lineage, of giving dignity to his position. It appears, moreover, that the warrior-duke really entertained a strong affection for Matilda; and he seized an opportunity of manifesting the excess of his attachment by a violent kind of love-making, which has long been out of fashion.

It is related that one day, when Matilda had been at mass, and was quietly walking with her ladies of honour along the streets of Bruges on her way to the palace, to employ her hands with the embroidery work for which she was destined to become famous, and perhaps to occupy her thoughts with the fair Saxon noble who had won her young heart without giving his in return, William, arrayed as if for battle and mounted on horseback, suddenly and unexpectedly made his appearance. Alighting with a bound, he seized the princess in his strong arms, shook her, beat her, rolled her on the ground, and fearfully damaged her rich garments. After this extraordinary exhibition, he sprang into his saddle, set spurs to his horse, and rode away at full speed.

It might have been supposed that William's violent conduct would have increased Matilda's aversion to the match. The reverse, however, was the case. The princess, in fact, appears to have been overwhelmed by such a proof of affection.

"I am now convinced of the sincerity of his love," she said, "and I will offer no further objections to taking him as a husband."

Ere Matilda began to conquer the repugnance she had expressed to a union with the son of Duke Robert, William found, to his annoyance, that the Church opposed his marriage with the fair Flemish princess, on the ground of their being within the prohibited degrees of relationship. It would seem, in fact, that Adele, Countess of Flanders, had, in early youth, been betrothed to William's uncle, Richard, Duke of Normandy; so that the mother of Matilda stood in the relationship of aunt to the Norman duke, "an affinity," as has been observed, "quite near enough to account for, if not to justify the interference of the Church."

Nevertheless, William did not despair. Indeed, he had thoroughly made up his mind to be Matilda's husband and Baldwin's son-in-law, and to permit no priest to baffle him in a matrimonial scheme which ambition and love alike rendered dear to his heart. It was in vain that Pope Nicholas set himself in opposition to the marriage, and that the legitimate heirs of Rolfganger prepared to take advantage of a rupture between the son of Arlette and the See of Rome. William's perseverance and policy overcame all obstacles, and at length, with a dispensation in his hand, he claimed and received the bride he had so long wooed.

It was after his visit to the Court of Westminster, in 1052, and after the restoration of Godwin and his sons to their country, that William the Norman led Matilda of Flanders to the altar, and flattered himself that, by espousing a descendant of Alfred, he had smoothed his way to the throne from which Alfred had ruled England.



VIII.



Death of Siward with harness on his back.

SIWARD THE DANE.

At the time when Godwin and Edward were at feud, and when the earl was browbeating the saintly prince whom he had placed on the English throne—among the Saxons and Normans who assembled around the king to discuss a grave question, or strike a great blow, might have been observed an aged warrior of gigantic stature, leaning on a two-handed sword, and regarding Saxon thane and Norman count with an expression indicative of some degree of calm contempt. His dress recalled the days of Canute and Hardicanute; his hair was white with years; his frame was bowed with time; but his spirit was such as time could neither bend nor break; and his eye still glanced at the sight of battle-axe and shield. "Gray and vast, as some image of a gone and mightier age, towered over all Siward, the son of Beorn, the great Earl of Northumberland."

Siward was one of the most remarkable men who figured in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and he had a history still more remarkable than himself. A Dane, and of noble birth, he had, at an early age, left his native shores, with an idea, perhaps, of emulating the feats of Hasting or Haveloke. Landing in the Orcades, he engaged in single combat, and put to the rout a large dragon, which had long been the terror of the rude islanders. After performing this exploit, Siward put to sea, left the Orcades behind, and, guiding his ship as a horseman does a steed, reached the northern coast of England. Having sprung ashore, and wandered into the forest in quest of adventures, he met a venerable old man, with a long white beard, who entered into conversation with him, presented him with a mystic banner, and gave him some sage advice.

"This banner," said the venerable man, "is called 'the raven of earthly terror;' take it as thy standard; direct thy voyage southward to the mouth of a river called the Thames, which will lead thee to a city called London, where reigns the son of Canute, who will bid thee welcome, and aid thee to become great in this land."

Siward does not appear to have disdained the idea of exchanging the pine plank for the rush-strewed hall. At all events, he took the mystic banner and the advice of the venerable man, steered his course towards the Thames, and, reaching London, presented himself to the king. It was an age when men of huge proportions and fearless hearts were in great request; and Siward's reception was all that could have been wished.

The favour shown by the Danish king to Siward naturally made him the object of envy. Many absurd stories were consequently circulated about his origin and parentage. He was described as the grandson of a bear; and Tostig, Earl of Huntingdon, took occasion to affront him before the whole court. But the adventurous Dane gave his enemies a lesson which they never forgot. Defying Tostig to mortal combat, he signalized his prowess beyond all dispute, and terminated the duel by cutting off his antagonist's head. More convinced than ever of Siward's value as an adherent, Hardicanute bestowed on him the earldom which Tostig had enjoyed.

After being installed as Earl of Huntingdon, Siward played his part with energy and wisdom. The ability he displayed seemed fully to justify his sudden rise to importance, and a circumstance ere long occurred which gave him an opportunity of still further advancing his fortunes.

It happened that Uchtred, the great Saxon Earl of Northumberland, having been gathered to his fathers, Eadulph, the son of Uchtred, ruled from the Humber to the Tweed. Not content, however, with this territory, Eadulph undertook an expedition against the Welsh, and committed fearful depredations. Enraged at the northern earl making war without his consent, Hardicanute resolved on a severe chastisement, and entrusted Siward with the duty of inflicting it. Aware of his danger, Eadulph mounted, and hastened towards London to implore the king's clemency. But it was too late. While Eadulph was on his way south, Siward, going north, met him face to face. A conflict ensued. Eadulph fell, and Siward carried his head to Hardicanute.

It was shortly after the encounter which terminated in the death of Eadulph, that Edward the Confessor ascended the throne of his ancestors. At that time the fortunes of Siward, as foreigner and Dane, were probably in great peril. The event, however, proved to his advantage. There was some dread of a Danish fleet appearing on the Northumbrian coast; and the new king, in considerable alarm, took counsel with his great men.

"What is to be done?" asked the king.

"It is best," answered the thanes, "that the little devil should be first opposed to the great devil. Let Siward the Dane be sent to rule that part of your realm likely to be invaded by the Danes."

The king listened, and, as he was advised, nominated Siward Earl of Northumberland. Siward, repairing to York, the capital of the North, won the favour of the province by espousing Alflada, granddaughter of Uchtred, and then governed the inhabitants with an ability and a vigour that excited the admiration of Leofric, and roused the jealousy of Godwin. The Danes, considering, perhaps, that their gigantic countryman would be a formidable antagonist to encounter, refrained from any attempt at invasion, and, moreover, sent messages of peace and friendship to Edward. "We will," said they, "allow you to reign unmolested over your country, and content ourselves with the lands which God has given us."

Years passed over, and Siward was keeping his court at York, and ruling Northumberland with complete success, when the unfortunate conflict between the townsmen of Dover and the train of Eustace of Boulogne brought the quarrel of Edward and Godwin to a crisis. Siward and Leofric were then summoned to the king's aid, and commanded to lead their fighting men against the forces of the refractory earl. Both obeyed, and, at their call, the inhabitants of Northumberland and Mercia took up arms. Hostile, however, as Siward and Leofric were to Godwin, they could not help perceiving that the country was wholly on his side. Indeed, the murmurs of their own soldiers convinced the Earls of Northumberland and Mercia of the utter impolicy of pushing matters to extremity. Generously sacrificing resentment to patriotism, they raised their voices in favour of Godwin's restoration and against Godwin's foes.

Scarcely had Godwin gone to his account, when Siward became aware that his own end was drawing nigh. The Danish earl had just returned from that expedition into Scotland which resulted in the overthrow of Macbeth, when he was prostrated with sickness at York. Feeling that the great destroyer was upon him, Siward became horrified at the prospect of dying in bed, and in night-gear.

"Raise me," he said to those who watched his uneasy couch. "Let me die like a warrior, and not huddled up together like a cow!"

"What wouldest thou, great earl?" asked the attendants.

"Put my coat of mail on my back," said Siward; "place my helmet on my head, my shield on my left arm, and my gilt axe in my right hand, that I may expire as a warrior should."

The command of the dying earl was obeyed. Clad, by his own desire, in all the habiliments of war, and sitting up in his bed, Siward, with calm courage, awaited the last enemy, and died with the same martial dignity which had characterized his life. His remains were laid in the monastery of Galmanho, which he had founded at York; and, as a memorial of his prodigious prowess, there was long afterwards shown a rock of granite which he was said to have split with one blow of his mighty battle-axe.



Yggdrasill, the Mundane Tree of the Scandinavians

IX.



William extorting a promise from Harold.

HAROLD, THE SAXON KING.

When Earl Godwin breathed his last, under circumstances so memorable, his second son, Harold, succeeded to his earldom, and inherited his influence. A robust and active man, of tall, though not gigantic stature, with long fair hair, a pleasing countenance, dignified manners, and popular address—such appears to have been Harold, the son of Godwin.

It was when Hardicanute died so suddenly, at the marriage feast at Lambeth, that Harold began to figure in public, and to take a prominent part in national affairs. At that crisis, Harold was one of the first to raise a standard against the Danes, and he is even said to have contributed to the triumph of the Saxon cause, by inviting many of the Danish chiefs to a banquet, and causing them to be put to the sword while over their cups. But, whatever truth there may be in such a story, it seems that Harold shared in the prosperity of the house of Godwin at the opening of Edward's reign, and that when Godwin, outlawed and exiled, in 1048 escaped to Bruges, Harold, with his brother Leofwin, fled to Bristol, and there took shipping for the Irish coast. When Godwin returned from Bruges, Harold and Leofwin, coming from Ireland, joined their father at the Isle of Wight, and took part in that formidable demonstration which startled King Edward and his Norman courtiers in the halls of Westminster.

After the restoration of Godwin, and the banishment of the Normans, Harold would seem to have been higher in Edward's favour than any of his kinsmen; and after the death of Godwin, Harold was quietly put in possession of the vast earldom south of the Thames which his sire had so long enjoyed. Both as regarded military reputation and territorial power he was now foremost among the Anglo-Saxons, and he immensely increased his fame by the skill he displayed in a war with the refractory Welsh.

The originator of this war was Algar, son of the great Leofric, who, becoming discontented, gave his daughter Aldith in marriage to a Welsh prince named Griffith, and encouraged that crowned Celt to make an incursion into the English territories. During this inroad the city of Hereford was sacked and much mischief done; but Harold, on being sent with an army, speedily put the Welsh to the rout, and forced Griffith to submit. Untaught, however, by his severe experience of the superiority of the English, Griffith once more rebelled; and Harold, marching back to the borders of Wales, caused such terror, that, to pacify him, the Welsh sacrificed Griffith to save themselves, and sent the head of the murdered prince to the English camp, on the point of a spear.

After his victories over the Welsh, Harold returned to London, and found himself hailed by the multitude as a conqueror. His popularity was now immense, and wherever he appeared his name was shouted with enthusiasm.

"Harold! Harold the Earl!" was the cry.

"Since Edward the king has no heirs," was the saying, "no man is so worthy to succeed to the crown."

While such was the popularity of the son of Godwin, and while all rivalry with him was so completely out of the question that Algar died of despair and regret, Harold, with a view of recovering his brother Wolnoth and his nephew Haco, who had been sent as hostages to Duke William, and who were still retained at the court of Rouen, proposed to visit Normandy. On intimating his intention to Edward, however, the king hesitated to grant permission.

"Your journey," said the king, "will certainly bring some evil on yourself, and on your country."

"In what way, O king?" asked Harold in amazement.

"I know Duke William and his crafty mind," replied Edward; "he hates you, and will grant you nothing unless he gain greatly by it. The only way to obtain the hostages from him were to send some one else."

"I fear it is otherwise," said Harold.

"Well," said Edward, "I will not prevent your going; but, if you do go, it will be without my consent."

Not much influenced by Edward's warnings, Harold departed for Normandy. As if going on an excursion for pleasure, he set out, surrounded by his gay comrades, with his hawks and his hounds.

But a circumstance soon occurred to make him serious. Having sailed from one of the ports of Sussex, Harold's vessels were driven by contrary winds towards the mouth of the Somme; and the earl, forced to land on the territories of Guy, Count of Ponthieu, was seized by that feudal personage as a captive, despoiled of all his property, and placed securely under lock and key, in the castle of Beaurain.

One day, when William the Norman was at Rouen, a messenger from Harold arrived hurriedly and in haste, with intelligence of his captivity. William expressed high indignation, and demanded extradition of the Saxon earl with a menace, which was meant to serve for ransom. Guy of Ponthieu, however, demanded a fine estate and a large sum of money, and would listen to no proposal less advantageous to himself. William was, in consequence, obliged to grant what the count demanded; and, the matter having been arranged, Harold was set free and conducted to Rouen.

On reaching the Norman capital, Harold met with a reception which soon effaced the remembrance of his captivity in the stronghold of Count Guy. At the same time William intimated that the hostages were at Harold's disposal; but he pressed the earl to remain for a time as his guest, and see something of the land. Harold, who was bold and confident, accepted the invitation; and having, with his companions, been admitted into the Norman order of knighthood, he began to figure prominently in the festivals and pageants of the Norman court.

While Harold the Saxon was in this position, William the Norman undertook an expedition against the Bretons. Before setting out, the martial duke requested Harold's company; and Harold, consenting without hesitation, went with his Saxon comrades to take part in the war. During this campaign, William treated Harold with the utmost consideration; and the Norman duke and the Saxon earl slept in one tent, ate at the same table, and conducted themselves towards each other like men on terms of the most intimate friendship.

In this expedition against the Bretons, Harold and his Saxon companions bore themselves with a courage which excited high admiration; and, in spite of Edward's prophecy, everything seemed to go smoothly; when one day, as the duke and the earl rode along, side by side, enlivening the way with friendly colloquy, William artfully turned the conversation to his early acquaintance with the King of England, and suddenly revealed the ambitious project which was occupying his mind.

"In the days of my youth," said William, turning on his saddle, playing with his bridle-rein, and looking Harold in the face, "your king and I lived under the same roof like brothers; and he then promised that, if ever he came to be King of England, I should be nominated heir to his crown."

Harold, in perplexed surprise, muttered some words.

"Wherefore, Harold," continued William, "if thou wouldst aid me in realizing this promise, be sure that, if I obtain the kingdom, whatever thou askest thou shalt have. What is thine answer?"

"Be it as thou sayest," murmured Harold, taken by surprise, and finding it impossible to answer otherwise than with some vague words of compliance.

"Then," added William, growing bolder in his proposals, "since thou consentest to serve me, thou must engage to fortify the castle of Dover, to dig there a well of fresh water, and when the time comes, to deliver up the place to my people. Moreover, to make the bond between us the stronger, thou must give thy sister Thyra in marriage to one of my barons; and thou must take to wife my daughter Adeliza. On thy departure, thou must leave me, as guarantee for thy promise, one of the two hostages thou hast come to reclaim, and I will restore him to thee in England when I come there as king."

"I acquiesce in your demands," said Harold, eager to get rid of a subject which every moment became more embarrassing, and, without pursuing the conversation further, the duke and the earl rode on side by side towards Bayeux.

But it soon became apparent that William the Norman was by no means satisfied with the promise he had wrung from his Saxon guest. No sooner had the duke reached Bayeux than he prepared to exact a more solemn and ceremonious pledge; and, having caused such sacred relics as bones of saints to be brought from the churches, placed in a vessel in the council hall of the castle, and covered with a rich cloth of gold, so as to have the appearance of a table, he convoked his barons and prelates on a certain day, and intimated to Harold that his presence would be required.

At the hour appointed, baron and bishop crowded to the council hall; and William, with a sword in his hand and the coronal of Normandy on his brow, took his seat on the throne, caused two small reliquaries to be placed on the cloth of gold, and intimated, by a gesture, his desire that Harold should approach.

"Harold," said the Duke, "I require thee, before this noble assembly, to confirm, by oath, the promises thou hast made to me—namely, to aid me to obtain the kingdom of England after the death of King Edward, to marry my daughter, and to send thy sister, that I may give her to one of my lords."

"I swear," said Harold, extending his hand over the two reliquaries, "to execute my promise as far as lies in my power, if I live, and if God aid me."

"God aid him!" repeated the barons and bishops who stood around.

The ceremony being thus complete, William made a sign; the cloth of gold was raised; and before Harold's eyes lay bones and entire skeletons of saints, upon which he had, without suspecting their presence, so solemnly sworn. With a shudder and a change of countenance, which did not escape notice, he turned away from the sight. But the oath which he had sworn appeared to the Normans far too sacred ever to be broken; and he was allowed to depart for England with his nephew, the son of Sweyn. William accompanied them to the seaside, made them valuable presents, and repaired to Rouen, rejoicing in the thought, that the man most likely to have baffled his aspirations after the crown of England, was bound, by the most solemn oath, to aid him to the utmost.

Meanwhile, Harold's ships went tilting over the waters; and, on reaching England in a mood the reverse of serene, he hastened to London, presented himself to Edward, and related what had passed between the duke and himself. The saintly king heard the tidings with sadness, and expressed himself in words of woe.

"Did I not warn you," he said, after a painful silence, "warn you over and over again, that I knew Duke William, and that thy journey would bring evil on thyself and on thy country?"

"It is true," said Harold.

"Heaven grant," continued Edward, "that these evils happen not in my time!"

And, in truth, there was little danger of Edward living to witness the troubles in store for the land of his fathers. The king's days were now "dwindling to the shortest span." Aware that he was hourly sinking, Edward occupied himself more and more with religious devotions, and manifested much anxiety for the completion of the Abbey of Westminster, which, under his auspices, had risen on Thorney Island in the form of a cross, with a high tower in the centre. Intending to consecrate this edifice with great splendour at the Christmas of 1065, Edward summoned all the nobles and clergy to be present. But before the appointed day he became too weak to leave his chamber.

Edith, the queen, consequently presided at the consecration; and scarcely was the ceremony over, when Harold became aware that his royal brother-in-law could not survive many days. In fact, Edward, stretched on a bed of sickness, and haunted by terrible visions of fiends wandering over England, was looking, almost with impatience, for the hour that was to deliver him from the evils to come. Nor was the patience of the royal saint put to any long or severe trial.

It was Thursday, the 5th of January, 1066, and the king lay in that chamber of the palace of Westminster long afterwards, when known as "The Painted Chamber," associated with his memory. Robert Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, with many nobles and prelates, stood by his couch; for Edward was on the eve of going where the weary are at rest; and nobles and prelates were, doubtless, anxious to hear his last will. He was, however, entirely absorbed in melancholy forebodings; and, as passages of Scripture denouncing woe to nations occurred involuntarily to his memory, he repeated them with a wild energy which horrified those who surrounded his couch.

"The Lord has bent his bow," exclaimed the dying king, "the Lord has prepared his sword; he brandishes it like unto a warrior; his wrath is manifested in steel and flame."

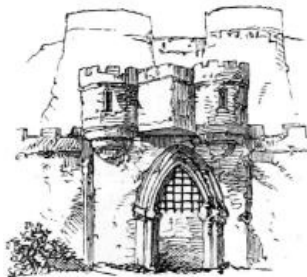
"The saints defend us!" muttered those present, terrified at the king's ejaculations.

"Tush!" exclaimed Archbishop Stigand, with a sneer of contempt; "why tremble ye at the dreams of a sick old man?"

In such a frame of mind, Edward the king breathed his last; and it is said that, having been asked whom he wished to succeed to his throne, he named Harold, son of Godwin. But whether or not such was the case, Harold was elected on the day after Edward's funeral, and allowed himself to be crowned at once, in violation of his oath to William the Norman, and in defiance of the claims of Edgar Atheling, grandson of Edmund Ironsides, and heir of the Saxon kings. In order to bind the chiefs of the House of Leofric to his interest, and to render his throne more secure, Harold espoused Aldith, daughter of Earl Algar, and widow of that Griffith whose head the Welsh had sent to him on the point of a spear.

Nevertheless, the position of Harold was encompassed with danger, and the minds of his subjects were filled with gloom and apprehension. As men reflected on the dying words of Edward the king, they recalled to mind old prophecies which increased their alarm. One of these predicted such calamities as the Saxons had never experienced since they left the Elbe; and another, which was more to the point, predicted the conquest of England by a people from France. While vague terrors preyed upon England, the appearance of a comet daunted all hearts, and was regarded, as it seemed to come, as a herald of woe.

"Thou hast then returned," said a monk of the period; "thou hast returned at length, thou who wilt cause so many mothers to weep! Many times have I seen thee shine; but thou lookest to me more terrible now that thou announcest the ruin of my country."



X.

DUKE WILLIAM AND HIS DIFFICULTIES.



IT was early one day, about the opening of the year 1066, and the ground was hard with frost, when William the Norman left the palace of Rouen, and crossed the Seine to test some new arrows in the park of Rouvray. While the duke was occupied in stringing that mighty bow which, save himself, no man then living could bend, a messenger from England reached him with tidings of such import, that his colour changed, and his lip quivered with emotion. It was to the effect that Edward the Confessor was dead, and that Harold, son of Godwin, had seized the English crown.

Giving his bow to an attendant, William walked to the margin of the Seine, stepped into his barge, and, without speaking, indicated by a gesture his wish to return to Rouen. On reaching the castle, he entered the great hall, and paced up and down with a restless and excited step, "often," say the chronicles, "changing posture and attitude, and oft loosening and tightening the strings of his mantle." Such, indeed, seemed his agitation, that no member of his household ventured for some time to ask the cause.

Meantime, rumours of the intelligence brought by the messenger from England began to creep about, and a Norman noble, probably William Fitzosborne, the duke's seneschal, and the proudest of Norman magnates, presented himself to learn the actual state of affairs. Fitzosborne, who was Count of Breteuil, and destined one day to higher rank, had such a reputation for *hauteur* that he was surnamed "The Proud Spirit." Without any of that hesitation exhibited by others, he approached William the Norman, and inquired the cause

of his emotion.

"My lord," said he, "pray communicate your news. It is bruited about that the King of England is dead, and that Harold, breaking faith with you, has usurped the crown."

"They say truly who so report," answered the duke; "and my grief is touching the death of Edward, and my anger is touching the wrong done me by Harold."

"Sir," said Fitzosborne, "chafe not at what may be amended. For Edward's death, it is true, there is no remedy; but there is a remedy for the injury done you by Harold. Yours is the right, and you have stout warriors. Strike with courage: the work is already half done."

Genius, however, is generally patient; and William was too crafty to spoil his game by indiscreet haste. He went cautiously and gradually to work; and not till he had twice, in courteous phrase, required Harold to fulfil the treaty so solemnly concluded, did he threaten the Saxon with invasion and punishment. Then, however, he cast hesitation to the winds, and resolved on inflicting a signal chastisement. "I doubt not," he said, "of finding that man a feeble foe, who has proved so faithless a friend."

In the meantime negotiations were vigorously commenced at Rome, and Harold was charged before the pontifical court with perjury and sacrilege. The Saxon king was summoned to defend himself, and endeavoured to escape by refusing to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the court. But this did not serve his purpose. The conclave assembled at the Lateran, under the inspiration of the famous Hildebrand, decided that William should enter England, and bring that kingdom back to the Holy See; and a papal bull, directed against Harold and his adherents, was presented to William, along with a consecrated banner, an agnus of gold, and a ring which contained a hair of St. Peter, set in a diamond of great price.

A council of high Norman nobles was now convened at Rouen; and William, addressing his friends, demanded counsel and aid. There was no difference of opinion. All were ready to take part with their duke in the invasion of England, and each man present delighted his soul with visions of rich manors on the Thames or the Mersey. However, they advised him to consult the general feeling of the community; and, accordingly, the merchants and traders of Normandy, as well as the lords and knights, were summoned to confer with the duke.

Lillebonne was the place appointed for this memorable assembly, and thither came all the wealthiest and most important subjects of Normandy. William, after opening his heart to them, explained his views and craved pecuniary aid, and they then withdrew to deliberate in freedom. The result was not quite satisfactory. The Normans were greatly divided in opinion. Some were anxious to aid the duke with men and money; but others positively objected, declaring that they had already more debts than they could pay.

It was now that William Fitzosborne did better service than a hundred knights could have rendered to his liege lord. Raising his voice above the tumult, he exerted that eloquence for which the Norman nobles were so remarkable.

"Why this confusion and discord?" asked Fitzosborne. "Why dispute thus among ourselves? The duke hath need of us, and he is our lord—"

"William is our lord; but we owe him no aid beyond the seas," interrupted the assembly.

"It is our duty to make offers of aid, rather than to wait his requests," continued Fitzosborne. "He hath need of us now; and if we fail him, and he gains his end, he will remember it to our disadvantage. Let us, then, prove by our acts that we love him, and let us entitle ourselves to his gratitude."

"Doubtless, William is our lord," cried the Normans; "but is it not enough for us to pay him his dues? We owe him no aid beyond the seas. He hath already oppressed us enough with his wars; let him fail in this new enterprise, and our country is undone."

"Well," said Fitzosborne, changing his plan, "let us return to the duke; and I, as knowing the position of each man present, will take upon me to excuse the limited offers of the assembly."

"So be it," was the answer; and the Normans, with Fitzosborne at their head, returned to Duke William's presence.

"Sire," said Fitzosborne, addressing William, "I do not believe that there are in the whole world people more zealous than yours. You know the aids they have given you—the onerous services they have rendered. Well, sire, they will do more. They offer to serve you beyond the seas as they have done here."

"No, no!" cried the Normans, "we did not charge you with such an answer."

"For my own part," continued Fitzosborne, "I will, out of love to you, give sixty well-appointed ships, each charged with fifty fighting men. Forward, then, and spare us in nothing! He who hath hitherto only supplied you with two good mounted soldiers will now supply four."

"We did not say that," cried the Normans, "and it shall not be so. In things within his own country, we will serve the duke, as is due; but we are not bound to assist him to conquer another man's country. Besides, if once we rendered double service, and followed him across the sea, he would make it a right and a custom for the future; he would burden our children with it."

"It shall not be—it cannot be!" shouted the assembled Normans vociferously; and, after forming themselves into groups of ten, twenty, and thirty, they declaimed tumultuously, and then separated.

William was enraged beyond measure—the blood of Rolfganger boiled in his veins—and the spirit of Robert the Devil flashed from his eyes. Nevertheless, by such an effort as only such a man is capable of, he exercised sufficient command over himself to control his temper, bow his pride, and resort to artifice. Summoning separately the men with whom in a body he had failed, he requested the support of each as a personal favour. This plan of proceeding proved completely successful. No Norman, when alone with the duke, and under the influence of his eloquence and his eye, had the courage to refuse; and every one of those who had shouted "It cannot be!" consented to give to the full extent of his means.

With the papal bull in his hands, and promises of aid from his subjects, carefully registered when they had been made, William summoned the Normans to the consecrated banner, and published his ban in the neighbouring countries, with promises of pay and pillage. Both Normans and foreigners answered his call. From all directions martial adventurers crowded to his standard. The papal bull and the promises of plunder did their work. From France and Flanders; from Maine, and Aquitaine, and Brittany, and from Anjou, ruled by the ancestors of the Plantagenets—from the Alps, and from the banks of the Rhine—multitudes crowded, with sword and cross-bow, to range themselves under the consecrated banner, and to aid in the conquest and share in the plunder of England.



XI.



Tostig's parting speech to his brother Harold.

TOSTIG, SON OF GODWIN.

In the spring of 1066, when the crown of Edward the Confessor was placed on the head of Harold the Saxon; and when the news of the coronation, carried to Rouen, kindled the ire of William the Norman, there was living in Flanders, musing over the past, watching events with a keen eye, an English exile, who was Harold's brother and his sworn foe. This exile was Tostig, the third son of Godwin and Githa.

When the riot between the townsmen of Dover and the train of Eustace of Boulogne resulted in the dispersion of the family of Godwin, Tostig, then in the pride of early manhood, accompanying his father to Flanders, wedded Judith, daughter of Count Baldwin, and sister of Matilda, whom William the Norman, after vanquishing so many obstacles, received as his bride. This high alliance would seem to have rendered Tostig's pride intolerable; and he returned to England with ridiculous notions of his hereditary claims, and absurd ideas of his personal importance. It was a period, however, when the members of Godwin's house were encouraged to conduct themselves as if England had existed solely for their advantage; and when Siward died, leaving one son too young to succeed to his authority, Tostig claimed and received the earldom of Northumberland.

Accustomed to the sway of such chiefs as Uchtred and Siward, the men of the north were not perhaps particularly pleased with their new earl. But whether or not, Tostig soon gave them cause to be discontented. Cruel and tyrannical in his notions, he appeared at York with the tax-gatherer on one hand, and the executioner on the other, and treated the Northumbrians as if he had been a conqueror, and they had been the inhabitants of a conquered province. Brooking no restraint, he violated old customs and laws, levied enormous imposts, and violently put to death those who refused to submit to his exactions. Gamel, the son of Orm, and Ulf, the son of Dolphin, are mentioned as among the thanes of high rank whom, with fell treachery, he allured to the castle of York, and caused to be put to death, under his own roof, and in his own chamber.

Of all people, the Northumbrians were the least likely to tolerate such tyranny. Meeting at Gamelburn, Dunstan, son of Agelnoth, and Gloricern, son of Eadulf, with two hundred soldiers, raised the standard of insurrection; and, under the command of their native chiefs, the men of the north sprang to arms to avenge their slaughtered countrymen and fight for their ancient liberties. Marching to York, Dunstan and Gloricern prepared to seize the tyrant in his castle.

Tostig was in the capital of the north, when he suddenly became aware that armed men were approaching with hostile intent. Unprepared for resistance, and shrinking from the peril he had defied, the son of Godwin resolved to fly; and, escaping with some of the chief ministers of his violence and injustice, he left his officers and servants to contend with the men whom he had exasperated. The Northumbrians, taking possession of York, seized the arsenal and treasury, and, assembling a council, formally deposed Tostig, and elected Morkar, one of the sons of Algar, and one of the grandsons of Leofric and Godiva, in his stead.

When news of the tumult in Northumberland, and of the expulsion of Tostig, reached the Confessor's court, Harold mustered an army and marched northward to deal with the insurgents. This, however, he soon found would be no easy operation. The Northumbrians met him at Oxford, and in such a way as convinced him of the expediency of listening to their complaints. A conference was consequently held, and Harold endeavoured to exculpate his brother and to soften the Northumbrians.

"If," said Harold, "you will receive Tostig again as your earl, I promise that he will govern with equity, and according to law."

"No!" cried the Northumbrians with one voice, and with that Danish burr which their descendants have inherited; "we were born free; we were brought up free; and a haughty ruler we cannot abide. We have been taught by our ancestors to live free or to die. We have said. Bear thou our answer to Edward the king."

Harold could not dispute the justice of the complaints of the Northumbrians. Without delay he went to explain their grievances to the king; and Edward sent him back to give the royal sanction to Tostig's deposition, and to the election of Morkar, the grandson of Leofric.

Henceforth, it was not so much against the Northumbrians as against Harold that Tostig's wrath burned fiercely; and when the brothers soon after met at Windsor, at Edward's board, a scene was enacted which made the blood of the saintly king run cold. Harold, it appears, pledged Edward in a cup of wine; and Tostig, exclaiming that such familiarity with the king was unseemly, pulled Harold by the hair of his head. A scuffle immediately ensued, and but for the presence of the king would have ended in bloodshed.

"It is notorious," said Edward, raising his hands in holy horror, "that all the sons of Godwin are so transcendently wicked, that if they see any house which they covet, they will murder the owner in the night-time, and destroy his children, to get possession. Verily, they will one day destroy each other."

After this outrageous scene at Windsor, Harold and Tostig were at deadly feud; and when Harold, somewhat later, was on his way to Hereford with the king, Tostig, going thither and entering his brother's house, attacked the servants, who were preparing a great feast. Killing the unoffending men, and severing the heads and hewing the limbs from the bodies, he put the corpses into the winecasks, and then, riding forth as if to meet the king and his party, he hinted at the brutal enormity he had perpetrated.

"Harold," he said, as he turned away, "you will find the meat for your feast well powdered."

And, as Tostig spoke these words, the brothers parted, not to meet again till that day when they met face to face as foes, each with a weapon in his hand and an army at his back.

After the massacre at Hereford, Tostig, with revenge gnawing at his heart, and threats on his lips, sailed from England and repaired to the court of Flanders. For a time he remained brooding in silence over his wrongs, and watching his opportunity. No sooner, however, did he receive intelligence of Edward's death and Harold's coronation, than he sprang to action, and cried that the time for vengeance had arrived. Mounting in haste, he made his way without delay to Normandy, and urged Duke William, his brother-in-law, to lose no time in hurling Harold from the throne.

"Be not so impatient, brave Tostig," said William.

"Why," asked Tostig, excitedly, "should a perjurer be allowed to reign in peace? Have not I more credit and power in England? Yea, and I can assure possession of the country to any one who will unite with me to make the conquest."

But William was not the man to be imposed upon by vain boasts; and Tostig was somewhat mortified at the reception with which his proposals were met. Willing, however, to test the banished Saxon's influence,

the duke furnished him with some ships to make a descent. But Tostig, instead of sailing for England, sailed to the Baltic trusting to secure the aid of his uncle, Sweyn, King of Denmark. This attempt, however, failed. Sweyn gave Tostig a harsh refusal; and the nephew, leaving his uncle in discontent, but still breathing threats of revenge against his brother, made for Norway, where a king reigned more likely than Sweyn to take part in a bold adventure, and better qualified to conduct a bold adventure to a triumphant conclusion.

XII.



Hardrada's deliverance from his eastern dungeon.

HAROLD HARDRADA.

When Tostig's ships came to anchor, and when Tostig, landing at Drontheim, presented himself at the rude palace of the old kings of Norway, the crown of that northern realm was worn by the last of those heroes who called the ocean their home and the tempest their servant. This was Harold Hardrada, a warrior of high renown, who had fought countless battles on the sea as well as on the land, who had probably seen more of the world than any man then living, and who, in every respect, looked worthy of the fame he had won. His height exceeded seven feet; and, though the hands and feet appeared somewhat large, the whole person was fairly proportioned. He had a short beard, a long moustache, and fair hair falling over his shoulders. His aspect was, on the whole, pleasing, and would always have been so but for the circumstance of one eyebrow being somewhat higher than the other, and giving a sinister expression to his face when he frowned.

Hardrada was son of Sigurd and brother of Olaf—that King of Norway who established Christianity in his kingdom by the strong hand. Hardrada, however, appears to have been more of a sea-king than a saint.

At an early age, Hardrada fought by the side of Olaf in the sanguinary battle of Stiklestad. The elder brother fell, but the younger escaped, after his body had been covered with wounds, and his blood freely poured out. Taking to the forest, he was received into the cottage of a woodman, and there lay concealed till his wounds were healed and his spirits revived.

Restored to health and hope, Hardrada left his lurking-place, and turned his face eastward. Faring forth with a brave band of comrades on a career of adventure, he set foot, after many romantic wanderings, on the banks of the Bosphorus, and, halting with his comrades at Constantinople, took service, as a varing, in the bodyguard then maintained by the Emperor of the East.

The varings were of high account at the Imperial Court. Generally Danes, Swedes, or Germans, they exhibited the courage characteristic of Northmen, and wore their hair long, after the fashion of their native countries. Armed with huge axes, which they were in the habit of carrying on their shoulders, they stood as guards at the door of the emperor's chamber, and paraded his capital, imposing respect and awe.

Among the varings, Hardrada, though the brother of a king, did not disdain to enrol himself and his comrades. But his wild and free spirit could ill brook the necessary subordination, and, after some quarrel with a Greek commander, he repaired to Africa. Fighting there with the Saracens, and despoiling them of gold and jewels, he became celebrated and rich. Turning to Sicily, he increased his fame and his wealth; and then, as if to consecrate his deeds of violence, he made an armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem, not yet visited by Peter the Hermit; and, sweeping Moslem and marauder from his path, ascended Mount Calvary, and knelt at the Holy Sepulchre.

From Jerusalem Hardrada returned to Constantinople, and there became enamoured of Maria, a niece of the Empress Zoe, while he himself became dear to the heart of the empress. The predicament was perplexing, and might have baffled the ingenuity of another man. But Hardrada was equal to the occasion, and freed himself by a romantic elopement from the snares by which he was surrounded.

It appears that Olaf, the brother of Hardrada, though deemed worthy of canonization, had been somewhat general in his attentions to the fair sex; and, among other consequences of his amours, was an illegitimate son, named Magnus. In the absence of Hardrada, Magnus contrived to win the sovereignty of Norway from the heir of Canute; and no sooner did Hardrada hear of his nephew's elevation than he determined to assert his own superior claim.

But Hardrada had scarcely intimated his intention of returning to Norway, when he found there was a lioness in the way. Eager to detain the varing who had won her heart, the empress caused him to be charged with some irregularity, and imprisoned. Hardrada was accordingly incarcerated. But a Greek lady, incited by

a dream, resolved to attempt his deliverance, and lowered ropes from the roof of a tower to the dungeon in which he lay. Escaping in this way, Hardrada hastily roused his varings, proceeded to the palace of Maria, niece of the empress, bore off the princess in his strong arms to the quay, embarked with her in his galley, and gave his sails to the wind.

At length, Hardrada, with the bride and the wealth he had won, set his foot on the shores of Norway, and, raising an army, made an effort to grasp the crown. Magnus, however, proved a formidable adversary; and Hardrada, perceiving the difficulty of a complete triumph, made a compromise, and agreed to share the kingdom with his nephew.

On the death of Magnus, however, Hardrada became king of all Norway. Such he was, and highly considered among European sovereigns on account of his experience, his prowess, and his wealth, when Tostig, with the proposals which had been coldly treated in Normandy and scornfully repelled in Denmark, reached Drontheim, appeared at the log palace, and approached him with honeyed words. "The world knows well," said the banished son of Godwin, "that there lives no warrior worthy to be compared to thee. Thou hast only to will it, and England will be thine."

Hardrada was neither insensible to such flattery, nor proof against such a temptation. Allowing himself to be persuaded, he promised to put to sea whenever the ice should melt and the ocean become navigable, and commenced preparations for the grand expedition.

Tostig, however, was much too impatient to await the convenience of his Norwegian ally. With his own fleet he set out to prepare the way, and, with a band of men recruited in Flanders, Holland, and Friesland, he made a descent on the northern coast of England. But the inhabitants, roused at the news of villages pillaged, and granges burned, rose in such numbers that he was compelled to make for Scotland, and, anchoring off the Orkney Islands, he waited till the winds should blow the Norwegian ships to his aid.

Hardrada, meanwhile, fitted out several hundred ships of war; and the Norwegians, encamped on their coast, waited the signal to embark. Their enthusiasm was not excessive. Vague presentiments of evil pervaded their ranks, and the sleep of many of the warriors was broken by ill-omened visions. One dreamed that, the fleet having put to sea, flocks of vultures perched on the masts and sails; and that a woman, sword in hand, sitting on a rock, cried to the birds with a loud voice, "Go without fear; you shall have enough to eat and to choose from, for I go with them." Another dreamed that he saw his comrades land in England, and encounter an English army, in front of which was a woman of gigantic stature, riding on a wolf, and giving it human bodies to devour.

The imaginations of the Norwegian warriors were disagreeably influenced by these presages; and more threatening than either of the dreams appeared an incident that occurred as the Norwegian king, with his son Olaf, and his war-steed black as a raven, and his banner, "The Ravager of the World," embarked. As Hardrada set foot in the royal barge, the weight of his body pressed the boat so much down in the water, as to cause general apprehension. But, undismayed, Hardrada set sail, touched at the Orcades, and joined his fleet with that of Tostig, who was all impatience for carnage and revenge.

XIII.



Door of Westminster Abbey.

THE ALARM IN ENGLAND.

It was the summer of 1066, and William the Norman was gathering continental warriors to his standard, and Harold Hardrada was manning his lofty war-ships with grim Norwegians, and Harold the Saxon king was applying his energies with diligence and care to the difficulties of his position, when the people of England were seized with alarm at the prospect of an invasion.

From the day of Harold's coronation at Westminster, he devoted himself ably and vigorously to his regal duties. Never, indeed, had English monarch shown himself more considerate for the people's feelings, or more ardent for their welfare. The new reign was marked by a complete return to the national customs, by a diminution of the taxes previously levied, and by a more decided impartiality in the administration of justice. By all means in his power Harold endeavoured to render his reign popular. "Ever active for the good of his country," says the chronicler, "he spared himself no fatigue by land or by sea."

Notwithstanding his vigour and energy, clouds soon began to gather around the Saxon king. In the midst of his efforts to keep together a decaying empire, Harold was disagreeably interrupted by the arrival of a messenger from Duke William to claim fulfilment of the promise made at Bayeux.

"William Duke of Normandy," said the messenger, "reminds thee of the oath which thou didst swear to him upon good and holy relics."

"It is true that I swore such an oath to Duke William," replied Harold, "but I swore it under compulsion. I promised that which did not belong to me, and which I could not perform. My royalty is not mine, nor can I divest myself of it without consent of the country. As for my sister Thyra, whom the duke claims, to marry her to one of the chiefs, she died this year. Would he have me send her body?"

The Norman with this answer departed, and hastened to Duke William. But, with as little delay as possible, he was sent back, and appeared at Westminster with a new message, couched in terms of gentle remonstrance.

"Duke William," said the messenger, "entreats you, if you will not abide by all the conditions, at least to execute one of them, and take, as wife, his daughter Adeliza, whom you promised to marry."

"I could not marry," said Harold, "without the country's consent; and besides," he added, "it is now impossible for me to wed the daughter of Duke William, since I have already wedded another woman."

"Is this thine answer?" asked the Norman.

"It is," replied Harold.

"Then," said the Norman, "Duke William swears that, within the year, he will come and demand the whole of his debt, and pursue you, as perjurer, to the very places where you think you have the surest and firmest footing."

Rumours of William's projects crept about England, and the country was soon in serious apprehension. The appearance of the comet, coming, it was believed, as a harbinger of woe, added to the general alarm; and while thousands nightly went out to gaze at "the blazing star," merchant and pilgrim carried to castle and cottage intelligence of the formidable preparations making by Duke William for the subjugation of England.

In the midst of the alarm which prevailed, Harold at first displayed a vigilance worthy of the crisis. All summer, and far into autumn, he remained steadily at his post, guarding the southern coast. Even when news of Tostig's ravages came, he did not leave London, but left the chastisement of his brother to the Northumbrians and their earl.

But events baffled Harold's plans. When summer passed and autumn came without an invasion, men, wise in their own conceit, began to ridicule the idea of the peril being imminent; and Harold, not uninfluenced by the general impression that William would not attempt to land before winter, allowed his army to disband, and the fleet to run short of provisions.

Such was the position of affairs, when news reached London that Hardrada, in company with Tostig, had landed in the North, defeated the Northumbrians in a sharp battle, and taken measures for forcing York to yield.

No sooner did Harold become aware of the new danger than he roused himself to action. Convincing himself, perhaps reluctantly, that the peril which he left behind was not extreme, the Saxon king hastily drew his men together, and prepared to crush the host of grim Norwegians. Turning his face northward, Harold pushed on, by forced marches, to York, and succeeded in reaching the capital of the North on the very evening before Hardrada and Tostig anticipated placing on its walls "The Ravager of the World."

XIV.



The Norwegian Champion at Stamford Bridge.

THE BATTLE OF STAMFORD BRIDGE.

The month of September, 1066, was drawing towards its close, and so far all had prospered with Tostig and his Norwegian ally. After burning Scarborough, they had sailed up the Humber, advanced towards York, fought a tough battle, and placed themselves in such a position before the capital of the North, that the citizens recognised the necessity of yielding. Indeed, they had agreed to open the gates on the morning of the 25th, and on that morning Tostig and Hardrada—who had broken up their lines, and encamped on the river Derwent, at Stamford Bridge, seven miles from York—were to march in triumph into the city, and hold a grand council to regulate the affairs of the province.

It was a Monday; and early in the morning, Hardrada and Tostig, leaving part of their army encamped on the other side of the Derwent, rode side by side towards York, accompanied by some thousands of their soldiers. The weather being warm—for it was "one of those autumnal days in which the sun is still in all its vigour"—and no resistance being anticipated, the Norwegians laid aside their coats of mail, and dispensed with all defensive armour except helmets and bucklers. When approaching York, however, they suddenly perceived clouds of dust, and, through the clouds, steel glittering in the sun.

"Who are these men?" asked Hardrada, in surprise.

"They must be Northumbrians," answered Tostig, "coming either to crave friendship or to ask pardon."

The Norwegians, however, had not advanced many paces, when Tostig was disagreeably undeceived. The approaching mass grew more distinct, and the sun revealed an army in battle order.

"It is King Harold," said Tostig, scarce mustering voice sufficient to speak the words.

"Ride!" said Hardrada, turning to three of his horsemen—"ride! and, with all haste, bring our warriors from the camp."

The horsemen darted off with the speed of the wind; and Hardrada, unfurling "The Ravager of the World," on the folds of which a vast raven was depicted, ranged his men round the banner in a long, narrow line, curved at the extremities. Pressing against each other, with their spears planted in the ground, and the points turned against the foe, the Norwegians stood ready for conflict; and their king, mounted on his coal-black steed, his helmet glittering with gold, rode along the line, singing, as was his wont on such occasions, extempore verses, to excite the valour of his men.

"Let us fight," he sang, "though without our cuirasses; let us forward to the edge of blue steel. Our helmets shine in the sun. For brave men that is enough."

While Hardrada thus sang, about twenty mounted warriors—horses and riders clad in steel—dashed out from the Saxon ranks. Approaching the Norwegian lines, they suddenly halted, and intimated their wish to hold a parley.

"Where," cried one of them, "is Tostig, the son of Godwin?"

"Here," answered Tostig, spurring forward his steed.

"If thou art Tostig," said the Saxon, "thy brother greets thee by me, and offers thee peace, with his friendship, and thine ancient honours."

"These are fine words," said Tostig, bitterly; "but if I accept your offers, what shall be given to the noble King Hardrada, son of Sigurd, my faithful ally?"

"He," replied the Saxon, "shall have seven feet of English land, or a little more, for his height exceeds that of other men."

"Then," said Tostig, "go back and say to my brother that he may prepare to fight; for none but liars will ever say that the son of Godwin deserted the son of Sigurd."

The parley ended; and the Saxon warriors rode back to their host. The Norwegians and Saxons then closed in the shock of war, and the conflict immediately became fierce and sanguinary. But, from the first, the invaders had the worst of the encounter. With their huge battle-axes, wielded with both hands, the Saxons rushed furiously on their foes, cleaving down all opposition, and breaking the first rank of the Norwegians. Hardrada, pierced with an arrow, fell in the heat of the strife; and, as his gigantic form disappeared from the black steed, the banner he had brought from Norway was trampled in the dust and captured by the foe.

No sooner did Hardrada fall than Tostig took command of the Norwegians, and prepared to continue the strife. Harold, however, paused in his assault, and sent once more to offer peace. But the Norwegians would not listen to terms.

"We will rather die," said they, "than owe our lives to those who have killed our king."

On receiving this answer, the Saxon king led on his men to the attack, and fearful was the carnage that ensued. In vain did bands of the Norwegians, roused in their camp by Hardrada's riders, hurry up to the aid of their fast-falling comrades. Fatigued with their hasty march under a burning sun, they fell in heaps before the axes of their foes. Ere long, the struggle ceased: Tostig lay dead on the ground, and around him the Norwegian chiefs who had followed their king to minister to his vengeance.

But, meanwhile, the Norwegians who had not passed the Derwent drew together to make a desperate defence; and the Saxons advanced to consummate their victory. This, however, proved no easy achievement. In fact, the strength and resolution of one man long kept the Saxons at bay.

At that time the Derwent was crossed by a wooden bridge. Long and furiously was this bridge contested; and when the Norwegians, yielding to overwhelming press of numbers, retreated, one warrior, of tall stature and mighty strength, remained to defy, single-handed, the might of his foes. Armed with a battle-axe, which few men could have wielded, he struck down every one who ventured within his reach; and, when forty men had fallen by his hand, the boldest Saxons recoiled in dismay from a foe who appeared armed with supernatural power.

But at length the Norwegian was taken unawares. Perceiving the certainty of death in attempting an encounter hand to hand, one of the Saxons seized a long spear, leaped into a boat, and floated quietly under the bridge. Availing himself of a favourable opportunity, the Saxon dexterously thrust his spear through the planks right into the Norwegian's body; and the huge champion, without even seeing his new adversary, fell mortally wounded. Harold then became master of the bridge, and led his soldiers to the Norwegian camp.

Nothing that could be called resistance was now attempted. The Norwegians had given way to despair; and when Harold, for the third time, sent to offer peace, the proposal was gladly accepted. Accordingly, a treaty was hastily concluded; and after Olaf, son of Hardrada, had sworn friendship to the Saxon king, the

Norwegians took to their ships, and, with sad hearts, set sail for their northern homes.

The victory at Stamford Bridge placed much booty, and a considerable quantity of gold, in the hands of the Saxons. All this Harold, as king, claimed as his own; and deep was the discontent which the avarice, or economy, of the son of Godwin, on this occasion, created in the ranks of the victorious army. Many of the Anglo-Saxon chiefs took mortal offence, and ridiculed the idea of serving a king who had not sufficient generosity to share the spoil of a vanquished enemy with those by whom the enemy had been vanquished.

The discontent of the Anglo-Saxons was at its height, when Harold suddenly became aware that he was in no position to lose friends and adherents. The breezes in which his banners waved at Stamford Bridge had filled the sails, and impelled to the English shores, the fleet of an invader more formidable than the adventurous Hardrada. While Harold the Saxon was wrangling with his earls and thanes in the city of York, William the Norman had landed with his counts and vavasors, on the coast of Sussex.

Alarm now appeared on the face of every Saxon, and confusion added to the discontent that pervaded Harold's ranks. But no time was to be lost. Without even taking time to bury the slain, the Saxon king turned his face southward. For many years after, the bones of the slaughtered Norwegians whitened the scene of the battle of Stamford Bridge; and, so late as the nineteenth century, swords, heads of halberds, and horseshoes, have often been turned up, and excited interest, as memorials of the day on which the great Hardrada was overthrown, and the "Ravager of the World" trampled in the dust.



XV.

PHILIP OF FRANCE.

While Duke William was preparing for the invasion of England, and the nobles of Normandy were mustering their fighting men, and adventurous warriors were flocking from all quarters, with eager anticipation, to take part in the daring enterprise, he bethought him of repairing to the court of France, with the object of enlisting the sympathies, and securing the support, of the French king.

Philip, the son of Henry, and great-grandson of Hugh Capet, was then a boy of fourteen, and reigning under the guardianship of Baldwin, Count of Flanders. He was residing at St. Germain when William appeared to ask his aid and salute him with a degree of feudal deference seldom shown by the Dukes of Normandy to the Capetian kings.

"You are my seigneur," said William, addressing the young king; "and if it please you to aid me, and I, by God's grace, obtain my rights over England, I promise to do you homage for it, as though I held it from you."

"Well," answered Philip, "I will assemble my council of barons; for, without their advice, I cannot decide an affair so important."

A council was accordingly called, and the expediency of assisting William was discussed; but the French barons, one and all, pronounced strongly against rendering any aid.

"You know," said they to the king, "how ill the Normans obey you now."

"True," said Philip.

"It will be worse if they possess England," said the barons. "Besides, it would cost us a great deal to assist Duke William; and, if he fail in his enterprise, the English will be our enemies for ever."

The council, having determined on giving William no aid, rose; and Philip, repairing to the Norman duke, communicated the decision.

"My barons," said he, "are of opinion that they ought not, in any way, to aid you in the conquest of England."

"Are they?" exclaimed William, much disappointed. "Then, by the splendour of God! I will show them that I can conquer England without their help."

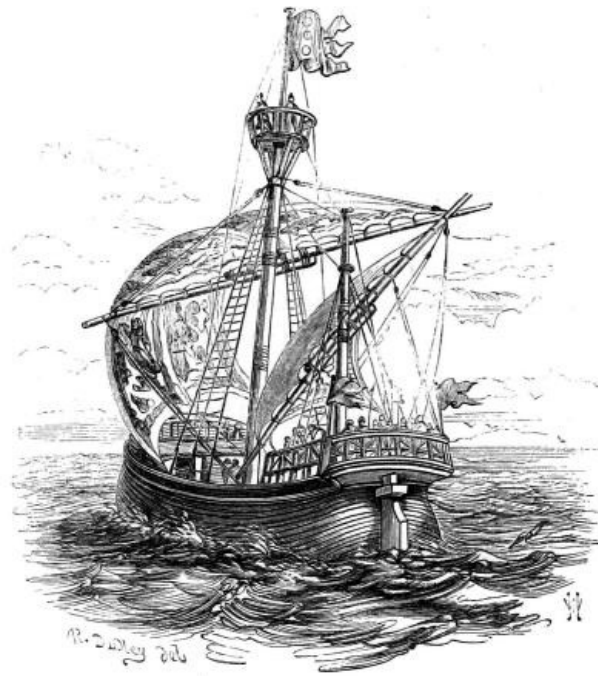
"But," asked the boy-king, with a sneer, "who will take care of your duchy while you are grasping at a crown?"

"My duchy," answered William, fiercely, "shall not trouble my neighbours. I have a spouse of prudence, who can take charge of my duchy, and could take charge of much more, if it were necessary."

And King Philip parted with his great subject, whom he was never henceforth to think of but as a formidable foe.



XVI.



The good ship Moira, William of Normandy, owner

THE NORMAN ARMAMENT.

All through the summer of 1066, while England was ringing with alarm, Normandy was resounding with preparations; armourers were busy forging weapons and coats of mail; shipwrights were occupied with the construction of vessels; and men were continually employed carrying arms from workshop to port. Everything, meantime, seemed to favour William's project of conquest; and he fixed on a day about the middle of August as the time for his departure.

The mouth of the Dive was appointed as the rendezvous; and there, in good time, William's mighty armament was ready for the enterprise. Sixty thousand men came to the Norman standard; and the fleet consisted of four hundred ships and a thousand other vessels, great and small. For a month, however, the winds, proving adverse, detained the fleet in port. An Anglo-Saxon was caught making observations, taken into custody, and carried before William.

"You are a spy," said the duke.

The man, with William's terrible eye upon him, could not muster courage to deny the charge.

"Nevertheless," said the duke, "you shall see everything; though Harold need not trouble himself to ascertain my force; for he shall both see and feel it, ere the year has run its course."

At length a southern breeze sprang up, and the Normans set sail. But they soon found the impossibility of proceeding on their voyage. Carried as far as the roadstead of St. Valery, at the mouth of the Somme, they were under the necessity of landing and submitting to a further delay.

William's patience was now severely tried. The weather was stormy; rain fell in torrents; some ships, shattered by the tempest, sank with their crews; and the men began to lose heart. The fearful difficulties that beset the enterprise forced themselves on every mind; and while conversing with each other under their tents, dripping with water, they talked of the ships that had been lost, and exaggerated the number of the bodies cast ashore.

"The man is mad who thus seeks to seize the land of another," said some of the soldiers.

"And, doubtless," suggested others, "God is offended with such designs, and proves it by refusing us a favourable wind."

Not unaware that such conversations were held, William became uneasy and restless. He plied the men with strong drink to stimulate their courage, and was frequently observed to enter the church of St. Valery, to remain long in prayer, and to gaze anxiously, as he left the building, at the weathercock that ornamented the belfry.

On Tuesday, the 26th of September, while William was occupied with somewhat sad thoughts, a brilliant idea crossed his brain, and filled his heart with hope. Either prompted by sincere faith, or by a desire to dissipate the gloom that hung over his mighty host, he caused a coffer containing the bones of St. Valery to be taken from the church and solemnly carried through the camp. The duke made rich offerings; every soldier gave his mite; and the adventurers in a body joined in prayer. This ceremony had the effect of calming superstitious fears; and when next morning dawned, it seemed as if their prayers had been answered and a miracle wrought; for the weather was fine, and the wind was favourable.

No time was now lost. At daybreak the sleepers were roused from their repose; orders for immediate embarkation were given; the soldiers, cheered by the change of weather, joyfully hastened on board; and the mariners made ready to haul up their anchors and spread their sails.

William's own ship—a gift of Matilda the duchess—was named the Moira, commanded by a skipper of skill, known as Stephen, the son of Gerard, and ornamented by a figure-head representing William Rufus, then a little boy, with a bent bow in his hands. On the sails of divers colours were painted the arms of Normandy, and at the masthead flew the consecrated banner sent to William by the pope. Large lanterns, fixed on poles, were intended to serve as a rallying-point for the whole fleet.

After much bustle and exertion, everything was in readiness for sailing; and, William having embarked, the Moira, followed by fourteen hundred vessels, great and small, made for the open sea, while a cheer rose from sixty thousand tongues. The voyage was, on the whole, prosperous. But the Moira, sailing much more swiftly than the other ships, outstripped them during the day, and at night left them far behind. In the morning William found to his dismay that his friends were not to be seen.

"Go to the masthead," said the duke, addressing Stephen; and the skipper obeyed.

"I see only sky and sea," said the skipper.

"Never mind," said William, affecting a gay countenance; "cast anchor till they come in sight."

At the same time, to keep away fear and anxiety, he ordered a copious repast, with spiced wines; and, this having been disposed of, he caused the skipper again to go aloft.

"What do you see now?" asked William.

"Four vessels," answered the skipper.

"Look again," said William.

"Ah!" cried the skipper, "I see a forest of masts and sails."

"Our fleet!" exclaimed William, joyfully; and ere long, the fourteen hundred vessels having come up, the Moira was once more at their head, and gallantly leading the way to the coast of Sussex.

On that September day, the Norman fleet, without encountering the slightest opposition, sailed into the Bay of Pevensey, and cast anchor hard by that ancient castle, whose foundations were then washed by the waves, though the sea is now a mile distant from its stately ruins. The process of disembarking the troops was immediately commenced. First landed the archers, clad in short coats, with their bows in their hands; then the horsemen, in steel helmets and coats of mail, with long lances and double-edged swords; and then the armourers, smiths, carpenters, and pioneers. Everything was done in perfect order, and with a degree of precision which must have pleased William's eye.

The duke was the last to land; and, as he did so, a slight accident occurred, which some were inclined to regard as a presage of evil, but to which, with his wonted tact, he contrived to give an interpretation highly favourable to the fortunes of their enterprise. When his foot touched the shore, he slipped and fell on his face, and a murmur instantly arose.

"God preserve us!" exclaimed some in horror.

"This is a bad sign," cried others.

"Lords, what is it you say?" exclaimed William, rising with a spring. "Why are you amazed? See you not that I have taken seizin of this land with my hands, and all that it contains is our own?"

It is said that after landing, William ordered the ships forming his fleet to be burned, that the Normans, seeing all hope of retreat cut off, might be induced to fight the more desperately; and then he marched towards Hastings.

On a broad plain, between Pevensey and Hastings, the Normans pitched their camp. Having erected two wooden castles, brought with them to serve as receptacles for provisions during the campaign, or as places of refuge in case of disaster, they sent out bodies of troops to overrun the neighbourhood. The inhabitants, terrified at the approach of foes whom they were utterly unprepared to meet, fled from their dwellings to the churches; and the country seemed to lie so open, that many of the invaders indulged in the anticipation of taking possession without resistance.

Far otherwise, however, was it ordered. In fact, the Anglo-Saxons were rising from the Thames to the Tweed; and William soon received warning from one of the Normans settled in England not to trust to appearances.

"Be upon your guard," was the message, "for in four days the son of Godwin will be at the head of a hundred thousand men."

The warning was well meant, but somewhat unnecessary. William was not the man to be taken by surprise, as Hardrada had been. His camp was carefully guarded; and his outposts, extending to a great distance, kept watch night and day with unceasing vigilance. At length, on the morning of Friday, the 13th of October, horsemen galloped into the camp in such haste, that they had scarcely breath sufficient to communicate their intelligence.

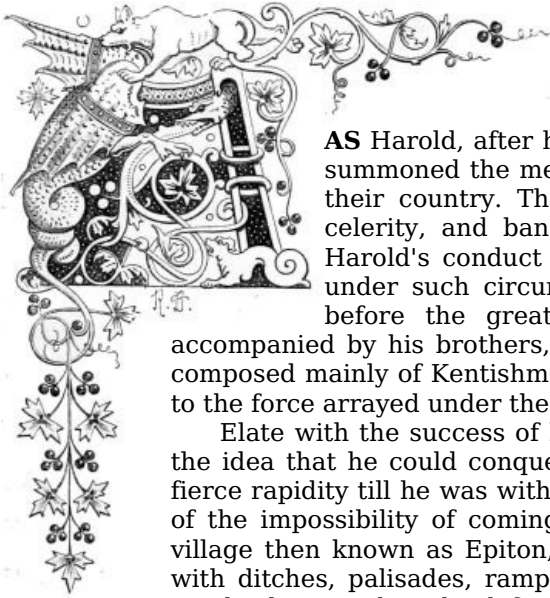
"With what tidings come you?" asked the Normans eagerly.

"With tidings," answered the horsemen, "that the Saxon king is advancing furiously."



Harold has news of William's landing.

XVII. HAROLD'S HOST.



AS Harold, after his victory over the Norwegians, left York to hasten to London, he summoned the men of the provinces through which he passed to arm in defence of their country. The Anglo-Saxons obeyed the summons with the utmost possible celerity, and bands of armed men were soon on their way to the capital. But Harold's conduct ruined all. With a rashness of which even Tostig would hardly, under such circumstances, have been guilty, he resolved to venture on a battle before the great Anglo-Saxon nobles and their fighting-men came up; and, accompanied by his brothers, Gurth and Leofwine, he left the capital at the head of an army composed mainly of Kentishmen and Londoners, utterly inferior both in numbers and discipline to the force arrayed under the banner of his potent foe.

Elate with the success of his arms at Stamford Bridge, and probably deluding himself with the idea that he could conquer William as he had conquered Hardrada, Harold marched with fierce rapidity till he was within seven miles of the Norman camp. But convinced, at that stage, of the impossibility of coming on William unawares, he changed his tactics, halted near the village then known as Epiton, took possession of some hilly ground, and fortified his position with ditches, palisades, ramparts of slates, and willow hurdles. Thus strongly intrenched, he resolved to stand on the defensive.

Meanwhile, some spies, sent to make observations on the hostile army, and bring intelligence of the disposition and force of the Normans, returned to the camp, and gave their report.

"There are more priests," said the spies, "in Duke William's camp, than there are fighting men on the English side."

"Ah," said Harold, with a smile, "you have mistaken warriors for priests, because the Normans shave their beards, and wear their hair short. Those whom you saw in such numbers are not priests, but brave soldiers, who will soon show us what they are worth."

"It seems to us," said some of the Saxon chiefs, on whom the report of the spies, doubtless, was not without effect, "that we should act prudently in avoiding a battle for the present, and retreating towards London, ravaging the country as we go, and thus starving out the foreigners."

"I cannot ravage the country which has been committed to my care," answered Harold. "By my faith, that were indeed treason; and I prefer taking the chances of battle with my courage, my good cause, and the few men I have."

But ere long the Saxon chiefs had reason to doubt the goodness of Harold's cause. While this conversation as to the expediency of a retreat was taking place, a monk from William arrived with a message for Harold, and found his way to the presence of the Saxon king.

"William, Duke of Normandy," said the monk, addressing Harold, "requires thee to do one of three things: either to surrender to him, the crown of England; or to submit your quarrel to the arbitration of the pope; or to refer its decision to the chances of a single combat."

"And my answer," said Harold, briefly, "is, that I will not resign the crown; I will not refer the matter to the pope; and a single combat I will not fight."

"Then," said the monk, solemnly, "Duke William denounces thee as perjurer and liar; and all who support thee are excommunicated. The papal bull is in the Norman tent."

The mention of excommunication produced an instantaneous effect on the Saxon chiefs, and they looked at each other like men suddenly seized with superstitious terror.

"This is a business of great danger," they murmured.

"Whatever the danger may be, we ought to fight," said a thane; "for here is not a question of receiving a new lord as if our king were dead; the matter in hand is very different. William of Normandy has given our lands to his barons and his people, most of whom have already rendered him homage for them. They come not only to ruin us, but to ruin our descendants also, and to take from us the country of our ancestors."

"It is true," cried the Saxons, recovering their courage. "Let us neither make peace, truce, nor treaty with the invader."

"Let us swear," cried all, "to drive out the Normans, or die in the attempt."

An oath was accordingly taken by the Saxon chiefs. But when their enthusiasm evaporated, the thought of fighting for national existence under the auspices of a man branded as "perjurer and liar" troubled every conscience. Even Harold's brothers could not conceal their uneasiness, and Gurth frankly and honestly expressed his sentiments.

"Harold," said Gurth, "let me persuade you not to be present in the battle, but to return to London and seek fresh reinforcements, while we sustain the Norman's attack."

"And why?" asked Harold.

"Thou canst not deny," replied Gurth, "that, whether on compulsion or willingly, thou hast sworn an oath to Duke William upon the relics of saints. Why risk a combat with a perjury against thee? For us, who have taken no oath, the war is just: we defend our country. Leave us, then, to fight the battle. If we retreat, thou canst aid us; if we fall, thou canst avenge us."

"My duty," said Harold, "forbids me to remain apart while others risk their lives."

The night of Friday, the 13th of October, had now come, and by the Saxons little doubt was entertained that the Norman duke would attack them on the morrow. Nor was their anticipation incorrect. Indeed, William had intimated to his army that next day would be a day of battle; and, while the Norman warriors prepared their arms, Norman monks and priests prayed, and chanted litanies, and confessed the soldiers, and

administered the sacrament.

The Saxons passed the night in a far different and much less devout manner. It seems that the 14th of October was the day of Harold's nativity, and that the Saxons, eager to celebrate such an occasion, or hailing it as a fair excuse for carousing, dedicated the night to joviality. Around their fires wine and ale flowed in abundance, and men, grouped in large circles, sang national ballads, and filled and emptied horns and flagons with a reckless indifference to the probability that next morning their ideas would be confused and their nerves disordered.

And thus, almost face to face with the Normans, and soon to be hand to hand, the Saxons, under King Harold's standard, beheld the break of that day on which, against fearful odds, they were to fight a battle for the sovereignty of England.



Battle Abbey, Hastings.

XVIII.



The Norman prelates blessing the troops.

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

On the morning of Saturday, the 14th of October, 1066, the day of St. Calixtus, William the Norman rose from his couch, and prepared to tear the crown of Edward the Confessor from the head of Harold, son of Godwin.

Before forming into battle order, the Normans went through an impressive religious ceremony. Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutance, celebrated mass, and solemnly blessed the troops; and then Odo, who was warrior as well as prelate, and wore a hauberk under his rochet, mounted his tall white charger, and, with a baton of command in his hand, aided to marshal the cavalry.

The Norman army was ranged in three divisions. In the first were the men of Boulogne, Ponthieu, and most of the continental adventurers, whom the prospect of pay and plunder had brought to the invading standard; in the second appeared the auxiliaries from Brittany, Maine, and Poitou; while the third was composed of the high Norman chivalry, and comprised hundreds of knights and nobles, whose names were

afterwards registered in the roll of Battle Abbey, and whose descendants ranked among the mediæval magnates of England. Gallantly they mounted—Fitzosborne and Warren, Gourney and Grantmesnil, Percy and Peverill, Montgomery and Mortimer, Merley and Montfichet, Bruce, Bigod, and Bohun, De Vere, De Vesci, De Clare, De La Val, and De Roos—completely covered with linked mail, armed with lances and swords, and with crosses or dragons and wolves painted on their shields.

But, while warriors were mounting, the proudest and grandest of these barons attracted little attention. It was on the chief of that mighty host that all eyes were turned—on the martial duke, under whose auspices was now to be fought one of the greatest battles of the world—a battle the result of which has ever since exercised no unimportant influence on the destinies of the human race.

William was now in his forty-third year, and time had left its traces behind. But, bald as he was, and worn with the cares of four decades, the Norman duke had all the vigour, energy, and martial enthusiasm of youth. Never, perhaps, had he appeared more worthy of his high fortunes than when, with some of the relics on which Harold had sworn, around his neck, he stood in view of the great army of which he was the soul.

This display having served its purpose, William hastened to complete the process of arming; and his squires, while handing him his hauberk, in their haste presented him with the backpiece first.

"This is an evil omen," said the lords around.

"Tush!" exclaimed William, laughing their fears to scorn. "Methinks it is rather a good omen: it betokens that the last shall be first—that the duke will be a king."

Having completely armed himself, with the exception of his helmet, William intrusted his standard to Tonstain le Blanc, a young warrior, and sprang upon his magnificent Spanish charger, which the King of Castile had sent him as a gift. Thus armed, and thus mounted, with the consecrated standard waving over his head, he raised his voice to address his soldiers ere they marched upon the foe.

"Normans and warriors," said the duke, "you are now about to encounter your enemies. Fight your best, and spare not. What I gain, you gain; if I conquer, you conquer; if I take the land, you will share it. We shall all be rich. Know, however, that I came here not merely to take that which is my due, but to revenge our whole nation for the felon acts, perjuries, and treasons of these Saxons. In the night of St. Brice they put to death the Danes, both men and women. Afterwards they decimated the companions of my kinsman, Alfred, and put him to death. On then, in God's name, and chastise them for all their misdeeds!"

As William concluded his address, the Norman priests and monks retired to a neighbouring hill to pray for victory; and the Norman warriors, with a shout of "Dieu aide!" began their march to the Saxon camp. In a short time they came in sight of the place where Harold and his men, all on foot around their standard, and strongly posted, stood ready, with their huge axes, to fight to the death.

While such was the position of the hostile armies, a Norman minstrel, named Taillefer, rendered himself prominently conspicuous. Giving the spur to his horse, he rode out in front of the Norman array, and, in a loud voice, raised the song of Charlemagne and Roland, then so famous throughout Christendom. As he proceeded, he played with his sword, tossing the weapon far into the air, and then catching it in his right hand with wondrous dexterity; while the warriors behind vociferously repeated the burthen of his song, and loudly shouted, "Dieu aide!"

When the Normans approached the Saxon intrenchments, their archers began the conflict by letting fly a shower of arrows, and the crossbowmen discharged their bolts. But neither arrows nor bolts did much execution. In fact, most of the shots were rendered useless by the high parapets of the Saxon redoubts, and the archers and bowmen found, with dismay, that their efforts were in vain.

But the infantry, armed with spears, and the cavalry, with their long lances, now advanced, and charging the gates of the redoubts, endeavoured to force an entrance. The Saxons, however, forming a solid mass, encountered their assailants with courage, and swinging with both hands their heavy axes, broke lances into shivers, and cut through coats of mail.

It was in vain that the Normans forming the first division of William's army perseveringly endeavoured to tear up the stakes and penetrate the redoubts. Foiled and dispirited, archers and bowmen, infantry and cavalry, fell back on that column where the duke, in person, commanded.

But William was not to be baffled. Spurring his Spanish charger in among the archers, he ordered them to shoot, not straightforward, but into the air, so that their arrows might fall into the enemy's camp.

"See you not," said the duke, "that your shafts fall harmless against the parapets? Shoot in the air. Let your arrows fall as if from the heavens."

The archers then, advancing in a body, profited by William's suggestion; and so successful proved the manœuvre, that many of the Saxons, and, among others, King Harold, were wounded in the face.

In the meantime, the Norman horse and foot renewed the attack with shouts of "Notre Dame!" "Dieu aide!" and an impetuosity which seemed to promise success. But if the attack was fierce, the resistance was stubborn. Notwithstanding the execution done by arrows and bolts, and their frightful wounds, Harold and his men fought with mighty courage. Driven back from one of the gates to a deep ravine, which was concealed by brushwood and long grass, the Normans found their situation deplorable. Horses and men rolled over each other into the ravine, perishing miserably; and, when William's Spanish charger was killed under him, and the great war-chief for a moment disappeared, alarm seized the invaders.

"The duke is slain!" was the cry; and the Normans, giving way to panic, commenced a retreat.

"No!" exclaimed William, in a voice of thunder, as he disentangled himself from his fallen steed; "I am here. Look at me. I still live, and, with God's help, I will conquer."

And taking off his helmet that he might be the more readily recognised, William threw himself before the fugitives, and threatening some, striking others with his lance, he barred their passage, and ordered the cavalry to return to the attack. But every effort to force the redoubts proved fruitless; still the charge of the Normans was broken on the wall of shields; and, in spite of the fearful odds against them, the Saxons still held gallantly out.

It was now that William determined on a stratagem to lure the Saxons from their intrenchments, and ordered a thousand horse to advance to the redoubts and then retire. His command was skilfully obeyed; and when the Saxons saw their enemies fly as if beaten, they lost the coolness they had hitherto exhibited, and, with their axes hanging from their necks, rushed furiously forth in pursuit.

But brief indeed was their imaginary triumph. Suddenly the Normans halted, faced about, and being

joined by another body of cavalry, that had watched the manœuvre, turned fiercely upon the pursuers with sword and lance, and quickly put them to the rout.

Evening was now approaching; and William, availing himself of the confusion and disorder which the success of his stratagem had created among the Saxons, once more assailed the redoubts, and this time with success. In rushed horse and foot, hewing down all who opposed them. In vain the Saxons struggled desperately, overthrowing cavalry and infantry, and continued the combat hand to hand and foot to foot. Their numbers rapidly diminished; and at length the king and his two brothers were left almost without aid to defend the standard.

No hope now remained for the Saxons, and soon all was over. Harold, previously wounded in the eye, fell to rise no more. Leofwine shared his brother's fate and died by his side; and Gurth, courageously facing the foe, maintained a contest single-handed against a host of knightly adversaries. But William, pushing forward, mace in hand, struck the Saxon hero a blow of irresistible violence, and Gurth fell on the mangled corpses of his kinsmen and countrymen.

Ere this the sun had set, and still the conflict was continued; and the Saxons, vain as were their efforts, maintained an irregular struggle till darkness rendered it impossible to know friend from foe, except by the difference of language. The vanquished islanders then fled in the direction of London. But when the moon rose, the victors fiercely urged the pursuit. The Norman cavalry, flushed with triumph, granted no quarter. Thousands of Saxons, dispersed and despairing, fell by the weapons of pursuers, and thousands more died on the roads of wounds and fatigue.

Meanwhile, William ordered the consecrated standard to be set up where that of the Saxons had fallen, and, pitching his tent on the field of battle, passed that October night almost within hearing of the groans of the dying.



XIX.

THE BODY OF HAROLD.

NO sooner did Sunday morning dawn than William, having first evinced his gratitude to Heaven for the victory gained, applied himself to ascertain the extent of his loss. Having vowed to erect on the field of battle an abbey, to be dedicated to St. Martin, the patron saint of the warriors of Gaul, the Conqueror drew up his troops, and called over the names of all who had crossed the sea, from a list made at St. Valery.

While this roll was being called over, many of the wives and mothers of the Saxons who had armed in the neighbourhood of Hastings to fight for King Harold appeared on the field to search for and bury the bodies of their husbands and sons. William immediately caused the corpses of the men who had fallen on his side to be buried, and gave the Saxons leave to do the same for their countrymen.

For some time, however, no one had the courage to mention the propriety of giving Christian burial to the Saxon king; and the body of Harold lay on the field without being claimed or sought for. At length Githa, the widow of Godwin, sent to ask the Conqueror's permission to render the last honours to her son, but William sternly refused.

"The mother," said the messengers, "would even give the weight of the body in gold."

"Nevertheless," said William, "the man, false to his word and to his religion, shall have no other sepulchre than the sands of the shore."

William, however, relented. It happened that Harold had founded and enriched the abbey of Waltham, and that the abbot felt himself in duty bound to obtain Christian burial for such a benefactor. Accordingly he deputed Osgod and Ailrik, two Saxon monks, to demand permission to transfer the body of Harold to their church; and the Conqueror granted the permission they asked.

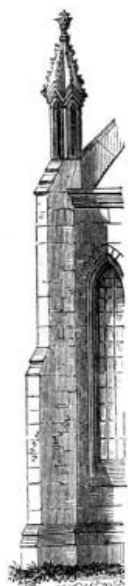
But Osgod and Ailrik found their mission somewhat difficult to fulfil. So disfigured, in fact, were most of the dead with wounds and bruises, that one could hardly be known from another. In vain the monks sought among the mass of slain, stripped as they were of armour and clothing. The monks of Waltham could not recognise the corpse of him whom they sought, and, in their difficulty, they resolved to invoke female aid.

At that time there was living, probably in retirement, a Saxon woman known as Edith the Fair. This woman, who was remarkable for her beauty, and especially for the gracefulness of her neck, which chroniclers have compared to the swan's, had, before Harold's coronation and his marriage with Aldith, been entertained by him as a mistress; and, on being applied to, she consented to assist the monks in their search. Better acquainted than they were with the features of the man she had loved, Edith was successful in discovering the corpse.

The body of Harold having thus—thanks to the zeal and exertions of the monks—been found, was, with those of his brothers, Gurth and Leofwine, placed at the disposal of their mother, the widowed Githa. With her consent they were buried in the abbey of Waltham. The Conqueror sent William Mallet, one of his knights, to see the corpse honourably interred; and at the east end of the choir, in a tomb long pointed out as that containing the remains of the Saxon king, were inscribed the words—

"HAROLD INFELIX."

"But here," says Sir Richard Baker, "Giraldus Cambrensis tells a strange story, that Harold was not slain



in the battle, but only wounded and lost his left eye, and then escaped by flight to Chester, where he afterwards led a holy anchorite's life in the cell of St. James, fast by St. John's Church."

XX.



THE CONQUEROR AND THE KENTISHMEN.

After his victory at Hastings, William remained for some time on the field, waiting for the men of the country to appear at his camp and make their submission. Finding, however, that nobody came, he marched along the sea coast, took Dover, and then advanced by the great Roman road towards London.

While passing through Kent, the conquerors, for a time, pursued their way without interruption. Suddenly, however, at a place where the road, approaching the Thames, ran through a forest, they found their passage disputed by a large body of Kentishmen. Each man carried in his hand a green bough, and at a distance they presented the appearance of a wood in motion.

"This," said the Normans, crossing themselves, "is magic—the work of Satan."

On drawing near, however, the Kentishmen threw the green boughs to the ground, raised their banner, and drew their swords; and William, aware that the men of Kent were not foes to be despised, asked with what intent they came against him in such a fashion.

"We come," cried the men of Kent, "to fight for our liberty, and for the laws we have enjoyed under King Edward."

"Well," answered William, whose object it now was, if possible, to conciliate, "ye shall have your ancient customs and your laws which ye demand, so that ye acknowledge me king of England."

The Kentishmen, on hearing this, consented to lay down their arms, having concluded a treaty by which they agreed to offer no further resistance, on condition that they should be as free as they had before been. William sent forward five hundred horsemen towards London; and learning that the citizens were likely to stand on their defence, he resolved to turn towards the west, and passed the Thames at Wallingford.

On reaching Wallingford, which had been regarded by the Saxons as a stronghold of the first importance, William was struck with the capacity of the place, and eager to secure it as one of his strongholds. On this point there was no difficulty. In fact, Wallingford was in possession of a Saxon thane named Wigod, who had neither the will nor the power to resist, but who had an only daughter named Aldith, with no insuperable objection to become the bride of a Norman knight. The Conqueror immediately provided the fair Aldith with a husband, in the person of Robert D'Oyley, one of his favourite warriors; and the marriage ceremony having been performed without any unnecessary delay, D'Oyley was left, in the company of his bride and his father-in-law, to make the castle as strong as possible; while the Conqueror, marching to Berkhamstead, cut off all communication between London and the north, and continued so to hem in the city that the inhabitants became every day more apprehensive of being exposed to the horrors of famine.

XXI.

EDGAR ATHELING.

News of the Norman victory at Hastings speedily reached London; and the city became the scene of commotion and debate. So strong, however, appeared the necessity for doing something decisive, that men calmed themselves to consider their position; and, by way of dealing with the crisis, they resolved on placing the Confessor's crown on the head of Edgar Atheling, the Confessor's kinsman, and the undoubted heir of the Saxon kings.

Atheling was grandson of Edmund Ironsides, and a native of Hungary. In fact, it seems that when Canute the Dane, in 1017, made himself master of England, he found in the kingdom two sons of Ironsides, who bore the names of Edmund and Edward. Wishing, it is said, to have the Saxon princes put to death, but apprehensive of the consequences of ordering their execution, Canute sent them to the King of Sweden, with a request that they might be secretly made away with. Not caring, however, to have the blood of two innocent boys to answer for, the royal Swede sent them to Hungary; and the king of that country, after receiving them with reluctance, reared them with kindness. As time passed on, Edmund died without heirs; but Edward, known as The Exile, espousing Agatha, daughter of an Emperor of Germany, became father of a handsome and fair-haired boy, known as Edgar Atheling, and two girls, named Margaret and Christina.

During the reigns of Harold Harefoot and Hardicanute, the son of Ironsides remained forgotten in exile. But the Confessor, in his old age, finding himself childless, and knowing that his end was drawing nigh,

turned his thoughts towards his expatriated kinsman, and despatched Aldred, Archbishop of York, to escort the heir of Alfred from the German court. The result was, that Edward the Exile, bringing with him his wife and three children, returned to the country of his ancestors, with high hopes of wearing the crown. But not long after arriving in England he went the way of all flesh, leaving his son much too young to assert his own rights, and without adherents sufficiently influential to cope successfully with the wealthy and popular chief of the House of Godwin.

At the time when the Confessor drew his last breath, in the Painted Chamber, Edgar Atheling was a boy of ten; and Harold had very little difficulty in excluding him from the throne. It has been asserted, indeed, that, from the earliest period, minors had been set aside, as a matter of course, by the Saxon customs; and that the Atheling's nonage positively disqualified him from wearing the crown. Nevertheless, the youth, the beauty, the hereditary claims of the boy, won him many friends; and he was much beloved by the people, who, in their loyal affection, called him their darling.

"He is young and handsome," said they, "and descended from the true race, the best race of the country."

It would seem that the Atheling's claims caused Harold considerable uneasiness. In fact, historians state that the son of Godwin was kept in constant dread "of anything being contrived against him in favour of Edgar by those who had a great affection for the ancient royal family." However, Harold, to keep them quiet, showed the boy great respect, gave him the earldom of Oxford, and "took care of his education," says one historian, "as if he would have it thought that he intended to resign the crown to him when he should be of fit age to govern."

But whatever may have been Harold's motives or intentions, no sooner did he fall at Hastings than the popular cry rose in Edgar's favour. Opinions, however, were divided as to the person most worthy of being king. Edwin and Morkar, the grandsons of Leofric, claimed the honour for one of themselves; and men influenced by the papal bull, stood up for Duke William. But both Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Aldred, Archbishop of York, declared strongly for the Atheling; and at length, after much hesitation and much dispute, the boy was publicly proclaimed.

Such was the stage at which affairs had arrived in London, when William, from his camp at Berkhamstead, found a way of communicating with Ansgar, the standard-bearer of the city, an officer whom, in 1051, he had seen at Edward's court; and when Ansgar, assembling the chief citizens, without informing them of William's message to himself, impressed upon them the expediency of negotiating with the invaders.

"Honourable brothers," said Ansgar, "our resources are nearly exhausted. The city is threatened with assault, and no army comes to our aid."

"True," murmured the citizens.

"Such," continued Ansgar, "is our situation; but when strength is exhausted, when courage can do no more, artifice and stratagem still remain. I advise you to resort to them."

"In what way?" asked the citizens.

"The enemy," answered Ansgar, "is not yet aware of our miserable position: let us profit by that circumstance, and send them fair words by a man capable of deceiving them, who will feign to convey your submission, and, in sign of peace, will lay his hand in theirs if required."

"Yes," cried the citizens: "we will, in that case, be able to obtain a suspension of hostilities, and protract negotiations until the arrival of succours."

After this scene, in which Ansgar skilfully acted his part, his counsel was enthusiastically adopted. But the messenger sent to delude William returned to London devoted to the Norman duke's cause, and gave so flattering a report of the Conqueror, that the citizens became eager to acknowledge such a man as King of England. The feeling proved marvellously contagious, and London was soon under the influence of one of those popular outbursts which nothing can resist.

"What should be done?" asked Ansgar.

"Let the keys of the city be carried to Duke William," was the answer.

The warriors and prelates who surrounded Edgar Atheling were probably somewhat surprised at this sudden resolution, and they were certainly in no position to restrain or counteract it. They therefore yielded to the current; and the young king, accompanied by the two archbishops, Stigand and Aldred, by Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester, and by the chief citizens, proceeded to Berkhamstead to make their submission. On presenting themselves to the Conqueror they swore fidelity, gave hostages, and received his promise to be gentle and clement. William regarded the grandson of Ironsides with interest, kissed the boy tenderly, and spoke to him with kindness. Doubtless, in the eye of a prince of Edgar Atheling's age, a dog and a pony would have seemed more to be desired than the crown and throne of England; nor can it be said that, in after years, when his valour and his capacity had been proved, he ever looked back with excessive regret to the crown he had lost and the throne from which he had been excluded.



Saxon Bondman (from Strutt).

XXII.



Commotion during the crowning of William.

CORONATION OF THE CONQUEROR.

After Edgar Atheling and the Saxon chiefs and prelates had made their submission to the conqueror of Hastings, and given hostages for their fidelity, William—having previously sent forward a strong body of soldiers to construct a fortress in the heart of London—left Berkhamstead, and marched towards the wealthy city on the Thames, ere long to become the capital of England.

It seemed as if the progress of the Normans would now be easy. Most men of rank and worldly discretion, especially the bishops—whose influence was strong—believed that the national cause could not be maintained, and were inclined to support Duke William as a matter of duty.

"It is needful," men said to each other, "to fall in with the times, and not to oppose the will of God, by whom the powers of the world are raised up."

But all Saxons did not take this view; and while the Normans were on their way from Berkhamstead to London, an incident occurred which gave William an idea of the hostile spirit by which many of the natives were animated. On approaching the ancient abbey of St. Alban's he found, with surprise, that numbers of huge trees had been cut down, and so disposed as to intercept the march of his army. William immediately sent for the abbot, whose name was Frithrik, and demanded the reason of this attempt to intercept his passage.

"Why," asked the Conqueror, "hast thou thus cut down thy woods?"

"I have done my duty," answered the abbot, boldly; "and had all of my order done the same, as they ought to have done, thou wouldst not have advanced so far into our country."

After having advanced near London, William, pondering the propriety of assuming the crown, held a council of war, ostensibly to discuss the means of promptly completing the conquest, but in reality to get nearer the object on which his heart had so long been set.

"It appears," said some of William's friends, addressing their chief, "that, in order to mitigate resistance, it is politic that thou shouldst assume the title of King of the English."

"No," said William, feigning an indifference which he was far from feeling; "I demand, at least, some delay. I have not come to England for my own interest alone, but for that of the whole Norman nation. And besides, if it be the will of God that I should become king, the time has not yet arrived. Too many countries and too many men have yet to be subjected."

"Yes; it is not yet time to create a king," said the Norman nobles, interpreting William's scruples literally.

"This is too modest of Duke William," said Aimery de Thouars, a captain of auxiliaries, rising and speaking with much energy. "It is too modest of him to appeal to soldiers, whether or no they will have their lord a king. Soldiers have nothing to do with questions of this nature; and our discussions only serve to retard that which, as a matter of feeling, we all so ardently desire."

After the speech of Aimery de Thouars, the Norman nobles felt bound to support the opinion he had expressed; and it was unanimously resolved that William should be crowned before proceeding farther with the work of the conquest. Accordingly, he entered London, took up his residence at the Tower, and ordered the necessary preparations to be made for the ceremony.

Christmas was the day fixed for placing the Confessor's crown on the Conqueror's head, and the church of Westminster was decorated for the occasion. The Archbishop of Canterbury was invited to perform the office; but Stigand declined. The Archbishop of York was then invited; and Aldred consented. The Norman cavalry, posted around Westminster, carefully watched over the safety of those who took part in the ceremony; and William, walking between two ranks of soldiers, entered the abbey, accompanied by two hundred and sixty of his counts and captains.

When everything was ready for the ceremony of coronation, Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutance, and Aldred, Archbishop of York, ascended a platform; and Geoffrey asked the Normans, and Aldred asked the English, whether they would have William for their king. Those present answered by acclamations so loud as to produce awkward results. The Norman cavalry posted in the vicinity, mistaking the meaning of the cries, and hastily concluding that a riot had taken place, drew their swords, spurred towards the church, and, in their confusion, set fire to some houses. The noise and tumult reaching the interior, caused Normans and Saxons hastily to disperse, and William was left alone with Aldred and the Saxon and Norman priests. The ceremony was, however, completed; and William somewhat hastily took the oaths to treat the Saxon people as well as the best king ever elected by them.

Having planted the lion banner of Normandy on the Tower of London, and portioned out the south and east of England among his followers, William embarked at Pevensey to visit his continental dominions, taking with him as hostages, Edgar Atheling and several Saxon chiefs, and more gold and silver than could have been found in all Gaul.

In Normandy he was received with boundless enthusiasm. Crowds flocked from Rouen to the seashore to welcome his return. The Normans and the French vied with each other in doing him honour. William's vanity was gratified, and he displayed his munificence by presenting his guests with the chased gold and silver plate, and the massive drinking-cups, of which the Saxons had been despoiled.

No one dared now to allude to his illegitimacy, or to mention his grandsire, the tanner. William had, in fact, made himself the most independent of European sovereigns; and even the great Hildebrand, when exalted to the papal throne as Gregory the Seventh, in vain asked for the oath of fealty.

"I hold my kingdom of God and of my sword," was the stern answer of the Conqueror.



XXIII.

THE SIEGE OF EXETER.

After having seated himself on the throne of Edward the Confessor, and attained the object of his ambition, William was not, perhaps, unwilling to pursue a policy of clemency and conciliation towards the Saxons. The Norman barons and knights might have been satisfied with the lands of the Saxons who had fallen at Hastings. But the numerous adventurers who had followed the Norman standard had yet to be gorged with plunder. While the Conqueror was on the Continent, these men were guilty of indiscreet severity; and the Saxons, unable to brook their insolence, formed leagues, and vowed to assert their liberty or die in its defence.

Messengers, hastily despatched, carried to Rouen intelligence of the state of affairs; and William in alarm hastened to Dieppe, and on a cold December night embarked for England. On reaching London he found that city in a ferment; and conscious that his military force was not as yet sufficient to keep down a whole nation, he resorted to artifice—called around him Saxon chiefs and prelates, promised all they asked—celebrated, in their company, the festival of Christmas—and having in this way gained over the leaders, addressed to the populace a proclamation, couched in the Saxon language, and engaging to maintain the laws of King Edward.

After making these and other promises, never intended to be kept, William left London, and proceeded westward, to pursue the work of conquest. At Exeter, where Githa, the widow of Godwin and mother of Harold, had resided since Hastings, the citizens, bent on resistance, fortified their walls, repaired their towers, and, summoning fighting men from the neighbouring country, indicated their determination to bid the Conqueror defiance.

Informed of the attitude assumed by the men of Exeter, William halted at a place four miles distant from the city, and sent, summoning the citizens to surrender and swear the oath of fidelity.

"No," answered the citizens of Exeter; "we shall swear no oath of fidelity to this pretended king, nor admit him within our walls. But if he thinks proper to receive, by way of tribute, the impost we pay to our kings, we will give it to him."

"I require subjects," was William's scornful reply, "and I will have them on no such conditions as are offered."

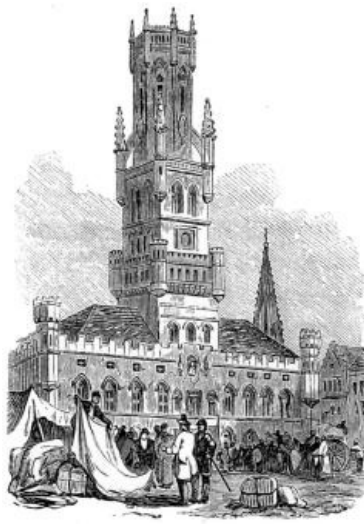
Without further parley, William ordered his banner to advance forthwith, and the Norman army speedily invested Exeter. Ere the assault began, however, some of the chief men, in pursuance of a secret negotiation, came to the king, demanded peace on terms of surrender, and delivered hostages. But on returning within the walls, the bulk of the citizens exclaimed against their treaty, kept the gates closed, and stood to their arms. William, who was not to be trifled with, caused one of the hostages to be brought in sight of the ramparts, and had his eyes put out. But the determination of the inhabitants was inflexible; and it was not till the siege had lasted nearly three weeks, and till forty-eight houses were destroyed, that their courage gave way, and they repaired to the Norman camp, in the attitude of suppliants, with their priests bearing missals and sacred vessels.

Having gained possession of Exeter, William ordered a strong fortress to be constructed out of the houses that had been destroyed during the siege, and proceeded with the subjugation of the west; adding Somerset and Gloucester to the conquered territory; dividing the land among his warriors; and on almost every eminence erecting strong and gloomy castles to keep the Saxons in awe. Recognising the importance of Gloucester as a barrier against the incursions of the Welsh, William fortified the north and south with embattled walls and gates, and selected its castle for his residence in winter, as he had already made the Tower of London his residence in summer, and the palace of Winchester his residence in spring.

Ere Exeter surrendered, Githa, the widow of Godwin, and a number of other women, escaped to one of the islands of the Severn; then to Bath; and from Bath gained the western coast, and embarked for Flanders. Fortunate, comparatively speaking, were those who thus betook themselves to exile. Cruel, indeed, if we are to believe historians, was the fate of those who remained. While thanes of high name and great descent were supplanted by men who had been weavers in Flanders and drovers in Normandy, their wives and sisters were degraded to the dust.

"Ignoble grooms, the scum of armies," says the chronicler, "did as they pleased with the noblest women, and left them nothing but to weep and wish for death."





Belfry at Bruges

MATILDA AND BRIHTRIK.

While William the Norman was occupied with the subjugation of the west, Matilda of Flanders arrived in England to share her husband's triumph. It was in the spring of 1068, after the siege of Exeter, that Matilda, with her children, set foot on English ground. Her reception was all that she could have desired. Her grace and majesty quite charmed the people; and when, with great state, she was crowned at Westminster, she was cheered enthusiastically.

The popularity of Matilda arose from a belief that her counsels often softened the heart of the Conqueror towards the Saxons, and disposed him to clemency. Such was probably the case. On one occasion, however, the royal lady manifested a most vindictive spirit, and exercised the influence she possessed with her husband to avenge, in a signal manner, a slight which she deemed had been put upon her in the days of a somewhat wayward youth.

It appears that when the daughter of Count Baldwin was a girl at Bruges, with nothing particular to occupy her attention, a young and noble Saxon, named Brihtrik, arrived at her father's court as ambassador from Edward the Confessor, and brought with him the reputation of being enormously rich. Matilda was then passing her time in exchanging sharp sayings with her sister, Judith, going to mass with her ladies of honour, working at the embroidery in which she had such skill, and applying her fine intelligence to the studies which rendered her one of the most accomplished of European princesses. Captivated with Brihtrik's handsome person, long hair, and fair face, and being at an age when ladies are supposed to fall in love without profoundly calculating the consequences, the Flemish princess soon found her heart full of a romantic kind of affection for the interesting stranger.

Brihtrik, however, does not appear to have evinced excessive joy at his good fortune. In vain the daughter of Count Baldwin indulged in dreams and in hints of uniting her fate with his. The Saxon lord, either from having another bride in view, or not relishing the idea of ladies taking the initiative in love, proved insensible to allurements, and left the court of Bruges, and the beautiful Matilda, without having given proof of anything like reciprocity of sentiment.

Matilda was by no means gratified with Brihtrik's coolness. Indeed, she would seem to have brooded over the memory of the Saxon for many long years. In any case, when time passed over, and she became the bride of William the Norman, Queen of England, and the mother of sons destined to wear crowns and coronals, she had not forgotten Brihtrik the Saxon.

It is just probable that Brihtrik might not always have spoken of the daughter of Count Baldwin with the discretion which he ought to have exercised. When the alarm of invasion was agitating England, and the name of Duke William was on every tongue, the Saxon, over his cups in his own hall, or even in the palace of Westminster, might have been tempted, under the influence of repeated potations, to speak too freely of his early acquaintance with Matilda the duchess; and his words might have been carried to the palace of Rouen. At all events, she still sighed for vengeance on the man who had trifled with her affections, or treated her advances with indifference.

Matilda had an early opportunity of proving to Brihtrik that he had not been forgiven. The possessions of Brihtrik, which included Tewkesbury and Thornbury, lay in the south-west of England; and after the taking of Exeter, the lands of the vanquished in that quarter were divided among the conquerors. One of the first names inscribed on the partition-roll was that of Matilda of Flanders; and her portion of the plunder was all the land of Brihtrik the Saxon. But Matilda's resentment was too deep to be satisfied with impoverishing Brihtrik; and the potent queen still further avenged her outraged vanity by imprisoning the object of her youthful love after she had plundered him.

Accordingly, Brihtrik, having been arrested at his manor-house, was incarcerated in the castle of Winchester. In a dungeon of that palatial stronghold, with misery for his mate, and precluded, probably, from looking on the face of day, save through the iron bars of a prison house, Brihtrik had the prospect of leisure to lament the coolness of which he had been guilty towards the daughter of Count Baldwin, and to curse the fate that had made the offended fair one the spouse of a king and conqueror of England.

But Brihtrik did not long survive the date of his incarceration. Whether he died a natural death, or fell a victim to Matilda's relentless vengeance, does not clearly appear. It is certain, however, that the Saxon lord drew his last breath in prison, and that he was buried with a degree of secrecy which suggested suspicions of



William's march on Hexham

THE NORMANS IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

It was the autumn of 1068, and the south, east, and west of England having yielded to the Conqueror, and been portioned out among his adventurous followers, the theatre of English independence became somewhat limited. William, however, had not yet reason to sigh for another country to conquer. North of the Humber was a vast province, where no Norman banner had yet waved, where no Norman horseshoe had left its print, but where tall Danes and wealthy Saxons, who were prepared to do battle fearlessly for their liberty, were leaving their houses to sleep in tents, or in the open air, swearing never again to repose beneath the shelter of a roof till they had freed their country.

At length, however, the Conqueror marched northward, and, advancing upon York, slaughtered all who attempted resistance, and, sword in hand, entered the capital of the north. Feeling that the struggle was hopeless, many of the chief Northumbrians descended the Humber in boats, and sought refuge on Scottish soil, there to watch events; and William, after erecting a strong castle, and appointing William Malet as Governor of York, returned southward. But the aspect of affairs speedily became so alarming, that the king prepared for a second expedition, and reached York at the very time when the citizens and the inhabitants of the country had formed a league, and were besieging the Norman fortress. Attacking them with his wonted energy, William succeeded in killing or dispersing the insurgents, and, determined on extending his sovereignty at least as far as Durham, he entrusted the task of doing so to Robert Comine, whom he by anticipation created earl of the county that was to be subdued.

With an army of nine thousand men, twelve hundred of whom were horsemen, Robert Comine ventured on his perilous enterprise. At first all seemed to go prosperously; and he became quite confident when he found himself approaching Durham without having seen the face of a foe. At that point, however, he was met by Eghelwin, Bishop of Durham, who hinted that there was danger in the way.

"I advise you," said the bishop, "to be prudent and beware of a surprise."

"Who would attack me?" asked Comine, with contempt. "None of you, I imagine, would dare to do so." And with these words the Norman warrior rode into the city and took up his quarters in the bishop's palace, while his troops encamped in the square.

Everything, so far, seemed secure; but after nightfall a wonderful change occurred. On every hill a signal-fire was lighted, and armed men, gathering from the banks of the Tyne, assembled in great numbers, and hastened towards Durham. By daybreak they were before the walls, and, forcing the gates, they entered with a mighty rush, and fell ferociously upon the Normans. Dismayed, but not yet despairing, Comine attempted to rally his soldiers in the bishop's palace, erected barricades, and showered arrows from the roofs; but every effort proved vain. The Northumbrians, resolutely pressing on, set fire to the episcopal mansion, and Comine and every man within the walls perished in the flames.

After this successful attempt at revolt, the Northumbrians summoned allies to their side. They implored aid from the King of Denmark, and they recalled the Saxons who had exiled themselves to the Scottish frontier. Both responded with alacrity. A Danish fleet, sent by the King of Denmark, under the command of his brother, entered the Humber; and Edward Atheling, Siward Beorn, and Merlesweyn, and Waltheof, son of the great Siward, who had all taken refuge in Scotland, hastened to Durham.

It was the autumn of 1069, when the Saxons and Danes, after uniting their forces, marched upon York, the Saxons forming the van, the Danes the main army. Messengers went before, announcing deliverance from the invaders; and, ere long, the Normans were surprised to find the city invested on all sides. For several days the garrison offered a brave resistance, but on the eighth day—it was Saturday, the 19th of September—the besiegers had made such progress that the Normans, seeing that they must depend on their citadel, and fearing that the neighbouring houses might be used as materials for filling up the moats, set them on fire. The flames, leaping from house to house, made rapid progress; and the Northumbrians and their Danish allies, guided by the light, penetrated within the walls.

The Normans now took to the citadel, and still hoped to save themselves. The assault of the besiegers, however, proved irresistible. The citadel was taken. A conflict of the most desperate character took place: the Northumbrians and the Danes sought to excel each other in deeds of valour; and thousands of Normans fell in the sanguinary encounter. The victors granted quarter to William Malet and his wife and children, who were conveyed on board the Danish fleet, and then imprudently proceeded to destroy the fortifications erected by the Normans, in order to efface all vestiges of the invasion. This done, they raised the shout of triumph, and expressed their impatience for the arrival of spring to march southward, and drive the conquerors from the land. Meanwhile, as King of England, Edgar Atheling concluded a treaty of alliance with the citizens of York, and had the gratification of being recognised from the Humber to the Tweed.

William was hunting in the Forest of Dean when he received intelligence that the Northumbrians had killed Robert Comine at Durham, and taken possession of York. The wrath of the Norman king burned fiercely.

"By the Divine splendour!" he exclaimed, "I will never again lay aside my lance till I have slain all the Northumbrians;" and he prepared forthwith to execute his threat. But, resolved to facilitate operations by buying off the Danes, he sent messengers to the Danish king's brother, with offers of a large sum of money; and the Dane, yielding to temptation, agreed to take the bribe, and withdrew without striking another blow.

Having thus deprived the Northumbrians of their allies, William assembled an army composed of picked soldiers, and, by forced marches, suddenly appeared at York. The Northumbrians, taken by surprise, and dispirited by the departure of the Danes, nevertheless girded themselves up for the combat, resisted with the courage of despair, and fell by thousands while attempting to oppose the Conqueror's passage through the breaches of the walls. But long as was the struggle, and dearly-purchased as was William's success, his victory was complete. Edgar Atheling left as a fugitive the land of his ancestors, and all who could, made their escape northward.

Finding himself once more master of York, William determined to extend his conquest to the Tweed. Cruelly and savagely the work was begun. Precipitating themselves on Northumberland, the Normans wreaked their fury on all that the land contained. Flocks and herds were massacred as well as men; corn-fields were burned with the towns and hamlets they surrounded; and the devastation seems to have been pursued on such a scale as to render the country uninhabitable. Wasting, burning, slaughtering as they went, the Normans at length reached Durham, which in the previous year had witnessed the death of Robert Comine.

When, one winter's day, news of the Conqueror's approach reached Durham, the bishop and his clergy were well-nigh in despair. It was the very depth of the season. Nevertheless, they resolved to be gone.

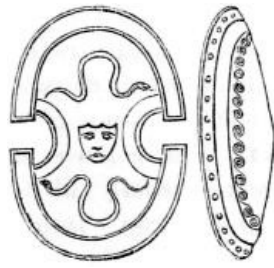
"Let us fly," they cried, "to some place where neither Norman, nor Burgundian, nor brigand, nor vagabond can reach us."

Accordingly they set out for Holy Island, carrying with them the bones of St. Cuthbert and all their moveables of value. They left, however, a crucifix, richly adorned with gold and silver gems, which had, in other days, been presented to the church by Tostig, the son of Godwin, and his haughty countess, Judith of Flanders. This crucifix appears to have been too heavy for the monks to carry. But they consoled themselves with the idea that, instead of tempting sacrilege, it would act as a protection to the church, and to the sick and infirm persons who had crawled to seek refuge within the sacred precincts, and who, overcome with pain, and misery, and fatigue, lay in crowds on the bare stones.

While the bishop and clergy were flying, William entered Durham, and the Normans took possession of the city, without being disturbed in their slumbers as Robert Comine had been. Indeed, resistance was now scarcely thought of, even by the most desperate; and the conquering army traversed Northumberland in all directions, killing the unresisting. The sufferings of the inhabitants were fearful. Between the Humber and the Tweed, more than a hundred thousand human beings perished by famine and the sword; and many, bidding farewell for ever to the fields and homesteads of their fathers, hurried northward, and sought safety in the Merse and Lothian.

But the expedition proved infinitely more fatiguing than any previously undertaken by the conquerors. Their march was through terrible roads, across rivers, and over hills covered with snow. On reaching Hexham, William's army had suffered severely. Horses sank never to rise again, and the riders complained of the hardships as intolerable. One dark night William was horrified to learn that his guides had missed their way, and that he was separated from his army. The Conqueror found himself in the awkward predicament of being in a strange and hostile country, with not more than six attendants. The circumstance caused him some pensive reflection; and when, with the aid of the morning light, he regained his army, it appeared that the danger he had passed had produced considerable effect on his mind.

On reaching Hexham, William halted; and ordering his captains to overrun the country to the north and west, he returned to York, and caused himself to be crowned in the northern capital. At the same time he endeavoured to confirm his conquests by planting Norman warriors of high rank throughout the territory that had been subjugated. William de Warren, William de Percy, and others were gifted with manors and villages in Yorkshire; William de Lacy obtained the great domain of Pontefract; Robert de Brus was settled in Durham; Ralph Meschines took possession of the mountainous district of Cumberland; Robert de Umfraville had a grant of Prudhoe and Redesdale; William de Merley obtained the lands of Morpeth, on which he and his heirs built the castle of Morpeth and the abbey of Newminster; and Ivo de Vesci became lord of Alnwick, and husband of the heiress of a Saxon chief who had fallen at Hastings. All these Norman warriors erected strong castles, manned the walls with foreign soldiers, and applied their energies to keep down the Northumbrians.



XXVI.

COSPATRICK AND THE CONQUEROR.

It would seem that William's taste of Northumberland during his campaign made him pause and ponder. Perceiving the difficulty of retaining such a district in subjection against the inclination of the inhabitants, he recognised the policy of conciliation. Under such circumstances he bethought him of the claims of a Saxon of illustrious birth, whom the Northumbrians regarded with pride as the heir of their ancient earls.

At the time when Harold reigned at Westminster, when Tostig was tempting the King of Norway to invade England, and when William the Norman was preparing that mighty armament the accounts of which filled the minds of the Saxons with dismay and alarm, without rousing them to preparations for a patriotic resistance, there might have been seen, in the north of England, riding somewhat discontentedly to the Northumbrian earl's court at York, or stalking about the woods of Raby, with a spear in his right hand, a hawk on his left wrist, and greyhounds running at his heels, a young man with fair face and blue eyes, whose dress was the short garment, reaching to mid-knee, of the Normans, but whose moustache, long hair, and speech, strongly tinged with the "burr" which the Danes introduced into Northumberland, indicated, in a manner not to be mistaken, his genuinely English birth. He was a Saxon thane of high consideration, and was known as Cospatrick. Frank and hasty was this personage, ever too ready to trust foes and to quarrel with friends; but with all his faults, he was destined to play in his own day a conspicuous part in the affairs of struggling England north of the Humber, and to figure in history as male ancestor of the two mighty mediæval families of Neville and Dunbar.

The father of Cospatrick was Malred, the son of Crinian; and his mother was Alghitha, daughter of the great Uchtred, Earl of Northumberland. Moreover, the blood of the Saxon kings ran in Cospatrick's veins; for Uchtred had married Elfgiva, King Ethelred's daughter; and of that marriage Alghitha was the issue. It was natural that, with such a pedigree, Cospatrick should be somewhat discontented; that he should look with discontent on the domination of the House of Godwin; that, as grandson of Uchtred, he should grow indignant at the sight of Tostig figuring as Earl of Northumberland; that, as great-grandson of Ethelred, he should boil with indignation at the sight of Harold on the throne of his young kinsman, the Atheling.

It is necessary, in order to comprehend the course taken by the great Anglo-Saxon Houses at the time of the Conquest, to remember that the members of Godwin's House appeared to them wholly different beings from the personages represented to our generation by the writers of romantic histories and historic romances. Almost every one of them stood charged with some fearful crime. Edric Streone was the worst of ingrates and traitors. Godwin had on his hands the blood of the young Alfred. Sweyn had debauched a nun and assassinated a kinsman. Harold had the weight of perjury and usurpation on his soul. Tostig's name was associated with bloodshed, savagery, and treason. Even Edith, the queen, was not free from reproach. Chroniclers tell how, on the fourth night of Christmas, 1065, while the Confessor was on his death-bed, starting restlessly from dreams of woe and terror, Edith, for love of her brother, Tostig, caused some Northumbrians, who were dependents of Cospatrick, to be murdered in the king's court.

Such being the idea entertained of the House of Godwin, Cospatrick was probably in no mood to pray for the usurpation of Harold being attended with success. More probably, indeed, the Saxon magnate, rich, potent, ambitious, and surrounded, in his halls at Raby, by a huge household of warriors, cœrles, serfs, and adherents of every description, who fed at his board, lived on his hospitality, and ministered to his pride, reflected with bitterness on being excluded from the government of that magnificent province, which from infancy he had been taught to regard as his birthright, and only awaited a favourable opportunity to enforce his hereditary claim to these fair domains.

Thus it came to pass, that when the enterprise of the Normans so prospered, that the Saxon prelates and chiefs carried Edgar Atheling to Berkhamstead, Cospatrick claimed the earldom of Northumberland, as heir of Uchtred. William the Conqueror, however, proved as unaccommodating as Harold the Usurper had been; and Cospatrick not only saw the government of Northumberland bestowed upon another, but found that he was no longer safe on the south of the Tweed.

However, when William perceived the necessity for cultivating the good-will of the Northumbrians, he entered into negotiations with Cospatrick, and indicated his readiness to come to terms. A bargain was soon struck between the Conqueror and the grandson of Uchtred. Cospatrick paid William a large sum of money, and William invested Cospatrick with the earldom of Northumberland.



XXVII.

SAXON SAINTS AND NORMAN SOLDIERS.

At the time when William the Conqueror was north of the Humber; when the Normans were ruthlessly ravaging Northumberland with fire and sword; when the bishop and clergy of Durham were carrying off the body of St. Cuthbert to Holy Island; and when the invaders were slaughtering man and beast without a thought of mercy, one spot of ground escaped, as if by miracle, from devastation, and remained cultivated and covered with buildings, when every other part of the country around was laid waste or given to the flames. The land thus miraculously saved from the spoiler's hand lay around, and belonged to, the church of St. John of Beverley.

It appears that, in 1070, when the Normans were encamped about seven miles from Beverley, many Northumbrians, in utter despair of resisting the invaders with the slightest success, remembered, in the hour of darkness, that St. John of Beverley was a saint of Saxon race, and, in accordance with the ideas prevalent at the time, believed he was potent enough to afford them protection. Alarmed beyond measure at the approach of the Conqueror, and at the accounts of atrocities perpetrated by the victorious Normans, many women of rank whose husbands and brothers had fallen, and old men on the verge of the grave, taking with them their most valuable property, gathered to the church of Beverley, and prostrating themselves at the shrine of St. John, prayed to their canonized countryman, "that he, remembering in heaven he was born a Saxon, might protect them and their property from the fury of the foreigners." Having thus committed themselves to the care of St. John, the refugees awaited the issue, with fear and trembling indeed, but not without hope of salvation.

In the meantime, there reached the Norman camp tidings that many Northumbrians of great riches had sought shelter in the church of Beverley, and that most of the wealth of the neighbourhood had been lodged in safety within the walls. This report roused the avarice of the invaders; nor did any thought of the sacred character of the edifice, or of the saint to whom it was dedicated, restrain their aspirations after plunder. Whatever an Umfraville or a Merley might think of sacrilege, the crime was one which the majority of the conquerors lightly regarded. Every consideration, however holy, vanished in presence of the temptation presented by the prospect of booty; and the warriors of the Conquest had as little hesitation in robbing a church as in plundering a henhouse.

Among the military adventurers encamped near Beverley was a soldier named Toustain. This man, who seems to have had neither scruples nor fears, on hearing that spoil was to be easily come by, immediately resolved on a foray. Buckling on his mail, calling out his men, and mounting his horse, Toustain, at the head of his troops, rode from the camp, and dashed across the country to Beverley, eager to commence the work of pillage, and only uneasy at the possibility of any one being before him.

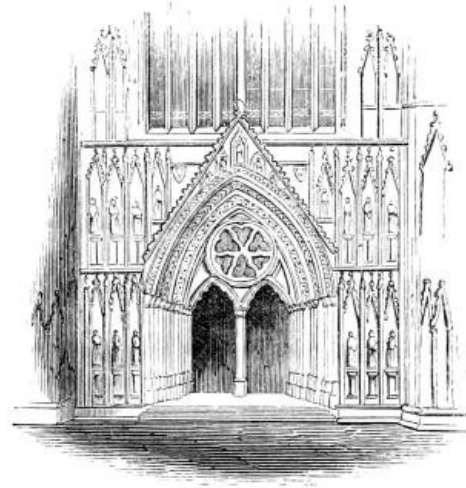
But Toustain was destined to disappointment. Entering Beverley with his band at his back, he rode on, and pursued his way towards the church without encountering resistance, and found that the people had taken refuge and crowded together in the cemetery. Giving his horse the spur, Toustain leaped the wall; and running his keen eye along the crowd, he was attracted by an old man, whose attire was of the richest description.

The individual on whose figure the eye of Toustain thus rested was an aged thane—so advanced in years, indeed, that he probably remembered the days of Earl Uchtred. With his long, loose robe, long white hair, and long white moustache, the aspect of the man was venerable and striking. But what attracted Toustain's attention was not the white beard, nor the long robes, but the bracelets with which, according to the custom of the country, the arms of the aged thane were loaded. In fact, the sight of the bracelets caused Toustain's eye to gleam with avarice; and drawing his sword, he spurred forward with the intention of making them his own.

But, according to the proverb, there is much between the cup and the lip; and the truth of this Toustain now found to his cost. Terrified at the Norman's drawn blade and menacing manner, the old thane tottered hastily to the church, to place himself under the protection of the patron saint of the place; and Toustain, who had no more respect for the Saxon saint than for those who invoked his aid, pursued sword in hand. Scarcely, however, had the Norman, with avarice at his heart and blasphemy on his lips, spurred through the doorway, when his horse, touching the pavement, slipped, lost its footing, and fell, bearing its rider to the ground with a crash which seemed sufficient to break every bone in his body.

On seeing their leader fall, and lie as if dead, the Norman soldiers were seized with superstitious terror. It seemed as if the Saxon saint had, in his wrath, struck Toustain down. Hurriedly turning their horses' heads, they left Beverley at a gallop, hastened in terror to their camp, and related to the companions of their enterprise the terrible example which St. John of Beverley had just given of his power. The accident produced

a lasting effect on the invading army; and when the Normans again marched to slay and plunder, not one soldier in their ranks was daring enough to expose himself to supernatural vengeance by molesting any person under the protection of St. John of Beverley.



XXVIII.

THE REDUCTION OF CHESTER.

While the conquerors of Northumberland passed the winter of 1070 at York, and rested from the fatigues they had undergone in their campaign north of the Humber, William occupied his mind with schemes for the reduction of the country around Chester—"the one great city of England that had not yet heard the tramp of the foreigners' horses." When winter passed, and spring began to bring back the grass to the fields and leaves to the trees, the Norman king intimated his intention of setting out on the important expedition.

But the effect produced by William's orders, that war-steeds should be saddled, and warriors should mount, to encounter new perils, was such as he could hardly have anticipated. Loud murmurs immediately arose in the army, especially among the auxiliaries from Anjou and Brittany. Exaggerated accounts of the ruggedness of the province of Chester and of the ferocity of the inhabitants circulated through the camp; and the terrible hardships suffered in Northumberland utterly disinclined the soldiers for a campaign on the banks of the Dee.

"This service," said they, "is more intolerable than slavery. We demand leave to return to our homes."

"Wait awhile," said William, coaxingly: "after victory I promise you repose; and with repose, great estates, as the reward of your exertions."

After some difficulty the murmurs of the Normans were silenced; and William, leading his army over the intervening mountains by paths till then deemed impracticable for cavalry, entered the city of Chester as a conqueror. Having erected a strong castle to keep the natives in awe, he gave the command of the province to a Fleming, named Gherbaud, with the title of Earl of Chester.

Elate, doubtless, with his good fortune, Gherbaud entered on his duties with vigour. His ardour, however, was speedily damped. It appeared that the accounts of the ferocity of the men of Chester that had reached York were not altogether without foundation. The English and Welsh, hitherto sworn foes, and continually at strife, seemed to vie with each other in their attacks on the invaders. Harassed on every hand, and exposed to continual anxiety and peril, Gherbaud grew tired of Chester, abandoned his earldom, and intensely disgusted with his taste of the conquered country, retired to Flanders.

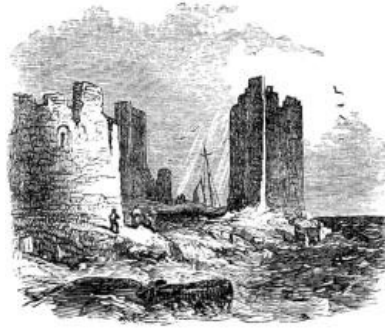
It now appeared necessary to place the earldom of Chester in the hands of a man who, while gifted with the governing faculty, could laugh at danger, and fatigue, and ferocious foes. Accordingly, William, duly weighing the circumstances of the case, conferred the post of danger on that feudal personage who figures in the history of the period as Hugh d'Avranches, and who, from bearing a wolf's head painted on his shield, was familiarly known among his contemporaries as Hugh le Loup.

Hugh le Loup was son of Richard Gosse, and, on the mother's side, stood to William in the relationship of nephew. Full of courage and ambition, he shrunk neither from the perils nor the toils that had disgusted and dismayed Gherbaud. Passing the Dee with his two lieutenants, Robert de Malpas and Robert d'Avranches, Hugh conquered Flintshire, and built a castle at Rhuddlan, which was occupied by Robert d'Avranches; while Robert de Malpas having built a castle on a high hill, gave the place his name, which it still bears. Both of these warriors exhibited high courage, carried on a fierce war with the natives, and fought sanguinary battles, in which they dyed their spears in Welsh blood.

When Hugh le Loup found himself installed as Earl of Chester, but surrounded on all sides by implacable foes, he naturally felt desirous of having some of his countrymen at hand to share his fortunes. With this view he sent to Normandy for an old friend, named Nigel, who brought with him five brothers, to whom Hugh granted lands in the earldom of Chester. Besides appointing Nigel Constable and Hereditary Marshal of Chester, Hugh granted him the town of Halton, near the Mersey, and all four-legged beasts of more than one colour taken from the Welsh, besides other privileges; and the five brothers were all provided for. One was gifted with the office of Constable of Halton, and the lands of Weston and Ashton, with all the bulls taken from the Welsh, and the best ox for the man-at-arms who carried his banner; the second of the brothers received as much land as an ox could plough in two days; the third, who was a priest, was gifted with the church of Runcorn; and two others became lords of a domain in that village.

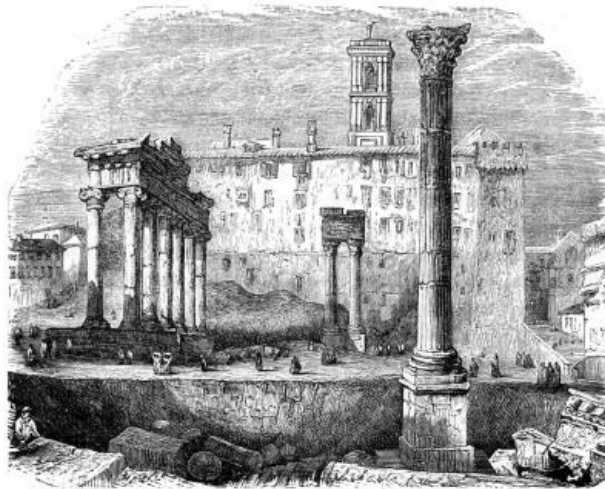
About the time that Hugh le Loup was consolidating his power in Chester, Gilbert de Lacy, to whom William had granted the magnificent domain of Pontefract, passed the mountains west of York, advancing boldly into the county of Lancaster, which then formed part of Chester. Gilbert took possession of this immense territory, extending south and east to the borders of Yorkshire, forcibly expelled the ancient

proprietors, and constituted himself lord of the towns of Blackburn and Rochdale, and all the land which he overran.



Flint Castle, on the Estuary of the Dee

XXIX.



Ruins of the Forum at Rome

LANFRANC OF PAVIA.

About Easter, 1070, three ecclesiastics of high rank, sent by the Pope, at King William's request, arrived in England in the capacity of legates. One was bishop of Sion, the other two were cardinals, and their errand was to set the Church of England in order. After being received by William with great honour, and magnificently entertained in the castle of Winchester, the legates convoked a great assembly of Norman priests and warriors, and summoned to it the Anglo-Saxon prelates and abbots. Having opened the business of the assembly by solemnly placing the Confessor's crown on the Conqueror's head, they proceeded to the discharge of their harsh duties, and pronounced sentence of deposition on many abbots and prelates.

Among those who were deposed, the most important, from his position and influence, was Robert Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury. The difficulty of finding a proper successor to Stigand was not overlooked. Without delay, the legates prepared to bestow the archbishopric of Canterbury on Lanfranc of Pavia, one of the greatest scholars and most remarkable men of the century in which he lived.

Lanfranc was a native of the city of Pavia, and a man of gentle blood. A scholar by nature, he early applied himself to those studies which enabled him to figure as the leader of the intellectual movement of the age. It has been said that, "to comprehend the extent of his talents, one must be Herodian in grammar, Aristotle in dialectics, Cicero in rhetoric, Augustine and Jerome in scriptural lore."

Becoming a monk of Bec-Hellouin, Lanfranc rapidly raised that humble monastery to the dignity of a university, and came to be acknowledged as the great teacher of Latin Christendom. So signal was his success, and so high his reputation, that, from the remotest parts of Western Europe, and even from Greece, students resorted to Bec-Hellouin as to a new Athens.

While at Bec-Hellouin, Lanfranc had the gratification to gain the confidence of William the Norman, and he became zealously attached to the ambitious duke's fortunes. But a serious difference arose. Lanfranc happened to set himself in opposition to William's marriage with Matilda of Flanders, as being within the degrees of relationship prohibited by the Church; and as, in regard to this affair, the duke would brook no contradiction, the priest of Pavia was commanded to depart. It is related that William, to speed Lanfranc on his way back to his native land, sent him a horse so lame of one foot, that it might be said to go on three legs, and that Lanfranc, meeting William on the road, begged at least to have a quadruped, and not a tripod, for his journey. But however that may have been, Lanfranc found his way to Rome, and placed himself under the wing of the Pope.

Once at Rome, Lanfranc began carefully to examine the case of William's relationship to Matilda in all its bearings. Ere long, his opinion as to its merits underwent a change. After examining canon and precedent, he

arrived at the conclusion that, though the letter of the law was against the union of the duke and the Flemish princess, yet that the alliance came under the category of those to which the Church should accord dispensation. Having convinced himself on this point, Lanfranc exerted his efforts earnestly as William's advocate, and though dealing with a Pope decidedly averse to the marriage, he managed matters so skilfully as to obtain a formal dispensation, which not only restored him to the Norman duke's good opinion, but gave him a higher place in the martial magnate's favour than he before occupied.

Removed from the cloisters of Bec-Hellouin to figure as Abbot of Caen, Lanfranc became the soul of William's councils and his plenipotentiary at Rome. He it was who, in that capacity, brought to a successful issue the negotiations regarding the invasion of England.

When the papal legate proposed Lanfranc as Stigand's successor in the archbishopric of Canterbury, William gladly approved of the selection. Lanfranc was then at Caen. No time, however, was lost in sending him to England. Matilda hastened his departure; and his arrival was celebrated by the Normans with joy. "He is," said they, "an institutor sent from God to reform the habits of the English."

The gratification which the elevation of Lanfranc caused was not confined to the conquerors of Neustria and England. The Pope evinced his high satisfaction by sending his own pallium to the new archbishop, with an epistle worded in the most complimentary strain.

"I long to see your face," wrote the Pontiff, "and am only consoled for your absence by reflecting on the happy fruits which England will derive from your care."

When Lanfranc made his entry into Canterbury, the condition to which the church was reduced filled his heart with sadness. During the Conquest the edifice had met with rough treatment. It had been pillaged, despoiled of its ornaments, and even set on fire, and the high altar was half buried beneath a heap of rubbish.

It was not difficult for a man of Lanfranc's influence to repair the church; but there was a grave question, whether Canterbury or York should possess the primacy of England, which had long furnished matter for dispute. It was a serious controversy, and one from which Lanfranc felt that it would ill become him to shrink.

By this time the Saxon Alred, bowed down with sorrow, had gone where the weary are at rest, and Thomas, one of William's Norman chaplains, figured as Archbishop of York. Thomas was naturally reluctant to give up his claims; and some of the earlier evidences were so ambiguous, that he had a fair excuse for being pertinacious. After a long process, however, Lanfranc established his claim to the primacy; became, as such, first member of the Grand Council of State, and by his success established the great principle, "that whatever rights had legally subsisted before the Conquest were to be preserved and maintained, unaffected by the accession of a new dynasty."

After thus being recognised as primate, Lanfranc was hailed as, "by the grace of God, father of all the churches," and as such undertook a task of great delicacy. Owing to the ignorance of Anglo-Saxon transcribers, the text of the biblical books had become much corrupted; and Lanfranc employed himself in a new edition of the Holy Scriptures, diligently occupying himself with the work, and executing much of it with his own hand. The Saxons, incapable of comprehending the necessity that existed for such revision, raised a cry that the primate was falsifying the sacred books. But Lanfranc went on with his labours, and without heeding the hostile attitude assumed towards him by the vanquished islanders, was ever zealous in standing up for their rights. He endeavoured to enact the part of a father to the conquered populace; he devoted his whole energies to the service of his adopted country, and he ever rejoiced in the name of Englishman.



XXX.



Edwin, Earl of Mercia, and the daughters of the Conqueror.

EDWIN AND MORKAR.

While Lanfranc was, as Archbishop of Canterbury, establishing his claims to the primacy of England, the year 1071 witnessed the utter ruin of that great Saxon House of which, in the days of Edward the Confessor, Leofric, Earl of Mercia, had been the head.

Edwin and Morkar, the sons of Algar, and grandsons of Leofric and Godiva, were fair to look upon and pleasant to converse with. They were proud, indeed, but their pride did not detract from their popularity. The people rather thought it became them; for it was well known that, while the immediate forefathers of most Saxon thanes had held the plough or enriched themselves by trade, the Mercian earls could justly boast of a long pedigree. Leofric, the husband of Godiva, was sixth in descent from his renowned ancestor of the same name; and his heirs were all the prouder of the circumstance, that their position had been maintained with honour and dignity, while other families, yielding to wars, revolutions, and confiscations, had ceased to exist or degenerated into ceorles.

Edwin, Earl of Mercia, was considered the handsomest man of his age. With the earldom of Leofric, he had inherited the beauty of Godiva. His frank features, valiant spirit, and engaging manners made him a great favourite with men; and few women, whether peasant girls or princesses, could look without admiration upon his fair face, blue eyes, handsome figure, and the long light hair that flowed over his manly shoulders.

Edwin and Morkar had taken no part in the battle of Hastings. That, however, was no fault of theirs, for Harold, rashly as it would seem, had left London to encounter the Normans before his brothers-in-law could possibly bring up the men of the north to his aid. On reaching London they heard of his defeat and fall.

The idea of aspiring to the vacant throne was not unnatural to men situated as Edwin and Morkar were. They accordingly appeared as candidates for the difficult post of King of England. What might have been the result if one of them had been elected it would be useless to speculate. Sufficient it is to say that the adherents of Edgar Atheling were too resolute to be influenced and too numerous to be overawed. Finding their claims disregarded, Edwin and Morkar took their sister Aldith, the widow of Harold, from the palace of Westminster, escorted her to Chester, and then repaired to York with some dream of separating the northern provinces from the rest of England, and defending them to the death against the Norman invaders.

Events speedily opened the eyes of the northern earls to the absurdity of their project. Almost every day brought to York such intelligence as convinced them that they were pursuing an impolitic course; and when they learned that William the Norman had obtained possession of London and the Confessor's crown, they deemed it prudent to hasten southward to present themselves to the Conqueror, to profess their friendship, and offer their allegiance.

William, well understanding the importance of being recognised as king by such men as Edwin and Morkar, treated the sons of Algar with distinction. Moreover, to insure the fidelity of the two brothers, William promised Edwin one of his daughters in marriage; and, fascinated by the prospects opened up to their view, they remained quietly and submissively at the Conqueror's court. It does not appear to have occurred to them that they were regarded in the light either of captives or of hostages.

As months passed on, however, and William, anxious to display himself on the Continent in his new character, prepared to embark at Pevensey for Normandy, Edwin and Morkar suddenly learned their real position. The Conqueror peremptorily commanded the attendance of the two Saxon earls, and they were fain to obey. But it was with sullen reluctance; and when, after having been duly admired and criticised by the dames and damsels at the court of Rouen, they returned to England, it was with a determination to break

their chains without delay.

Matters were soon brought to a crisis. Edwin reminded William of the promise of his daughter's hand, and demanded her in marriage. William made a reply which sounded like a refusal, and seemed to savour of insult. The Saxon earl tossed back his head with an air of defiance, as if to indicate his opinion that the granddaughter of Arlette would have been highly honoured by becoming the wife of the grandson of Godiva. Soon after, it was publicly known that Edwin and Morkar, having escaped from the court, had departed for the north; and the prayers of the people accompanied them in their flight, while monks and priests offered up fervent orisons for their safety and success.

The prayers and orisons, however, cannot be said to have proved of much avail. The enterprise of Edwin and Morkar resulted in failure; the Saxon earls were fain to retreat to the borders of Scotland; and events ere long seeming to render the Saxon cause hopeless, the chiefs, after William's coronation at York, lost heart and hope, and consented to capitulate. On the banks of the Tees, where William was encamped, a formal reconciliation took place. Edwin and Morkar, with other Saxons of high name, made their peace with the Conqueror, and with a sigh for the freedom they left behind, returned to his court.

Brief, however, was the residence of the Saxon earls in the halls of the Norman king. In fact, the deposition of the Saxon bishops, and the sufferings they had to endure, fired the soul of every Saxon with fierce indignation. A mighty conspiracy was formed, with ramifications over all England; and men, driven to the last stage of despair, determined to establish an extensive armed station.

At that time the district to the north of Cambridgeshire, of which Ely and Croyland formed part, was almost a moving bog, intersected by rivers, overgrown with rushes and willows, clouded with fogs and vapours, and presenting the appearance of a vast lake interspersed with islands. On these islands there stood, as monuments of the piety of the Saxon kings, religious houses, built on piles and earth brought from a distance—here an abbey, there a hermitage.

It was to this district, wholly impracticable for cavalry and heavily-armed troops, that Saxon chiefs despoiled of their lands, and Saxon priests deprived of their livings, repaired in great numbers. Constructing intrenchments of earth and wood, they formed what was called the Camp of Refuge. Thither, from Scotland, came Robert Stigand, the deposed Archbishop of Canterbury, and Eghelwin, the deposed Bishop of Durham; and thither, from the court of the Norman, after having escaped countless perils, and wandered for months in woods and solitary places, came Edwin and Morkar, the Saxon earls.

William was startled at this second escape of his long-haired captives, and by no means easy at the idea of their being at liberty. He immediately contrived to convey to them promises never intended to be kept, and Morkar was sufficiently credulous to listen. Yielding to the temptations held out, the young earl abandoned the camp at Ely. Scarcely, however, had he left the intrenchments when he was seized, bound hand and foot, carried to a Norman castle, put forcibly in irons, and left under the custody of Robert de Beaumont—one of those men from whose keeping there was small chance of escaping.

Edwin, hearing of his brother's imprisonment, became somewhat desperate. He resolved to leave Ely, not to surrender, but to struggle so long as life remained. With a few adherents he wandered for six months from place to place, vainly endeavouring to rouse his countrymen to a great effort for their deliverance. While thus occupied he was betrayed by three of his officers, who basely sold him to the Normans. Warned of his danger, Edwin was one day riding, with twenty attendants, towards the sea, with some notion of reaching the coast of Scotland, when a band of Normans suddenly rushed upon him. Endeavouring to escape, the Saxon earl galloped on; but stopped by a brook so swollen with the tide that it was impossible to cross, he dismounted from his steed and turned desperately to bay.

Nor in that hour did the young and popular Saxon earl bear himself in a manner unworthy of his position as one of the great race which for six centuries had given kings and war-chiefs to the British isles. For a long time he defended himself with heroic courage against a host of assailants; and at last—when overborne by numbers and forced to his knees, he fell as, in such circumstances, a brave man should—he died without fear, as he had fought without hope.

The death of Edwin was lamented by Normans as well as Saxons; even the grim Conqueror's heart was touched to the core. When the head of the Saxon earl, with its long, flowing hair, was carried to London, William could not restrain his tears. The king, says the chronicler, wept over the fate of one whom he loved, and whom he would fain have attached to his fortunes.

XXXI.



OLD FOREST LAWS

IVO TAILLE-BOIS.

Among the martial adventurers of the Continent whom William the Norman, before sailing to the Conquest, allured to his standard, and whose services he rewarded with the lands and lordships of the Saxons, slain, imprisoned, or expatriated during his progress from the coast of Sussex to the verge of "mountainous Northumberland," one of the most unpopular with the vanquished islanders was Ivo Taille-Bois.

Nevertheless, Ivo Taille-Bois was a remarkable man in his way. A native of Angers, he came to the Conquest as a captain of Angevin auxiliaries, with a spirit equally mercenary and unscrupulous. Fortune favoured his career; and having done much work from which a Norman noble would have shrunk, he found that his aspirations after wealth and power were likely to be realized. It was on the ruins of the great House of Leofric that Ivo eventually contrived to exalt himself.

When Edwin was killed, under circumstances so touching, and Morkar was imprisoned, under circumstances so melancholy, Ivo Taille-Bois received in marriage Lucy, the youngest sister of the two earls, and with her a large part of their hereditary domains. This immediately made Ivo a man of importance; and as the bulk of his land was situated about Spalding, towards the borders of Cambridge and Lincoln, he called himself Viscount of Spalding, and began to let the inhabitants feel his territorial power in such a way, that they cursed the chance which had metamorphosed a captain of mercenaries into a feudal lord.

Among a band of conquerors such as accompanied William the Norman to England, there must always be many more or less tyrannical to the vanquished; but the tyranny of Ivo Taille-Bois was something by itself. He was so fond of outraging the feelings and invading the rights of the populace, that he seemed to indulge in it as a luxury; and no humility on their part could in the slightest degree mitigate his violence. It was in vain that they paid all the rents he demanded; that they rendered all the services he required; that they appeared in his presence on bended knee; and that they addressed him in the most deferential tone: he only became the more cruel and more exacting.

The account given by a contemporary chronicler of the oppressions practised by Ivo Taille-Bois on the inhabitants of the district subject to his sway is sufficient, even at this distance of time, to excite strong indignation. Though they rendered him all possible honour, he showed them neither affability nor kindness; on the contrary, he vexed them, imprisoned them, tormented them, and tortured them. Often he hounded his dogs on their cattle while quietly grazing, drove their beasts into the marshes, drowned them in ponds, broke their backs or limbs, and by mutilating them in various ways, rendered them unfit for service.

Ivo seemed to delight in cruelty for cruelty's sake; and under such treatment, the people who were his victims gradually gave way to despair. Selling what little they still possessed, they sought in other lands the peace no longer to be found at home. Ivo, however, feeling the necessity of somebody to oppress, and looking round, fixed his eyes on some Saxon monks.

It happened that there stood near Spalding, and by the gates of the terrible Angevin, a religious house which was dependent on the abbey of Croyland and inhabited by some of the Croyland monks. Ivo, having forced the peasantry of the neighbourhood to decamp, turned his attention to this religious house, and soon succeeded in making it an earthly purgatory. The monks attempted to save themselves by refraining from giving the slightest offence; but this only added to his bitterness. He lamed their horses and cattle, killed their sheep and poultry, attacked their servants on the highway, and oppressed their tenants in every way which his ingenuity could invent.

Nevertheless, the monks held on. Not by any means inclined to yield their home without a struggle, they did all they could, by prayers, supplications, and presents to his dependents, to soften Ivo's heart. But they were utterly unsuccessful. They found that matters became worse and worse. Their patience and long-

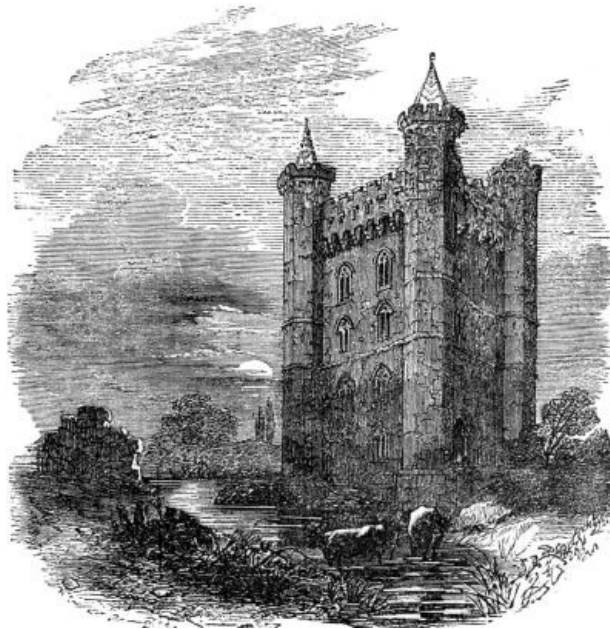
suffering came to an end. They packed up their books and their sacred vessels, and committing their house to God's keeping, prepared to depart. "We have tried all, and suffered all," said they; "now let us begone;" and shaking the dust from their feet, they repaired to Croyland.

On the departure of the monks Ivo was rejoiced beyond measure. He immediately despatched a messenger to his native town of Angers, and requested to have some holy men sent over to England. A prior and five monks soon appeared, and took possession of the religious house at Spalding. The Abbot of Croyland, who was an Anglo-Saxon, protested against their installation, and complained to the king's council against proceedings so lawless. But no redress could be obtained; and Ivo Taille-Bois continued in the daily perpetration of enormities, for which, had he lived two centuries later, he would have been tried before a jury at Westminster, and hanged at the Nine Elms.



Norman rustic (from Strutt)

XXXII.



Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire.

HEREWARD THE SAXON.

While Edgar Atheling was seeking refuge in Scotland, and while Edwin and Morkar were, by their wavering, bringing ruin on the House of Leofric, and rendering the Saxon cause utterly hopeless, there was living in Flanders a native of England, who bore the name of Hereward and a high reputation for courage and prowess.

Hereward, having long been settled in Flanders, had taken no part in the earlier struggle between Normans and Saxons. Some of the vanquished islanders, however, flying from the Conqueror's sword, sought their countryman, and intimated that they brought him bad news.

"Your father," said the exiles, "has been dead for a year; your mother has been exposed to many

indignities and vexations; and your heritage is in possession of a foreigner."

"By the Holy Rood!" exclaimed Hereward, "if such are the tidings you bring from England, it is high time for me to be there."

After this, Hereward was not guilty of any delay. He prepared for a voyage, embarked for England, reached the coast, and made his way to Lincolnshire, where, surrounded by woodland and marshes, with a wide avenue in front, and an orchard in the rear, near the abbeys of Croyland and Peterborough, and near the Isle of Ely, stood the rude wooden mansion which his fathers had called their own. The sight of his birthplace fired Hereward's patriotism; and making himself known to such of his friends and kinsmen as had survived the struggle, he induced them to arm. Having, without exciting the suspicion of the Normans, assembled them in a body, he attacked the foreigner who had evicted his mother, and conducted the enterprise with such courage, that he was enabled to take possession of his property.

But scarcely had Hereward installed himself in his paternal property, when he found that he could not, with safety, limit his operations to a single exploit. Accordingly he commenced a partisan warfare in the neighbourhood of his dwelling, and at the head of his little band encountered the garrisons of towns and strongholds. Such were the skill and courage he displayed, that his name soon became celebrated over England. Songs in his praise were sung in the streets, and the Saxons turned their eyes towards him with hope unfelt.

On hearing of the exploits of Hereward, the Saxons who had formed the Camp of Refuge at Ely requested him to become their captain; and Hereward, most readily consenting, passed, with the comrades of his victories, to the Isle. His arrival excited the courage and revived the hopes of the Saxons. Before taking the command, however, he desired to become a member of the high Saxon militia, and to be admitted with the proper ceremonies into that body.

The demand was suggestive of some difficulties, for it was necessary to have the services of a priest of high rank to bless the arms, and at this stage of the Conquest few priests of high rank were sufficiently courageous to defy the wrath of the conquerors. Among those, however, who regarded Hereward as the hero destined to save his country was Brand, the Abbot of Peterborough. This abbot, a man of high temper and indomitable spirit, consented to perform the ceremony; and Hereward repaired to the abbey. Having confessed at evening, and watched all night in the church, he laid his sword on the altar at the hour of mass in the morning, received, while kneeling, his blade from the hand of the abbot, took the sacrament, and rose to go forth and wield it in the cause of his country.

The ceremony that was performed in the abbey of Peterborough was no secret to the Normans in the neighbourhood. The knights with whom Hereward had crossed swords soon learned that he had repaired to the abbey, and sneered scornfully at the idea of a warrior's belt being girded on by an abbot.

"He who has his sword girded on by a priest," said they, "is not knight, but a degenerate burgess."

But it was against the Saxon abbot, in the first place, and not against Hereward, that the wrath of the conquerors was directed. No sooner did news of the ceremony at Peterborough reach the ears of those high in authority, than Brand was doomed; and ere long soldiers appeared to seize him in the king's name. They, however, were too late. Before their arrival he had breathed his last; and a foreigner was, without delay, appointed to fill the bold Saxon's place.

Among the fighting churchmen whom the Conquest had introduced to England was a native of Fécamp, named Turauld. Accommodated with an abbey at the expense of the vanquished, this man had rendered himself notorious by the stern method he used of drilling the Saxon monks into discipline. Whenever they proved refractory he was in the habit of crying, "A moi, mes hommes d'armes;" and he made his abbey the scene of military violence.

The system pursued by Turauld in his abbey soon became a matter of notoriety, and reached the king's ears. William thought himself bound to interfere, but was at some loss to decide in what way such an offender should be punished. On the death of Abbot Brand, however, the difficulty vanished, and Turauld was immediately appointed to the abbey of Peterborough.

"That is somewhat near the Saxon Camp of Refuge," remarked Turauld.

"It is a dangerous post, doubtless," said William, smiling grimly; "but very fit for an abbot who is so good a soldier."

Attended by Norman warriors, Turauld in due time approached Peterborough to take possession. But apprehensive of danger, he halted some leagues from the abbey, and sent men forward to ascertain the position of the refugees.

The monks of Peterborough, in the utmost trepidation, determined to admit the foreigner; and Hereward, not unaware of their intentions, made a descent on the abbey. Finding that the monks could not be relied on, he resolved on a desperate expedient. While the scouts of Turauld were making observations, he carried off the crosses, chalices, sacred vessels, and whatever valuable ornaments the abbey contained, and conveyed them by water to the camp.

"Now," he said, "we have hostages for the fidelity of the monks."

Soon after Hereward left the abbey of Peterborough, Turauld, encompassed by Norman lances, presented himself at the gates. The monks, trembling for their lives, bent their shaven crowns, and admitted their new abbot without hesitation; and Turauld, having taken possession, was forthwith installed. At the same time he appropriated sixty-two hides of land belonging to the abbey to his soldiers, to reward their services and encourage their zeal.

Meantime, Ivo Taille-Bois, clad in his linked mail, and followed by armed men, rode to the abbey of Peterborough. On being admitted to the abbot's presence Ivo proposed an expedition to the Isle of Ely, to destroy the Camp of Refuge and crush the insurgents. Turauld sanctioned the expedition, but declined to take an active part in it; and everything having been arranged, the Angevin viscount advanced boldly with his men through the forests and willows which served the Saxons as intrenchments, while the abbot, surrounded by Normans of high rank, remained at what he considered a safe distance.

But Ivo Taille-Bois was destined to miss his foes, and Turauld to meet those whom Ivo sought. Aware of the projects of the Normans and of their movements, Hereward was on the alert. Contriving to escape unobserved from the wood by one side while Ivo entered by the other, the Saxon chief, leaving the Angevin viscount to pursue his search in vain, fell suddenly upon the abbot and the abbot's Norman attendants, seized

them without difficulty as prisoners, and kept them securely in the marshes till they paid a large ransom.

Nevertheless, the position of Hereward and his comrades became every day more perilous. About this time, however, they were reinforced by allies, whose presence inspired them with some hope of accomplishing their country's deliverance. Indignant at his brother's conduct at York, Sweyn, King of Denmark, fitted out a new fleet, and came in person to the aid of the vanquished islanders. But the royal Dane soon tired of an enterprise which he found was much less promising than he had anticipated. After sailing up the Humber without receiving any particular encouragement, he returned to Denmark.

But, however disappointed he might have been, Sweyn, while departing from the shores of England, did not withdraw his fleet. Entering Boston Wash, the Danish ships, by the mouth of the Ouse and the Glen, succeeded in reaching the Isle of Ely. Hereward hailed with joy the arrival of the Danes, and welcomed them as friends and liberators.

William was startled at the arrival of Danish auxiliaries, but he was not particularly perplexed. Perfectly comprehending how to deal with King Sweyn, the Conqueror hastened to send ambassadors to Denmark with artful messages and costly presents. The successor of Canute, completely won over to the Norman cause, did without scruple that which he had, some months earlier, punished his brother for doing; and Hereward and his comrades soon learned to their dismay that they were once more betrayed by their Northern allies.

When the Danes at Ely, on whose powerful aid Hereward had built such hopes, received orders to return home, they were far from manifesting any reluctance. They seemed determined, however, not to go empty-handed. In fact, the temptation of carrying off the ornaments and sacred vessels which Hereward had brought from the abbey of Peterborough was more than the grisly Northmen could resist; and seizing everything in the way of treasure upon which they could lay hands, they embarked, and turning the prows of their ships homewards, gave their sails to the wind, laughing grimly at the ridiculous plight in which they left the men they had come to save.

Affairs now hurried to a catastrophe. Ivo Taille-Bois and Abbot Turauld rejoiced in the hope of triumph and revenge; and Hereward could not but confess that the prospects of the Saxons at Ely were dismal in the extreme. By-and-by news reached the Camp of Refuge that William was assembling forces, and that a great blow was to be struck, and as weeks passed on, the Camp of Refuge was invested by land and water. On every side workmen were set to form dykes and causeways over the marshes; and on the west, over waters covered with reeds and willows, the Normans commenced the construction of a road three hundred paces in length.

But most of the labour was found to be in vain. The Normans had no rest. Hereward and his friends, incessant in their attacks and artful in their stratagems, constantly interrupted the work; and the workmen, finding themselves disturbed in the most sudden and unexpected manner, gave way to superstitious terror.

"Assuredly," they exclaimed, "this Hereward is in league with the Evil One."

"Think you so?" cried Ivo Taille-Bois; "then we must fight him with his own weapons."

The idea of the Angevin viscount was highly approved of; and he soon procured the services of a witch, whose enchantments, he declared, would disenchant Hereward's operations. Accordingly this woman was brought to the scene of action, and posted in a wooden tower at the place where the work was in progress. The result, however, was not such as Ivo had predicted. In fact, while the Norman pioneers and soldiers were all confident in the potency of the witch's charms, Hereward suddenly made a sally, set fire to the osiers that covered the marsh like a forest, and gave witch, workmen, and warriors to the flames.

At this fresh misfortune the Normans began to consider their enterprise hopeless, and the blood of Ivo Taille-Bois boiled at the thought of being baffled by a "degenerate burgess" like Hereward. The address and activity of the Saxon chief really seemed to preclude the possibility of success. Nevertheless, the Normans persevered; and for months the Isle of Ely was blockaded so closely that provisions were with extreme difficulty obtained from without.

When the operations reached this stage, William bethought him of the monks of Ely, and devised a scheme for enforcing their aid. Without warning he seized all the manors belonging to the abbey situated without the Isle; and the monks, unable to endure poverty and misery, and the famine that stared them in the face, resolved to put an end to the contest. With this view they sent to the Norman camp, and offered to show a passage, on condition of being left in possession of their property. Gilbert de Clare and William Warren having plighted their faith, and a treaty having been entered into, the monks fulfilled their promise, and the Normans prepared to penetrate into the Isle.

Hereward and the Saxons, utterly unsuspecting of the treachery of the monks of Ely, were resting from their arduous exertions, when the sound of arms and the war-cry of Normans intimated that their foes were upon them. Completely taken by surprise, the Saxons were in no position to resist; and after a thousand of them had fallen, the camp was closely surrounded, and the majority were forced to lay down their arms. But better far would it have been for them to fight to the last. Many of those who submitted had their hands cut off and their eyes put out, and were then turned adrift as warnings against future revolts; others—and among them Archbishop Stigand and Bishop Eghelwin—were incarcerated and sentenced to imprisonment for life.

But in the midst of carnage and disaster, Hereward was undaunted. When others laid down their arms, he still disdained the thought of yielding. Closely attended by a few zealous adherents, the Saxon chief broke from the assailants, retreated by paths into which the Normans did not venture to follow, passed from marsh to marsh, and overcoming every obstacle, made his way to the lowlands of Lincolnshire.

It happened that the Normans had a station in the immediate neighbourhood of the place where Hereward and his friends found themselves after their hair-breadth escape. The temptation of a daring adventure was, under the circumstances, irresistible. Hereward made himself known to some fishermen, who were in the habit of every day taking fish to the garrison; and the fishermen, sympathizing with his views, were induced to lend their aid. Receiving Hereward and his companions into the boats, and concealing them under straw, the fishermen, next day, approached the station as usual; and the Normans, who were just sitting down to dinner, preparatory to riding forth on an expedition, were not in the least apprehensive of danger. Suddenly strange voices were heard, and Hereward and his men entering with their axes in their hands, rushed upon the Normans, and hewed down many before they knew what was taking place. Alarmed and despairing, the survivors fled, leaving their horses, which were ready saddled, a prey to the victors.

After this exploit, which struck dismay into the hearts of his enemies, and considerably modified the joy

with which the Normans announced their success at Ely, Hereward resumed operations with his old spirit. With a band of patriotic men, which gradually swelled to the number of a hundred, the indomitable Saxon performed countless feats of valour. Ever lying in ambush, and granting no quarter, he exerted his skill and energy with such effect, that he well avenged, if he could not redeem, the disaster of Ely. His comrades, all well armed and inspired by his example, encountered the foe with a degree of courage seldom equalled, and appearing suddenly at various points, never shrunk from odds save such as appeared overwhelming. Not one of them was known to have declined a conflict with fewer than four Normans; and Hereward, on his part, often fought with as many as seven.

While Hereward was signalizing his prowess and courage in such a way that his name was idolized all over England, a lady of large property, named Alswithe, hearing of his fame and admiring his exploits, offered him her hand. Grateful for such a mark of esteem, Hereward accepted the proposal, and married her without delay. But Alswithe, dreading her husband's continual exposure to danger, employed all her influence to induce him to make his peace with the Conqueror; and Hereward, who loved his wife tenderly, gradually yielded to her entreaties, and at length accepted the king's peace.

Having exchanged peril for security, and glory for ease, Hereward indulged in dreams of peace and comfort. But the Normans were not disposed to spare so formidable a foe. Determined to rid the country, by some means, of one who might again prove a mighty adversary, they several times attacked his house without success. One day, however, Fortune placed him in their power.

It was a summer afternoon; and, after having dined, Hereward stretched himself in his orchard, with his hound at his feet, to enjoy some repose. He was without a coat of mail, but beside him lay his sword and a short spear, which Saxons of his rank always carried with them. As Hereward slept, a band of armed men, led by Asselm, a Norman, and Raoul de Dol, a knight of Brittany, cautiously penetrated into the orchard; and he, suddenly awakened by the barking of the hound, found himself hemmed in. But even in this emergency the heart of the hero did not fail him. Rising with a bound, before which the armed band recoiled, he faced his foes and demanded their errand.

"Whom seek you?" he asked, sternly.

"You," was the significant answer.

"False traitors!" he cried; "the king has granted me his peace. Seek you me for my goods or my life?"

"Both."

"Then," exclaimed Hereward, "ye shall pay for them dearly!" and with these words he thrust his short spear with such force against a Norman knight who stood near, that it pierced through the hauberk into the heart, and came out dripping with life's blood.

The Normans, startled, but confident in their numbers, now attempted to close with Hereward, and inflicted numerous wounds. But the Saxon hero returned blow for blow. When his spear broke he drew his sword, and made so desperate a resistance, that, at times, the issue of the combat appeared doubtful. Even when his sword broke on the helmet of one of his antagonists, he continued to fight with the pommel; and fifteen Normans had fallen beneath his hand, when he, at once, received four lance thrusts, and felt himself borne to the ground. Still he continued to struggle. Seizing a buckler, he struck Raoul de Dol so fiercely in the face, that the warlike Breton fell dead on the spot. But strength and life were now spent, and Hereward sank and expired.

As Hereward lay dead, Asselm, the Norman, cut off the hero's head, but not without an emphatic expression of admiration. "By the virtue of God!" he exclaimed, "I swear that I have never in my life seen so valiant a man!"



Fen country near Boston.

XXXIII.

BUILDING OF BATTLE ABBEY.

While pursuing his victorious career, William the Conqueror did not forget the vow which, immediately after the battle of Hastings, he made to erect an abbey, to be dedicated to the Holy Trinity and to St. Martin, the patron of the warriors of Gaul.

It is related that, when the foundations were dug, and the first stones of the edifice laid, the architects discovered that there would be a deficiency of water. Somewhat disconcerted, they repaired to William, and

acquainted him with the untoward circumstance.

"Never mind," said the Conqueror, in a tone more jovial than his wont; "work away, and, if God give me life, there shall be more wine among the monks of Battle Abbey than there is in the best convent of Christendom."

According to William's orders, the work was proceeded with: the outer walls were traced round the hill which Harold and his men had covered with their bodies; and the adjacent land was granted to the abbey.

When the building of Battle Abbey was finished, William offered his sword and the regal robe he had worn at his coronation; and seven-score monks were brought from the great convent of Marmontiers, near Tours, to inhabit the edifice and pray for the souls of all who had died on the field. This magnificent structure is now in ruins, and the altar-stone, standing amid stagnant water, marks the spot where the Pope's consecrated banner was planted by William in the hour of carnage and victory.



XXXIV.

MALCOLM CANMORE.



AFTER devastating Northumberland, reducing the men of Chester, and entirely crushing the refugees in the camp of Ely, William turned his attention towards the reduction of Scotland, where reigned a king who had some power and much inclination to work him annoyance.

Malcolm Canmore was son of Duncan, King of Scots, whose murder by Macbeth, Buchanan has narrated and Shakspeare immortalized. In danger of being destroyed by the usurper, Malcolm and his brother, Donald Bane, after lurking for awhile in Scotland, resolved to fly—one made for Northumberland, the other for the Western Isles.

At that time Siward the Dane ruled Northumberland; and of that great and sapient earl the mother of Malcolm had been a near kinswoman. This circumstance was sufficient to insure the Scottish prince a friendly reception; and, on reaching York, he had the consolation of being treated with every possible kindness. Moreover, when Siward carried him to the court of Westminster, the Confessor—who could not help comparing Malcolm's circumstances to his own, while an exile in Normandy—after expressing a strong sympathy with his misfortunes, and a strong interest in his welfare, bade him be of good cheer.

At the Confessor's court, among Saxon thanes and Norman chevaliers, Malcolm might have learned to forget the crown which he had lost and the rude land from which he had been forced to fly; but it happened that Macbeth, after forfeiting the popularity by the aid of which he had usurped the Scottish throne, became a cruel and rapacious tyrant. The Scots, in disgust, manifested a decided desire for Malcolm's restoration; and Macduff, thane of Fife, abandoning Macbeth's cause, espoused that of Malcolm with enthusiasm and energy.

About the time of Godwin's restoration to England, messages of encouragement from the north of the Tweed reached Malcolm in his exile; and, without much hesitation, the young prince, now grown to be a man of huge stature, resolved on an expedition to regain his father's crown. Powerful was the aid on which he had to rely; for the Confessor readily lent his countenance to the enterprise, and Siward undertook to conduct it to a successful issue.

A fleet was soon fitted out to land soldiers on the Scottish coast; and an army of horse, commanded by Siward and his son, escorted Malcolm across the Tweed and through Lothian. The enterprise proved perfectly successful. In vain Hugh the Norman, Osborne, surnamed Pentecost, and other foreigners who had fled into Scotland at the time of Godwin's return, drew their swords in favour of the usurper. A battle was fought; the son of Siward fell, and many Anglo-Danes. But Malcolm was victorious; and Macbeth, who in the battle had lost all his Norman allies, was deserted by his army, forced to fly, and overtaken and slain at Lanfanan in Aberdeenshire. An effort was then made by some of Macbeth's friends to raise a kinsman of the usurper, named Lulach, to the throne; but the friends of Malcolm soon put an end to Lulach's pretensions and his life, and the son of Duncan was, without further opposition, crowned at Scone.

Nevertheless, a plot was soon after formed to put Malcolm to death, and of this the chief author was a nobleman who frequented the court. Malcolm early became aware of the existence of the plot, but affected ignorance, till one day, when out hunting, he took the chief conspirator aside, and severely reproached him.

"But," said Malcolm, "here is a fit place and time to do that manfully which you have intended to do treacherously; and here draw your sword, if you dare."

The nobleman, however, fell on his knees, confessed his fault, asked forgiveness, and ever afterwards served his king faithfully.

It cannot be said that Malcolm Canmore, when seated securely on the Scottish throne, displayed any particular gratitude to his benefactors. Indeed, the nation under the protection of which he had found safety in the day of adversity, and by the aid of which he had gained his crown, had more than once strong reason to complain of his enmity and denounce his ingratitude. But it was chiefly in the third year after the landing of William the Norman that Malcolm offended. When the Northumbrians drew together at York, to make head

against the Conqueror's power, Malcolm mustered an army to lead to their assistance. Ere he was ready to take the field, however, the Northumbrians were put down; but, unwilling to be balked of carnage and plunder, he marched by way of Carlisle, which, with Cumberland, he then held from the English crown, into Northumberland, and let loose all the fury of his barbarous subjects on the land where he had found rest in his weariness and consolation in his despair.

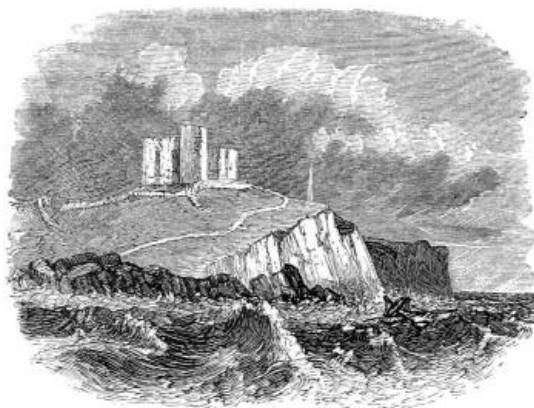
The Scots proceeded with energy to the work of destruction and bloodshed. Cleveland was savagely overrun; Wearmouth was sacked; St. Peter's Church was burned; the banks of the Wear were ravaged without mercy; and everywhere the inhabitants were treated with barbarous cruelty. Able-bodied men and women were driven off captive, like flocks of sheep, and in such numbers, that, for many years after, there was scarcely a tenement in Scotland without English slaves of one sex or the other. Blood, meanwhile, flowed like water. Grandfathers and grandmothers, on the verge of the grave, and infants torn from their mothers' arms, were ruthlessly slaughtered. Warriors, calling themselves men and Christians, exhibited neither humanity nor religion. Never had Pagan Danes or Norwegians been guilty of such atrocities as were perpetrated on this memorable occasion.

One day, while the church of St. Peter was in flames, and while the Scots were revelling in carnage and cruelty, Malcolm, as he rode along and witnessed savage outrages which it is charitable to suppose he could not prevent, received intelligence that Edgar Atheling, with his mother Agatha, and his two sisters, Margaret and Christina—whom the chronicler describes as "comely young women"—were on board a ship in the harbour, waiting for a fair wind, but scarcely knew whither to steer their course. The tale of their distress appears to have touched the heart of Malcolm; he sent messages of kindness, invited them to repair to Scotland, and assured them that they might there reside in safety as long as they pleased. In their despair, the royal exiles grasped at this invitation, and the mariners steered for Scotland.

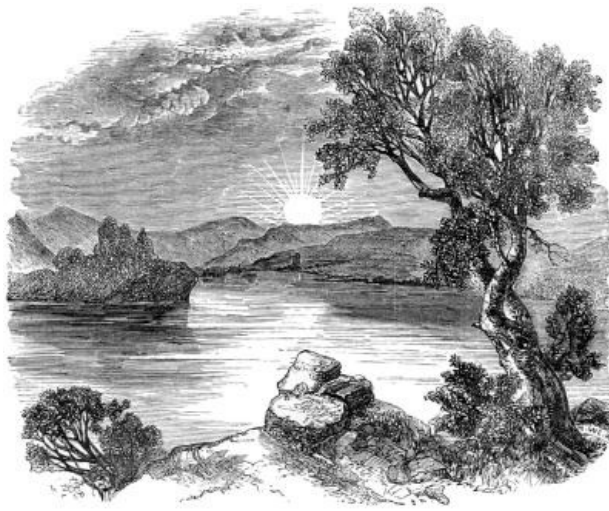
Accordingly, when Malcolm Canmore returned to his own dominions, he found that the heirs of Alfred and of Ironsides had sought refuge on the Scottish shores. The young king hastened to make their acquaintance; and the result was important in its influence on the destinies of England. The sweetness and piety of Margaret Atheling, endowed as she was with all the comeliness characteristic of Saxon women, produced a strange effect on the royal Scot, and he soon arrived at the conclusion that the opportunity of securing such a bride ought not to be neglected. A marriage was, in due time, celebrated; the Saxon Queen of Scots, by her precepts and example, exercised a softening and civilizing influence on her fierce husband and his savage subjects; their daughter Maude became the wife of Henry Beauclerc; and from their ancestress—the heiress of Henry and Maude, married to Geoffrey, the brave and accomplished Count of Anjou—the Plantagenets inherited royal Saxon blood, and that sympathy with the vanquished race which made them, when kings, the favourites and heroes of the English people.

William the Conqueror was not, of course, inattentive to what was passing in the north; nor, indeed, did Malcolm allow the Norman to overlook his existence. In 1073, the Scottish king gathered an army, and crossed the Border to vindicate the claim of his wife's family to the English crown. By this time, however, William had put the Saxons throughout England under his feet, and resolved to bring Malcolm to reason by demanding the extradition of those who had taken refuge in Scotland.

With this object William placed himself at the head of his army, and, for the first time, crossed the Tweed. Not inclined to try conclusions with an antagonist so formidable, Malcolm presented himself to the Conqueror at a place near the frontier, which is supposed to have been Berwick; and, though declining to surrender the Saxon emigrants, "met King William in a peaceful attitude, touched his hand in sign of friendship, promised that William's enemies should be his also, and freely acknowledged himself his vassal and liegeman."



Fern Islands, off the Coast of Northumberland.



THE DEATH OF COSPATRICK.

It was the year 1072, when the destruction of the camp of Ely ruined the last hope which the Saxons entertained of making head against the Conqueror; and the year 1073 witnessed the exile of the last Saxon of illustrious lineage whom the Conqueror allowed to occupy a high position and exercise important functions.

It appears that after the installation of Cospatrick as Earl of Northumberland, the peace of the North was unbroken save by the terrible inroad of Malcolm, King of Scots. On that occasion, Cospatrick, having no force sufficiently powerful to oppose that of the Scottish king, endeavoured to draw Malcolm from Northumberland by making an incursion into Cumberland in the direction of Carlisle, which then lay in ruins. But finding the Scots too intent on carnage and plunder to move, he was fain to return, to shut himself up in Bamburgh, and in that fortress to listen, with unavailing regret, to accounts of the barbarous atrocities perpetrated by the invaders.

At length affairs began to settle; and the Bishop of Durham and his clergy, hearing that William had departed for the South, ventured back to their church. They found everything in disorder. Even the magnificent crucifix, the gift of Tostig and Judith, was stripped of all its ornaments, and tossed upon the floor. Nor was this the worst that was to befall. Ere long the bishop was degraded, and a native of Lorraine, named Vaulcher, instituted in his place.

When Vaulcher, accompanied by a numerous train of Norman knights, reached York, Cospatrick presented himself, and conducted the new bishop to Durham. Perhaps, by this attention to Vaulcher, Cospatrick hoped to escape such a fate as had befallen every other Saxon of high rank. But if so, he was mistaken. Between the Norman king and the Saxon earl no real confidence existed. Every movement in Northumberland hostile to the Normans had exposed Cospatrick to suspicion; and, after having received Malcolm's homage, William, thinking he could dispense with the aid of the grandson of Uchtred, alleged that he had taken part in the murder of Robert Comine and in the siege of York, and formally deprived him of his earldom.

Cospatrick was now at his wits' end. Mortified at his own reverses, and grieving at the oppression under which his countrymen were labouring, but against which it seemed vain to struggle single-handed, he left England and passed over to Flanders, to which the Saxons still looked with hope of aid. But all efforts proved vain; and he returned to die in poverty on the verge of the great northern province which he had lately ruled.

It would seem that Cospatrick had, by advising the flight of the bishop from Durham, lost favour with the clergy, and that they used all their efforts to terrify him with threats of the wrath of St. Cuthbert. An aged priest of Durham, while in Holy Island, professed to have had a dream, in which he saw a great Northumbrian thane, who had maltreated the bishop and his company during their flight, suffering the torments of hell, and in which St. Cuthbert appeared denouncing woes against Cospatrick. This dream derived importance from the circumstance of the Northumbrian thane having died at the very time; and when related to Cospatrick, now grown old and infirm, it caused him much trouble of spirit. Indeed, he is said to have forthwith taken the shoes from his feet, and set out on a pilgrimage to Holy Island, to propitiate St. Cuthbert by prayers and offerings.

After his pilgrimage to Holy Island, Cospatrick found rest for a time at Norham, on the Tweed. At that place, weary with adversity and woe, he soon felt himself sinking under his infirmities. At length, sick unto death, he bethought him of religious consolation, and intimated his wish to have the spiritual aid of Aldwin and Turgot, two monks in whose piety and prayers he had great confidence.

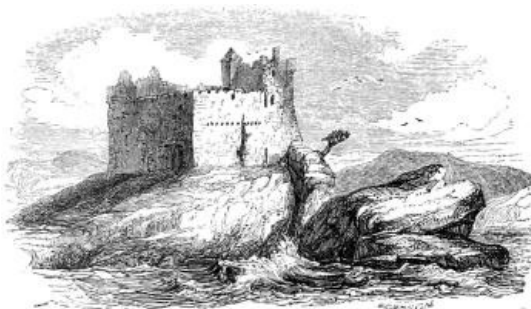
At Melrose—not on the spot occupied by the magnificent ruins of that great abbey, to which Sir Walter Scott has, in our day, given so wide a fame, but in a flat peninsula, described by Bede as "almost inclosed by the windings of the river Tweed"—the Culdees had, in the seventh century, erected a religious house. After flourishing for two hundred years, this edifice had suffered at the hand of King Kenneth, and gradually dwindled down to a chapel sacred to St. Cuthbert. In this chapel Aldwin and Turgot were "living in poverty and contrite in spirit for the sake of Christ." On receiving Cospatrick's message, these holy men hurried down the Tweed, eager to comfort the expiring sinner.

On reaching Norham the monks found the Saxon earl loudly lamenting his shortcomings, and expressing penitence for his sins, and they confessed him with all the ceremonies usual on such occasions. Before their departure he gave them two dorsals, or pieces of tapestry which were hung against walls as screens for the back, and begged that, in whatever place the monks might chance to take rest, they would hang the dorsals up in memory of him. This scene over, Cospatrick yielded up his breath.

It was destined that the posterity of this great Saxon, who passed his last days hovering between two

countries, in neither of which he could find a home, and who died in misery, and with lamentations on his lips, should exercise the very highest authority in centuries then to come. He left two sons. One of these was Cospatrick, founder of the House of Dunbar, whose chiefs were so great in war and peace; the other was Dolfin, male ancestor of the Nevilles, who became famous for making and unmaking kings.

Meanwhile, Cospatrick was laid at rest in the porch of the church of Norham. In the chancel of that ancient edifice, a recumbent effigy, in the decorated style of the fourteenth century, when his descendants on both sides of the Tweed were in all their glory, still recalls his memory, when the places that once knew them know them no more—when the castle of Dunbar is desolate, and when Raby no longer owns a Neville as its lord.



XXXVI.



ATHELING AND HIS ALLIES.

When Edgar Atheling, after the disastrous defeat of the Saxons at York, took refuge in Scotland, he found himself treated with great respect. Malcolm Canmore, saluting the exiled prince as true King of England, assured him of a secure asylum, and influenced, doubtless, by the charms of the fair Margaret, still further evinced his sympathy with the Saxon cause by bestowing offices and lands on the expatriated chiefs. Moreover, he promised Atheling every aid to regain the throne of his ancestors.

The King of Scots was probably quite sincere in his professions of friendship and promises of support; but his power to assist the Saxons was by no means equal to his will. Besides, the mighty energy of William, bearing down all opposition, was calculated to daunt the boldest foe. Malcolm was brave as a lion; yet he might, without exposing himself to the imputation of cowardice, feel some degree of alarm as he conjured up visions of Norman warriors crossing the river Tweed, sweeping through the Merse and Lothian, and pursuing their victorious career as far north as to cool the hoofs of their horses in the waters of the Tay, and plant their standard on the towers of the palace of Scone.

At all events, it is certain that, after a brief residence in Scotland, Atheling recognised the necessity of seeking a reconciliation with the Conqueror. This was, without difficulty, obtained. Then, as ever, William was kind and forgiving to the heir of Alfred. But, as the work of the Conquest went on, and as the Saxons, exasperated by the deposition of their bishops and abbots, indicated their intention of making a great effort to recover their liberty, Atheling discovered that he was the object of suspicion. Indeed, it was natural that such should have been the case; for his name was in the mouth of all ardent patriots, and songs were sung in which he was described as "the brave, the beautiful darling of England." Perceiving that snares were set for him, Atheling effected his escape from court; and, with all the haste he could, made for Scotland.

"Curse him!" exclaimed the Normans; "he is the most fickle of human beings."

"Ah!" cried the Saxons, "he is young and handsome, and descended from the true race—the best race of the country."

It must be admitted that, so far as appearances went, the Saxons had reason to be proud of the heir of their ancient kings. Atheling was now approaching manhood, and looked worthy, indeed, of a nation's regard. His person was handsome, his figure tall and graceful, his manner courteous to excess, his temper serene to a fault, and he spoke with taste and eloquence. Brave he was beyond question, but somewhat slow in action; and while ever and anon giving proof that he inherited the courage of Ironsides, he constantly showed symptoms of having in his veins the sluggish blood of Ethelred.

Indeed, the prospects of Edgar Atheling were at no time so encouraging as to tempt him to heroic ventures to regain the crown which had, for a brief season, been his. After the day on which Malcolm Canmore did homage to William the Norman, aid from Scotland could not reasonably be expected. Not yet content, however, to submit tamely to circumstances, Atheling, in 1075, repaired to Flanders, probably when Cospatrick, after being deprived of Northumberland, went thither to crave the alliance of Count Robert, who, though Matilda's kinsman, was William's political enemy, and, moreover, a descendant of Alfred the Great.

But Atheling's application was not attended with success, and he returned to Scotland with the impression that the Saxon cause was too hopeless to enlist the alliance of any European prince, when, somewhat to his surprise, he was favoured with a friendly message from the King of France.

Philip, though young, was no longer the mere boy whose countenance and support William the Norman had asked before undertaking his expedition against Harold. The heir of Hugh Capet was now in his thirty-third year, perfectly capable of comprehending his position, and of estimating the power of a Duke of Normandy who was also King of England. In fact, he had somewhat recent evidence of William's strength and his own weakness. While William, who had left England in 1073, was on the Continent, carrying on war in Maine with signal success, Philip had taken up arms against the Count of Flanders, and sustained a shameful defeat before Cassel. The idea of a man who had been vanquished by Count Robert of Flanders having to encounter William the Conqueror was not pleasant; and the French king, eager in the extreme to multiply William's enemies on the English side of the Channel, resolved to afford the Saxons such encouragement as to enable them to keep their conqueror in his insular dominions.

It was under the influence of such apprehensions, and with a view of accomplishing such an object, that Philip invited Atheling to France.

"Come hither," wrote the French king to the English prince—"come and aid me with your counsel. I will give you the fortress of Montreuil, which is so situated that thence you can either make a descent on England or ravage Normandy."

Atheling was not proof against such temptation. On receiving Philip's message, he prepared, with the companions of his exile, to embark for France, and made arrangements for his voyage. Malcolm, as William's liegeman, could not openly lend his countenance to the enterprise of his brother-in-law. Nevertheless, he secretly supplied Atheling with money, and furnished the companions of the exiled prince with arms.

But the expedition, and all the projects to which it was to lead, were destined to come to nought. The voyage of the adventurers proved the very reverse of fortunate. Scarcely had Atheling's fleet lost sight of the Scottish shores when a violent tempest arose. The vessels were scattered like leaves in autumn. Some sank, and others, going to pieces on the northern coast of England, left their crews at the mercy of the Norman officials, who made them prisoners. Atheling, and those who sailed in his ship, were wrecked, but escaped captivity. However, they lost everything; and in sadness and gloom they made their way, some on foot, others miserably mounted, back to the Scottish court, where Atheling, with his wonted eloquence, narrated to Malcolm and Margaret the misfortunes of the voyage.

"And now," asked Atheling, in conclusion, "what is to be done?"

"It seems to me," answered Malcolm, "that fortune is decidedly against you. Wherefore, struggle no longer with fate, but seek peace, once more, of William the Norman."

At all times Atheling was easily persuaded; and, on this occasion, he was in no frame of mind to dispute the wisdom of Malcolm's counsel. Accordingly he sent a message to William, who was still on the Continent; and William, responding frankly, asked him to repair to Normandy. Entering England by the north, passing through the country escorted by Norman counts, and entertained by them in the tall and turretted castles which already crowned every height, and which contrasted strangely with the low, irregular buildings, surrounded by woods, in which dwelt such of the Saxons of rank as had escaped death or banishment, Atheling could not fail to be impressed with a conviction of the fact that the work of the Conquest had gone much too far to be undone by force of arms, and that any thought of resistance was absurd.

Embarking for the Continent, he reached Rouen in safety, and was received by the Conqueror with kindness. A pension was granted to the banished prince to defray his personal expenses; but, taking a fancy to a charger in the stables of the palace, he afterwards parted with his pension in order to become master of the animal. For years Atheling remained at the palace of Rouen, amusing himself with hawks, dogs, and horses, and reflecting, with philosophic calmness, on the crown he had lost and the land from which he was exiled.



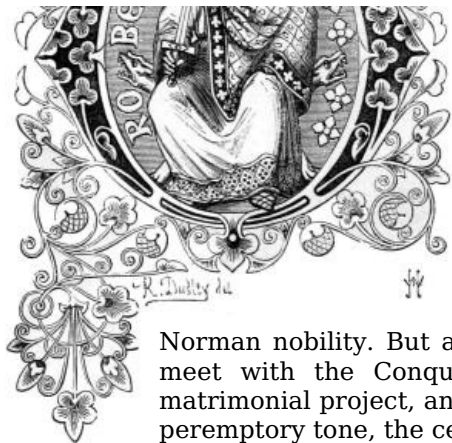
Hawk striking the quarry.

XXXVII.

FITZOSBORNE AND DE GAEL.



One day in the course of the year 1074, when William the Conqueror was in Normandy fighting with his Continental foes, and while Archbishop Lanfranc governed England in the king's absence, a great marriage took place in the castle of Norwich. Many



guests of high rank were bidden; and the occasion was rendered memorable by the circumstance that the feast with which it was celebrated proved fatal to almost every individual who happened to be present.

About the year 1073, William Fitzosborne, the Conqueror's famous comrade in arms, departed this life, leaving two sons, named William and Roger, and a daughter, named Emma. William, succeeding to his father's lands in Normandy, was known as Lord of Breteuil; Roger, inheriting his father's English possessions, became Earl of Hereford; and Emma was sought in marriage by a young Breton, who figured as Earl of Norfolk, and naturally felt ambitious of allying himself with the high

Norman nobility. But a union between Ralph de Gael and the daughter of Fitzosborne did not meet with the Conqueror's approval. In fact, William set his face decidedly against the matrimonial project, and, being at the time in Normandy, sent a messenger to forbid, in the most peremptory tone, the celebration of the marriage.

The interference of William was more than the high spirit of Roger Fitzosborne could brook. He resolved at once to set the Conqueror's prohibition at defiance; and, on a day appointed for the wedding, conveyed his sister to Norwich.

The ceremony was performed with a pomp worthy of the rank of the parties; and when the feast was spread in the castle hall, Norman bishops, and lords of high degree, both Norman and Welsh, and ladies fair to look upon, gathered around the board. So far all went smoothly. But as dishes were carved and cups emptied the master of the feast and his guests became rapidly excited and frank to excess. The habitual respect displayed by the Norman nobles for the great war-chief who had led them to conquest and plunder vanished as wine flowed in abundance, and the two earls especially vociferated in a strain which caused many present to stare in silent surprise.

"What is this man?" asked Roger Fitzosborne, in accents of supreme contempt—"what is this man, who dictates who are to be the husbands of ladies descended from the comrades of Rollo?—A bastard, owing this kingdom to my father, to whose memory this interference is an insult."

"He is a bastard, and a man of low birth," cried the Normans. "He may call himself a king; but 'tis clear that he is not made for one, and that he is not agreeable in the sight of God."

"And," exclaimed the Saxons, "he invaded England, he massacred the legitimate heirs of our kings and nobles, or obliged them to expatriate themselves."

"What is worst of all," roared the military adventurers who had followed William's banner in hopes of high reward, "he has not honoured as he might those who came to his aid—those who raised him higher than any of his predecessors."

"Yes," cried others; "what has he given to us, the conquerors covered with wounds? Sterile tracts of land, of which he deprives us whenever he sees them improving."

"It is true!" shouted the guests, tumultuously; "the man is odious to all; his death would gladden the hearts of all. Let him die!"

After further vociferation, the two earls, several bishops and abbots, many Normans and Saxons, and the Welsh chieftains, bound themselves by oath to rise against William, and arranged to ask the aid of Sweyn, King of Denmark, to insure the success of their perilous project. Perhaps, with the morning, repentance came, and many rued the words they had spoken and the promises they had made over wine at the festive board. But it was too late to retreat; and the two earls, to lessen the danger of being betrayed, resolved on immediate action. Roger Fitzosborne hastened home to raise his banner at Hereford; and Ralph de Gael prepared to shorten his honeymoon, leave the company of his bride, and raise his banner at Cambridge.

On reaching the province of which he was earl, Roger Fitzosborne lost no time in rallying his friends around him. Not only did he gather the discontented Normans to his standard. The Welsh on the Marches rose at his summons, and, with wild and vague hopes of recovering independence, rushed with enthusiasm to his aid. Having assembled a force which he deemed sufficiently formidable to inspire foes with terror, he commenced his march eastward, with the intention of joining De Gael. But, on reaching the Severn, and attempting to pass that river by the bridge at Worcester, he found, somewhat to his surprise, that preparations had been made to stop his progress.

In fact, the conspirators at Norwich had not very faithfully kept their secret. By some means or other, Lanfranc had become acquainted with the whole project; and when in possession of such intelligence the great archbishop was not the man to sleep at his post. He despatched soldiers from London to throw themselves in Roger's path; and he so far made use of the spiritual artillery at his command as to level a sentence of excommunication against the Norman earl.

Meanwhile, the king's friends were not idle in the west. Walter de Lacy, a Norman baron, and Eghelwig, the Saxon abbot of Evesham, roused the people of the country to take arms against Roger Fitzosborne and his Welshmen; and the people, regarding the Welsh as their natural enemies, obeyed the call of Walter and Eghelwig, and crowded to the royal standard.

At length the royal soldiers and the insurgents met face to face. It was on the banks of the Severn that the hostile armies encountered and fought a sanguinary battle. The Welsh, however, were defeated, and with such slaughter that the river was crimsoned with their blood. Roger Fitzosborne was made prisoner, and with him many adherents were taken with arms in their hands. The chief was kept in secure custody till the Conqueror should decide what was to be his fate. But the inferior captives were summarily disposed of. Some were hung on gibbets, some had their eyes put out, and others underwent such mutilation as to render them incapable of further mischief.

While such disasters attended the adventure of Roger Fitzosborne on the Severn, Ralph de Gael did not yield to the temptation of lingering with his fair bride at Norwich. Leaving that city, the bold Breton encamped in the neighbourhood of Cambridge, and succeeded in alluring a multitude of Saxons to his standard. But Ralph de Gael's part of the enterprise proved little more successful than that of Roger Fitzosborne had been. While the Breton earl was still gathering men to his camp, William de Warren, with

Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutance, took the field, and the insurgents found themselves menaced by a force decidedly superior to them in number. Not shrinking, however, from a conflict, they bravely faced the royal force at a place named Fagadon. There a stubborn battle was fought; but Ralph de Gael's men were completely defeated; and the chief escaped from the lost field, while many of his adherents were taken and treated with the utmost cruelty. Indeed, the victors are said to have been so merciless as to cut off the right foot of every captive, no matter what his rank or nation.

In the midst of this operation, Ralph de Gael had the fortune to reach Norwich. He threw himself into the citadel with some vague and desperate notions of defending himself to the last. Seeing, however, the impossibility of holding out, he left the fortress under the charge of his bride, and sailed to Brittany to implore the aid of his friends. The daughter of Fitzosborne made a brave defence, but her resistance proved vain. After a somewhat protracted struggle, the men-at-arms, seeing famine staring them in the face, recognised the necessity of yielding, and agreed, not only to surrender Norwich, but to leave England in case of their lives being spared. Almost every Breton who had come to England with the Conqueror was involved in the ruin of Ralph de Gael, and departed from the English shores. "Glory be to God in the highest!" Lanfranc wrote joyfully to King William, "your kingdom is freed from the filthy Bretons."

On returning to England, William, at Christmas, held a great council of barons, and dealt with the rebel chiefs. Both were condemned to lose their estates. De Gael, being absent, could not, of course, be punished in person; but Fitzosborne, who appeared before the assembly, was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment.

When matters had reached this stage, a son of Sweyn, King of Denmark, unaware of the ruin of those who had craved assistance, approached the eastern coast. But the Danes made no attempt to land. On learning what had happened they turned their helms towards Flanders, and left Fitzosborne to his fate.

But even captivity and chains could not break the strong spirit nor humble the haughty pride of Fitzosborne. Even in his dungeon he found a way of braving and insulting the king whom he had attempted to dethrone. One day, during Easter, the Conqueror, according to a Norman custom, sent him a magnificent suit of precious stuff, as if he had been at liberty. Fitzosborne received the vestments with a smile, examined the coat and mantle of silk, and handled the jacket, trimmed with foreign furs, as if highly pleased. Having done so, however, Roger ordered a fire to be kindled, and committed coat, mantle, and jacket to the flames.

"Thus," said he, "does the son of William Fitzosborne treat the gifts of the bastard to whom his father gave a crown."

"By the splendour of God!" exclaimed the Conqueror, boiling with anger, when informed of this scene, "the man who has thus insulted me shall never leave his prison alive."

XXXVIII.



Thor.

WALTHEOF, SON OF SIWARD.

Siward the Dane, when he expired at York, exhibiting his martial spirit to the last—clad, at his own request, in all the habiliments of war, with his helmet on his head, his coat of mail on his back, his gilt battle-axe in his hand, and that mystic banner, "The Raven of Earthly Terror," waving over his head—left, by his wife, the daughter of Earl Alred, one son to inherit his renown. The name of the son of Siward was Waltheof, and his career was anticipated with hope by the inhabitants of the provinces which his great father had ruled.

At the time of Siward's death, however, Waltheof was too young to succeed to Northumberland. Indeed, Tostig, as one of the sons of Godwin, immediately grasped at the earldom. Waltheof, however, soon began to figure as Earl of Huntingdon, and gave evidence of inheriting his father's courage and prowess in the conflicts of the Northumbrians with Tostig and Harold Hardrada.

After the battle of Hastings, Waltheof made his submission to the Conqueror. As a consequence, when William visited the Continent, the son of Siward was taken, with Edwin and Morkar, to grace the Conqueror's triumphant return to Rouen. But the sympathies of Waltheof were with the vanquished; and when the spirit of the country rose against the invaders he left London, and hurried northward, to take part in the operations of the Northumbrians. He was still very young; but, like his father, he was remarkable for his tall stature, his physical strength, and his strong arm; and the presence of the son of Siward was hailed with delight by those whom Siward had so often led.

When the Northumbrians, after the tragical death of Robert Comine, and the landing of the Danes, marched from Durham and besieged York, Waltheof performed prodigies of valour. Placing himself in

ambuscade at one of the gates, battle-axe in hand, he fell upon some Normans who were attempting to escape, and laid twenty of them dead on the ground. A hundred men, who hoped to save themselves by flight, took refuge in a neighbouring wood; but Waltheof, who pursued them closely, was in no humour to allow them to escape.

"I will save myself further trouble," he said, "by setting the wood on fire."

Putting his threat immediately into execution, Waltheof gave the wood to the flames; and a Danish poet, who was also a warrior, celebrating Waltheof's deeds in verse, compared his valour to that of Odin, and congratulated him on having given the English wolves an ample repast on Norman corpses.

When William was interrupted, while hunting in the Forest of Dean, with news of the outbreak beyond the Humber, and swore never again to lay aside his lance till he had slain all the Northumbrians, and marched suddenly with his choice troops to York, Waltheof once more fought like a hero of romance. Planting himself in a breach, through which only a single person could enter at a time, he cleft Norman after Norman with his ponderous battle-axe. His prowess on the occasion moved the admiration of his antagonists; and William was unable to refrain from expressions of surprise.

"By the Divine splendour!" he exclaimed, "I must make a friend of the man who dare do such deeds."

Accordingly a reconciliation was proposed; and a meeting was appointed at the Norman camp on the banks of the Tees. Everything went smoothly. Waltheof, in token of homage, placed his bare hand in that of the Conqueror, and William bestowed the earldoms of Huntingdon and Northampton on the son of Siward.

After this submission Waltheof received Judith, one of the Conqueror's nieces, in marriage, became the father of two children, and, after the deprivation of Cospatrick, had his highest ambition gratified by being installed as Earl of Northumberland. In that capacity the Anglo-Dane lived in the closest friendship with Vulcher of Lorraine, Bishop of Durham. Sitting with Vulcher in the synods of his clergy, Waltheof humbly and obediently put in execution the decrees of the bishop for reforming religion within the diocese. Nor did he by such conduct lose the favour of the English. All appeared prosperous; and Waltheof, united to the king's niece, and occupying his father's seat, enjoyed the favour of the Conqueror without having forfeited his popularity with the vanquished, when the conspiracy of Norwich, for which he cannot be considered to have been responsible, involved him in ruin and cost him his life.

On that day, when Norman counts, Saxon thanes, and Welsh chiefs assembled at Norwich to celebrate the marriage of Ralph de Gael with the daughter of William Fitzosborne, conspicuous, by his high head and gigantic stature appeared Waltheof, the Anglo-Dane. It would seem, however, that Waltheof took no part in the abuse lavished upon the uncle of his wife. But when the tumult was at the loudest, one of the Norman earls, rising suddenly, hushed the assembly to silence, and solemnly appealed to Waltheof to take part in the revolt.

"Brave man," said the earl, with that eloquence for which the Normans were so famous, "this is a great moment for your country; this is, for you, the hour of vengeance and fortune. Join us, and we will re-establish the kingdom of England in every respect as it was in the time of King Edward. One of us three shall be king, the other two shall command under him, and all lordships shall be held of us. William is occupied beyond sea; we are satisfied that he will not again cross the Channel. Now, brave warrior, adopt our plan; 'tis the best for thee, for thy family, and for thy crushed and fallen nation."

"It is! it is!" shouted the guests in chorus.

But Waltheof hesitated and remained silent. Warned by former failures, and with the fate of Edwin and Morkar before his mind's eye, he shrunk from embarking in an enterprise which he felt must terminate in disaster. At length he allowed himself so far to be drawn into the league that he promised secrecy.

It would seem, however, that Waltheof did not keep his word. The secret preyed on his mind. Uneasy, restless, and sleepless, he revealed the conspiracy first to his wife, Judith, and then to Archbishop Lanfranc. It is even said that he was persuaded by the primate to repair to Normandy and warn the Conqueror.

At all events, Waltheof did not escape punishment. When, in due time, the fleet invited from Denmark, commanded by the son of King Sweyn, approached the coast, Waltheof was accused of having invited the Danes over, lodged in the Castle of Winchester, and, ere long, brought to trial. He denied the charge. But the evidence given by Judith against her husband, whom she disliked, appeared conclusive, and the court was only divided in opinion as to the punishment to be inflicted.

"He deserves execution as a revolted Englishman," said some.

"No," argued others, "it should be perpetual imprisonment as a revolted officer of the king's."

While Waltheof remained a prisoner in the Castle of Winchester, his fate hung in the balance for nearly a year. But his enemies were eager for his destruction. Judith was eager to be a widow; Ivo Taille-Bois had set his heart on some of Waltheof's land which adjoined his own; and many Normans had a keen eye to the great earldom which had been enjoyed by the son of Siward. William did not resist the pressure, and sentence of death was pronounced.

The 29th of April, 1075, was appointed for the execution of Waltheof. But such was his popularity that the Normans apprehended an insurrection as the consequence of openly beheading him. It was, therefore, determined that the utmost secrecy should be observed. Before daybreak, accordingly, while the citizens of Winchester still slept, Norman officers, appearing in Waltheof's prison, informed him that his hour was come; and Waltheof, rising, arrayed himself in his earl's robes and walked forth to execution. Escorted by soldiers, attended by priests, and followed by some of the poor whose home was the street, the son of Siward directed his steps to a hill outside the city. On reaching this place, where the last scene was to be enacted, he prostrated himself on the ground, and, for a few moments, prayed in a low and earnest tone.

"Rise, that we may fulfil our orders," said the Normans, alarmed at the thought of the news spreading and a rescue being attempted.

"Wait," he replied calmly, "till I have said the Lord's Prayer for myself and for you."

"Yes," said they, consenting.

Waltheof, rising from his prostrate attitude, but remaining on his knees, said, in a loud voice, "Our Father, which art in Heaven." However, when he reached the words "lead us not into temptation," the executioner, growing impatient and uneasy, suddenly drew his large sword, waved it in the air, and with one blow severed the earl's head from his body. Alarmed at the approach of day, the Normans hastily dug a hole between two roads, threw in the body, and covered it with earth.

The possessions of Waltheof, and the earldom of Northampton, devolved upon Judith, his widow; and that lady consoled herself in her bereavement by regaling her imagination with the idea of sharing her wealth and power with a husband of her own choosing. But it soon appeared that in this respect the widow of Waltheof had made a serious miscalculation. William, in fact, without consulting her taste, destined her hand for Simon de Senlis, a French knight of unquestioned courage, but lame and somewhat deformed; and Judith expressed her utter horror of the match.

"What!" she exclaimed, "I marry a man who is lame and ill-shapen? Never!"

"As you will, madam," said the Conqueror, grimly; "but, at all events, Simon de Senlis shall be Earl of Northampton."

Meanwhile, the body of Waltheof was removed from the place where it had been hastily buried to the Abbey of Croyland, and interred in the chapter-house. Judith, disappointed in her hopes of a second husband, and mortified at the spectacle of Simon de Senlis figuring as Earl of Northampton, repaired to Croyland, and, as if to appease the spirit of the man whom she had betrayed, offered a silken cloth at his sepulchre. Left with her two children in poverty and obscurity, the widow of Waltheof passed the remainder of her life mournfully in a remote corner of England.



XXXIX.

WULSTAN, BISHOP OF WORCESTER.



IN that memorable day when Edgar Atheling appeared at the Norman camp at Berkhamstead to make his submission to the conqueror of Hastings, one of the Saxon prelates who accompanied the grandson of Edmund Ironside was Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester.

Wulstan had taken part in the election of Edgar Atheling, and probably felt as anxious as any of his neighbours to maintain the national independence. But after having arrived at the conclusion that the game was up, and sworn allegiance to William the Norman, he continued faithful to his oath; and, in doing so, earned the distinction of being described by a modern historian as "a simple, weak-minded man, who, after a momentary impulse of patriotic enthusiasm, became heartily reconciled with the conquerors."

It appears that long after the other prelates of Saxon race were somewhat summarily deposed, Wulstan was, in consequence of his fidelity to William, allowed to remain Bishop of Worcester. In that capacity he rendered to the Norman cause services which only a Saxon churchman could have rendered. When the violence shown towards the Saxon clergy raised so much resentment throughout England that in some provinces no Norman bishop durst show his face, Wulstan made pastoral visitations, calmed the popular excitement, and proclaimed the amnesties of the king; and when Roger Fitzosborne, raising the standard of revolt, marched from Hereford, in hopes of crossing the Severn and joining Ralph de Gael, Wulstan not only rallied the natives of Worcester around the royal standard, but marched in person to oppose the rebel earl's progress.

Wulstan, after these events, doubtless considered his position secure. Indeed, it was quite natural that he should. But he was deficient in that kind of erudition which Lanfranc deemed that a bishop ought to possess—and Lanfranc, being no respecter of persons, reported him as "insufficient for his place for want of learning."

It was the year 1076; and a great council of barons and bishops was held in the church of Westminster, under the auspices of Lanfranc and under the presidency of William. Before that assembly Wulstan was cited; and by the assembly he was unanimously declared incapable of exercising episcopal functions. When this judgment was pronounced, William ordered Wulstan to take off his pontifical robes, and resign his staff and ring, the ensigns of his ecclesiastical dignity. Wulstan, however, was so amazed and indignant, that, instead of obeying quietly, as was anticipated, he rose, turned towards the Conqueror, and exclaimed, with energy—

"A better man than you, O king! bestowed these robes upon me, and to him I will restore them!"

As Wulstan spoke, the Norman barons and bishops stared in mute surprise, and they were astonished when the venerable man, as if under Divine inspiration, walked to the Confessor's tomb.

"Thou, holy Edward," said he, "gavest me this staff, and to thee I return and confide it!"

Suiting the action to the words, Wulstan energetically struck the tombstone with the end of his pastoral staff; and then turning back to the Normans, he said, with calm scorn—

"I received my staff from a better man than any of *you!* I have returned it to him. Take it from him if you can!"

At this distant period it would be impossible adequately to describe the effect produced on the assembled Normans by this scene. Had all the heroes, saints, and martyrs of that great regal House whose throne the son of Arlette so unworthily occupied come out of their graves, and walked in procession before the council, the bishops and barons could not have been more astonished. The air of Wulstan, his unexpected energy, and the circumstances under which it was displayed, produced a feeling of wonder mingled with superstitious awe. The king did not repeat his demand; but Lanfranc mustered voice to entreat Wulstan to put on his robes and remain in his bishopric.

But the effect produced on the bishops and barons within the church of Westminster was trifling compared with the impression produced throughout the country. According to popular report, something resembling a miracle had been wrought. It must be confessed, indeed, that the story lost nothing in the telling. The rumour ran, that when Wulstan struck the tomb his staff penetrated into the stone as into soft earth, and that no one was able to draw it but the bishop himself. The story spread far and wide, and was told by many an oppressed peasant at the cottage hearth, by many a bold outlaw under the greenwood tree, and by many a sad-hearted Saxon, driven from his country, dressed as a Varing, and guarding the palace of the Emperor of Constantinople.



Herdsman (from Strutt)

XL.

ROBERT CURTHOSE.

The conquest of England having been accomplished, and the Saxons completely reduced to submission, the Conqueror, instead of enjoying his triumph, became sad and uneasy. Doubts as to the fidelity of his barons, and dismal forebodings as to the fate of his sons, haunted him day and night; and he even went so far, in his intense anxiety, as to consult some "wise men," who were supposed to have the gift of divination, as to the future of his line. Had any magician really had the power of revealing to him the fortune of his descendants in an enchanted mirror, as conjurers in another age revealed to Catherine de Medici the fortunes of her posterity, his worst apprehensions would have been confirmed. As it was, the conduct of his son Robert filled his heart with sadness and his mind with gloom.

Robert was the eldest son of William and Matilda. He drew his first breath about the year 1053; and his appearance was hailed with delight by his parents. Both William and Matilda appear to have indulged young Robert in such a way as utterly to spoil him; and when he passed from childhood to boyhood he acquired most dangerous notions of his importance.

When William sailed to conquer England, Robert had reached his thirteenth year. Ere that period he had been formally recognised by the Norman barons as heir of the duchy, and affianced to the heiress of the Counts of Maine; and when William sailed in the *Moir*, Robert was associated with Matilda in the administration of affairs. Flattered, complimented, and allowed to exercise enormous influence in Normandy during the absence of his sire, Robert early assumed the airs of an independent sovereign, and began to treat the parental authority with undisguised contempt.

Notwithstanding the influence which unfortunate training produced on the heir-apparent of Normandy, Robert, as he grew up to manhood, displayed qualities which recommended him to the hearts of the Norman chivalry. Brave and eloquent, intrepid and generous, he was just the person to secure the affection of a martial and high-spirited race of nobles. In war his prowess reminded men of the heroes of romance. But his appearance was in no respect heroic. He was under the ordinary height, fat to excess, and large in the bones. Rollo would have been astonished at the aspect of his heir; and William was so impressed with the shortness of Robert's legs, that the father, in ridicule, called the son "Curthose."

While Curthose was emerging from his teens, the death of the heiress of Maine and the annexation of that province to Normandy resulted in a quarrel between William and his heir. Eager to have a dominion of his own, Curthose claimed Maine as husband of the heiress; and the inhabitants, eager to have a lord of their own, supported Curthose's claim heart and soul. William, however, treated the idea with cold contempt; and while Curthose was brooding over this as a serious injury, circumstances occurred to fire his indignation.

It was the year 1077, and the Conqueror, Queen Matilda, and their sons happened to be on a visit to Laigle. One day, about noon, Curthose, with his friends around him, was standing in the courtyard of the house in which he lodged, expatiating with his wonted eloquence on his wrongs, and his brothers, William Rufus and Henry Beauclerc, who had been in the habit of taking part against Curthose in the domestic feud, coming thither, ascended to the upper rooms, where, making a great noise, they began to play at dice, after the manner of the soldiers of that age. Suddenly Rufus and Beauclerc conceived the idea of varying their

amusement, and, without calculating the consequences, they threw a quantity of water on Curthose and those with whom he was in earnest and animated conversation.

This insult stung Curthose to the quick. Giving way to irritation, he swore that no man on earth should so treat him with impunity; and, drawing his sword, with a gesture of menace he sprang to the doorway, and rushed upstairs to inflict chastisement. Fortunately, his friends interfered in time to prevent bloodshed. But high words passed, defiances were exchanged, and the scene was so tumultuous that the Conqueror's presence became necessary to prevent the disputants from coming to blows.

At length order was restored. It was even supposed that the quarrel was at an end. But, all the time, the blood of Curthose was boiling in his veins, and his high spirit was swelling with anger and grief. Next night he left Laigle with a choice band of friends, and proceeded to Rouen. With some vague notion, he attempted to surprise the citadel. The enterprise, however, failed, and many of his adherents were arrested. Curthose, however, escaped, passed the frontier of Normandy, took refuge in La Perche, and found shelter in the castle of Sorel.

The conduct of his heir naturally excited the Conqueror's wrath. Curthose, however, had a powerful advocate in his mother, Matilda, and a reconciliation took place. But this domestic peace was not of long duration. The adherents of Curthose, generally gay and thoughtless young men, exercised all their art to stimulate his ambition; and he yielded somewhat too readily to their suggestions.

"Noble son of a king," said they, "thy father's people must take good care of his treasure, since thou hast not a penny to bestow on thy followers. Why endurest thou to remain so poor when thy father is so rich?"

"But what can I do?" asked Curthose.

"Ask him for a portion of his England," they answered; "or, at least, for the duchy of Normandy, which he promised thee before all his barons."

Curthose did as he was advised. Excited and discontented, he went to William, and demanded to be put in possession of either part of the kingdom of England or the duchy of Normandy. William, instead of complying, exhorted Curthose, in a paternal tone, to amend his life, and to behave in a manner more worthy of the position he was destined to occupy.

"Return to your duty as a son," said the Conqueror, "and then make choice of better counsellors than you now have. Make choice of wise and grave persons of mature age to guide you—such a man, for instance, as Archbishop Lanfranc."

"Sir King!" replied Curthose, so sharply that William started, "I came here to claim my right, and not to listen to sermons. I heard enough of them, and wearisome enough they were, when I was at my grammar. Answer me, therefore, distinctly, so that I may know what I have to do; for I am firmly resolved not to live on the bread of others, and not to receive the wages of any man."

"Know, then," exclaimed William, angrily, "that I will not divest myself of Normandy, to which I was born, nor share England, which I have acquired with so much labour."

"Well," said Curthose, "I will go and serve strangers, and perhaps obtain from them what is refused me in my own country."

Without further ceremony, Curthose summoned his adherents, mounted his horse, and, with a soul glowing with pride and a spirit swelling with indignation, rode out from Rouen and away towards Flanders. Passing from country to country, from castle to castle, and from court to court, Curthose travelled over Europe, publishing his grievances and demanding aid. Nor was his story, told in eloquent language, without influence on the magnates whom he visited. Counts, dukes, and princes testified their sympathy, and drew their purses. Their liberality, however, had no beneficial influence on the wanderer's circumstances. In fact, Curthose was one of those men who can give the most sapient advice as to the affairs of their friends, while their own affairs are going to ruin as rapidly as their enemies could wish. All that he received to support his cause slipped through his fingers. Mountebanks, parasites, and women of equivocal reputation perpetually preyed upon him. All that Curthose obtained from barons and princes to buy arms and equip men passed into the hands of those who ministered to his amusement or contributed to his pleasure. Hard pressed for money, inconvenienced by poverty and all its concomitant evils, compelled to beg afresh, but, probably, with less success than on the first occasion, he found himself under the necessity of going to the usurers, and borrowing gold at exorbitant interest. Such were the steps by which Curthose entered upon that fatal path which finally, notwithstanding his great fame as a prince and soldier, and as a champion of the Cross, conducted him to disaster and defeat, and to a long and dismal captivity in the dungeons of Cardiff.

XLI.

THE CONQUEROR AND HIS HEIR.

While Robert Curthose was journeying from castle to castle and from court to court, Philip, King of France, now in his twenty-seventh year, and William the Conqueror's sworn foe, was offering bribes and protection to all the discontented Normans. After wandering about Flanders, Lorraine, and Aquitaine, Curthose at length turned his horse's head towards France, made for St. Germain, and craved sympathy and support from the great grandson of Hugh Capet.

Never did monarch listen to exiled prince with more eagerness than Philip of France listened to the heir of Normandy. Fearing and hating William as he did, Philip smiled with delight at the idea of setting the son to pull down the father, and readily promised his utmost aid. After much conversation on the subject, Curthose formed his plan of action, and, under the auspices of the French king, repaired to Gerberoy, a castle on the frontiers of Normandy.

At that period it was the custom that the castle of Gerberoy should be occupied by two viscounts, equal in authority, and that fugitives from all nations should find protection within its walls. The reception of Curthose at this stronghold was all that he could have wished. He was courteously received at the gate by Elie, one of the viscounts, and afterwards cordially welcomed by Elie's colleague.

Ere this, Matilda of Flanders became aware of the pecuniary embarrassments of her son, and, eager to administer relief without informing William, she contrived, by means of a Breton named Samson, to send Curthose sums of money. Hearing of this, the Conqueror forbade her to hold any communication with a son who had forfeited all title to consideration. Matilda, however, had a will of her own. Her maternal anxiety proving, in this case, infinitely stronger than respect for her husband's mandate, she continued secretly to

assist Curthose in the midst of his multitudinous difficulties. William, learning that he had been disobeyed, was highly indignant, and addressed his spouse in language somewhat reproachful.

"Behold my wife," said the Conqueror; "she whom I have loved as mine own soul—to whom I have confided the government of my realms, my treasures, and all that in this world I possess of power and greatness—she hath supported mine adversary against me; she hath strengthened and enriched him with the wealth I confided to her keeping; she hath secretly employed her zeal and subtlety in his cause, and done everything she could to encourage him against me."

"My lord," answered Matilda, "be not surprised if I feel a mother's tenderness for my first-born son. By the virtue of the Most High! I protest that if my son Robert were dead, and hidden far from the sight of the living, seven feet deep in the earth, and that the price of my blood would restore him to life, I would cheerfully bid it flow."

"But," said William, "you support my enemy with the very money I have committed to your keeping."

"And how," asked Matilda, "can you suppose that I could enjoy the pomps and luxuries with which I was surrounded when I knew that he was pining in want and misery? Far from my heart be such hardness!"

On hearing this, William grew pale with vexation. In his rage he bethought him of Matilda's messenger, and gave peremptory orders that Samson should be arrested and deprived of his sight. But the Breton, hearing that his eyes were to be put out, made his escape, and sought safety in the cloister. The old chronicler deemed the circumstance one in regard to which he had a right to be jocular, and remarked that Samson turned monk to save at once his body and soul.

Meanwhile, Curthose hoisted his flag and invited mercenaries to repair, without delay, to the castle of Gerberoy. Thither they flocked as eagles to the carnage. From France, from Flanders, and from Normandy they hastened, on foot and on horseback, with sword and with spear. Even men-at-arms who had served in William's court, who had lived under his protection, and who had partaken of the fruits of his successes, willing to worship the rising sun, left Rouen and galloped to Gerberoy. Curthose ere long found himself at the head of a formidable force, and Philip of France rejoiced in the triumph which he anticipated from having set the son against the father.

William was startled at the menacing attitude which Curthose had assumed, but he acted with all the energy of his earlier days. Landing in Normandy, the Conqueror prepared to encounter his refractory heir as he had encountered other foes, and, attended by his son, William Rufus, appeared in hostile array, and at the head of a numerous army, before Archembrage, where Curthose then was.

It was now Curthose's turn to feel some degree of anxiety. Inclosed within the walls of Archembrage, he saw himself hemmed in by a force with which his own was too weak to cope. But the chivalrous spirit of the heir of Normandy was not to be daunted by the odds arrayed against him; and making a sally, with his lance in rest, and his best warriors at his back, he bore down opposition and carried confusion into the enemy's camp.

It was on this occasion that Curthose and the Conqueror encountered hand to hand. Unaware who was his adversary, Curthose so strenuously exerted his marvellous prowess that William, who had never before been worsted in close conflict, was wounded and unhorsed. Alarmed at disasters which to him were quite novel, William bellowed out much more loudly than was consistent with the dignity of a conqueror, and the Norman knights, spurring in to the rescue, shouted out that it was the king. On discovering who was the wounded knight, Curthose dismounted, lifted William from the ground, aided him to regain his saddle, and left him at liberty to depart.

After the affray at Archembrage, the Norman counts and bishops used their utmost endeavours to reconcile William and his son. At first their efforts were unavailing. The Conqueror would scarcely listen to their entreaties, and, even after listening, he resisted sternly and stubbornly.

"Why," he asked, "do you solicit me in favour of a traitor who has seduced from me those soldiers whom I have fed with my bread and whom I have supplied with the arms they bear?"

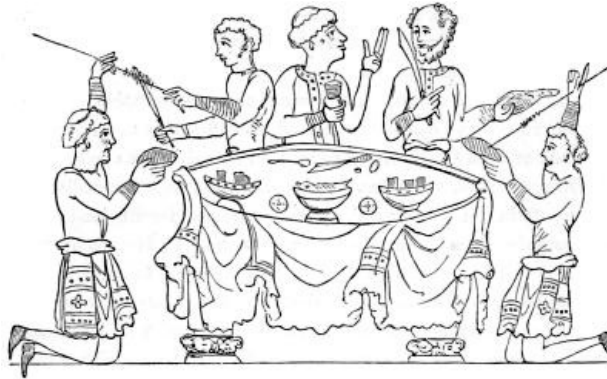
As time passed on, however, William's heart softened. Perhaps, when cured of his wound, he recovered from the mortification of spirit caused by the remembrance of his overthrow and affright at Archembrage. At all events, he yielded to the solicitations of the Norman counts and bishops, expressed his willingness to forgive the past, and granted Curthose full pardon for his rebellious exploits.

While the good understanding consequent on this reconciliation between father and son lasted, William departed for England, and not, perhaps, deeming it safe to leave Curthose in Normandy, requested the honour of his company. In England, however, there was work for a warrior to do. Malcolm, King of Scots, crossing the Tweed, began once more to ravage Northumberland, and Curthose, placed at the head of an army, was sent to repel the invader. But in this expedition the heir of Normandy had no opportunity of winning new laurels. Malcolm, alarmed at the approach of so redoubted a champion, retreated rapidly to his own dominions; and Curthose, to leave some memorial of his northern expedition, erected a strong fort on the Tyne, to which was given the name of Newcastle.

Matters so far went smoothly; but in the year 1083 Matilda of Flanders died; and soon after the queen's death, the quarrel between the Conqueror and his heir broke out afresh.



XLII.



From the Bayeux Tapestry.

ODO, BISHOP OF BAYEUX.

During the time that King William was on the Continent fighting with Robert Curthose, the government of England was committed to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. Before this period Odo's arrogance had been sufficiently conspicuous, and during the time he exercised viceregal functions events occurred to minister to his pride to such a degree that he became altogether intolerable.

It was one of the great objects of William the Norman to elevate those to whom he was related on the mother's side. After the death of Robert the Devil, Arlette, probably ambitious of figuring in a less equivocal position than that which she had previously occupied, united herself in marriage with Herluin de Couteville, and found herself the mother of two legitimate sons. William did not neglect their interests. One of them, Robert, became Earl of Mortain; the other, named Odo, and dedicated to the Church at an early age, became Bishop of Bayeux.

But, though Bishop of Bayeux, Odo was no meek shaveling nor pale-faced student. He was a daring warrior and a cautious libertine, and is pictured with defiance in his eye and rings on his finger; at one time leading a fiery charge of Norman cavalry, at another inditing love epistles to the dames of Rouen while pretending to be occupied with a treatise on some such relic as the finger of St. Thomas. His addiction to sinful pleasures was, in fact, notorious; and one of the results of his amours was a son, named John, who distinguished himself in the reign of his kinsman, Henry Beauclerc.

In the scenes with which the Norman invasion of England commenced, Odo of Bayeux enacted a prominent part. When Edward the Confessor expired, and Harold usurped the throne of young Atheling, and William calculated the chances of success in the event of undertaking an enterprise, Odo was one of the Normans who met at Rouen, who tendered the hesitating duke their support, and who promised to serve with money and goods, even to pledging or alienating their inheritances. On that day, also, which witnessed the battle of Hastings Odo was a prominent personage. In the morning he celebrated mass and blessed the troops; and, having performed this duty, he mounted his tall white charger and displayed his military skill by setting the cavalry in order for battle.

Hastings having been won, and the work of the Conquest proceeding, Odo's services did not go unrewarded. While his brother Robert became Earl of Cornwall, Odo became Grand Justiciary of England, and obtained the earldom of Kent; and at a later period, having meanwhile shared the whole of Archbishop Stigand's property with Adeliza, wife of Hugh Grantmesnil, he, on the forfeiture of Roger Fitzosborne, received a grant of the earldom of Hereford.

Never had fortune been more favourable to a human being than for years she seemed to Odo. Unluckily for the warlike Bishop of Bayeux, his pride swelled as his power and possessions increased; and at length, when invested, during William's absence from England, with viceregal authority, he lost all sense of discretion, and acted like a man whose head prosperity had turned.

It happened that, after the execution of Waltheof at Winchester, the earldom of Northumberland was purchased from the Conqueror by Vulcher, Bishop of Durham, and that his government was somewhat unsatisfactory. Vulcher, indeed, appears to have been a learned, pious, and well-meaning man, and to have shown his respect for popular sentiment by the high consideration he paid to Liulf, a Saxon thane connected

by marriage with the wife of Siward and with the mother of Cospatrick. But Leofwin, the bishop's chaplain and chief confidant, and Gislebert, a kinsman who acted as the bishop's deputy in administering the affairs of this province, regarded Liulf with envy and malice. After frequent exhibitions of ill-will, they conspired to murder Liulf; and Gislebert, entering the Saxon thane's house by night, put him and his family to the sword.

Vaulcher was naturally much enraged at this atrocity. Such, however, was his position that he was fain to pass over the crime, and even to continue his countenance to Leofwin and Gislebert. The Northumbrians, deeming that this was adding insult to injury, held nocturnal conferences, as in the time of Robert Comine, and were so evidently bent on mischief, that Vaulcher recognised the necessity of doing something to allay the ferment. With this object he announced his intention of holding a court, and mediating between the relatives of Liulf on the one part and Leofwin and Gislebert on the other.

It was on the 14th of May, 1080, and at Gateshead, that Vaulcher met the Northumbrians. The bishop was attended by Leofwin and Gislebert, and about a hundred men of foreign birth; and the Northumbrians, all secretly armed, were headed by Eadulf, surnamed Rus, a great-grandson of Earl Uchtred, and a connexion by marriage of Liulf. Knowing the French language, Eadulf acted as spokesman, and conferred with the bishop on the business of the day, and then stated that he must consult his followers as to the terms proposed. But instead of doing so, he cried out—"Short reed, good reed, slay ye the bishop;" and the Northumbrians, who had come with weapons concealed under their clothes, instantly brandished them in the air. In order to encourage his followers, Eadulf struck down Vaulcher with his own hand; and the Northumbrians, rushing on the bishop's attendants, slaughtered them without mercy. Only two servants, men who were natives of England, escaped the massacre.

News of this outrage at Gateshead was carried to Odo. The Bishop of Bayeux smiled grimly, and, girding on his armour, promptly marched northward to punish the perpetrators of the murder. But, meanwhile, the Northumbrians had marched to Durham, attacked that city, and, after finding their efforts vain, dispersed in all directions. Eadulf and the ringleaders fled the country; and, when Odo's approach was announced, few remained at home except those who had taken no part in the insurrection.

But Odo had ridden northward indulging in visions of carnage and plunder; and he was not to be baffled in his expectations by considerations of justice. Aware that the murderers of the bishop had fled, he avenged their crime on the whole province, ravaged the country, executed many of the inhabitants, mutilated others in the most revolting manner, plundered the church at Durham of the sacred ornaments which Bishop Eghelwin had formerly saved by removal to Holy Island, and gained a high reputation among the most disreputable class of the Norman conquerors, who proudly described him as "one of the greatest quellers of the English."

On learning what had occurred in Northumberland, William was doubtless surprised to hear of his brother acting so like a madman. But his astonishment was still greater when he learned that Odo was on the point of leaving England and proceeding to Italy. In fact, the queller of the Northumbrians, relying on some prediction of an Italian soothsayer that the next Pope should be named Odo, had bought a palace in Rome, and, in order to secure his election to the papal chair, was not only preparing to go thither, but had engaged his nephew, Hugh Le Loup, Earl of Chester, and many other Norman knights and barons, to form his court.

The idea of Odo aspiring to the chair of St. Peter proved in the highest degree displeasing to William. Sailing from Normandy without delay, he contrived to intercept Odo off the Isle of Wight. Assembling a council of Norman barons, he presented Odo to them, and accused him of having abused his power as judge and earl.

"This man," explained William, "has despoiled churches; he has maltreated the Saxons to the danger of the common cause; and he has attempted to seduce and take with him beyond the Alps the warriors on whose fidelity the safety of the country depended. Consider these grievances," said William, in conclusion, "and tell me how I ought to act towards such a brother."

The barons looked at each other; but no one ventured to reply.

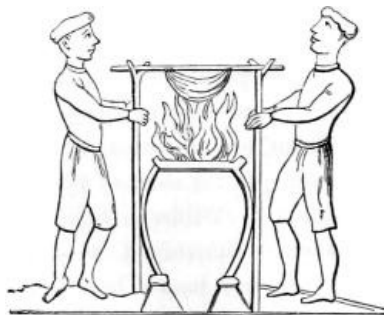
"Ha!" exclaimed William, "offensive foolhardiness must be restrained in time. Therefore," continued he, after a pause, "let this man be arrested and put into safe custody."

But the idea of Odo being a bishop daunted the boldest. None present had the courage to put out a hand. At length William advanced and seized Odo's robe.

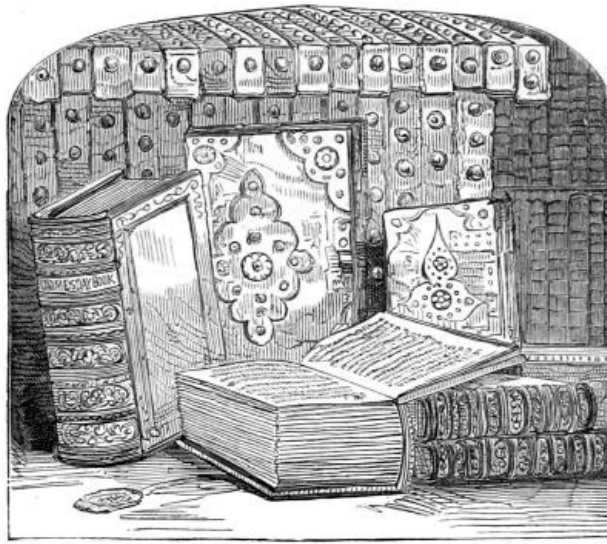
"I am a priest—I am a minister of God!" cried Odo. "The Pope alone can judge between us."

"It is not as priest or prelate that I judge," exclaimed William, grasping the bishop's robe more tightly than before; "it is as my vassal, my earl, and my false viceroy."

Odo, finding all protests unavailing, was fain to yield to his fate. Carried to Normandy, he was lodged in a strong fortress, and made to suffer for the sins committed in the days of his prosperity. In fact, the licentiousness for which he had been notorious was urged as a reason against his release, and he remained in durance almost without hope of seeing his prison-doors opened.



Cooks—from Bayeux Tapestry.



The Doom's-day Books

DOOMSDAY BOOK.

The House of Godwin having been overthrown; the son of Siward executed; one grandson of Leofric in the grave, the other in a dungeon; and one son of Cospatrick relegated to obscurity in Durham, the other condemned to exile in Lothian; William the Conqueror shook off all feelings of apprehension in so far as concerned the vanquished, and bethought him of casting up accounts with the companions of his victories. With this view he commissioned Walter Gifford, Henry de Ferrars, Remi, Bishop of Lincoln, and other persons of distinction, to traverse the country in all directions, and ascertain what amount of property each man possessed, and what proportion each should contribute towards the revenue.

This process, however necessary, does not appear to have been highly gratifying to those whom it chiefly concerned. Indeed, the Norman king and the Norman barons had, ere this, begun to regard each other with distrust and hostility. William accused them of caring more for their private interests than the general welfare; and they retaliated by reproaching him with greediness of gain and a desire to appropriate to himself, under the pretext of public utility, the wealth that had been acquired by their united exertions. No forcible opposition, however, was offered to the inquest which William ordered; and the Royal commissioners proceeded to the execution of their laborious duties.

Making progresses through the various counties of England, the commissioners established a court of inquiry in each place of importance, and caused the results of their investigations to be regularly registered in a book. The king's name was placed first, with the lands and revenues he enjoyed; then the names of the chiefs or smaller proprietors, according to their military rank and the value of their territory. The whole business was conducted with the utmost regularity, and with such care as rendered the lapse of years inevitable before the completion of their inquiry.

When this territorial register, described by the Normans as the "Grand Roll," but talked of by the Saxons as "Doom's-Day Book," was completed, all the Norman chiefs, clerks as well as laymen, were convoked, in 1086, to discuss and decide the various claims that had been made and disputes that had arisen during the inquest. It was a magnificent assembly, presided over by William, and consisting of prelates, barons, and knights, glutted with the blood and gorged with the spoil of the slaughtered and banished Anglo-Saxon lords. But many of them came thither in no amicable mood; and the Goddess of Discord availed herself of their frame of mind to celebrate a festival.

It appears that William asserted himself proprietor, by inheritance, of all the land that had belonged to Edward the Confessor, to Harold the Usurper, and to the various members of the House of Godwin, and thus interfered with the claims of many Normans who had served him most zealously at the time of the invasion. Much discontent was felt in consequence, and expressed without hesitation. Men deprived of their estates held strong language; and, finally, unable to obtain redress, they renounced their allegiance, left the country they had helped to conquer, passed the Tweed, and offered their homage to Malcolm Canmore.

This circumstance was destined to exercise considerable influence in after ages. The Normans crossed the frontier with feelings the reverse of tender towards the country they were leaving, and taught their children to turn the points of their spears southward. Two centuries later it was the perfidy of their descendants that baffled the genius of the first Great Edward; and it was the courage and prowess of their children's children which enabled Robert Bruce to wrest from Edward's son the crown of Scotland on the field of Bannockburn.



Norman Rustic, 11th century (from Strutt)

XLIV.



The quarrel of Henry Beauclerc and Louis le Gros

THE CONQUEROR'S DEATH.

It was the spring of 1086, and Philip, King of France—weak as ever, and with a reputation decidedly the worse for wear—was at Conflans, on the Seine; and with him was his son, afterwards, as Louis le Gros, distinguished as the foremost man of his time, but then scarcely out of his teens, and showing no signs of the talent and energy which history has associated with his name. In fact, this prince was "gay, conciliating all hearts to him, and of such extreme good-nature," says his biographer, "that to some men he seemed almost weak."

While Philip was at Conflans with his court, Conflans was doubtless an attractive place. Indeed, the court of Philip included so many young men sent to be instructed in knightly accomplishments, under the royal auspices, that they almost formed an army. At the same time, weary, perhaps, of Rouen, and eager for change of scene Robert Curthose and Henry Beauclerc—whom the Conqueror had recently invested with joint authority as governors of Normandy—repaired to Conflans on a visit, "entertaining the time with a variety of sports."

One day, when the three princes were in the palace, Henry and Louis commenced playing chess, while Curthose sat looking out on the banks of the Seine, or paced the room, pondering some vague project connected with love or war. Henry appears to have had marvellous luck; and Louis, perhaps not quite satisfied of having fair play, lost not only his money but his temper also. High words, and a quarrel not remarkable for princely dignity were the consequences. Louis, getting into a rage, perhaps for the first time in his life, called Henry the son of a bastard, and threw the chessmen in his face. Henry, provoked in the highest degree, reproached Louis with being the heir of usurping, effeminate, and priest-ridden kings, and felled him to the floor with the chessboard. In the vehemence of his passion, Henry would have slain Louis on the spot; but Curthose, recovering from the amazement produced by the scene, hastily interfered, dragged his brother away, and hurried to the stables. Mounting, the Norman princes spurred off with the speed of the wind, and scarcely halted till they were beyond the French frontier.

On learning what had occurred, Philip swore to be avenged. Rousing himself from apathy, and availing himself of William's absence from the Continent, the French king made a hostile incursion into Normandy; and, ere long, the Conqueror, while in England, learned that his liege lord was ravaging his territory and besieging his towns.

William was, by this time, in his sixty-third year, and by no means so energetic as in days gone by. Nevertheless, his spirit was high as ever. Resolved to go in person to face the danger and punish the aggression, he prepared to cross the Channel. Before doing so, however, he determined to remove from the vanquished islanders the temptation of making a last desperate effort to restore their national royalty.

At this time, Edgar Atheling, and his sister, Christina, were both in England. The Atheling, with some touch of sentiment for the land over which his sires had reigned, had, in the previous year, returned from Normandy; and Christina, having perhaps exhausted the patience of King Malcolm, had returned from Scotland. The presence of the royal Saxons could hardly, under all the circumstances, have been of vital consequence. But suspicion had now become a disease with the Conqueror, and he could not embark without having first disposed of them to his satisfaction. Accordingly, he so strongly impressed upon Christina the propriety of becoming a religious, that the princess, albeit not yet forty, still comely to behold, and perhaps by no means averse to the veil of a bride, was fain to take the veil of a nun in the convent of Rumsey; and he demonstrated so clearly to Atheling the propriety of undertaking an expedition to the Holy Land, that the prince, after being promised money to support his dignity, consented to set out on a pilgrimage.

Matters having thus been settled, William, with Edgar Atheling under his wing, and Rufus in attendance, embarked for the Continent. Having set his iron heel once more on Norman soil, the Conqueror first shipped off the grandson of Ironside to Apulia, with a retinue of two hundred knights, and then applied himself to his dispute with the heir of Hugh Capet.

It appears that the real cause of debate between William and Philip was the country of Vexin, situated between the Epte and the Oise. This territory had been wrested from Normandy and united to France during the troubles consequent upon the rumoured death of Robert the Devil. William, less inclined than of yore to submit the question of possession to the arbitrament of the sword, flattered himself that he should be able to regain the Vexin by peaceful means, and with this hope opened negotiations.

While negotiations were pending, William, whose corpulence had caused him serious inconvenience, felt the necessity of placing himself in the hands of his physicians and, by their advice, he kept his bed, and attempted to reduce himself by a rigorous diet. Philip, deeming that he had little to fear from such an adversary, returned evasive replies to William's demands, and found that the Conqueror bore the delay so patiently, that he ventured one day, at Paris, to indulge, at William's expense, in a coarse jest, which was faithfully repeated at Rouen.

"By my faith!" said Philip, "our cousin, the King of England, is very long about his lying-in! What rejoicings there will be when he gets up! What a number of candles I must provide for his churching!"

"Ha!" angrily exclaimed William, when told what Philip had said, "no cost shall the King of France incur on that day for candles or lights. For," added he, his anger rising and swelling into fury, "by the splendour and birth of God! I will be churching at Notre Dame de Paris with ten thousand lances for my candles."

While the blood of William was boiling with indignation at his liege lord's insulting jest, an incident occurred which must have added much to his annoyance. Curthose, falling under Philip's influence, and allured by Philip's promises, broke once more with his father, and prepared for the third time to leave the Norman court. William stormed as was his wont on such occasions, cursed his son's folly, and heaped maledictions on his head. Curthose, however, paid no regard to the reproaches of a sire with whom he could not agree; though it could hardly have been without reluctance that he left the duchy of which he was the recognised heir, to sit at the hearth, and feed at the board, and climb the stairs of strangers. But, whatever his feelings, Curthose did go; and the grim Conqueror cursed him as he departed.

William now shook off sickness, discarded his physicians, rose from his bed, mustered his men-at-arms, buckled on his mail, and entered the territory of Philip. More than threescore years had passed since the son of Arlette drew his first breath; but he proved, in a manner not to be mistaken, that time had not bent his spirit nor softened his heart. It was late in July, the harvest was at hand, and the summer's sun shone on fields of yellow corn, on vineyards rich with grapes, and orchards laden with fruit. William spared nothing. He ordered his cavalry to burn the corn, to tear up the vines, and to cut down the fruit-trees. Slaughtering, destroying, and ravaging with all the fury he had seventeen years earlier displayed in Northumberland, William reached Mantes, on the Seine.

It was Sunday, the 15th of August, when the Conqueror appeared at Mantes; and, on effecting an entrance, he immediately ordered the town to be set on fire. His orders were promptly obeyed; and as the flames leaped from roof to roof, seizing on cottages, and castles, and churches, and shot crackling upwards like a serpent's tongue, William, as if in a frenzy, shouted at the top of his voice, galloped through the conflagration, and seemed to enjoy the terrible scene. But suddenly his haughty spirit was brought low. While riding through the ruins, he spurred his horse towards a ditch which crossed his path. While in the act of springing, the animal set its foot on some burning embers, started, plunged furiously, and came to the ground, throwing the corpulent rider with such violence against the saddle as to cause a severe wound in the stomach.

It soon became apparent that William was not destined to reach Paris or to appear at Notre Dame; in fact,

the Conqueror was in no slight danger. Weak from recent confinement, heated by excitement, by the fire, and by the weather, he became feverish, and ordered himself to be conveyed back to Rouen. But when laid in his own chamber he could not rest; and so great was the annoyance he experienced from the noise of the streets, that it was deemed expedient to remove him to the priory of St. Gervase. In that religious house, which belonged to the monks of Fescamp, and stood on a hill outside the city, William, under the care of Gilbert, Bishop of Lysieux, and Goutard, Abbot of Jumieges, who tended him as physicians, languished for weeks. But his condition daily became worse, and, not deluding himself with hopes of recovery, he prepared for death.

When stretched on a bed from which he felt there was no probability of his rising, William reflected seriously on his past life, and regarded many actions in a very different light from that in which he had been in the habit of viewing them during the years of health and vigour. Eager to make atonement, he caused money to be given to the poor, and to be sent to the religious houses of England and Mantes to rebuild the churches which, by his orders, had been burned. At the same time he ordered the prison doors to be opened, and freedom to be given to captives, among whom were Wulnoth, brother of Harold; Morkar, brother of Edwin; and William's own brother, Odo of Bayeux.

It was now Wednesday, the 8th of September, 1087, and the Conqueror became aware that he was on the point of passing that bourne from which no traveller returns. But still he seems to have remained somewhat unconvinced of the vanity of sublunary greatness. Ordering the officers of his household to repair to his chamber, he, weak as he was, delivered an harangue of some length on his military achievements, dilated on the renown he had acquired as a ruler of men, and dictated his last will to his sons. Robert Curthose was at Abbeville; but William Rufus and Henry Beauclerc were by the bed of their dying father.

"I leave Normandy," said the Conqueror, "to my eldest son Robert, in accordance with the wishes of the Normans; but wretched will be the land subject to his rule. As for England, I leave it to no one, because I acquired it by force and bloodshed. I replace it in God's hands, wishing that my son William, who has ever been obedient to me, may, if it please God, obtain that kingdom and prosper in it."

"And," said Henry, stepping forward and speaking with energy, "what, then, will you give me, my father?"

"Give thee?" replied William; "I give thee five thousand pounds in silver from my treasury."

"But," said Henry, "what can I do with this money if I have neither house nor land?"

"Be content, my son," answered the Conqueror, "and have confidence in God. Allow thine elder brothers to precede thee. Thy time will come after theirs."

This scene having been enacted, William awaited that pale spectre which comes with impartiality to the cottages of the poor and the castles of kings. Nor was his patience severely tried. At sunrise, on Thursday morning, he awoke from the feverish slumber in which he passed the last night his spirit was to spend on earth. It was bright and clear; the rising sun shone on the storied windows of the priory, the bells were ringing, and the monks were singing a Latin hymn to the hour of prime.

"What means that noise?" inquired William, in faint accents.

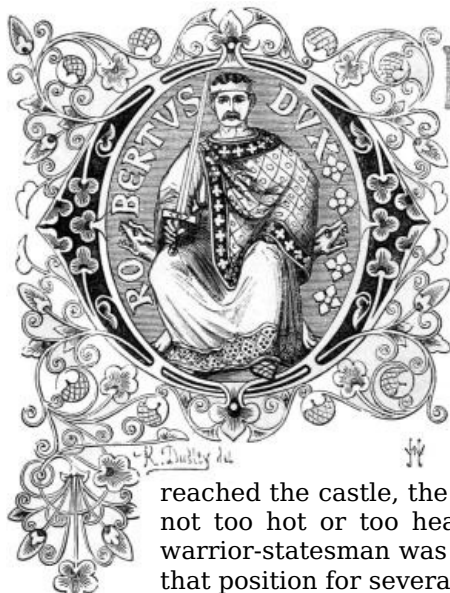
"They are ringing prime at the church of St. Mary," was the answer.

"Ha!" faltered William; and then adding, "I commend my soul to Mary, the Holy Mother of God," he raised his hands to heaven, and instantly expired.



XLV.

THE BURIAL AT CAEN.



NE One Thursday the 10th of September, 1087, consternation and dismay pervaded the city of Rouen. Neither Granada after Boabdil's flight, nor Edinburgh after the death of King James at Flodden, presented such a scene of confusion as did the capital of Normandy on that morning when it became known that William the Conqueror had breathed his last. Fear fell upon all men who had anything to lose, and they ran wildly about, beating their breasts, tearing their hair, and imploring advice, as if a hostile army had been before the gates.

Meanwhile, within the convent of St. Gervase and the castle of Rouen were enacted such scenes as, when reflected on, make human beings blush for human nature. No sooner did William breathe his last than his physicians, and the attendants who had watched his couch during the night, hastily left the chamber of death, and mounting their horses, rode away to look after their property; and, when the news

reached the castle, the servants carried off plate, armour, clothes, linen, and everything that was not too hot or too heavy, and fled from the place. It is even said that the body of the great warrior-statesman was left on the floor with scarcely a shred of covering, and that it remained in that position for several hours.

It is most discreditable, indeed, to the memory of William's two sons, Rufus and Beauclerc, that such

should have been the case. But these young men were wholly intent on their own interests. Rufus was already on his way to England, and Beauclerc was busy receiving the five thousand pounds, seeing the silver carefully weighed, and depositing the treasure in a chest, fastened with bands of iron, and secured with strong locks. Never was there a more thorough display of intense selfishness. Even Curthose, with all his faults, would not have been guilty of such filial impiety.

It almost seemed as if the Conqueror was to be denied Christian burial. But William, Archbishop of Rouen, had the decency to think of the dead king, and ordered a procession to be arranged. Dressed in their habits, monks and priests, with cross, candles, and censers, repaired to the chamber to pray for the soul that had departed, and the archbishop gave orders that the corpse should be conveyed to Caen, and buried in the cathedral which William had built and dedicated to St. Stephen. But nobody showed the least inclination to take an active part in the obsequies.

At length a Norman knight, named Herluin, probably a kinsman of Arlette's husband, William's stepfather, volunteered to take the trouble and bear the expense. Having hired a hearse and men, Herluin removed the body to the banks of the Seine, and, having caused it to be placed in a boat, attended it, by the river and the sea, to Caen. On reaching that place the corpse was met by the Abbot of Caen, with all his monks, and by many other priests and laymen, among whom appeared Henry Beauclerc. But a fire suddenly breaking out in the town dissolved the procession, and the corpse, deserted by all but the monks of St. Stephen, was borne by them to the cathedral.

Between the altar and the choir of the Cathedral of Caen a tomb was prepared; and when the time appointed for the inhumation arrived all the bishops and abbots of Normandy assembled for the ceremony. Mass was then said; and the body, without a coffin, but clothed in royal robes, was about to be lowered, when suddenly a man, advancing from the crowd, stepped forward and interrupted the process.

"Priests and bishops," said he, in a loud voice, "this ground is mine. It was the site of my father's house. The man for whom you have now prayed took it from me by force to build his church upon it."

"It is true," said several voices.

"I have not sold my land," continued the man; "I have not pawned it—I have not forfeited it—I have not given it. Mine the ground is by right, and I demand it."

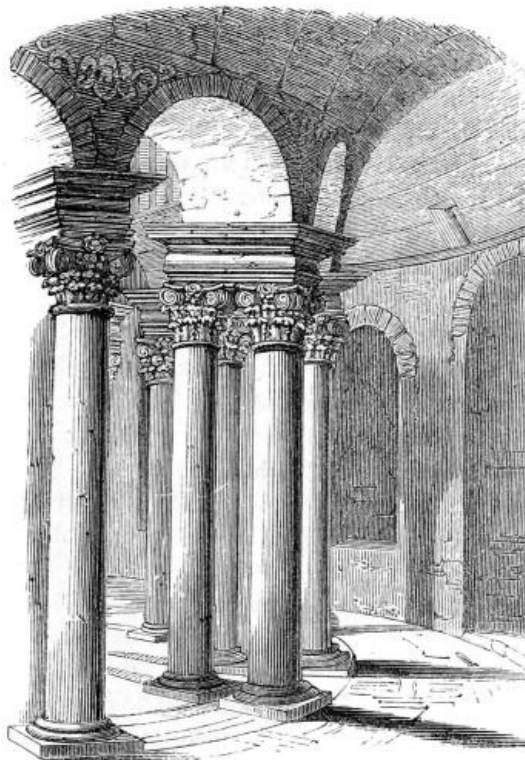
"Who art thou?" they asked.

"My name," he answered, "is Asselin Fitzarthur, and in God's name I forbid the body of the spoiler to be laid in this place. Here was the floor of my father's house—it was violently wrested from us; and I charge you, as ye shall answer for it before the face of God, not to cover this body with the earth of my inheritance."

"He hath the law of Normandy on his side," muttered those present.

Perceiving how the matter stood, the bishops caused Fitzarthur to approach, and a bargain was hastily struck. The bishops agreed to pay sixty pence for the immediate place of sepulture, and to give equitable recompence for the rest of the ground; and Fitzarthur, contented with their assurance, withdrew his protest. The body was then placed in its narrow receptacle, and, the ceremony having been hastily completed, the grave closed over the remains of William the Conqueror.

The right of Robert Curthose to the coronal of Normandy was not disputed, and when that prince arrived at Rouen he quietly took possession of the dominions of Rollo. But the succession to the crown of England was a question which the Anglo-Norman barons deemed themselves entitled to decide. A council was accordingly held for that purpose; and at this assembly the majority of those present gave it as their opinion that crown and coronal should go together—that the two countries should have one and the same government—and that the crown of England should be placed where the coronal of Normandy already was, on the head of Duke Robert. But, in the midst of their deliberations, the dignity of the assembled barons was rudely shocked. News, in fact, came across the Channel which seemed to indicate that their wishes on the subject of the succession were not thought worthy even of being consulted, and which, by creating bitter animosities, was destined to produce an alarming and not altogether unimportant civil war.





Shakespeare's Cliff, Dover.

THE RED KING.

About the time when news that the Conqueror had commended his soul to the Virgin Mary and expired at the convent of St. Gervase was causing consternation and affright in the city of Rouen, there might have been seen, at the port of Wissant, near Calais, a thickset and rude-mannered man, of twenty-seven or thereabouts, who stammered in Norman French, swore "by the face of St. Luke," and went blustering about in the excess of his eagerness to embark for the shores of England.

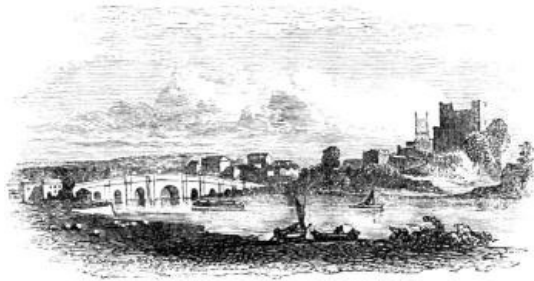
The appearance of this person was the reverse of prepossessing. His stature was mean, his figure was ungraceful, his face florid, his forehead shaped like a window, his hair fiery red, and his countenance, which had not a redeeming feature, was deformed by a disagreeable defect in the eyes. It was William Rufus, the Conqueror's second son, on his way to seize the English throne.

On setting foot in England, Rufus hastened to Winchester, presented himself to the treasurer, and gained that officer over to his views. Having obtained the keys of the treasury, he found much silver and gold, and a quantity of jewels. Upon weighing these carefully, and taking an inventory, he succeeded in gaining the support of Lanfranc; and, having prevailed on the Norman barons then in England to recognise him as king, he was crowned by the archbishop in the cathedral of Winchester.

It would seem that at this stage Rufus apprehended some danger from the enmity of the Saxons. At all events, his first act of royal authority was directed against men of the vanquished race. In accordance with the Conqueror's dying command, four captives of high rank had been restored to liberty. These were Roger Fitzosborne, Odo of Bayeux, Wolnoth, brother of Harold, and Morkar, brother of Edwin. Of these, Rufus ordered Wolnoth and Morkar to be seized, and again committed to prison at Winchester.

Events soon occurred to convince the Red King that he had mistaken the quarter whence danger was to come. In fact, the Norman barons, who had assembled at Rouen, were furious at the intelligence of a coronation having taken place without their consent, and, ere long, they reached England, breathing defiance and threatening vengeance. Soon a party was formed with the avowed resolution of pulling Rufus from the throne, and placing the crown of England on Curthose's head.

At the head of this party figured Odo, the fierce and haughty Bishop of Bayeux, now released from prison. Owing Lanfranc an old grudge, and willing to pay the debt with interest, Odo exerted all his influence to destroy the settlement of which the archbishop was author, and proved so successful in his efforts that a formidable conspiracy was formed with that object. Day by day it was strengthened by the names of powerful nobles and influential churchmen. Hugh de Grantmesnil, Robert Mortain, Earl of Cornwall; Robert Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury; Robert Moubray, Earl of Northumberland; and William Carilif, Bishop of Durham, were among the many eminent personages who vowed to place Curthose on the Conqueror's throne. With the object of perplexing the movements of Rufus while awaiting the coming of Curthose, they fortified themselves in different parts of the country. Hugh de Grantmesnil fortified himself in Leicester; the Earl of Cornwall posted himself at Pevensey; the Earl of Shrewsbury held Norwich; the Earl of Northumberland seized Bristol; William Carilif occupied the castle of Durham; and Odo himself took possession of the castle of Rochester. The banners of the insurgents waved from hundreds of other strongholds; and they only awaited the arrival of Curthose to strike a decisive blow.



Rochester

The position of Rufus appeared somewhat perilous. Left to his own resources he must have fallen from the throne he so unworthily occupied. But the circumstance of having a minister of such wisdom and experience as Lanfranc at his side considerably altered the case; and, acting under the auspices of the archbishop, Rufus took the only step likely to save him from impending ruin.

In passing through England, as it then was, foreigners were surprised, after passing the Norman fortresses, which on every height frowned with heavy, massive, and gloomy turrets, to come, ever and anon, on two-storied houses, quite unfortified, and standing in the midst of parks, through which, watched by the herdsmen, herds and flocks grazed in security. These were the seats of such Saxons of consideration as had escaped the Norman sword; not mighty chiefs, like Edwin or Cospatrick, but thanes who, perhaps, had been too proud to march under the banner of the son of Godwin; men who had not, for years, wandered out from the shadow of their paternal oaks; whom isolation had rendered eccentric, and whom oppression had rendered irascible.

In the hour of need, Rufus was reminded of these Saxon thanes, who had long been exclaiming over their cups against Norman tyranny, summoned them to his court, asked their counsels, and promised, in the event of their rendering aid, to restore to them the right of carrying arms, and the privileges of the chase. The simple Saxons fell into the snare, gave credit to his frank assurances, and issued to the natives a proclamation couched in the words to which the Saxons had been long accustomed.

"Let every man," such were the words—"let every man that is not a nothing, whether in the town or country, leave his house and come."

The appeal was not made in vain. At the time and place appointed thirty thousand Saxons rallied round the Red King's banner.

It was at the head of this body of men, who were mostly on foot, that William, with some Norman cavalry, marched towards Rochester, where Odo of Bayeux was strongly posted. The Saxons, to whom Odo was peculiarly odious, displayed great eagerness for the strife, vowed vengeance against the oppressors, and beleaguered Rochester on all sides. Closely pressed, the Bishop of Bayeux and his friends soon offered to yield, and to acknowledge Rufus as King, on condition of being allowed to retain their honours and their lands. Rufus, who was brave, though his courage somewhat resembled that of a wild beast, at first refused to listen to such terms. But the Normans in his army, having no mind to slaughter their friends and kinsmen, pressed him to accede.

"We, who have aided thee in this danger," said they, "pray thee to spare our countrymen and relatives, who are also thine, and who aided thy father to conquer England."

"Well," said Rufus, yielding to their representations, "I will grant them liberty to depart with arms and horses."

"But," said Odo, "we must stipulate that the king's military music shall not play in token of victory at our departure."

"By St. Luke's face!" exclaimed Rufus, fiercely, on hearing of this demand, "I will not make any such concession for a thousand gold marks."

Accordingly, when Odo and his friends left Rochester, with colours lowered, the royal trumpets sounded in token of victory; but far louder were the clamours that arose from the assembled Saxons.

"Bring us cords!" some cried; "we will hang this traitor bishop, with all his accomplices!"

"O king!" cried others, "why dost thou let him go free? He is not worthy to live—the traitor, the perjurer, the murderer of so many thousand men."

The war, after raging for some time longer, was terminated by a treaty. Curthose was bribed with a grant of land and with a promise of succeeding to the crown in the event of his surviving Rufus; while his adherents were pardoned and returned to their estates. But how did Rufus treat the Anglo-Saxons who had secured him victory? How did he fulfil the promises made to the Saxon chiefs who had brought their countrymen around him in the hour of need?

No sooner was the war at an end than Rufus became infinitely more tyrannical than ever his father had been. In vain Lanfranc, who had, as it were, stood sponsor, reminded the Red King of the pledges he had given.

"Remember your promises," said the venerable prelate.

"Tush!" stammered out Rufus; "how can a king keep all the promises he makes?"

Lanfranc was horrified. Dumb with amazement at the idea of solemn engagements, for which he had stood security, being thus repudiated, the archbishop retired into privacy, and soon after went the way of all flesh. The death of Lanfranc was regarded as a national calamity; and the Red King, freed from all restraint, and pursuing his career without scruple and without fear, lived like a scoundrel, and reigned like a tyrant.

Rufus seems to have had as little sympathy with the sentiments of that gallant French monarch who said that "society without ladies would be like the year without the spring; or, rather, like spring without the flowers," as with the sentiment of another French monarch, who said that, "if good faith were banished from all the rest of the world, it should still be found in the breasts of kings." No gentle wife had the Red King to

exercise a softening influence on his harsh heart. From the first he was a confirmed bachelor, and his morals were dissolute in the extreme. It is true that at the court of Winchester no mediæval Diana of Poitiers or Madame Pompadour scandalized the grave and decorous by the spectacle of an abandoned woman, arrayed in purple and fine linen, enjoying a degree of royal favour not vouchsafed to a wedded wife. But Rufus indulged without restraint in amours with females too obscure to be mentioned by chroniclers; and such was the reputation of the king's court that, when he made progresses through England, women who had not discarded decency left their homes to save their honour, and took refuge in the depths of the forests.

At the same time the country through which the Red King passed was ruthlessly ravaged by his train. Goods and provisions were lawlessly seized; and such was the spirit of the courtiers that, when they found in the houses of the Saxons more than they could consume, they amused themselves by giving articles of food to the flames, and using wine to wash the feet of their horses.

Another kind of oppression was heavily felt by the vanquished race. The king deemed it necessary to construct a new wall round the Tower, to build a bridge over the Thames, and to add a great hall to the palace of Westminster. All around London men were taxed, and bands of labourers were forcibly compelled to take part in the works. Murmurs and complaints were frequent; but murmurs were useless and complaints unavailing.

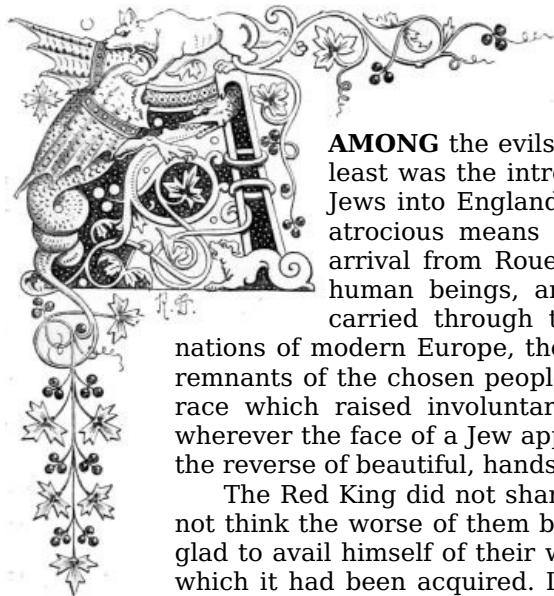
In fact, under the government of the Red King, the affairs of England were conducted without the least reference to the feelings of those to whom he owed his throne. Deep, of course, was the discontent.

"Every year that passed," says the chronicler, "was heavy and full of sorrow, on account of the vexations without number, and the multiplied taxes."



Knights jousting (from Strutt)

XLVII. RUFUS AND THE JEWS.



AMONG the evils which the Saxons associated with the Norman Conquest, not the least was the introduction, by William the Conqueror, of a considerable number of Jews into England. Doubtless, ere that event, the fame of their wealth, and of the atrocious means by which it had been acquired, had preceded them. But their arrival from Rouen caused much dismay. Accounts of their usury, their traffic in human beings, and the insults offered by them to the Christian religion, were carried through the land, and so influenced the popular mind, that, of all the nations of modern Europe, the Anglo-Saxons learned most thoroughly to despise the degraded remnants of the chosen people. There was something about the appearance of men of Hebrew race which raised involuntary antipathy in the breasts of the inhabitants of England; and wherever the face of a Jew appeared, with the sensual lip, the sharp, hooked nose, and features the reverse of beautiful, hands instinctively clenched and lips curled with scorn.

The Red King did not share the prejudices of his Saxon subjects. Being an infidel, he could not think the worse of them because they were not Christians; and being a spendthrift, he was glad to avail himself of their wealth, without particularly inquiring into the nefarious means by which it had been acquired. In any case, Rufus gave the Jews considerable encouragement in matters of religion; and, whenever an opportunity occurred, he showed that he was not above pocketing their gold.

It appears that on one occasion the Red King even consented to a disputation being held in his presence between Jews and Christians. Before the arrival of the day appointed, the Jews came to Rufus, laid rich presents at his feet, and implored him to insure them a fair and impartial hearing.

"Doubtless," he answered; "and you must quit yourselves like men."

"Assuredly," said the Jews.

"And if you prevail in argument," exclaimed Rufus, "I swear by St. Luke's face that I myself will turn Jew, and be of your religion."

This disputation, like most disputations of the kind, came to nought, and Rufus was not called upon to redeem his pledge of becoming a convert. He did, however, contrive to turn the conversion of others to account. When a Jew happened to be brought to a knowledge of the truth, Rufus was quite ready, on certain terms, to lay his commands on the convert to return to Judaism. In this way, which ill became the king of a Christian people, he obtained considerable sums of money.

On one occasion a wealthy old Jew, whose son had seen the error of his ways, and embraced Christianity, appeared at the king's court, told his tale of woe, and entreated assistance.

"I am sore troubled," said the Hebrew; "I am bowed down with grief. O king," he continued, presenting Rufus with sixty marks, "command my son to return to the faith of his fathers."

"Ay," said Rufus, clutching the money; "bring your son to me, and I will bring him to reason."

The old Jew retired, and soon after returned with his son. The young Israelite, however, was unabashed as he entered the Red King's presence, conscious of the goodness of his cause.

"Young man," said Rufus, by way of settling the business in as few words as possible, "I command you, without delay, to return to the religion of your nation."

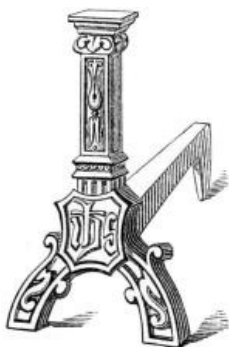
"King," said the young Israelite, in a tone of mournful reproach, "I marvel that you can give such advice. Being a Christian, you ought to feel it your duty rather to persuade me to remain steadfast to Christianity."

"Dog!" stammered out Rufus, in a loud tone; "get out of my sight without delay, or it will be the worse for thee."

The convert went his way, and the old Jew remained, deeply mortified at the result of the royal mediation, for which he had paid so high a price. But even at that instant his intense love of gold, prevailing over all considerations of propriety, prompted an attempt to recover his sixty marks.

"Since, O king," he said, "you have not persuaded my son to return to his religion, it would be but fair to restore to me the gold I gave to that end."

"Nay," answered the king, with his usual oath; "I have taken trouble enough, and have done work enough, for the gold, and more. And yet I would like to show you how kindly I can deal. Therefore you shall have one-half of the sixty marks, and in conscience you cannot deny me the other."



Andiron.

XLVIII.



Death of Malcolm Canmore, the Scottish King

RUFUS AND THE SCOTS.

While William Rufus, having set honour and decency at defiance, was playing the part of a tyrant and

oppressor in England, he ever and anon gave indications, not to be mistaken, of a desire to play the part of a usurper in Normandy.

Repairing to the Continent, with some idea of taking possession of his brother's duchy, Rufus expelled from Normandy the unfortunate heir of the Saxon kings, who had returned from Apulia. Homeless and well-nigh desperate, Edgar Atheling once more sought refuge in Scotland; and Malcolm Canmore, irritated, perhaps, at the treatment with which his brother-in-law had met, resolved on making Rufus feel his enmity.

"Years since," said the King of Scots, "I was fain to recognise William the Norman as my liege lord; and I acknowledge Robert Curthose as the heir of William the Norman; but as for this Red King, I can only recognise him as a usurper, and he shall only know me as a foe."

Rufus was still in Normandy, when intelligence reached him that Malcolm, accompanied by the Atheling, had, in the month of May, 1091, crossed the frontier; and he was seriously alarmed at tidings of an invasion that might lead to important consequences. Under such circumstances he perceived the policy of going craftily to work; and, after patching up a peace with his brother Robert, prevailed on the Norman duke to attend him to England, and aid in bringing Malcolm to reason. It was in the autumn of 1091 when, with Curthose by his side, an army at his back, and a fleet at sea, Rufus moved northward to try conclusions with the royal Scot.

On hearing of the approach of the King of England, Malcolm fell back in some dismay. Nevertheless, Rufus was not quite in a position to congratulate himself on the success of his expedition. In fact, everything went wrong. The weather proved altogether unfavourable. Before the close of September, the English fleet was destroyed by a storm; and, soon after Michaelmas, the army began to suffer so fearfully from cold and want, that there appeared little prospect of the enterprise having other than a disastrous termination.

While such was the state of affairs, Malcolm Canmore, turning to bay, sent a messenger to the English camp with expressions of friendship to Curthose, and of scornful defiance to Rufus. Curthose, however, with characteristic generosity, stood firmly by Rufus at this crisis. Mounting his steed, he rode to the Scottish camp, had an interview with Edgar Atheling, persuaded the Saxon prince that, for all parties, peace was the wisest policy, and finally succeeded in negotiating a treaty between the two kings.

Rufus now deemed himself secured against Malcolm's hostility; and scarcely had Curthose rendered this service when the Norman duke began to experience the gross ingratitude of the Red King. In utter disgust, Curthose resolved forthwith to leave England, and, crossing the sea, he established himself at Rouen with the intention of securing himself against further hostility.

Meanwhile Rufus, while keeping his court at Gloucester, fell so sick, that physicians despaired of his life. Stretched on a bed of suffering, the Red King became extremely penitent and anxious to atone for his sins. While in this frame of mind, William invited Malcolm Canmore to come and settle all disputes. But ere the King of Scots reached Gloucester, Rufus was in a fair way of recovering, and in no mood to sacrifice either to justice or righteousness. Without even condescending to see Malcolm, he disdainfully ordered him to submit his disputes to his peers, the Anglo-Norman nobles; and Malcolm—his blood boiling at the treatment with which he had met—returned home, vowing to make the Red King repent his insolence.

No sooner, accordingly, did Malcolm reach Scotland, than he assembled a great army, and marched towards England. Attended by his eldest son, Edward, he entered Northumberland, ravaged the country with fire and sword, advanced as far as Alnwick, invested the castle of Ivo de Vesci, and besieged that stronghold so closely that the garrison lost all hope.

It was the month of November, 1093—a Sunday, and the day of St. Brice. The rain had fallen in torrents; the river Alne was in flood; and the garrison had given way to perplexity and despair. No chance of the siege being raised, or of escape by any other means, could be entertained; and the remembrance of the savage cruelty of the Scots under Malcolm, twenty years earlier, filled every heart with consternation. In this emergency, Hammond Morael, of Bamburgh, a soldier of courage and determination, undertook to deliver the garrison, or die in the attempt. Mounting a fleet steed, he issued from the castle, and, carrying the keys on the point of his spear, he rode towards the Scottish camp. On being challenged, he professed his willingness to surrender the keys of the fortress, but demanded permission to present them to the King of Scots in person. Malcolm, informed of Hammond's approach, immediately came forth; and Morael, spurring forward, pierced the Scottish king through the heart.

A loud cry arose as Malcolm fell, and the Scotch camp was in commotion. Hammond, however, had well calculated his danger and his chances of escape. Turning rein without the delay of an instant, he gave his horse the spur, galloped towards a wood, made for the Alne, then swollen with rain, and, dashing in at all hazards, escaped by swimming the river at a place long afterwards known as "Hammond's Ford."

While the Scots, amazed at the unexpected fall of their king, were in confusion, the soldiers forming the garrison of Alnwick availed themselves of the circumstance. Sallying, they made a fierce attack; and the Scots, put to the rout, either fell by the sword, or were drowned in attempting to pass the river. Among the warriors slain on this occasion was Malcolm's son Edward, a young prince of great promise.

The rout of the Scots was so sudden, and their dispersion so complete, that the victors, without opposition, took possession of Malcolm's body. But though left in the hands of the foe, the corpse was not denied a Christian's grave. Placed in a cart by the Northumbrians, it was conveyed to Tynemouth, and there laid, with funereal honours, in the priory of St. Oswin, a famous religious house, which Robert de Moubray had wrested from the monks of St. Cuthbert, and bestowed on the monks of St. Alban's.

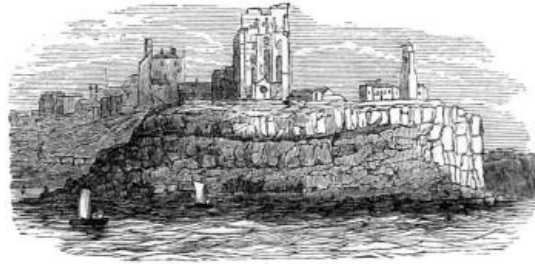
In the meantime, news that Malcolm and his son had fallen at Alnwick reached the Scottish court, and overwhelmed Queen Margaret with grief. Nothing seemed sufficient to console the royal lady for the loss she had sustained. Indeed, she is said to have prayed that she might not survive them, and to have expired within three days of the catastrophe which made her a widow.

The children of Malcolm Canmore and Margaret Atheling, when thus deprived of both parents, were in no enviable plight. The courtiers, being for the most part Normans and Saxons, were regarded and hated by the Scots as strangers or foreigners; and the only man capable of protecting the royal children was their uncle, Donald Bane. But that prince proved the reverse of generous. Instead of maintaining the interests of the eldest of his nephews, he resolved on availing himself of his nephew's nonage to seize the crown.

It was not difficult for Donald Bane to realize his aspirations. The prejudices of the Scots as to the laws of succession, and the claims of Magnus, King of Norway, were in his favour. Without scruple he gratified the

patriotism of the Scots by declaring for the banishment of all Normans and Saxons; and at the same time he purchased the support of the Norwegian king by ceding to him the Western Isles. Having thus strengthened his claims, Donald Bane mounted the Scottish throne.

When affairs reached this stage, the Normans and Saxons escaped from Scotland with all convenient speed. With Normans and Saxons to England went Edgar Atheling; and with Atheling, to the country over which his sires had reigned, went the children of Malcolm and Margaret, to seek refuge in the land of their maternal ancestors till the occurrence of events calculated to lead to their restoration to home and country.



Tynemouth.

XLIX.



ROBERT DE MOUBRAY

About the spring of 1095, William Rufus was menaced with ruin. It was Robert de Moubray, Earl of Northumberland—a man who possessed two hundred and eighty manors—whose influence the Red King now had to dread.

Not without bitter grumbling had the Norman barons hitherto submitted to the law by which the Norman king retained the exclusive right of hunting in the forests of England. Nevertheless, this privilege was maintained by Rufus as vigorously as ever it had been by the mighty Conqueror. The Saxons contemptuously called him "The Wild Beast Herd," while the Normans conspired to take off his crown, and place it on the head of Stephen, Earl of Albemarle, son of the Conqueror's sister. At the head of this conspiracy, which included several of the highest Norman nobles, Robert de Moubray nobly placed himself.

Rufus was not altogether unaware of the conspiracy formed by the Anglo-Norman barons to overturn the throne. Indeed, Moubray drew suspicion on himself by failing to appear at court on the occasion of a great assembly of knights and barons at Easter. In order to bring matters to a crisis, Rufus issued a proclamation that, at the feast of Whitsuntide, every great landholder should attend, or be excluded from the public peace. Moubray, instead of presenting himself, sent Rufus a message, which sounded like a defiance.

"I will not attend," said the Norman earl, "unless the king sends me hostages, and a safe-conduct to protect me going and returning."

"By St. Luke's face!" cried Rufus, stammering with rage, "if he will not come to me, I will go to him!"

According to this threat, the Red King mustered an army and marched northward. Besieging the castle of Tynemouth, which was held by a garrison commanded by Moubray's brother, he, after two months, took that fortress, and then marched on to Bamburgh, where Moubray was spending his time in the company of a young woman of great beauty, whom he had recently married. But Rufus, discovering that Bamburgh was

quite impregnable, erected near it a stronghold called Malvoisin, or "Ill Neighbour," and, placing therein a strong garrison to keep that of Bamburgh in check, returned southward with the bulk of his army.

Meanwhile Moubray had established communications with the garrison of Newcastle, and conceived the hope of making himself master of that stronghold. With this object, he one night set out from Bamburgh, attended by thirty horse; but, unfortunately for his scheme, he was observed by the garrison of Malvoisin, closely pursued, and forced to take refuge in the priory of Tynemouth. At that place, after being besieged and wounded in the leg, he was taken prisoner with his comrades.

Rufus, on hearing of Moubray's capture, sent orders to secure Bamburgh without delay. But this was no easy business. The garrison, under the auspices of Moubray's young countess, and Hammond Morael—that warrior who had slain Malcolm Canmore—proved as stubborn as ever, and the besiegers were well-nigh in despair. Rufus, however, was not to be baffled by a woman.

"Carry her husband before the castle," he cried, "and let his eyes be put out if it is not immediately surrendered."

The king's orders were promptly obeyed. The soldiers left by Rufus at Malvoisin led Moubray in chains before the castle of Bamburgh, and summoned the countess to a parley. No sooner did she appear than they intimated their intention of putting out Moubray's eyes unless she instantly yielded the castle. The fair countess could not hesitate; without delay she threw the keys over the walls; and the soldiers of Rufus entering, took all prisoners. Morael, however, earned his pardon by revealing the names of all the conspirators; and Moubray, sentenced to perpetual imprisonment, was conveyed to the castle of Windsor.

After long captivity, however, Moubray was permitted to retire to the Abbey of St. Alban's. In that great religious house, the once haughty Earl of Northumberland assumed the monastic habit, and became a meek shaveling. He appears to have survived his unfortunate rebellion fully thirty years.

"You must know," says the chronicler, "that Robert de Moubray, the brave knight and Earl of Northumberland, was deprived of sight some days before he died. He was a very old man, and devoted to God, and became a monk at St. Alban's, where, after living a holy life for some time, he departed to the Lord, and was honourably buried in a place not far from the chapter-house."

L.



Hawking.

HENRY BEAUCLERC.

At the time when Rufus became King of England, and Curthose took possession of Normandy, Henry, third son of the Conqueror, was in his twentieth year. Both in personal appearance and intellectual capacity he was decidedly superior to his brothers. He was a princely personage, of tall stature, and firmly built, with brown hair, a brilliant complexion, and clear, penetrating eyes, thoughtful rather than dreamy, which ever seemed to be looking to the future. He thought much, but spoke little, for his mind was occupied with projects of ambition, which he would not have whispered even to the winds.

Henry had the advantage of being a native of England. It was at Selby, in Yorkshire, where an abbey was afterwards founded by the Conqueror, that Matilda of Flanders, during 1068, the first year of her residence in England, became the mother of her third son. But though a native of "the proud isle of liberty," Henry can hardly be described as an Englishman. His manners were foreign; his habits were those of a Norman; and it does not appear that he could even speak the English language. But he never failed, when such was his interest, to profess ardent love for his native land, and strong sympathy with the struggles of those who were its inhabitants.

In critical moods, William the Conqueror was in the habit of repeating a phrase of one of the old counts of Anjou, as to a king without learning being a crowned ass; and the words sank deep into Henry's mind. The prince, thus strongly impressed with the necessity of acquiring knowledge, exhibited exemplary diligence; and, in 1084, William, when keeping his court at Abingdon, left him under the care of Robert D'Oyly, to be educated by the monks. Subsequently Henry was instructed beyond seas in philosophy and the liberal sciences, and won such renown for his knowledge that he was distinguished by the honourable surname of Beauclerc.

Meanwhile, Henry's military education was not neglected. It was an age, as the grim Conqueror knew full well, in which no prince could hope to prosper who was not prepared to lead fighting men to the field, and ride boldly, through all dangers, into the thickest ranks of foemen. Henry was carefully trained in all the warlike exercises of the period; and, in 1086, he was, with the ceremonies befitting his rank, admitted to the honour of knighthood.

The accomplishments of Henry were not confined to arms and letters. The scene at Laigle, when he and Rufus were playing at dice, after the fashion of soldiers at the time of the Conquest—the scene at Conflans, when he won so much money from Prince Louis that the heir of France lost his temper—lead to the suspicion that Henry was addicted to gaming; and there is evidence that his success in playing for money, if not miraculous, was quite equal to his success in playing for kingdoms and crowns.

When the Conqueror, on his death-bed, left Beauclerc five thousand pounds in white silver, and gave the assurance that, after his brothers had their turn of sovereignty, his would certainly come, Beauclerc, who probably valued the legacy more than the assurance, hastened to secure the treasure. He immediately went to receive the money, had it carefully told and weighed, packed it in chests, strongly locked, and bound with iron. But the silver did not long remain in the strong boxes. Curthose came to Normandy poor, and eager to borrow from any one who would lend on any terms; and Beauclerc was not unwilling to advance on good security. A bargain was accordingly struck between the brothers. Curthose received a sum which gladdened his heart; and Beauclerc, in consideration thereof, took possession of that part of Normandy known as Cotentin.

One morning, when Beauclerc was hunting near Caen, he entered a church to hear mass. The priest, whose name was Roger, comprehending the taste, and consulting the convenience of his visitor, made the service so brief that Beauclerc was impressed with a high admiration of his sense.

"By Heavens!" he exclaimed, "this is the most sensible priest I ever knew. I must attach him to my fortunes."

Roger, who evinced no unwillingness, immediately became Beauclerc's chaplain, and lived to flourish as Bishop of Sarum, and first minister of England.

Beauclerc was figuring as lord of Cotentin, when, in 1090, Rufus invaded Normandy, and threatened Curthose with ruin. The circumstance, doubtless, caused him alarm, and interfered with his plans. With a keen eye to his own interest, however, he took part with Curthose, and exerted himself to prevent Rufus taking possession of the duchy.

It appears that, when the Red King seemed likely to conquer, some of the inhabitants of Rouen, influenced by threats, promises, and bribes, conspired to surrender the city. Beauclerc, informed of their scheme, resolved to baffle it; and, suddenly entering Rouen, he proceeded to a tower, where the chief conspirator was, and, throwing him headlong to the ground, caused such terror among the confederates that the city was saved. But Curthose soon after came to terms with the invader; and Rufus was in no mood to spare the man who had disappointed his hopes of complete success.

Not unaware of his danger, Beauclerc threw himself into Mont St. Michael, and in that fort, situated on a rock, determined to bid the Red King defiance. Rufus, however, induced Curthose to join in bringing Beauclerc to submission; and the two princes, with a powerful army, appeared at Mont St. Michael, and commenced a close siege.

For a time Beauclerc seems to have resisted bravely, and on one occasion the Red King was in the utmost peril of death or captivity. Riding carelessly along the shore one day, Rufus was attacked by three horsemen, who bore him to the ground, and his saddle with him. He was, of course, in extreme danger. But seizing his saddle in one hand, and drawing his sword with the other, he managed to defend himself till his soldiers came to the rescue.

"O king!" exclaimed the soldiers, "how could you be so obstinate to save a saddle?"

"Nay," cried Rufus, "it would have angered me at the very heart if the knaves could have bragged they had won my saddle from me."

Meanwhile, the siege was so closely pressed that provisions ran short, and every man in the fort was suffering from the want of fresh water. Beauclerc, however, sent a messenger to beseech the besiegers not to deny him the enjoyment of that which belonged to all men; and Curthose, touched with compassion, ordered that the garrison should be allowed to take in a supply. Rufus, who, when this occurred, was possibly on the shore fighting about his saddle, was highly enraged on hearing of this permission, and took Curthose to task in no courteous terms.

"You show your warlike skill," stammered the Red King, "in letting your enemy help himself to drink. By St. Luke's face! you have now only to supply him with meat to make him hold out for twelve months."

"And how," asked Curthose, "could I leave a brother to die of thirst? What other brother have we if we lose him?"

Notwithstanding the supply of fresh water, Beauclerc could not much longer hold out. After enduring a rigorous siege he was compelled, for want of provisions, to submit to fate. Rufus despoiled him of all he possessed, and it was with difficulty he obtained leave to depart to Brittany. His escort consisted of one knight, three squires, and a chaplain; and with these adherents, who either disdained to desert him in his distress, or felt strong faith in his destiny, Beauclerc wandered about, sometimes in want of the necessaries of life, and utterly hopeless of reaching any place that could be called a home.

But genius is generally prophetic; and Beauclerc scarcely required to recall his father's dying words to feel assured that he was yet to reign in the land of his birth, and over the land he had just quitted for poverty and exile. The consciousness that he was one day to be great gave the Conqueror's son a dignity in all that he said or did. Even as a vagrant, Beauclerc was an influential personage; and he impressed strangers with so high a notion of his talents and his political wisdom, that he was, ere long, elected by the people of Damfront as governor of their city.

It happened, however, that Beauclerc was soon tempted from the government of Damfront. His high reputation for intellect and decision filled the mind of Rufus with jealousy, and the Red King, deeming, perhaps, that his gifted brother would be much less likely to work mischief under his own eye than when rambling about Europe and ready to head any movement promising a change of fortune, expressed his desire for a reconciliation. Beauclerc, who perfectly comprehended the motives of Rufus, calculated his chances, and, trusting to the chapter of accidents, came to England.

Beauclerc now suffered all the inconveniences likely, in the eleventh century, to surround a prince without land and without money. Even for abilities he got no credit; he was sneered at as "having little in him." He was fond of the chase; and, having no horses, he was forced when hunting to follow the game on foot, but such was his speed that the courtiers of the Red King surnamed him "Deersfoot." Beauclerc,

however, bore all inconveniences and taunts with patience; perhaps, remembering the paternal assurance that, after his brothers', his turn would surely come, he hoped he might, by patience, conquer adversity. If so, he was not doomed to disappointment. It has been remarked that generally there is in human affairs an extreme point of depression, from which they naturally ascend in an opposite direction; and Beauclerc's case was not to prove any exception to the general rule.



Woman with distaff

LI.



Bringing home the body of Rufus

THE DEATH OF RUFUS.

On the evening of Wednesday, the 1st of August, 1100, William Rufus, intent on chasing the deer of the New Forest, stretched his limbs to rest in the hunting-seat that then crowned the height of Malwood.

At dead of night, a loud voice roused the royal household from repose; and the officers, starting to their feet to listen, with surprise heard the king invoking the aid of the Virgin Mary, and calling for lights in his chamber. On entering, they learned that his rest had been disturbed by a fearful vision, in which he himself figured with the veins of his arms broken and blood flowing in streams. Such was the effect produced on the King's imagination, that he would not allow them to leave the side of his couch till the sun rose, and the light of day streamed into the chamber.

Nevertheless, on the morning of Thursday, a grand breakfast was spread in the hall of the hunting-seat, and Rufus rose to indulge in the good cheer. As he was dressing, however, a messenger arrived with a

despatch from the Norman Abbot of Gloucester, warning the king that danger was at hand.

"One of my monks," said the abbot, "has had a dream of evil omen. He has seen Jesus Christ seated on His throne, and at His feet a woman supplicating Him in these words—'Saviour of the world, look down with pity upon this people, who suffer under the yoke of William.'"

"Tush!" cried Rufus, breaking into a loud laugh; "do they take me for a Saxon with their dreams? Do they think I am one of the idiots who tremble because an old woman sneezes? But I warrant the monk would have something for his dream. Let him have a hundred shillings, and bid him look that he dream more auspicious dreams in future."

With these words, Rufus tied his shoes, left his chamber, and seated himself at table with his friends around him. It was a gay party that feasted that morning in the hunting-lodge of Malwood, and included many personages of high degree. Among them were the king's brother, Henry Beauclerc; his bosom friend, Walter Tyrel; his bow-bearer, Nigel de Albini; his treasurer, William de Breteuil, who was eldest son of the great Fitzosborne, and hardly less proud than his father had been. Perhaps Rufus, with the scene of the previous night preying on his mind, felt unwontedly depressed. At all events, he ate more than usual, and drank copiously, as if to banish sadness. The potations, of course, soon took effect. The king's spirits rose. He blustered and swore with characteristic indecency.

While Rufus was still passing round the wine-cup, an artificer brought him six arrows for cross-bows, which seemed so sharp and strong as to excite much admiration. The king received the arrows, praised the workmanship, took four for his own use, and handed the others to Walter Tyrel.

"There, Tyrel," said he, "take two; for you know how to shoot to some purpose. Sharp arrows for the best shot! And now to horse!"

The king and the Norman knights, excited with wine, strung their hunting-horns round their necks, called for their horses, sprang into their saddles, and with huntsmen in attendance, their hounds running at their feet, rode down the steep of Malwood, and entered the New Forest. According to the custom of the period, they then dispersed through the wood to pursue the game. Walter Tyrel, however, remained with the king, and all day their dogs hunted together.

At length, as the sun was setting, the king and the knight found themselves at a place known as Charingham, where were the ruins of a chapel which the Conqueror had dismantled. At that instant, a large hart, roused by the huntsmen, came bounding up between Rufus and Tyrel, who were on opposite sides of the glade. The king instantly pulled his trigger; but, the cord of the cross-bow breaking, the arrow did not fly. The stag, however, hearing a sharp sound, halted abruptly; and Rufus, after making a sign to his comrade to shoot, without being understood, cried out impatiently—

"Shoot, Walter, shoot, in the devil's name!"

The knight bent his bow, and at that instant an arrow, whistling through the air, pierced the king's breast. In another moment he dropped from his horse, and expired without having time to utter a word.

When Rufus fell to the ground, Tyrel, in great alarm at what he saw, leaped from his horse and rushed forward. But the king was already a corpse. Perceiving that life was quite extinct, Tyrel sprang upon his horse, spurred through the glade, rode hastily to the coast, embarked for France, and soon set foot on continental soil. Protesting his innocence, but horrified at being suspected of killing a king, even by accident, the knight afterwards went to Palestine.

A rumour that the king was killed ran through the forest; but none of the knights or nobles deemed it their duty to pay any attention to the corpse. For hours the body remained among the rank grass that grew over the ruins of the chapel of Charingham, as completely abandoned as that of the Conqueror had been in the convent at Rouen.

However, as the evening advanced, a charcoal-burner, passing by with his cart, observed the body pierced with an arrow, and recognised it as that of the king. More humane and considerate than Norman knights and nobles, the charcoal-burner wrapped the corpse in rags, placed it in his cart, and conveyed it to the castle of Winchester. Soon after, Rufus was buried in the choir of that cathedral, where Anglo-Saxon kings and their Danish foes reposed in peace together. Scarcely a tear, however, was shed over the grave of the Red King. The Anglo-Normans felt no grief at his death, and the Anglo-Saxons openly rejoiced that the destroyer had struck down their oppressor in the midst of his pride.





A CHANGE OF FORTUNE.

When a rumour ran through the New Forest that Rufus had fallen, never again to rise, Henry Beauclerc, far from manifesting any excessive grief at the death of his rude brother, sprang upon his horse—which was probably a borrowed one—and, with a resolution to turn the circumstance to the best account, spurred off to Winchester, to secure the royal treasure, as a preliminary step to seizing the crown.

On reaching Winchester, Beauclerc rode straight to the castle, and demanded the keys of the treasury; but, while the officials were still hesitating, William de Breteuil galloped up breathless and in haste, and, in his capacity of treasurer, protested against the keys being surrendered.

"Thou and I," he said to Beauclerc, "ought loyally to remember the fealty we swore to the Duke Robert, thy brother. He has received our homage, and, absent or present, he is entitled to the crown."

"Nevertheless," answered Beauclerc, who observed that the populace had gathered, "no man shall have possession of the crown of England but whom the people appoint."

As he spoke these words, Beauclerc, seeing it was no time to be squeamish, drew his sword, and a scuffle ensued. But it was not serious. Indeed, Breteuil and other lords, seeing the mob on Henry's side, deemed it prudent to retire; while he secured the public money and the regal ornaments. Hastening then to London, and gaining the support of the bishop, he was elected as king, and solemnly crowned before the high altar in the abbey of Westminster.

Nevertheless, many of the Anglo-Norman barons continued faithful to the cause of Curthose, and prepared to support his claims to the crown. But Beauclerc was not a man to surrender, without a struggle, the prize he had so boldly grasped. Feeling his insecurity, he determined on adopting measures of safety. He set himself to win the hearts and to secure the aid of the Saxons; he reminded them of his being a native of the country, and promised, as their king, to guide himself by their counsel, to maintain their ancient liberties, and to grant them a charter confirming the laws in force during the reign of Edward the Confessor. The Saxons, on hearing Beauclerc's promises, consented to befriend him; and he, to consolidate the alliance, engaged to marry a woman of Saxon race.

At that time there was in the convent of Rumsey, in Hampshire, where she had been educated under the care of her aunt Christina, a daughter of Malcolm Canmore and of Margaret Atheling. The hand of the princess, whose name was Edith, had been sought by Norman lords of high rank; and Beauclerc and she had loved in other days. But a somewhat serious objection was made to their union. It was said that she had taken the veil of a nun. An inquiry, however, was instituted, and it appeared that she had never been consecrated to God.

"I must confess," she said, "that I have sometimes appeared veiled, but only for this reason: in my youth, when I was under the care of my aunt Christina, she, to protect me, as she said, from the Normans—who then assailed the honour of every woman they met—used to place a piece of black stuff on my head; and when I refused to wear it, she treated me harshly. In her presence I wore this cloth, but as soon as she left me I threw it on the ground, and trampled on it in childish anger."

In order, however, that the position of Edith might be formally investigated, an assembly of clergy and lay lords was convoked at Rochester, and this assembly decided that "the girl was free to marry." Accordingly she was united to Beauclerc, and exchanged her name of Edith for that of Maude. Even envy itself could not discover a flaw in her conduct as wife; but it is said that the Anglo-Norman barons favourable to Curthose affected to regard Henry's marriage with a princess in whose veins ran the blood of the vanquished race as a *mésalliance*, and, in derision, nicknamed the regal pair Godrick and Godiva. Beauclerc, perhaps, did not relish the joke, but, like a man of sense, he laughed at the allusion.

In fact, Henry had more serious business to think of, for the partisans of his brother were watching their opportunity, and only awaiting the presence of Curthose to do their utmost to overturn Beauclerc's throne. And where, in reality, had that eccentric son of chivalry been at the time of the crisis of his fate? Had he been carried away to Fairyland, between death and life, like King Arthur, or borne to another region on the backs of fiends, like his grandsire, Robert the Devil? In order to ascertain his "whereabouts," we must follow his steps on an expedition which at that time excited universal interest, and which was destined to exercise no slight influence on the destinies of Europe and of Asia.



LIII.



Peter the Hermit preaching the first Crusade

CURTHOSE AT THE CRUSADE.

In the autumn of 1095, a little man, of mean aspect and eccentric manners, arrayed in a coarse woollen mantle, and mounted on a mule, rode about Europe, exhorting Christians to arm for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre. Sometimes he preached in a church, or at the market-cross; at others, under a tree by the wayside; and wherever he went people crowded round him, hung on his eloquent words, and seemed delighted if they could touch the hem of his mantle, or pluck a hair from the mane of his mule. This remarkable man was known as Peter the Hermit, who had recently visited Jerusalem as a pilgrim, and vowed to deliver the Holy Land from the domination of the Turks.

The preaching of Peter the Hermit was marvellously successful. Peasant and peer alike confessed the grandeur of his idea; and, as the conquest of England by the Normans had inspired feudal warriors with a desire for adventurous enterprise, multitudes expressed their willingness to take part in a crusade. Many men of princely rank, among whom the chief was Godfrey de Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine, assumed the cross, alienated their possessions, and mustered armies to fight in Palestine. At length the idea which was agitating all Christendom, penetrating to the castle of Rouen, excited the ardent imagination of Robert Curthose, and stirred the somewhat sluggish blood of Edgar Atheling.

Both princes resolved to take part in the Holy War. But a serious obstacle presented itself. Money was necessary, and neither the heir of the Conqueror nor the heir of the Saxon kings had the means of defraying their expenses. The difficulty, however, was overcome. Rufus, who was glad to hear of his brother's wish to leave Europe, agreed to furnish ten thousand marks on condition of being put in possession of Normandy for five years; and Curthose, having received the sum, made his preparations, and set up his white banner embroidered with gold.

In spite of his faults, few men of that period were more popular than the Norman duke; and, eager to fight under a chief so brave and generous, a goodly band of warriors, led by feudal barons of great name, came around his standard. Aubrey de Vere, Everard Percy, Girard Gourney, Conan Montacute, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and Stephen, Earl of Albemarle, were among those who attended the Conqueror's heir. Edgar Atheling, who was on the point of setting out for Scotland to dethrone Donald Bane, and seat his youthful nephew on the Scottish throne, did not accompany his friend. But he promised to join Curthose in the Holy Land, with a host of Saxons, which he was about to lead against the Scottish usurper.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre Jerusalem

Meanwhile, Curthose, at the head of his army, and attended by his chaplain, Arnold de Rohés, made his way eastward, met the pious Godfrey de Bouillon, and other pilgrim-princes, under the walls of Constantinople, and, after causing much alarm to the Emperor Alexis, crossed the Bosphorus, and marched towards Nice.



Curthose and the Saracen

No sooner was Curthose on Asiatic soil than his valour and prowess excited general admiration. At the siege of Nice he repelled the fierce onset of the Sultan's cavalry; at the battle of Dogorgan he performed prodigies of valour, made the most magnificent charge of the day, spurring into the midst of the foe, with his banner flying and his sword flashing, and cutting down three Emirs with his own hand; at Antioch he led the van of the Crusaders, seized the bridge, defended by towers masked with iron, and during one of the subsequent skirmishes when fiercely attacked by a gigantic Saracen, who figured as chief in command, he cleft him with his battle-axe from crown to chest.



Pilgrims in sight of Jerusalem.

"Pagan dog!" exclaimed Curthose, as the Saracen fell lifeless to the ground; "I devote thy impure soul to the powers of hell."

At Laodicea, Curthose was joined by Edgar Atheling. Faithful to his promise, the Saxon prince, after seating his nephew on the Scottish throne, brought the flower of the Saxon race to fight for the Holy Sepulchre. Side by side, like brothers, Curthose and Atheling marched to Jerusalem; side by side they fought at the siege of the Holy City; and side by side, in the hour of victory, they scaled the walls, Saracens bearing back in terror before the Norman's falchion and the Saxon's axe.



Godfrey de Bouillon elected King of Jerusalem

After taking possession of Jerusalem, the Crusaders assembled for the purpose of electing a king; and it is

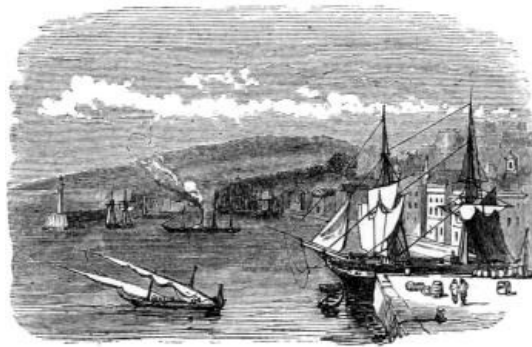
understood that Curthose might, if he had chosen, worn the crown of Jerusalem. However, Curthose declined the high honour, which fell to the lot of Godfrey de Bouillon; and, after taking part in the battle of Ascalon, where, at the head of the European cavalry, he broke the Saracens' ranks, penetrated to their centre, and seized the Moslem standard, he left the Holy Land, and returned to Europe.

When Curthose was at Palermo, on his way home, Odo of Bayeux breathed his last. The Norman duke, having buried his uncle in St. Mary's Church, pursued his way, and found himself quite at home among the Normans, whose families had been settled by warlike adventurers in Southern Italy. All these Norman warriors treated the heir of the great William with high honour; and all their daughters manifested interest in a hero who had won such fame as a Champion of the Cross. But of all the Normans of Southern Italy, none showed Curthose so much hospitality as William, Count of Conversano, a kinsman of the Guiscards, founders of the Norman dynasty in Naples.

The Count of Conversano was the most powerful lord in Lower Apulia. His possessions extended along the shores of the Adriatic, from Otranto to Bari. His castle was situated on an eminence, amid olive groves, and was replete with all those means for rendering life pleasant which the feudal system brought into existence. Curthose thought Conversano a terrestrial paradise, and was delighted with his host's fine hounds, choice hawks, and mettled steeds; but, above all, he was delighted, charmed, and fascinated with his host's daughter, Sybil, who was still in her teens, and as beautiful as she was young.

It could not be concealed that Curthose was verging on fifty, and that Sybil was just seventeen. But that was no conclusive objection to a match. In fact, such fame as that of a Crusader, and such rank as Duke of Normandy, were strong recommendations; so, when Curthose told his enamoured tale, Sybil smiled on her lover; and, ere long, the daughter of the Count of Conversano was led to the altar, and became Duchess of Normandy.

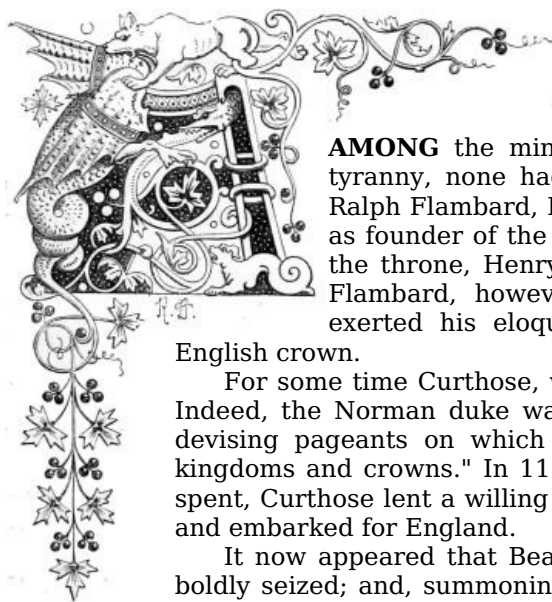
Even after his marriage Curthose found himself too comfortable to move. Perhaps he was averse to change the splendour of Conversano for the irksome poverty of Rouen. At all events he lingered in the scene of his courtship, and among the olive groves on the shores of the Adriatic wasted months, which, if judiciously spent, might have secured him a duchy and assured him a crown.



Trieste.

LIV.

BEAUCLERC AND CURTHOSE.



AMONG the ministers who enjoyed the favour of Rufus, and ministered to his tyranny, none had rendered himself more odious to the people of England than Ralph Flambard, Bishop of Durham, known as "the fighting bishop," and celebrated as founder of the castle of Norham-on-Tweed. Immediately on taking possession of the throne, Henry caused Flambard to be arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. Flambard, however, contrived to escape; and, passing over to Normandy, he exerted his eloquence to persuade Curthose to invade England and seize the

English crown.

For some time Curthose, who had just arrived from Italy with his bride, remained inactive. Indeed, the Norman duke was so much occupied with showing off Sybil of Conversano, and devising pageants on which to squander her fortune, that he had no leisure "to play for kingdoms and crowns." In 1102, however, when the young duchess was dead, and her money spent, Curthose lent a willing ear to the tempter, roused himself to energy, made preparations, and embarked for England.

It now appeared that Beauclerc would have to fight desperately for the throne he had so boldly seized; and, summoning the Saxons, he marched to Pevensey, where he anticipated his brother would land. Curthose, however, landed at Portsmouth. But the brothers gradually approached each other, and a sanguinary conflict appeared inevitable. Ere Beauclerc and Curthose met, however, the quarrel had been adjusted. Instead of a bloody battle there was a hurried treaty. Curthose, who was in want of money, sold what he deemed his birthright for an annual pension of three thousand marks; and the brothers embraced with all the semblance of genuine affection.

Returning to Normandy, Curthose scrupulously maintained the treaty. Nevertheless, to his surprise, he found that his pension was not regularly paid. Feeling, no doubt, extreme inconvenience from the circumstance, he paid a visit to England to make arrangements for regularity in future. But, ere this, the

Norman duke had yielded to the temptation of indulging too frequently in the wine-cup, and, when at Beauclerc's court, he was often drunk for days together. On such occasions, of course, nothing was too absurd for him to consent to; and one night, when intoxicated, he was easily prevailed on to resign his annual pension in favour of the queen, who was his goddaughter. On recovering possession of his faculties, and becoming aware of the advantage taken of him while under the influence of wine, he expressed high indignation, and, much exasperated, returned to Normandy.

By this time the castle of Rouen was the most miserable of ducal palaces, and Normandy was the most wretched of duchies. Poverty reigned in the palace; disorder prevailed in the duchy. While Curthose, for want of fitting raiment, lay in bed for days, Robert de Belesme, Earl of Shrewsbury, whom Beauclerc had exiled from England, ravaged Normandy at his pleasure; and matters soon reached such a stage that the Norman nobles entreated the King of England to interfere. Beauclerc, who only wanted an excuse, received their message with gladness, and, by way of settling affairs, proposed to purchase the duchy.

"Thou hast the title of lord," he said, addressing Curthose, "but thou art no longer a lord in reality; for they scorn, who should obey thee. Yield to me thy duchy, and I will give thee money."

Curthose declined the proposal with disdain; and Beauclerc, having prepared to take Normandy by force of arms, fitted out an armament, and soon appeared on continental soil with a determination to conquer. For a time, however, Beauclerc and Curthose proceeded with caution, and not till the autumn of 1106 did they put their fortunes to the chance of a decisive engagement.

It was Friday, the 28th of September—the vigil of St. Michael, and just forty years after William the Conqueror had landed at Pevensey; and Beauclerc, with a great army, was besieging the castle of Tinchebray, situated about three leagues from the town of Mortain. Curthose, however, having promised speedy relief, the garrison made a brave defence; and the Norman duke, having allied himself with De Belesme, came to redeem his pledge, accompanied by Edgar Atheling, who by his side had fought so gallantly beneath the Cross in Palestine.

On learning that a hostile force was approaching, Beauclerc turned to give battle; and the trumpets having sounded an onset, Curthose began the conflict by a charge so hot, that for a time the English were thrown into confusion. Bearing down all opposition, William Crispin, Count d'Evreux, fought his way to the English standard, and dealt the king so violent a blow on the head that blood gushed from his mouth. Beauclerc, indeed, was in extreme peril, and his army in danger of being scattered in dismay. At a critical moment, however, a cry of "Treason!" arose to turn the fortunes of the day; and De Belesme was observed leading away his men, and basely deserting his allies.

While Curthose and his friends were still under the influence of surprise and indignation, Beauclerc recovered himself, and, showing himself to his army, encouraged them by words and gestures to encounter the foe, weakened by desertion. But meanwhile Curthose, rallying his broken forces, made another onset; and never in his younger days, neither on the plain of Antioch nor on the plain of Archembrage, had his courage and prowess been more conspicuous. Foe after foe went down before his weapon, and it seemed for a moment that his single arm was about to retrieve the day.

At Beauclerc's side, however, was Nigel de Albini, a Norman warrior, who, more than thirty years earlier, marched with the Conqueror on the terrible expedition into Northumberland, and who had since figured as bow-bearer to Rufus. For a captain who had faced the tall Danes of Northumberland even the prowess of the bravest champion of the Cross had no terrors; and Albini followed Curthose through the battle as keenly as he had ever chased a stag in the New Forest. At length, availing himself of an opportunity, he killed the duke's horse, and found the redoubted Crusader at his mercy. At that moment forward rushed Ealdric, the king's chaplain, by whom Curthose was disentangled from his prostrate steed, and conducted to his victorious brother. With Curthose were captured several men of high rank, the most distinguished of whom was his friend Edgar Atheling, who, by some strange destiny, was ever leagued with the unfortunate.

The captive princes were forthwith conveyed to England. Curthose was committed as a prisoner to the castle at Cardiff. Atheling was allowed to go at large, having no longer sufficient influence to endanger the king's throne. The captors, meanwhile, were well rewarded—Nigel de Albini having a grant of the lands forfeited by the great Robert de Moubray; while Ealdric, the king's chaplain, was promoted to the bishopric of Llandaff.

At first Curthose was indulged with some measure of freedom, and allowed to walk along the banks of the Severn. For a time he seemed content with his lot. One day, however, his old spirit of adventure seized him, and, leaping on a horse, he broke from his keepers, and rode off at full speed. Unfortunately for him, his horse floundered in a morass, and having been secured, he was subjected to a rigorous durance. Some even say his eyes were put out. But, however that may have been, he remained in his prison at Cardiff till 1135, and then dying, was laid at rest in the cathedral of Gloucester, where his tomb is still to be seen.

Edgar Atheling long survived his comrade-in-arms. Indeed, the life of the Saxon prince far exceeded the term of years ordinarily allotted to mortal man. Well-nigh a century after the battle of Hastings, and his coronation as king, when the first of our Plantagenet sovereigns was on the English throne, Atheling was still alive in England, in full possession of his faculties, and probably telling old stories of the Norman Conquest, and the First Crusade, and of William the Norman, and Rufus, and Curthose, and Beauclerc, and a hundred other warriors and statesmen who had gone the way of all flesh, and who were known only by name to the generation amid which he found himself lingering out the last years of his strange and diversified career.



LV.



English Archers.

AFTER TINCHEBRAY.

When Curthose was defeated at Tinchebray and carried captive to the castle of Cardiff, the son whom he had been left by Sybil of Conversano was a little boy, known as William Clito. Not relishing the spectacle of so ambitious a prince as Henry Beauclerc figuring at once as King of England and Duke of Normandy, Louis, King of France—he who, in his earlier years, had quarrelled with the Conqueror's sons over their game of chess at Conflans—supported the pretensions of the son of Robert, and formed a league, with the object of putting him in possession of the duchy which Rolfanger had wrested from Charles the Simple. This, however, proved a much more difficult matter than Louis had anticipated. In fact, Beauclerc exerted himself with such effect that all efforts to diminish his power proved vain; and when, in 1132, William Clito, who had been invested with the earldom of Flanders, died of a wound received while besieging Alost, Louis gave up the struggle in despair.

Meanwhile, Beauclerc had not improved his reputation in the country where he reigned as king. He had been faithless at once to the Saxon people who had placed him on the throne, and to the Saxon princess who, for the sake of her race, had, somewhat against her inclination, united her fate with his. Every promise made to the English had been so unscrupulously violated, that they began to speak of royalty as synonymous with crime; and Maude died with the melancholy reflection that she had sacrificed herself for her race in vain.

Ere "the good queen" was laid at rest in the cathedral of Winchester, she made Henry father of two children—a son, William Atheling, who married a daughter of the Count of Anjou, and a daughter, Matilda, wife of Henry, Emperor of Germany. The son, however, was drowned while on his voyage from Normandy in a vessel called *The White Ship*; and the daughter, on the death of her imperial husband, returned to England a young and beautiful widow.

About that time, Fulke, Count of Anjou, bowed down with grief at the loss of his wife, undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to seek consolation at the Holy Sepulchre. Before going, Fulke gave Anjou to his eldest son, Geoffrey, who, from wearing a sprig of flowering broom in his hat instead of a feather, was surnamed Plantagenet. Being an accomplished and handsome prince, Geoffrey Plantagenet had the good fortune to secure the friendship of Henry Beauclerc and the hand of the Empress Matilda, who was expected to succeed, on her father's death, to the crown of England and the coronal of Normandy.

It was, however, otherwise ordered. When, in 1135, Henry Beauclerc, having eaten lampreys to excess—such is the story—breathed his last in Normandy, his martial nephew, Stephen of Bouillon, claimed the English crown, and seated himself on the throne. But Matilda was not the woman to submit tamely to exclusion under such circumstances; and a war of succession between her and Stephen was the consequence. A long and sanguinary struggle resulted, and continued, with varying success, till 1153, when it was agreed, by the treaty of Wallingford, that Stephen should be allowed to reign during his life, on condition of recognising young Henry Plantagenet, the son of Geoffrey and Matilda, as his heir. Next year, on the death of Stephen, Henry, who, by his marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine, had extended his continental dominions from the Channel to the Pyrenees, was crowned King of England in the cathedral of Winchester. From the first he seems to have been in high favour with the nation. In fact, the people, remembering that he derived his descent, through his grandmother, "the good queen Maude," from the ancient monarchs of England,

called him "the Saxon king," described him as the natural foe of the Norman nobles, and believed him favourable to such a system of laws as popular tradition ascribed to Edward the Confessor.

But the day for the rise of the vanquished race had not yet come. Nor was it, indeed, till more than a century later, when Simon de Montfort had fallen at Evesham, and the third Henry had gone to his grave, that the monarchy of the Plantagenets, having passed through that terrible struggle celebrated as the Barons' War, was enabled to emancipate itself, in some measure, from the trammels of feudalism, and associate its fortunes with the nation. It was then that the first Edward, already famous as the conqueror of Evesham, returned from romantic adventures and hair-breadth escapes in the East to rule England with justice and righteousness—to give prosperity to the country and protection to the people—to win, by his admirable laws, the title of the English Justinian; and, by his profound and patriotic policy, to unite hostile races into a nation capable of great achievements in war and peace.

THE END.

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