

Harold, Book 12. The Last Of The Saxon Kings

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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#111 in our series by Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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BOOK XII.

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

CHAPTER I.

In the heart of the forest land in which Hilda's abode was situated, a gloomy pool reflected upon its stagnant waters the still shadows of the autumnal foliage. As is common in ancient forests in the neighbourhood of men's wants, the trees were dwarfed in height by repeated loppings, and the boughs sprang from the hollow, gnarled boles of pollard oaks and beeches; the trunks, vast in girth, and covered with mosses and whitening canker-stains, or wreaths of ivy, spoke of the most remote antiquity: but the boughs which their lingering and mutilated life put forth, were either thin and feeble with innumerable branchlets, or were centred on some solitary distorted limb which the woodman's axe had spared. The trees thus assumed all manner of crooked, deformed, fantastic shapes--all betokening age, and all decay--all, in despite of the noiseless solitude around, proclaiming the waste and ravages of man.

The time was that of the first watches of night, when the autumnal moon was brightest and broadest. You might see, on the opposite side of the pool, the antlers of the deer every now and then, moving restlessly above the fern in which they had made their couch; and, through the nearer glades, the hares and conies stealing forth to sport or to feed; or the bat wheeling low, in chase of the forest moth. From the thickest part of the copse came a slow human foot, and Hilda, emerging, paused by the waters of the pool. That serene and stony calm habitual to her features was gone; sorrow and passion had seized the soul of the Vala, in the midst of its fancied security from the troubles it presumed to foresee for others. The lines of the face were deep and care-worn--age had come on with rapid strides--and the light of the eye was vague and unsettled, as if the lofty reason shook, terrified in its pride, at last.

"Alone, alone!" she murmured, half aloud: "yea, evermore alone! And the grandchild I had reared to be the mother of kings--whose fate, from the cradle, seemed linked with royalty and love--in whom, watching and hoping for, in whom, loving and heeding, methought I lived again the sweet human life--hath gone from my hearth--forsaken, broken-hearted--withering down to the grave under the shade of the barren cloister! Is mine heart, then, all a lie? Are the gods who led Odin from the Scythian East but the juggling fiends whom the craven Christian abhors? Lo! the Wine Month has come; a few nights more, and the sun which all prophecy foretold should go down on the

union of the icing and the maid, shall bring round the appointed day: yet Aldyth still lives, and Edith still withers; and War stands side by side with the Church, between the betrothed and the altar. Verily, verily, my spirit hath lost its power, and leaves me bowed, in the awe of night, a feeble, aged, hopeless, childless woman!"

Tears of human weakness rolled down the Vala's cheeks. At that moment, a laugh came from a thing that had seemed like the fallen trunk of a tree, or a trough in which the herdsman waters his cattle, so still, and shapeless, and undefined it had lain amongst the rank weeds and night-shade and trailing creepers on the marge of the pool, The laugh was low yet fearful to hear.

Slowly, the thing moved, and rose, and took the outline of a human form; and the Prophetess beheld the witch whose sleep she had disturbed by the Saxon's grave.

"Where is the banner?" said the witch, laying her hand on Hilda's arm, and looking into her face with bleared and rheumy eyes, "where is the banner thy handmaids were weaving for Harold the Earl? Why didst thou lay aside that labour of love for Harold the King? Hie thee home, and bid thy maidens ply all night at the work; make it potent with rune and with spell, and with gums of the seid. Take the banner to Harold the King as a marriage-gift; for the day of his birth shall be still the day of his nuptials with Edith the Fair!"

Hilda gazed on the hideous form before her; and so had her soul fallen from its arrogant pride of place, that instead of the scorn with which so foul a pretender to the Great Art had before inspired the King-born Prophetess, her veins tingled with credulous awe.

"Art thou a mortal like myself," she said after a pause, "or one of those beings often seen by the shepherd in mist and rain, driving before them their shadowy flocks? one of those of whom no man knoweth whether they are of earth or of Helheim? whether they have ever known the lot and conditions of flesh, or are but some dismal race between body and spirit, hateful alike to gods and to men?"

The dreadful hag shook her head, as if refusing to answer the question, and said:

"Sit we down, sit we down by the dead dull pool, and if thou wouldst be wise as I am, wake up all thy wrongs, fill thyself with hate, and let thy thoughts be curses. Nothing is strong on earth but the Will; and hate to the will is as the iron in the hands of the war-man."

"Ha!" answered Hilda, "then thou art indeed one of the loathsome brood whose magic is born, not of the aspiring soul, but the fiendlike heart. And between us there is no union. I am of the race of those whom priests and kings revered and honoured as the oracles of heaven; and rather let my lore be dimmed and weakened, in admitting the humanities of hope and love, than be lightened by the glare of the wrath that Lok and Rana bear the children of men."

"What, art thou so base and so doting," said the hag, with fierce contempt, "as to know that another has supplanted thine Edith, that all the schemes of thy life are undone, and yet feel no hate for the man who hath wronged her and thee?--the man who had never been king if thou hadst not breathed into him the ambition of rule? Think, and

curse!"

"My curse would wither the heart that is entwined within his," answered Hilda; "and," she added abruptly, as if eager to escape from her own impulses, "didst thou not tell me, even now, that the wrong would be redressed, and his betrothed yet be his bride on the appointed day?"

"Ha! home, then!--home! and weave the charmed woof of the banner, broider it with zimmes and with gold worthy the standard of a king; for I tell thee, that where that banner is planted, shall Edith clasp with bridal arms her adored. And the hwata thou hast read by the bautastein, and in the temple of the Briton's revengeful gods, shall be fulfilled."

"Dark daughter of Hela," said the Prophetess, "whether demon or god hath inspired thee, I hear in my spirit a voice that tells me thou hast pierced to a truth that my lore could not reach. Thou art houseless and poor; I will give wealth to thine age if thou wilt stand with me by the altar of Thor, and let thy galdra unriddle the secrets that have baffled mine own. All foreshown to me hath ever come to pass, but in a sense other than that in which my soul read the rune and the dream, the leaf and the fount, the star and the Scin-laeca. My husband slain in his youth; my daughter maddened with woe; her lord murdered on his hearthstone; Sweyn, whom I loved as my child,"--the Vala paused, contending against her own emotions,--"I loved them all," she faltered, clasping her hands, "for them I tasked the future. The future promised fair; I lured them to their doom, and when the doom came, lo! the promise was kept! but how?--and now, Edith, the last of my race; Harold, the pride of my pride!--speak, thing of Horror and Night, canst thou disentangle the web in which my soul struggles, weak as the fly in the spider's mesh?"

"On the third night from this, will I stand with thee by the altar of Thor, and unriddle the rede of my masters, unknown and unguessed, whom thou hadst duteously served. And ere the sun rise, the greatest mystery earth knows shall be bare to thy soul!"

As the witch spoke, a cloud passed over the moon; and before the light broke forth again, the hag had vanished. There was only seen in the dull pool, the water-rat swimming through the rank sedges; only in the forest, the grey wings of the owl, fluttering heavily across the glades; only in the grass, the red eyes of the bloated toad.

Then Hilda went slowly home, and the maids worked all night at the charmed banner. All that night, too, the watch-dogs howled in the yard, through the ruined peristyle--howled in rage and in fear. And under the lattice of the room in which the maids broidered the banner, and the Prophetess muttered her charm, there couched, muttering also, a dark, shapeless thing, at which those dogs howled in rage and in fear.

CHAPTER II.

All within the palace of Westminster showed the confusion and dismay

of the awful time;--all, at least, save the council-chamber, in which Harold, who had arrived the night before, conferred with his thegns. It was evening: the courtyards and the halls were filled with armed men, and almost with every hour came rider and bode from the Sussex shores. In the corridors the Churchmen grouped and whispered, as they had whispered and grouped in the day of King Edward's death. Stigand passed among them, pale and thoughtful. The serge gowns came rustling round the archprelate for counsel or courage.

"Shall we go forth with the King's army?" asked a young monk, bolder than the rest, "to animate the host with prayer and hymn?"

"Fool!" said the miserly prelate, "fool! if we do so, and the Norman conquer, what become of our abbacies and convent lands? The Duke wars against Harold, not England. If he slay Harold----"

"What then?"

"The Atheling is left us yet. Stay we here and guard the last prince of the House of Cerdic," whispered Stigand, and he swept on.

In the chamber in which Edward had breathed his last, his widowed Queen, with Aldyth, her successor, and Githa and some other ladies, waited the decision of the council. By one of the windows stood, clasping each other by the hand, the fair young bride of Gurth and the betrothed of the gay Leofwine. Githa sate alone, bowing her face over her hands--desolate; mourning for the fate of her traitor son; and the wounds, that the recent and holier death of Thyra had inflicted, bled afresh. And the holy lady of Edward attempted in vain, by pious adjurations, to comfort Aldyth, who, scarcely heeding her, started ever and anon with impatient terror, muttering to herself, "Shall I lose this crown too?"

In the council-hall debate waxed warm,--which was the wiser, to meet William at once in the battle-field, or to delay till all the forces Harold might expect (and which he had ordered to be levied, in his rapid march from York) could swell his host?

"If we retire before the enemy," said Gurth, "leaving him in a strange land, winter approaching, his forage will fail. He will scarce dare to march upon London: if he does, we shall be better prepared to encounter him. My voice is against resting all on a single battle."

"Is that thy choice?" said Vebba, indignantly. "Not so, I am sure, would have chosen thy father; not so think the Saxons of Kent. The Norman is laying waste all the lands of thy subjects, Lord Harold; living on plunder, as a robber, in the realm of King Alfred. Dost thou think that men will get better heart to fight for their country by hearing that their King shrinks from the danger?"

"Thou speakest well and wisely," said Haco; and all eyes turned to the young son of Sweyn, as to one who best knew the character of the hostile army and the skill of its chief. "We have now with us a force flushed with conquest over a foe hitherto deemed invincible. Men who have conquered the Norwegian will not shrink from the Norman. Victory depends upon ardour more than numbers. Every hour of delay damps the ardour. Are we sure that it will swell the numbers? What I dread most is not the sword of the Norman Duke, it is his craft. Rely upon it, that if we meet him not soon, he will march straight to London.

He will proclaim by the way that he comes not to seize the throne, but to punish Harold, and abide by the Witan, or, perchance, by the word of the Roman pontiff. The terror of his armament, unresisted, will spread like a panic through the land. Many will be decoyed by his false pretexts, many awed by a force that the King dare not meet. If he come in sight of the city, think you that merchants and cheapmen will not be daunted by the thought of pillage and sack? They will be the first to capitulate at the first house which is fired. The city is weak to guard against siege; its walls long neglected; and in sieges the Normans are famous. Are we so united (the King's rule thus fresh) but what no cabals, no dissensions will break out amongst ourselves? If the Duke come, as come he will, in the name of the Church, may not the Churchmen set up some new pretender to the crown--perchance the child Edgar? And, divided against ourselves, how ingloriously should we fall! Besides, this land, though never before have the links between province and province been drawn so close, hath yet demarcations that make the people selfish. The Northumbrians, I fear, will not stir to aid London, and Mercia will hold aloof from our peril. Grant that William once seize London, all England is broken up and dispirited; each shire, nay, each town, looking only to itself. Talk of delay as wearing out the strength of the foe! No, it would wear out our own. Little eno', I fear, is yet left in our treasury. If William seize London, that treasury is his, with all the wealth of our burgesses. How should we maintain an army, except by preying on the people, and thus discontenting them? Where guard that army? Where are our forts? where our mountains? The war of delay suits only a land of rock and defile, or of castle and breast-work. Thegns and warriors, ye have no castles but your breasts of mail. Abandon these, and you are lost."

A general murmur of applause closed this speech of Haco, which, while wise in arguments our historians have overlooked, came home to that noblest reason of brave men, which urges prompt resistance to foul invasion.

Up, then, rose King Harold.

"I thank you, fellow-Englishmen, for that applause with which ye have greeted mine own thoughts on the lips of Haco. Shall it be said that your King rushed to chase his own brother from the soil of outraged England, yet shrunk from the sword of the Norman stranger? Well indeed might my brave subjects desert my banner if it floated idly over these palace walls while the armed invader pitched his camp in the heart of England. By delay, William's force, whatever it might be, cannot grow less; his cause grows more strong in our craven fears. What his armament may be we rightly know not; the report varies with every messenger, swelling and lessening with the rumours of every hour. Have we not around us now our most stalwart veterans--the flower of our armies--the most eager spirits--the vanquishers of Hadrada? Thou sayest, Gurth, that all should not be perilled on a single battle. True. Harold should be perilled, but wherefore England? Grant that we win the day; the quicker our despatch, the greater our fame, the more lasting that peace at home and abroad which rests ever its best foundation on the sense of the power which wrong cannot provoke unchastised. Grant that we lose; a loss can be made gain by a king's brave death. Why should not our example rouse and unite all who survive us? Which the nobler example--the one best fitted to protect our country--the recreant backs of living chiefs, or the glorious dead with their fronts to the foe? Come what may, life

or death, at least we will thin the Norman numbers, and heap the barriers of our corpses on the Norman march. At least, we can show to the rest of England how men should defend their native land! And if, as I believe and pray, in every English breast beats a heart like Harold's, what matters though a king should fall?--Freedom is immortal."

He spoke; and forth from his baldric he drew his sword. Every blade, at that signal, leapt from the sheath: and, in that council-hall at least, in every breast beat the heart of Harold.

CHAPTER III.

The chiefs dispersed to array their troops for the morrow's march; but Harold and his kinsmen entered the chamber where the women waited the decision of the council, for that, in truth, was to them the parting interview. The King had resolved, after completing all his martial preparations, to pass the night in the Abbey of Waltham; and his brothers lodged, with the troops they commanded, in the city or its suburbs. Haco alone remained with that portion of the army quartered in and around the palace.

They entered the chamber, and in a moment each heart had sought its mate; in the mixed assembly each only conscious of the other. There, Gurth bowed his noble head over the weeping face of the young bride that for the last time nestled to his bosom. There, with a smiling lip, but tremulous voice, the gay Leofwine soothed and chided in a breath the maiden he had wooed as the partner for a life that his mirthful spirit made one holiday; snatching kisses from a cheek no longer coy.

But cold was the kiss which Harold pressed on the brow of Aldyth; and with something of disdain, and of bitter remembrance of a nobler love, he comforted a terror which sprang from the thought of self.

"Oh, Harold!" sobbed Aldyth, "be not rashly brave: guard thy life for my sake. Without thee, what am I? Is it even safe for me to rest here? Were it not better to fly to York, or seek refuge with Malcolm the Scot?"

"Within three days at the farthest," answered Harold, "thy brothers will be in London. Abide by their counsel; act as they advise at the news of my victory or my fall."

He paused abruptly, for he heard close beside him the broken voice of Gurth's bride, in answer to her lord. "Think not of me, beloved; thy whole heart now be England's. And if--if"--her voice failed a moment, but resumed proudly, "why even then thy wife is safe, for she survives not her lord and her land!"

The King left his wife's side, and kissed his brother's bride.

"Noble heart!" he said; "with women like thee for our wives and mothers, England could survive the slaughter of thousand kings."

He turned, and knelt to Githa. She threw her arms over his broad breast, and wept bitterly.

"Say--say, Harold, that I have not reproached thee for Tostig's death. I have obeyed the last commands of Godwin my lord. I have deemed thee ever right and just; now let me not lose thee, too. They go with thee, all my surviving sons, save the exile Wolnoth,--him whom now I shall never behold again. Oh, Harold!--let not mine old age be childless!"

"Mother,--dear, dear mother, with these arms round my neck I take new life and new heart. No! never hast thou reproached me for my brother's death--never for aught which man's first duty enjoined. Murmur not that that duty commands us still. We are the sons, through thee, of royal heroes; through my father, of Saxon freemen. Rejoice that thou hast three sons left, whose arms thou mayest pray God and his saints to prosper, and over whose graves, if they fall, thou shalt shed no tears of shame!"

Then the widow of King Edward, who (the crucifix clasped in her hands) had listened to Harold with lips apart and marble cheeks, could keep down no longer her human woman's heart; she rushed to Harold as he still knelt to Githa--knelt by his side, and clasped him in her arms with despairing fondness:

"O brother, brother, whom I have so dearly loved when all other love seemed forbidden me;--when he who gave me a throne refused me his heart; when, looking at thy fair promise, listening to thy tender comfort,--when, remembering the days of old, in which thou wert my docile pupil, and we dreamed bright dreams together of happiness and fame to come,--when, loving thee methought too well, too much as weak mothers may love a mortal son, I prayed God to detach my heart from earth!--Oh, Harold! now forgive me all my coldness. I shudder at thy resolve. I dread that thou should meet this man, whom an oath hath bound thee to obey. Nay, frown not--I bow to thy will, my brother and my King. I know that thou hast chosen as thy conscience sanctions, as thy duty ordains. But come back--Oh, come back--thou who, like me," (her voice whispered,) "hast sacrificed the household hearth to thy country's altars,--and I will never pray to Heaven to love thee less--my brother, O my brother!"

In all the room were then heard but the low sounds of sobs and broken exclamations. All clustered to one spot--Leofwine and his betrothed--Gurth and his bride--even the selfish Aldyth, ennobled by the contagion of the sublime emotion,--all clustered round Githa the mother of the three guardians of the fated land, and all knelt before her, by the side of Harold. Suddenly, the widowed Queen, the virgin wife of the last heir of Cerdic, rose, and holding on high the sacred rood over those bended heads, said, with devout passion:

"O Lord of Hosts--We Children of Doubt and Time, trembling in the dark, dare not take to ourselves to question thine unerring will. Sorrow and death, as joy and life, are at the breath of a mercy divine, and a wisdom all-seeing: and out of the hours of evil thou drawest, in mystic circle, the eternity of Good. 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' If, O Disposer of events, our human prayers are not adverse to thy pre-judged decrees, protect these lives, the bulwarks of our homes and altars, sons whom the land offers as a sacrifice. May thine angel turn aside the blade--as of old from

the heart of Isaac! But if, O Ruler of Nations, in whose sight the ages are as moments, and generations but as sands in the sea, these lives are doomed, may the death expiate their sins, and, shrived on the battle-field, absolve and receive the souls!"

CHAPTER IV.

By the altar of the Abbey Church of Waltham, that night, knelt Edith in prayer for Harold.

She had taken up her abode in a small convent of nuns that adjoined the more famous monastery of Waltham; but she had promised Hilda not to enter on the novitiate, until the birthday of Harold had passed. She herself had no longer faith in the omens and prophecies that had deceived her youth and darkened her life; and, in the more congenial air of our Holy Church, the spirit, ever so chastened, grew calm and resigned. But the tidings of the Norman's coming, and the King's victorious return to his capital, had reached even that still retreat; and love, which had blent itself with religion, led her steps to that lonely altar. And suddenly, as she there knelt, only lighted by the moon through the high casements, she was startled by the sound of approaching feet and murmuring voices. She rose in alarm--the door of the church was thrown open--torches advanced--and amongst the monks, between Osgood and Ailred, came the King. He had come, that last night before his march, to invoke the prayers of that pious brotherhood; and by the altar he had founded, to pray, himself, that his one sin of faith forfeited and oath abjured, might not palsy his arm and weigh on his soul in the hour of his country's need.

Edith stifled the cry that rose to her lips, as the torches fell on the pale and hushed and melancholy face of Harold; and she crept away under the arch of the vast Saxon columns, and into the shade of abutting walls. The monks and the King, intent on their holy office, beheld not that solitary and shrinking form. They approached the altar; and there the King knelt down lowly, and none heard the prayer. But as Osgood held the sacred rood over the bended head of the royal suppliant, the Image on the crucifix (which had been a gift from Alred the prelate, and was supposed to have belonged of old to Augustine, the first founder of the Saxon Church--so that, by the superstition of the age, it was invested with miraculous virtues) bowed itself visibly. Visibly, the pale and ghastly image of the suffering God bowed over the head of the kneeling man; whether the fastenings of the rood were loosened, or from what cause soever,--in the eyes of all the brotherhood, the Image bowed. [254]

A thrill of terror froze every heart, save Edith's, too remote to perceive the portent, and save the King's, whom the omen seemed to doom, for his face was buried in his clasped hands. Heavy was his heart, nor needed it other warnings than its own gloom.

Long and silently prayed the King; and when at last he rose, and the monks, though with altered and tremulous voices, began their closing hymn, Edith passed noiselessly along the wall, and, stealing through one of the smaller doors which communicated to the nunnery annexed, gained the solitude of her own chamber. There she stood, benumbed

with the strength of her emotions at the sight of Harold thus abruptly presented. How had the fond human heart leapt to meet him! Twice, thus, in the august ceremonials of Religion, secret, shrinking, unwitnessed, had she, his betrothed, she, the partner of his soul, stood aloof to behold him. She had seen him in the hour of his pomp, the crown upon his brow,--seen him in the hour of his peril and agony, that anointed head bowed to the earth. And in the pomp that she could not share, she had exulted; but, oh, now--now,--oh now that she could have knelt beside that humbled form, and prayed with that voiceless prayer!

The torches flashed in the court below; the church was again deserted; the monks passed in mute procession back to their cloister; but a single man paused, turned aside, and stopped at the gate of the humbler convent: a knocking was heard at the great oaken door, and the watch-dog barked. Edith started, pressed her hand on her heart and trembled. Steps approached her door--and the abbess, entering, summoned her below, to hear the farewell greeting of her cousin the King.

Harold stood in the simple hall of the cloister: a single taper, tall and wan, burned on the oak board. The abbess led Edith by the hand, and at a sign from the King, withdrew. So, once more upon earth, the betrothed and divided were alone.

"Edith," said the King, in a voice in which no ear but hers could have detected the struggle, "do not think I have come to disturb thy holy calm, or sinfully revive the memories of the irrevocable past: where once on my breast, in the old fashion of our fathers, I wrote thy name, is written now the name of the mistress that supplants thee. Into Eternity melts the Past; but I could not depart to a field from which there is no retreat--in which, against odds that men say are fearful, I have resolved to set my crown and my life--without once more beholding thee, pure guardian of my happier days! Thy forgiveness for all the sorrow that, in the darkness which surrounds man's hopes and dreams, I have brought on thee (dread return for love so enduring, so generous and divine!)--thy forgiveness I will not ask. Thou alone perhaps on earth knowest the soul of Harold; and if he hath wronged thee, thou seest alike in the wronger and the wronged, but the children of iron Duty, the servants of imperial Heaven. Not thy forgiveness I ask--but--but--Edith, holy maid! angel soul!--thy--thy blessing!" His voice faltered, and he inclined his lofty head as to a saint.

"Oh that I had the power to bless!" exclaimed Edith, mastering her rush of tears with a heroic effort; "and methinks I have the power--not from virtues of my own, but from all that I owe to thee! The grateful have the power to bless. For what do I not owe to thee--owe to that very love of which even the grief is sacred? Poor child in the house of the heathen, thy love descended upon me, and in it, the smile of God! In that love my spirit awoke, and was baptised: every thought that has risen from earth, and lost itself in heaven, was breathed into my heart by thee! Thy creature and thy slave, hadst thou tempted me to sin, sin had seemed hallowed by thy voice; but thou saidst 'True love is virtue,' and so I worshipped virtue in loving thee. Strengthened, purified, by thy bright companionship, from thee came the strength to resign thee--from thee the refuge under the wings of God--from thee the firm assurance that our union yet shall be--not as our poor Hilda dreams, on the perishable earth,--but there! oh,

there! yonder by the celestial altars, in the land in which all spirits are filled with love. Yes, soul of Harold! there are might and holiness in the blessing the soul thou hast redeemed and reared sheds on thee!"

And so beautiful, so unlike the Beautiful of the common earth, looked the maid as she thus spoke, and laid hands, trembling with no human passion, on that royal head--that could a soul from paradise be made visible, such might be the shape it would wear to a mortal's eye! Thus, for some moments both were silent; and in the silence the gloom vanished from the heart of Harold, and, through a deep and sublime serenity, it rose undaunted to front the future.

No embrace--no farewell kiss--profaned the parting of those pure and noble spirits--parting on the threshold of the grave. It was only the spirit that clasped the spirit, looking forth from the clay into measureless eternity. Not till the air of night came once more on his brow, and the moonlight rested on the roofs and fanes of the land entrusted to his charge, was the man once more the human hero; not till she was alone in her desolate chamber, and the terrors of the coming battle-field chased the angel from her thoughts was the maid inspired, once more the weeping woman.

A little after sunrise the abbess, who was distantly akin to the house of Godwin, sought Edith, so agitated by her own fear, that she did not remark the trouble of her visitor. The supposed miracle of the sacred Image bowing over the kneeling King, had spread dismay through the cloisters of both nunnery and abbey; and so intense was the disquietude of the two brothers, Osgood and Ailred, in the simple and grateful affection they bore their royal benefactor, that they had obeyed the impulse of their tender credulous hearts, and left the monastery with the dawn, intending to follow the King's march [255], and watch and pray near the awful battle-field. Edith listened, and made no reply; the terrors of the abbess infected her; the example of the two monks woke the sole thought which stirred through the nightmare dream that suspended reason itself; and when, at noon the abbess again sought the chamber, Edith was gone;--gone, and alone--none knew wherefore--one guessed whither.

All the pomp of the English army burst upon Harold's view, as, in the rising sun, he approached the bridge of the capital. Over that bridge came the stately march,--battle-axe, and spear, and banner, glittering in the ray. And as he drew aside, and the forces filed before him, the cry of; "God save King Harold!" rose with loud acclaim and lusty joy, borne over the waves of the river, startling the echoes in the ruined keape of the Roman, heard in the halls restored by Canute, and chiming, like a chorus, with the chaunts of the monks by the tomb of Sebba in St. Paul's--by the tomb of Edward at St. Peter's.

With a brightened face, and a kindling eye, the King saluted his lines, and then fell into the ranks towards the rear, where among the burghers of London and the lithsmen of Middlesex, the immemorial custom of Saxon monarchs placed the kingly banner. And, looking up, he beheld, not his old standard with the Tiger heads and the Cross, but a banner both strange and gorgeous. On a field of gold was the effigies of a Fighting Warrior; and the arms were bedecked in orient pearls, and the borders blazed in the rising sun, with ruby, amethyst, and emerald. While he gazed, wondering, on this dazzling ensign, Haco, who rode beside the standard-bearer, advanced, and gave him a

letter.

"Last night," said he, "after thou hadst left the palace, many recruits, chiefly from Hertfordshire and Essex, came in; but the most gallant and stalwart of all, in arms and in stature, were the lithsmen of Hilda. With them came this banner, on which she has lavished the gems that have passed to her hand through long lines of northern ancestors, from Odin, the founder of all northern thrones. So, at least, said the bode of our kinswoman."

Harold had already cut the silk round the letter, and was reading its contents. They ran thus:--

"King of England, I forgive thee the broken heart of my grandchild. They whom the land feeds, should defend the land. I send to thee, in tribute the best fruits that grow in the field, and the forest, round the house which my husband took from the bounty of Canute;--stout hearts and strong hands! Descending alike, as do Hilda and Harold (through Githa thy mother,) from the Warrior God of the North, whose race never shall fail--take, O defender of the Saxon children of Odin, the banner I have broidered with the gems that the Chief of the Asas bore from the East. Firm as love be thy foot, strong as death be thy hand, under the shade which the banner of Hilda,--under the gleam which the jewels of Odin,--cast on the brows of the King! So Hilda, the daughter of monarchs, greets Harold the leader of men."

Harold looked up from the letter, and Haco resumed:

"Thou canst guess not the cheering effect which this banner, supposed to be charmed, and which the name of Odin alone would suffice to make holy, at least with thy fierce Anglo-Danes, hath already produced through the army."

"It is well, Haco," said Harold with a smile. "Let priest add his blessing to Hilda's charm, and Heaven will pardon any magic that makes more brave the hearts that defend its altars. Now fall we back, for the army must pass beside the hill with the crommell and gravestone; there, be sure, Hilda will be at watch for our march, and we will linger a few moments to thank her somewhat for her banner, yet more justly, methinks, for her men. Are not yon stout fellows all in mail, so tall and so orderly, in advance of the London burghers, Hilda's aid to our Fyrd?"

"They are," answered Haco.

The King backed his steed to accost them with his kingly greeting; and then, with Haco, falling yet farther to the rear seemed engaged in inspecting the numerous wains, bearing missiles and forage, that always accompanied the march of a Saxon army, and served to strengthen its encampment. But when they came in sight of the hillock by which the great body of the army had preceded them, the King and the son of Sweyn dismounted and on foot entered the large circle of the Celtic ruin.

By the side of the Teuton altar they beheld two forms, both perfectly motionless: but one was extended on the ground as in sleep or in death; the other sate beside it, as if watching the corpse, or guarding the slumber. The face of the last was not visible, propped upon the arms which rested on the knees, and bidden by the hands. But

in the face of the other, as the two men drew near, they recognised the Danish Prophetess. Death in its dreadest characters was written on that ghastly face; woe and terror, beyond all words to describe, spoke in the haggard brow, the distorted lips, and the wild glazed stare of the open eyes. At the startled cry of the intruders on that dreary silence, the living form moved; and though still leaning its face on its hands, it raised its head; and never countenance of Northern Vampire, cowering by the rifled grave, was more fiendlike and appalling.

"Who and what art thou?" said the King; "and how, thus unhonored in the air of heaven, lies the corpse of the noble Hilda? Is this the hand of Nature? Haco, Haco, so look the eyes, so set the features, of those whom the horror of ruthless murder slays even before the steel strikes. Speak, hag, art thou dumb?"

"Search the body," answered the witch, "there is no wound! Look to the throat,--no mark of the deadly gripe! I have seen such in my day.--There are none on this corpse, I trow; yet thou sayest rightly, horror slew her! Ha, ha! she would know, and she hath known; she would raise the dead and the demon; she hath raised them; she would read the riddle,--she hath read it. Pale King and dark youth, would ye learn what Hilda saw, eh? eh? Ask her in the Shadow-World where she awaits ye! Ha! ye too would be wise in the future; ye too would climb to heaven through the mysteries of hell. Worms! worms! crawl back to the clay--to the earth! One such night as the hag ye despise enjoys as her sport and her glee, would freeze your veins, and sear the life in your eyeballs, and leave your corpses to terror and wonder, like the carcase that lies at your feet!"

"Ho!" cried the King, stamping his foot. "Hence, Haco; rouse the household; summon hither the handmaids; call henchman and ceorl to guard this foul raven."

Haco obeyed; but when he returned with the shuddering and amazed attendants, the witch was gone, and the King was leaning against the altar with downcast eyes, and a face troubled and dark with thought.

The body of the Vala was borne into the house; and the King, waking from his reverie, bade them send for the priests and ordered masses for the parted soul. Then kneeling, with pious hand he closed the eyes and smoothed the features, and left his mournful kiss on the icy brow. These offices fulfilled, he took Haco's arm, and leaning on it, returned to the spot on which they had left their steeds. Not evincing surprise or awe,--emotions that seemed unknown to his gloomy, settled, impassible nature--Haco said calmly, as they descended the knoll:

"What evil did the hag predict to thee?"

"Haco," answered the King, "yonder, by the shores of Sussex, lies all the future which our eyes now should scan, and our hearts should be firm to meet. These omens and apparitions are but the ghosts of a dead Religion; spectres sent from the grave of the fearful Heathenese; they may appal but to lure us from our duty. Lo, as we gaze around--the ruins of all the creeds that have made the hearts of men quake with unsubstantial awe--lo, the temple of the Briton!--lo, the fane of the Roman!--lo, the mouldering altar of our ancestral Thor! Ages past lie wrecked around us in these shattered symbols. A

new age hath risen, and a new creed. Keep we to the broad truths before us; duty here; knowledge comes alone in the Hereafter."

"That Hereafter!--is it not near?" murmured Haco.

They mounted in silence; and ere they regained the army paused, by a common impulse, and looked behind. Awful in their desolation rose the temple and the altar! And in Hilda's mysterious death it seemed that their last and lingering Genius,--the Genius of the dark and fierce, the warlike and the wizard North, had expired for ever. Yet, on the outskirts of the forest, dusk and shapeless, that witch without a name stood in the shadow, pointing towards them, with outstretched arm, in vague and denouncing menace;--as if, come what may, all change of creed,--be the faith ever so simple, the truth ever so bright and clear,--there is a SUPERSTITION native to that Border-land between the Visible and the Unseen, which will find its priest and its votaries, till the full and crowning splendour of Heaven shall melt every shadow from the world!

CHAPTER V.

On the broad plain between Pevensey and Hastings, Duke William had arrayed his armaments. In the rear he had built a castle of wood, all the framework of which he had brought with him, and which was to serve as a refuge in case of retreat. His ships he had run into deep water, and scuttled; so that the thought of return, without victory, might be banished from his miscellaneous and multitudinous force. His outposts stretched for miles, keeping watch night and day against surprise. The ground chosen was adapted for all the manoeuvres of a cavalry never before paralleled in England nor perhaps in the world,--almost every horseman a knight, almost every knight fit to be a chief. And on this space William reviewed his army, and there planned and schemed, rehearsed and re-formed, all the stratagems the great day might call forth. But more careful, and laborious, and minute, was he in the manoeuvre of a feigned retreat. Not ere the acting of some modern play, does the anxious manager more elaborately marshal each man, each look, each gesture, that are to form a picture on which the curtain shall fall amidst deafening plaudits than did the laborious captain appoint each man, and each movement, in his lure to a valiant foe:--The attack of the foot, their recoil, their affected panic, their broken exclamations of despair;--their retreat, first partial and reluctant, next seemingly hurried and complete,--flying, but in flight carefully confused:--then the settled watchword, the lightning rally, the rush of the cavalry from the ambush; the sweep and hem round the pursuing foe, the detachment of levelled spears to cut off the Saxon return to the main force, and the lost ground,--were all directed by the most consummate mastership in the stage play, or upokrisis, of war, and seized by the adroitness of practised veterans.

Not now, O Harold! hast thou to contend against the rude heroes of the Norse, with their ancestral strategy unimproved! The civilisation of Battle meets thee now!--and all the craft of the Roman guides the manhood of the North.

It was in the midst of such lessons to his foot and his horsemen--

spears gleaming--pennons tossing--lines reforming--steeds backing, wheeling, flying, circling--that William's eye blazed, and his deep voice thundered the thrilling word; when Mallet de Graville, who was in command at one of the outposts, rode up to him at full speed, and said in gasps, as he drew breath:

"King Harold and his army are advancing furiously. Their object is clearly to come on us unawares."

"Hold!" said the Duke, lifting his hand; and the knights around him halted in their perfect discipline; then after a few brief but distinct orders to Odo, Fitzosborne, and some other of his leading chiefs, he headed a numerous cavalcade of his knights, and rode fast to the outpost which Mallet had left,--to catch sight of the coming foe.

The horsemen cleared the plain--passed through a wood, mournfully fading into autumnal hues--and, on emerging, they saw the gleam of the Saxon spears rising on the brows of the gentle hills beyond. But even the time, short as it was, that had sufficed to bring William in view of the enemy, had sufficed also, under the orders of his generals, to give to the wide plain of his encampment all the order of a host prepared. And William, having now mounted on a rising ground, turned from the spears on the hill tops, to his own fast forming lines on the plain, and said with a stern smile:

"Methinks the Saxon usurper, if he be among those on the height of yon hills, will vouchsafe us time to breathe! St. Michael gives his crown to our hands, and his corpse to the crow, if he dare to descend."

And so indeed, as the Duke with a soldier's eye foresaw from a soldier's skill, so it proved. The spears rested on the summits. It soon became evident that the English general perceived that here there was no Hardrada to surprise; that the news brought to his ear had exaggerated neither the numbers, nor the arms, nor the discipline of the Norman; and that the battle was not to the bold but to the wary.

"He doth right," said William, musingly; "nor think, O my Quens, that we shall find a fool's hot brain under Harold's helmet of iron. How is this broken ground of hillock and valley named in our chart? It is strange that we should have overlooked its strength, and suffered it thus to fall into the hands of the foe. How is it named? Can any of ye remember?"

"A Saxon peasant," said De Graville, "told me that the ground was called Senlac [256] or Sanglac, or some such name, in their musicless jargon."

"Grammercy!" quoth Grantmesnil, "methinks the name will be familiar eno' hereafter; no jargon seemeth the sound to my ear--a significant name and ominous,--Sanglac, Sanguelac--the Lake of Blood."

"Sanguelac!" said the Duke, startled; "where have I heard that name before? it must have been between sleeping and waking.--Sanguelac, Sanguelac!--truly sayest thou, through a lake of blood we must wade indeed!"

"Yet," said De Graville, "thine astrologer foretold that thou wouldst win the realm without a battle."

"Poor astrologer!" said William, "the ship he sailed in was lost. Ass indeed is he who pretends to warn others, nor sees an inch before his eyes what his own fate will be! Battle shall we have, but not yet. Hark thee, Guillaume, thou hast been guest with this usurper; thou hast seemed to me to have some love for him--a love natural since thou didst once fight by his side; wilt thou go from me to the Saxon host with Hugues Maigrot, the monk, and back the message I shall send?"

The proud and punctilious Norman thrice crossed himself ere he answered:

"There was a time, Count William, when I should have deemed it honour to hold parle with Harold the brave Earl; but now, with the crown on his head, I hold it shame and disgrace to barter words with a knight unfeal and a man forsworn."

"Nathless, thou shalt do me this favour," said William, "for" (and he took the knight somewhat aside) "I cannot disguise from thee that I look anxiously on the chance of battle. Yon men are flushed with new triumph over the greatest warrior Norway ever knew, they will fight on their own soil, and under a chief whom I have studied and read with more care than the Comments of Caesar, and in whom the guilt of perjury cannot blind me to the wit of a great general. If we can yet get our end without battle, large shall be my thanks to thee, and I will hold thine astrologer a man wise, though unhappy."

"Certes," said De Griville gravely, "it were discourteous to the memory of the star-seer, not to make some effort to prove his science a just one. And the Chaldeans----"

"Plague seize the Chaldeans!" muttered the Duke. "Ride with me back to the camp, that I may give thee my message, and instruct also the monk."

"De Griville," resumed the Duke, as they rode towards the lines, "my meaning is briefly this. I do not think that Harold will accept my offer and resign his crown, but I design to spread dismay, and perhaps revolt amongst his captains; I wish that they may know that the Church lays its Curse on those who fight against my consecrated banner. I do not ask thee, therefore, to demean thy knighthood, by seeking to cajole the usurper; no, but rather boldly to denounce his perjury and startle his liegemen. Perchance they may compel him to terms--perchance they may desert his banner; at the worst they shall be daunted with full sense of the guilt of his cause."

"Ha, now I comprehend thee, noble Count; and trust me I will speak as Norman and knight should speak."

Meanwhile, Harold seeing the utter hopelessness of all sudden assault, had seized a general's advantage of the ground he had gained. Occupying the line of hills, he began forthwith to entrench himself behind deep ditches and artful palisades. It is impossible now to stand on that spot, without recognising the military skill with which the Saxon had taken his post, and formed his precautions. He surrounded the main body of his troops with a perfect breastwork against the charge of the horse. Stakes and strong hurdles interwoven with osier plaits, and protected by deep dykes, served at once to neutralise the effect of that arm in which William was most powerful,

and in which Harold almost entirely failed; while the possession of the ground must compel the foe to march, and to charge, up hill, against all the missiles which the Saxons could pour down from their entrenchments.

Aiding, animating, cheering, directing all, while the dykes were fast hollowed, and the breastworks fast rose, the King of England rode his palfrey from line to line, and work to work, when, looking up, he saw Haco leading towards him up the slopes, a monk, and a warrior whom, by the banderol on his spear and the cross on his shield, he knew to be one of the Norman knighthood.

At that moment Gurth and Leofwine, and those thegns who commanded counties, were thronging round their chief for instructions. The King dismounted, and beckoning them to follow, strode towards the spot on which had just been planted his royal standard. There halting, he said with a grave smile:

"I perceive that the Norman Count hath sent us his bodes; it is meet that with me, you, the defenders of England, should hear what the Norman saith."

"If he saith aught but prayer for his men to return to Rouen,-- needless his message, and short our answer," said Vebba, the bluff thegn of Kent.

Meanwhile the monk and the Norman knight drew near and paused at some short distance, while Haco, advancing, said briefly:

"These men I found at our outposts; they demand to speak with the King."

"Under his standard the King will hear the Norman invader," replied Harold; "bid them speak."

The same sallow, mournful, ominous countenance, which Harold had before seen in the halls of Westminster, rising deathlike above the serge garb of the Benedict of Caen, now presented itself, and the monk thus spoke:

"In the name of William, Duke of the Normans in the field, Count of Rouen in the hall, Claimant of all the realms of Anglia, Scotland, and the Walloons, held under Edward his cousin, I come to thee, Harold his liege and Earl."

"Change thy titles, or depart," said Harold, fiercely, his brow no longer mild in its majesty, but dark as midnight. "What says William the Count of the Foreigners, to Harold, King of the Angles, and Basileus of Britain?"

"Protesting against thy assumption, I answer thee thus," said Hugues Maigrot. "First, again he offers thee all Northumbria, up to the realm of the Scottish sub-king, if thou wilt fulfil thy vow, and cede him the crown."

"Already have I answered,--the crown is not mine to give; and my people stand round me in arms to defend the king of their choice. What next?"

"Next, offers William to withdraw his troops from the land, if thou and thy council and chiefs will submit to the arbitrement of our most holy Pontiff, Alexander the Second, and, abide by his decision whether thou or my liege have the best right to the throne."

"This, as Churchman," said the Abbot of the great Convent of Peterboro', (who, with the Abbot of Hide, had joined the march of Harold, deeming as one the cause of altar and throne), "this as Churchman, may I take leave to answer. Never yet hath it been heard in England, that the spiritual suzerain of Rome should give us our kings."

"And," said Harold, with a bitter smile, "the Pope hath already summoned me to this trial, as if the laws of England were kept in the rolls of the Vatican! Already, if rightly informed, the Pope hath been pleased to decide that our Saxon land is the Norman's. I reject a judge without a right to decide; and I mock at a sentence that profanes heaven in its insult to men. Is this all?"

"One last offer yet remains," replied the monk sternly. "This knight shall deliver its import. But ere I depart, and thou and thine are rendered up to Vengeance Divine, I speak the words of a mightier chief than William of Rouen. Thus saith his Holiness, with whom rests the power to bind and to loose, to bless and to curse: 'Harold, the Perjurer, thou art accursed! On thee and on all who lift hand in thy cause, rests the interdict of the Church. Thou art excommunicated from the family of Christ. On thy land, with its peers and its people, yea, to the beast in the field and the bird in the air, to the seed as the sower, the harvest as the reaper, rests God's anathema! The bull of the Vatican is in the tent of the Norman; the gonfanon of St. Peter hallows yon armies to the service of Heaven. March on, then: ye march as the Assyrian; and the angel of the Lord awaits ye on the way!'"

At these words, which for the first time apprised the English leaders that their king and kingdom were under the awful ban of excommunication, the thegns and abbots gazed on each other aghast. A visible shudder passed over the whole warlike conclave, save only three, Harold, and Gurth, and Haco.

The King himself was so moved by indignation at the insolence of the monk, and by scorn at the fulmen, which, resting not alone on his own head, presumed to blast the liberties of a nation, that he strode towards the speaker, and it is even said of him by the Norman chroniclers, that he raised his hand as if to strike the denouncer to the earth.

But Gurth interposed, and with his clear eye serenely shining with virtuous passion, he stood betwixt monk and king.

"O thou," he exclaimed, "with the words of religion on thy lips, and the devices of fraud in thy heart, hide thy front in thy cowl, and slink back to thy master. Heard ye not, thegns and abbots, heard ye not this bad, false man offer, as if for peace, and as with the desire of justice, that the Pope should arbitrate between your King and the Norman? yet all the while the monk knew that the Pope had already predetermined the cause; and had ye fallen into the wile, ye would but have cowered under the verdict of a judgment that has presumed, even before it invoked ye to the trial, to dispose of a free people and an

ancient kingdom!"

"It is true, it is true," cried the thegns, rallying from their first superstitious terror, and, with their plain English sense of justice, revolted at the perfidy which the priest's overtures had concealed. "We will hear no more; away with the Swikebode." [257]

The pale cheek of the monk turned yet paler, he seemed abashed by the storm of resentment he had provoked; and in some fear, perhaps, at the dark faces bent on him, he slunk behind his comrade the knight, who as yet had said nothing, but, his face concealed by his helmet, stood motionless like a steel statue. And, in fact, these two ambassadors, the one in his monk garb, the other in his iron array, were types and representatives of the two forces now brought to bear upon Harold and England--Chivalry and the Church.

At the momentary discomfiture of the Priest, now stood forth the Warrior; and, throwing back his helmet, so that the whole steel cap rested on the nape of the neck, leaving the haughty face and half-shaven head bare, Mallet de Graville thus spoke:

"The ban of the Church is against ye, warriors and chiefs of England, but for the crime of one man! Remove it from yourselves: on his single head be the curse and the consequence. Harold, called King of England--failing the two milder offers of my comrade, thus saith from the lips of his knight, (once thy guest, thy admirer, and friend,) thus saith William the Norman:--'Though sixty thousand warriors under the banner of the Apostle wait at his beck, (and from what I see of thy force, thou canst marshal to thy guilty side scarce a third of the number,) yet will Count William lay aside all advantage, save what dwells in strong arm and good cause; and here, in presence of thy thegns, I challenge thee in his name to decide the sway of this realm by single battle. On horse and in mail, with sword and with spear, knight to knight, man to man, wilt thou meet William the Norman?'"

Before Harold could reply, and listen to the first impulse of a valour, which his worst Norman maligner, in the after day of triumphant calumny, never so lied as to impugn, the thegns themselves almost with one voice, took up the reply.

"No strife between a man and a man shall decide the liberties of thousands!"

"Never!" exclaimed Gurth. "It were an insult to the whole people to regard this as a strife between two chiefs, which should wear a crown. When the invader is in our land, the war is with a nation, not a king. And, by the very offer, this Norman Count (who cannot even speak our tongue) shows how little he knows of the laws, by which, under our native kings, we have all as great an interest as a king himself in our Fatherland."

"Thou hast heard the answer of England from those lips, Sire de Graville," said Harold: "mine but repeat and sanction it. I will not give the crown to William in lieu for disgrace and an earldom. I will not abide by the arbitrement of a Pope who has dared to affix a curse upon freedom. I will not so violate the principle which in these realms knits king and people, as to arrogate to my single arm the right to dispose of the birthright of the living, and their races unborn; nor will I deprive the meanest soldier under my banner, of the

joy and the glory to fight for his native land. If William seek me, he shall find me, where war is the fiercest, where the corpses of his men lie the thickest on the plains, defending this standard, or rushing on his own. And so, not Monk and Pope, but God in his wisdom, adjudge between us!"

"So be it," said Mallet de Graville, solemnly, and his helmet re-closed over his face. "Look to it, recreant knight, perjured Christian, and usurping King! The bones of the Dead fight against thee."

"And the fleshless hands of the Saints marshal the hosts of the living," said the monk.

And so the messengers turned, without obeisance or salute, and strode silently away.

CHAPTER VI.

The rest of that day, and the whole of the next, were consumed by both armaments in the completion of their preparations.

William was willing to delay the engagement as long as he could; for he was not without hope that Harold might abandon his formidable position, and become the assailing party; and, moreover, he wished to have full time for his prelates and priests to inflame to the utmost, by their representations of William's moderation in his embassy, and Harold's presumptuous guilt in rejection, the fiery fanaticism of all enlisted under the gonfanon of the Church.

On the other hand, every delay was of advantage to Harold, in giving him leisure to render his entrenchments yet more effectual, and to allow time for such reinforcements as his orders had enjoined, or the patriotism of the country might arouse; but, alas! those reinforcements were scanty and insignificant; a few stragglers in the immediate neighborhood arrived, but no aid came from London, no indignant country poured forth a swarming population. In fact, the very fame of Harold, and the good fortune that had hitherto attended his arms, contributed to the stupid lethargy of the people. That he who had just subdued the terrible Norsemen, with the mighty Hardrada at their head, should succumb to those dainty "Frenchmen," as they chose to call the Normans; of whom, in their insular ignorance of the continent, they knew but little, and whom they had seen flying in all directions at the return of Godwin; was a preposterous demand on the imagination.

Nor was this all: in London, there had already formed a cabal in favour of the Atheling. The claims of birth can never be so wholly set aside, but what, even for the most unworthy heir of an ancient line, some adherents will be found. The prudent traders thought it best not to engage actively on behalf of the reigning King, in his present combat with the Norman pretender; a large number of would-be statesmen thought it best for the country to remain for the present neutral. Grant the worst--grant that Harold were defeated or slain; would it not be wise to reserve their strength to support the

Atheling? William might have some personal cause of quarrel against Harold, but he could have none against Edgar; he might depose the son of Godwin, but could he dare to depose the descendant of Cerdic, the natural heir of Edward? There is reason to think that Stigand, and a large party of the Saxon Churchmen, headed this faction.

But the main causes for defection were not in adherence to one chief or to another. They were to be found in selfish inertness, in stubborn conceit, in the long peace, and the enervate superstition which had relaxed the sinews of the old Saxon manhood; in that indifference to things ancient, which contempt for old names and races engendered; that timorous spirit of calculation, which the over-regard for wealth had fostered; which made men averse to leave trade and farm for the perils of the field, and jeopardise their possessions if the foreigner should prevail.

Accustomed already to kings of a foreign race, and having fared well under Canute, there were many who said, "What matters who sits on the throne? the king must be equally bound by our laws." Then too was heard the favourite argument of all slothful minds: "Time enough yet! one battle lost is not England won. Marry, we shall turn out fast eno' if Harold be beaten."

Add to all these causes for apathy and desertion, the haughty jealousies of the several populations not yet wholly fused into one empire. The Northumbrian Danes, untaught even by their recent escape from the Norwegian, regarded with ungrateful coldness a war limited at present to the southern coasts; and the vast territory under Mercia was, with more excuse, equally supine; while their two young Earls, too new in their command to have much sway with their subject populations, had they been in their capitals, had now arrived in London; and there lingered, making head, doubtless, against the intrigues in favour of the Atheling;--so little had Harold's marriage with Aldyth brought him, at the hour of his dreaddest need, the power for which happiness had been resigned!

Nor must we put out of account, in summing the causes which at this awful crisis weakened the arm of England, the curse of slavery amongst the theowes, which left the lowest part of the population wholly without interest in the defense of the land. Too late--too late for all but unavailing slaughter, the spirit of the country rose amidst the violated pledges, but under the iron heel, of the Norman Master! Had that spirit put forth all its might for one day with Harold, where had been the centuries of bondage! Oh, shame to the absent--All blessed those present! There was no hope for England out of the scanty lines of the immortal army encamped on the field of Hastings. There, long on earth, and vain vaunts of poor pride, shall be kept the roll of the robber-invaders. In what roll are your names, holy Heroes of the Soil? Yes, may the prayer of the Virgin Queen be registered on high; and assoiled of all sin, O ghosts of the glorious Dead, may ye rise from your graves at the trump of the angel; and your names, lost on earth, shine radiant and stainless amidst the Hierarchy of Heaven!

Dull came the shades of evening, and pale through the rolling clouds glimmered the rising stars; when,--all prepared, all arrayed,--Harold sat with Haco and Gurth, in his tent; and before them stood a man, half French by origin, who had just returned from the Norman camp.

"So thou didst mingle with the men undiscovered?" said the King.

"No, not undiscovered, my lord. I fell in with a knight, whose name I have since heard as that of Mallet de Graville, who wilily seemed to believe in what I stated, and who gave me meat and drink, with debonnair courtesy. Then said he abruptly,--'Spy from Harold, thou hast come to see the strength of the Norman. Thou shalt have thy will--follow me.' Therewith he led me, all startled I own, through the lines; and, O King, I should deem them indeed countless as the sands, and resistless as the waves, but that, strange as it may seem to thee, I saw more monks than warriors."

"How! thou jestest!" said Gurth, surprised.

"No; for thousands by thousands, they were praying and kneeling; and their heads were all shaven with the tonsure of priests."

"Priests are they not," cried Harold, with his calm smile, "but doughty warriors and dauntless knights." Then he continued his questions to the spy; and his smile vanished at the accounts, not only of the numbers of the force, but their vast provision of missiles, and the almost incredible proportion of their cavalry.

As soon as the spy had been dismissed, the King turned to his kinsmen.

"What think you?" he said; "shall we judge ourselves of the foe? The night will be dark anon--our steeds are fleet--and not shod with iron like the Normans;--the sward noiseless--What think you?"

"A merry conceit," cried the blithe Leofwine. "I should like much to see the boar in his den, ere he taste of my spear-point."

"And I," said Gurth, "do feel so restless a fever in my veins that I would fain cool it by the night air. Let us go: I know all the ways of the country; for hither have I come often with hawk and hound. But let us wait yet till the night is more hushed and deep."

The clouds had gathered over the whole surface of the skies, and there hung sullen; and the mists were cold and grey on the lower grounds, when the four Saxon chiefs set forth on their secret and perilous enterprise.

"Knights and riders took they none,
Squires and varlets of foot not one;
All unarmed of weapon and weed,
Save the shield, and spear, and the sword at need." [258]

Passing their own sentinels, they entered a wood, Gurth leading the way, and catching glimpses, through the irregular path, of the blazing lights, that shone red over the pause of the Norman war.

William had moved on his army to within about two miles from the farthest outpost of the Saxon, and contracted his lines into compact space; the reconnoiterers were thus enabled, by the light of the links and watchfires, to form no inaccurate notion of the formidable foe whom the morrow was to meet. The ground [259] on which they stood was high, and in the deep shadow of the wood; with one of the large dykes common to the Saxon boundaries in front, so that, even if discovered, a barrier not easily passed lay between them and the foe.

In regular lines and streets extended huts of branches for the meaner soldiers, leading up, in serried rows but broad vistas, to the tents of the knights, and the gaudier pavilions of the counts and prelates. There, were to be seen the flags of Bretagne and Anjou, of Burgundy, of Flanders, even the ensign of France, which the volunteers from that country had assumed; and right in the midst of this Capital of War, the gorgeous pavilion of William himself, with a dragon of gold before it, surmounting the staff, from which blazed the Papal gonfanon. In every division they heard the anvils of the armourers, the measured tread of the sentries, the neigh and snort of innumerable steeds. And along the lines, between hut and tent, they saw tall shapes passing to and from the forge and smithy, bearing mail, and swords, and shafts. No sound of revel, no laugh of wassail was heard in the consecrated camp; all was astir, but with the grave and earnest preparations of thoughtful men. As the four Saxons halted silent, each might have heard, through the remoter din, the other's painful breathing.

At length, from two tents, placed to the right and left of the Duke's pavilion, there came a sweet tinkling sound, as of deep silver bells. At that note there was an evident and universal commotion throughout the armament. The roar of the hammers ceased; and from every green hut and every grey tent, swarmed the host. Now, rows of living men lined the camp-streets, leaving still a free, though narrow passage in the midst. And, by the blaze of more than a thousand torches, the Saxons saw processions of priests, in their robes and aubes, with censer and rood, coming down the various avenues. As the priests paused, the warriors knelt; and there was a low murmur as if of confession, and the sign of lifted hands, as if in absolution and blessing. Suddenly, from the outskirts of the camp, and full in sight, emerged, from one of the cross lanes, Odo of Bayeux himself, in his white surplice, and the cross in his right hand. Yea, even to the meanest and lowliest soldiers of the armament, whether taken from honest craft and peaceful calling, or the outpourings of Europe's sinks and sewers, catamarans from the Alps, and cut-throats from the Rhine,—yea, even among the vilest and the meanest, came the anointed brother of the great Duke, the haughtiest prelate in Christendom, whose heart even then was fixed on the Pontiff's throne—there he came, to absolve, and to shrive, and to bless. And the red watchfires streamed on his proud face and spotless robes, as the Children of Wrath knelt around the Delegate of Peace.

Harold's hand clenched firm on the arm of Gurth, and his old scorn of the monk broke forth in his bitter smile and his muttered words. But Gurth's face was sad and awed.

And now, as the huts and the canvas thus gave up the living, they could indeed behold the enormous disparity of numbers with which it was their doom to contend, and, over those numbers, that dread intensity of zeal, that sublimity of fanaticism, which from one end of that war-town to the other, consecrated injustice, gave the heroism of the martyr to ambition, and blended the whisper of lusting avarice with the self-applauses of the saint!

Not a word said the four Saxons. But as the priestly procession glided to the farther quarters of the armament, as the soldiers in their neighbourhood disappeared within their lodgments, and the torches moved from them to the more distant vistas of the camp, like lines of retreating stars, Gurth heaved a heavy sigh, and turned his

horse's head from the scene.

But scarce had they gained the centre of the wood, than there rose, as from the heart of the armament, a swell of solemn voices. For the night had now come to the third watch [260], in which, according to the belief of the age, angel and fiend were alike astir, and that church-division of time was marked and hallowed by a monastic hymn.

Inexpressibly grave, solemn, and mournful came the strain through the drooping boughs, and the heavy darkness of the air; and it continued to thrill in the ears of the riders till they had passed the wood, and the cheerful watchfires from their own heights broke upon them to guide their way. They rode rapidly, but still in silence, past their sentries; and, ascending the slopes, where the force lay thick, how different were the sounds that smote them! Round the large fires the men grouped in great circles, with the ale-horns and flagons passing merrily from hand to hand; shouts of drink-hael and was-hael, bursts of gay laughter, snatches of old songs, old as the days of Athelstan, --varying, where the Anglo-Danes lay, into the far more animated and kindling poetry of the Pirate North,--still spoke of the heathen time when War was a joy, and Valhalla was the heaven.

"By my faith," said Leofwine brightening; "these are sounds and sights that do a man's heart good, after those doleful ditties, and the long faces of the shavelings. I vow by St. Alban, that I felt my veins curdling into ice-bolts, when that dirge came through the woodholt. Hollo, Sexwolf, my tall man, lift us up that full horn of thine, and keep thyself within the pins, Master Wassailer; we must have steady feet and cool heads to-morrow."

Sexwolf, who, with a band of Harold's veterans, was at full carousal, started up at the young Earl's greetings, and looked lovingly into his smiling face as he reached him the horn.

"Heed what my brother bids thee, Sexwolf," said Harold severely; "the hands that draw shafts against us to-morrow will not tremble with the night's wassail."

"Nor ours either, my lord the King," said Sexwolf, boldly; "our heads can bear both drink and blows,--and--(sinking his voice into a whisper) the rumour runs that the odds are so against us, that I would not, for all thy fair brother's earldoms, have our men other than blithe tonight."

Harold answered not, but moved on, and coming then within full sight of the bold Saxons of Kent, the unmixed sons of the Saxon soil, and the special favourers of the House of Godwin, so affectionate, hearty, and cordial was their joyous shout of his name, that he felt his kingly heart leap within him. Dismounting, he entered the circle, and with the august frankness of a noble chief, nobly popular, gave to all cheering smile and animating word. That done, he said more gravely: "In less than an hour, all wassail must cease,--my bodes will come round; and then sound sleep, my brave merry men, and lusty rising with the lark!"

"As you will, as you will, dear our King," cried Vebba, as spokesman for the soldiers. "Fear us not--life and death, we are yours."

"Life and death yours, and freedom's," cried the Kent men.

Coming now towards the royal tent beside the standard, the discipline was more perfect, and the hush decorous. For round that standard were both the special body-guard of the King, and the volunteers from London and Middlesex; men more intelligent than the bulk of the army, and more gravely aware, therefore, of the might of the Norman sword.

Harold entered his tent, and threw himself on his couch, in deep reverie; his brothers and Haco watched him silently. At length, Gurth approached; and, with a reverence rare in the familiar intercourse between the two, knelt at his brother's side, and taking Harold's hand in his, looked him full in the face, his eyes moist with tears, and said thus:

"Oh, Harold! never prayer have I asked of thee, that thou hast not granted: grant me this! sorest of all, it may be, to grant, but most fitting of all for me to press. Think not, O beloved brother, O honoured King, think not that it is with slighting reverence, that I lay rough hand on the wound deepest at thy heart. But, however surprised or compelled, sure it is that thou didst make oath to William, and upon the relics of saints; avoid this battle, for I see that thought is now within thy soul; that thought haunted thee in the words of the monk to-day; in the sight of that awful camp to-night;-- avoid this battle! and do not thyself stand in arms against the man to whom the oath was pledged!"

"Gurth, Gurth!" exclaimed Harold, pale and writhing.

"We," continued his brother, "we at least have taken no oath, no perjury is charged against us; vainly the thunders of the Vatican are launched on our heads. Our war is just: we but defend our country. Leave us, then, to fight to-morrow; thou retire towards London and raise fresh armies; if we win, the danger is past; if we lose, thou wilt avenge us. And England is not lost while thou survivest."

"Gurth, Gurth!" again exclaimed Harold, in a voice piercing in its pathos of reproach.

"Gurth counsels well," said Haco, abruptly; "there can be no doubt of the wisdom of his words. Let the King's kinsmen lead the troops; let the King himself with his guard hasten to London and ravage and lay waste the country as he retreats by the way [261]; so that even if William beat us, all supplies will fail him; he will be in a land without forage, and victory here will aid him nought; for you, my liege, will have a force equal to his own, ere he can march to the gates of London."

"Faith and troth, the young Haco speaks like a greybeard; he hath not lived in Rouen for nought," quoth Leofwine. "Hear him, my Harold, and leave us to shave the Normans yet more closely than the barber hath already shorn."

Harold turned ear and eye to each of the speakers, and, as Leofwine closed, he smiled.

"Ye have chid me well, kinsmen, for a thought that had entered into my mind ere ye spake"--

Gurth interrupted the King, and said anxiously:

"To retreat with the whole army upon London, and refuse to meet the Norman till with numbers more fairly matched!"

"That had been my thought," said Harold, surprised.

"Such for a moment, too, was mine," said Gurth, sadly; "but it is too late. Such a measure, now, would have all the disgrace of flight, and bring none of the profits of retreat. The ban of the Church would get wind; our priests, awed and alarmed, might wield it against us; the whole population would be damped and disheartened; rivals to the crown might start up; the realm be divided. No, it is impossible!"

"Impossible," said Harold, calmly. "And if the army cannot retreat, of all men to stand firm, surely it is the captain and the King. I, Gurth, leave others to dare the fate from which I fly! I give weight to the impious curse of the Pope, by shrinking from its idle blast! I confirm and ratify the oath, from which all law must absolve me, by forsaking the cause of the land, which I purify myself when I guard! I leave to others the agony of the martyrdom or the glory of the conquest! Gurth, thou art more cruel than the Norman! And I, son of Sweyn, I ravage the land committed to my charge, and despoil the fields which I cannot keep! Oh, Haco, that indeed were to be the traitor and the recreant! No, whatever the sin of my oath, never will I believe that Heaven can punish millions for the error of one man. Let the bones of the dead war against us; in life, they were men like ourselves, and no saints in the calendar so holy as the freemen who fight for their hearths and their altars. Nor do I see aught to alarm us even in these grave human odds. We have but to keep fast these entrenchments; preserve, man by man, our invincible line; and the waves will but split on our rock: ere the sun set to-morrow, we shall see the tide ebb, leaving, as waifs, but the dead of the baffled invader."

"Fare ye well, loving kinsmen; kiss me, my brothers; kiss me on the cheek, my Haco. Go now to your tents. Sleep in peace and wake with the trumpet to the gladness of noble war!"

Slowly the Earls left the King; slowest of all the lingering Gurth; and when all were gone, and Harold was alone, he threw round a rapid, troubled glance, and then, hurrying to the simple imageless crucifix that stood on its pedestal at the farther end of the tent, he fell on his knees, and faltered out, while his breast heaved, and his frame shook with the travail of his passion:

"If my sin be beyond a pardon, my oath without recall, on me, on me, O Lord of Hosts, on me alone the doom. Not on them, not on them--not on England!"

CHAPTER VII.

On the fourteenth of October, 1066, the day of St. Calixtus, the Norman force was drawn out in battle array. Mass had been said; Odo and the Bishop of Coutance had blessed the troops; and received their vow never more to eat flesh on the anniversary of that day. And Odo

had mounted his snow-white charger, and already drawn up the cavalry against the coming of his brother the Duke. The army was marshalled in three great divisions.

Roger de Montgomeri and William Fitzosborne led the first; and with them were the forces from Picardy and the countship of Boulogne, and the fiery Franks; Geoffric Martel and the German Hugues (a prince of fame); Aimeri, Lord of Thouars, and the sons of Alain Fergant, Duke of Bretagne, led the second, which comprised the main bulk of the allies from Bretagne, and Maine, and Poitou. But both these divisions were intermixed with Normans, under their own special Norman chiefs.

The third section embraced the flower of martial Europe, the most renowned of the Norman race; whether those knights bore the French titles into which their ancestral Scandinavian names had been transformed--Sires of Beaufou and Harcourt, Abbeville, and de Molun, Montfichet, Grantmesnil, Lacie, D'Aincourt, and D'Asnieres;--or whether, still preserving, amidst their daintier titles, the old names that had scattered dismay through the seas of the Baltic; Osborne and Tonstain, Mallet and Bulver, Brand and Bruse [262]. And over this division presided Duke William. Here was the main body of the matchless cavalry, to which, however, orders were given to support either of the other sections, as need might demand. And with this body were also the reserve. For it is curious to notice, that William's strategy resembled in much that of the last great Invader of Nations--relying first upon the effect of the charge; secondly, upon a vast reserve brought to bear at the exact moment on the weakest point of the foe.

All the horsemen were in complete link or net mail [263], armed with spears and strong swords, and long, pear-shaped shields, with the device either of a cross or a dragon [264]. The archers, on whom William greatly relied, were numerous in all three of the corps [265], were armed more lightly--helms on their heads, but with leather or quilted breastplates, and "panels," or gaiters, for the lower limbs.

But before the chiefs and captains rode to their several posts they assembled round William, whom Fitzosborne had called betimes, and who had not yet endued his heavy mail, that all men might see suspended from his throat certain relics chosen out of those on which Harold had pledged his fatal oath. Standing on an eminence in front of all his lines, the consecrated banner behind him, and Bayard, his Spanish destrier, held by his squires at his side, the Duke conversed cheerily with his barons, often pointing to the relics. Then, in sight of all, he put on his mail, and, by the haste of his squires, the back-piece was presented to him first. The superstitious Normans recoiled as at an evil omen.

"Tut!" said the ready chief; "not in omens and divinations, but in God, trust I! Yet, good omen indeed is this, and one that may give heart to the most doubtful; for it betokens that the last shall be first--the dukedom a kingdom--the count a king! Ho there, Rou de Terni, as Hereditary Standard-bearer take thy right, and hold fast to yon holy gonfanon."

"Grant merci," said De Terni, "not to-day shall a standard be borne by me, for I shall have need of my right arm for my sword, and my left for my charger's rein and my trusty shield."

"Thou sayest right, and we can ill spare such a warrior. Gautier Giffart, Sire de Longueville, to thee is the gonfanon."

"Beau Sire," answered Gautier; "par Dex, Merci. But my head is grey and my arm weak; and the little strength left me I would spend in smiting the English at the head of my men."

"Per la resplendar De," cried William, frowning;--"do ye think, my proud vavasours, to fail me in this great need?"

"Nay," said Gautier; "but I have a great host of chevaliers and paid soldiers, and without the old man at their head will they fight as well?"

"Then, approach thou, Tonstain le Blanc, son of Rou," said William; "and be thine the charge of a standard that shall wave ere nightfall over the brows of thy--King!" A young knight, tall and strong as his Danish ancestor, stepped forth, and laid gripe on the banner.

Then William, now completely armed, save his helmet, sprang at one bound on his steed. A shout of admiration rang from the Quens and knights.

"Saw ye ever such beau rei?" [266] said the Vicomte de Thouars.

The shout was caught by the lines, and echoed afar, wide, and deep through the armament, as in all his singular majesty of brow and mien, William rode forth: lifting his hand, the shout hushed, and thus he spoke "loud as a trumpet with a silver sound."

"Normans and soldiers, long renowned in the lips of men, and now hallowed by the blessing of the Church!--I have not brought you over the wide seas for my cause alone; what I gain, ye gain. If I take the land, you will share it. Fight your best, and spare not; no retreat, and no quarter! I am not come here for my cause alone, but to avenge our whole nation for the felonies of yonder English. They butchered our kinsmen the Danes, on the night of St. Brice; they murdered Alfred, the brother of their last King, and decimated the Normans who were with him. Yonder they stand,--malefactors that await their doom! and ye the doomsmen! Never, even in a good cause, were yon English illustrious for warlike temper and martial glory [267]. Remember how easily the Danes subdued them! Are ye less than Danes, or I than Canute? By victory ye obtain vengeance, glory, honours, lands, spoil,--aye, spoil beyond your wildest dreams. By defeat,--yea, even but by loss of ground, ye are given up to the sword! Escape there is not, for the ships are useless. Before you the foe, behind you the ocean. Normans, remember the feats of your countrymen in Sicily! Behold a Sicily more rich! Lordships and lands to the living,--glory and salvation to those who die under the gonfanon of the Church! On, to the cry of the Norman warrior; the cry before which have fled so often the prowdest Paladins of Burgundy and France--'Notre Dame et Dex aide!'" [268]

Meanwhile, no less vigilant, and in his own strategy no less skilful, Harold had marshalled his men. He formed two divisions; those in front of the entrenchments; those within it. At the first, the men of Kent, as from time immemorial, claimed the honour of the van, under "the Pale Charger,"--famous banner of Hengist. This force was drawn up in the form of the Anglo-Danish wedge; the foremost lines in the

triangle all in heavy mail, armed with their great axes, and covered by their immense shields. Behind these lines, in the interior of the wedge, were the archers, protected by the front rows of the heavy armed; while the few horsemen--few indeed compared with the Norman cavalry--were artfully disposed where they could best harass and distract the formidable chivalry with which they were instructed to skirmish, and not peril actual encounter. Other bodies of the light armed; slingers, javelin throwers, and archers, were planted in spots carefully selected, according as they were protected by trees, bushwood, and dykes. The Northumbrians (that is, all the warlike population, north the Humber, including Yorkshire, Westmoreland, Cumberland, etc.), were, for their present shame and future ruin, absent from that field, save, indeed, a few who had joined Harold in his march to London. But there were the mixed races of Hertfordshire and Essex, with the pure Saxons of Sussex and Surrey, and a large body of the sturdy Anglo-Danes from Lincolnshire, Ely and Norfolk. Men, too, there were, half of old British blood, from Dorset, Somerset, and Gloucester. And all were marshalled according to those touching and pathetic tactics which speak of a nation more accustomed to defend than to aggrieve. To that field the head of each family led his sons and kinsfolk; every ten families (or tything) were united under their own chosen captain. Every ten of these tythings had, again, some loftier chief, dear to the populace in peace; and so on the holy circle spread from household, hamlet, town,--till, all combined, as one county under one Earl, the warriors fought under the eyes of their own kinsfolk, friends, neighbours, chosen chiefs! What wonder that they were brave?

The second division comprised Harold's house-carles, or bodyguard,--the veterans especially attached to his family,--the companions of his successful wars,--a select band of the martial East-Anglians,--the soldiers supplied by London and Middlesex, and who, both in arms, discipline, martial temper and athletic habits, ranked high among the most stalwart of the troops, mixed, as their descent was, from the warlike Dane and the sturdy Saxon. In this division, too, was comprised the reserve. And it was all encompassed by the palisades and breastworks, to which were but three sorties, whence the defenders might sally, or through which at need the vanguard might secure a retreat. All the heavy armed had mail and shields similar to the Normans, though somewhat less heavy; the light armed had, some tunics of quilted linen, some of hide; helmets of the last material, spears, javelins, swords, and clubs. But the main arm of the host was in the great shield, and the great axe wielded by men larger in stature and stronger of muscle than the majority of the Normans, whose physical race had deteriorated partly by inter-marriage with the more delicate Frank, partly by the haughty disdain of foot exercise.

Mounting a swift and light steed, intended not for encounter (for it was the custom of English kings to fight on foot, in token that where they fought there was no retreat), but to bear the rider rapidly from line to line [269], King Harold rode to the front of the vanguard;--his brothers by his side. His head, like his great foe's, was bare, nor could there be a more striking contrast than that of the broad unwrinkled brow of the Saxon, with his fair locks, the sign of royalty and freedom, parted and falling over the collar of mail, the clear and steadfast eye of blue, the cheek somewhat hollowed by kingly cares, but flushed now with manly pride--the form stalwart and erect, but spare in its graceful symmetry, and void of all that theatric pomp of bearing which was assumed by William--no greater contrast could there

be than that which the simple earnest Hero-king presented, to the brow furrowed with harsh ire and politic wile, the shaven hair of monastic affectation, the dark, sparkling tiger eye, and the vast proportions that awed the gaze in the port and form of the imperious Norman. Deep and loud and hearty as the shout with which his armaments had welcomed William, was that which now greeted the King of the English host: and clear and full, and practised in the storm of popular assemblies, went his voice down the listening lines.

"This day, O friends and Englishmen, sons of our common land--this day ye fight for liberty. The Count of the Normans hath, I know, a mighty army; I disguise not its strength. That army he hath collected together, by promising to each man a share in the spoils of England. Already, in his court and his camp, he hath parcelled out the lands of this kingdom; and fierce are the robbers who fight for the hope of plunder! But he cannot offer to his greatest chief boons nobler than those I offer to my meanest freeman--liberty, and right, and law, in the soil of his fathers! Ye have heard of the miseries endured in the old time under the Dane, but they were slight indeed to those which ye may expect from the Norman. The Dane was kindred to us in language and in law, and who now can tell Saxon from Dane? But yon men would rule ye in a language ye know not, by a law that claims the crown as the right of the sword, and divides the land among the hirelings of an army. We baptized the Dane, and the Church tamed his fierce soul into peace; but yon men make the Church itself their ally, and march to carnage under the banner profaned to the foulest of human wrongs! Outscourings of all nations, they come against you: Ye fight as brothers under the eyes of your fathers and chosen chiefs; ye fight for the women ye would save from the ravisher; ye fight for the children ye would guard from eternal bondage; ye fight for the altars which yon banner now darkens! Foreign priest is a tyrant as ruthless and stern as ye shall find foreign baron and king! Let no man dream of retreat; every inch of ground that ye yield is the soil of your native land. For me, on this field I peril all. Think that mine eye is upon you wherever ye are. If a line waver or shrink, ye shall hear in the midst the voice of your King. Hold fast to your ranks, remember, such amongst you as fought with me against Hardrada,--remember that it was not till the Norsemen lost, by rash sallies, their serried array, that our arms prevailed against them. Be warned by their fatal error, break not the form of the battle; and I tell you on the faith of a soldier who never yet hath left field without victory,--that ye cannot be beaten. While I speak, the winds swell the sails of the Norse ships, bearing home the corpse of Hardrada. Accomplish this day the last triumph of England; add to these hills a new mount of the conquered dead! And when, in far times and strange lands, scald and scop shall praise the brave man for some valiant deed wrought in some holy cause, they shall say, 'He was brave as those who fought by the side of Harold, and swept from the sword of England the hosts of the haughty Norman.'"

Scarcely had the rapturous hurrahs of the Saxons closed on this speech, when full in sight, north-west of Hastings, came the first division of the Invader.

Harold remained gazing at them, and not seeing the other sections in movement, said to Gurth, "If these are all that they venture out, the day is ours."

"Look yonder!" said the sombre Haco, and he pointed to the long array

that now gleamed from the wood through which the Saxon kinsmen had passed the night before; and scarcely were these cohorts in view, than lo! from a third quarter advanced the glittering knighthood under the Duke. All three divisions came on in simultaneous assault, two on either wing of the Saxon vanguard, the third (the Norman) towards the entrenchments.

In the midst of the Duke's cohort was the sacred gonfanon, and in front of it and of the whole line, rode a strange warrior of gigantic height. And as he rode, the warrior sang:

"Chaunting loud the lusty strain
Of Roland and of Charlemain,
And the dead, who, deathless all,
Fell at famous Roncesval." [270]

And the knights, no longer singing hymn and litany, swelled, hoarse through their helmets, the martial chorus. This warrior, in front of the Duke and the horsemen, seemed beside himself with the joy of battle. As he rode, and as he chaunted, he threw up his sword in the air like a gleeman, catching it nimbly as it fell [271], and flourishing it wildly, till, as if unable to restrain his fierce exhilaration, he fairly put spurs to his horse, and, dashing forward to the very front of a detachment of Saxon riders, shouted:

"A Taillefer! a Taillefer!" and by voice and gesture challenged forth some one to single combat.

A fiery young thegn who knew the Romance tongue, started forth and crossed swords with the poet; but by what seemed rather a juggler's sleight of hand than a knight's fair fence, Taillefer, again throwing up and catching his sword with incredible rapidity, shore the unhappy Saxon from the helm to the chine, and riding over his corpse, shouting and laughing, he again renewed his challenge. A second rode forth and shared the same fate. The rest of the English horsemen stared at each other aghast; the shouting, singing, juggling giant seemed to them not knight, but demon; and that single incident, preliminary to all other battle, in sight of the whole field, might have sufficed to damp the ardour of the English, had not Leofwine, who had been despatched by the King with a message to the entrenchments, come in front of the detachment; and, his gay spirit roused and stung by the insolence of the Norman, and the evident dismay of the Saxon riders, without thought of his graver duties, he spurred his light half-mailed steed to the Norman giant; and, not even drawing his sword, but with his spear raised over his head, and his form covered by his shield, he cried in Romance tongue, "Go and chaunt to the foul fiend, O croaking minstrel!" Taillefer rushed forward, his sword shivered on the Saxon shield, and in the same moment he fell a corpse under the hoofs of his steed, transfixed by the Saxon spear.

A cry of woe, in which even William (who, proud of his poet's achievements, had pressed to the foremost line to see this new encounter) joined his deep voice, wailed through the Norman ranks; while Leofwine rode deliberately towards them, halted a moment, and then flung his spear in the midst with so deadly an aim, that a young knight, within two of William, reeled on his saddle, groaned, and fell.

"How like ye, O Normans, the Saxon gleeman?" said Leofwine, as he

turned slowly, regained the detachment, and bade them heed carefully the orders they had received, viz., to avoid the direct charge of the Norman horse, but to take every occasion to harass and divert the stragglers; and then blithely singing a Saxon stave, as if inspired by Norman minstrelsy, he rode into the entrenchments.

CHAPTER VIII.

The two brethren of Waltham, Osgood and Ailred, had arrived a little after daybreak at the spot in which, about half a mile, to the rear of Harold's palisades, the beasts of burden that had borne the heavy arms, missiles, luggage, and forage of the Saxon march, were placed in and about the fenced yards of a farm. And many human beings, of both sexes and various ranks, were there assembled, some in breathless expectation, some in careless talk, some in fervent prayer.

The master of the farm, his sons, and the able-bodied ceorls in his employ, had joined the forces of the King, under Gurth, as Earl of the county [272]. But many aged theowes, past military service, and young children, grouped around: the first, stolid and indifferent--the last, prattling, curious, lively, gay. There, too, were the wives of some of the soldiers, who, as common in Saxon expeditions, had followed their husbands to the field; and there, too, were the ladies of many a Hlaford in the neighbouring district, who, no less true to their mates than the wives of humbler men, were drawn by their English hearts to the fatal spot. A small wooden chapel, half decayed, stood a little behind, with its doors wide open, a sanctuary in case of need; and the interior was thronged with kneeling suppliants.

The two monks joined, with pious gladness, some of their sacred calling, who were leaning over the low wall, and straining their eyes towards the bristling field. A little apart from them, and from all, stood a female; the hood drawn over her face, silent in her unknown thoughts.

By and by, as the march of the Norman multitude sounded hollow, and the trumps, and the fifes, and the shouts, rolled on through the air, in many a stormy peal,--the two abbots in the Saxon camp, with their attendant monks, came riding towards the farm from the entrenchments.

The groups gathered round these new comers in haste and eagerness.

"The battle hath begun," said the Abbot of Hide, gravely. "Pray God for England, for never was its people in peril so great from man."

The female started and shuddered at those words.

"And the King, the King," she cried, in a sudden and thrilling voice; "where is he?--the King?"

"Daughter," said the abbot, "the King's post is by his standard; but I left him in the van of his troops. Where he may be now I know not. Wherever the foe presses sorest."

Then dismounting, the abbots entered the yard, to be accosted

instantly by all the wives, who deemed, poor souls, that the holy men must, throughout all the field, have seen their lords; for each felt as if God's world hung but on the single life in which each pale trembler lived.

With all their faults of ignorance and superstition, the Saxon churchmen loved their flocks; and the good abbots gave what comfort was in their power, and then passed into the chapel, where all who could find room followed them.

The war now raged.

The two divisions of the invading army that included the auxiliaries had sought in vain to surround the English vanguard, and take it in the rear: that noble phalanx had no rear. Deepest and strongest at the base of the triangle, everywhere front opposed the foe; shields formed a rampart against the dart--spears a palisade against the horse. While that vanguard maintained its ground, William could not pierce to the entrenchments, the strength of which, however, he was enabled to perceive. He now changed his tactics, joined his knighthood to the other sections, threw his hosts rapidly into many wings, and leaving broad spaces between his archers--who continued their fiery hail--ordered his heavy-armed foot to advance on all sides upon the wedge, and break its ranks for the awaiting charge of his horse.

Harold, still in the centre of the vanguard, amidst the men of Kent, continued to animate them all with voice and hand; and, as the Normans now closed in, he flung himself from his steed, and strode on foot, with his mighty battle-axe, to the spot where the rush was dreadest.

Now came the shock--the fight hand-to-hand: spear and lance were thrown aside, axe and sword rose and shone. But before the close-serried lines of the English, with their physical strength and veteran practice in their own special arm, the Norman foot were mowed as by the scythe. In vain, in the intervals, thundered the repeated charges of the fiery knights; in vain, throughout all, came the shaft and the bolt.

Animated by the presence of their King fighting amongst them as a simple soldier, but with his eye ever quick to foresee, his voice ever prompt to warn, the men of Kent swerved not a foot from their indomitable ranks. The Norman infantry wavered and gave way; on, step by step, still unbroken in array, pressed the English. And their cry, "Out! out! Holy Crosse!" rose high above the flagging sound of "Ha Rou! Ha Rou!--Notre Dame!"

"Per la resplendar De," cried William. "Our soldiers are but women in the garb of Normans. Ho, spears to the rescue! With me to the charge, Sires D'Aumale and De Littain--with me, gallant Bruse, and De Mortain; with me, De Grville and Grantmesnil--Dex aide! Notre Dame." And heading his prowdest knights, William came, as a thunderbolt, on the bills and shields. Harold, who scarce a minute before had been in a remoter rank, was already at the brunt of that charge. At his word down knelt the foremost line, leaving nought but their shields and their spear-points against the horse. While behind them, the axe in both hands, bent forward the soldiery in the second rank, to smite and to crush. And, from the core of the wedge, poured the shafts of the archers. Down rolled in the dust half the charge of those knights.

Bruse reeled on his saddle; the dread right hand of D'Aumale fell lopped by the axe; De Graville, hurled from his horse, rolled at the feet of Harold; and William, borne by his great steed and his colossal strength into the third rank--there dealt, right and left, the fierce strokes of his iron club, till he felt his horse sinking under him--and had scarcely time to back from the foe--scarcely time to get beyond reach of their weapons, ere the Spanish destrier, frightfully gashed through its strong mail, fell dead on the plain. His knights swept round him. Twenty barons leapt from selle to yield him their chargers. He chose the one nearest to hand, sprang to foot and to stirrup, and rode back to his lines. Meanwhile De Graville's casque, its strings broken by the shock, had fallen off, and as Harold was about to strike, he recognised his guest.

Holding up his hand to keep off the press of his men, the generous King said briefly: "Rise and retreat!--no time on this field for captor and captive. He whom thou hast called recreant knight, has been Saxon host. Thou hast fought by his side, thou shalt not die by his hand!--Go."

Not a word spoke De Graville; but his dark eye dwelt one minute with mingled pity and reverence on the King; then rising, he turned away; and slowly, as if he disdained to fly, strode back over the corpses of his countrymen.

"Stay, all hands!" cried the King to his archers; "yon man hath tasted our salt, and done us good service of old. He hath paid his weregeld."

Not a shaft was discharged.

Meanwhile, the Norman infantry, who had been before recoiling, no sooner saw their Duke (whom they recognised by his steed and equipment) fall on the ground, than, setting up a shout--"The Duke is dead!" they fairly turned round, and fled fast in disorder.

The fortune of the day was now well-nigh turned in favour of the Saxons; and the confusion of the Normans, as the cry of "The Duke is dead!" reached, and circled round, the host, would have been irrecoverable, had Harold possessed a cavalry fit to press the advantage gained, or had not William himself rushed into the midst of the fugitives, throwing his helmet back on his neck, showing his face, all animated with fierce valour and disdainful wrath, while he cried aloud:

"I live, ye varlets! Behold the face of a chief who never yet forgave coward! Ay, tremble more at me than at yon English, doomed and accursed as they be! Ye Normans, ye! I blush for you!" and striking the foremost in the retreat with the flat of his sword, chiding, stimulating, threatening, promising in a breath, he succeeded in staying the flight, reforming the lines, and dispelling the general panic. Then, as he joined his own chosen knights, and surveyed the field, he beheld an opening which the advanced position of the Saxon vanguard had left, and by which his knights might gain the entrenchments. He mused a moment, his face still bare, and brightening, as he mused. Looking round him, he saw Mallet de Graville, who had remounted, and said, shortly:

"Pardex, dear knight, we thought you already with St. Michael!--joy,

that you live yet to be an English earl. Look you, ride to Fitzosborne with the signal-word, 'Li Hardiz passent avant!' Off, and quick."

De Graville bowed, and darted across the plain.

"Now, my Quens and chevaliers," said William, gaily, as he closed his helmet, and took from his squire another spear; "now, I shall give ye the day's great pastime. Pass the word, Sire de Tancarville, to every horseman--'Charge!--to the Standard!'"

The word passed, the steeds bounded, and the whole force of William's knighthood, scouring the plain to the rear of the Saxon vanguard, made for the entrenchments.

At that sight, Harold, divining the object, and seeing this new and more urgent demand on his presence, halted the battalions over which he had presided, and, yielding the command to Leofwine, once more briefly but strenuously enjoined the troops to heed well their leaders, and on no account to break the wedge, in the form of which lay their whole strength, both against the cavalry and the greater number of the foe. Then mounting his horse, and attended only by Haco, he spurred across the plain, in the opposite direction to that taken by the Normans. In doing so, he was forced to make a considerable circuit towards the rear of the entrenchment, and the farm, with its watchful groups, came in sight. He distinguished the garbs of the women, and Haco said to him,--

"There wait the wives, to welcome the living victors."

"Or search their lords among the dead!" answered Harold. "Who, Haco, if we fall, will search for us?"

As the word left his lips, he saw, under a lonely thorn-tree, and scarce out of bowshot from the entrenchments, a woman seated. The King looked hard at the bended, hooded form.

"Poor wretch!" he murmured, "her heart is in the battle!" And he shouted aloud, "Farther off! farther off!--the war rushes hitherward!"

At the sound of that voice the woman rose, stretched her arms, and sprang forward. But the Saxon chiefs had already turned their faces towards the neighbouring ingress into the ramparts, and beheld not her movement, while the tramp of rushing chargers, the shout and the roar of clashing war, drowned the wail of her feeble cry:

"I have heard him again, again!" murmured the woman, "God be praised!" and she re-seated herself quietly under the lonely thorn.

As Harold and Haco sprang to their feet within the entrenchments, the shout of "the King--the King!--Holy Crosse!" came in time to rally the force at the farther end, now undergoing the full storm of the Norman chivalry.

The willow ramparts were already rent and hewed beneath the hoofs of horses and the clash of swords; and the sharp points on the frontals of the Norman destriers were already gleaming within the entrenchments, when Harold arrived at the brunt of action. The tide was then turned; not one of those rash riders left the entrenchments

they had gained; steel and horse alike went down beneath the ponderous battle-axes; and William, again foiled and baffled, drew off his cavalry with the reluctant conviction that those breastworks, so manned, were not to be won by horse. Slowly the knights retreated down the slope of the hillock, and the English, animated by that sight, would have left their stronghold to pursue, but for the warning cry of Harold. The interval in the strife thus gained was promptly and vigorously employed in repairing the palisades. And this done, Harold, turning to Haco, and the thegns round him, said joyously:

"By Heaven's help we shall yet win this day. And know you not that it is my fortunate day--the day on which, hitherto, all hath prospered with me, in peace and in war--the day of my birth?"

"Of your birth!" echoed Haco in surprise. "Ay--did you not know it?"

"Nay!--strange!--it is also the birthday of Duke William! What would astrologers say to the meeting of such stars?" [273]

Harold's cheek paled, but his helmet concealed the paleness:--his arm drooped. The strange dream of his youth again came distinct before him, as it had come in the hall of the Norman at the sight of the ghastly relics;--again he saw the shadowy hand from the cloud--again heard the voice murmuring: "Lo, the star that shone on the birth of the victor;" again he heard the words of Hilda interpreting the dream --again the chaunt which the dead or the fiend had poured from the rigid lips of the Vala. It boomed on his ear; hollow as a death bell it knelled through the roar of battle--

"Never
Crown and brow shall Force dissever,
Till the dead men, unforgiving,
Loose the war-steeds on the living;
Till a sun whose race is ending
Sees the rival stars contending,
Where the dead men, unforgiving,
Wheel their war-steeds round the living!"

Faded the vision, and died the chaunt, as a breath that dims, and vanishes from, the mirror of steel. The breath was gone--the firm steel was bright once more; and suddenly the King was recalled to the sense of the present hour, by shouts and cries, in which the yell of Norman triumph predominated, at the further end of the field. The signal words to Fitzosborne had conveyed to that chief the order for the mock charge on the Saxon vanguard, to be followed by the feigned flight; and so artfully had this stratagem been practised, that despite all the solemn orders of Harold, despite even the warning cry of Leofwine, who, rash and gay-hearted though he was, had yet a captain's skill--the bold English, their blood heated by long contest and seeming victory, could not resist pursuit. They rushed forward impetuously, breaking the order of their hitherto indomitable phalanx, and the more eagerly because the Normans had unwittingly taken their way towards a part of the ground concealing dykes and ditches, into which the English trusted to precipitate the foe. It was as William's knights retreated from the breastworks that this fatal error was committed: and pointing toward the disordered Saxons with a wild laugh of revengeful joy, William set spurs to his horse, and, followed by all his chivalry, joined the cavalry of Poitou and Boulogne in their swoop upon the scattered array. Already the Norman infantry had

turned round--already the horses, that lay in ambush amongst the brushwood near the dykes, had thundered forth. The whole of the late impregnable vanguard was broken up, divided corps from corps,--hemmed in; horse after horse charging to the rear, to the front, to the flank, to the right, to the left.

Gurth, with the men of Surrey and Sussex, had alone kept their ground, but they were now compelled to advance to the aid of their scattered comrades; and coming up in close order, they not only awhile stayed the slaughter, but again half turned the day. Knowing the country thoroughly, Gurth lured the foe into the ditches concealed within a hundred yards of their own ambush, and there the havoc of the foreigners was so great, that the hollows are said to have been literally made level with the plain by their corpses. Yet this combat, however fierce, and however skill might seek to repair the former error, could not be long maintained against such disparity of numbers. And meanwhile, the whole of the division under Geoffroi Martel, and his co-captains, had by a fresh order of William's occupied the space between the entrenchments and the more distant engagement; thus when Harold looked up, he saw the foot of the hillocks so lined with steel, as to render it hopeless that he himself could win to the aid of his vanguard. He set his teeth firmly, looked on, and only by gesture and smothered exclamations showed his emotions of hope and fear. At length he cried:

"Gallant Gurth! brave Leofwine, look to their pennons; right, right; well fought, sturdy Vebba! Ha! they are moving this way. The wedge cleaves on--it cuts its path through the heart of the foe." And indeed, the chiefs now drawing off the shattered remains of their countrymen, still disunited, but still each section shaping itself wedge-like,--on came the English, with their shields over their head, through the tempest of missiles, against the rush of the steeds, here and there, through the plains, up the slopes, towards the entrenchment, in the teeth of the formidable array of Martel, and harassed behind by hosts that seemed numberless. The King could restrain himself no longer. He selected five hundred of his bravest and most practised veterans, yet comparatively fresh, and commanding the rest to stay firm, descended the hills, and charged unexpectedly into the rear of the mingled Normans and Bretons.

This sortie, well-timed though desperate, served to cover and favour the retreat of the straggling Saxons. Many, indeed, were cut off, but Gurth, Leofwine, and Vebba hewed the way for their followers to the side of Harold, and entered the entrenchments, close followed by the nearer foe, who were again repulsed amidst the shouts of the English.

But, alas! small indeed the band thus saved, and hopeless the thought that the small detachments of English still surviving and scattered over the plain, would ever win to their aid.

Yet in those scattered remnants were, perhaps, almost the only men who, availing themselves of their acquaintance with the country, and despairing of victory, escaped by flight from the Field of SANGUELAC. Nevertheless, within the entrenchments not a man had lost heart; the day was already far advanced, no impression had been yet made on the outworks, the position seemed as impregnable as a fortress of stone; and, truth to say, even the bravest Normans were disheartened, when they looked to that eminence which had foiled the charge of William himself. The Duke, in the recent melee, had received more than one

wound, his third horse that day had been slain under him. The slaughter among the knights and nobles had been immense, for they had exposed their persons with the most desperate valour. And William, after surveying the rout of nearly one half of the English army, heard everywhere, to his wrath and his shame, murmurs of discontent and dismay at the prospect of scaling the heights, in which the gallant remnant had found their refuge. At this critical juncture, Odo of Bayeux, who had hitherto remained in the rear [274], with the crowds of monks that accompanied the armament, rode into the full field, where all the hosts were reforming their lines. He was in complete mail, but a white surplice was drawn over the steel, his head was bare, and in his right hand he bore the crozier. A formidable club swung by a leathern noose from his wrist, to be used only for self-defence: the canons forbade the priest to strike merely in assault.

Behind the milk-white steed of Odo came the whole body of reserve, fresh and unbreathed, free from the terrors of their comrades, and stung into proud wrath at the delay of the Norman conquest.

"How now--how now!" cried the prelate; "do ye flag? do ye falter when the sheaves are down, and ye have but to gather up the harvest? How now, sons of the Church! warriors of the Cross! avengers of the Saints! Desert your Count, if ye please; but shrink not back from a Lord mightier than man. Lo, I come forth, to ride side by side with my brother, bareheaded, the crozier in my hand. He who fails his liege is but a coward--he who fails the Church is apostate!"

The fierce shout of the reserve closed this harangue, and the words of the prelate, as well as the physical aid he brought to back them, renewed the army. And now the whole of William's mighty host, covering the field, till its lines seemed to blend with the grey horizon, came on serried, steadied, orderly--to all sides of the entrenchment. Aware of the inutility of his horse, till the breastworks were cleared, William placed in the van all his heavy armed foot, spearmen, and archers, to open the way through the palisades, the sorties from which had now been carefully closed.

As they came up the hills, Harold turned to Haco and said: "Where is thy battle-axe?"

"Harold," answered Haco, with more than his usual tone of sombre sadness, "I desire now to be thy shield-bearer, for thou must use thine axe with both hands while the day lasts, and thy shield is useless. Wherefore thou strike, and I will shield thee."

"Thou lovest me, then, son of Sweyn; I have sometimes doubted it."

"I love thee as the best part of my life, and with thy life ceases mine: it is my heart that my shield guards when it covers the breast of Harold."

"I would bid thee live, poor youth," whispered Harold; "but what were life if this day were lost? Happy, then, will be those who die!"

Scarce had the words left his lips ere he sprang to the breastworks, and with a sudden sweep of his axe, down dropped a helm that peered above them. But helm after helm succeeds. Now they come on, swarm upon swarm, as wolves on a traveller, as bears round a bark. Countless, amidst their carnage, on they come! The arrows of the

Norman blacken the air: with deadly precision, to each arm, each limb, each front exposed above the bulwarks whirrs the shaft. They clamber the palisades, the foremost fall dead under the Saxon axe; new thousands rush on: vain is the might of Harold, vain had been a Harold's might in every Saxon there! The first row of breastworks is forced--it is trampled, hewed, crushed down, cumbered with the dead. "Ha Rou! Ha Rou! Notre Dame! Notre Dame!" sounds joyous and shrill, the chargers snort and leap, and charge into the circle. High wheels in air the great mace of William; bright by the slaughterers flashes the crozier of the Church.

"On, Normans!--Earldom and land!" cries the Duke.

"On, Sons of the Church! Salvation and heaven!" shouts the voice of Odo.

The first breastwork down--the Saxons yielding inch by inch, foot by foot, are pressed, crushed back, into the second enclosure. The same rush, and swarm, and fight, and cry, and roar--The second enclosure gives way. And now in the centre of the third--lo, before the eyes of the Normans, towers proudly aloft, and shines in the rays of the westering sun, brodered with gold, and, blazing with mystic gems, the standard of England's King! And there, are gathered the reserve of the English host; there, the heroes who had never yet known defeat--unwearied they by the battle--vigorous, high-hearted still; and round them the breastworks were thicker, and stronger, and higher, and fastened by chains to pillars of wood and staves of iron, with the waggons and carts of the baggage, and piled logs of timber-barricades at which even William paused aghast, and Odo stifled an exclamation that became not a priestly lip.

Before that standard, in the front of the men, stood Gurth, and Leofwine, and Haco, and Harold, the last leaning for rest upon his axe, for he was sorely wounded in many places, and the blood oozed through the links of his mail.

Live, Harold; live yet, and Saxon England shall not die!

The English archers had at no time been numerous; most of them had served with the vanguard, and the shafts of those within the ramparts were spent; so that the foe had time to pause and to breathe. The Norman arrows meanwhile flew fast and thick, but William noted to his grief that they struck against the tall breastworks and barricades, and so failed in the slaughter they should inflict.

He mused a moment, and sent one of his knights to call to him three of the chiefs of the archers. They were soon at the side of his destrier.

"See ye not, maladroits," said the Duke, "that your shafts and bolts fall harmless on those ozier walls? Shoot in the air; let the arrow fall perpendicular on those within--fall as the vengeance of the saints falls--direct from heaven! Give me thy bow, Archer,--thus." He drew the bow as he sate on his steed, the arrow flashed up, and descended in the heart of the reserve, within a few feet of the standard.

"So; that standard be your mark," said the Duke, giving back the bow.

The archers withdrew. The order circulated through their bands, and in a few moments more down came the iron rain. It took the English host as by surprise, piercing hide cap, and even iron helm; and in the very surprise that made them instinctively look up--death came.

A dull groan as from many hearts boomed from the entrenchments on the Norman ear.

"Now," said William, "they must either use their shields to guard their heads--and their axes are useless--or while they smite with the axe they fall by the shaft. On now to the ramparts. I see my crown already resting on yonder standard!"

Yet despite all, the English bear up; the thickness of the palisades, the comparative smallness of the last enclosure, more easily therefore manned and maintained by the small force of the survivors, defy other weapons than those of the bow. Every Norman who attempts to scale the breastwork is slain on the instant, and his body cast forth under the hoofs of the baffled steeds. The sun sinks near and nearer towards the red horizon.

"Courage!" cries the voice of Harold, "hold but till nightfall, and ye are saved. Courage and freedom!"

"Harold and Holy Crosse!" is the answer.

Still foiled, William again resolves to hazard his fatal stratagem. He marked that quarter of the enclosure which was most remote from the chief point of attack--most remote from the provident watch of Harold, whose cheering voice, ever and anon, he recognised amidst the hurtling clamour. In this quarter the palisades were the weakest, and the ground the least elevated; but it was guarded by men on whose skill with axe and shield Harold placed the firmest reliance--the Anglo-Danes of his old East-Anglian earldom. Thither, then, the Duke advanced a chosen column of his heavy-armed foot, tutored especially by himself in the rehearsals of his favourite ruse, and accompanied by a band of archers; while at the same time, he himself, with his brother Odo, headed a considerable company of knights under the son of the great Roger de Beaumont, to gain the contiguous level heights on which now stretches the little town of "Battle;" there to watch and to aid the manoeuvre. The foot column advanced to the appointed spot, and after a short, close, and terrible conflict, succeeded in making a wide breach in the breastworks. But that temporary success only animates yet more the exertions of the beleaguered defenders, and swarming round the breach, and pouring through it, line after line of the foe drop beneath their axes. The column of the heavy-armed Normans fall back down the slopes--they give way--they turn in disorder--they retreat--they fly; but the archers stand firm, midway on the descent--those archers seem an easy prey to the English--the temptation is irresistible. Long galled, and harassed, and maddened by the shafts, the Anglo-Danes rushed forth at the heels of the Norman swordsmen, and sweeping down to exterminate the archers, the breach that they leave gapes wide.

"Forward," cries William, and he gallops towards the breach.

"Forward," cries Odo, "I see the hands of the holy saints in the air! Forward! it is the Dead that wheel our war-steeds round the living!"

On rush the Norman knights. But Harold is already in the breach, rallying around him hearts eager to replace the shattered breastworks.

"Close shields! Hold fast!" shouts his kingly voice. Before him were the steeds of Bruse and Grantmesnil. At his breast their spears:-- Haco holds over the breast the shield. Swinging aloft with both hands his axe, the spear of Grantmesnil is shivered in twain by the King's stroke. Cloven to the skull rolls the steed of Bruse. Knight and steed roll on the bloody sward.

But a blow from the sword of De Lacy has broken down the guardian shield of Haco. The son of Sweyn is stricken to his knee. With lifted blades and whirling maces the Norman knights charge through the breach.

"Look up, look up, and guard thy head," cries the fatal voice of Haco to the King.

At that cry the King raises his flashing eyes. Why halts his stride? Why drops the axe from his hand? As he raised his head, down came the hissing death-shaft. It smote the lifted face; it crushed into the dauntless eyeball. He reeled, he staggered, he fell back several yards, at the foot of his gorgeous standard. With desperate hand he broke the head of the shaft, and left the barb, quivering in the anguish. Gurth knelt over him.

"Fight on," gasped the King, "conceal my death! Holy Crosse! England to the rescue! woe-woe!"

Rallying himself a moment, he sprang to his feet, clenched his right hand, and fell once more,--a corpse.

At the same moment a simultaneous rush of horsemen towards the standard bore back a line of Saxons, and covered the body of the King with heaps of the slain.

His helmet cloven in two, his face all streaming with blood, but still calm in its ghastly hues, amidst the foremost of those slain, fell the fated Haco. He fell with his head on the breast of Harold, kissed the bloody cheek with bloody lips, groaned, and died.

Inspired by despair with superhuman strength, Gurth, striding over the corpses of his kinsmen, opposed himself singly to the knights; and the entire strength of the English remnant, coming round him at the menaced danger to the standard, once more drove off the assailants.

But now all the enclosure was filled with the foe, the whole space seemed gay, in the darkening air, with banderols and banners. High, through all, rose the club of the Conqueror; high, through all, shone the crozier of the Churchman. Not one Englishman fled; all now centering round the standard, they fell, slaughtering if slaughtered. Man by man, under the charmed banner, fell the lithsmen of Hilda. Then died the faithful Sexwolf. Then died the gallant Godrith, redeeming, by the death of many a Norman, his young fantastic love of the Norman manners. Then died, last of such of the Kent-men as had won retreat from their scattered vanguard into the circle of closing slaughter, the English-hearted Vebba.

Even still in that age, when the Teuton had yet in his veins the blood

of Odin, the demi-god,--even still one man could delay the might of numbers. Through the crowd, the Normans beheld with admiring awe,--here, in the front of their horse, a single warrior, before whose axe spear shivered, helm drooped;--there, close by the standard, standing breast-high among the slain, one still more formidable, and even amidst ruin unvanquished. The first fell at length under the mace of Roger de Montgommeri. So, unknown to the Norman poet (who hath preserved in his verse the deeds but not the name), fell, laughing in death, young Leofwine! Still by the enchanted standard towers the other; still the enchanted standard waves aloft, with its brave ensign of the solitary "Fighting Man" girded by the gems that had flashed in the crown of Odin.

"Thine be the honour of lowering that haughty flag," cried William, turning to one of his favourite and most famous knights, Robert de Tessin.

Overjoyed, the knight rushed forth, to fall by the axe of that stubborn defender.

"Sorcery," cried Fitzosborne, "sorcery. This is no man, but fiend."

"Spare him, spare the brave," cried in a breath Bruse, D'Aincourt, and De Graville.

William turned round in wrath at the cry of mercy, and spurring over all the corpses, with the sacred banner borne by Tonstain close behind him, so that it shadowed his helmet,--he came to the foot of the standard, and for one moment there was single battle between the Knight-Duke and the Saxon hero. Nor, even then, conquered by the Norman sword, but exhausted by a hundred wounds, that brave chief fell [275], and the falchion vainly pierced him, falling. So, last man at the standard, died Gurth.

The sun had set, the first star was in heaven, the "Fighting Man" was laid low, and on that spot where now, all forlorn and shattered, amidst stagnant water, stands the altar-stone of Battle Abbey, rose the glittering dragon that surmounted the consecrated banner of the Norman victor.

CHAPTER IX.

Close by his banner, amidst the piles of the dead, William the Conqueror pitched his pavilion, and sate at meat. And over all the plain, far and near, torches were moving like meteors on a marsh; for the Duke had permitted the Saxon women to search for the bodies of their lords. And as he sate, and talked, and laughed, there entered the tent two humble monks: their lowly mien, their dejected faces, their homely serge, in mournful contrast to the joy and the splendour of the Victory-Feast.

They came to the Conqueror, and knelt.

"Rise up, sons of the Church," said William, mildly, "for sons of the Church are we! Deem not that we shall invade the rights of the

religion which we have come to avenge. Nay, on this spot we have already sworn to build an abbey that shall be the proudest in the land, and where masses shall be sung evermore for the repose of the brave Normans who fell in this field, and for mine and my consort's soul."

"Doubtless," said Odo, sneering, "the holy men have heard already of this pious intent, and come to pray for cells in the future abbey."

"Not so," said Osgood, mournfully, and in barbarous Norman; "we have our own beloved convent at Waltham, endowed by the prince whom thine arms have defeated. We come to ask but to bury in our sacred cloisters the corpse of him so lately King over all England--our benefactor, Harold."

The Duke's brow fell.

"And see," said Ailred, eagerly, as he drew out a leathern pouch, "we have brought with us all the gold that our poor crypts contained, for we misdoubted this day," and he poured out the glittering pieces at the Conqueror's feet.

"No!" said William, fiercely, "we take no gold for a traitor's body; no, not if Githa, the usurper's mother, offered us its weight in the shining metal; unburied be the Accursed of the Church, and let the birds of prey feed their young with his carcase!"

Two murmurs, distinct in tone and in meaning, were heard in that assembly: the one of approval from fierce mercenaries, insolent with triumph; the other of generous discontent and indignant amaze, from the large majority of Norman nobles.

But William's brow was still dark, and his eye still stern; for his policy confirmed his passions; and it was only by stigmatising, as dishonoured and accursed, the memory and cause of the dead King, that he could justify the sweeping spoliation of those who had fought against himself, and confiscate the lands to which his own Quens and warriors looked for their reward.

The murmurs had just died into a thrilling hush, when a woman, who had followed the monks unperceived and unheeded, passed with a swift and noiseless step to the Duke's foot-stool; and, without bending knee to the ground, said, in a voice which, though low, was heard by all:

"Norman, in the name of the women of England, I tell thee that thou darest not do this wrong to the hero who died in defence of their hearths and their children!"

Before she spoke she had thrown back her hood; her hair dishevelled, fell over her shoulders, glittering like gold, in the blaze of the banquet-lights; and that wondrous beauty, without parallel amidst the dames of England, shone like the vision of an accusing angel, on the eyes of the startled Duke, and the breathless knights. But twice in her life Edith beheld that awful man. Once, when roused from her reverie of innocent love by the holiday pomp of his trumps and banners, the childlike maid stood at the foot of the grassy knoll; and once again, when in the hour of his triumph, and amidst the wrecks of England on the field of Sanguelac, with a soul surviving the crushed and broken heart, the faith of the lofty woman defended the Hero Dead.

There, with knee unbent, and form unquailing, with marble cheek, and haughty eye, she faced the Conqueror; and, as she ceased, his noble barons broke into bold applause.

"Who art thou?" said William, if not daunted at least amazed.
"Methinks I have seen thy face before; thou art not Harold's wife or sister?"

"Dread lord," said Osgood; "she was the betrothed of Harold; but, as within the degrees of kin, the Church forbade their union, and they obeyed the Church."

Out from the banquet-throng stepped Mallet de Graville. "O my liege," said he "thou hast promised me lands and earldom; instead of these gifts undeserved, bestow on me the right to bury and to honour the remains of Harold; today I took from him my life, let me give all I can in return--a grave!"

William paused, but the sentiment of the assembly, so clearly pronounced, and, it may be, his own better nature, which, ere polluted by plotting craft, and hardened by despotic ire, was magnanimous and heroic, moved and won him. "Lady," said he, gently, "thou appealest not in vain to Norman knighthood: thy rebuke was just; and I repent me of a hasty impulse. Mallet de Graville, thy prayer is granted; to thy choice be consigned the place of burial, to thy care the funeral rites of him whose soul hath passed out of human judgment."

The feast was over; William the Conqueror slept on his couch, and round him slumbered his Norman knights, dreaming of baronies to come; and still the torches moved dismally to and fro the waste of death, and through the hush of night was heard near and far the wail of women.

Accompanied by the brothers of Waltham, and attended by link-bearers, Mallet de Graville was yet engaged in the search for the royal dead--and the search was vain. Deeper and stiller, the autumnal moon rose to its melancholy noon, and lent its ghastly aid to the glare of the redder lights. But, on leaving the pavilion, they had missed Edith; she had gone from them alone, and was lost in that dreadful wilderness. And Ailred said despondingly:

"Perchance we may already have seen the corpse we search for, and not recognised it; for the face may be mutilated with wounds. And therefore it is that Saxon wives and mothers haunt our battle-fields, discovering those they search by signs not known without the household." [276]

"Ay," said the Norman, "I comprehend thee, by the letter or device, in which, according to your customs, your warriors impress on their own forms some token of affection, or some fancied charm against ill."

"It is so," answered the monk; "wherefore I grieve that we have lost the guidance of the maid."

While thus conversing, they had retraced their steps, almost in despair, towards the Duke's pavilion.

"See," said De Graville, "how near yon lonely woman hath come to the

tent of the Duke--yea, to the foot of the holy gonfanon, which supplanted 'the Fighting Man!' pardex, my heart bleeds to see her striving to lift up the heavy dead!"

The monks neared the spot, and Osgood exclaimed in a voice almost joyful:

"It is Edith the Fair! This way, the torches! hither, quick!"

The corpses had been flung in irreverent haste from either side of the gonfanon, to make room for the banner of the conquest, and the pavilion of the feast. Huddled together, they lay in that holy bed. And the woman silently, and by the help of no light save the moon, was intent on her search. She waved her hand impatiently as they approached, as if jealous of the dead; but as she had not sought, so neither did she oppose, their aid. Moaning low to herself, she desisted from her task, and knelt watching them, and shaking her head mournfully, as they removed helm after helm, and lowered the torches upon stern and livid brows. At length the lights fell red and full on the ghastly face of Haco--proud and sad as in life.

De Graville uttered an exclamation: "The King's nephew: be sure the King is near!"

A shudder went over the woman's form, and the moaning ceased.

They unhelmed another corpse; and the monks and the knight, after one glance, turned away sickened and awe-stricken at the sight: for the face was all defeatured and mangled with wounds; and nought could they recognise save the ravaged majesty of what had been man. But at the sight of that face a wild shriek broke from Edith's heart.

She started to her feet--put aside the monks with a wild and angry gesture, and bending over the face, sought with her long hair to wipe from it the clotted blood; then with convulsive fingers, she strove to loosen the buckler of the breast-mail. The knight knelt to assist her. "No, no," she gasped out. "He is mine--mine now!"

Her hands bled as the mail gave way to her efforts; the tunic beneath was all dabbled with blood. She rent the folds, and on the breast, just above the silenced heart, were punctured in the old Saxon letters; the word "EDITH;" and just below, in characters more fresh, the word "ENGLAND."

"See, see!" she cried in piercing accents; and, clasping the dead in her arms, she kissed the lips, and called aloud, in words of the tenderest endearments, as if she addressed the living. All there knew then that the search was ended; all knew that the eyes of love had recognised the dead.

"Wed, wed," murmured the betrothed; "wed at last! O Harold, Harold! the words of the Vala were true--and Heaven is kind!" and laying her head gently on the breast of the dead, she smiled and died.

At the east end of the choir in the Abbey of Waltham, was long shown the tomb of the Last Saxon King, inscribed with the touching words--"Harold Infelix." But not under that stone, according to the chronicler who should best know the truth [277], mouldered the dust of him in whose grave was buried an epoch in human annals.

"Let his corpse," said William the Norman, "let his corpse guard the coasts, which his life madly defended. Let the seas wail his dirge, and girdle his grave; and his spirit protect the land which hath passed to the Norman's sway."

And Mallet de Graville assented to the word of his chief, for his knightly heart turned into honour the latent taunt; and well he knew, that Harold could have chosen no burial spot so worthy his English spirit and his Roman end.

The tomb at Waltham would have excluded the faithful ashes of the betrothed, whose heart had broken on the bosom she had found; more gentle was the grave in the temple of heaven, and hallowed by the bridal death-dirge of the everlasting sea.

So, in that sentiment of poetry and love, which made half the religion of a Norman knight, Mallet de Graville suffered death to unite those whom life had divided. In the holy burial-ground that encircled a small Saxon chapel, on the shore, and near the spot on which William had leapt to land, one grave received the betrothed; and the tomb of Waltham only honoured an empty name. [278]

Eight centuries have rolled away, and where is the Norman now? or where is not the Saxon? The little urn that sufficed for the mighty lord [279] is despoiled of his very dust; but the tombless shade of the kingly freeman still guards the coasts, and rests upon the seas. In many a noiseless field, with Thoughts for Armies, your relics, O Saxon Heroes, have won back the victory from the bones of the Norman saints; and whenever, with fairer fates, Freedom opposes Force, and Justice, redeeming the old defeat, smites down the armed Frauds that would consecrate the wrong,--smile, O soul of our Saxon Harold, smile, appeased, on the Saxon's land!

NOTES

NOTE (A)

There are various accounts in the Chroniclers as to the stature of William the First; some represent him as a giant, others as of just or middle height. Considering the vulgar inclination to attribute to a hero's stature the qualities of the mind (and putting out of all question the arguments that rest on the pretended size of the disburied bones--for which the authorities are really less respectable than those on which we are called upon to believe that the skeleton of the mythical Gawaine measured eight feet), we prefer that supposition, as to the physical proportions, which is most in harmony with the usual laws of Nature. It is rare, indeed, that a great intellect is found in the form of a giant.

NOTE (B)

Game Laws before the Conquest.

Under the Saxon kings a man might, it is true, hunt in his own grounds, but that was a privilege that could benefit few but thegns; and over cultivated ground or shire-land there was not the same sport to be found as in the vast wastes called forest-land, and which mainly belonged to the kings.

Edward declares, in a law recorded in a volume of the Exchequer, "I will that all men do abstain from hunting in my woods, and that my will shall be obeyed under penalty of life." [280]

Edgar, the darling monarch of the monks, and, indeed, one of the most popular of the Anglo-Saxon kings, was so rigorous in his forest-laws that the thegns murmured as well as the lower husbandmen, who had been accustomed to use the woods for pasturage and boschage. Canute's forest-laws were meant as a liberal concession to public feeling on the subject; they are more definite than Edgar's, but terribly stringent; if a freeman killed one of the king's deer, or struck his forester, he lost his freedom and became a penal serf (white theowe)--that is, he ranked with felons. Nevertheless, Canute allowed bishops, abbots, and thegns to hunt in his woods--a privilege restored by Henry III. The nobility, after the Conquest, being excluded from the royal chases, petitioned to enclose parks, as early even as the reign of William I.; and by the time of his son, Henry I., parks became so common as to be at once a ridicule and a grievance.

NOTE (C)

Belin's Gate.

Verstegan combats the Welsh antiquaries who would appropriate this gate to the British deity Bal or Beli; and says, if so, it would not have been called by a name half Saxon, half British, gate (geat) being Saxon; but rather Belinsport than Belinsgate. This is no very strong argument; for, in the Norman time, many compound words were half Norman, half Saxon. But, in truth, Belin was a Teuton deity, whose worship pervaded all Gaul; and the Saxons might either have continued, therefore, the name they found, or given it themselves from their own god. I am not inclined, however, to contend that any deity, Saxon or British, gave the name, or that Billing is not, after all, the right orthography. Billing, like all words ending in ing, has something very Danish in its sound; and the name is quite as likely to have been given by the Danes as by the Saxons.

NOTE (D)

The question whether or not real vineyards were grown, or real wine made from them, in England has been a very vexed question among the antiquaries. But it is scarcely possible to read Pegge's dispute with

Daines Barrington in the *Archaeologia* without deciding both questions in the affirmative.--See *Archaeol.* vol. iii. p. 53. An engraving of the Saxon wine-press is given in STRUTT's *Horda*.

Vineyards fell into disuse, either by treaty with France, or Gascony falling into the hands of the English. But vineyards were cultivated by private gentlemen as late as 1621. Our first wines from Bordeaux--the true country of Bacchus--appear to have been imported about 1154, by the marriage of Henry II. with Eleanor of Aquitaine.

NOTE (E)

Lanfranc, the first Anglo-Norman Archbishop of Canterbury.

Lanfranc was, in all respects, one of the most remarkable men of the eleventh century. He was born in Pavia, about 1105. His family was noble--his father ranked amongst the magistrature of Pavia, the Lombard capital. From his earliest youth he gave himself up, with all a scholar's zeal, to the liberal arts, and the special knowledge of law, civil and ecclesiastical. He studied at Cologne, and afterwards taught and practised law in his own country. "While yet extremely young," says one of the lively chroniclers, "he triumphed over the ablest advocates, and the torrents of his eloquence confounded the subtlest rhetorician." His decisions were received as authorities by the Italian jurisconsults and tribunals. His mind, to judge both by his history and his peculiar reputation (for probably few, if any, students of our day can pretend to more than a partial or superficial acquaintance with his writings), was one that delighted in subtleties and casuistical refinements; but a sense too large and commanding for those studies which amuse but never satisfy the higher intellect, became disgusted betimes with mere legal dialectics. Those grand and absorbing mysteries connected with the Christian faith and the Roman Church (grand and absorbing in proportion as their premises are taken by religious belief as mathematical axioms already proven) seized hold of his imagination, and tasked to the depth his inquisitive reason. The *Chronicle of Knyghton* cites an interesting anecdote of his life at this, its important, crisis. He had retired to a solitary spot, beside the Seine, to meditate on the mysterious essence of the Trinity, when he saw a boy ladling out the waters of the river that ran before him into a little well. His curiosity arrested, he asked "what the boy proposed to do?" The boy replied, "To empty yon deep into this well." "That canst thou never do," said the scholar. "Nor canst thou," answered the boy, "exhaust the deep on which thou dost meditate into the well of thy reason." Therewith the speaker vanished, and Lanfranc, resigning the hope to achieve the mighty mystery, threw himself at once into the arms of faith, and took his refuge in the monastery of Bec.

The tale may be a legend, but not an idle one. Perhaps he related it himself as a parable, and by the fiction explained the process of thought that decided his career. In the prime of his manhood, about 1042, when he was thirty-seven years old, and in the zenith of his scholarly fame, he professed. The Convent of Bee had been lately founded, under Herluin, the first abbot; there Lanfranc opened a school, which became one of the most famous throughout the west of Europe. Indeed, under the Lombard's influence, the then obscure

Convent of Bee, to which the solitude of the site and the poverty of the endowment allured his choice, grew the Academe of the age. "It was," says Oderic, in his charming chronicle, "it was under such a master that the Normans received their first notions of literature; from that school emerged the multitude of eloquent philosophers who adorned alike divinity and science. From France, Gascony, Bretagne, Flanders, scholars thronged to receive his lessons." [281]

At first, as superficially stated in the tale, Lanfranc had taken part against the marriage of William with Matilda of Flanders--a marriage clearly contrary to the formal canons of the Roman Church, and was banished by the fiery Duke; though William's displeasure gave way at "the decent joke" (*jocus decens*), recorded in the text. At Rome, however, his influence, arguments, and eloquence were all enlisted on the side of William: and it was to the scholar of Pavia that the great Norman owed the ultimate sanction of his marriage, and the repeal of the interdict that excommunicated his realm. [282]

At Rome he assisted in the council held 1059 (the year wherein the ban of the Church was finally and formally taken from Normandy), at which the famous Berenger, Archdeacon of Angers (against whom he had waged a polemical controversy that did more than all else to secure his repute at the Pontifical Court), abjured "his heresies" as to the Real Presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In 1062, or 1063, Duke William, against the Lombard's own will (for Lanfranc genuinely loved the liberty of letters more than vulgar power), raised him to the abbacy of St. Stephen of Caen. From that time, his ascendancy over his haughty lord was absolute. The contemporary historian (William of Poitiers), says that "William respected him as a father, venerated him as a preceptor, and cherished him as a brother or son." He confided to him his own designs; and committed to him the entire superintendence of the ecclesiastical orders throughout Normandy. Eminent no less for his practical genius in affairs, than for his rare piety and theological learning, Lanfranc attained indeed to the true ideal of the Scholar; to whom, of all men, nothing that is human should be foreign; whose closet is but a hermit's cell, unless it is the microcosm that embraces the mart and the forum; who by the reflective part of his nature seizes the higher region of philosophy--by the energetic, is attracted to the central focus of action. For scholarship is but the parent of ideas; and ideas are the parents of action.

After the conquest, as prelate of Canterbury, Lanfranc became the second man in the kingdom--happy, perhaps, for England had he been the first; for all the anecdotes recorded of him show a deep and genuine sympathy with the oppressed population. But William the King of the English escaped from the control which Lanfranc had imposed on the Duke of the Normans. The scholar had strengthened the aspirer; he could only imperfectly influence the conqueror.

Lanfranc was not, it is true, a faultless character. He was a priest, a lawyer, and a man of the world--three characters hard to amalgamate into perfection, especially in the eleventh century. But he stands in gigantic and brilliant contrast to the rest of our priesthood in his own day, both in the superiority of his virtues, and in his exemption from the ordinary vices. He regarded the cruelties of Odo of Bayeux with detestation, opposed him with firmness, and ultimately, to the joy of all England, ruined his power. He gave a great impetus to

learning; he set a high example to his monks, in his freedom from the mercenary sins of their order; he laid the foundations of a powerful and splendid church, which, only because it failed in future Lanfrancs, failed in effecting the civilisation of which he designed it to be the instrument. He refused to crown William Rufus, until that king had sworn to govern according to law and to right; and died, though a Norman usurper, honoured and beloved by the Saxon people.

Scholar, and morning star of light in the dark age of force and fraud, it is easier to praise thy life, than to track through the length of centuries all the measureless and invisible benefits which the life of one scholar bequeaths to the world--in the souls it awakens--in the thoughts it suggests! [283]

NOTE (F)

Edward the Confessor's reply to Magnus of Denmark who claimed his Crown.

On rare occasions Edward was not without touches of a brave kingly nature.

Snorro Sturleson gives us a noble and spirited reply of the Confessor to Magnus, who, as heir of Canute, claimed the English crown; it concludes thus:--"Now, he (Hardicanute) died, and then it was the resolution of all the people of the country to take me, for the king here in England. So long as I had no kingly title I served my superiors in all respects, like those who had no claims by birth to land or kingdom. Now, however, I have received the kingly title, and am consecrated king; I have established my royal dignity and authority, as my father before me; and while I live I will not renounce my title. If King Magnus comes here with an army, I will gather no army against him; but he shall only get the opportunity of taking England when he has taken my life. Tell him these words of mine." If we may consider this reply to be authentic, it is significant, as proof that Edward rests his title on the resolution of the people to take him for king; and counts as nothing, in comparison, his hereditary claims. This, together with the general tone of the reply, particularly the passage in which he implies that he trusts his defence not to his army but his people--makes it probable that Godwin dictated the answer; and, indeed, Edward himself could not have couched it, either in Saxon or Danish. But the King is equally entitled to the credit of it, whether he composed it, or whether he merely approved and sanctioned its gallant tone and its princely sentiment.

NOTE (G)

Heralds.

So much of the "pride, pomp, and circumstance" which invest the Age of Chivalry is borrowed from these companions of princes, and blazoners of noble deeds, that it may interest the reader, if I set briefly

before him what our best antiquaries have said as to their first appearance in our own history.

Camden (somewhat, I fear, too rashly) says, that "their reputation, honour, and name began in the time of Charlemagne." The first mention of heralds in England occurs in the reign of Edward III., a reign in which Chivalry was at its dazzling zenith. Whitlock says, "that some derive the name of Herald from Hereauld, "a Saxon word (old soldier, or old master), "because anciently they were chosen from veteran soldiers." Joseph Holland says, "I find that Malcolm, King of Scots, sent a herald unto William the Conqueror, to treat of a peace, when both armies were in order of battle." Agard affirms, that "at the conquest there was no practice of heraldry;" and observes truly, "that the Conqueror used a monk for his messenger to King Harold."

To this I may add, that monks or priests also fulfil the office of heralds in the old French and Norman Chronicles. Thus Charles the Simple sends an archbishop to treat with Rolfganger; Louis the Debonnair sends to Mormon, chief of the Bretons, "a sage and prudent abbot." But in the Saxon times, the nuncius (a word still used in heraldic Latin) was in the regular service both of the King and the great Earls. The Saxon name for such a messenger was bode, and when employed in hostile negotiations, he was styled warbode. The messengers between Godwin and the King would seem, by the general sense of the chronicles, to have been certain thegns acting as mediators.

NOTE (H)

The Fylgia, or Tutelary Spirit.

This lovely superstition in the Scandinavian belief is the more remarkable because it does not appear in the creed of the Germanic Teutons, and is closely allied with the good angel, or guardian genius, of the Persians. It forms, therefore, one of the arguments that favour the Asiatic origin of the Norsemen.

The Fylgia (following, or attendant, spirit) was always represented as a female. Her influence was not uniformly favourable, though such was its general characteristic. She was capable of revenge if neglected, but had the devotion of her sex when properly treated. Mr. Grenville Pigott, in his popular work, entitled "A Manual of Scandinavian Mythology," relates an interesting legend with respect to one of these supernatural ladies:

A Scandinavian warrior, Halfred Vandraedakald, having embraced Christianity, and being attacked by a disease which he thought mortal, was naturally anxious that a spirit who had accompanied him through his pagan career should not attend him into that other world, where her society might involve him in disagreeable consequences. The persevering Fylgia, however; in the shape of a fair maiden, walked on the waves of the sea after her viking's ship. She came thus in sight of all the crew; and Halfred, recognising his Fylgia, told her point blank that their connection was at an end for ever. The forsaken Fylgia had a high spirit of her own, and she then asked Thorold "if he would take her." Thorold ungallantly refused; but Halfred the younger

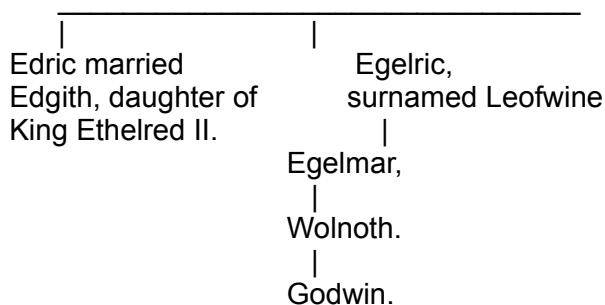
said, "Maiden, I will take thee." [284]

In the various Norse Saga there are many anecdotes of these spirits, who are always charming, because, with their less earthly attributes, they always blend something of the woman. The poetry embodied in their existence is of a softer and more humane character than that common with the stern and vast demons of the Scandinavian mythology.

NOTE (I)

The Origin of Earl Godwin.

Sharon Turner quotes from the Knytlinga Saga what he calls "an explanation of Godwin's career or parentage, which no other document affords;" viz.--"that Ulf, a Danish chief, after the battle of Skorstein, between Canute and Edmund Ironsides, pursued the English fugitives into a wood, lost his way, met, on the morning, a Saxon youth driving cattle to their pasture, asked him to direct him in safety to Canute's ships, and offered him the bribe of a gold ring for his guidance; the young herdsman refused the bribe, but sheltered the Dane in the cottage of his father (who is represented as a mere peasant), and conducted him the next morning to the Danish camp; previously to which, the youth's father represented to Ulf, that his son, Godwin, could never, after aiding a Dane to escape, rest in safety with his countrymen, and besought him to befriend his son's fortunes with Canute." The Dane promised, and kept his word; hence Godwin's rise. Thierry, in his "History of the Norman Conquest," tells the same story, on the authority of Torfaeus, Hist. Rer. Norweg. Now I need not say to any scholar in our early history, that the Norse Chronicles, abounding with romance and legend, are never to be received as authorities counter to our own records, though occasionally valuable to supply omissions in the latter; and, unfortunately for this pretty story, we have against it the direct statements of the very best authorities we possess, viz. The Saxon Chronicle and Florence Of Worcester. The Saxon Chronicle expressly tells us that Godwin's father was Childe of Sussex (Florence calls him minister or thegn of Sussex [285]), and that Wolnoth was nephew to Edric, the all-powerful Earl or Duke of Mercia. Florence confirms this statement, and gives the pedigree, which may be deduced as follows:



Thus this "old peasant," as the North Chronicles call Wolnoth, as, according to our most unquestionable authorities, a thegn of one of the most important divisions in England, and a member of the most powerful family in the kingdom! Now, if our Saxon authorities needed any aid from probabilities, it is scarcely worth asking, which is the

more probable, that the son of a Saxon herdsman should in a few years rise to such power as to marry the sister of the royal Danish Conqueror--or that that honour should be conferred on the most able member of a house already allied to Saxon royalty, and which evidently retained its power after the fall of its head, the treacherous Edric Streone! Even after the Conquest, one of Streone's nephews, Edricus Sylvaticus, is mentioned (Simon. Dunelm.) as "a very powerful thegn. "Upon the whole, the account given of Godwin's rise in the text of the work appears the most correct that conjectures, based on our scanty historical information, will allow.

In 1009 A.D., Wolnoth, the Childe or Thegn of Sussex, defeats the fleets of Ethelred, under his uncle Brightric, and goes therefore into rebellion. Thus when, in 1014 (five years afterwards), Canute is chosen king by all the fleet, it is probable that Wolnoth and Godwin, his son, espoused his cause; and that Godwin, subsequently presented to Canute as a young noble of great promise, was favoured by that sagacious king, and ultimately honoured with the hand, first of his sister, secondly of his niece, as a mode of conciliating the Saxon thegns.

NOTE (K)

The want of Fortresses in England.

The Saxons were sad destroyers. They destroyed the strongholds which the Briton had received from the Roman, and built very few others. Thus the land was left open to the Danes. Alfred, sensible of this defect, repaired the walls of London and other cities, and urgently recommended his nobles and prelates to build fortresses, but could not persuade them. His great-souled daughter, Elfleda, was the only imitator of his example. She built eight castles in three years.
[286]

It was thus that in a country, in which the general features do not allow of protracted warfare, the inhabitants were always at the hazard of a single pitched battle. Subsequent to the Conquest, in the reign of John, it was, in truth, the strong castle of Dover, on the siege of which Prince Louis lost so much time, that saved the realm of England from passing to a French dynasty: and as, in later periods, strongholds fell again into decay, so it is remarkable to observe how easily the country was overrun after any signal victory of one of the contending parties. In this truth, the Wars of the Roses abound with much instruction. The handful of foreign mercenaries with which Henry VII. won his crown,--though the real heir, the Earl of Warwick (granting Edward IV.'s children to be illegitimate, which they clearly were according to the rites of the Church), had never lost his claim, by the defeat of Richard at Bosworth;--the march of the Pretender to Derby,--the dismay it spread throughout England,--and the certainty of his conquest had he proceeded;--the easy victory of William III. at a time when certainly the bulk of the nation was opposed to his cause;--are all facts pregnant with warnings, to which we are as blind as we were in the days of Alfred.

NOTE (L)

The Ruins of Penmaen-mawr.

In Camden's *Britannia* there is an account of the remarkable relics assigned, in the text, to the last refuge of Gryffyth ap Llewellyn, taken from a manuscript by Sir John Wynne in the time of Charles I. In this account are minutely described, "ruinous walls of an exceeding strong fortification, compassed with a treble wall, and, within each wall, the foundations of at least one hundred towers, about six yards in diameter within the walls. This castle seems (while it stood) impregnable; there being no way to offer any assault on it, the hill being so very high, steep, and rocky, and the walls of such strength, --the way or entrance into it ascending with many turnings, so that one hundred men might defend themselves against a whole legion; and yet it should seem that there were lodgings within those walls for twenty thousand men.

"By the tradition we receive from our ancestors, this was the strongest refuge, or place of defence, that the ancient Britons had in all Snowdon; moreover, the greatness of the work shows that it was a princely fortification, strengthened by nature and workmanship." [287]

But in the year 1771, Governor Pownall ascended Penmaen-mawr, inspected these remains, and published his account in the *Archaeologia*, vol. iii. p. 303, with a sketch both of the mount and the walls at the summit. The Governor is of opinion that it never was a fortification. He thinks that the inward inclosure contained a carn (or arch-Druid's sepulchre), that there is not room for any lodgment, that the walls are not of a kind which can form a cover, and give at the same time the advantage of fighting from them. In short, that the place was one of the Druids' consecrated high places of worship. He adds, however, that "Mr. Pennant has gone twice over it, intends to make an actual survey, and anticipates much from that great antiquary's knowledge and accuracy."

We turn next to Mr. Pennant, and we find him giving a flat contradiction to the Governor. "I have more than once," [288] says he, "visited this noted rock, to view the fortifications described by the editor of Camden, from some notes of that sensible old baronet, Sir John Wynne, of Gwidir, and have found his account very just.

"The fronts of three, if not four walls, presented themselves very distinctly one above the other. I measured the height of one wall, which was at the time nine feet, the thickness seven feet and a half." (Now, Governor Pownall also measured the walls, agrees pretty well with Pennant as to their width, but makes them only five feet high.) "Between these walls, in all parts, were innumerable small buildings, mostly circular. These had been much higher, as is evident from the fall of stones which lie scattered at their bottoms, and probably had once the form of towers, as Sir John asserts. Their diameter is, in general, from twelve to eighteen feet (ample room here for lodgement); the walls were in certain places intersected with others equally strong. This stronghold of the Britons is exactly of the same kind with those on Carn Madryn, Carn Boduan, and Tre'r Caer."

"This was most judiciously chosen to cover the passage into Anglesey, and the remoter part of their country; and must, from its vast

strength, have been invulnerable, except by famine; being inaccessible by its natural steepness towards the sea, and on the parts fortified in the manner described." So far, Pennant versus Pownall! "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" The opinion of both these antiquarians is liable to demur. Governor Pownall might probably be a better judge of military defences than Pennant; but he evidently forms his notions of defence with imperfect knowledge of the forts, which would have amply sufficed for the warfare of the ancient Britons; and moreover, he was one of those led astray by Bryant's crotchets as to "High places," etc. What appears most probable is, that the place was both *carn* and fort; that the strength of the place, and the convenience of stones, suggested the surrounding the narrow area of the central sepulchre with walls, intended for refuge and defence. As to the circular buildings, which seem to have puzzled these antiquaries, it is strange that they appear to have overlooked the accounts which serve best to explain them. Strabo says that "the houses of the Britons were round, with a high pointed covering--," Caesar says that they were only lighted by the door; in the Antonine Column they are represented as circular, with an arched entrance, single or double. They were always small, and seem to have contained but a single room. These circular buildings were not, therefore, necessarily Druidical cells, as has been supposed; nor perhaps actual towers, as contended for by Sir John Wynne; but habitations, after the usual fashion of British houses, for the inmates or garrison of the enclosure. Taking into account the tradition of the spot mentioned by Sir John Wynne, and other traditions still existing, which mark, in the immediate neighbourhood, the scenes of legendary battles, it is hoped that the reader will accept the description in the text as suggesting, amidst conflicting authorities, the most probable supposition of the nature and character of these very interesting remains in the eleventh century [289], and during the most memorable invasion of Wales (under Harold), which occurred between the time of Geraint, or Arthur, and that of Henry II.

NOTE (M)

The Idol Bel.

Mons. Johanneau considers that Bel, or Belinus, is derived from the Greek, a surname of Apollo, and means the archer; from Belos, a dart or arrow. [290]

I own I think this among the spurious conceits of the learned, suggested by the vague affinities of name. But it is quite as likely, (if there be anything in the conjecture,) that the Celt taught the Greek, as that the Greek taught the Celt.

There are some very interesting questions, however, for scholars to discuss--viz. 1st, When did the Celts first introduce idols? 2d, Can we believe the classical authorities that assure us that the Druids originally admitted no idol worship? If so, we find the chief idols of the Druids cited by Lucan; and they therefore acquired them long before Lucan's time. From whom would they acquire them? Not from the Romans; for the Roman gods are not the least similar to the Celtic, when the last are fairly examined. Nor from the Teutons, from whose deities those of the Celt equally differ. Have we not given too much

faith to the classic writers, who assert the original simplicity of the Druid worship? And will not their popular idols be found to be as ancient as the remotest traces of the Celtic existence? Would not the Cimmerii have transported them from the period of their first traditional immigration from the East? and is not their Bel identical with the Babylonian deity?

NOTE (N)

Unguents used by Witches.

Lord Bacon, speaking of the ointments used by the witches, supposes that they really did produce illusions by stopping the vapours and sending them to the head. It seems that all witches who attended the sabbat used these unguents, and there is something very remarkable in the concurrence of their testimonies as to the scenes they declared themselves to have witnessed, not in the body, which they left behind, but as present in the soul; as if the same anointments and preparatives produced dreams nearly similar in kind. To the believers in mesmerism I may add, that few are aware of the extraordinary degree to which somnambulism appears to be heightened by certain chemical aids; and the disbelievers in that agency, who have yet tried the experiments of some of those now neglected drugs to which the medical art of the Middle Ages attached peculiar virtues, will not be inclined to dispute the powerful and, as it were, systematic effect which certain drugs produce on the imagination of patients with excitable and nervous temperaments.

NOTE (O)

Hilda's Adjurations.

I.

"By the Urdar fount dwelling,
Day by day from the rill,
The Nornas besprinkle
The Ash Ygg-drasill."

The Ash Ygg-drasill.--Much learning has been employed by Scandinavian scholars in illustrating the symbols supposed to be couched under the myth of the Ygg-drasill, or the great Ash-tree. With this I shall not weary the reader; especially since large systems have been built on very small premises, and the erudition employed has been equally ingenious and unsatisfactory: I content myself with stating the simple myth.

The Ygg-drasill has three roots; two spring from the infernal regions --i.e. from the home of the frost-giants, and from Niffl-heim, "vapour-home, or hell"--one from the heavenly abode of the Asas. Its branches, says the Prose Edda, extend over the whole universe, and its stem bears up the earth. Beneath the root, which stretches through Niffl-heim, and which the snake-king continually gnaws, is the fount whence flow the infernal rivers. Beneath the root, which stretches in

the land of the giants, is Mimir's well wherein all wisdom is concealed; but under the root which lies in the land of the gods, is the well of Urda, the Norna--here the gods sit in judgment. Near this well is a fair building, whence issue the three maidens, Urda, Verdandi, Skulda (the Past, the Present, the Future). Daily they water the ash-tree from Urda's well, that the branches may not perish. Four harts constantly devour the birds and branches of the Ash-tree. On its boughs sits an eagle, wise in much; and between its eyes sits a hawk. A squirrel runs up and down the tree sowing strife between the eagle and the snake.

Such, in brief, is the account of the myth. For the various interpretations of its symbolic meaning, the general reader is referred to Mr. Blackwell's edition of MALLETT's *Northern Antiquities*, and PIGOTT's *Scandinavian Manual*.

NOTE (P)

Harold's Accession.

There are, as is well known, two accounts as to Edward the Confessor's death-bed disposition of the English crown. The Norman chroniclers affirm, first, that Edward promised William the crown during his exile in Normandy; secondly, that Siward, Earl of Northumbria, Godwin, and Leofric had taken oath, "serment de la main," to receive him as Seigneur after Edward's death, and that the hostages, Wolnoth and Haco, were given to the Duke in pledge of that oath [291]; thirdly, that Edward left him the crown by will.

Let us see what probability there is of truth in these three assertions.

First, Edward promised William the crown when in Normandy. This seems probable enough, and it is corroborated indirectly by the Saxon chroniclers, when they unite in relating Edward's warnings to Harold against his visit to the Norman court. Edward might well be aware of William's designs on the crown (though in those warnings he refrains from mentioning them)--might remember the authority given to those designs by his own early promise, and know the secret purpose for which the hostages were retained by William, and the advantages he would seek to gain from having Harold himself in his power. But this promise in itself was clearly not binding on the English people, nor on any one but Edward, who, without the sanction of the Witan, could not fulfil it. And that William himself could not have attached great importance to it during Edward's life, is clear, because if he had, the time to urge it was when Edward sent into Germany for the Atheling, as the heir presumptive of the throne. This was a virtual annihilation of the promise; but William took no step to urge it, made no complaint and no remonstrance.

Secondly, That Godwin, Siward, and Leofric, had taken oaths of fealty to William.

This appears a fable wholly without foundation. When could those oaths have been pledged? Certainly not after Harold's visit to William, for they were then all dead. At the accession of Edward?

This is obviously contradicted by the stipulation which Godwin and the other chiefs of the Witan exacted, that Edward should not come accompanied by Norman supporters--by the evident jealousy of the Normans entertained by those chiefs, as by the whole English people, who regarded the alliance of Ethelred with the Norman Emma as the cause of the greatest calamities--and by the marriage of Edward himself with Godwin's daughter, a marriage which that Earl might naturally presume would give legitimate heirs to the throne.--In the interval between Edward's accession and Godwin's outlawry? No; for all the English chroniclers, and, indeed, the Norman, concur in representing the ill-will borne by Godwin and his House to the Norman favourites, whom, if they could have anticipated William's accession, or were in any way bound to William, they would have naturally conciliated. But Godwin's outlawry is the result of the breach between him and the foreigners.--In William's visit to Edward? No; for that took place when Godwin was an exile; and even the writers who assert Edward's early promise to William, declare that nothing was then said as to the succession to the throne. To Godwin's return from outlawry the Norman chroniclers seem to refer the date of this pretended oath, by the assertion that the hostages were given in pledge of it. This is the most monstrous supposition of all; for Godwin's return is followed by the banishment of the Norman favourites--by the utter downfall of the Norman party in England--by the decree of the Witan, that all the troubles in England had come from the Normans--by the triumphant ascendancy of Godwin's House. And is it credible for a moment, that the great English Earl could then have agreed to a pledge to transfer the kingdom to the very party he had expelled, and expose himself and his party to the vengeance of a foe he had thoroughly crushed for the time, and whom, without any motive or object, he himself agreed to restore to power or his own probable perdition? When examined, this assertion falls to the ground from other causes. It is not among the arguments that William uses in his embassies to Harold; it rests mainly upon the authority of William of Poitiers, who, though a contemporary, and a good authority on some points purely Norman, is grossly ignorant as to the most accredited and acknowledged facts, in all that relate to the English. Even with regard to the hostages, he makes the most extraordinary blunders. He says they were sent by Edward, with the consent of his nobles, accompanied by Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury. Now Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, had fled from England as fast as he could fly on the return of Godwin; and arrived in Normandy, half drowned, before the hostages were sent, or even before the Witan which reconciled Edward and Godwin had assembled. He says that William restored to Harold "his young brother;" whereas it was Haco, the nephew, who was restored; we know, by Norman as well as Saxon Chroniclers, that Wolnoth, the brother, was not released till after the Conqueror's death, (he was re-imprisoned by Rufus;) and his partiality may be judged by the assertions, first, that "William gave nothing to a Norman that was unjustly taken from an Englishman;" and secondly, that Odo, whose horrible oppressions revolted even William himself, "never had an equal for justice, and that all the English obeyed him willingly."

We may, therefore, dismiss this assertion as utterly groundless, on its own merits, without directly citing against it the Saxon authorities.

Thirdly, That Edward left William the crown by will.

On this assertion alone, of the three, the Norman Conqueror himself seems to have rested a positive claim [292]. But if so, where was the will? Why was it never produced or producible? If destroyed, where were the witnesses? why were they not cited? The testamentary dispositions of an Anglo-Saxon king were always respected, and went far towards the succession. But it was absolutely necessary to prove them before the Witan [293]. An oral act of this kind, in the words of the dying Sovereign, would be legal, but they must be confirmed by those who heard them. Why, when William was master of England, and acknowledged by a National Assembly convened in London, and when all who heard the dying King would have been naturally disposed to give every evidence in William's favour, not only to flatter the new sovereign, but to soothe the national pride, and justify the Norman succession by a more popular plea than conquest,--why were no witnesses summoned to prove the bequest! Alred, Stigand, and the Abbot of Westminster, must have been present at the death-bed of the King, and these priests concurred in submission to William. If they had any testimony as to Edward's bequest in his favour, would they not have been too glad to give it, in justification of themselves, in compliment to William, in duty to the people, in vindication of law against force! But no such attempt at proof was ventured upon.

Against these, the mere assertion of William, and the authority of Normans who could know nothing of the truth of the matter, while they had every interest to misrepresent the facts--we have the positive assurances of the best possible authorities. The Saxon Chronicle (worth all the other annalists put together) says expressly, that Edward left the crown to Harold:

"The sage, ne'ertheless,
The realm committed
To a highly-born man;
Harold's self,
The noble Earl.
He in all time
Obeyed faithfully
His rightful lord,
By words and deeds:
Nor aught neglected
Which needful was
To his sovereign king."

Florence of Worcester, the next best authority, (valuable from supplying omissions in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,) says expressly that the King chose Harold for his successor before his decease [294], that he was elected by the chief men of all England, and consecrated by Alred. Hoveden, Simon (Dunelm.), the Beverley chronicler, confirm these authorities as to Edward's choice of Harold as his successor. William of Malmesbury, who is not partial to Harold, writing in the reign of Henry the First, has doubts himself as to Edward's bequest, (though grounded on a very bad argument, viz. "the improbability that Edward would leave his crown to a man of whose power he had always been jealous;" there is no proof that Edward had been jealous of Harold's power--he had been of Godwin's;) but Malmesbury gives a more valuable authority than his own, in the concurrent opinion of his time, for he deposes that "the English say," the diadem was granted him (Harold) by the King.

These evidences are, to say the least, infinitely more worthy of

historical credence than the one or two English chroniclers, of little comparative estimation, (such as Wike,) and the prejudiced and ignorant Norman chroniclers [295], who depose on behalf of William. I assume, therefore, that Edward left the crown to Harold; of Harold's better claim in the election of the Witan, there is no doubt. But Sir F. Palgrave starts the notion that, "admitting that the prelates, earls, aldermen, and thanes of Wessex and East-Anglia had sanctioned the accession of Harold, their decision could not have been obligatory on the other kingdoms (provinces); and the very short time elapsing between the death of Edward and the recognition of Harold, utterly precludes the supposition that their consent was even asked." This great writer must permit me, with all reverence, to suggest that he has, I think, forgotten the fact that, just prior to Edward's death, an assembly, fully as numerous as ever met in any national Witan, had been convened to attend the consecration of the new abbey and church of Westminster, which Edward considered the great work of his life; that assembly would certainly not have dispersed during a period so short and anxious as the mortal illness of the King, which appears to have prevented his attending the ceremony in person, and which ended in his death a very few days after the consecration. So that during the interval, which appears to have been at most about a week, between Edward's death and Harold's coronation [296], the unusually large concourse of prelates and nobles from all parts of the kingdom assembled in London and Westminster would have furnished the numbers requisite to give weight and sanction to the Witan. And had it not been so, the Saxon chroniclers, and still more the Norman, would scarcely have omitted some remark in qualification of the election. But not a word is said as to any inadequate number in the Witan. And as for the two great principalities of Northumbria and Mercia, Harold's recent marriage with the sister of their earls might naturally tend to secure their allegiance.

Nor is it to be forgotten that a very numerous Witan had assembled at Oxford a few months before, to adjudge the rival claims of Tostig and Morcar; the decision of the Witan proves the alliance between Harold's party and that of the young Earl's--ratified by the marriage with Aldyth. And he who has practically engaged in the contests and cabals of party, will allow the probability, adopted as fact in the romance, that, considering Edward's years and infirm health, and the urgent necessity of determining beforehand the claims to the succession--some actual, if secret, understanding was then come to by the leading chiefs. It is a common error in history to regard as sudden, that which in the nature of affairs never can be sudden. All that paved Harold's way to the throne must have been silently settled long before the day in which the Witan elected him *unanimes omnium consensu*. [297]

With the views to which my examination of the records of the time have led me in favour of Harold, I can not but think that Sir F. Palgrave, in his admirable History of Anglo-Saxon England, does scanty justice to the Last of its kings; and that his peculiar political and constitutional theories, and his attachment to the principle of hereditary succession, which make him consider that Harold "had no clear title to the crown any way," tincture with something like the prejudice of party his estimate of Harold's character and pretensions. My profound admiration for Sir F. Palgrave's learning and judgment would not permit me to make this remark without carefully considering and re-weighing all the contending authorities on which he himself relies. And I own that, of all modern historians, Thierry seems to me to have given the most just idea of the great actors in the tragedy of

the Norman invasion, though I incline to believe that he has overrated the oppressive influence of the Norman dynasty in which the tragedy closed.

NOTE (Q)

Physical Peculiarities of the Scandinavians.

"It is a singular circumstance, that in almost all the swords of those ages to be found in the collection of weapons in the Antiquarian Museum at Copenhagen, the handles indicate a size of hand very much smaller than the hands of modern people of any class or rank. No modern dandy, with the most delicate hands, would find room for his hand to grasp or wield with ease some of the swords of these Northmen."

This peculiarity is by some scholars adduced, not without reason, as an argument for the Eastern origin of the Scandinavian. Nor was it uncommon for the Asiatic Scythians, and indeed many of the early warlike tribes fluctuating between the east and west of Europe, to be distinguished by the blue eyes and yellow hair of the north. The physical attributes of a deity, or a hero, are usually to be regarded as those of the race to which he belongs. The golden locks of Apollo and Achilles are the sign of a similar characteristic in the nations of which they are the types; and the blue eye of Minerva belies the absurd doctrine that would identify her with the Egyptian Naith.

The Norman retained perhaps longer than the Scandinavian, from whom he sprang, the somewhat effeminate peculiarity of small hands and feet; and hence, as throughout all the nobility of Europe the Norman was the model for imitation, and the ruling families in many lands sought to trace from him their descents, so that characteristic is, even to our day, ridiculously regarded as a sign of noble race. The Norman probably retained that peculiarity longer than the Dane, because his habits, as a conqueror, made him disdain all manual labour; and it was below his knightly dignity to walk, as long as a horse could be found for him to ride. But the Anglo-Norman (the noblest specimen of the great conquering family) became so blent with the Saxon, both in blood and in habits, that such physical distinctions vanished with the age of chivalry. The Saxon blood in our highest aristocracy now predominates greatly over the Norman; and it would be as vain a task to identify the sons of Hastings and Rollo by the foot and hand of the old Asiatic Scythian, as by the reddish auburn hair and the high features which were no less ordinarily their type. Here and there such peculiarities may all be seen amongst plain country gentlemen, settled from time immemorial in the counties peopled by the Anglo-Danes, and inter-marrying generally in their own provinces; but amongst the far more mixed breed of the larger landed proprietors comprehended in the Peerage, the Saxon attributes of race are strikingly conspicuous, and, amongst them, the large hand and foot common with all the Germanic tribes.

NOTE (R)

The Interment of Harold.

Here we are met by evidences of the most contradictory character. According to most of the English writers, the body of Harold was given by William to Githa, without ransom, and buried at Waltham. There is even a story told of the generosity of the Conqueror, in cashiering a soldier who gashed the corpse of the dead hero. This last, however, seems to apply to some other Saxon, and not to Harold. But William of Poitiers, who was the Duke's own chaplain, and whose narration of the battle appears to contain more internal evidence of accuracy than the rest of his chronicle, expressly says, that William refused Githa's offer of its weight in gold for the supposed corpse of Harold, and ordered it to be buried on the beach, with the taunt quoted in the text of this work--"Let him guard the coast which he madly occupied;" and on the pretext that one, whose cupidity and avarice had been the cause that so many men were slaughtered and lay unseparated, was not worthy himself of a tomb. Orderic confirms this account, and says the body was given to William Mallet, for that purpose. [299]

Certainly William de Poitiers ought to have known best; and the probability of his story is to a certain degree borne out by the uncertainty as to Harold's positive interment, which long prevailed, and which even gave rise to a story related by Giraldus Cambrensis (and to be found also in the Harleian MSS.), that Harold survived the battle, became a monk in Chester, and before he died had a long and secret interview with Henry the First. Such a legend, however absurd, could scarcely have gained any credit if (as the usual story runs) Harold had been formally buried, in the presence of many of the Norman barons, in Waltham Abbey--but would very easily creep into belief, if his body had been carelessly consigned to a Norman knight, to be buried privately by the sea-shore.

The story of Osgood and Ailred, the childmaister (schoolmaster in the monastery), as related by Palgrave, and used in this romance, is recorded in a MS. of Waltham Abbey, and was written somewhere about fifty or sixty years after the event--say at the beginning of the twelfth century. These two monks followed Harold to the field, placed themselves so as to watch its results, offered ten marks for the body, obtained permission for the search, and could not recognise the mutilated corpse until Osgood sought and returned with Edith. In point of fact, according to this authority, it must have been two or three days after the battle before the discovery was made.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Sismondi's History of France, vol. iv. p. 484.

[2] "Men's blinded hopes, diseases, toil, and prayer,
And winged troubles peopling daily air."

[3] Merely upon the obscure MS. of the Waltham Monastery; yet, such is the ignorance of popular criticism, that I have been as much attacked for the license I have taken with the legendary connection

between Harold and Edith, as if that connection were a proven and authenticated fact! Again, the pure attachment to which, in the romance, the loves of Edith and Harold are confined, has been alleged to be a sort of moral anachronism,--a sentiment wholly modern; whereas, on the contrary, an attachment so pure was infinitely more common in that day than in this, and made one of the most striking characteristics of the eleventh century; indeed of all the earlier ages, in the Christian era, most subjected to monastic influences.

[4] Notes less immediately necessary to the context, or too long not to interfere with the current of the narrative, are thrown to the end of the work.

[5] There is a legend attached to my friend's house, that on certain nights in the year, Eric the Saxon winds his horn at the door, and, in forma spectri, serves his notice of ejection.

[6] The "Edinburgh Review," No. CLXXIX. January, 1849. Art. I. "Correspondance inedite, de Mabillon et de Montfaucon, avec l'Italie." Par M. Valery. Paris, 1848.

[7] And long before the date of the travesty known to us, and most popular amongst our mediaeval ancestors, it might be shown that some rude notion of Homer's fable and personages had crept into the North.

[8] "The apartment in which the Anglo-Saxon women lived, was called Gynecium."--FOSBROOKE, vol. ii., p. 570.

[9] Glass, introduced about the time of Bede, was more common then in the houses of the wealthy, whether for vessels or windows, than in the much later age of the gorgeous Plantagenets. Alfred, in one of his poems, introduces glass as a familiar illustration:

"So oft the mild sea
With south wind
As grey glass clear
Becomes grimly troubled."
SHAR. TURNER.

[10] Skulda, the Norna, or Fate, that presided over the future.

[11] The historians of our literature have not done justice to the great influence which the poetry of the Danes has had upon our early national muse. I have little doubt but that to that source may be traced the minstrelsy of our borders, and the Scottish Lowlands; while, even in the central counties, the example and exertions of Canute must have had considerable effect on the taste and spirit of our Scops. That great prince afforded the amplest encouragement to Scandinavian poetry, and Olaus names eight Danish poets, who flourished at his court.

[12] "By the splendour of God."

[13] See Note (A) at the end of this volume.

[14] It is noticeable that the Norman dukes did not call themselves Counts or Dukes of Normandy, but of the Normans; and the first Anglo-Norman kings, till Richard the First, styled themselves Kings of the

English, not of England. In both Saxon and Norman chronicles, William usually bears the title of Count (Comes), but in this tale he will be generally called Duke, as a title more familiar to us.

[15] The few expressions borrowed occasionally from the Romance tongue, to give individuality to the speaker, will generally be translated into modern French; for the same reason as Saxon is rendered into modern English, viz., that the words may be intelligible to the reader.

[16] "Roman de Rou," part i., v. 1914.

[17] The reason why the Normans lost their old names is to be found in their conversion to Christianity. They were baptised; and Franks, as their godfathers, gave them new appellations. Thus, Charles the Simple insists that Rolf-ganger shall change his law (creed) and his name, and Rolf or Rou is christened Robert. A few of those who retained Scandinavian names at the time of the Conquest will be cited hereafter.

[18] Thus in 991, about a century after the first settlement, the Danes of East Anglia gave the only efficient resistance to the host of the Vikings under Justin and Gurthmund; and Brithnoth, celebrated by the Saxon poet, as a Saxon par excellence, the heroic defender of his native soil, was, in all probability, of Danish descent. Mr. Laing, in his preface to his translation of the Heimskringla, truly observes, "that the rebellions against William the Conqueror, and his successors, appear to have been almost always raised, or mainly supported, in the counties of recent Danish descent, not in those peopled by the old Anglo-Saxon race."

The portion of Mercia, consisting of the burghs of Lancaster, Lincoln, Nottingham, Stamford, and Derby, became a Danish state in A.D. 877;-- East Anglia, consisting of Cambridge, Suffolk, Norfolk, and the Isle of Ely, in A.D. 879-80; and the vast territory of Northumbria, extending all north the Humber, into all that part of Scotland south of the Frith, in A.D. 876.--See PALGRAVE'S Commonwealth. But besides their more allotted settlements, the Danes were interspersed as landowners all over England.

[19] Bromton Chron--via., Essex, Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Herts, Cambridgeshire, Hants, Lincoln, Notts, Derby, Northampton, Leicestershire, Bucks, Beds, and the vast territory called Northumbria.

[20] PALGRAVE's History of England, p. 315.

[21] The laws collected by Edward the Confessor, and in later times so often and so fondly referred to, contained many introduced by the Danes, which had grown popular with the Saxon people. Much which we ascribe to the Norman Conqueror, pre-existed in the Anglo-Danish, and may be found both in Normandy, and parts of Scandinavia, to this day. --See HAKEWELL's Treatise on the Antiquity of Laws in this Island, in HEARNE's Curious Discourses.

[22] PALGRAVE's History of England, p. 322.

[23] The name of this god is spelt Odin, when referred to as the object of Scandinavian worship; Woden, when applied directly to the

deity of the Saxons.

[24] See Note (B), at the end of the volume.

[25] The Peregrine hawk built on the rocks of Llandudno, and this breed was celebrated, even to the days of Elizabeth. Burleigh thanks one of the Mostyns for a cast of hawks from Llandudno.

[26] Hlaf, loaf,--Hlaford, lord, giver of bread; Hleafdian, lady, server of bread.--VERSTEGAN.

[27] Bedden-ale. When any man was set up in his estate by the contributions of his friends, those friends were bid to a feast, and the ale so drunk was called the bedden-ale, from bedden, to pray, or to bid. (See BRAND's Pop. Antiq.)

[28] Herleve (Arlotta), William's mother, married Herluin de Conteville, after the death of Duke Robert, and had by him two sons, Robert, Count of Mortain, and Odo, Bishop of Bayeux.-ORD. VITAL. lib. vii.

[29] Mone, monk.

[30] STRUTT's Horda.

[31] There is an animated description of this "Battle of London Bridge, "which gave ample theme to the Scandinavian scalds, in Snorro Sturleson:

"London Bridge is broken down;
Gold is won and bright renown;
Shields resounding,
War-horns sounding,
Hildur shouting in the din,
Arrows singing,
Mail-coats ringing,
Odin makes our Olaf win."
LAING's Heimskringla, vol. ii. p. 10.

[32] Sharon Turner.

[33] Hawkins, vol. ii. p. 94.

[34] Doomsday makes mention of the Moors, and the Germans (the Emperor's merchants) that were sojourners or settlers in London. The Saracens at that time were among the great merchants of the world; Marseilles, Arles, Avignon, Montpellier, Toulouse, were the wonted stapes of their active traders. What civilisers, what teachers they were--those same Saracens! How much in arms and in arts we owe them! Fathers of the Provencal poetry they, far more than even the Scandinavian scalds, have influenced the literature of Christian Europe. The most ancient chronicle of the Cid was written in Arabic, a little before the Cid's death, by two of his pages, who were Mnssulmans. The medical science of the Moors for six centuries enlightened Europe, and their metaphysics were adopted in nearly all the Christian universities.

[35] Billingsgate. See Note (C), at the end of the volume.

[36] London received a charter from William at the instigation of the Norman Bishop of London; but it probably only confirmed the previous municipal constitution, since it says briefly, "I grant you all to be as law-worthy as ye were in the days of King Edward." The rapid increase, however, of the commercial prosperity and political importance of London after the Conquest, is attested in many chronicles, and becomes strikingly evident even on the surface of history.

[37] There seems good reason for believing that a keep did stand where the Tower stands, before the Conquest, and that William's edifice spared some of its remains. In the very interesting letter from John Bayford relating to the city of London (Lel. Collect. lviii.), the writer, a thorough master of his subject, states that "the Romans made a public military way, that of Watling Street, from the Tower to Ludgate, in a straight line, at the end of which they built stations or citadels, one of which was where the White Tower now stands." Bayford adds that "when the White Tower was fitted up for the reception of records, there remained many Saxon inscriptions."

[38] Rude-lane. Lad-lane.--BAYFORD.

[39] Fitzstephen.

[40] Camden.

[41] BAYFORD, Leland's Collectanea, p. lviii.

[42] Ludgate (Leod-gate).--VERSTEGAN.

[43] See Note (D), at the end of the volume.

[44] Massere, merchant, mercer.

[45] Fitzstephen.

[46] Meuse. Apparently rather a hawk hospital, from Muta (Camden). Du Fresne, in his Glossary, says, Muta is in French Le Meue, and a disease to which the hawk was subject on changing its feathers.

[47] Scotland-yard.--STRYPE.

[48] The first bridge that connected Thorney Isle with the mainland is said to have been built by Matilda, wife of Henry I.

[49] We give him that title, which this Norman noble generally bears in the Chronicles, though Palgrave observes that he is rather to be styled Earl of the Magesetan (the Welch Marches).

[50] Eadigan.--S. TURNER, vol. i. p. 274.

[51] The comparative wealth of London was indeed considerable. When, in 1018, all the rest of England was taxed to an amount considered stupendous, viz., 71,000 Saxon pounds, London contributed 11,000 pounds besides.

[52] Complin. the second vespers.

[53] CAMDEN--A church was built out of the ruins of that temple by

Sibert, King of the East Saxons; and Canute favoured much the small monastery attached to it (originally established by Dunstan for twelve Benedictines), on account of its Abbot Wulnoth, whose society pleased him. The old palace of Canute, in Thorney Isle, had been destroyed by fire.

[54] See note to PLUQUET's *Roman de Rou*, p. 285.

N.B.--Whenever the *Roman de Rou* is quoted in these pages it is from the excellent edition of M. Pluquet.

[55] Pardex or Parde, corresponding to the modern French expletive, *pardie*.

[56] Quen, or rather Quens; synonymous with Count in the Norman Chronicles. Earl Godwin is strangely styled by Wace, Quens Qwine.

[57] "Good, good, pleasant son,--the words of the poet sound gracefully on the lips of the knight."

[58] A sentiment variously assigned to William and to his son Henry the Beau Clerc.

[59] Mallet is a genuine Scandinavian name to this day.

[60] Rou--the name given by the French to Rollo, or Rolf-ganger, the founder of the Norman settlement.

[61] Pious severity to the heterodox was a Norman virtue. William of Poitiers says of William, "One knows with what zeal he pursued and exterminated those who thought differently;" i.e., on transubstantiation. But the wise Norman, while flattering the tastes of the Roman Pontiff in such matters, took special care to preserve the independence of his Church from any undue dictation.

[62] A few generations later this comfortable and decent fashion of night-gear was abandoned; and our forefathers, Saxon and Norman, went to bed in *puris naturalibus*, like the Laplanders.

[63] Most of the chroniclers merely state the parentage within the forbidden degrees as the obstacle to William's marriage with Matilda; but the betrothal or rather nuptials of her mother Adele with Richard III. (though never consummated), appears to have been the true canonical objection.--See note to Wace, p. 27. Nevertheless, Matilda's mother, Adele, stood in the relation of aunt to William, as widow of his father's elder brother, "an affinity," as is observed by a writer in the *"Archaeologia,"* "quite near enough to account for, if not to justify, the interference of the Church."--Arch. vol. xxxii. p. 109.

[64] It might be easy to show, were this the place, that though the Saxons never lost their love of liberty, yet that the victories which gradually regained the liberty from the gripe of the Anglo-Norman kings, were achieved by the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. And even to this day, the few rare descendants of that race (whatever their political faction), will generally exhibit that impatience of despotic influence, and that disdain of corruption, which characterise the homely bonders of Norway, in whom we may still recognise the sturdy likeness of their fathers; while it is also remarkable that the modern inhabitants of those portions of the kingdom originally peopled by

their kindred Danes, are, irrespective of mere party divisions, noted for their intolerance of all oppression, and their resolute independence of character; to wit, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Cumberland, and large districts in the Scottish Lowlands.

[65] Ex pervetusto codice, MS. Chron. Bec. in Vit. Lanfranc, quoted in the "Archaeologia," vol. xxxii. p. 109. The joke, which is very poor, seems to have turned upon pede and quadrupede; it is a little altered in the text.

[66] Ord. Vital. See Note on Lanfranc, at the end of the volume.

[67] Siward was almost a giant (pene gigas statures). There are some curious anecdotes of this hero, immortalised by Shakspeare, in the Bromton Chronicle. His grandfather is said to have been a bear, who fell in love with a Danish lady; and his father, Beorn, retained some of the traces of the parental physiognomy in a pair of pointed ears. The origin of this fable seems evident. His grandfather was a Berserker; for whether that name be derived, as is more generally supposed, from bare-sark,--or rather from bear-sark, that is, whether this grisly specimen of the Viking genus fought in his shirt or his bearskin, the name equally lends itself to those mystifications from which half the old legends, whether of Greece or Norway, are derived.

[68] Wace.

[69] See Note (E), at the end of the volume (foot-note on the date of William's marriage).

[70] Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

[71] Some writers say fifty.

[72] Hovenden.

[73] Bodes, i.e. messengers.

[74] Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

[75] Or Fleur-de-lis, which seems to have been a common form of ornament with the Saxon kings.

[76] Bayeux Tapestry.

[77] See note (F), at the end of the volume.

[78] The York Chronicle, written by an Englishman, Stubbs, gives this eminent person an excellent character as peacemaker. "He could make the warmest friends of foes the most hostile." "De inimicissimis, amicissimos faceret." This gentle priest had yet the courage to curse the Norman Conqueror in the midst of his barons. That scene is not within the range of this work, but it is very strikingly told in the Chronicle.

[79] Heralds, though probably the word is Saxon, were not then known in the modern acceptation of the word. The name given to the messenger or envoy who fulfilled that office was bode or nuncius. See Note (G), at the end of the volume.

[80] When the chronicler praises the gift of speech, he unconsciously proves the existence of constitutional freedom.

[81] Recent Danish historians have in vain endeavoured to detract from the reputation of Canute as an English monarch. The Danes are, doubtless, the best authorities for his character in Denmark. But our own English authorities are sufficiently decisive as to the personal popularity of Canute in this country, and the affection entertained for his laws.

[82] Some of our historians erroneously represent Harold as the eldest son. But Florence, the best authority we have, in the silence of the Saxon Chronicle, as well as Knyghton, distinctly states Sweyn to be the eldest; Harold was the second, and Tostig was the third. Sweyn's seniority seems corroborated by the greater importance of his earldom. The Norman chroniclers, in their spite to Harold, wish to make him junior to Tostig--for the reasons evident at the close of this work. And the Norwegian chronicler, Snorro Sturleson, says that Harold was the youngest of all the sons; so little was really known, or cared to be accurately known, of that great house which so nearly founded a new dynasty of English kings.

[83] Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A. D. 1043. "Stigand was deposed from his bishopric, and all that he possessed was seized into the King's hands, because he was received to his mother's counsel, and she went just as he advised her, as people thought." The saintly Confessor dealt with his bishops as summarily as Henry VIII. could have done, after his quarrel with the Pope.

[84] The title of Basileus was retained by our kings so late as the time of John, who styled himself "Totius Insulae Britannicae Basileus."--AGARD: On the Antiquity of Shires in England, op. Hearne, Cur. Disc.

[85] Sharon Turner.

[86] See the Introduction to PALGRAVE's History of the Anglo-Saxons, from which this description of the Witan is borrowed so largely, that I am left without other apology for the plagiarism, than the frank confession, that if I could have found in others, or conceived from my own resources, a description half as graphic and half as accurate, I would only have plagiarised to half the extent I have done.

[87] Girald. Gambrensis.

[88] Palgrave omits, I presume accidentally, these members of the Witan, but it is clear from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that the London "lithsmen" were represented in the great National Witans, and helped to decide the election even of kings.

[89] By Athelstan's law, every man was to have peace going to and from the Witan, unless he was a thief.--WILKINS, p. 187.

[90] Goda, Edward's sister, married first Rolf's father, Count of Nantes; secondly, the Count of Boulogne.

[91] More correctly of Oxford, Somerset, Berkshire, Gloucester, and Hereford.

[92] Yet how little safe it is for the great to despise the low-born. This very Richard, son of Scrob, more euphoniously styled by the Normans Richard Fitz-Scrob, settled in Herefordshire (he was probably among the retainers of Earl Rolf), and on William's landing, became the chief and most active supporter of the invader in those districts. The sentence of banishment seems to have been mainly confined to the foreigners about the Court--for it is clear that many Norman landowners and priests were still left scattered throughout the country.

[93] SENECA, Thyest. Act ii.--"He is a king who fears nothing; that kingdom every man gives to himself."

[94] Scin-laeca, literally a shining corpse; a species of apparition invoked by the witch or wizard.--See SHARON TURNER on The Superstitions of the Anglo-Saxons, b. ii. c. 14.

[95] Galdra, magic.

[96] Fylgia, tutelary divinity. See Note (H), at the end of the volume.

[97] Morthwyrtha, worshipper of the dead.

[98] It is a disputed question whether the saex of the earliest Saxon invaders was a long or short curved weapon,--nay, whether it was curved or straight; but the author sides with those who contend that it was a short, crooked weapon, easily concealed by a cloak, and similar to those depicted on the banner of the East Saxons.

[99] See Note (K), at the end of the volume.

[100] Saxon Chronicle, Florence Wigorn. Sir F. Palgrave says that the title of Childe is equivalent to that of Atheling. With that remarkable appreciation of evidence which generally makes him so invaluable as a judicial authority where accounts are contradictory, Sir F. Palgrave discards with silent contempt the absurd romance of Godwin's station of herdsman, to which, upon such very fallacious and flimsy authorities, Thierry and Sharon Turner have been betrayed into lending their distinguished names.

[101] This first wife Thyra, was of very unpopular repute with the Saxons. She was accused of sending young English persons as slaves into Denmark, and is said to have been killed by lightning.

[102] It is just, however, to Godwin to say, that there is no proof of his share in this barbarous transaction; the presumptions, on the contrary, are in his favour; but the authorities are too contradictory, and the whole event too obscure, to enable us unhesitatingly to confirm the acquittal he received in his own age, and from his own national tribunal.

[103] Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

[104] William of Malmesbury.

[105] So Robert of Gloucester says pithily of William, "Kyng Wylliam was to mild men debonnere ynou."--HEARNE, v. ii. p. 309.

[106] This kiss of peace was held singularly sacred by the Normans, and all the more knightly races of the continent. Even the craftiest dissimulator, designing fraud, and stratagem, and murder to a foe, would not, to gain his ends, betray the pledge of the kiss of peace. When Henry II. consented to meet Becket after his return from Rome, and promised to remedy all of which his prelate complained, he struck prophetic dismay into Becket's heart by evading the kiss of peace.

[107] SNORRO STURLESON's Heimskringla.--Laing's Translation, p. 75-77.

[108] The gre-hound was so called from hunting the gre or badger.

[109] The spear and the hawk were as the badges of Saxon nobility; and a thegn was seldom seen abroad without the one on his left wrist, the other in his right hand.

[110] BED Epist. ad Egbert.

[111] TEGNER's Frithiof.

[112] Some of the chroniclers say that he married the daughter of Gryffyth, the king of North Wales, but Gryffyth certainly married Algar's daughter, and that double alliance could not have been permitted. It was probably, therefore, some more distant kinswoman of Gryffyth's that was united to Algar.

[113] The title of queen is employed in these pages, as one which our historians have unhesitatingly given to the consorts of our Saxon kings; but the usual and correct designation of Edward's royal wife, in her own time, would be, Edith the Lady.

[114] ETHEL. De Gen. Reg. Ang.

[115] AILRED, De Vit. Edward Confess.

[116] Ingulfus.

[117] The clergy (says Malmesbury), contented with a very slight share of learning, could scarcely stammer out the words of the sacraments; and a person who understood grammar was an object of wonder and astonishment. Other authorities, likely to be impartial, speak quite as strongly as to the prevalent ignorance of the time.

[118] House-carles in the royal court were the body-guard, mostly, if not all, of Danish origin. They appear to have been first formed, or at least employed, in that capacity by Canute. With the great earls, the house-carles probably exercised the same functions; but in the ordinary acceptation of the word in families of lower rank, house-carle was a domestic servant.

[119] This was cheap. For Agelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, gave the Pope 6000 lb. weight of silver for the arm of St. Augustine.--MALMESBURY.

[120] William of Malmesbury says, that the English, at the time of the Conquest, loaded their arms with gold bracelets, and adorned their skins with punctured designs, i.e., a sort of tattooing. He says, that they then wore short garments, reaching to the mid-knee; but that

was a Norman fashion, and the loose robes assigned in the text to Algar were the old Saxon fashion, which made but little distinction between the dress of women and that of men.

[121] And in England, to this day, the descendants of the Anglo-Danes, in Cumberland and Yorkshire, are still a taller and bonier race than those of the Anglo-Saxons, as in Surrey and Sussex.

[122] Very few of the greater Saxon nobles could pretend to a lengthened succession in their demesnes. The wars with the Danes, the many revolutions which threw new families uppermost, the confiscations and banishments, and the invariable rule of rejecting the heir, if not of mature years at his father's death, caused rapid changes of dynasty in the several earldoms. But the family of Leofric had just claims to a very rare antiquity in their Mercian lordship. Leofric was the sixth Earl of Chester and Coventry, in lineal descent from his namesake, Leofric the First; he extended the supremacy of his hereditary lordship over all Mercia. See DUGDALE, *Monast.* vol. iii. p. 102; and PALGRAVE's *Commonwealth, Proofs and Illustrations*, p. 291.

[123] AILRED de Vit. Edw.

[124] Dunwich, now swallowed up by the sea.--Hostile element to the house of Godwin.

[125] Windsor.

[126] The chronicler, however, laments that the household ties, formerly so strong with the Anglo-Saxon, had been much weakened in the age prior to the Conquest.

[127] Some authorities state Winchester as the scene of these memorable festivities. Old Windsor Castle is supposed by Mr. Lysons to have occupied the site of a farm of Mr. Isherwood's surrounded by a moat, about two miles distant from New Windsor. He conjectures that it was still occasionally inhabited by the Norman kings till 1110. The ville surrounding it only contained ninety-five houses, paying gabel-tax, in the Norman survey.

[128] AILRED, de Vit. Edward. Confess.

[129] "Is it astonishing," asked the people (referring to Edward's preference of the Normans), "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 never does he utter one harsh word to the man whom he himself created king?"--HAZLITT's *THIERRY*, vol. i. p. 126.

This is the English account (versus the Norman). There can be little doubt that it is the true one.

[130] Henry of Huntingdon, etc.

[131] Henry of Huntingdon; *Bromt. Chron.*, etc.

[132] Hoveden.

[133] The origin of the word leach (physician), which has puzzled some inquirers, is from lids or leac, a body. Leich is the old Saxon word for surgeon.

[134] Sharon Turner, vol. i. p. 472.

[135] Fosbrooke.

[136] Aegir, the Scandinavian god of the ocean. Not one of the Aser, or Asas (the celestial race), but sprung from the giants. Ran or Rana, his wife, a more malignant character, who caused shipwrecks, and drew to herself, by a net, all that fell into the sea. The offspring of this marriage were nine daughters, who became the Billows, the Currents, and the Storms.

[137] Frilla, the Danish word for a lady who, often with the wife's consent, was added to the domestic circle by the husband. The word is here used by Hilda in a general sense of reproach. Both marriage and concubinage were common amongst the Anglo-Saxon priesthood, despite the unheeded canons; and so, indeed, they were with the French clergy.

[138] Hilda, not only as a heathen, but as a Dane, would be no favourer of monks; they were unknown in Denmark at that time, and the Danes held them in odium.--Ord Vital., lib. vii.

[139] Chron. Knyghton.

[140] Weyd-month. Meadow month, June.

[141] Cumen-hus. Tavern.

[142] Fitzstephen.

[143] William of Malmesbury speaks with just indignation of the Anglo-Saxon custom of selling female servants, either to public prostitution, or foreign slavery.

[144] It will be remembered that Algar governed Wessex, which principality included Kent, during the year of Godwin's outlawry.

[145] Trulofa, from which comes our popular corruption "true lover's knot;" a vetere Danico trulofa, i.e., fidem do, to pledge faith.--HICKE's Thesaur.

"A knot, among the ancient northern nations, seems to have been the emblem of love, faith, and friendship."--BRANDE's Pop. Antiq.

[146] The Saxon Chronicle contradicts itself as to Algar's outlawry, stating in one passage that he was outlawed without any kind of guilt, and in another that he was outlawed as swike, or traitor, and that he made a confession of it before all the men there gathered. His treason, however, seems naturally occasioned by his close connection with Gryffyth, and proved by his share in that King's rebellion. Some of our historians have unfairly assumed that his outlawry was at Harold's instigation. Of this there is not only no proof, but one of the best authorities among the chroniclers says just the contrary--that Harold did all he could to intercede for him; and it is certain that he was fairly tried and condemned by the Witan, and afterwards restored by the concurrent articles of agreement between Harold and Leofric. Harold's policy with his own countrymen stands out very markedly prominent in the annals of the time; it was invariably that of conciliation.

[147] Saxon Chron., verbatim.

[148] Hume.

[149] "The chaste who blameless keep unsullied fame,
Transcend all other worth, all other praise.
The Spirit, high enthroned, has made their hearts
His sacred temple."

SHARON TURNER's Translation of Aldhelm, vol. iii. p. 366. It is curious to see how, even in Latin, the poet preserves the alliterations that characterised the Saxon muse.

[150] Slightly altered from Aldhelm.

[151] It is impossible to form any just view of the state of parties, and the position of Harold in the later portions of this work, unless the reader will bear constantly in mind the fact that, from the earliest period, minors were set aside as a matter of course, by the Saxon customs. Henry observes that, in the whole history of the Heptarchy, there is but one example of a minority, and that a short and unfortunate one; so, in the later times, the great Alfred takes the throne, to the exclusion of the infant son of his elder brother. Only under very peculiar circumstances, backed, as in the case of Edmund Ironsides, by precocious talents and manhood on the part of the minor, were there exceptions to the general laws of succession. The same rule obtained with the earldoms; the fame, power, and popularity of Siward could not transmit his Northumbrian earldom to his infant son Waltheof, so gloomily renowned in a subsequent reign.

[152] Bayeux Tapestry.

[153] Indeed, apparently the only monastic order in England.

[154] See Note to Robert of Gloucester, vol. ii. p. 372.

[155] The Saxon priests were strictly forbidden to bear arms.--SPELM. Concil. p. 238.

It is mentioned in the English Chronicles, as a very extraordinary circumstance, that a bishop of Hereford, who had been Harold's chaplain, did actually take sword and shield against the Welch. Unluckily, this valiant prelate was slain so soon, that it was no encouraging example.

[156] See Note (K), at the end of the volume.

[157] The Normans and French detested each other; and it was the Norman who taught to the Saxon his own animosities against the Frank. A very eminent antiquary, indeed, De la Rue, considered that the Bayeux tapestry could not be the work of Matilda, or her age, because in it the Normans are called French. But that is a gross blunder on his part; for William, in his own charters, calls the Normans "Franci." Wace, in his "Roman de Rou," often styles the Normans "French;" and William of Poitiers, a contemporary of the Conqueror, gives them also in one passage the same name. Still, it is true that the Normans were generally very tenacious of their distinction from their gallant but hostile neighbours.

[158] The present town and castle of Conway.

[159] See CAMDEN's Britannia, "Caernarvonshire."

[160] When (A.D. 220) the bishops, Germanicus, and Lupus, headed the Britons against the Picts and Saxons, in Easter week, fresh from their baptism in the Alyn, Germanicus ordered them to attend to his war-cry, and repeat it; he gave "Alleluia." The hills so loudly re-echoed the cry, that the enemy caught panic, and fled with great slaughter. Maes Garmon, in Flintshire, was the scene of the victory.

[161] The cry of the English at the onset of battle was "Holy Crosse, God Almighty;" afterwards in fight, "Ouct, ouct," out, out.--HEARNE's Disc. Antiquity of Motts.

The latter cry, probably, originated in the habit of defending their standard and central posts with barricades and closed shields; and thus, idiomatically and vulgarly, signified "get out."

[162] Certain high places in Wales, of which this might well be one, were so sacred, that even the dwellers in the immediate neighbourhood never presumed to approach them.

[163] See Note (L), at the end of the volume.

[164] See Note (M), at the end of the volume.

[165] The Welch seem to have had a profusion of the precious metals very disproportioned to the scarcity of their coined money. To say nothing of the torques, bracelets, and even breastplates of gold, common with their numerous chiefs, their laws affix to offences penalties which attest the prevalent waste both of gold and silver. Thus, an insult to a sub-king of Aberfraw is atoned by a silver rod as thick as the King's little finger, which is in length to reach from the ground to his mouth when sitting; and a gold cup, with a cover as broad as the King's face, and the thickness of a ploughman's nail, or the shell of a goose's egg. I suspect that it was precisely because the Welch coined little or no money, that the metals they possessed became thus common in domestic use. Gold would have been more rarely seen, even amongst the Peruvians, had they coined it into money.

[166] Leges Wallicae.

[167] Mona, or Anglesea.

[168] Ireland.

[169] The Welch were then, and still are, remarkable for the beauty of their teeth. Giraldus Cambrensis observes, as something very extraordinary, that they cleaned them.

[170] I believe it was not till the last century that a good road took the place of this pass.

[171] The Saxons of Wessex seem to have adopted the Dragon for their ensign, from an early period. It was probably for this reason that it was assumed by Edward Ironsides, as the hero of the Saxons; the principality of Wessex forming the most important portion of the pure

Saxon race, while its founder was the ancestor of the imperial house of the Basileus of Britain. The dragon seems also to have been a Norman ensign. The lions or leopards, popularly assigned to the Conqueror, are certainly a later invention. There is no appearance of them on the banners and shields of the Norman army in the Bayeux tapestry. Armorial bearings were in use amongst the Welch, and even the Saxons, long before heraldry was reduced to a science by the Franks and Normans. And the dragon, which is supposed by many critics to be borrowed from the east, through the Saracens, certainly existed as an armorial ensign with the Cymrians before they could have had any obligation to the songs and legends of that people.

[172] "In whose time the earth brought forth double, and there was neither beggar nor poor man from the North to the South Sea."
POWELL's Hist. of Wales, p. 83.

[173] "During the military expeditions made in our days against South Wales, an old Welchman, at Pencadair, who had faithfully adhered to him (Henry II.), being desired to give his opinion about the royal army, and whether he thought that of the rebels would make resistance, and what he thought would be the final event of this war, replied: 'This nation, O King, may now, as in former times, be harassed, and, in a great measure, be weakened and destroyed by you and other powers; and it will often prevail by its laudable exertions, but it can never be totally subdued by the wrath of man, unless the wrath of God shall concur. Nor do I think that any other nation than this of Wales, or any other language (whatever may hereafter come to pass), shall in the day of severe examination before the Supreme Judge answer for this corner of the earth!'"--HOARE's Giraldu Cambrensis, vol. i. p. 361.

[174] Gryffyth left a son, Caradoc; but he was put aside as a minor, according to the Saxon customs.

[175] Bromton Chron., Knyghton, Walsingham, Hoveden, etc.

[176] Bromton, Knyghton, etc.

[177] The word "decimated" is the one generally applied by the historians to the massacre in question; and it is therefore retained here. But it is not correctly applied, for that butchery was perpetrated, not upon one out of ten, but nine out of ten.

[178] The above reasons for Harold's memorable expedition are sketched at this length, because they suggest the most probable motives which induced it, and furnish, in no rash and inconsiderate policy, that key to his visit, which is not to be found in chronicler or historian.

[179] See Note (N).

[180] Faul was an evil spirit much dreaded by the Saxons. Zabulus and Diabolus (the Devil) seem to have been the same.

[181] Ygg-drassill, the mystic Ash-tree of Life, or symbol of the earth, watered by the Fates.--See Note (O.)

[182] Mimir, the most celebrated of the giants. The Vaner, with whom he was left as a hostage, cut off his head. Odin embalmed it by his seid, or magic art, pronounced over it mystic runes, and, ever after,

consulted it on critical occasions.

[183] Asa-Lok or Loke--(distinct from Utgard-Lok, the demon of the Infernal Regions)--descended from the Giants, but received among the celestial Deities; a treacherous and malignant Power fond of assuming disguises and plotting evil--corresponding in his attributes with our "Lucifer." One of his progeny was Hela, the Queen of Hell.

[184] "A hag dwells in a wood called Janvid, the Iron Wood, the mother of many gigantic sons shaped like wolves; there is one of a race more fearful than all, named 'Managarm.' He will be filled with the blood of men who draw near their end, and will swallow up the moon and stain the heavens and the hearth with blood."--From the Prose Edda. In the Scandinavian poetry, Managarm is sometimes the symbol of war, and the "Iron Wood" a metaphor for spears.

[185] "Wolf Month," January.

[186] Bayeux tapestry.

[187] Roman de Rou, see part ii. 1078.

[188] Belrem, the present Beaurain, near Montreuil.

[189] Roman de Rou, part ii. 1079.

[190] William of Poitiers, "apud Aucense Castrum."

[191] As soon as the rude fort of the middle ages admitted something of magnificence and display, the state rooms were placed in the third story of the inner court, as being the most secure.

[192] A manor (but not, alas! In Normandy) was held by one of his cooks, on the tenure of supplying William with a dish of dillegrout.

[193] The Council of Cloveshoe forbade the clergy to harbour poets, harpers, musicians, and buffoons.

[194] ORD. VITAL.

[195] Canute made his inferior strength and stature his excuse for not meeting Edward Ironsides in single combat.

[196] Odo's licentiousness was, at a later period, one of the alleged causes of his downfall, or rather against his release from the prison to which he had been consigned. He had a son named John, who distinguished himself under Henry I.--ORD. VITAL. lib. iv.

[197] William of Poitiers, the contemporary Norman chronicler, says of Harold, that he was a man to whom imprisonment was more odious than shipwreck.

[198] In the environs of Bayeux still may perhaps linger the sole remains of the Scandinavian Normans, apart from the gentry. For centuries the inhabitants of Bayeux and its vicinity were a class distinct from the Franco-Normans, or the rest of Neustria; they submitted with great reluctance to the ducal authority, and retained their old heathen cry of Thor-aide, instead of Dieu-aide!

[199] Similar was the answer of Goodyn the Bishop of Winchester, ambassador from Henry VIII. to the French King. To this day the English entertain the same notion of forts as Harold and Goodyn.

[200] See Mr. Wright's very interesting article on the "Condition of the English Peasantry," etc., *Archaeologia*, vol. xxx. pp. 205-244. I must, however, observe, that one very important fact seems to have been generally overlooked by all inquirers, or, at least, not sufficiently enforced, viz., that it was the Norman's contempt for the general mass of the subject population which more, perhaps, than any other cause, broke up positive slavery in England. Thus the Norman very soon lost sight of that distinction the Anglo-Saxons had made between the agricultural ceorl and the theowe; i.e., between the serf of the soil and the personal slave. Hence these classes became fused in each other, and were gradually emancipated by the same circumstances. This, be it remarked, could never have taken place under the Anglo-Saxon laws, which kept constantly feeding the class of slaves by adding to it convicted felons and their children. The subject population became too necessary to the Norman barons, in their feuds with each other, or their king, to be long oppressed; and, in the time of Froissart, that worthy chronicler ascribes the insolence, or high spirit, of le menu peuple to their grand aise, et abondance de biens.

[201] Twelve o'clock.

[202] Six A.M.

[203] A celebrated antiquary, in his treatise in the "*Archaeologia*," on the authenticity of the Bayeux tapestry, very justly invites attention to the rude attempt of the artist to preserve individuality in his portraits; and especially to the singularly erect bearing of the Duke, by which he is at once recognised wherever he is introduced. Less pains are taken with the portrait of Harold; but even in that a certain elegance of proportion, and length of limb, as well as height of stature, are generally preserved.

[204] Bayeux tapestry.

[205] AIL. de Vit. Edw.--Many other chroniclers mention this legend, of which the stones of Westminster Abbey itself prated, in the statues of Edward and the Pilgrim, placed over the arch in Dean's Yard.

[206] This ancient Saxon lay, apparently of the date of the tenth or eleventh century, may be found, admirably translated by Mr. George Stephens, in the *Archaeologia*, vol. xxx. p. 259. In the text the poem is much abridged, reduced into rhythm, and in some stanzas wholly altered from the original. But it is, nevertheless, greatly indebted to Mr. Stephens's translation, from which several lines are borrowed verbatim. The more careful reader will note the great aid given to a rhymeless metre by alliteration. I am not sure that this old Saxon mode of verse might not be profitably restored to our national muse.

[207] People.

[208] Heaven.

[209] Omen.

[210] The Eastern word Satraps (Satrapes) made one of the ordinary and most inappropriate titles (borrowed, no doubt, from the Byzantine Court), by which the Saxons, in their Latinity, honoured their simple nobles.

[211] Afterwards married to Malcolm of Scotland, through whom, by the female line, the present royal dynasty of England assumes descent from the Anglo-Saxon kings.

[212] By his first wife; Aldyth was his second.

[213] Flor. Wig.

[214] This truth has been overlooked by writers, who have maintained the Atheling's right as if incontestable. "An opinion prevailed," says Palgrave, "Eng. Commonwealth," pp. 559, 560, "that if the Atheling was born before his father and mother were ordained to the royal dignity, the crown did not descend to the child of uncrowned ancestors. "Our great legal historian quotes Eadmer, "De Vit. Sanct. Dunstan," p. 220, for the objection made to the succession of Edward the Martyr, on this score.

[215] See the judicious remarks of Henry, "Hist. of Britain," on this head. From the lavish abuse of oaths, perjury had come to be reckoned one of the national vices of the Saxon.

[216] And so, from Gryffyth, beheaded by his subjects, descended Charles Stuart.

[217] Brompt. Chron.

[218] See Note P.

[219] It seems by the coronation service of Ethelred II. still extant, that two bishops officiated in the crowning of the King; and hence, perhaps, the discrepancy in the chronicles, some contending that Harold was crowned by Alred, others, by Stigand. It is noticeable, however, that it is the apologists of the Normans who assign that office to Stigand, who was in disgrace with the Pope, and deemed no lawful bishop. Thus in the Bayeux tapestry the label, "Stigand," is significantly affixed to the officiating prelate, as if to convey insinuation that Harold was not lawfully crowned. Florence, by far the best authority, says distinctly, that Harold was crowned by Alred. The ceremonial of the coronation described in the text, is for the most part given on the authority of the "Cotton MS." quoted by Sharon Turner, vol. iii. p. 151.

[220] Introduced into our churches in the ninth century.

[221] The Wyn-month: October.

[222] "Snorro Sturleson." Laing.

[223] The Vaeringers, or Varangi, mostly Northmen; this redoubtable force, the Janissaries of the Byzantine empire, afforded brilliant field, both of fortune and war, to the discontented spirits, or outlawed heroes of the North. It was joined afterwards by many of the bravest and best born of the Saxon nobles, refusing to dwell under the yoke of the Norman. Scott, in "Count Robert of Paris," which, if not

one of his best romances, is yet full of truth and beauty, has described this renowned band with much poetical vigor and historical fidelity.

[224] Laing's Snorro Sturleson.--"The old Norwegian ell was less than the present ell; and Thorlasius reckons, in a note on this chapter, that Harold's stature would be about four Danish ells; viz. about eight feet."--Laing's note to the text. Allowing for the exaggeration of the chronicler, it seems probable, at least, that Hardrada exceeded seven feet. Since (as Laing remarks in the same note), and as we shall see hereafter, "our English Harold offered him, according to both English and Danish authority, seven feet of land for a grave, or as much more as his stature, exceeding that of other men, might require."

[225] Snorro Sturleson. See Note Q.

[226] Snorro Sturleson.

[227] Hoveden.

[228] Holinshed. Nearly all chroniclers (even, with scarce an exception, those most favouring the Normans), concur in the abilities and merits of Harold as a king.

[229] "Vit. Harold. Chron. Ang. Norm." ii, 243.

[230] Hoveden.

[231] Malmesbury.

[232] Supposed to be our first port for shipbuilding.--FOSBROOKE, p. 320.

[233] Pax.

[234] Some of the Norman chroniclers state that Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been expelled from England at Godwin's return, was Lanfranc's companion in this mission; but more trustworthy authorities assure us that Robert had been dead some years before, not long surviving his return into Normandy.

[235] Saxon Chronicle.

[236] Saxon Chronicle.--"When it was the nativity of St. Mary, then were the men's provisions gone, and no man could any longer keep them there."

[237] It is curious to notice how England was represented as a country almost heathen; its conquest was regarded quite as a pious, benevolent act of charity--a sort of mission for converting the savages. And all this while England was under the most slavish ecclesiastical domination, and the priesthood possessed a third of its land! But the heart of England never forgave that league of the Pope with the Conqueror; and the seeds of the Reformed Religion were trampled deep into the Saxon soil by the feet of the invading Norman.

[238] WILLIAM OF POITIERS.--The naive sagacity of this bandit argument, and the Norman's contempt for Harold's deficiency in

"strength of mind," are exquisite illustrations of character.

[239] Snorro Sturleson.

[240] Does any Scandinavian scholar know why the trough was so associated with the images of Scandinavian witchcraft? A witch was known, when seen behind, by a kind of trough-like shape; there must be some symbol, of very ancient mythology, in this superstition!

[241] Snorro Sturleson.

[242] Snorro Sturleson.

[243] So Thierry translates the word: others, the Land-ravager. In Danish, the word is Land-ode, in Icelandic, Land-eydo.--Note to Thierry's "Hist. of the Conq. of England," book iii. vol. vi. p. 169 (of Hazlitt's translation).

[244] Snorro Sturleson.

[245] See Snorro Sturleson for this parley between Harold in person and Tostig. The account differs from the Saxon chroniclers, but in this particular instance is likely to be as accurate.

[246] Snorro Sturleson.

[247] Snorro Sturleson.

[248] Sharon Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 396. Snorro Sturleson.

[249] Snorro Sturleson.

[250] The quick succession of events allowed the Saxon army no time to bury the slain; and the bones of the invaders whitened the field of battle for many years afterwards.

[251] It may be said indeed, that, in the following reign, the Danes under Osbiorn (brother of King Sweyn), sailed up the Humber; but it was to assist the English, not to invade them. They were bought off by the Normans,--not conquered.

[252] The Saxons sat at meals with their heads covered.

[253] Henry.

[254] Palgrave--"Hist. of Anglo-Saxons."

[255] Palgrave--"Hist. of Anglo-Saxons."

[256] The battle-field of Hastings seems to have been called Senlac, before the Conquest, Sanguelac after it.

[257] Traitor-messenger.

[258] "Ne meinent od els chevalier,
Varlet a pie De eskuier;
Ne nul d'els n'a armes portee,
Forz sol escu, lance, et espee."

Roman de Rou, Second Part, v. 12, 126.

[259] "Ke d'une angarde [eminence] u ils 'estuient
Cels de l'ost virent, ki pres furent."

Roman de Rou, Second Part, v. 12, 126.

[260] Midnight.

[261] This counsel the Norman chronicler ascribes to Gurth, but it is so at variance with the character of that hero, that it is here assigned to the unscrupulous intellect of Haco.

[262] Osborne--(Asbiorn),--one of the most common of Danish and Norwegian names. Tonstain, Toustain, or Tostain, the same as Tosti, or Tostig,--Danish. (Harold's brother is called Tostain or Toustain, in the Norman chronicles). Brand, a name common to Dane or Norwegian --Bulmer is a Norwegian name, and so is Bulver or Bolvaer--which is, indeed, so purely Scandinavian that it is one of the warlike names given to Odin himself by the Norse-scalds. Bulverhithe still commemorates the landing of a Norwegian son of the war-god. Bruce, the ancestor of the deathless Scot, also bears in that name, more illustrious than all, the proof of his Scandinavian birth.

[263] This mail appears in that age to have been sewn upon linen or cloth. In the later age of the crusaders, it was more artful, and the links supported each other, without being attached to any other material.

[264] Bayeux tapestry.

[265] The cross-bow is not to be seen in the Bayeux tapestry--the Norman bows are not long.

[266] Roman de Rou.

[267] William of Poitiers.

[268] Dieu nous aide.

[269] Thus, when at the battle of Barnet, Earl Warwick, the king-maker, slew his horse and fought on foot, he followed the old traditional customs of Saxon chiefs.

[270] "Devant li Dus alout cantant
De Karlemaine e de Rollant,
Ed 'Olever e des Vassalls
Ki morurent en Ronchevals."
Roman de Rou, Part ii. l. 13, 151.

Much research has been made by French antiquaries, to discover the old Chant de Roland, but in vain.

[271] W. PICT. Chron. de Nor.

[272] For, as Sir F. Palgrave shrewdly conjectures, upon the dismemberment of the vast earldom of Wessex, on Harold's accession to the throne, that portion of it comprising Sussex (the old government of his grandfather Wolnoth) seems to have been assigned to Gurth.

[273] Harold's birthday was certainly the 14th of October. According to Mr. Roscoe, in his "Life of William the Conqueror," William was born also on the 14th of October.

[274] William Pict.

[275] Thus Wace,

"Guert (Gurth) vit Engleiz amenuisier,
Vi K'il n'i ont nul recovrier," etc.

"Gurth saw the English diminish, and that there was no hope to retrieve the day; the Duke pushed forth with such force, that he reached him, and struck him with great violence (par grant air). I know not if he died by the stroke, but it is said that it laid him low."

[276] The suggestions implied in the text will probably be admitted as correct; when we read in the Saxon annals of the recognition of the dead, by peculiar marks on their bodies; the obvious, or at least the most natural explanation of those signs, is to be found in the habit of puncturing the skin, mentioned by the Malmesbury chronicler.

[277] The contemporary Norman chronicler, William of Poitiers. See Note (R).

[278] See Note (R).

[279] "Rex magnus parva jacet hic Gulielmus in urna--
Sufficit et magno parva Domus Domino."

From William the Conqueror's epitaph (ap-Gemiticen). His bones are said to have been disinterred some centuries after his death.

[280] Thomson's Essay on Magna Charta.

[281] Orderic. Vital. lib. 4.

[282] The date of William's marriage has been variously stated in English and Norman history, but is usually fixed in 1051-2. M. Pluquet, however, in a note to his edition of the "Roman de Rou," says that the only authority for the date of that marriage is in the Chronicle of Tours, and it is there referred to 1053. It would seem that the Papal excommunication was not actually taken off till 1059; nor the formal dispensation for the marriage granted till 1063.

[283] For authorities for the above sketch, and for many interesting details of Lanfranc's character, see Orderic. Vital. Hen. de Knyghton, lib. ii. Gervasius; and the life of Lanfranc, to be found in the collection of his Works, etc.

[284] Pigott's Scand. Mythol. p. 380. Half. Vand. Saga.

[285] "Suthsaxonum Ministrum Wolfnothem." Flor. Wig.

[286] Asser. de Reb. Gest. Alf. pp. 17, 18.

[287] Camden, Caernarvonshire.

[288] Pennant's Wales, vol. ii. p. 146.

[289] The ruins still extant are much diminished since the time even of Pownall or Pennant; and must be indeed inconsiderable, compared with the buildings or walls which existed at the date of my tale.

[290] Johann. ap. Acad. Celt. tom. iii. p. 151.

[291] William of Poitiers.

[292] He is considered to refer to such bequest in one of his charters: "Devicto Harlodo rege cum suis complicitibus qui michi regnum prudentia Domini destinatum, et beneficio concessionis Domini et cognati mei gloriosi regis Edwardi concessum conati sunt auferre."--FORESTINA, A. 3.

But William's word is certainly not to be taken, for he never scrupled to break it; and even in these words he does not state that it was left him by Edward's will, but destined and given to him--words founded, perhaps, solely on the promise referred to, before Edward came to the throne, corroborated by some messages in the earlier years of his reign, through the Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, who seems to have been a notable intriguer to that end.

[293] Palgrave, "Commonwealth," 560.

[294] "Quo tumultato, subregulus Haroldus Godwin Ducis filius, quem rex ante suam decessionem regni successorem elegerat, a totius Angliæ primatibus, ad regale culmen electus, die eodem ab Aldredo Eboracensi Archiepiscopo in regem est honorifice consecratus."--FLOR. Wig.

[295] Some of these Norman chroniclers tell an absurd story of Harold's seizing the crown from the hand of the bishop, and putting it himself on his head. The Bayeux Tapestry, which is William's most connected apology for his claim, shows no such violence; but Harold is represented as crowned very peaceably. With more art, (as I have observed elsewhere,) the Tapestry represents Stigand as crowning him instead of Alred; Stigand being at that time under the Pope's interdict.

[296] Edward died Jan. 5th. Harold's coronation is said to have taken place Jan. the 12th; but there is no very satisfactory evidence as to the precise day; indeed some writers would imply that he was crowned the day after Edward's death, which is scarcely possible.

[297] Vit. Harold. Chron. Ang. Norm.

[298] Laing's Note to Snorro Sturleson, vol. iii. p. 101.

[299] This William Mallet was the father of Robert Mallet, founder of the Priory of Eye, in Suffolk (a branch of the House of Mallet de Graville).--PLUQUET. He was also the ancestor of the great William Mallet (or Malet, as the old Scandinavian name was now corruptly spelt), one of the illustrious twenty-five "conservators" of Magna Charta. The family is still extant; and I have to apologise to Sir Alexander Malet, Bart. (Her Majesty's Minister at Stutgard), Lieut.-Col. Charles St. Lo Malet, the Rev. William Windham Malet (Vicar of Ardley), and other members of that ancient House, for the liberty taken with the name of their gallant forefather.

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