

CHAPTER XIII.

William of Normandy.—Return of Godwin.—Death of Godwin.—Harold.—Harold in Normandy.—Harold returns to England.—Banishment of Tostig.—Death of Edward the Confessor.—Harold chosen king.—Norman preparations for invasion.—Landing of Duke William.—Battle of Stamford-Bridge.—Battle of Hastings.—The Abbey of Bataille.—Burial of Harold.—Close of the Saxon period.

WHEN Canute leapt into the English throne, and married the widow of Ethelred, her brother Richard II. became the protector of her two sons by her first marriage; and they remained under his guardianship till his death, about 1026. His eldest son, Richard III., succeeded to the dukedom; but he soon gave place to his brother Robert. Whether Richard were murderously thrust from his crown and from his life by his younger brother, is matter of doubtful history; but that brother was for ten years the bold and powerful duke, who is sometimes styled "Robert the Magnificent," and more commonly "Robert the Devil." He was favourable to the pretensions of his cousins, Alfred and Ethelred; for he fitted out a fleet for the invasion of England, to place them in the sovereignty which Canute had usurped. But his armament was driven back by a tempest; and he changed its direction, to enforce the submission of Alan, of Brittany. He then went upon a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Before his departure, he presented to the nobles a little boy who he said was his son; and told them that his "little bastard" should be their lord if he saw them no more. He died in Bithynia, in 1035, the same year in which Canute died.

The young William of Normandy was placed under the care of Henry I. of France. At the death of Robert he was put in possession of his father's dominions; and the seat of his court was Rouen. Edward of England and William of Normandy were second-cousins; but the very difference of their ages would have been enough to have prevented much intercourse between them. Edward was called to his kingdom, in 1042, seven years after the death of Robert. William was a youth of fourteen, and from the time of his accession, the great duchy was distracted by the contests of the

nobles, and by the pretensions to the sovereign power of Guido, Count of Macon. But there was an energetic will maturing in the boy, whose illegitimacy his father had been proud to proclaim, according to the morality of those times; and he fought against Guido, and conquered in a great battle in 1047. In a year or two he had consolidated his power; and in 1051 was free to visit his cousin Edward in England.

Here then, in all the vigour of youthful manhood, came William of Normandy, to look upon the rich lands, and to understand something of the rough people over whom his feeble relative was the nominal ruler. In the fields through which he travelled, he saw an industrious race, churls and slaves, cultivating diligently, and not without skill, after the modes of their predecessors. In the towns he saw busy artisans, who were associated for mutual protection, and had their peculiar laws, handed down in code after code, but with little essential change in their principles. He saw powerful earls—bold, bearded men—who were great landed possessors, but not holding their arable and their pastures, their woods and waters, as fiefs of the crown, but as independent lords, and tyrannising, wherever they dared, in a most kingly fashion. He saw cathedrals and abbeys, built in a rude style, but splendidly endowed by the piety of the faithful. He heard on every side a tongue which sounded harsh to his ears—a tongue which his own people called barbarous and unfit for gentlemen. The same language, with slight difference, was spoken by the thirty thousand warriors whom Rollo planted a century and a half before, where he now ruled; but it was now the "abhorred English idiom." He saw a land that arms might win, and a people that craft might denationalise. He might be the peaceful successor of Edward, or he might fight for the crown against some pretender, when the childless king should be no more. William sojourned a little while at the court of Edward; and he there found ample encouragement for his ambition, and ready instruments of his will, when the fortunate hour should come. When that hour came, the laws of rude Germanic tribes should be changed for the Roman code. The turbulent earls and sheriffs should be supplanted by his own obedient vassals. The cathedrals and abbeys should be filled by intelligent Norman priests. The language of the Saxon should be supplanted by the refined Norman-French, in which the romances of his poets were sung, and the judgments of his clerks were delivered. "He was a stark man," said one who knew him—that is, he was a man of inflexible pur-

pose. There can be little doubt that his purpose was to possess England. Ingulphus says that he kept his views perfectly secret. Such men never make false confidences. His work was in great part done. Godwin and his sons, who represented the nationality of England, were banished. The king had a Norman court about him. Most of the few strongholds had Norman governors, and were garrisoned by Norman men-at-arms. The honest policy of the Anglo-Saxons did not repress foreign settlers, and there were Normans in every town. The nobles and the franklins, the burghers and the churls, were full feeders and late wassailers. They were a people to be first conquered, and then plundered.

The subjection of England was not quite so near its accomplishment as the condition of the country, in 1051, might have led William to expect. Godwin and his sons were banished. The old earl's domains were in the hands of the king, and of Odda the Norman; and Harold's earldom was bestowed upon Algar, the son of Leofric. But banishment and confiscation were of little avail, as long as those bold men could command the sympathies of their countrymen. In 1052, Harold and Leofwine sailed from Ireland, and entered the Severn. They landed, and defeated the opposing thanes, whose districts they ravaged. Godwin, in the meantime, had fitted out a fleet from Flanders, and found all the mariners of the coast, and all the people of his old earldom, ready to follow his bidding. Harold came round the coast, and joined his father at Portland. They seized upon the king's ships; they received hostages; they obtained supplies wherever they touched. At length they sailed up the Thames, and found the people of Southwark favourable to their cause. The king had ships in the river, and an army near at hand. But the disposition of the people was too manifest to permit him now to resist the demand that Godwin and his sons should be restored to their possessions and their dignities. Where the great thoroughfare from the west to the east of the most populous city of the earth—a road all too narrow for the daily crush of the thousands who pour along it—is now deafening with the din of never-resting wheels, then, upon that pebbly Strand, with field and forest behind, broke the silent wave of the tidal river; and there, were drawn up, in order of battle, the forces of the insurgent chiefs. Their demand was not unreasonable, on the part of men who had a superiority of physical force, and whose cause was so popular. The king at length yielded. Then the Normans, who were with the army and the king, hastily fled. The witan was as

sembled; and decreed the restoration of the earls, and held them innocent of the acts and designs which had been imputed to them. The greater number of the foreign advisers of Edward were declared outlaws. The joy of the Anglo-Saxon race was unbounded. They had achieved a great triumph with little bloodshed.

Within a year after his restoration the energetic and sagacious Godwin died. The circumstances of his death have been related by the Norman historians, so as to revive the old imputation that he was the murderer of Prince Alfred. The king was banqueting at Windsor. This was not the Windsor which is now so rich with historical associations—not “the proud keep,” which looks down upon the valley of the Thames, with “its kindred and coeval towers”—but the present Old Windsor, a royal house, in the fertile plain skirted by the river, where the Saxon kings went forth to meet their people in Runemed, the Council-meadow. At the king's banquet sat Godwin, in the house where his daughter was again the queen. Edward, in a dispute, hinted that the earl was accessory to the death of his brother Alfred. He stood up to aver his innocence, and fell speechless to the earth. Other writers say, that he invoked Heaven to choke him by the bread which he was about to swallow, if that guilt were his; and that he was choked.

The death of Godwin was, we may believe, a public calamity. There was wanting a strong hand to direct the central power in its due control of separate authorities. The great earls were bringing back the country to that condition of misrule which existed before the days of Egbert and Alfred. The earls were no longer the ministers of the king. The Danish “jard” had superseded the Saxon “ealdorman;” and the wearers of the new title were really district kings. The quarrel between Saxon and Norman had been laid aside for a season; but the ambitious chieftains were quarrelling amongst themselves. We cannot follow the minute historians in their narratives of the contests between the house of Leofric and the house of Godwin. When Harold vacated the earldom of East Anglia it was bestowed upon Algar, the son of Leofric. He was soon expelled upon a charge of treason. He fled to Griffith, king of Wales, and their united forces ravaged Herefordshire. Harold drove them back. Without any ostensible cause the outlawry of Algar was reversed. He was a second time banished, but he then recovered his possessions by force of arms. Tostig, the brother of Harold, had obtained Northumbria, upon the death of Siward. But he was too violent an oppressor, and his land was not tranquil.

Edward might well look with dismay to the time when he should no longer be a barrier, however feeble, to the ruin which would come out of rival factions. There was a legitimate heir to the throne in Hungary—Edward, the son of the brave Ironside. He was induced to come to England, and he came with a wife and three children. His death very soon followed his arrival. His child, Edgar, was now the last male of the race of Cerdic. There was little hope of a legitimate succession.

We are now reaching a point of history in which the narratives greatly vary, according to the national prejudices of the relators. The story, as it is told by the Norman chroniclers, has a coherence which gives it the semblance, if not the reality, of truth. There is, moreover, a picture-history of the events which we are about to relate. The famous Bayeux Tapestry, a roll of brownish linen-cloth worked with coloured thread, with figures and letters perfectly bright and distinct, is a roll twenty inches broad and two hundred and fourteen feet in length. The various figures have no perspective; but it has the artistic merit of constantly preserving the resemblance of individuals and classes. The same figure always represents Duke William; and the same moustached warriors always represent the Saxons. Of the antiquity of this remarkable record there is little doubt; and it has been said of it, "If the Bayeux Tapestry be not history of the first class, it is perhaps something better." It is, however, a Norman history; and illustrates the circumstances of the most important period of our annals as they presented themselves to the Norman mind. We must receive these relations, whether of chronicle or picture, with due caution.

In the year 1065 Harold is practically the foremost man of England. He has won the king to the endurance of his power, and has almost commanded his confidence and affection. That he was ambitious, to the utmost reach of ambition, is sufficiently manifest. His bravery and military talent were undoubted. He was the idol of the Saxon race. He had subdued the British people to his fealty by the terror of his arms. The Northumbrians were, he might believe, unequal to contend with him in any great contest for supremacy. That he looked to the crown of England on the death of Edward was a natural result of his character and his position. He had the energy of the warrior, but he had also the forethought of the politician. It is said that he kept Edward the Atheling from the presence of his uncle; that he procured the banishment of

Algar. We would not speak unkindly of Harold. He had great and noble qualities. He was formed for the re-regeneration of his countrymen, by upholding them against a foreign yoke, and by defending them against domestic oppression. We hear of the licentiousness of his brother Sweyn, and the tyranny of his brother Tostig, but no voice is lifted against Harold. To be merely brave and generous; to assert his pre-eminence over brute courage and sordid craft by the impulses of his own nature, was to put himself in danger. He became, at the court of Edward, the supple friend. He was gentle and submissive to the weak master over whom his father held a stern government. When Wales was at his mercy in 1065, "he ordered a great building to be erected in the country of the Welsh, at a place which is called Portaseith [near Chepstow]; and many things for eating and drinking to be there collected, that his lord, King Edward, might be enabled to stay there sometimes for the sake of hunting."* It is tolerably clear that he was cautiously working upon the mind of the king to make him his successor. Edward, even with his infirmity of purpose, would see the danger of bringing a ruler upon England, who would be as hateful to them as the courtiers he had been compelled to drive away. He would see the almost equal danger of raising up one great noble to the sovereign dignity, whilst others, almost as powerful, were passed by. But the last thing he would do, would be to send a message to William of Normandy, by Harold of Wessex, that William was to fill the throne of England. Yet this message, some of the Norman chroniclers say, he so sent. The Anglo-Saxon authorities are silent in the matter. Other authorities state that Edward warned Harold of the danger of putting himself into the power of the Norman duke. Harold's ostensible reason for going, was to redeem his young brother Ulfnoth, and his nephew, who had both been confined to William, when Godwin gave them as hostages upon the conclusion of his revolt. They had been detained in Normandy, though not ill-treated. The motive for Harold's journey was natural and honourable; and he might not be unwilling to measure his intellectual strength with one who was marked as his rival. Fear was unknown to him. The ingenious historian of the Bayeux Tapestry had as much adroitness in the exhibition of minute circumstances, as have the picture chroniclers of our own times. We see in that lady's work, whether of palace or monastery, a king sitting in a chair of state, over whose head is written "Edwardus Rex." He is addressing two persons.

* Roger de Hoveden.

This is Harold, it is held, with a companion, taking leave of the king. We next see Harold, as the inscription testifies, on the road to his manor of Bosham, in Sussex. He rides, as becomes a great duke, with his falcon on his hand, and his dogs leaping before him, and horsemen in his train. He next enters a church, not unmindful of one great duty. But the manners would not be Saxon, if a picture did not show him, or his followers, at a banquet. He goes on ship-board; but his dog is under his arm, and his hawk is on his wrist. His ship is then coming to anchor. The crew are impatiently gazing, and a sailor is on the mast. They have been driven by a tempest on the coast near the mouth of the Somme.

Guy, the Count of Ponthieu, is lord of that territory. He has no personal enmity to Harold; but he has a strong desire to possess himself of his equipments—his armour and his jewels, his embroidered mantles and his well-stocked purses. The count, too, will have ransom for his prisoner; and he shuts him up in a fortress near Montreuil. All this the lord of Ponthieu did, according to the feudal laws of hospitality. Harold had little hope of immediate escape; but he found a ransom in Duke William. Upon his release from Montreuil, Harold goes on to Rouen. There he is welcomed with the most lavish generosity. The secret rivals become the warmest friends. Harold followed William to his war with Conan, a count of Brittany; and William honoured him with splendid gifts of arms and horses. These things the chronicles and the tapestry duly record. The duke frankly promised the surrender of Ulnoth and the son of Sweyn. It was a time of feasting and pageantry, of dangerous battle and more dangerous tranquillity. In that noble city, where the Englishman delights to gaze upon the quaint gables that have stood through many generations, and to believe that some of his Norman kings might have rested beneath these roofs, or worshipped in those churches, whose grandeur and beauty is scarcely surpassed by his own cathedrals—there, where the quays of the Seine are loaded with the cotton-bags of America, and the chimneys of the factories send their heavy smoke over its green islets,—was Harold led by his host in stately procession with knight and bishop, or sailed with him in his pleasure-barge on the broad river to the sound of flute or sackbut. The brawling revel of the Saxon palaces was not there. Ladies sat not long, as at the coarse Saxon feasts, amidst the ribaldry of the drinking-horn. But when a temperate repast was quickly ended, in flower-garden or in tapestried hall the lute was heard; and the romancer sang of the

deeds of Roland and Charlemagne, whilst warriors whispered of love to not unwilling ears. In such scenes, say the chroniclers, and more emphatically the poets, was Harold subdued by the conqueror's fair daughter, Adeliza.*

Robert Brunne, in his Chronicle, says of William and Harold, "tales together they told, ilk on a good palfrey." William would tell of some knightly feat; and then compare it with the courage and humanity of the son of Godwin, who saved the lives of Norman soldiers, as they were sinking in the quicksands of the river of Couesnon, when they crossed together to fight in Brittany. Harold would speak of Norman chivalry; and of his own pride at having received his spurs from the hand of William. They talked of England; and the duke said that when he and Edward were living under the same roof in Normandy, Edward had affirmed that if ever he became king of England, William should be his successor. The timid man of forty was making this promise to the bold boy of fourteen, if we are to believe the Norman chronicles. William then asked whether Harold would support him in realising that promise. The Saxon was in his power. These were not times when ambition was easily surrendered to conscientiousness. Harold assented. But his assent was to be more solemnly enforced. He was to swear. He did swear. But he swore with a mental reservation. The Bayeux Tapestry shows in what manner he did swear. The duke sits upon his chair of state, with his sword in his hand. Before him stands Harold, between two ornamental pedestals, upon the top of which he places his fingers. He is swearing upon common reliquaries, as he thought; such as parish priests in England kept upon their altars, to command the faith of ignorant boors. He swears. But under the reliquaries are hidden, by a cloth of gold, the bones of saints and holy martyrs. William then commands the cloth to be removed; and Harold turns pale when he knows the supersanctity of the oath which he had taken. This strange story is in perfect accordance with the character of the age in which these men lived. It argues nothing against the peculiar narrowness of his mind that he could conceive of this method of making an oath sacred; or of his impiety who would shudder at the force of an obligation, in the presence of dust and ashes, which would sit lightly upon him if simply made in the presence of the Most High. But it shows how far true religion was separated from the super-

* The scene and its manners are beautifully set forth in Mr. Taylor's poem, "The Eve of the Conquest."

stitutions that passed for religion; and how the strongest minds were then subjected to influences which still remain, in some modified form or other, to prostrate the weakest.

Harold, at length, returned to England. In that voyage across the narrow sea he had lost much. He had lost his future freedom of action. He would be false to his oath; or he would surrender his nationality to a crafty and imperious lord. The season of his return was not one of inaction for Harold. His brother Tostig and William of Normandy had married sisters,—the daughters of Baldwin, Count of Flanders. In his earldom of Northumbria, Tostig was most tyrannous and oppressive, even beyond the usual oppression, which others of these petty kings exercised over their people. We may know what was the general nature of this oppression from the story of Godiva. A true poet has told that story with more than historic fidelity.* We see the gentle woman appealing to her grim lord, Leofric, to remit a tax upon the people of Coventry:

"She told him of their tears,
And pray'd him, 'If they pay this tax, they starve.'"

And so, to procure the remission of the tax, she did her lord's imperious bidding; and

"Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity."

It was the rapacity of the great earls that, amongst many other evils of misrule, made the country weak and demoralised. But Tostig went beyond the enormities of most of the grasping and licentious nobles, "who made a prey of the common people," as Malmesbury writes. The people of Northumbria rose against his power, drove him from York, and chose Morcar, one of the sons of Leofric, as their chief. The whole country was in alarm; and Harold was deputed to put down the insurrection. The fraternal bond—the pride of family which would shrink from the elevation of a son of Leofric over his own house—might have moved Harold to throw his whole military strength into the contest. But he summoned the insurgent people to a conference. They stated their wrongs. He tried to extenuate the deeds of Tostig, and to plead for his restoration. "We were born free," said the Northumbrians. "We were brought up in freedom. We will have no tyrant." Harold returned to the king without striking a blow; and he brought back to the insurgents pardon and peace. Tostig fled to Flanders; and became Harold's implacable enemy.

Upon the banishment of Tostig, Harold contracted a marriage of

* Tennyson's "Godiva."

policy. He married the daughter of Algar; she being the widow of Griffith, king of Wales, whose sons had succeeded to the kingdom. He was thus placed in alliance with two of the most powerful of the other chieftains. The king was old, and more than ever enfeebled. His great desire was to complete his abbey-church of Westminster. Close by that abbey was his palace. Here the gentle Edward died on the 5th of January, 1066. A few fragments are left of that palace, upon the site of which another palace of Westminster has arisen. The new palace has its political foundations firmly based upon the old institutions of which "the Confessor" was the head. A more splendid abbey-church was raised up under the Norman kings than that in which "the Confessor" had his last resting-place. But a few heavy and discoloured arches, amidst the architecture of a later age, stand as memorials of the ancient building; and in what is still called "The Confessor's Chapel," is a shrine, in which are the ashes of the last of the lineal descendants of that strenuous race of kings, who first, in 519, "obtained the kingdom of the West Saxons."

The Bayeux Tapestry, continuing its history, shows us the sickness and death of Edward, and his funeral procession to the abbey church which he built. It carries on the picture narrative by two simple representations. Harold stands with his plain battle-axe in his hand, while one man offers him a crown, and another a battle-axe having a cross at the junction of the handle with the blade. The inscription says, "They gave the crown to king Harold." "They" were the witan. Some of the chroniclers, amongst others Hoveden, state, that before his decease the king appointed Harold his successor. The fact is generally admitted; but it is coupled by others with a statement that the nomination was extorted from the dying Edward by the importunities of Harold and his partisans. The Saxon king was crowned on the day of Edward's burial, by the Saxon archbishop Stigand, who had been raised to the see of Canterbury when the monk of Jumièges was expelled. Stigand was never acknowledged by the papal power, and his support of Harold was a new offence to Rome.

Duke William is in his city of Rouen, in the January of 1066. He goes forth to hunt in his forest of Rouvray. Princes have their "toys of age" as well as the humbler; and William had a new bow in his hand, of which he was trying the power. A messenger comes in haste. The duke hears his message; throws down the bow; hastily repasses the Seine; and strides into his hall. No

one dare speak, for he clenches his teeth; stalks up and down with unequal steps; and half draws his sword from its sheath. He has had news from England; and all Rouen has heard the same news. Edward is dead; Harold fills his throne. But William is a man of action, and wastes no time in impotent rage. His envoy departs for Rome, to ask that Nicholas II. should put England under interdict—the England that had chosen a perjurer for king; that had expelled a Norman archbishop whom Rome had consecrated; that had ceased to pay the “Peter’s pence,” which her pious kings of old had willingly given. The duke secured the aid of Rome. He was not so successful with the king of France, whose aid he implored in his projected assertion of a right to the English crown, on the promise of Edward. Philip of France thought his imperious vassal somewhat too powerful already. Baldwin of Flanders, his brother-in-law, was equally indisposed to assist him in his enterprise. Conan, then duke of Brittany, after William had for some time announced his design, declared war against him, claiming Normandy as his own. Conan paid the penalty of his rashness. He died by poison. William had still to surmount difficulties with his own people. He called a great council at his castle of Lillebonne. About two miles from the eastern bank of the Seine, near Quillebœuf, is the old town of Lillebonne, with its Roman amphitheatre and other spoils of time; and near the town is “Le Manoir de Guillaume Conquerant.” A lofty circular tower is the principal remain of the ancient palace. On this spot were assembled warriors, churchmen, burghers, when the duke told them of his plans, and asked for their aid. They retired to deliberate. Fierce was the debate; and though Fitz Osbert, the seneschal of Normandy, urged their compliance, and misrepresented their opinions when they again had audience, they sturdily refused what William asked. They would give no double knight’s service. They would defend their own country; but they would not aid their duke in making a conquest of a land beyond the sea. William found out a secret which has been transmitted to later times. Those who were obstinate in a public assembly were pliant enough in private negotiation. Gold did more than the eloquence of Fitz Osbert. Then went forth a proclamation, that, supported by the Holy Father of Christendom, who had sent to him a consecrated banner, William, Duke of Normandy, was about to demand, by force of arms, his rightful inheritance of England; and that all who would serve him with spear, sword, or cross-bow should be amply re-

warded. At this call gathered together all the adventurers of Western Europe. They came in crowds from Maine and Anjou, from Poitou and Brittany, from Aquitaine and Burgundy, from France and Flanders. They should have land; they should have money; they should wed Saxon heiresses; the humblest foot-soldier should be a gentleman. The summer of 1066 was almost passed before the preparations were complete. A large fleet had assembled at the beginning of September at the mouth of the Dive. We come again to our picture-history, and we see men cutting down trees, and others building vessels. Another section of the needle-work shows us how the ships were moved to the sea, by men dragging them with ropes. They were not ships that rushed from their stocks like loosened castles; but small transports, scarcely larger than a fishing-smack. Their whole number is stated to have been nine hundred and ninety-seven. The fleet was detained for a month by contrary winds, and had been driven from the mouth of the Dive to the mouth of the Somme. The troops landed and encamped at St. Valery. The rain poured down; the hurricane drove dismantled vessels on the shore; the Norman soldiers murmured and said “God is against us.”

The Duke understood the temper of his men. In solemn procession through the camp was borne the shrine which contained the relics of Saint Valery; and the army knelt before the shrine, and made offerings to the priests. The next day the clouds were less lowering. At night the wind changed. On the morning of the 27th of September, the sun was gilding the calmer waves of the channel. The tents were struck; the embarkation commenced; and before evening the fleet had weighed anchor, amidst the shouts of men and the braying of trumpets. The vessel of William led the way; and he outsailed the fleet. After some anxiety, for the ships were widely dispersed, they were again together on the morning of the 28th September. “He passed the sea in a great ship and came to Pevensey.” So says the inscription on the tapestry. There, on the flat beach, which, seven hundred and fifty years afterwards was to be defended against another invasion by martello towers, William leapt from his boat; and falling to the ground, a cry went forth that it was an evil omen. He grasped the sand, and turned the omen into a sign of gladness, for he had taken seisin of his kingdom. The castle of Pevensey was at a short distance,—now a ruin, of Roman, Saxon, and Norman construction. In a few days the army marched to Hastings.

King Harold was far away when Duke William landed on that unprotected shore. His exiled brother, Tostig, had been to Normandy, and had arranged with William a plan of united action for the invasion of the country; and he engaged Hardrada, the King of Norway, in the confederacy. Tostig first tried his fortune alone on the south coast; but the vigilance of Harold drove him to the north. At the mouth of the Tyne, Tostig waited for the Norwegian armament, and their forces having landed, they marched to York. Here they defeated the Northumbrian earls, Edwin and Morcar. Harold was with his army on the southern coast when the news of the Norwegian invasion reached him; and he marched at once to encounter these enemies. He would have negotiated with his brother; but when Tostig asked what the king of Norway should have, the Saxon answered, "Seven feet of earth for a grave." A great battle was fought at Stamford-bridge on the Derwent; and Hardrada and Tostig were amongst the slain. Where this battle was fought, the bones of the dead whitened the earth for half a century. That day of carnage was the same 27th of September on which William sailed from Saint Valery. As Harold sat at a banquet at York, after the victory, the news came of the Norman landing. He had made adequate preparations for a resistance by sea when he marched to the north; but the same tempest that detained the invaders in Normandy compelled the Saxon ships to remain in their ports. They came out too late; and blockaded the whole coast. Harold rested not a day in Northumbria. He marched direct for London; where all the warlike population rallied round his standard. Meanwhile, the Normans had intrenched themselves near Hastings. They had ravaged this beautiful district so mercilessly, that for twenty years it lay waste and desolate. The tapestry exhibits their feasting in this land of fertility, when the harvest was in the homesteads, and the oxen were fattening in the marsh-lands.

On the 13th October, the army of Harold was encamped on a range of hills, near a place then called Senlac. This is the modern "Battle." The sea was in the distance, and the English ships were ready to cut off the retreat of the invaders. The army of William was on another range of hills. The watch-fires of each camp could be seen by the other as the night closed in. There was revelry in the English camp. There was silence and prayer in the Norman. The historians have put a long harrangue into the mouth of William, when he mounted his horse at day-break of the

14th. They are as genuine as the speeches which we find in Livy. At nine o'clock the Normans moved across the little valley, with the papal banner carried in advance of the Duke. They were formidable in their cavalry and their bowmen. The English waited the attack with their battle-axes, the Kentish men in the front. The Anglo-Saxons kept their ground like a mighty wall; and they advanced in the same firm array. This solidity in battle has been the great tactic of the country even to this day; and it belongs to the nature of the people. But it is in the same nature to be open to stratagem. After a fight of six hours, William commanded his men to turn their backs. The English raised a cry of triumph, and, breaking their ranks, rushed from their commanding position into the plain. Then the Norman cavalry wheeled round, and a terrible slaughter took place. Harold fell a little before sunset. There was still a struggle; but the great leader had passed away.

"In Waltham Abbey, on St. Agnes' Eve,
A stately corpse lay stretch'd upon a bier.
The arms were cross'd upon the breast; the face,
Uncover'd, by the taper's trembling light
Show'd dimly the pale majesty severe
Of him whom Death, and not the Norman Duke,
Had conquered; him, the noblest and the last
Of Saxon kings; save one, the noblest he,—
The last of all." *

Upon the ground where "was tried, by the great assize of God's judgment in battle, the right of power between the English and Norman nations," † the conqueror, within two years, founded an abbey. The old name of Senlac was changed, and this foundation was called "The Abbey of Bataille." The present buildings, so imperfectly preserved, and so miserably defaced, are of a later date. But no changes of time or of irreverent hands can destroy the interest which belongs to this memorable place. Some years ago, after a visit to Battle, the author of this history wrote:—

"The politic conqueror did wisely thus to change the associations, if it were possible, which belonged to this fatal spot. He could not obliterate the remembrance of the 'day of bitterness,' the 'day of death,' the 'day stained with the blood of the brave.' ‡ Even the red soil of Senlac was held, with patriotic superstition, to exude real and fresh blood after a small shower, 'as if intended for a testimony that the voice of so much Christian blood here shed

* "Eve of the Conquest."

† Daniel.

‡ Matthew of Westminster

does still cry from the earth to the Lord."* This Abbey of Bataille is unquestionably a place to be trodden with reverent contemplation by every Englishman who has heard of the great event that here took place, and has traced its greater consequences. He is of the mixed blood of the conquerors and the conquered. His national character is founded upon the union of the Saxon determination and the Norman energy. As he treads the red soil of Senlac, if his reformed faith had not taught him otherwise, he would breathe a petition for all the souls, Saxon and Norman, 'that there slain were.'

The victory of the Norman was no final triumph of one race over another. The nationality which Harold asserted, in a fight that might have had a different ending had the fatal arrow not pierced his brain, was never lost. The language and the laws of the victor only supplanted for a short season, and in a limited range, the old language and the old laws. It was in this spirit of nationality that the Anglo-Saxon people long refused to believe that the last of their kings had perished at Senlac. They believed that his wounds were healed amidst loving friends; that he waited, in some safe seclusion, again to head his faithful English when the hour of deliverance should appear approaching; that their Harold did not sleep in the tomb which was called his tomb in Waltham Abbey.† That abbey, like the Abbey of Bataille, has been removed to make way for the arches and columns of a later period. But, in the belief that Harold was borne to the great religious house which he had endowed, that venerable church of Waltham will be associated with our national history, whilst the memory is cherished of the brave, whether victorious or subdued, who have fought to the death for their country.

* William of Newbury.

† Fuller in his "History of Waltham Abbey," of which he was curate, has the following account of Harold's burial at Waltham:—"Githa, mother of Harold, and two religious men of this abbey, Osegod and Ailric, with their prayers and tears, hardly prevailed with the Conqueror (at first denying him burial, whose ambition had caused the death of so many) to have Harold's corpse (with his two brethren, Gurth and Leofwine losing their lives in the same battle,) to be entombed in Waltham Church, of his foundation. He was buried where now the Earl of Carlisle's leaden fountain in his garden, then probably the end of the choir, or rather some eastern chapel beyond it; his tomb of plain, but rich gray marble, with what seemeth a cross-floree (but much descanted on with art) upon the same, supported with pillarets, one pedestal whereof I have in my house. As for his reported epitaph, I purposely omit it, not so much because barbarous (scarce any better in that age), but because not attested, to my apprehension, with sufficient authority." The "reported epitaph" was, HIC JACET HAROLD INFELIX.

Here, then, is the close of this history of eleven hundred years. It is a history full of doubt and obscurity—a history in which we have to seek the growth of a nation amidst the most conflicting elements, sometimes wondering how they could have given birth to a perdurable state. Out of this British, Roman, Saxon, Danish, Norman stock, has come the English people. Out of these fierce wars, adverse religions, discordant institutions, has come, in the fulfilment of the decrees of an overruling Providence, a nation that has preserved its free spirit under every form of foreign domination or domestic oppression; a nation that in every conflict with authority, whether that of king, noble, or priest, has asserted the right of individual liberty, and has, with constantly increasing strength, upheld the principle that all power is derived from the people for the general good. To the Saxon mind we owe a great part of the English Constitution. It was as rudely developed, in its original stages, as the Saxon tongue. But as that tongue was gradually formed into a language, which has been spread over the earth, and has made new nations, so the Saxon principle of the natural right of each man to do what to him seemeth best, as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others, and the Saxon practice of social co-operation for public objects, have gone forth, and will still go forth, ultimately to banish from the civilised world that despotism which asserts the empire of the few over the many.