

to the barricade on foot, and slew Gyrth in hand-to-hand fight. At the same time the king's other brother, Earl Leofwine, was killed. The duke mounted another horse, and again pressed on; but the barricade and the shield-wall withstood all attempts. On the right the attack of the French division had been more lucky; the palisade was partly broken down, but the English, with their axes and shields, still kept their ground, and the Normans were still unable to gain the top of the hill or to come near the standard.

The battle had now gone on for several hours, and Duke William saw that, unless he quite changed his tactics, he had no hope of overcoming the resistance of the English. They had suffered a great loss in the death of the two earls, and their defenses were weakened at some points; but the army, as a whole, held its ground as firmly as ever. William then tried a most dangerous stratagem, his taking to which shows how little hope he now had of gaining the day by any direct attack. He saw that his only way was to bring the English down from the hill, as part of them had already come down. He, therefore, bade his men feign flight. The Normans obeyed; the whole host seemed to be flying. The irregular levies of the English on the right again broke their line; they ran down the hill, and left the part where its ascent was most easy open to the invaders. The Normans now turned on their pursuers, put most of them to flight, and were able to ride up the part of the hill which was left undefended, seemingly about three o'clock in the afternoon. The English had thus lost the advantage of the ground; they had now, on foot, with only the bulwark of their shields, to withstand the horsemen. This, however, they still did for some hours longer. But the advantage was now on the Norman side, and the battle changed into a series of single combats. The great object of the Normans was to cut their way to the standard, where King Harold still fought. Many men were killed in the attempt; the resistance of the English grew slacker, but yet,

when evening was coming on, they still fought on with their king at their head, and a new device of the duke's was needed to bring the battle to an end.

This new device was to bid his archers shoot in the air, that their arrows might fall, as he said, like bolts from heaven. They were, of course, bidden specially to aim at those who fought around the standard. Meanwhile twenty knights bound themselves to lower or bear off the standard itself. The archers shot; the knights pressed on; and one arrow had the deadliest effect of all; it pierced the right eye of King Harold. He sank down by the standard; most of the twenty knights were killed, but four reached the king while he still breathed, slew him with many wounds, and carried off the two ensigns. It was now evening; but though the king was dead, the fight still went on. Of the king's own chosen troops it would seem that not a man either fled or was taken prisoner. All died at their posts, save a few wounded men who were cast aside as dead, but found strength to get away on the morrow. But the irregular levies fled, some of them on the horses of the slain men. Yet even in this last moment they knew how to revenge themselves on their conquerors. The Normans, ignorant of the country, pursued in the dark. The English were thus able to draw them to the dangerous place behind the hill, where not a few Normans were slain. But the duke himself came back to the hill, pitched his tent there, held his midnight feast, and watched there with his host all night.