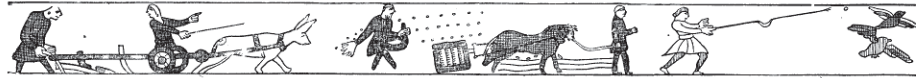
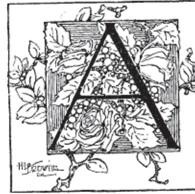


PLOUGHING AND SOWING. THE SLINGER.

Scenes from the Border of the Tapestry.

THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY.

By Edward J. Lowell.



MONG the curiosities that are scattered through the collections and galleries of Europe, there is no single one, perhaps, so interesting to all persons who care for the past as that long piece of embroidery which is known as the "Bayeux tapestry." It will, I think, be easiest to appreciate its importance by means of a comparison. Let us suppose, then, that in the course of time the inhabitants of this continent should lose almost all the records of the late civil war; that almost every contemporary account of that great struggle should be destroyed; that a few meagre chronicles, in prose or rhyme, some of them written long after the events had occurred, and far from the scene where they happened, should be the most trustworthy sources of information concerning a contest so important to our country. And let us then suppose that in some old church library a scrap-book should be discovered, containing the pictures published by one of our weekly newspapers during the course of the war; without other letter-press, it is true, than the title of each picture, but complete from the election of Lincoln to the battles about Petersburg; from sketches drawn perhaps by an eye-witness of some of the scenes represented, and certainly by a contemporary. With what care would such pictures be studied by all who were interested in the history of their country.

A little more than eight hundred years ago a series of events took place which have influenced the condition of all men living in Great Britain and Ireland, and of all their descendants from that day to this. If William of Normandy had not conquered England, we who live in America should to-day speak a different language from that which we now speak, and be governed by different laws and customs from those which we now observe. And, moreover, there are probably few readers of this magazine some of whose direct ancestors did not fight on one side or the other in the great battle near Hastings. Of that battle, and of the events which preceded it, the Bayeux tapestry is the most interesting record, for it tells not only those great events which historians and chroniclers think worthy of their

Harold takes leave of King Edward the Confessor.

[Beginning of the Tapestry.]

trouble, but a multitude of details concerning the daily life of the two nations whose mixed descendants are Englishmen and Americans.

The term "Bayeux tapestry," although universally adopted, is not strictly correct. The object we are considering is an embroidery on linen cloth. The strip on which it is worked is two hundred and thirty feet, nine and one-third inches long, and nineteen and two-third inches wide. The linen was probably unbleached, and time and dust have brought it to the shade of brown Holland. It is divided by horizontal lines into a centre and two borders, the centre being a little more than thirteen inches wide. It is in this central part that the action of the piece takes place, over-running at times into the borders. Over the greater part of the tapestry these last are merely ornamental, being cut by diagonal lines into sections only a few inches in length, which are filled with beasts, birds, and fishes, centaurs and dragons. At times, however, little pictures from life are given, or illustrations of Æsop's fables. Men are seen ploughing and harrowing, the fowler uses his sling, the fox flatters the crow who drops her cheese into his mouth. In general the border would seem to be more uneven in merit, both as to imagination and as to execution, than the central part of the tapestry.

Harold and Guy.

In the whole composition are represented more than six hundred and twenty persons, one hundred and eighty horses, and five hundred and fifty other animals, besides ships, boats, buildings, trees, weapons, tools, and other objects. These figures are drawn and colored *flat*, without any attempt at shading, and in their spirited uncouthness remind us of the work of a clever child. The faces, hands, and legs of the human figures, when bare, are merely indicated by a line of stitches. Yet it is an instance of the durability of frail things that these faces and hands have, in many cases, retained for eight hundred years a decided expression. In the colored portions of the embroidery, where the linen ground is covered with long worsted stitches, little attempt is made to imitate the hues of nature. There is nothing improbable, it is true, in the colors of the clothing, but those of the animals are not such as are found in the common varieties. In the absence of shading and perspective, an attempt is made to supply their place by varying the color arbitrarily on the different parts of the same animal. Thus a light-blue horse may have his two legs

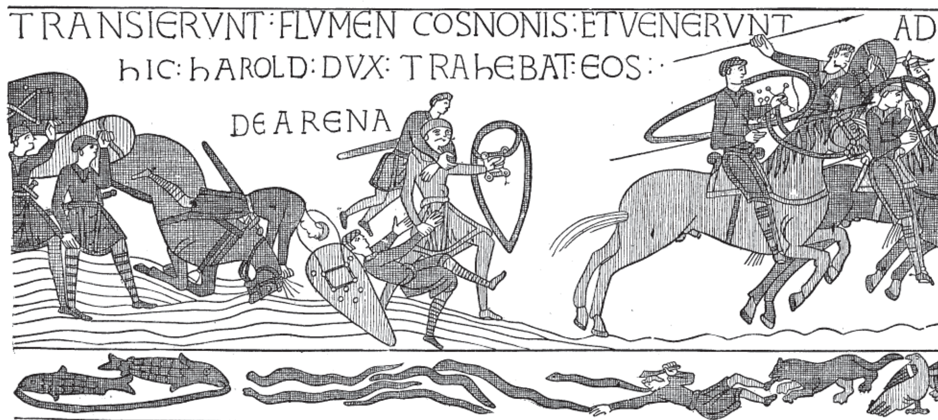
Aelgyva.

which are farthest from the spectator colored red, his ears green, and his mane yellow. The hoofs on his blue legs may be red, and those on his red legs green. In spite of this grotesqueness, the general effect is good ; and time, which will usually bring colors which lie near each other into harmony, however discordant

they may have been at first, has mellowed and softened the whole.

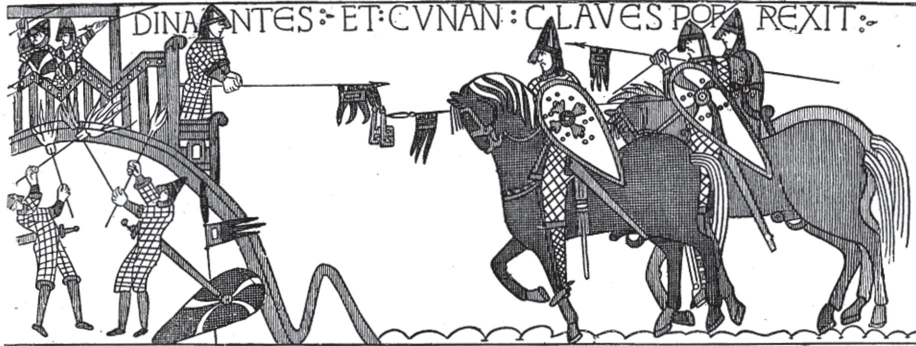
The Siege of Dol.

There has been some controversy as to the maker of the tapestry, and as to its exact date. It is attributed by popular tradition to Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror, who is supposed to have worked it, with her ladies, to commemorate the glories of her husband. Some writers suppose it to have been made at a somewhat later date than that of her lifetime. Mr. Freeman, however, probably the best authority on the subject, assigns the work to a period little after that of the conquest, but does not attribute its manufacture to the queen. The tapestry was worked, as he thinks, for Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, half-brother to William on the mother's side. There are some reasons to suppose that English workmen were employed. Odo appears at least four times in the tapestry, and several of his vassals, otherwise almost unknown men, are represented. The tapestry itself was exhibited in the cathedral of Bayeux down to the time of the French Revolution, being stretched round the nave on certain feast days. During the eight centuries which have elapsed since its completion it has escaped many dangers. The church was burned in 1106. It was pillaged by the Calvinists in 1562. In 1792 the tapestry narrowly escaped being cut up into coverings for carts for the French Revolutionary army. In 1803 it was carried to Paris and exhibited in the Musée Napoléon, to fire the French heart for a new conquest of England. On being returned to Bayeux the tapestry was wound on two cylinders or windlasses in the town-hall, and rolled from one to the other for the inspection of the curious. By this process it became somewhat frayed, especially near the ends. It was not until 1842 that the priceless relic was displayed to students and the public, under glass, in a special museum of its own. Thence it was again removed, in 1871, on the approach of the Prussian invaders. It was soon brought back, however, and stretched again in its museum, where it has been carefully copied several times.*



Harold saves the Normans from the Quicksands.

* An excellent series of colored engravings of the tapestry was published by the Society of Antiquaries, of London, in their *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol. vi., in 1823; a complete series of photographs, with valuable notes, by Frank Rede Fowke (London, Arundel Society, 1875). In these photographs the reproduction is between four and a half and five inches wide. A set of colored lithographs, reduced



The Surrender of Dinan.

The design of the central portion of the tapestry is divided into scenes or compartments, the separation between them being usually made by trees or buildings. But one scene sometimes runs into another in a way to make any count uncertain. A Latin inscription, placed generally near the top of each division, tells its story in a few words. Thus the tapestry is a history of the conquest, told from the Norman side. But more valuable than the record it bears of important events is its testimony concerning the little affairs of daily life—the clothing, armor, and weapons, the food, manners, and fashions—of our ancestors.

In the first compartment King Edward the Confessor is seen, seated on a cushioned throne. His crown is on his head, his sceptre in his hand. He wears the full beard, which was then going out of fashion both in England and France. His long white hands, mentioned by William of Malmesbury, are clearly shown, as he raises a finger in admonition. Beside him stand two figures in short tunics and long hose, with mantles (a distinction of nobility) draped about them. The young men wear moustaches only, as was usual among Englishmen, the Normans being clean-shaven. These men are probably Earl Harold and a companion, taking leave of the king before their journey to France. In the next scene they ride to the sea-coast. Harold goes first, with his hawk on his hand and his dogs running before him. Although these dogs are colored blue and green, they are drawn with much life and spirit. Before sailing, Harold goes into a church, and afterward partakes of a banquet. The latter is enjoyed in a hall supported by round arches and covered by a tiled roof. Some of the guests drink from round cups, some from carved ox-horns.

William arming Harold.

When the meal is over they come down a flight of steps to the water, and, having taken off their long hose, wade out to the ship, carrying their dogs under their arms. They then step their mast and push off from the shore. The ac-

from the *Vetusta Monumenta*, and rather roughly executed, elucidated by Rev. John Collingwood Bruce, LL.D., F.S.A., was published in 1856. They are about two inches wide. (London, John Russell Smith.) Articles on the tapestry are printed in the 17th and 19th volumes of the *Archæologia* of the Society of Antiquaries of London; a treatise "on the Banners of the Bayeux Tapestry, and some of the earliest heraldic charges, by Gilbert J. French," was reprinted from the Journal of the Archæological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, for July, 1857. (London, T. Richards.) Edward A. Freeman has an appendix on the tapestry in the third volume of his "History of the Norman Conquest," and there are many references to it in the history itself. The *Roman de Rou*, written by Robert Wace, about a century after the battle, has been much used in the preparation of this article. It was very carefully published by Dr. Hugo Andresen, Heilbronn, 1877. Many works on arms and armor have been consulted, and especially the fifth volume of the *Dictionnaire raisonné du Mobilier Français*, by Viollet le Duc, Paris, 1874.

tion of the men shoving with poles is well given.

The ships are long galleys, propelled by sails and by oars. The bows and sterns are high, and in many instances capped with a carved head. The sails hang from a long yard, which keeps a horizontal position, not holding one end much higher than the other, as do the lateen sails of the Lake of Geneva, or the Nile. Along the gunwale of each galley the shields of the warriors are displayed, lapping over each other to form a bulwark.

Soon land is seen from the mast-head, and presently the ship is run on a beach and an anchor set out to keep her firm. Here Harold is seized by Wido, or Guy,

Harold's Oath.

Count of Ponthieu, and taken off as a prisoner to Beaurain le Château, whence he is finally ransomed by William, Duke of Normandy. The whole incident is characteristic of the manners of the time. Whether it was by mistake or by stress of weather that Harold landed in the count's dominions we do not know. But in either case he became the lawful spoil of the lord of the land. The claim is undisputed, and William, although he is Count Guy's overlord, does not think of demanding the prisoner without ransom. The adventure has its value, moreover, in the story of the conquest of England. Harold, ransomed by William for a great price, is put under a heavy obligation to him.

The Duke of Normandy takes the English earl to Rouen, where he gives him solemn audience in a great hall surmounted by an arcade of seventeen Romanesque arches. Harold, the only Englishman present, seems to expostulate with William. The story at this point presents a mystery. The scene immediately following the interview between the duke and the earl at Rouen represents a woman, against whose face a tonsured man is laying his hand. The inscription, apparently mutilated, or intentionally left incomplete (for there are no stitch-marks), reads, in Latin, "where a clerk and Aelgyva." Mr. Fowke, in his excellent notes accompanying the photograph of the tapestry, has made a guess at the meaning of this picture, which, although incapable of proof, seems to bring it into the general course and story of the work. He surmises that Aelgyva was a noble English lady (as, indeed, is shown by her name); that she was possibly even the sister of Harold; that this lady was insulted or outraged by a member of the clergy; that this may have taken place at the Breton town of Dol; and that Harold entreated William to assist him in obtaining revenge. Thereupon we see, in the next compartment, the expedition into Brittany; the flight of the culprit, who lets himself down from the walls of Dol by a rope and escapes to Dinan; the siege and capitulation of that place. This theory, however, is contradicted by the fact, mentioned by William of Poitiers, that William's expedition to Dol was made for the purpose of raising the siege of the town, which was attacked by Conan, Duke of Brittany. Indeed, the flight of Conan from before the walls of Dol is shown in the tapestry; it is he that surrenders Dinan; and if Aelgyva's clerical lover were of the party, his affair had been lost sight of by the artist. The scandal is eight centuries old, after all, and no one but an archæologist can be expected to care much about it.

Some incidents of the Breton expedition, however, deserve notice. Passing by Mont St. Michel, the army crossed the great sandy beach which surrounds that picturesque fortress. Here the river Couesnon flows into the sea,

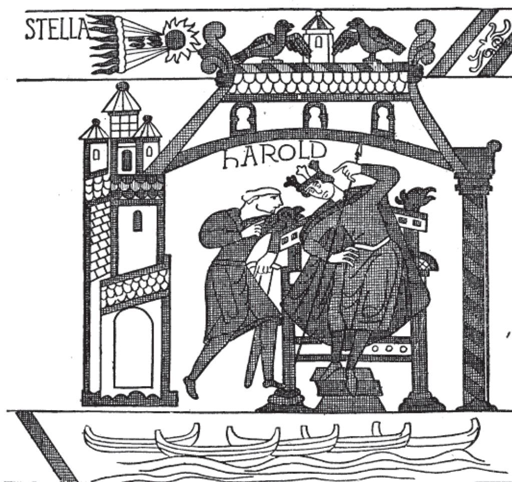
through dangerous quicksands. Caught among these we see the Norman army. The men carry their shields above their heads to keep them from the salt water; a horse and his rider are floundering. Harold, by his personal strength, is saving two Normans from the sands. One he carries pickapack, and the other he pulls by the wrist. Below, in the border, are eels and fishes devouring those who have been lost.

Completion of Westminster Abbey.

After chasing Conan from before Dol the Normans lay siege to Dinan. We see them on horseback and in armor advance toward the outer defences of the place. Javelins are thrown from both sides. Meanwhile two knights on foot, leaving their pennoned lances stuck in the ground, and their shields leaning against them, advance boldly to the palisade and set fire to it with torches. On the other side of the picture, Conan gives over the keys of the town. He reaches them, on a lance, from the walls to an officer (probably Duke William), who receives them in the same manner.

The Death of King Edward the Confessor.

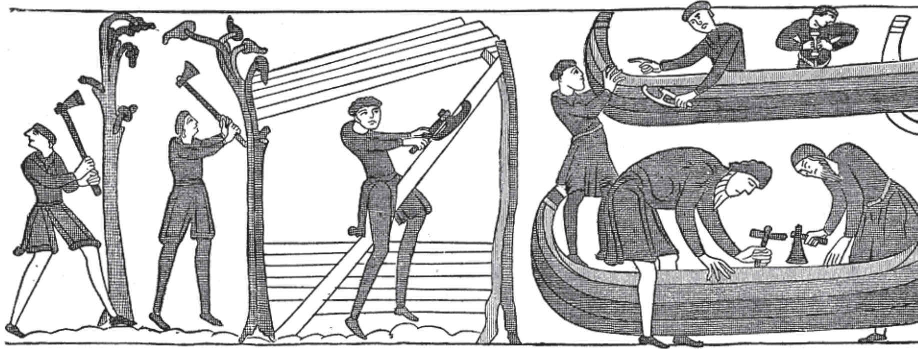
Immediately after the surrender of Dinan we have a scene with the inscription, "*Here William gave arms to Harold.*" It is probable, however, that something more than a present of the spoils of Dinan is intended. Both warriors are clad in armor. Harold holds a lance with a pennon in his left hand. William's left hand rests on Harold's helmet; his right is raised, as in earnest speech. The scene is perhaps that of conferring knighthood, a ceremony which took place, according to Wace, between the duke and the earl at Avranches. There are difficulties, however, in so considering it. Knighthood was conferred among the Normans by a ceremony on horseback. Among the Saxons it was conferred by a priest and according to a religious ritual. Here it is a layman who gives the honor, and both he and the recipient are on foot.



Bad News brought to Harold.

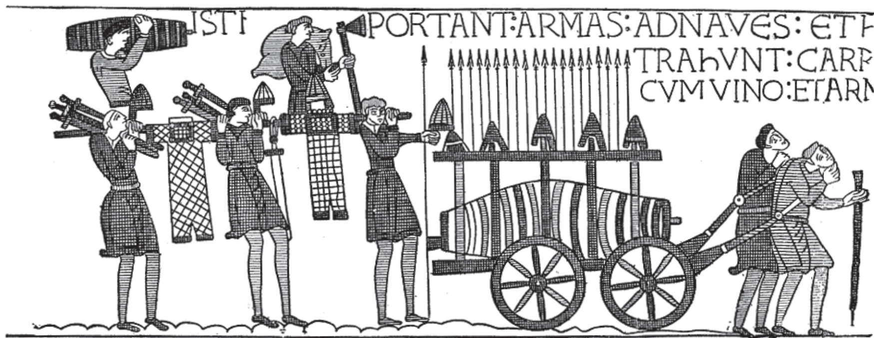
The campaign was now ended, and the Normans returned to Bayeux. It was here that, before sending Harold back to England, William exacted from him an oath. The nature and extent of the promise is not absolutely certain, but there is nothing positively to contradict the story told by a Norman poet a century later. Harold, he says, first proposed to give over the kingdom of England to William on King Edward's death, and to take to wife Ele, William's daughter. This Harold offered to swear to,

and William assembled a great council at Bayeux to hear the oath. The duke then got together all the relics he could find—the bodies of the saints—and filled a tub with them. Over the tub was thrown a silken cloth, so that Harold neither knew nor saw what it contained. On the cloth was laid a reliquary, the best that could be had and the most precious; it was called the ox-eye. When Harold stretched his hand over it, his hand trembled and his flesh crept. Then he swore and pledged himself, as was dictated to him, to marry Ele, the duke's daughter, and to give up England to the duke, to the best of his power, after Edward's death, if he himself should be alive, so help him God, and the holy relics that were there. And several of those present said, "God grant it!" When Harold had kissed the relics and had risen to his feet, the duke led him to the tub and took off the silken cloth which had covered it, and showed Harold what was within and on what relics he had sworn. Harold was indeed aghast at what he saw.



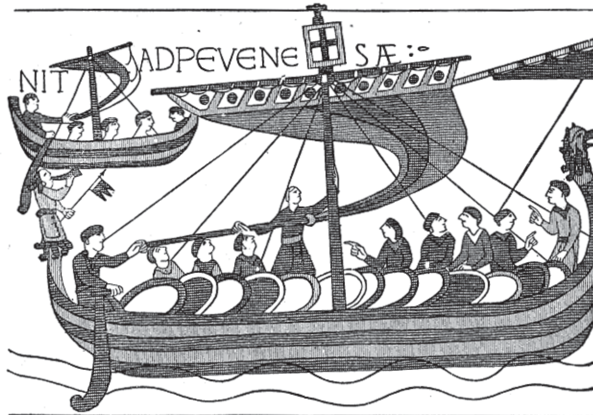
Building the Ships.

This story, with its curious primitive notion of cheating your prisoner and taking liberties with the saints, and enlisting the powers of heaven against your enemy by tempting him to offer them an unintended insult, is neither conclusively affirmed nor denied by the evidence of the tapestry. Harold stands between two altars, one apparently permanent and the other movable. The front of each is concealed by drapery, and on each stands an ornamental box, or reliquary, of elaborate architectural design, such as the bones of saints are kept in to this day. On top of one of these boxes is a projection, terminating in a ball or knob, which may well be the "ox-eye" mentioned by the old poet. Toward each Harold extends a hand. It is clearly the intention of the artist to show that the English earl



Arms and Provisions.

swore on many relics; else why the two reliquaries. If the story of the pious fraud be true, it may not have suited the bishop, or his patron, to publish it, but rather to intimate that Harold swore with full knowledge of what he was doing. On the other hand, if the story were notorious, the draped altars would suggest the hidden tub. The objection afterward raised to this oath by Harold was not fraud, but duress; he said that he was William's prisoner when he took it. Moreover, the exact nature of the oath taken is as doubtful as the story of the tubful of relics. That some solemn promise was actually made, or some solemn act of fealty performed, there can be little doubt.



The Mora.

After taking the oath Harold returns to England. We see his boat on the channel, which may here well be called "the narrow seas," for while her stern almost overhangs the coast of France her bow is within half a lance's length of England. From the terrace of a castle a watchman, shading his eyes with his hand, looks for the coming sail. Harold and a companion ride to London, and present themselves before King Edward.

As the best authorities are quite uncertain as to the exact date of the incidents hitherto narrated, it is impossible to say how long an interval of time should be supposed to have elapsed between the scene last mentioned and that which occurs next in the tapestry. We see Westminster Abbey, whose building had been the principal interest of King Edward the Confessor's later years, and whose completion he survived but a few days. The church was consecrated three days after Christmas, 1065, although Edward was too ill to be present, and on the 6th of January, 1066, the king died. He was buried the next day, in his own abbey church, the most interesting spot on English soil. The building has since his time been almost entirely renewed and rebuilt; but in its choir, in the place corresponding to that where the high altar of most cathedrals stands, is the wooden tomb of Edward, the work of a later age; while around this cluster the monuments of kings and heroes, and above hangs the armor of an English monarch who won on French soil a battle as brilliant, if not as important, as that of Hastings.* The original building, in which the body of the Confessor was first laid, was neither small nor mean. A long nave of round arches, a central tower or lantern, an apse, and transepts (the last perhaps unfinished) are shown in the tapestry. On the roof

Norman Cooks.

* The saddle, helmet, and shield used by Henry V., at the battle of Agincourt, hang in the chapel of King Edward the Confessor.

a workman is setting up a weather-cock — the cock that crowed to Peter on Saint Peter's Church.

The Banquet.

Toward this stately edifice Edward's funeral is advancing. The bier is borne by eight laymen, and a party of the clergy follows it. One carries a bishop's crook; others have books. Beside the bier two boys are carrying bells, one in each hand. The body is seen wrapped in a shroud and shaded by a canopy.

The artist goes back a step and shows us the last scene in Edward's life. A contemporary chronicler has preserved the names of the group of stiffly drawn but expressive figures that cluster round the bed of the dying man. The cushion that supports his head and shoulders is in the hands of Wymarc, one of the great officers of his household. On the further side of the couch stands Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury, easily recognized by his embroidered robe and his tonsure. At the king's feet sits his queen, Eadgyth, and wipes her eyes. Nearest the spectator is a kneeling figure in the cloak of a nobleman. To him the dying man appears to speak, even in this tapestry made for a Norman bishop. For this is Harold, the hero of the great tragedy, the man destined to be the last English king of England until the nation shall have conquered and absorbed its conquerors. King Edward named him as his successor, but the nomination was preceded by a prophecy of woe. Two holy monks, known to him in his youth, said the dying monarch, had lately appeared to him in a vision. The great men of the kingdom, they had told him, were not what they seemed. Earls, bishops, abbots, and men in holy orders —they were ministers of the fiend. Within a year and a day the whole land would be a prey to devils. Thus with prophecy and injunction the old king passed away.

The great council of the nation was at that time assembled at Westminster. Without delay it elected Harold to the royal office. In the tapestry two noblemen are seen offering him the crown. Edward had died childless, and there was no male descendant of the royal house living and grown to manhood.

The First Attack.

The crown, moreover, was elective; although it was usual to choose a member of the royal family, if an available member were forthcoming. Harold accepted the crown in spite of his oath to William. The considerations—that it had been taken under duress, and that he had had no right in any case to dispose of the crown of England—were reasons strong enough for his ambition. Yet the oath itself, and the tubful of relics, may well have weighed on his conscience.

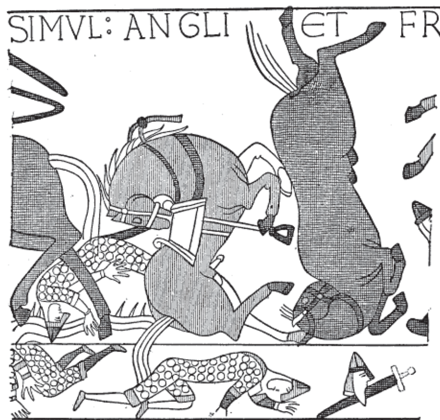
In the tapestry the funeral of King Edward and the coronation of King Harold are separated by the compartments representing the death of the former king. But in reality one ceremony followed closely on the other. On the morning of the day following that of his death the body of the Confessor was laid in the tomb, in his new church; and on the same day, and perhaps in the same building, Harold was crowned king in his stead. In times like those, it would not have been safe to run the risks of an interregnum. We see Harold on his throne, with a crown on his head, a sceptre in his right hand, and an orb in his left. On one side of him are two nobles, one of whom carries the sword of state. On the other is Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury. There is some doubt whether Stigand really officiated at the coronation. His position in the church was not unquestioned, and an office performed by him might not have been considered valid. We consequently find Norman accounts, including this one, asserting that it was he who crowned Harold. The English writers, on the other hand, say that the ceremony was performed by Ealdred, the Archbishop of York. The crowd, placed in an adjoining compartment (or an antechamber), raise their hands and bend eagerly forward toward the new monarch. But another group, farther from the presence, in a vestibule or under a cloister, are turned away from the throne. They point toward the sky, where blazes a comet, most elaborately represented. From chroniclers we learn that this portent was generally supposed by contemporaries all over Western Europe to be connected with the crisis in England, and to prefigure the misfortunes of that country. Later scientific researches have established the probability that it was Halley's comet which so disturbed our ancestors. In a building, over whose roof the flaming star is shining, we see Harold again. The new king, wearing his crown, but holding a spear in his hand, listens, with bent head and troubled face, to a messenger of bad tidings. In the border below is a rough representation of boats dancing on the waves, the sight which a king of England, fearing invasion, might well see before his troubled eyes.

The realization of Harold's fears is shown in the compartments which follow: An English ship crosses the seas to Normandy. Duke William sits in his palace. He has heard the news and he prepares for war. By his side sits his half-brother Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux. A carpenter, carrying a broad-axe, receives the duke's orders. On the other side of the duke a Norman gentleman gesticulates violently, but receives little attention. We next see the workmen felling trees, shaping planks, and building boats. The tools employed are axes, broad-axes, hatchets, hammers, and a boring instrument with an elaborate but rather awkward handle. The ships are long and low, rising at the bow and stern. Indeed, this type is never departed from in the tapestry, whether for large vessels or small boats. I do not think any of the ships were decked. William's fleet, hastily constructed, was not intended for long or difficult navigation. In fact, he waited for weeks for a fair south wind before embarking his army. We see in the tapestry how the boats are launched and the arms and provisions put aboard—swords, helmets, and coats of armor, shields and spears, casks of wine, and carcasses of pork.

The principal garment worn in battle at this time by both Normans and Englishmen who were rich or powerful (for the ordinary people fought in their everyday clothes) was so shaped as to cover the arms to the elbow and the legs to the knee. It was made of leather or strong cloth, on which were sewed small plates or rings of metal. It was probably also wadded, as an additional protection. Sometimes, instead of the plates or rings, a trellis-work of leather was made and strengthened with studs. The

garment had a square opening in the breast, to enable the wearer to struggle into it, first his legs, then one arm, then the other. When he was in, a flap was buckled or buttoned across the opening. A hood, of the same material as this body garment, covered the head and shoulders. On top of the hood was placed a helmet of iron and bronze, conical or nearly so in shape, and fitting round the head like a hat. A piece of iron came down from the rim in front, protecting the nose, and partially masking the face. There was sometimes a similar piece to cover the back of the head and the nape of the neck. These helmets must have been both heavy and uncomfortable, as the whole weight rested on the head, and a perfect fit must have been difficult to obtain. William and one or two of his greatest nobles wore hose protected by plates or rings, like their coats; but most men, noble and simple, relied in battle on an elaborate arrangement of straps reaching from the knee to the ankle, and recalling that worn to-day by the peasants of the Roman Campagna. On their left arms the warriors carried almond-shaped shields, three or four feet long. For these the English sometimes substituted round or oval shields. The shield was probably made of wood, covered with leather, and having a border of metal and a projection, or boss, of metal in the widest part. The studs which held the straps by which the shield was carried also appeared on the outside. The surface, slightly curved and generally of one plain color with a border, was sometimes decorated with colored lines, a cross, or the figure of a dragon. Armorial bearings did not appear on shields until a later date.

The weapons in use were swords, axes, lances, darts, bows and arrows. The swords appear to have been sharp on both edges, and blunt at the point, intended to cut and not to stab; their guards were simple cross-pieces. The axe was the national weapon of the English. With it King Harold is said to have been able to strike down horse and man at one blow. It was also considered appropriate for ceremonial occasions; thus, when the crown is first presented to Harold both he and the man who presents it carry axes. It has been noticed that the blades of both these axes are turned toward the newly chosen king. I believe, however, that this is accidental. The designers of the tapestry were not given to allegory, and the attempt to attach hidden meanings to their plain pictures is fanciful. It may be noted that the axe carried in war differs entirely in shape from that used for felling trees. The former has a broad curved edge, and becomes very narrow at the back; the latter approaches our modern shape. In one of the *mêlées* of the battle of Hastings, however, a man is seen fighting with a workman's axe. It is known that some of Harold's forces were the hastily armed levies of the neighborhood of the field of battle; but as the man wielding this axe is dressed in armor, the appearance of the common axe in his hands is probably due to carelessness in the embroiderer.



A Part of the Battle.

The lance was used both by the Normans and the English. It was not held under the shoulder when charging, like the heavier lance of a later date, but carried free in the hand, which was often raised beside the head. When not in use it rested in the stirrup. The wood was about eight or nine feet long; the head varied in form, being oftenest leaf-shaped or barbed. The principal knights carried a pennon on their lances. The devices on these pennons are interesting as coming singularly near the beginning of the science of heraldry.

They consist of stripes and bands of various colors, and in most cases the pennon ends in three points. When any more elaborate device is attempted, it usually takes the form of a cross or of two or more circles. I think that the lance generally passed through the hem of the pennon, but this is sometimes doubtful. One of the banners pictured in the tapestry would, if we could surely recognize it, deserve peculiar attention. It is on record that Pope Alexander II. sent a consecrated banner to Duke William, and a ring containing a hair of St. Peter. The ring is not to be found on the duke's finger in the tapestry, nor can the banner be identified with absolute certainty. A distinguished antiquary, however, has pitched on one particular pennon, which bears a yellow or golden cross on a white ground surrounded by a blue border, as the papal gift; * and it is noticeable that this device is almost identical with that on the flag carried at William's masthead in the ship Mora, which bore him to England.

The English Churls.

Only once is a figure more elaborate than a simple cross shown on a Norman banner in the tapestry. This is the representation of a bird on a semicircular banner with nine small streamers. This bird has been thought by some scholars to be the holy Dove, by others to be a raven, the standard of a band of Danish origin. The small size of the figure makes its identification impossible.

Two other standards, more curious than any Norman pennon, even though sent by a pope to encourage an invader, are to be seen in the tapestry. These are dragons, not embroidered on cloth, but made solid, either of metal or wood (for a stuffed dragon is hardly to be supposed), and carried on spears. The dragon was the ensign of Wessex, but King Harold's own standard was the "fighting man." This last, which is not shown in the tapestry, would appear to have been an embroidered figure. The dragon, however, made solid, and taking the place of a flag, can hardly have been an invention of the designer of the tapestry, to whom flags of cloth were familiar. It is probable, therefore, that the dragon standard was indeed solid, like the eagle of the Roman legion or the French regiment, and like those figures of dragons which are represented on Trajan's column at Rome.

Duke William spent the summer of 1066 in building and collecting a fleet. His half-brothers, Bishop Odo and Count Robert of Mortain, gave one hundred and one hundred and twenty ships respectively. Other vessels were sent in from all sides, and the builders were kept busy. The whole fleet numbered six hundred and ninety-six sail by the lowest reckoning, while the highest credible figure is above three thousand. But the largest of these vessels, the Mora herself, the gift of the Duchess Matilda, which bore the great duke to the conquest of a kingdom, was but an open boat with one mast, easily unstepped. Into such boats men and horses were crowded. The numbers of the army are variously estimated at from fourteen to sixty thousand.

Long they waited for a fair wind, in-

* Viollet-le-Duc, Dictionnaire raisonné du Mobilier Français, vol. v., p. 171.

voking the saints. At last the relics of St. Valery were brought from their church and laid in a field, on a carpet. The pious warriors crowded around them to pray, and covered the body of the saint with the pile of their offerings. The powers of heaven were appeased, as they believed, and on the 27th of September the south wind blew fair for England. The day was spent in embarking; the night, in sailing over the channel; in the morning they approached the white cliffs of England. We see in the tapestry the long lapstreak hulls, painted in bright lines; the colored sails, that remind us of Venice; the row of bucklers along the gunwale; the heads of men and horses looking out over the rolling water. We see the landing; the horses taken from the ships; the scouts galloping over the country; the foragers bringing in cattle and provisions. A house is burned, and we see the mistress going forth leading a child by the hand. From other sources we learn that the country all about Hastings was so plundered that after twenty years it still showed marks of the Norman pillage. For a time the invading army remained undisturbed. King Harold was away in the north, where, three days before the landing of William, he had defeated another host of invaders under his own brother Tostig and Harold Hardrada, King of Norway. So William was left to land unopposed at Pevensey, to march unhindered to Hastings, and to fortify his camp there. Nor was the time spent without feasting. In one of the most curious scenes of the whole tapestry we see the pot hanging over the fire; we see a head cook taking dainties from a portable oven. He balances a dish on his left hand; in his right he holds a curious double hook, perhaps a hawk's claw on the end of a stick, with which he lifts—can it be a croquette?—and arranges his dish with French taste. We see the chickens on the spits. A sideboard is hastily made of shields laid on a trestle; but the dinner-table, which is very curious, must have been brought among the baggage. It is shaped like a horseshoe, and the guests sit only on the outer side; while on the inner a servant, on one knee and with a napkin over his arm, presents a dish. There is no cloth on the table, but there are dishes, knives, and cups; yet we see fish laid on the bare board. Odo, the bishop, is blessing the food and drink. He holds a bowl in his left hand and stretches three fingers over it. But the hunger of the other guests will hardly be restrained. Two appear to be pledging each other; one seizes a cake; another raises a morsel to his lips.

I had hoped, and at one time believed, that of Odo, at least, the tapestry had preserved a portrait. We see him in the scene above mentioned, and in the next, where he is holding council with his brothers, with a round face, large eyes, and a mouth of the type called cherubic. But I find him in another part of the tapestry with sunken cheeks. In fact, if the artist ever attempted portraiture, which is not impossible,as the size of the heads admits it (a face can be amply covered with a silver dollar), time and winding on windlasses have destroyed the portraits, except as to such obvious features as moustaches and beards. William is usually represented as a tall man, but I do not think that this means much. There is a tendency, even in artistic representations much more advanced than those of the tapestry, to give size to the most important figure. In fact, a great man does look big to those who see him.

William shows his Face to his Friends.

After the feast the tapestry is occupied with the preparations for the battle. On the afternoon of the 13th of October, 1066, the English army, advancing from London, was drawn up on a hill called Senlac, about seven miles

from Hastings. The position itself was strong and well chosen. Harold fortified it with a ditch and a palisade, and the shields of the warriors themselves, resting with one end upon the ground, formed a wall. All Englishmen at that time fought on foot, using their horses only to carry them to the field, while the chief strength of the Normans was in their cavalry. The hill of Senlac is long and narrow facing the south. On the middle of the hill King Harold took his place, beside the standards of the dragon and the fighting man. Around him were his brothers and his personal followers, the flower of the English army; the men of Kent, and the citizens of London. They were armed with lances, javelins, and swords, and with the terrible axe. On the flanks were the raw levies, mostly without defensive armor, and carrying anything to strike with, from a lance to a pitchfork, and even the stone hatchets of an earlier civilization.

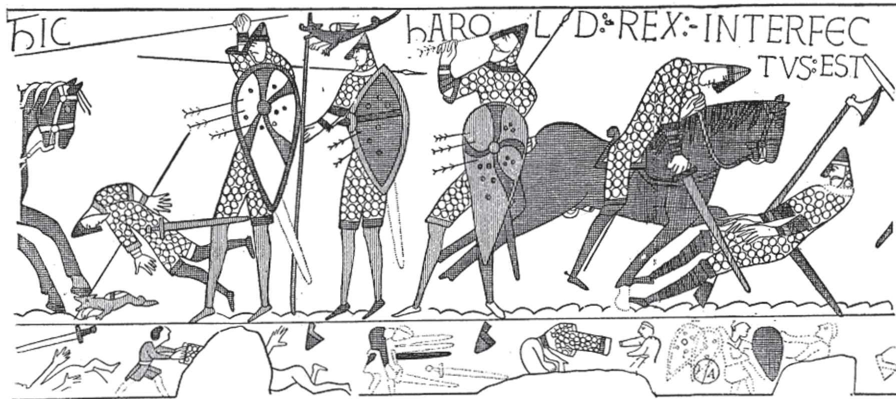
On Saturday, the 14th of October, Duke William led out his army to attack the English position. It was composed of his own subjects of Normandy, and of adventurers from all France. Indeed, it is noticeable that the person who superintended the making of the tapestry, presumably a Norman, calls the invaders *Franci*, and not *Normanni*. The duke was mounted on a noble charger, the gift of a Spanish king. Three horses were killed under him that day, says a chronicler.

Near the duke rode his two half-brothers, Odo and Robert. Neither Odo nor William used their swords that day, but each was armed with a club. On the part of the bishop this was made necessary by a rule of the Church of Rome, which forbade her shepherds to shed the blood of the sheep. The shepherds might, however, knock the sheep on the head. By the duke the club must have been carried from choice. Some later generals have preferred to go into battle armed only with a stick, but in the duke's hands the stick was a formidable weapon.

The tapestry shows William's army on its march from Hastings. One Vital, a follower of Odo, announces the neighborhood of the English; while at about the same time Harold hears of the approach of the French. The duke exhorts his men to prepare for the battle with manliness and wisdom. The knights flourish their lances, the archers draw their bows. The horsemen charge the British square, and arrows, bolts, and javelins whistle through the air. Which of these gallant gentlemen is Taillefer, the minstrel, who rode first to the battle, throwing his sword into the air and catching it by the handle, while he sang the song of Roland at Roncesvalles? * One Englishman he pierced with his lance; another he struck down with his sword; then he fell beneath an English stroke. If this obscure warrior cannot be recognized in the tapestry, we are more fortunate in the case of the brothers of King Harold. Both of these were killed early in the day, Leofwine struck by a spear under the arm as he swung his mighty axe; Gyrth, the brave and prudent, falling, like him, in single combat with a mounted knight. Some of the old chroniclers attribute his death to the hand of the great duke himself, but the tapestry does not confirm this story.

The battle grows more furious. Frenchmen and Englishmen are falling at once, the axe and the sword doing their work. The lower border of the tapestry is full of dead men and horses. We see the English churls on their hill, without armor, fighting manfully. It is reported among the Normans that the duke had fallen; but William and Odo rally the fugitives. We see the Duke of Normandy rising in his stirrups and tilting back his helmet so that the nose-piece may not hide his face from his soldiers' eyes. On the other hand, to translate the quaint Latin of the tapestry, "Here Odo, the bishop, holding a club, comforts the boys." The Normans return to the charge. Meanwhile the French archers are ordered to fire in the air. The storm of arrows falls in the English faces, as when the wind drives the rain. The English lift their shields to cover their heads; the French swords find room to strike. The veterans who, in the centre of the English line, surround the standards and the

* The *Chanson de Roland* has been admirably translated into English verse by John O'Hagan, London, C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880.



The Death of Harold.

king fall one by one. An arrow struck Harold in the right eye; and soon afterward he was despatched by a Norman sword. We see him fall, the axe dropping from his nerveless grasp. One standard was taken; another trampled under foot. In the tapestry both are figured as dragons, and the one that is stricken down seems to bite at a Norman horse's hoof. It was twilight when the English churls turned and fled, some of them on foot, some on the horses that had brought their lords to the field of battle. But the men of Kent and the citizens of London, the personal followers of the king, neither asked nor received quarter, nor yet did they fly, while axe could split shield. Of the disciplined soldiers who, on the day before, had accompanied King Harold from London, none escaped alive from the field of battle save those few who, stricken down among the wounded, were revived by the cool night air and wandered away in the darkness. And even those who fled did not lose a chance to deal a last blow at their conquerors. The eastern end of the hill of Senlac falls off abruptly on the northern side to a marshy ravine. In the ardor of pursuit, and misled by the increasing darkness, many of the Norman riders plunged headlong down the steep bank, and were either smothered in the morass or despatched by the English fugitives. The place long kept the name of the *Malfosse*. Thus ended the most important battle ever fought on English soil, perhaps the most important battle in its results to all who now speak the English tongue that ever was fought at all. The Bayeux tapestry carries us through the fight, to the last resistance of the English soldiers and the flight of the English peasants. In this account I have followed mainly the order of the tapestry, taking its authority as final on those details concerning which chroniclers and historians have differed, but getting what light I could from other sources. Few histories or chronicles can surpass it in authority; none can have a more heroic theme.

Mont St. Michel.