

dealings with Harold before Hastings. Yet, as he said, one cannot build a house all of straight sticks.

"No matter how he was forced," said Henry, "England was promised to my Father William by Edward the Confessor. Is it not so?" William of Exeter nodded. "Harold confirmed that promise to my Father on the bones of the Saints. Afterwards he broke his oath and would have taken England by the strong hand."

"Oh! La! La!" Rahere rolled up his eyes like a girl. "That ever England should be taken by the strong hand!"

"Seeing that Red William and Henry after him had each in just that fashion snatched England from Robert of Normandy, we others knew not where to look; but De Aquila saved us quickly.

"Promise kept or promise broken," he said, "Harold came near enough to breaking us Normans at Senlac."

"Was it so close a fight, then?" said Henry.

"A hair would have turned it either way," De Aquila answered. "His house-carles stood like rocks against rain. Where wast thou, Hugh, in it?"

"Among Godwin's folk beneath the Golden Dragon till your front gave back, and we broke our ranks to follow," said Hugh.

"But I bade you stand! I bade you stand! I knew it was all a deceit!" Harold had waked, and leaned forward as one crying from the grave.

"Ah, now we see how the traitor himself was betrayed!" said William of Exeter, and looked for a smile from the King."