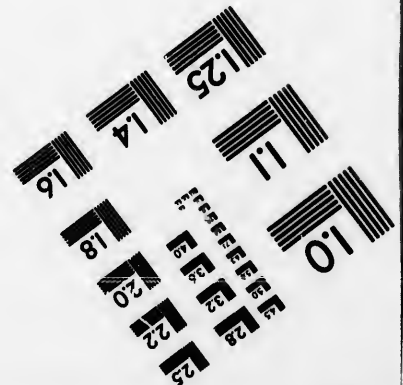
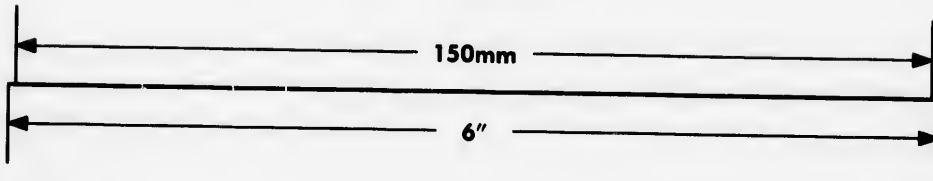
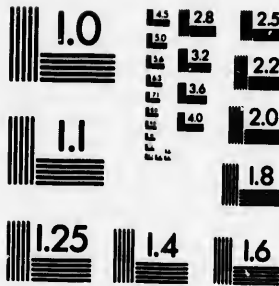
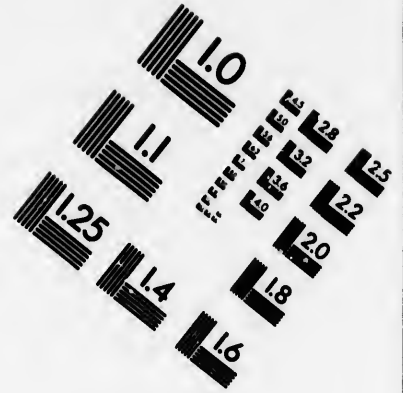
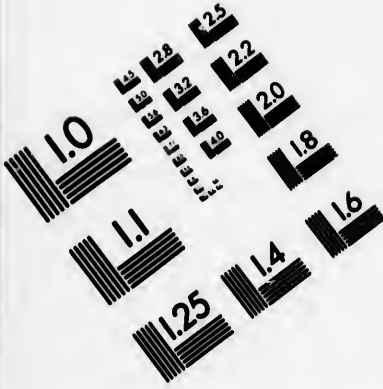


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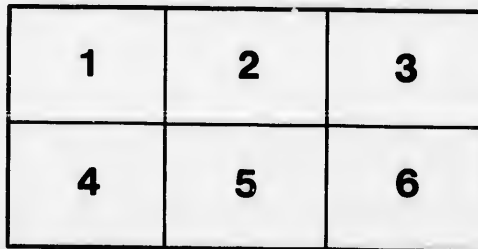
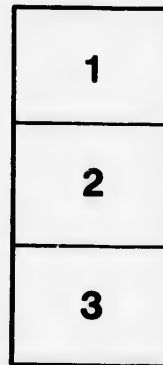
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The author P123-0
Mr. Justice Monk
Court of Queen's Bench
P.Q

FROM THE

NORMAN CONQUEST, —

A Manuscript Poem.

given to
me

BOOK FIRST.

Ms D King

ARGUMENT.

Invocation.—Departure of Harold, son of Godwin, from England, on his voyage to Normandy.—Objects of his visit stated.—Edward, the Confessor's warning.—The storm, and the wreck of Harold and his companions, on the coast of Ponthieu.—They pass the night on the sea-shore.—Their interview with Guy, the ruler of that country.—A ransom is demanded of Harold, which, being refused, he and his companions are cast into prison by Guy.—Message to and from William, Duke of Normandy.—Release of Harold by Guy, the Duke of Normandy having paid the required ransom.—Harold's arrival at Eu, in the territories of William.—His reception there by that Prince.—Description of the Normans, with a brief account of their settlement on the banks of the Seine.—Historical sketch of Rollo and his line to William, the Conqueror, with an outline of the life of that Prince.—Harold goes to Rouen.—His reception there.—Description of that court.—Matilda, and her

1870

sister Judith.—Harold's visit described.—He meets his brother Ulf, and Haco, his nephew, the son of Sweyn, the outlaw.—Their advice to Harold.—His conduct and feelings described.—Means adopted by William, and those around him, to gain the friendship and alliance of Harold.—Brief sketch of Normandy, as it then was.—Tour of Harold and his companions, with William, through parts of that country.

Of that proud Norman, who to England came,
 And there by arms, achieved a Conqueror's fame ;
 Of Harold's fate, whose valor shone in vain,
 On Hasting' field, where that great chief was slain,
 I sing : aid thou my song, oh ! Muse ; for vast
 The theme designed. With eye serene, the past
 For me survey, where realms obscurely rose,
 On time's dark waste, amid the boundless woes,
 The wrath of nations, fiercest of that day,
 But blended now, beneath a mightier sway.
 Thro' later times, explore those schemes profound,
 On conquest bent, by lasting conquest crown'd.
 Relate how Harold was induced to swear,
 A fatal oath ; and first, how to declare,
 A vassal's fealty, to his country's foe ;
 Pleas for dread crimes, and cause of so much woe.
 Depict the conflict, carnage, of that day,
 When England sunk beneath a Conqueror's sway,
 Close by the spot, which marks her hero's grave,
 In that bright isle, he died in vain to save.
 To me impart, for time long since hath spread,
 Silence and shade, o'er the renown'd, the dead,
 Those thoughts, once their's, which here enshrin'd should
 live,
 And, thro' the future, in men's minds survive.
 Nor let the glories of that distant age,
 Pass here unsung,—grow dim upon my page.

Now Godwin's son, Prince Harold, great and free,
 With spreading sail, stood joyfully to sea.
 Gay, tried companions, men of martial fame,
 Young nobles too, of proudest Saxon name,
 With him embarked. The sky and winds were fair,
 Tho' dark the scenes, they soon with him must share.
 Two royal ships, equipped to sail the deep,
 Rode proudly on, and close their courses keep :
 Swift were they borne before the rising blast,
 From England's shore, toward the Norman coast,
 To which great Harold, and his suite were bound,
 To view those shores, in arts and arms renown'd :
 And him to greet, who ruled that famous land,
 By wise decrees, and with a warlike hand.
 Likewise he sought, those kinsmen to release,
 By him beloved, once hostages of peace,
 Whom haughty Godwin, to his Sovereign gave,
 Upon that day, the king was prompt to save.
 Firm now his hope, Duke William would restore,
 His brother Ulf, whom many a year before,
 With Haco too, King Edward there had sent,
 As Princely guests (at least such his intent)
 To the great Norman, and his friendly court,
 To guard the oath, the pledge, he did extort.
 With fond affection, both Duke Harold loved,
 And this long exile, much his soul had grieved.
 Their fate he now, before his Sovereign brought,
 And their recall from Normandy had sought.—
 This freely granted to that Prince's prayer,
 Strong grew his wish, to visit, seek them, there.
 But much that project, did King Edward blame,
 And from his lips, these words of warning came :
 " Most noble Harold, much thy fame I prize
 And thy great life, is light to Saxon eyes.
 Thy kinsmen long, their exile now have borne,
 And with thee still, I wait for their return.

Thou know'st how much, my trust has been betrayed,
 And their release, from year to year delayed.
 But didst thou know that ruthless Norman heart,
 His crafty mind, the dark perfidious part,
 Which marks the triumphs of his later life,
 And oft displayed in his career of strife,
 Not to his shores, thine eager steps would lead,
 But thou wouldst shun, those perils I so dread.
 Once with Duke William, who now fears thy power,
 Thy life will darken from that fatal hour.
 Thee he will seek to bind, betray, destroy,
 Or blight that fame, now pure from earth's alloy :
 And thou wilt learn—alas! perchance too late—
 That his resolves, ere like decrees of fate.
 Harold, remain ; one less illustrious send,
 Be he some stranger, brother, or a friend."

But Harold deemed, no dangers should divert,
 From pleading rights, himself could urge, assert.
 His heart too bold, to this its hopes had lent,
 And to this task, his mind was firmly bent.
 Long he had sought, these kinsmen to release,
 And cause that exile from their homes to cease.
 So Edward's fears, the hero ne'er had shared,
 And for that journey, promptly had prepared.
 The Monarch yielded, but with grief, with sighs,
 While unshed tears stood in his aged eyes.

Full half the voyage, Harold thus had run,
 When darkly now, and with the set of sun,
 A storm arose. Propelled by north-west winds,
 Toward the shore, which fertile Ponthieu binds,
 The ships are borne, on homeless ocean toss'd,
 And headlong drive, full on the rocky coast.
 Thick darkness broods upon the raging deep,
 No more the ships upon their course they keep.
 Storm-bearing clouds, dark by the tempest driven,
 Move, charged with floods, athwart the fields of heaven.

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The viewless winds, from realms of night and fear,
 O'er ocean rush, upon their dread career.
 The angry billows, lift their heads on high,
 The ships they toss, up to the lurid sky,
 Then dash them low, into the wild abyss,
 Where ocean's depths, in Stygian horror hiss.
 O'er the dark waste, the livid lightnings play,
 But show no hope, upon that trackless way.
 The volleying thunders, peal from cloud to cloud,
 And add their terrors to the roaring flood.
 Torrents descend, and louder howls the storm,
 And danger threatens death in direst form.
 Before the blast, the creaking vessels fly,
 Their canvas gone; and oft is heard the cry
 Of wild despair, which on the winds arose,
 As fiercer now, and still the tempest grows.
 The ships drive on; one by a rocky isle
 Sweeps plunging close, and nearly strikes the while;
 But passing thence, direct toward the coast,
 She quickly strands, then on the shore is cast.
 Hard following there, thro' all that hopeless scene,
 Prince Harold's bark, in peril like had been.
 Now dashed on shore, by the remorseless surge,
 The boist'rous waves, the double wreck submerge.
 And death impends, at that ill-fated hour,
 O'er all the life, those vessels thither bore,
 As the wild sea, with each receding wave,
 Seeks to engulf them in unfathomed grave,
 But firm their footing, crew and nobles keep,
 And safe emerge, from the devouring deep.
 Dry land they reach, despite the booming roar,
 And dash of waters, on that lonely shore.
 Unnumbered perils, these brave men had passed,
 And here unite, in plight forlorn at last.
 No spark they bear, the cheerful blaze to start;
 No shelter near, a covering to impart.—

On that wild shore, the dismal night wanes slow,
 Dark skies above, and earth's damp bed below.
 There on strange coast, these men untimely cast,
 Wait for the dawn, beneath the midnight blast.

From orient skies, which rising suns adorn,
 Dim breaks the light, thro' clouds that veil the morn;
 Far o'er the ocean, sweep the mists of night,
 Full on the paths of tempests in their flight,
 While on that waste, where man hath fixed no home,
 Fly the wild winds, and fierce the billows foam.
 The Saxons, wrecked upon that sea-beat strand,
 Behold strange horrors in an unknown land.
 A forest dense, as far as eye could reach,
 With foliage dark, extended to the beach;
 While lower down, beneath the dashing spray,
 Their noble ships, two heaps of ruin lay.
 They see no homes, descrie no trace, of man,
 And, long perplexed, they further search began.
 Now forth they wander, and at length they gain
 The spot where Somme's dark waters cleave the main.
 There the fierce natives, dwellers by that stream,
 Whose banks with hostile population teem,
 To these worn strangers, rescued from the wave,
 Cold words addressed, and harsh reception gave,
 Them they conducted to their haughty chief,
 Ponthieu's proud Earl, whose words were stern and brief.
 This small dominion, independent then,
 Had long been governed by rapacious men:
 And tho' not swayed by any foreign state,
 Much William's influence it had known of late,
 And close on frontiers of the Norman power,
 They saw their doom, approaching ev'ry hour.
 When first Duke Harold to Guy's presence came,
 And to that Chieftain, was announced his name,
 With lordly gesture, and triumphant look,
 The Saxon then, with greeting rude, he spoke:

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"Thou art Prince Harold, Godwin's famous son'
So great a prize, have I thus easy won?
For thy release, a ransom now I claim:
Delay I grant, and the amount I name,
Which, promptly paid, thy freedom I concede:
'Tis not thy presence, but the sum, I heed."

To whom the Duke, in tones of scornful pride,
And haughty words, then promptly, thus replied:

"By this demand, our woes thou dost relieve!
And this the welcome, strangers here receive!
Cast in distress, upon this savage shore,
Plunder awaits, awaits us something more!
A robber's den, would greater safety yield,
And from such fate, would human suffering shield.
From thee I claim, both for myself and these,
Complete exemption, from such impious laws.
Let them at least, go free upon their way;
I, if compelled, will as thy prisoner stay."

Then Guy of Ponthieu, ready answer made,
And growing anger, in his words displayed:

"My will thou knowest; 'tis thine now to obey,
Or here remain, till all a ransom pay.
This law's well known,—'twas oft enforced by thee,
On the wrecked wanderers o'er the pathless sea.
I hold no parley; this undoubted right,
And this my due, I will exact, great knight.
When thou art willing, ready to comply,
Then free depart, but not evasion try.
Till then, a prison waits thee, mighty lord;
Thence thou wilt go, at my command, my word."

Harold incensed, with stern and flashing eye,
Thus to the Earl, made ready, harsh reply:

"No prey, despoiler, shalt thou wrest from me;
Such weak concession, would disgrace the free
And should a prison, here restrain me now,
To Heaven's will, but not to thine, I bow.

Thy power I here, and everywhere, defy,
Nor with thine order, will in aught comply."

The Earl of Ponthieu, then no answer made,
In stern rebuke, or fiercely to upbraid.

A soldier he, of rude and savage soul,
And o'er his subjects, wielding stern control.

A thousand men, the vassals of the land,
Surround him there, obey his high command.

The Saxons led, into a dungeon old,
Were all confined, in chambers dark and cold.

The ransom came not; in Belrain detained,
Six weary days, imprisoned they remained.

Harold once more, had plead his nobles' cause,
And claimed for them, exemption from these laws.

In vain he sued; his words could not prevail;
The Earl refused, was deaf to all appeal.

He then informs this Chieftain of Ponthieu,
The robber Guy, who rich by rapine grew,

That he a message, fraught with grave import;
From Edward bore, to William's sovereign court.

The right demands, his faith then to evince,
And of his mission, to apprize that Prince.

The Earl of Ponthieu, gives a harsh consent,
And to the Norman, Harold's missive sent.

With joy Duke William, this despatch received,
And quick the value, of that prize perceived.

For Harold then, was man of great renown,
The foremost subject of proud England's crown.

And in those schemes, by William long prepared,
This mighty Prince, could highest aid afford.

From Guy of Ponthieu, he the Saxon claimed,
And in mild words, all rash restraint was blamed.

So he enjoined, as guests to entertain,
That famous Prince, and all his knightly train.

That he, unhindered, to his court should bring,
The Royal Message, from the English King.

The Earl of Porthieu, courteous answer made,
But all refused, till ransom should be paid.
If this were done, Prince Harold he would send,
Without delay, and would himself attend
Him on his journey, to Duke William's court,
Or, as required, give strong, secure escort.
The crafty Norman, eager then to gain,
The Saxon's heart, did his release obtain.—
He ransom paid, and ceded tracts of land,
And bought a freedom, right could not command.

By William's aid, tho' selfish it might be,
Once more Prince Harold, and his friends were free.
At Eu's small town, renowned in after days.
The Norman Duke, his eager hope betrays.
There he had gone, the Saxons now to meet,
And chiefly Harold joyfully to greet.
To Eu they go, the Duke receives them there,
With regal courtesy, anxious to repair
A recent wrong, still deep in Harold's heart,
And, unatoned, might cold distrust impart.
William kind words and greetings, now bestowed,
Upon his guest, and every art employed.
Then he besought, implored him, not in vain,
As allied Prince, long with him to remain.
That Ulf, and Haco, free at his command,
Should then depart, to greet their native land.
That thro' his realm, he Harold would escort,
And kinsman's welcome, give him at his court.
And Harold prized, this earnest friendship shown,
But most that promise, which might yet atone
For years of exile,—many a hopeless hour,—
Since first his brother, felt the Norman's power.
And William seem'd both courteous, and so just,
That his fair words, gained all the Saxon's trust.

From Norway's shores, the conquering Normans came,
So rude at first, nor laws, nor arts could tame.

Their daring souls, more fierce than northern blasts,
 Which swept their haunts, around these icy coasts.
 The Danes and Saxons, kindred nations were,
 And, with the Normans, oft did rapine share.
 Kings of the ocean, scourges of the earth,
 They broke like giants, from the gloomy North
 Barbarian forms, inured to every wind,
 In every peril, enterprise they found.—
 They marched in triumph, o'er the land and wave,
 Nor mercy sought, nor quarter claimed, nor gave.
 From island homes, far in that Northern sea,
 Those mighty corsairs, ever wandering free,
 Thro' realms remote, spread terror and despair,
 And conquests made, in regions rich and fair.
 Along the Seine, their bloody paths had been,
 With fire and sword, 'mid many a fertile scene.
 Still on they went, a cruel, fearless band,
 And, all subduing, seized that glorious land.
 Thro' years of war, amidst a ruined race,
 Their ghastly deeds, historians still may trace.
 East, west, and north, far round the Gallic shore,
 Their pirate flag, and blood-stained arms, they bore.
 Their cities sacked; the works of ages gone,
 In ruins lay, and nations were undone.
 They burned the hamlet, spoiled the peaceful vale,
 Nor could their victims' tears, or prayers, prevail.
 They cease from slaughter, and their booty seize,
 Place it in ships, and slacken to the breeze;
 They put from land, and court the evening gale,
 With dipping oar, and feeble fluttering sail.
 Thro' pathless seas, and midnight storms they fly,
 And guide their course, by twinkling stars on high.
 They oft return,—return but to renew
 Wild scenes of ravage, spoil, and carnage too.
 Tis needless here, to name each roving chief,
 Whose expeditions, sojourns, yet were brief;

For nearly now, two hundred years had fled,
 O'er living generations and the dead,
 Since Rollo's fleet, before fair Rouen rode,
 Where that great chief, soon fixed his firm abode.
 As mighty leader of a lawless band,
 Who had on him, conferred supreme command,
 On many a shore, he plundered near and far,
 Of matchless strength, a demi-god of war.
 He ruled the main, where'er his bark rode free,
 And that wild name, was known on every sea.
 Rouen he sought, with a resistless force,
 And there he paused, upon his bloody course.
 That ancient city, famous long had shone,
 In earlier times, and scenes immortal known,
 Ere fire and sword, had laid the land in waste,
 And marked the epochs of a fearful past.
 To him the gates were opened prompt and wide;
 He entered there, but not in martial pride.
 A holy prelate gained that man of blood,
 And had his wrath, with sacred voice withstood.
 He softening influence, on his mind could wield,
 And from his fury, did the city shield.
 There Rollo reigned, and thence excursions made,
 In which his arms, their triumphs soon displayed.
 West of this spot, nor from the sea remote,
 Was Bayeux built, a place of ancient note.
 Against that town, now Rollo marched in wrath,
 And thro' that region, spread the work of death.
 The siege was formed, and the assault prepared,
 And Rollo's summons, to the town declared;
 Which, disregarded by the hosts within,
 The dread assault was ordered to begin.
 Dark was the scene, and dark that fearful hour,
 And fierce the onset of the Norman power.
 A mighty chieftain, Beranger by name,
 And long illustrious on the rolls of fame,

Holds chief command, along the lofty walls.
 And bravely dies, before the city falls.
 The furious Normans, quickly enter there,
 And plunder, ravage, but the people spare.
 The fallen chief was found among the dead.
 Neath heaps of slain, upon a bloody bed.
 One child he left, bright as the beams of morn,
 The cherished hope of love, and years forlorn.
 She like a flower upon a barren waste,
 Was, in those times of war and rapine, lost;
 Wan child of fate, in that dim light alone,
 Pale apparition of dark ages gone.
 Her mother slept, had died in early years,
 And left but her, to soothe her father's tears.
 Popæa named. When Rollo sacked the town,
 This prize he made, and claimed her for his own.
 With pagan rites, he made her then his bride,
 A star 'mid storms, to loftier hopes a guide.
 From this fair Christian, whom he thus had wed,
 There sprung a son, and daughter to his bed.
 William and Gerloc, were the names they bore.
 She died in youth; but he lived to restore
 A brighter lustre to the sovereign power,
 From which removed, he seemed in evil hour.
 Great Rollo still, his warlike forces led,
 And conquests made, where'er his legions sped.
 With Charles of France, he soon a treaty made,
 By which he power, and policy displayed,
 And the foundations of his throne were laid.
 Ste. Clair sur Epte, was chosen for that act,
 And there was formed, that long and firm compact.
 The King of France was with a daughter blest,
 Giselle by name, of noblest gifts possess'd.
 In youth's bright hour, with hopes of early years,
 E'er yet life's woes, had dimm'd her eyes with tears.
 Charles him besought, to take Giselle to wife,

That, thus allied, might end their fatal strife.
 Rollo consents, foreswears each pagan rite,
 And on his soul, there beamed a holier light.
 A Christian ruler, Rollo then became,
 And o'er the land, this change he did proclaim.
 The Norman Dukedom, Charles to Rollo gave,
 And other lands, to gain a chief so brave.
 Thro' his dominions, wise decrees he sent,
 Which to his rule, both strength and glory lent.
 Stern laws prevailed, wild rapine reigned to more.
 And peace and order, spread from shore to shore.

Popæa long had passed from Rollo's heart,
 Who, with cold words, constrained her to depart.
 Her son he kept, but cast the mother out,
 Who wandered far, on many a distant route.
 With bruised heart, which life's last woe had found,
 Pale offspring she, of fallen race renowned.
 That fair-haired daughter of a mightier line,
 Usurps her place, a heart she must resign.
 And grief had worn Popæa's faded brow,
 Yet Giselle lived, and mourned, in childless woe
 And Rollo sinks, into the vale of life,
 Worn out by toil, by peril, and by strife.
 Thus years had pass'd ; Giselle, Popæa, died,
 And the great Norman slumbered by their side.

William Longue Epée, Popæa's mighty son,
 By Rollo's will, succeeded to the crown.
 He held the sceptre with a monarch's hand,
 And peace maintained, throughout the Norman land.
 But foreign triumphs, in his prosperous hour,
 His arms achieved, in aid of tottering power.
 Louis of France, he placed upon his throne ;
 And Flanders' Earl, did his protection own.
 By treacherous deed, the latter laid him low,
 In pride of life, by an assassin's blow.
 Richard his son, succeeded him and reigned,
 His power vast, and well was it maintained.

First he espoused, and mournful was her fate,
 Agnes the Fair, offspring of Hugh the Great;—
 That Count of Paris, who proud monarchs sway'd,
 Chief of a line, by nations long obeyed.
 This Agnes died, in sorrow and despair;
 No child she left—to Normandy no heir.
 Then a young maid, of humble birth, he loved,
 Honor of Arques, who the great mother proved.
 Of sons and daughters, dynasties renown'd,
 By famous deeds, in after ages, crown'd,
 And these among, Queen Emma may be found.
 Emma the wife of Ethelred became,
 Mother of him, whom men Confessor name.
 This Norman Prince, *Sans Peur* was proudly stiled;
 In war too fierce, and oft to wrong beguiled.
 In course of time, Honor he made his bride,
 And to his offspring, legal rights supplied;
 Ho glorious liv'd, in peace of God he died.
 Then reign'd Duke Richard, second of that name,
 Son of *Sans Peur*, and Prince of warlike fame.
 He with the Saxons, and with others, warred,
 And, when victorious, nobly them he spared.
 Him his son Richard, followed as of right,
 But soon he pass'd into that dreamless night,
 Of death's long sleep, which comes upon us all;
 The doom of our sad race, since Adam's fault and fall.
 When he was gone, his brother reign'd instead,
 Robert the Great, well known for many a deed,
 That gave far glory to his name and race,
 Tho' dark were some, which time cannot efface.
 Magnificent, the epithet men gave,
 Proclaim'd him thoughtless, generous, and brave.
 Ho skill and valor, showed in deeds of war,
 Which oft he waged, in Christian lands afar.
 In this renown'd, and also great in peace,
 Much did his rule, the Norman state increase.

For this great Prince, whose celebrated court,
 To fall'n sov'reigns, proved a sure resort,
 Employed his sword, the feeble to restore,
 And his proud arms, to France and Flanders bore.
 Baldwin the Fourth, he placed upon his throne ;
 And the like act, for the French king had done.
 As a reward, for friendship thus displayed,
 Henry of France, The Vexin all conveyed
 To the proud Norman, who in war became,
 Of his own time, the most illustrious name.

Now at Falaise, a royal castle stood,
 Which thro' long years, despite time, war, and flood,
 A fortress' strength, and strong defence maintained,
 And the assaults of armies had sustained.
 There Robert oft, in expeditions dwelt,
 And for that spot, a rare attachment felt.
 From those high towers, a rich and varied view,
 Of gardens, fields, and groves of every hue,
 Glowed in the beam, beneath the summer's sky,
 And fixed the pensive, long-enraptured eye,
 While far beyond, receding landscapes lay,
 In sweet repose, thro' the refulgent day.
 There by a stream, which wound 'mong distant vales,
 Clothed in soft verdure, cooled by western gales,
 'Mid woodland hills, and sloping fields between,
 And stretching far, in many a rural scene,
 A cottage stood ; a poor man's home of peace,
 Who, by hard toil, still laboured to increase
 His slender store, and strove each weary day,
 And anxious there, pursued his humble way.
 He had one daughter, grown to woman's years,
 Adorned with beauty, all that youth endears,
 Her parents' pride, their latest, only hope,
 Their age to bless, and with its ills to cope.
 It came to pass, upon a summer's eve,
 At that blest hour, when peasants labor leave,

By that soft stream, where flowers their fragrance yield,
 In homely garb, that lovely maiden kneeled.
 Her daily toil, the virgin followed there,
 While vesper-bells, proclaimed the hour of prayer.
 That warrior chief, with hounds and huntsmen nigh,
 Approached the spot, and Herlève met his eye.
 Tho' time and war, from his strong heart had worn
 The tameless ardor, which its youth had borne,
 He halted near, that maid and murmuring stream,
 Which calmly flowed, beneath the evening beam.
 Spell-bound, he gazed upon that matchless face,
 Her radiant brow, her form's unrivalled grace.
 The damsel rose, and her obeisance made
 To the great Prince ; a few brief words were said.
 Then Robert went, his stately castle sought,
 And there Herlève, in course of time, was brought.
 Her heart he won. Thro' long and baffled years,
 He oft for her, would shed atoning tears.
 But from that love, all hapless and unblest,
 A child was born, of dauntless soul possess'd.
 That outcast son, his warlike father loved,
 And to his court, he early was removed ;
 In after days, a Prince in war renown'd,
 High on the roll, where earth's bright names are found.
 That Monarch he, whose prond, immortal name,
 Of England's Conqueror, fills the page of fame.
 Illustrious still, through many an age and clime,
 In past and present, so in future time.
 Zeal for the Cross, with many Robert shared,
 And when he left, his nobles he implored,
 That as his heir, this child they should obey ;
 And made them swear allegiance to his sway.
 These he besought, his heritage to shield,
 And to his cause, their arms and counsel yield.
 Duke Robert died, in some far Eastern land,
 Then the young William, with a warrior's hand,

The sceptre seized, and claimed the Norman throne,
 And forced the nobles, doubtful rights to own.
 Mid many a peril, he to manhood grew,
 And dark the paths, his boyhood did pursue.
 Powerful rivals, were his keenest foes,
 While warlike chieftains, did his rule oppose.
 With iron arm, as chief of that great land ;
 He smote them all, and ruled with stern command.
 This famous Prince, these recreant foen subdued,
 The fair Matilda, as fond lover, woo'd.
 His cousin she, for peerless beauty famed,
 Tho' dark traditions, have her vengeance blamed.
 Offspring of Baldwin, who o'er Flanders reigned.
 And, by that union, wide renown obtained.
 At Eu's cathedral, blessings were pronounced,
 And by great feasts, these nuptials were announced.
 This act was long, by Pope and Priest withstood.
 As not allowed, between close ties of blood ;
 And when 'twas known, an interdict was laid
 Upon the realm, and priestly wrath displayed,
 Till wise Lanfranc, his steady friendship proved,
 And caused these censures, each to be removed.
 For William ne'er, would just obedience yield,
 But stood resolved, his wife and throne to shield.
 At Rouen then, the Norman held his court,
 And thither Harold, proudly did escort.
 Where Princes, Prelates, Warriors, had resort.
 This royal abode, could boast with truth and pride,
 Of valiant knights, in fields of honor tried ;
 Of prelates grave, who highest charges filled,
 And scholars learn'd, in lore of ages skilled ;
 And there were dames, of noble, princely birth,
 And known alike, for beauty and for worth.
 That gorgeous palace, shone on many a night,
 Like fairy scene, illumed with magic light.
 Now at this court, the Saxon nobles shared,
 A welcome greeting, well for them prepared.

Matilda still, as lovely as the morn,
 Great William's wife, to fame and grandeur born,
 With matchless beauty, beaming from her face,
 Shed o'er those scenes, a soft and courtly grace.
 A queen-like brow, an eye of deepest blue,
 And tender accents, tones of feeling true,
 All blend in her, a form of beauty's light,
 Which fixed, allured, each one's admiring sight.
 Her gestures each, a royal will displayed,
 While smiling words, still loftier hopes betrayed;
 For not indifferent to her female mind
 Were the great schemes, Duke William had designed.
 There Judith too, in radiant beauty beamed,
 And each surpassing, save Matilda, seemed.
 With earnest look, pale cheek and thoughtful brow,
 She lived thro' sorrow, on this earth below.
 Her soft, dark eye, her calm, self-conscious air,
 Told of crushed hopes, of deep, untold despair.
 To greet her sister, she to Rouen came;
 Their hearts were one, tho' not their hopes the same.
 To Harold's brother Tostig, she was wed,
 And chequered life, that lovely Princess led.
 This Tostig then, ruled the Northumbrian laud,
 With tyrant sway, and a rapacious hand.
 Her husband's perils, long had Judith shared,
 And for dark future, was her mind prepared.
 There too was Robert, William's first-born son
 Wild Rufus too, whose youth had scarce begun,
 And Adelize, young, lovely, and sedate,
 Whose blameless name, is linked with Harold's fate.
 And many more, this humble page might name,
 Who then adorned that court of knightly fame.
 How each essayed, e'en female grace and art,
 Their guests to please, to win great Harold's heart
 My song might tell; but the far stream of fate
 Bears darkly on, and mightier scenes await.

Amid rejoicings, splendors, of that court,
 Swift sped the hours, and passing seemed too short.
 With heart confiding, free from anxious thought,
 And that distrust, the future too well taught,
 Great Harold stayed, as did each Saxon knight,
 Thro' joy by day, and revelry by night.
 The Norman then and his imperial bride,
 To gain Prince Harold, every art employed.
 Charms of friendship, blandishments of power,
 Surround his path, and freely on him shower.
 Days thus had gone, the Saxon lingered still,
 While William sought, each hour with joy to fill :
 And Harold oft, his exiled brother sought,
 And Haco too, by sorrow early taught,
 The child of Sweyn, the outlaw, long undone,
 Of great Earl Godwin, the dishonored son.
 There to these kinsmen, plain as light of day,
 Appeared the dangers, strewed in Harold's way.
 And they forewarned, implored him to beware
 Of the great Norman, and each hidden snare,
 Which his dark wiles, upon his path had spread,
 To sway him living, or detain him dead ;
 That heedless then, within the reach he stood,
 Of watchful foe, of strange and savage mood ;
 Who would, like tiger, stealth and treachery bring,
 To aid his fury, in the deadly spring.
 But Harold's high and valiant spirit bore,
 Firm faith and courage, to the Norman shore.
 His hero's soul, disdained to lend belief,
 In foul designs, from so renowned a chief.
 He nor suspicion, nor a fear had known,—
 His mind too great, distrustful thoughts to own.
 These words of Ulf, of Haco, he reproved,
 And, like a god, thro' all those perils moved.
 The first bright days of summer now were gone,
 And o'er the earth, a richer glory shone.

The waving fields, the forest, and the stream,
 Glow in the splendor, of a softer beam.
 The trembling leaf, on foliage-laden trees,
 Breathes its wild odors to the wandering breeze.
 The fragrant earth, the perfume of the flowers,
 The songs of birds, awakening with the hours
 That bring the dawn, to gild the Eastern sky ;
 And those sad notes, which, when the day-beams die,
 Thro' sacred twilight, sweet and undefiled,
 Sing of lost hopes ; so rapturously wild,
 They touch the soul, like life's last dream of love,
 Or raise the thoughts, to hollier worlds above,
 All spread enchantment, o'er that glorious land.
 Fertile and blest by nature's bounteous hand.
 In undulations, sweeping far away,
 Rich, smiling landscapes, fruitful toil display.
 Churches and spires, appear in distant view,
 O'er regions wide, where wealth and cities grew ;
 And feudal towers arise by mount and stream,—
 For safety built, and strong defence, they seem.
 There castles old, and lofty mansions stood,
 The stately homes of men of Norman blood,
 Who lived in splendor, swayed with high command
 O'er all the borders of that mighty land.
 Along the hanks of rivers winding far,
 Commerce had spread, despite the rage of war.
 Well tilled the soil, and many an art arose,
 With the strong impulse, industry bestows.
 'Twas at this time, that science, letters, spread,
 And soon o'er men, a softening influence shed.
 The Church had grown, beneath that sov'reign sway,
 And blest the people, with a brighter day.
 So now all glorious, in that ruder time,
 Shone this far-spreading, and majestic clime ;
 Another England, growing on the deep,
 Where some of Britain's great ancestors sleep.

The Celt, the Roman, Frank, were blended there,
Last wrecks of nations, wasted by despair ;
And o'er them all, now ruled the Norman race,
Whose footsteps yet, in wonder we may trace ;
The lasting impress, time will scarce efface.
Giants they were, by deeds and thoughts renown'd,
And thro' long ages, still with glory crown'd.
When fitting time, at Rouen they had been,
And viewed the wonders of each famous scene,
The Norman Duke, did courteously entreat
The Saxon Prince, and nobles of his suite,
Excursions then thro' Normandy to make ;
That he with them, like journey too would take.
They give consent, and soon they all depart,
Princes, and courtiers, each with joyous heart.
A tour they made, with William as escort,
And Norman warriors, nobles of his court.
Where'er they went, castle, abbaye, or town,
Harold was hailed, as Prince of great renown.
And famed abodes, they visit on their way,
And sacred fanes, undimm'd by time's decay.—
'Twere tedious here, to trace the routes they went,
Or them to follow, on such wanderings bent.
Those days were passed, in joyance and in glee,
In banquets, hunts, and feats of chivalry.

BOOK SECOND.

ARGUMENT.

Brief sketch of Brittany.—Its position, and some account of the Dukes of that country, contemporaries of William, of Normandy.—Hostility between the Britons and Normans.—The enmity between the two reigning houses of these powerful states.—Alain, Eudo, and Conan.—Cause of the war between William and Conan.—Commencement of the struggle.—Harold and the Saxon nobles join William in the campaign, and swear oaths of fealty to him, at Avranches.—Substance of the oath given.—William joins the main army on the River Coënon.—Engagements briefly described.—The heroic conduct of Harold, who rescues a large body of the Norman forces from destruction in the sands of the River Coënon.—Progress and termination of the campaign shortly narrated.—Visit of William and Harold to Mont St. Michel.—Night-scene between them described.—The proposals of William, and the astonishment of Harold at William's disclosure of his views.—The Saxon comes under serious promises and engagements to the Norman Prince.—The following day, they return to Avranches, and thence they proceed onward to Bayeux, passing through Granville, Coutances, St. Lo, and other towns.—Their arrival at Bayeux.

Upon the frontiers of the Norman state,
A region lay, renown'd from ancient date :
Its natives rude, but great in martial fame ;
In times remote, Armoricans by name.

Both to their country, and their princes true,
 Six centuries now, their varied fortunes grew.
 By Romans, Franks, and last by Britons, held,
 Who in defence, were oft to arms compelled.
 Washed by wild waves, that lave its western shore,
 Far round the coast, eternal tempests roar,
 And Britany, the well-known name it bore.
 Great streams, dark mountains, and far-stretching plains,
 And cities rich, in much that wealth attains,
 With limits changing in the turns of war,
 Now closing near, and then receding far :
 And annals stained, defaced by many a crime,
 Had marked that land, thro' a long lapse of time.
 From Albion's isle, the later Britons came,
 And here had found a country and a home :
 A kingdom formed, and made efficient laws,
 While their career had won the world's applause.
 Since that proud day, when Rollo at St. Clair,
 Enforced his claims, to many a region fair ;
 And Charles of France, such vast concessions made
 That the dark wave of conquest might be stayed.
 A struggle long and bloody had ensued,
 Between the Britons, with deep hate imbued,
 And the dread Normans, whose rapacious power
 Had sought those shores, in its triumphant hour.
 Still wasting contests, on their frontier rose,
 And years had passed, and, passing, left them foes.
 The Ducal chiefs, who long that sceptre held,
 Were famous warriors, tried on many a field,
 And ne'er would fealty to the Norman yield.
 By female side, their lineage we may trace,
 In proud descent, from Rollo's haughty race :
 And tho' these Princes, and Duke William stood,
 In close relation, by the ties of blood,
 They long, as rivals, deep resentment bore,
 And, from past wrongs, did mutual hatred share.

For when Duke Robert, with a noble band,
 As pilgrim journeyed to the Holy Land,
 His son, a boy, of his support bereft,
 With Duke Alain of Brittany he left.
 Prince Robert died : this charge he did retain,
 And sought by fraud, that sceptre to obtain.
 Faithless he proved to Robert's youthful heir,
 And vassals roused, to wage rebellious war.
 At Val des Dunes, a last and dire defeat
 Young William's foes were darkly doomed to meet.
 Alain ere this, had perished, it is said,
 By Norman hand, and in his tomb was laid.
 When he was gone, an only child remained,
 Conan his son, who future glory gained.
 Sole heir he stood, to that great Ducal throne,
 And later claimed, secured it, for his own.
 Eudo his uncle, had been guardian named,
 But by ambition was his mind inflamed.
 Hence he betrayed the trust on him imposed,
 And wrongs disastrous, to his charge had caused.
 The youthful Conan, sprung to man's estate,
 Against this Prince, appeared in arms elate.
 Incensed he then assailed his former foe,
 And him defeated, exiled, overthrew.
 Tho' Eudo thus, in his designs had failed,
 He on Duke William, by false words, prevailed ;
 Revengeful war, to wage against the land,
 Which Conan ruled, with proud, secure command.
 Thence the fierce Normans had aggressions made,
 And leagues around, in ruin soon were laid ;
 But young Duke Conan, promptly took the field,
 These foes to meet, who thus to arms appealed,
 And to the limits of their rival lands,
 This warlike Prince, had led his hostile bands.
 Hard by the stream, called Coësson, in the west.
 And on, the forces of the Norman press'd.

These thus assailed, and forced to make retreat,
 Were broken, slaughtered in one dread defeat.
 But now advancing, Conan's legions still,
 Did all that region with deep terror fill.
 William, thus threatened at this point afar,
 Levied fresh troops and hastened to the war.
 His Princely vassals gave him willing aid,
 And in his cause, their martial zeal displayed.
 Proud, eager levies to his standards fly,
 With their great chieftains, fate of war to try.

In this campaign, the Saxon nobles joined
 With ardor strange, and posts of honor found.
 Their valiant spirits, loved the pomp of war,
 And longed the rapture of the strife to share.
 The voice of fame was music to the ear,
 The souls of men, who held their honor dear.
 By their adhesion to the Norman cause,
 They won from William, favor and applause.
 That crafty Prince, with keen, far-seeing mind,
 By fealty now, those chieftains sought to bind.
 At fair Avranches, a court of arms was held,
 Whose stately forms, in splendor far excelled,
 The feudal pageants of each former scene,
 Where honour'd knighthood, long conferred had been.
 Brothers in arms, that league for life was called,
 And in its rights, here Harold was installed.
 Tho' formal words, this brotherhood expressed,
 Its aim and meaning, might be thus compressed :
 " From this day forth, thro' time for ever more,
 While I have life, firm faith to thee I swear.
 Thro' weal, thro' woe; I pledge my word to thee,
 As loyal knight ; so be thou true to me."

Much had Duke William, favored this compact
 Of knightly honor ; high and courteous act,
 Which from his vassals, he could scarce exact.

Now these great nobles, Normans, Saxons too,
 But chieffy Harold, deep attention drew,
 In that proud union of illustrious men,
 Of warlike chieftains, there assembled then.
 Knights they were made, with gorgeous, vast display
 Of all that courteous, chivalrous array,
 Which, at that time, the loftiest rank could claim,
 In courts of arms, when joined with martial fame.
 Again thus Harold signally displayed
 That faith too blind, which all, at last, betrayed.
 He step by step, thro' each ill-fated hour,
 Became sure victim, to the Norman's power.
 Tho' oath of fealty, little import bore,
 Still knightly faith, he to Duke William swore;
 An act unseemly, in a Prince so great,
 The mighty guardian of great England's fate.
 No aim concealed, did he in this suspect,
 Nor pause, in doubt or prudence, to reflect.
 The sword, the lance, which William now bestows,
 Proved fatal emblems of succeeding woes.

The Norman Prince, for action then prepared,
 With re-inforcements, to the field repaired.
 The Britons posted on the Coesnon's banks,
 Await the conflict, with embattled ranks.
 Those rival states, that river did divide,
 And long by it, their frontiers did abide.
 Near the right bank, the Norman army halts,
 And is extended for two great assaults.
 Here of the whole, elite of all the land,
 The warlike William, takes supreme command.
 In three divisions, he his force divides,
 And both the wings, to veteran skill confides.
 One wing despatched, to cross the stream above,
 Is, on that flank, to make decisive move;
 The other, ordered to cross o'er below,
 Was, on the right, to strike a fatal blow.

Himself the centre, as reserve, obeys ;
 And thus the soldier, his forethought displays,
 With him was Harold, and each Saxon knight,
 All prompt to act, to swell the coming fight.
 The ebbing tide, in Coësnon's tranquil stream,
 Has left vast shores, where sands of ocean gleam.
 The channel narrow, shallow in its course,
 Gives easy passage, to the Norman force.
 They form in ranks, to each assault advance,
 With sword, with shield, and the unerring lance.
 The right wing then, with all its foot and horse,
 Cross the dull stream, in strong, appalling force.
 Hugh d'Avranches, a chief of great command,
 A famous soldier of the Norman land,
 Leads this division, fronts embodied hosts,
 And, dauntless now, assails the hostile posts.
 With skill and valor, Conan doth oppose
 Compact battalions, to these mighty foes.
 With them he holds, the adverse river bank,
 Prepared to meet, resist, in front and flank.
 Then hand to hand, in conflict close arrayed,
 They desperate courage, warlike skill, display'd.
 Now the brave Britons, the high banks defend,
 Then, in pursuit, some on the shore descend.
 D'Avranches fierce urges each advance, attack,
 While Conan firm, repels and hurls them back,
 Both mix in combat, lead their squadrons now,
 Dread battle rages, bloody torrents flow.
 Along the bank, on the far-stretching shore.
 The carnage deepens, in that wild uproar.
 On rush the Normans, each defence assail,
 But all their fury cannot thus prevail.
 For Conan's troops, with strong entrenchments round,
 By matchless valor, firmly keep their ground.
 And bright the fame, which on that field was won,
 Tho' on this page, their acts cannot be shown.

And some great chiefs, there fighting on that day,
Thro' darker hour, will mightier deeds display.

At length the Normans yield in slow retreat,
And, falling back, sustain severe defeat.
Then rush the Britons, furious on their rear,
And slaughter spread, with conquering sword and spear
As they retreat, destruction now impends,
For there a flat, in quagmires, far extends.
This they approach; the Britons drive them on;
They, still retreating, still are overthrown.
And now these troops, involved in treacherous sands,
The charge sustain, of Conan's dreadful bands;
And, hardly press'd by that fierce, gathering host,
They fly, they scatter, are dispersed and lost.

While this repulse, is on the right sustained,
Upon the left, the Britons had maintained
Firm ground against the onset of the foe,
And hurled his squadrons to the beach below.
Montgomerie ere a fierce assault had made,
And utmost valor in the fight displayed;
But the brave Britons his attempt had met,
And drove him back with prompt and dire defeat.
To his support Duke William had repaired,
With strong reserve, and soon his peril shared.
A force he left to Harold's sure command,
With Norman knights and his own Saxon band,
To aid D'Avranches, should he then fail to gain
The adverse bank, or a defeat sustain.
This chief still struggles 'gainst o'erwhelming force,
While in the sands, his infantry and horse
Are deep involved, and wild disorder grows,
Before the charge of his triumphant foes.
Prince Harold waits, refuses to relieve,
Till all the Britons, their entrenchments leave:
Then down the bank, from the opposing heights,
Prompt to the rescue, rush these Saxon knights.

Brave Normans follow, quick the stream passed o'er,
 They fiercely charge, along the blood-stained shore.
 Great Harold leads them in that perilous scene,
 And ne'er more dreadful, in grim war had been.
 Like fiery bolt, descending from the cloud,
 Or the first wave, on ocean's tidal flood,
 Or the fell sweep, of the Sirocco's breath,
 He hurls these squadrons, on the ranks of death.
 His mighty arm, spreads carnage on his path;
 The Britons pause, re-coil before his wrath.
 The struggling Normans, now the Saxon's care,
 Were rescued, saved, tho' many perished there.
 These shattered forces, Harold at their head,
 Quick rallying there, against the foe were led.
 That bloody conflict, with undying hate,
 Was then renewed, strange scene in Harold's fate.
 The Britons slow, to their defences fled,
 From that wide shore, now covered with the dead.
 Conan's right wing, Duke William had o'erthrown,
 Tho' the fierce struggle fearful there had grown.
 Now the two wings, their separate force combine,
 And slow advance, in firm and dreadful line.
 Here short retreat, the Britons promptly made,
 Yet steady courage, in the fight displayed,
 They halt, re-form, confront their Norman foes;
 And to the onset, their whole strength oppose.
 On sloping ground, their ranks in deep array,
 Await th' assailants, near the close of day.
 These hostile hosts, in headlong fury meet,
 Alternate vanquish and sustain defeat.
 The proud Duke Conan, young, yet skilled in war,
 Bounds o'er the field, each peril then to share.
 Charges are made, fierce combats lost and won,
 And, thro' them all, the Britons' valor shone.
 And Conan's charger, bore him thro' the fray,
 Where many a warrior, fell upon that day.

A distant page, in this long lay, will show
 The mournful doom, which laid young Conan low :
 How early death, eclipsed his rising name,
 And cut him off from hopes of brighter fame.—
 But I must hasten on my lengthening way,
 Nor linger here, his triumphs to pourtray.
 His fiery courage, 'mid the battle's roar,
 That valiant youth, through scenes of carnage bore.
 Inured to arms, in many a former field,
 To few did he, in daring valor yield ;
 By few was he, in strength of frame excelled ;
 Nor in dread war, was nobler chief beheld.
 But slight advantage could the Normans claim,
 Tho' great their deeds, and high their martial fame.
 The battle rages, all their daring show,
 While various fortune, marks the contest now.
 Duke William, Harold, foremost then were seen,
 Where the worst storm of battle dark had been.
 In these dread conflicts, closely side by side,
 These chiefs renowned did thro' the battle ride.
 Borne on his barb, conspicuous to the light,
 The warlike Norman, sought the thickest fight ;
 While Harold eager, fierce, and valiant too,
 With mighty arm, opposing hosts o'erthrew.
 They spread destruction thro' the ranks of war,
 Smote in the front, on flank, and in the rear.
 Those mighty chiefs, unmatched, unrivalled, stood,
 In strength and valor, on that field of blood,
 And none would yield, while there was hope or life,
 So night, at length, descended on their strife.
 Slowly each chief, each army, then retires,
 And far around, bright blaze their bivouac fires.
 The following day, they doubtful war renew,
 Tho' slacker now, the bloody contest grew.
 Tho' their manœuvres show their warlike skill,
 Complete success is undecided still.

And Conan slowly yields to his great foes,
 But, in retreating, skill and firmness shows.
 Weary, in time, both Normans, Britons, grew;
 And peace those chiefs, were eager to renew.
 Faint waxed the war, and then, a truce ensued:
 The contest ceased, and prompt a peace was made.
 By it Duke William, Pontorson had gained,
 And long that town, to Normandy remained.
 William and Harold, in that war appeared,
 By mutual friendship, more and more endeared.
 And when no more the din of battle rose,
 Together there, those Princes sought repose.
 One tent they shared, in recreation joined,
 And rare indeed, could love like theirs be found.
 Discourse they held, of youth and youthful days,
 Of warlike deeds, and hardy poetic lays.
 O'er all the land had gone Prince Harold's fame,
 Where he remained, though time of parting came.
 He pleads, entreats, solicits, day by day,
 His leave to take, to hasten on his way;
 And William yielding, yields but to betray.
 For unfulfilled were the great Norman's schemes
 Tho' still to Harold, kind and frank he seems.
 Not thus that Prince, intends he shall depart;
 Far deeper plot, fills that ambitious heart.
 Now he proposes, joined by many more,
 To escort the Saxons to that Northern shore,
 Whence they must sail, to greet their native land,
 And bid adieu to that ill-fated strand.
 And 'twas agreed to make that journey then,
 With suit of knights and peers and warlike men.
 The camp they leave, and all the toils of war,
 And travel on, and closest friendship share,
 To sweet Avranches, a town of ancient name,
 With hearts elate, with both their suites, they came.
 And all-confiding, Harold now had grown,
 By courtiers seen, and well to William known.

The Norman Prince, in all his thoughts had shared,
 Nor by aught then, was Harold's trust impaired.
 No gesture, word, or act, however slight,
 Had damped his zeal, or did distrust excite.
 Still more the Saxon scorned the vulgar thought,
 That his betrayal, William ere had sought.
 Such candor, truth, his host still seems to show,
 While yielding all, deep friendship could bestow.
 Near to Avranches, and upward to the skies,
 The lonely heights of Mont St. Michel rise.
 That rocky isle in Cancale's gloomy bay,
 Dark o'er the deep, thro' many a vanished day,
 Had there withstood, the waste of Earth's decay.
 Two thousand years of sunshine and of storm,
 Had not impaired its grand and mystic form.
 There first the Druid, then the Roman, taught,
 Their sacred rights, with Pagan error fraught.
 By time, by conquest, these were swept away,
 To be replaced by lights of brighter day.
 There at that time, and from a distant age,
 An Abbey rose, abode of many a sage.
 There royal pilgrims, hermits, sought repose,
 And at its shrine had breathed immortal woes.
 Around that spot, traditions dim and old,
 Had spread dark tales, this page may not unfold.
 Upon those heights, that sacred structure stood;
 And midway down, long known for deeds of blood
 In later times, a dismal dungeon frowned,
 Where noble victims, broken hearts had found.
 There perished youth, the beautiful, the brave;
 There laurelled names, oft found the maniac's grave.
 There lonely grief, thro' wild despair by day,
 And night's pale dreams, had worn life's hopes away.
 The Abbey now, in solemn grandeur stands,
 High o'er that scene, long known in distant lands,
 And from its walls, as far as eye could see,
 Broad lay in view, the realms of Normandy;

While more remote, by mountain and o'er plain,
 Rose the proud homes of Brittany and Maine.
 And far to sea, and scattered, lay in sight,
 Some smaller isles, of less imposing height.
 The vapory clouds which often gather there,
 Give to that region a mysterious air
 Of nameless gloom, oft heightened by the roar
 Of ocean's wrath, upon that sterile shore.
 That sacred spot, had claimed Duke William's care,
 And long he sought its splendor to repair.
 An Abbé learned he named some years before,
 Who, by strict rule, was eager to restore
 A holy order to these priestly men,
 Who in by-paths too long had wandered then.
 Roget the name that famous Abbé bore,
 Of noble birth, of deep and varied lore.
 Now on their way, so near that mountain isle,
 A visit there, the Duke proposed the while.
 Strange scene it was, and curious to behold,
 And famed had been, through troubled times of old:
 Thence to survey, as far as reach of eye,
 The wondrous regions which around it lay,
 To see that dungeon, mark that ancient shrine,
 One breathing woes, the other hopes divine.
 To Harold seemed, in soft and careless mood,
 A time, a spot, with interest deep imbued.
 'Twas early Autumn, and the tinted skies,
 Soft spread on high, their gorgeous canopies;
 And summer's glory, fading at that time,
 With sadder hues, pervades that ocean clime.
 So great Prince Harold, with confiding heart,
 To William yields, and few with them depart.
 The isle they reach, as the last golden ray
 Of cloudless sunset, marks the close of day.
 The monks receive them, on that island shore,
 And to the Norman, eager welcome bore.

Prince Harold too, was greeted as a guest
Of the great Duke, and as his friend addressed.
The Abbé walks, the mighty chiefs between,
Who, in ascending, linger o'er that scene.
Some gather round, some follow close behind,
As up the mountain, still their footsteps climb'd.
Slowly they gain, the vast and rocky height,
Where they are each, besought to pass the night.
The Dukas comply, and cheerfully prepare
For sober diet, and the vesper prayer.
Of rich repast, they sumptuously partake,
And hours are passed, in grave and friendly talk.
Now on the summit, round the mountain's brow,
High o'er the sea, which laved the rocks below,
A pathway led, along the dizzy height,
A winding way, receding from the sight.
Hewn in the rock, unworn it still appears,
'Tho' trod by footsteps of a thousand years.
In early days, Duke William there had been ;
His eye had dwelt upon that wondrous scene.
Alone those chiefs, went forth at solemn hour,
Along that path, until they reached a tower,
An ancient tower, upon the rocky steep,
And there for ages, looking o'er the deep.
Around its basement, many a fragment lay,
For time had worn its strong defence away.
Here they sat down, in the dim world of night,
Like two great eagles, pausing from their flight,
On the high branches of some lofty tree,
Near river bank, or rooted by the sea.
All earth was still, nor cloud in the far skies,
While, lingering there, they saw the moon arise,
And o'er the world diffuse her tender beams,
Beneath whose light, the slumbering ocean gleams.
The sighing winds are sinking to their sleep,
Lulled in soft cradles of the silvery deep.

The wandering waves, dash on the rocks no more,
 But break in murmurs, round the sea-beat shore.
 Bright twinkling stars are sinking in the west,
 Those worlds of light, where men have hoped for rest :
 And, like the splendor of some eastern clime,
 A soft repose hangs o'er that scene sublime.
 There, 'mid the silence of that tranquil hour,
 When dark o'er all, dwelt night's mysterious power,
 Great William sat, with anxious thought oppressed,
 And thus at length, Prince Harold he addressed :
 " Harold, my guest, nor less my friend thou art ;
 And ere thou goest, to thee I would impart
 A solemn secret, which affects our fate,
 And thou shouldst know, before it prove too late.
 Between us now, a lasting league should be :
 In thee I trust ; place thou thy faith in me.
 When Edward sojourned at the Norman court,
 His home selected, for a long resort,
 Oft he declared, and then his thoughts were free,
 That should he ere, his native country see,
 Ascend that throne, which then so distant seemed,
 Though of that crown by day and night he dreamed,
 He would remember the great debt he bore
 To me, his friend,—his friend and something more.
 And oft he spoke, of the great claims I'd won,
 To his regard, for acts of kindness done.
 And later too, perchance thou art aware,
 He has proclaimed, that I should be his heir.
 He his affection, at his court displayed,
 And told me then, that his decree was made ;
 That Edgar's mind, tho' he was next to reign,
 Was young, too weak, dominion to maintain,
 O'er a proud race, divided and so free,
 And hence his crown, must soon devolve on me.
 That great event, in truth is drawing nigh :
 Be frank with me ; can I on thee rely ?"

As the great Norman, did these thoughts declare,
 With dire amazement, Harold heard him there.
 Now Edward's warning, smote upon his heart,
 And those dark fears, which Ulf sought to impart.
 With vivid light, now flash'd upon his view,
 The Norman's hopes, all then, alas! too true!
 To such demand, what answer could he make?
 What path was near, which he could safely take?
 'Twere vain, he deem'd, assent now to refuse,
 And yet too base, a different course to chose.
 Assent withheld, a dungeon did await
 Him thus entrapp'd,—perchance a darker fate.
 Duke William had, his plans so well concealed,
 That not till now, this secret he revealed,
 When he had made him famous thro' the land,
 And Harold's hopes and character had scann'd.
 Before a crime, he would not now recede,
 Nor fail his course, to crown with cruel deed.
 Could he consent and thus his life enthrall,
 Or could he later, such great pledge recall?
 Still for his brother, did the Saxon fear,
 That brother loved, and Haco held so dear.
 Thus for himself, and still for time to gain,
 And for these kinsmen, their release obtain,
 He calmly spoke, but spoke with faltering thought,
 And, by these words, evasion then he sought:
 "To thee I have an oath of fealty sworn;
 I would repeat the pledges by it borne,
 In any form thou mayst from me command,
 To make that promise, public through the land.
 Beyond that oath, I could not, dare not go,
 Nor closer alliance with a Norman show.
 To that extent, my friendship I'll declare,—
 To that extent, thy plans and hopes I share.
 To promise more, would be a crime in me;
 And more to ask, would be a fault in thee"

The Norman Duke intently Harold eyed,
And then to him thus artfully replied :

“ My noble Harold, this would be no more
Than the knight's oath, thy chieftains freely swore.
If to that oath, another thou wouldst add,
That thou my daughter Adelize wouldst wed,
And let thy sister be betrothed by me,
To some great noble of supreme degree :
And promise further, and in solemn form,
(This great compact and union to confirm,)
Thou wouldst receive me on the English shore,
And aid my cause, when Edward is no more.
This would be just, would closely, us unite,
Secure success by our resistless might.
This from our paths, each peril then would chase,
And save from war, thy great and cherished race ;
For my firm hope, is to achieve my aim,
To gain that throne, and spread the Norman name.
This I'll pursue, from every fear exempt,
And will prevail, or die in the attempt.
Reflect on this, and let thine answer be,
For thy renown, for union still with me.”

Saw Harold now, how strangely he had erred,
When he that project from the Norman heard.
In seeking then, just answer to evade,
Before the Duke had such proposal made,
That he in public, a new oath would make,
And fresh engagements to the Norman take.
At this the Duke, surprised as well as pleased,
With eager hope that offer then had seized,
And, as compulsion on his actions pressed,
Such fault could not be easily redressed.
Tho' this great oath, he knew he could not make,
Nor for his own, nor for his country's sake,
Yet other oath, in solemn words, he'd swear,
And private promise to the Duke would bear.

Since force were used, he soon could be absolved,
 And this the hope, he in his mind revolved.
 And now consenting, secret pledge to make,
 He might say much, but not as oath would take.
 Long then he mused, with anxious thought oppressed,
 Then calmly thus, the Norman he addressed :

“ If, in addition to the oath I swore,
 I now declare, when Edward is no more,
 Thy claims in council, I will not oppose,
 Should great debate about the crown arise ;
 And if their king, the nation should elect,
 Free from my influence, thee they may select ;
 And should their choice, then freely on thee fall,
 Thou'lt find me faithful, prompt, at thy great call.
 Would not such oath, prove all thou couldst require,
 And firmest faith and trust in me inspire ?
 Yet more ; I will advance, will then promote thy cause,
 And claim for it, the nation's just applause.
 But Edgar still, is England's rightful heir,
 And he succeeding, I am free as air.
 This pledge thus given, do thou as freely take,
 And this great oath, I publicly will make.
 If thus indeed, thou wishest me to swear,
 Declare the day, the sanction, form, and where.
 To thee alone, I further promise give—
 Be this concealed while thou and I shall live—
 I'll give thee freely all the aid I can,
 And will suggest, will name thee, as the man
 Whom England should select, and thee alone.
 To fill with honor, Edward's vacant throne.
 I promise too, thy daughter to espouse,
 As honored wife ; my sister to dispose
 To some great noble of the Norman land,
 Whom she shall marry at thy choice, command.
 And in return, dear object of my heart,
 Then home with me, my brother shall depart.

Thus far I go, to meet, great Prince, thy prayer,
Tho' late declared; no more may Saxon dare."

The crafty Norman, silent then remained,
Till mildly thus to Harold he complained :

"Thou dost distrust me, tho' in candor still,
To thee thus freely I declare my will.
I thought thou wouldst more friendly zeal display,
And leave me grateful to a later day.

But as thou say'st, so let our compact be;
Thou'lt ever find, unfailing friend in me.
In my great council, summoned at Bayeux.
Thine oath pronounce, and be its promise true!"

In William's projects, Harold thus concurred,
Consenting feebly, and with heedless word.
Oh! better far had that great warrior died,
Then act this part, where honor could not guide.
A noble heart, but too infirm of soul,
His spirit failed him, in that fatal role.
Had Harold then, a firm resolve maintained,
And his great part of Saxon Prince sustained;
Had he stern answer of a patriot made,
Nor at that hour, such anxious doubts betrayed;
Had he repelled, with calm and cold rebuke,
Th' insidious offers of the Norman Duke,
Perchance that Prince, all ruthless as he proved,
Had been with awe, at Harold's grandeur moved.
Perchance that oath, which darkened his career,
Would not like shadow on his fame appear.
So weakness first, invades the human heart,
And, by degrees, subdues each nobler part,
Till, all enthralled, we wander to and fro,
Lost in wild paths, which end in nameless woe.
Stern, lofty minds, resist the first approach,
And ne'er permit, to enter, or encroach,
That which, admitted, makes its ready way,
Clouds the bright soul, and leads pure hearts astray.

Yet proudest children of our race unblest,
 Are often those, of yielding souls possess.
 Man's strength is weakness ; and the loudest scorn
 For earth's lost ones, oft meets a doom forlorn.
 When the heart pines not, and the blood runs cold,
 When passion's madness, is subdued, controlled,
 We glide in safety, o'er a waveless sea,
 From storms and rocks, and life's worst perils, free.
 'Tis midnight now ; dark clouds shut out the moon,
 And the soft glories of the sky are gone.
 Silence reigns there ; the weird repose of night ;
 And deepening gloom invests that lonely height.
 Darkness broods then, o'er earth and on the deep,
 And veils their path along the rocky steep.
 Short time they lingered, Harold's promise made,
 While cold distrust, they mutually displayed.
 The hour has come, and they, at length, must part,
 William sedate, but Harold sad at heart.
 Soft sleep came not, tho' its repose they sought.
 For great their cares, and keen each anxious thought.
 William's vast schemes, with fell intent combined,
 Now banished rest from his ambitious mind.
 Dread thoughts, deep anguish, visit Harold's brain,
 And life's sweet sleep, can never come again.
 There king and country, perils still to come,
 Here his own freedom, and his kinsmen's doom.
 His friendship, honor, cruelly betrayed ;
 Himself, of all, he chiefly must upbraid.
 The tints of dawn, were in the Eastern skies,
 Ere sorrow's sleep, had closed great Harold's eyes.
 Next day they leave, and seek Avranches once more ;
 Thence they depart, toward another shore.
 A numerous train of nobles with them went,
 And their high prestige to that journey lent.
 Tho' William sought, Prince Harold still to sway,
 Yet small discourse, they hold upon the way.

Encompassed now by a resistless power,
 Deep his regrets that he, in fatal hour,
 King Edward's warning had not duly weighed,
 And, in the Norman, trust complete displayed ;
 But yet he promised, and evaded, still,
 With dubious accents, and a wavering will.
 Granville they reach, that fortress of the sea,
 As fair a spot, as eye of man could see.
 The lofty heights, which look upon the deep,
 The waves of ocean, from the city keep.
 Known then it was, as it was famed of old,
 For women beauteous, and of matchless mould.
 One night they stay, and then Coutances they seek,
 Which, having gained, another halt they make.
 Coutances was once a seat of Roman power,
 Of warlike strength, in her triumphant hour.
 There, Flavian legions, long and well withstood,
 Barbarian conquest, both by land and flood.
 There dwelt Helena, mourning by that shore,
 Constantius there, the Cæsar's laurel wore.
 That lowly scion, of a humbler race,
 Knew from Constantius, woman's last disgrace.
 Tho' she ne'er reached, great Rome's imperial throne
 She saw the crown of her immortal son.
 And the renown of Constantine the Great,
 Has spread thro' time his mother's mournful fate.
 Thence to St. Lo, they wend their easy way,
 Which place they reach, on the succeeding day.
 At length the towers of the famed Bayeux,
 Now meet the sight, far in the distant view,
 And kindness, court'sey, beam on Willam's brow,
 As they approach, that scene of Harold's woe.
 To that great castle, they repair in state,
 Where one foul deed, soon clouded Harold's fate.
 Within those walls, as prisoner, he must stay,
 While, in suspense, he waits the coming day.

BOOK THIRD.

ARGUMENT.

*Meeting of the National Council of Normandy, at Bayeux.—
Harold's appearance before it.—His oath, and his discovery of the deception, of which he is made the victim, by the treachery of the Duke of Normandy.—His anguish of mind on becoming aware, that he had sworn on holy relics.—The adjournment of the Council, and subsequent interview between William and Harold.—Speeches by both.—The Banquet afterwards, and the departure of Harold for England.*

[Two days are occupied by the events of this book, and the scene is at the Castle of Bayeux, and by the sea-shore, on the coast of Normandy.]

In council now, the Lords of Normandy,
Proud chieftains of a warlike chivalry ;
Men of deep thought, and holy prelates too,
Assembled were, by edict, at Bayeux.
By promise bound, Prince Harold then came there,
An awful oath, with solemn rites, to swear.
O! fatal act! accursed and baneful hour,
Which gave the Saxon to the Norman's power,
To vast designs, which William dared proclaim,
Harold thus lent the sanction of his name :
He, by that oath, to his great foe resigned,
His freedom, honor, and best hopes, combined.
A deed of death! of dire and dreadful note,
Which on his fame, his life and country brought,

Tremendous doom, deep woer of later years;
 Whence England's downfall, sealed with blood and tears.
 In royal state, with naked sword in hand,
 'egirt with ensigns of supreme command,
 High William sat: hard by, great Harold stood;
 And, with him, warriors of the Saxon blood.
 His brother Ulf, the nephew whom he loved,
 Close by his side, that fatal deed reproved.
 Both these detained, long held, by William there,
 Were guarded still, and watched with jealous care.
 These brothers oft, along the Thames had strayed,
 In their young days, and on its banks had played:
 Eventful years, their love had not impaired,
 And keenly now, each other's grief they shared.
 On William's right, and marked to public view,
 Prince Odo sat, the Bishop of Bayeux:
 His brother he—the same whose public crimes
 Great William saw—rebuked in after times.
 And near his sovereign, but below the throne.
 Stood great Lanfranc, in counsel deep, alone.
 Long held in honor by the Norman Prince,
 Could one so great, his sanction now evince,
 Of act so base, perfidiously designed,
 And darkly prompted by some ruthless mind?
 'Tis needless here, still loftier names to tell;
 A later record will proclaim them all.
 Men of renown, and valor, stood that day
 Before their chief, in proud and bright array;
 Sedate their mien, and calm each high-born eye,
 Could they behold great Harold's agony,
 His darkened brow, which spoke a sense of shame,
 Of treason branded on a mighty name,
 Without regret, perchance reproach, that he,
 Of tyrant force, a victim thus should be?
 Great Princes, Priests, and men of thought profound,
 By William thus, in that dark deed were bound;

Nor could the later glories which they won,
 Gild the foul wrong, their treachery had done.
 Before the nobles of the land had yet,
 Within that hall, in solemn conclave met,
 The Duke had caused (oh! dark, ignoble thought!)
 The bones of saints, in secret, to be brought.
 There in a shrine, concealed by cloth of gold,
 In many a fragment, lay those relics cold.
 Upon the cloth, two caskets rare were placed,
 On which some words mysterious then were traced.
 Those smaller shrines, adorned with precious stones,
 As symbols stood, unsanctified with bones.
 No sacred object met the Saxon's eye,
 Nor thus could he that odious fraud descry.
 William's friendship—still more, that solemn scene,
 Those princely men, deception could not mean;
 And holy ones, who then their presence gave,
 To that great council of the wise, the brave,
 Would each assert, what all alike beheld,
 That this strange oath, by force was now compelled.
 Constrained to swear, such oath could never bind;
 So Harold deemed, and sternly stood resigned.
 Thus all assembled, in long order stand,
 And calmly there, await that chief's command.
 With courteous mandate, to that senate high,
 While o'er the whole, he casts a monarch's eye;
 He all enjoins, appointed seats to take,
 That Harold might new oath of fealty make.
 These silent sat; and then the Norman chief,
 In accents mild, in words precise and brief,
 From his high place, the breathless silence broke,
 To Harold turned, and thus impressive spoke:
 "Illustrious Harold, Prince of vast renown,
 To all now here, our friendship well is known;
 And in our presence, thus these Princes greet
 Our coming here, thy fealty to repeat.

Warriors renown'd, great prelates, as you see,
 Men known to fame, and each of high degree,
 By me convoked, expressly now appear,
 In thy great honor, and thine oath to hear.
 That solemn oath, I will not now decline,
 Before our God, and on that holy shrine.
 Not that alone, but I thine oath receive,
 With the intent, my subjects should believe,
 And ever prize, our league thus freely made,
 That my just cause, thou faithfully wilt aid.
 So thou dost swear, when Edward is no more,
 Thou wilt receive me on the English shore ;
 Assist my purpose to ascend the throne,
 Oppose all others, and their claims disown.
 So bound by oath, our interests still require,
 (Bright hopes for thee, such wishes now inspire,)
 That thou to wife, young Adelize shouldst take,
 And give thy sister, to the choice I make."

Harold arose with gesture of surprise,
 At oath so dread, and claimed without disguise.
 With rising anger, he the Norman eyed,
 And promptly thus, tho' calmly, then replied :
 " Illustrious Prince, such promise I have made
 To you alone, and would it were unsaid !
 That secret pledge, I here to all admit :
 Yet thus to swear, should honor now submit ?
 An oath so grave, becomes alone the free,
 And if constrained, can it as binding be ?
 Your friendship, Prince, I would not here disown,
 Nor yet your courtsey, nor your great renown ;
 But to my country, and my race is due,
 A higher faith than can be claimed by you.
 And if in this, I deep repugnance show,
 'Tis to convince you that my duty now
 This oath condemns, reproves this pledge of mine,
 Nor should I thus, allegiance all resign.

Compulsion may my actions now control,
 But darkest dangers shall not sway my soul :
 That still, at least, from all coercion free,
 'Midst present perils, all unstained shall be.
 This protest hear, before these nobles made,
 Mark well the words, in which it is conveyed.
 Should this great oath, against me be invoked,
 By this reserve, all sanction stands revoked :
 But now coerced, my promise I confirm,
 And this new oath, will swear in solemn form."

Thus Harold spoke. The Norman, undismayed,
 To Odo turned, and gave a sign which said,—
 Obey my orders—promptly let it be ;
 Receive the oath, and leave the rest to me.

From his high place came Odo forth alone,
 Great Harold sought, and spoke in whispered tone ;
 Then led the way, the Saxon by his side,
 Towards the altar for the oath supplied.
 Lanfranc, the monk, close followed in their train,
 With mien composed, and eye that could restrain,
 Those haughty vassals, and their chief could sway,
 In all his pride, and teach him to obey.
 With solemn step, across that stately hall,
 The three passed on : the Saxon Prince, withal,
 His fame to blight before those princely men,
 While looks of wrath, defiance, gather'd then,
 In his blue eye, and on his lofty brow,
 As he advanced, before that council now.
 The spot he reached, where those cold relics lay,
 With fierce emotion, words cannot pourtray ;
 And tho' he knew, remonstrance then were vain,
 Yet could it be, that he must hear again,
 From his own lips, that outrage of the Duke,
 Nor him upbraid, in terms of stern rebuke !
 Yes ! now defenceless, held in hostile land,
 This will release him from the Norman's hand.

He faltered first, and then, to fate resigned,
 That oath he swore, but with averted mind.
 With his right hand, the holy sign he made,
 While on the shrine, the left he gently laid.
 In tones distinct, and with a fluent tongue,
 Odo repeats that oath from Harold wrung.
 Then with look fixed on William's lordly brow,
 The Saxon spoke, in tones of secret woe :

" I swear, as soon as Edward is no more,
 I will receive you on the English shore ;
 Assist your purpose to ascend the throne,
 Oppose all others, and their claims disown :
 Adelize to wife, I promise then to take,
 And give my sister to the choice you make."

As on his lips, each word successive died,
 So, one by one, were treasons multiplied ;
 And vows were made, big with a nation's fate,
 And woes to Harold, time could not abate.
 He added then,—so quick his thought re-acts,—
 " If I have life, and God approve my acts."

The vast assembly with one voice exclaimed,
 " If God approve what you have here proclaimed."

And now Lanfranc, the caskets both removed,
 From off the cloth, and thus, alas! approved,
 The secret fraud, about to be revealed,
 And, from that council, studiously concealed.
 Calm Harold stood, tho' anxious grew his eye,
 As now he gazed upon that mystery.

A pause ensued, 'mid looks of doubt, surprise,
 And William then enjoined them all to rise,
 That by a closer, and a clearer view,
 They all might judge and testify how true,
 How great the oath, which Harold thus had sworn,
 How dread the sanction, that same oath had borne.
 By order, Odo raised the cloth of gold,
 And bare to sight, disclosed the relics cold.

Harold beheld them : horror seized his heart,
 His hand he clasped with a convulsive start,
 His eye flashed fire, his brow grew dark as night,
 As he receded from that ghastly sight.
 Tho' his lip quivered, and his cheek was pale,
 No words he spoke ; they could not now avail.
 A victim thus of a perfidious fraud,
 Too well he knew, how widely spread abroad,
 Thro' every land where Christian rights were known,
 That deed would be, and as a crime be shown.
 Such holy relics, in those distant times,
 In awe were held, despite transcendant crimes ;
 And when on those, a solemn oath was made,
 Such vow to break, the boldest were afraid.
 He had so sworn, tho' treachery there might be !
 He was so bound, could aught now set him free ?
 And Harold's doom, and England's mightier fate,
 From that dark hour, their sad decline must date.
 Thence flowed the tide of conquest o'er these isles,
 Long, well prepared, by William's secret wiles.
 The boundless woes, which fell on Harold's race,
 To that dread source, a later age may trace.
 As slowly he, from that dread shrine withdrew,
 Those high-born men perceived full well how true,
 The inward anguish, Harold then controlled,
 And sorrow moved, in hearts not wholly cold.
 Stern and impassive, William still remained,
 While breathless silence, thro' that council reigned,
 And mighty nobles, the great hall around,
 Await the mandate of that chief renown'd.
 Lanfranc and Odo, to their seats returned,
 Approached the Norman, and his orders learned :
 And then aloud, by proclamation made,
 The Senate's labours for that day were stayed :
 Debate nor counsel, did they there pursue,
 And gladly then, those nobles all withdrew.

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Outside, abroad, the growing rumour flies,
 Excites the many, and confounds the wise:
 Great Harold's oath, on sacred relics sworn,
 Wide, far around, on wings of fame is borne.
 Within that castle, built by warlike men,
 Were regal halls, adorned with splendor then;
 The stately home, thro' many a vanished year,
 Of mighty chiefs, in long sojournings there.
 The Norman now, with Harold, took his way
 To that high place, where these apartments lay.
 Silent great Harold went; for sudden grief,
 Within his heart, nor hopes, nor seeks, relief.
 No words could now, these bitter pangs reveal,
 Nor yet from William, such deep wounds conceal.
 All now was known; at length, too plain appeared,
 While from such foe, a darker fate he feared.
 That foul betrayal, show'd that chief too well,
 And what might follow, where his fury fell.
 By long deception, he had sought to bind,
 In fatal bonds, his free and patriot mind.
 And now this oath might rule his future fate,
 Thus sworn on relics, known, alas! too late.
 No glorious deeds, no fame which he might share,
 Could e'er for him, so great a fault repair.
 That fearful vow would mar all future fame,
 On him bestow, a foul, dishonored name.
 He had betrayed his race, a nation's cause;
 His noblest acts could claim no more applause.
 He England's pride, a people's latest hope,
 Could hardly now, with Dane or Norman cope.
 Her old renown, her safety held so dear,
 His father's glory, and his own career;
 That shadowy hope, scarce formed within his breast,
 Yet passing there, like dream or vision blest;
 A hope he rarely to himself must own,
 That he one day would fill the English throne,

All perilled thus, in one disastrous hour,
 In such a cause, for so accursed a power !
 The path of conquest, dark before him lay ;
 The traitor he, to point that fatal way.
 He who ere now, dread foes as widely known,
 So oft had met,—in conflict overthrown ;
 He who had vanquished, with his valiant arm,
 To shield the throne, from peril and alarm ;
 Thus sell his country, his great trust betray,
 To the fierce Norman, and his iron sway !
 Dark thoughts like these, and many such now seem,
 To haunt his spirit, like a troubled dream.

The Saxon's anguish, William now could read,
 For well he knew, how heart like his must bleed,
 In that dread hour, of darkly clouded fate,
 And keen remorse, which ever comes too late.
 With honor lost, his fame forever gone,
 And stained with guilt, which time could not atone.
 No word of triumph, from the Norman broke,
 But mildly thus, he to the Saxon spoke :

" My kinsman Harold, well hast thou redeemed
 Thy princely word. Though many may be deemed,
 From all my favors, more securely mine,
 No faith I value, as I value thine.
 Near my great throne, thine honored post shall be ;
 My trust I place, my surest hopes, in thee."

After short pause, with cold, rebukeful eye,
 Great Harold thus to William made reply :
 " Those courteous words, my soul cannot relieve.

Of one great fault, my lot will be to grieve ;
 And this my fault, that I, in evil hour,
 My freedom placed, in your remorseless power.
 Where is that friendship, you have feigned for me ?
 Is this dark deed, this oath, the proof to be ?
 My acts, forsooth, you freely now applaud ;
 And well you might, but for this odious fraud.

Still, oath so awful, will ere long involve,
 Questions too vast for us alone to solve.
 But words are vain. To-morrow I depart,
 With a reproachful, self-upbraiding heart.
 Your promise made, I now from you must claim ;
 In this at least, be free from further blame.
 Those kinsmen loved, my coming was to greet,
 Yield up to me ; their freedom I entreat.
 Their presence here, cannot secure your throne ;
 And this last act, may for the past atone.
 Their lonely exile, now in truth should cease,
 And my dread oath, secure them their release.
 This much I ask ; now grant me but this prayer,
 The rest in silence, I must calmly bear.
 This end attained, I then will take my leave,
 Of shores so hostile, hoping to retrieve,
 My honor perilled, acts of weakness shown,
 Your faults forget, and expiate my own."

Surprise the Norman show'd, but no regret ;
 Stern his resolves, which never faltered yet :
 His boundless pride, his keen, aspiring mind,
 Sought all to sway, by hope and fear combined.
 With spirit cast in rude but stately mould,
 His iron will, grew fierce and uncontrolled.
 A soul so firm, and seldom taught to yield,
 O'er other minds, did force resistless wield.
 But chiefly he upon his speech retained
 Complete control, and cold reserve maintained.
 His pregnant words, pronounced in tone sedate,
 Bespoke a mind profound, but not elate.
 He seemed to rule his passions fierce at will,
 And others swayed, with ease and matchless skill.
 Yet when he sought, by courteous arts to please,
 He argued, praised, discoursed, with fluent ease :
 He hope encouraged, slumbering fears awoke,
 Could cogent reasons, for each act evoke.

Tho' now secure, time and events to wait,
 For Harold struggled in the grasp of fate;
 And tho' that oath, full answer had supplied,
 Yet thus diffuse, he artfully replied :

“ This self-reproach, this censure, is unjust.
 Why these regrets, this real or feigned distrust ?
 Is this thy friendship ? Is it a fault in me,
 That I have placed implicit trust in thee ?—
 To have disclosed the secrets of my soul
 To one so great, above all mean control ?
 I from the first, a closer alliance claimed,
 And, when secured, must I, forsooth, be blamed ?
 When thus allied, by friendship and by blood,
 Will not mine aim still be our common good ?
 Are not my hopes, our empire to extend,—
 Our names, our glory, closer still to blend ?
 On Mont St. Michel, 'mid that night's repose,
 Didst thou not freely this same oath propose :
 If not in words, in meaning still the same ?
 And, so agreed, we both to Bayeux came.
 These sacred bones, can they more freely bind,
 Thy future conduct, or thy princely mind,—
 Than word of promise, pledge to friendship given,
 Which stands recorded, in the books of heaven ?
 Thy bitter words may wound, but not impair,
 That higher sanction, sure and sacred there.
 Nor can regrets, which thou mayst here repeat,
 Great Heaven's will, or my designs defeat.
 Thy lot was cast, beneath propitious stars ;
 Mine has been darkened, by great public cares.
 So when my father to the Holy Land
 Went forth the leader of a warlike band,
 My early fate, he left to chosen men,
 Who sought from me, to wrest the Dukedom then.
 Ere he had left, the nobles fealty swore,
 And then revolted, 'gainst the trust I bore ;

While foreign rivals fiercely round me rose,
 With whom I warred, my most relentless foes.
 These one by one I met, and did subdue,
 Their banded hosts and projects overthrow.
 My father died, and left me to contend
 With jealous kinsmen, seeking still to rend
 This fair dominion, from my sword, my sway
 And, to my foes, my life and throne betray.
 Strong in my right, confiding in my sword,
 I swore to vanquish, and I kept my word.
 From fame, thou knowest the dangers I have shared;
 But wars, revolts, have not my rule impaired.
 These fierce, rude conflicts of my early years,
 Attest my fortune, but betray no fears.
 Though many a field, my skill, my arms, have won,
 And bright the course, my valor still hath run,
 Yet on my heart, the weight of many a care,
 Hath taught me well, in friendship to beware;
 And past experience adds the mournful truth,
 So hard to learn; in manhood as in youth,
 Few hearts are faithful, save among the free,
 And hence I place this boundless trust in thee.
 And thro' these perils which beset my crown,
 'Midst all those triumphs which I since have known,
 No angry word, no action, canst thou trace,
 Against thy country, or the Saxon race.
 Our kinsman Edward, well my friendship knows,
 And still for him, my deep affection flows.
 The love he bore me in my boyhood's years,
 Was well repaid, as from the past appears.
 Him I've protected, saved, to fill a throne;
 Hence all his glory, hence, great Prince, thine own,
 (Tho' thy renown, thy proud and great career,
 Full well I knew, and would not question here.)
 His throne, when vacant, must descend to me,
 That glorious crown, my heritage shall be.

So he desires, and this his firm design,
 That his great sceptre should be freely mine.
 And if that kingdom e'er descend by will
 To him best fitted that high trust to fill,
 My power alone, can Edward then replace,
 Resist invasion, and secure you peace.
 My former foes are baffled or expelled,
 And fierce revolt, has everywhere been quelled.
 Years of repose, of growing wealth and power,
 May intervene, before that fatal hour.
 The veteran armies, of a martial race,
 Will in the march of future conquest trace,
 A growing circle of dominion wide,
 And, o'er far realms, impel the flowing tide
 Of that renown, foretold to Norman arms,
 Give lasting peace, and silence war's alarms;
 Plant the fair lineage, of a royal race,
 Whose sons to me, their lofty line will trace.
 If Saxon England, call me to the throne,
 My arms and armies, she will make her own.
 Then two great nations shall combined remain,
 Throughout the land, long years of peace shall reign,
 And her own laws, stern justice shall maintain.
 Thus thou art pledged, and such thy sacred oath,
 Apart from relics, which attest thy truth.
 To prove thy faith, thy brother leave behind,
 And, for his safety, I mine honour bind.
 Thy nephew Haco, hither take with thee,
 But, as a guest, leave noble Ulf with me.
 This favor grant, and, when our league's discuss'd,
 This act will prove the fulness of thy trust;
 Proclaim our friendship and thy promise true,
 So may we each our lofty hopes pursue."

Thus spoke the Norman; his far hopes expressed;
 Him, in reply, the Saxon thus addressed:
 "I know, proud Prince, what your great deeds have been,
 Your laurels won, in many a glorious scene;

And all those perils, stated now with truth,
 Which fiercely rose around your lonely youth,
 And mighty foes, taught one and all to yield
 To skill, to valor, on the tented field.
 I know your power, the vast renown you claim,
 Your long success, the splendor of your fame.
 To Edward's friendship, all your rights I know,
 And great rewards on you he should bestow.
 In such discussion, I would claim no share,
 Nor is it mine, my wishes to declare,
 But of the kingdom he dare not dispose,
 To those who've been great England's deadly foes;
 And you should not, nor can you now forget,
 How much the Normans are distasteful yet,
 To all my race, nor what the task would be
 To force your rule upon a land so free.
 Tho' in your favor prove the monarch's will,
 The people love, revere, their Princes still;
 Refuse they would, to recognise your claim.
 Despite your strength, and all your martial fame.
 Remember too, young Edgar's Edward's heir,
 A truth of which all England is aware.
 I fear, great Prince, your projects would excite
 Long wasteful wars, our nation's hopes would blight
 For should you e'er invade the Saxon soil,
 And seek by arms the kingdom to despoil,
 On hostile shores, you would as surely meet
 Their warlike hosts, perchance a dire defeat.
 Met by the fury of a nation's wrath,
 A thousand dangers would beset your path;
 And should your arms triumphant o'er them prove,
 You'd plant your standards on a nation's grave.
 What then would follow? years of hopeless strife,
 Unheard-of woes, primes, waste of human life,
 Such are the perils, you would thus prepare,
 And these the blessings conquest would confer.

By conquest only, can you be secure,
 And conquest only, can the throne ensure,
 My oath may bind, each act of mine prove true,
 But, to succeed, all must depend on you,
 Candor forbids, your hopes I should deceive;
 Your arms alone, your triumph can achieve.
 The Norman Prince, his eye now flashing fire,
 With stern control repressed his kindling ire;
 Constrained he spoke, but scarce his wrath concealed,
 While every word his fiery thoughts revealed :
 " Why all these perils studiously retrace,
 To me, the ruler of the Norman race?
 Dost thou conceive such dangers would deter
 When my just rights, and my best hopes concur?
 More than all men's, my spirit doth abhor,
 The crimes, the horrors, of all-wasting war;
 And when my rights by peace I can obtain,
 From arms, from blood, I carefully abstain.
 But when all other, better means, have failed,
 Before stern war, my sword has never quailed.
 Bear this in mind, be thou exempt from blame,
 And add fresh laurels to a mighty name.
 Thy glory now, thy country's interest still,
 Combine in this,—do thou thy part fulfill.
 Harold, on thee, henceforth, I will rely.
 Your word alone, would bind a soul so high;
 But that great oath, on sacred relics sworn,
 Hath to my cause, the highest sanction borne.
 Thine utmost efforts in my cause I ask,
 And well I know, the greatness of the task,
 These aims promote, redeem thy promise made,
 Herein be true: by strenuous means persuade
 Thy Saxon nobles of my high resolve;
 Depict the perils, war must needs involve,
 If their resistance I am doomed to meet,
 Or should they seek my projects to defeat.

The feeble Edgar must his fate abide,—
 He and his claims be promptly set aside.
 With these great truths, be thou and all impress'd,
 And count on me; my sword will do the rest.
 First in my kingdom then shall Harold stand,
 And next to me will hold his high command.
 From honor's path my steps will not depart,
 For Heaven's will instructs and guides my heart.—
 But now no more; time and success will prove
 That my best hopes are in the powers above.
 Tho' calm the tone, in which the Norman Duke,
 From his cold eye, awakening anger broke:
 This Harold saw; each word, each look, remarked,
 And, tho' by force, in fatal cause embarked,
 His thoughts' intent, were perils to avert,
 And gain a freedom, he could not assert.
 Here all appeal, he knew would prove in vain,
 And safer far, his ardor to restrain.
 Him, prudence taught, in outward form to yield,
 And deeper thoughts, resentment, keep concealed.
 Thus briefly, he the haughty Duke addressed,
 In studied words, which dubious sense expressed:
 "An oath, great Prince, I've sworn; on that rely,
 If life I have, and sanction from on high,
 So to be swayed, must be my duty still;
 To you I look, your promise to fulfill."
 Duke William now, unbent his haughty pride;
 To great Prince Harold, eagerly replied:
 "Thine oath I have, and in return I swear,
 First in my fortunes, thou shall ever share,
 In fields of fame, or seated near the throne,
 To every nation our high friendship known:
 Great Harold still, shall Saxon rights uphold,
 And highest honours to his race behold.
 We'll blend the glory of heroic names,
 And our renown, transmit to future times."

Receive this pledge, as it is freely given ;
 Besides my word, its record is in heaven."

Tho' in their thoughts, and tone, and speech constrained,
 Those chiefs renowned, in converse there remained.
 By every art, device, he could exert,
 Duke William sought attention to divert,
 From topics painful to great Harold's mind,
 To soothe that spirit he had sought to bind.
 But rankling still, within the Saxon's breast,
 Corroding deep, because now unexpressed,
 Dwelt the dire thought, of William's secret fraud,
 Too foul for even Normans to applaud.
 Nor could the Duke, a firm assurance feel,
 In Harold's faith, in Harold's future zeal.
 But that estrangement was in part concealed;
 To be in after days, and other scenes, revealed.

In a vast hall, a banquet stood prepared,
 By all those princes, nobles, to be shared.
 With regal fare and richest viands laid,
 Of guests that board, a long array displayed.
 And costly wines, by many a trader sought,
 And for that court, from various regions brought.
 With stately splendour shone that gorgeous scene,
 Where ne'er before, such royal feast had been.
 The hour had come, and lordly guests were there,
 Warriors renowned, and men of lineage rare,
 And 'mong them then, were those of Saxon blood,
 And 'midst them all, two warlike Princes stood:
 Duke William first, with courteous words and bland,
 Looked still the chief, in proud, supreme command ;
 Great Harold next, with tone and look serene,
 The loftiest head, the knight of noblest mien.

Less tall of stature than the Saxon prince,
 His utterance calm, but potent to convince,
 William, in gesture proud, and aspect cold,
 Was cast in ampler, more gigantic mould.

His iron frame, serene and godlike brow,
 That steadfast air, which high resolves bestow,
 The stern repose in his imperial eye,
 And fatal thoughts, which man's research defy,
 All gave imposing grandeur to his look,
 Which neither freedom, nor approach could brook ;
 Something repressive, portentous to his mien,
 Which none forget, who once that man had seen.

The same in age, by loftier hopes impelled,
 In strength and grace, great Harold all excelled.
 His words as courteous as his spirit bold,
 Nor could the eye, more splendid form behold.
 Men's hearts he gained, they deep devotion gave,
 To one so gentle, chivalrous, and brave.
 There was a mildness in his fearless eye,
 That won, unasked, men's love and sympathy.
 His noble mind, the softness of his heart,
 To his high bearing did its tone impart,
 But ever on his pale and princely brow,
 There dwelt a sadness, grief does not bestow ;
 The fatal shadow of a doom too near,
 Which struck him down, in height of life's career.
 Within his bosom burned one steady flame,—
 A thirst for glory, love of deathless fame.
 Those hopes, and perils, which await on power,
 Betrayed, destroyed, in one ill-fated hour !

Soon to that feast, these princes led the way,
 And, following them, those guests in long array.
 Harold's high place was now on William's right,
 While on his left, conspicuous to the sight,
 With courtly ease and graceful pride combined,
 The prelate Odo had his seat assigned.
 Lanfranc also, by Odo had his seat :
 With cordial words, each other now they greet.
 On Harold's right, was Geoffrey of Coutances,
 And much did he the present joy enhance.

A prelate he, of learning and repute,
 Of courteous manners and a mind acute.
 And next to him, Count Robert of Mortemaine,
 The Duke's half-brother, did a place retain,
 And many others, some of equal name,
 All mighty men, and later known to fame.
 Around that board, the nobles took their place,
 All seated now, without regard to race.
 And Ulf was there, his nephew Haco too ;
 And noble Saxons, to their country true,
 Who all that oath, and this great feast deplored,
 And to 'apart, oft Harold had implored.

William was grave, but courteous, to his guest,
 And often him, in cheerful tones addressed.
 Tho' Harold smiled, a cloud was on his brow,
 And in his heart, a deep, consuming woe.
 Swift fled the hours, fast flowed the purple wine,
 And hearts and hands in friendship close combine.
 Proud, thoughtful minds, in part forget their care,
 Stern men waxed gay, and joyous hearts were there.
 But of that feast, great Harold scarce partook,
 Nor for a moment, his reserve forsook.
 Time passed : the hour of parting came ;
 Harold retired, his followers did the same ;
 Likewise great William, and his nobles too :
 And to repose, these Princes all withdrew.

The morn arose, with glowing dawn, next day,
 Inviting Harold on his homeward way ;
 And ere the sun had yet ascended high,
 Amid the glories of the eastern sky,
 Harold departed. With him Haco went,
 But Ulf remained, a long, dark grief to vent,
 Thro' hopeless years of exile and despair,
 And woes too great for that worn heart to bear.

The Saxon chiefs went gladly onward now,
 And with them William, with exulting brow :

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While Norman nobles, followed in his train,
 Their guests to honor, with a pomp now vain.
 The sea they reached, long ere the star of day,
 O'er earth had shed, his latest evening ray.
 That glorious sea! resplendent 'neath the beam
 Of setting suns, which o'er its billows gleam.
 Harold with joy, beheld that sea once more,
 While with glad ear, he hearkened to its roar.
 Once on its waves, and borne before the gale,
 He'd 'scape regrets, which could not now avail.
 Yet o'er his heart, the shuddering chill would come,
 And fill his mind, with a despairing gloom.
 Oh! dire event! what mighty mischief done!
 By cruel act, Duke William thus had won
 Advantage foul in his ambitious race;
 To both, reproach, which time could not efface;
 For Harold proved a weak or treacherous mind,
 The scorn of his own race, and all mankind.
 How Edward meet! how that dark deed proclaim!
 How greet companions, of his former fame!
 Altho' now free, and eager to depart,
 This grief profound, still lingered round his heart:
 While many a Norman, mourned his darken'd fate,
 And blamed such fraud, upon a man so great:
 Two ships at anchor, Harold now await,
 For him prepared, with pomp and royal state.
 Ere he embarked, assembled there they stood,
 All grave and calm, in solemn, thoughtful mood.
 The Norman then, fit tributes to the brave,
 Rare, costly gifts, to the great Saxon gave;
 Such gifts as well, became a mighty Prince,
 A monarch's tokens, friendship to evince.
 Now lengthening shadows of departing day,
 Fall from the heights far on the shore, the bay,
 Where Harold's bark, rode to the rising gale,
 With ready helm, and white expanding sail.

The setting sun sinks slowly in the west,
O'er distant oceans, regions of the blest:
On the horizon, lingering to the sight,
And passing thence, to other realms of light,
'Mid golden clouds, those isles of sapphire hue,
Like holier worlds, to man's despairing view,—
Serene abodes, so far removed from strife,
They seem the sojourns of immortal life,—
The heavenly homes, where angel spirits dwell,
Or that fair scene, where our first parents fell,—
While deep beyond, all splendour to the eye,
Repose the glories of the evening sky ;
A far, effulgent, canopy of light,
Fading from day, to azure of the night,
Till light and darkness, with their blending power,
Meet in the mysteries of the twilight hour.
The night descends ; low winds the ocean sweep,
And Harold now, looks wistful o'er the deep.
Those mighty chiefs, then said a long farewell,
Their last adieu, by each remembered well ;
And gladly Harold, fled that hostile strand,
Once more to seek, to hail, his native land.
They met again, but on another shore,
In fatal strife, 'mid battle's deaf'ning roar.

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