

of another wife,¹ and Robert and Odo, his own uterine brothers. For having expelled from Normandy on slight pretences William, surnamed Werlence, count of Morton, son of Count Mauger,² he had conferred the county of Morton on Robert, son of Herluin, and thus his own brother. Moreover, on the death of Hugh, bishop of Bayeux, son of Count Mauger,³ he gave that bishopric to his brother Odo, whom he afterwards made earl of Kent in England. At length, King William arrested him in the Isle of Wight,⁴ on account of his overweening pride, as I have before fully related, and having detained him four years in prison, was unwilling, such was the insolence of Odo, to release him even when he was himself at the point of death. In consequence, the earl of Morton, of whom I have lately spoken, was sorely afflicted, and, by his own supplications and those of his friends on behalf of his brother, wearied the suffering prince.

The king was exhausted by the numerous solicitations from so many quarters for the release of the bishop of Bayeux; but at length he said: "I wonder that your penetration has not discovered the character of the man for whom you supplicate me. Are not you making petitions for a prelate who has long held religion in contempt, and who is the subtle promoter of fatal divisions? Have I not already incarcerated for four years this bishop, who when he ought to have proved himself exemplary in the just government of England, became a most cruel oppressor of the people, and destroyer of the convents of monks? In desiring the liberation of this seditious man, you are ill-advised, and are bringing on yourselves a serious calamity. It is clear that my brother Odo is a man not to be trusted, ambitious, given to fleshly desires, and of enormous cruelty; and that he will never be converted from his whoredoms and ruinous follies. I satisfied myself of this on several occasions, and therefore I imprisoned, not the bishop, but the tyrannical

¹ This is the only notice we have of this eldest son of Herluin de Conteville, and half-brother of the Conqueror.

² William de Jumièges (b. vii. c. 19) relates the circumstances under which William Werlenc forfeited the earldom of Morton.

³ Ralph comte d'Ivry. It was in 1040 that William gave his brother the bishopric of Bayeux, vacant by the death of William d'Ivry.

⁴ See before, c. viii. p. 372, *et seq.* for the details of this transaction.

earl. There is no doubt that if he is released, he will disturb the whole country and be the ruin of thousands. I say this not from hatred, as if I were his enemy, but as the father of my country, watching for the welfare of a Christian people. It would indeed give me inexpressible and heartfelt joy to think that he would conduct himself with chastity and moderation, as it always becomes a priest and minister of God."¹

All the friends of the bishop pledging themselves for his reformation, the king further said: "Whether I will or not, your petition shall be granted, but after my death there will immediately be a violent change in affairs. It is against my own judgment that I permit my brother to be liberated from confinement, for be assured that he will cause the death or the grievous injury of many persons. Further, as I have declared the forfeiture of all the lands of Baudri, son of Nicholas,² as a punishment for his folly in quitting my service and going to Spain without my licence, I now restore him his domains for the love of God. I do not think that a braver knight exists, but he is prodigal and inconstant, and loves to wander in foreign countries."

Thus King William, though tormented with excruciating pains in his intestines, preserved throughout the full possession of his clearness of intellect and power of expressing himself with his usual vivacity; and gave with readiness useful counsels to all who addressed themselves to him on the affairs of the state.

At length, on Tuesday, the fifth of the ides [the 9th] of September,³ the king waking just when the sun was beginning to shed his rays on the earth, heard the sound of the

¹ Whatever amplifications our author may have made in the speeches which he has put into the king's mouth (a practice we find him frequently pursuing in common with most ancient historians), it does appear that Odo was excepted from the general amnesty, and the sequel of the history will show how well his brother had penetrated the real character of this voluptuous and turbulent prelate.

² Baudri de Guitri. This offence must have been very recent, as we have seen Baudri, in 1085, fighting bravely in William's service in Maine. This lord held a fief at Bocquencé under the abbey of St. Evroult, and must have been personally known to our author, who makes frequent and honourable mention of him.

³ William died, as before stated, on September 9, 1087.

great bell of the cathedral of Rouen. On his inquiring what it meant, his attendants replied: "My Lord, the bell is tolling for primes in the church of St. Mary." Then the king, raised his eyes to heaven with deep devotion, and lifting up his hands said: "I commend myself to Mary, the holy mother of God, my heavenly mistress, that by her blessed intercession I may be reconciled to her well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." Having said this he instantly expired. The physicians and others who were present, who had watched the king all night while he slept, his repose neither broken by cries or groans, seeing him now expire so suddenly and unexpectedly, were much astonished, and became as men who had lost their wits. Notwithstanding, the wealthiest of them mounted their horses and departed in haste to secure their property. But the inferior attendants, observing that their masters had disappeared, laid hands on the arms, the plate, the robes, the linen, and all the royal furniture, and leaving the corpse almost naked on the floor of the house hastened away.

Observe then, I pray you, my readers, how little trust can be placed in human fidelity. All these servants snatched up what they could of the royal effects, like so many kites, and took to their heels with their booty. Roguery thus came forth from its hiding place the moment the great justiciary was dead, and first exercised its rapacity round the corpse of him who had so long repressed it.

Intelligence of the king's death was quickly spread, and, far and near, the hearts of those who heard it were filled with joy or grief. In fact, King William's decease was known in Rome and in Calabria to some of the exiles he had disinherited, the same day he died at Rouen, as they afterwards solemnly asserted in Normandy. For the evil spirit was frantic with joy on finding his servants, who were bent on rapine and plunder, set free by the death of their judge.

O, worldly pomp, how despicable you are when one considers that you are empty and fleeting! You are justly compared to watery bubbles, since at one moment you are inflated and rise, and vanish the-next. Behold this mighty prince, who was lately obsequiously obeyed by more than a hundred thousand men in arms, and at whose nod nations trembled, was now stripped by his own attendants, in a

house which was not his own; and left on the bare ground from the hour of primes to that of tierce.

Meanwhile, the citizens of Rouen having heard the death of their prince, were in the greatest state of alarm; almost all of them lost their reason, as if they had been intoxicated, and were thrown into as much confusion as if the city had been threatened with an assault by a powerful army. Each quitted the place where he received the news, and ran to confer with his wife, or the first friend or acquaintance he met, as to what was to be done. Every one removed, or prepared to remove, his valuables, concealing them with alarm, lest they should be discovered.

At length the religious, both clergy and monks, recovering their courage and the use of their senses, formed a procession; and, arrayed in their sacred vestments, with crosses and censers, went in due order to St. Gervase, where they commended the spirit of the departed king to God, according to the holy rites of the Christian faith. Then William, the archbishop, ordered the body to be conveyed to Caen, and interred there in the abbey of St. Stephen the protomartyr, which the king himself had founded. His brother and other relations had already quitted the place, and all his servants had deserted him, as if he had been a barbarian; so that not one of the king's attendants was found to take care of his corpse. However, Herluin, a country knight, was induced by his natural goodness to undertake the charge of the funeral, for the love of God and the honour of his country. He therefore procured at his own expense persons to embalm and carry the body; and, hiring a hearse, he caused it to be carried to the port on the Seine; and, embarking it on board a vessel, conducted it by water and land to Caen.

Then Gilbert, the lord abbot,¹ with the whole convent of monks, met the hearse in solemn procession, accompanied by a sorrowing multitude of clerks and laymen, offering prayers. But at this moment a sudden calamity filled the minds of all with alarm. For a fire broke out in one of the houses, and, shooting up prodigious volumes of flame, spread through great part of the town of Caen, doing great damage. The crowds, both of clergy and laity, hastened with one accord to

¹ Gilbert de Coutances, abbot of St. Stephen at Caen, 1079—1101.

extinguish the fire, so that the monks were left alone to finish the service they had begun, and they brought the royal corpse into the abbey church, chanting psalms.

Afterwards, all the bishops and abbots of Normandy assembled to perform the obsequies of the illustrious duke, who was the father of his country. I will insert in this work a short list of some of the number, for the information of posterity. William, archbishop of Rouen; Odo, bishop of Bayeux; Gilbert, bishop of Evreux; Gilbert Maminot, bishop of Lisieux; Michael, bishop of Avranches; Geoffrey, bishop of Coutances; and Gerard, bishop of Sécuz. Among the abbots were the following: Anselm, of Bec; William de Roos, of Fécamp; Gerbert, of Fontenelles; Guntard, of Jumièges; Maimier, of St. Evroult; Fulk, of Dive; Durand, of Troarn; Robert, of Sécuz; Osbern, of Bernai; Roger, of St. Michael-in-peril-of-the-sea; the two abbots of Rouen, Nicholas, of St. Ouen, and Walter, of Mont-de-la-Sainte-Trinité; with many more, whom it would be tedious to enumerate. All these assembled at the funeral of the illustrious Baron, and buried him in the sanctuary, between the choir and the altar.

The mass ended, when the coffin was already lowered into the grave, but the corpse was still on the bier, the great Gilbert, bishop of Evreux, ascended the pulpit, and pronounced a long and eloquent discourse on the distinguished character of the deceased prince. He expatiated on William's having extended by his valour the bounds of the Norman dominion, and raised his people to a pitch of greatness surpassing the times of any of his predecessors; and on his having maintained peace and justice in all his states, wisely chastising thieves and robbers with the scourge of the law, while he firmly defended the clergy and monks, and defenceless people, with his meritorious sword. When he had concluded his discourse he addressed himself to the congregation, who were shedding affectionate tears and attested his assertions, and added this supplication: "As in this present life no man can live without sin, I beseech you, for the love of Christ, that you earnestly intercede with Almighty God on behalf of our deceased prince, and that you kindly forgive him, if in aught he has offended against you."

Then Ascelin, son of Arthur, came forward from the crowd, and preferred the following complaint with a loud voice, in the hearing of all: "The land," he said, "on which you stand was the yard belonging to my father's house, which that man for whom you pray, when he was yet only duke of Normandy,¹ took forcible possession of, and in the teeth of all justice, by an exercise of tyrannical power, here founded this abbey. I therefore lay claim to this land, and openly demand its restitution, and in God's name I forbid the body of the spoiler being covered with earth which is my property, and buried in my inheritance." The bishops and other great men, on hearing this, and finding from inquiries among his neighbours that he spoke the truth, drew the man aside, and, instead of offering him any violence, appeased his resentment with gentle words and came to terms with him. For the small space in which the grave was made, they paid him on the spot sixty shillings, and promised him a proportionable price for the rest of the land which he claimed. This agreement they soon afterwards fulfilled, for the good of the soul of the master they dearly loved.²

¹ That is, before the conquest of England, when the abbey was built; at which time William was only duke of Normandy.

² The narrative of Wace entirely agrees with that of our author. According to William of Malmesbury, his son Henry, afterwards king of England, was present at the funeral, and paid to Ascelin, whom he calls a "knight and a brawler, a hundred pounds of silver to quiet his audacious claim."—B. iii. p. 311 of the edition in *Bohn's Antiq. Lib.*

Two cotemporary facts may serve for a fitting conclusion to our author's account of the last hours of William the Conqueror. The first is supplied by William of Malmesbury, *ib.* p. 307. Honouring his father's memory, he had sent a person in his confidence to remove the body of Duke Robert, which had been interred at Nice, and bring it to Normandy. The messenger, having proceeded on his pious errand, received the intelligence of his sovereign's death while he was in Apulia, on his return home with Robert's remains. He, therefore, interred them there. The place where they were deposited is unknown, but might be probably discovered by the researches of travellers in the south of Italy.

The other fact present a curious contrast between two destinies which were terminated within a few days of each other. The tourist who visits the church of St. Saviour at Bruges will find a leaden tablet, transferred from the church of St. Donat in the same city, which records that Gunilde, born of illustrious parents in England, being the daughter of the powerful Earl Godwin, by Githa a noble lady of Danish extraction, having

However, when the corpse was lowered into the stone coffin, they were obliged to use some violence in forcing it in, because through the negligence of the masons it had been made too short, so that, as the king was very corpulent, the bowels burst, and an intolerable stench affected the by-standers and the rest of the crowd. The smoke of incense and other aromatics ascended in clouds, but failed to purify the tainted atmosphere. The priests therefore hurried the conclusion of the funeral service and retired as soon as possible, in great alarm, to their respective abodes.

I have thus carefully investigated, and given a true account of all the manifestations of God's providence at the duke's death, not composing a well-feigned tragedy for the lucre of gain, nor a humorous comedy to provoke the laughter of parasites, but a true narrative of the various events for the perusal of studious readers. In the midst of prosperity adverse circumstances were permitted to arise, that the hearts of men might be impressed with the fearful warnings.

A king once potent, and warlike, and the terror of the numberless inhabitants of many provinces, lay naked on the floor, deserted by those who owed him their birth, and those he had fed and enriched. He needed the money of a stranger for the cost of his funeral, and a coffin and bearers were provided, at the expense of an ordinary person, for him, who till then had been in the enjoyment of enormous wealth. He was carried to the church, amidst flaming houses, by trembling crowds, and a spot of freehold land was wanting for the grave of one whose princely sway had extended over so many cities, and towns, and villages. His corpulent stomach, fattened with so many delicacies, shamefully burst, to give a lesson, both to the prudent and the thoughtless, on what is the end of fleshly glory. Beholding the corruption

devoted herself to a life of chastity, and refused the highest offers in marriage, left England when it was conquered by William the Norman, and her brother, King Harold, was slain. She spent some years of her exile at St. Ouen in Flanders, charitable to the poor, gentle and agreeable to her attendants, courteous to strangers, and only severe to herself. She afterwards removed to Bruges, and, after some years spent in the exercises of virtue, departed in the Lord on August 24, 1087. The death-bed of this chaste and pious princess was exempt from the remorse and the scandals which disgraced the last hours of the enemy of her family.

of that foul corpse, men were taught to strive earnestly, by the rules of a salutary temperance, after better things than the delights of the flesh, which is dust, and must return to dust.

There is but one lot for rich and poor; both become the prey of death and corruption. Trust not then, O sons of men, in princes who deceive, but in the true and living God, who created all things. Turn over the pages of the Old and New Testament, and take from thence numberless examples which will instruct you what to avoid and what to desire. Expect nothing from iniquity, and covet not the goods of others. "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." "All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of hay. The grass fadeth, and the flower thereof perisheth; but the word of the Lord remaineth for ever."

I have determined to conclude this seventh book of the history of St. Evroult with the end of King William's reign. In the eighth book, it is my design to leave to posterity some account of that king's sons, and of the various disturbances by which both Normandy and England were long grievously afflicted.