

colleagues, when compared with the limited light which I have been able to throw upon the subject. I hope, should I have committed any error, no one of them will be afraid to act as a "*plagosus Orbilius*," and to give me a hearty rap over the knuckles if I deserve it.

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## ON THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY.

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IT is now some fifteen or sixteen years since the library committee of the Society of Antiquaries paid me the compliment of requesting me to write a notice of the Bayeux tapestry, to accompany the engravings of it, from the accurate drawings of Mr. Alfred Stothard, published as early as 1819, in the *Vetusta Monumenta*. In reply, I begged it might be distinctly understood that, with every wish to assist the Council, or oblige the Society, by any means in my humble power, I could not undertake the serious task of writing such a critical history of this important relic as I felt ought to be issued by the Society of Antiquaries of London. The time requisite for the researches was not at my disposal; and to make a mere *résumé* of all the controversy that has appeared, or a digest of all the conflicting speculations that have been published, on the subject, would have occupied more than I could conveniently spare, and tended, perhaps, to bewilder rather than inform the reader.

That excellent antiquary, Monsieur Frederick Pluquet, was so strongly of this opinion, that he prefaces his valuable evidences concerning the tapestry in his *Essai Historique sur la Ville de Bayeux* with these words:—"So many descriptions of this monument have been published, so much has its origin been discussed, that I shall take great care not to involve myself too deeply in these interminable arguments. I shall follow in this chapter the plan which regulates all the rest of this work,—that of not repeating what others have said, and of publishing only what others have been ignorant of, or forgotten, or neglected." Such is the plan I propose to follow in my notice of the tapestry,

as far as it is possible, considering that on the occasion of the delivery of this paper at the Hastings Congress I addressed a general audience, and that for many of my readers a particular description of the subject may not be conveniently at hand. For the latter, therefore, it may be necessary to state, that the curious relic popularly called the Bayeux tapestry is a roll of linen (formerly preserved in the Cathedral of Bayeux, in Normandy, and now in the town library of that city), measuring 19 inches in breadth, and about 211 feet in length, on which is worked, in coloured wools, the representations of a series of events immediately preceding the death of Edward the Confessor, and terminating with the accession of Harold, the invasion of England, and the decisive battle of Senlac or Hastings; possessing, therefore, a strong local interest for the inhabitants of Hastings and of Sussex, which I trust will atone for the unavoidable dryness of an antiquarian dissertation.

For the reason above stated, I shall also recapitulate the evidence collected by M. Pluquet in the admirable essay to which I have recently alluded, respecting the origin of the tapestry,—one of the principal bones of contention amongst antiquaries, and the cause of a quantity of *ink-shed* which it is perfectly alarming to contemplate.

After briefly stating his confidence in the antiquity of the tapestry, as contemporary with many of the personages represented in it, though neither the work of the first nor the second Matilda,<sup>1</sup> but executed by order of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, uterine brother of the Conqueror (who alone had the power to deposit and display the representation of a subject from profane history in a sacred edifice), M. Pluquet proceeds to answer the principal objections that have been urged against such an opinion, in the following brief but conclusive manner:—

Objection 1.—The silence of historians, particularly of Wace (author of a metrical history of the dukes of Normandy and the Conquest of England).

Answer.—It was not the custom amongst the historians of the Middle Ages to quote monumental evidence of any

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hume attributed it to the third, the Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I; and the Abbé de la Rue, being perfectly ignorant of costume, supports this opinion, and most authoritatively states the tapestry to have been unfinished in 1167, the date of the Empress Matilda's death! (*Arch.*, vol. xvii, p. 105.

description. "Comme dit l'histoire," "Comme on lit," "Comme on trouve écrit," "Comme dit cil (celui) de Jumièges." Such are the only authorities of our ancient chroniclers.

Objection 2.—Subjects appear in the border of the tapestry taken from the Fables of Æsop or Phædrus, and those works were not known at that period.<sup>2</sup>

Answer.—This is an error. They were well known long previously. Freculphus, Bishop of Lisieux, who lived in the eleventh century, says that Edward the Confessor caused the Fables of Æsop to be translated. Ingulphus informs us that Alfred had translated them from the Greek into Saxon in the ninth century.

Objection 3.—The word *Franci* is found on the tapestry, and the Normans never called themselves Frenchmen (Français).

Answer.—Wace, who was a Norman, calls the Normans "Français" in many passages of his works, and particularly when speaking of the battle of Hastings.

Objection 4.—Bayeux was burned by Henry I in 1106, and that conflagration must inevitably have destroyed the tapestry.

Answer.—Wace says positively that the treasures were carried out of the cathedral before it was burned.

"Tote fu l'Eglise destruite,  
E les richesses fors conduite."

(Roman du Rou.)

Objection 5.—The inventory of the treasures ("*effets précieux*") of William the Conqueror, taken in 1087, makes no mention of the tapestry.

Answer.—The tapestry did not belong to William, and had no right to be entered in an inventory of his property.

What can be clearer or more satisfactory than these refutations of unfounded assertions? And how grateful should we feel to M. Pluquet for wading through that mass of misapplied erudition and illogical deduction, and so quietly and concisely disposing of it. I should almost apologise for adding one word to his commentary; but the line *E les richesses fors conduite*, has been quoted by the Abbé de la Rue, and interpreted by him in the sense of

<sup>1</sup> Abbé de la Rue.

plunder. Even in that sense it does not necessarily imply destruction. The very absence of intrinsic value would go far to insure its safety. The Abbé asks who would care to rescue a piece of needlework? I ask, where would be the temptation to destroy it? Again, much stress has been laid on the silence of Wace, who, as a prebend of Bayeux, it is contended, *must* have seen the tapestry, had it existed in the cathedral in his time; but independently of the satisfactory reason given by M. Pluquet, there is no *must* in the case. Wace, who died in 1184, was born in Jersey, and educated at Caen, where he wrote his *Roman du Rou*, in 1160. He never could have seen the old cathedral out of which the treasures were taken in 1106, and who can say when the tapestry, if a portion of them, found its way back to the new edifice, rebuilt, or rather restored, for it was not entirely destroyed, by Philip de Harcourt in 1159. Nor can the silence or ignorance of Wace on this subject, who had finished his poem in 1160, be much wondered at, when we find M. Ducarel, in 1767, telling us that the clergy of the cathedral, to whom he applied for permission to inspect this remarkable relic, knew nothing about it? It was only by explaining to them that the tapestry he desired to see was annually exhibited to the public on certain days, that they comprehended his request; and even then seemed not to be aware that it had any reference to William the Conqueror, whom they simply designated Duke William. Wace expressly tells us that he wrote the account of the Conquest from the information of his own father, and had he even had an opportunity of seeing the tapestry, which does not appear probable, would no more have thought of quoting it as an authority than a writer of the present day, describing the battle of Waterloo from the information of eye-witnesses, would think of supporting such evidence by Jones's celebrated picture, or Burford's capital panorama, supposing the latter were still in existence. Besides, his poem was finished five years before King Henry II, his patron, sent him to Bayeux; for as the records of the cathedral tell us he enjoyed his prebend nineteen years, it follows that if he died in 1184, he could not have been appointed before 1165.

I will now state the few facts of which we are at present in possession relative to the history of the tapestry itself. The

earliest mention yet found of it occurs in an inventory of the jewels, ornaments, books, etc., belonging to the church of Notre Dame de Bayeux, and at that time found in it, taken by Guillaume de Castillon, Archdeacon of the Vez, and Nichole Michiel, *fabriquier*, canons of that church, in the month of September, 1476. In the third chapter of this valuable document, two magnificent mantles are described as having been those, according to tradition (*comme l'on dit*), worn by Duke William and his duchess at their marriage, a circumstance important to our present subject, as supporting the assertion of Wace, that the valuable property belonging to the cathedral in the eleventh century was *not* destroyed with the building in 1106; and in the fifth chapter, containing an account of the cloths, tapestries, curtains, etc., for the decoration of the church on solemn occasions, we find, "Item, *une tente tres longue et estrait de telle (toile) à broderie de ymages et escripteaulx, faisant representation du conquest d'Angleterre laquelle est tendue environ le nef de l'Eglise le jour et par les octaves de reliques.*" It is remarkable, in corroboration of M. Pluquet's opinion, that the tapestry was not the property of William, and had never belonged to him; that whilst the two mantles are traditionally assigned to him and his duchess, the tapestry is associated with neither of their names as donors or previous proprietors. Its popular appellation, *la toilette du Duc Guillaume*, with the additional tradition that it was the work of his wife Matilda, does not appear to have been known to the canons of Bayeux in 1476 any more than to their successors in 1767; but the name it would naturally receive from its subject, as it was called *la toile de St. Jean*, from its exhibition on the festival of that saint. The report mentioned by Montfaucon that it was the work of Queen Matilda and her handmaids, originated probably in the suggestion of some antiquary of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, repeated till it assumed the consistency of a fact. Should it eventually prove to be one, it would not at all invalidate the idea of M. Pluquet that it was placed in the church by Bishop Odo, for whom, and by whose desire, it might have been executed by his royal sister-in-law. M. Jubinal has, indeed, been hardy enough to suggest the name of the principal sempstress employed upon it (*Moyen Age et Renaissance—Tapisserie*).

That the treasures were not destroyed or stolen at the time of the fire we have abundant proofs; for, independently of the existence in 1476 of the two mantles traditionally assigned to William and his duchess, M. Ducarel in 1767 speaks of a curious ivory casket, with a silver-gilt lock, of oriental workmanship, part of the spoils taken from the Saracens by Charles Martel at the battle of Tours: the chasuble of St. Regnobert, presented to the cathedral by Ermentrude, wife of Charles the Bald, and two unicorns of massive silver, one fifteen feet and the other nine feet long, the gifts of William the Conqueror and his brother Odo, and which the Dean and Chapter of Bayeux offered to Francis I in 1531. The king nobly declined accepting them, saying that as they had been preserved there since the time of King William, they ought to remain under the same guardianship. During the troubles of 1562, these valuable figures were confided to the care of the Duke de Bouillon, governor of Normandy, who never returned them, and they have since disappeared entirely.

Having now told you all that is really known about the tapestry, I will proceed to describe the various subjects represented on it in the order they occur, appending the few remarks I shall presume to make upon them as they arise. First, then, we perceive Edward the Confessor seated on his throne, conversing with two persons, supposed to be Harold and an attendant receiving Edward's instructions to go to Normandy, or, according to other writers, requesting to make the voyage contrary to the advice of Edward.

A great deal of useless discussion will be found on this point in the earlier writers on the subject. There is nothing indicated in the tapestry beyond the fact of an interview. Whether Edward be issuing an order or granting a request must be left entirely to the imagination. We next see Harold with his attendants riding to Bosham.

Harold, with a hawk on his wrist, the mark of high nobility, is here depicted with moustaches. In the former group the figure supposed to represent him has none; but they are worn by the person beside him. Bosham, I need scarcely inform Sussex readers, is now only a small village on the coast of this county; but in the eleventh century was a well-frequented port, where Harold took

shipping. It was royal property in the time of the Confessor.

This subject is followed by a church, no doubt that of Bosham. Two persons are seen entering the church, or it may be praying at the entrance. Adjoining the church is a building, in the upper story of which five men are seen drinking; a sixth stands at the stair head; and a seventh is descending the stairs with an oar in his hand, following others carrying dogs and birds through the water to a boat.

Two vessels are next seen, crowded with warriors and mariners; and the inscription informs us that Harold crossed the sea and came full sail into the territory of Count Wido. Harold's vessels were driven by contrary winds into the mouth of the Somme, and he was therefore compelled to land on the territory of Wido, or Guy, Count de Ponthieu.

Inscription 5 is simply "Harold"; and he is next represented landing from a boat at anchor, and immediately afterwards arrested by the count.

"It was the custom," observes M. Thierry, in his *Histoire de la Conquête*, "of this maritime country, as of many others in the Middle Ages, that all strangers thrown upon the coast by a tempest, in lieu of being humanely assisted, should be imprisoned and held for ransom."—(Book 3.) He is then conducted as a prisoner to Behrem (Beauraine le Château, two leagues from Montreuil), where he is subsequently depicted parleying with Wido.

M. Lancelot suggests this conference is respecting Harold's ransom. I am sure it is not worth while to dispute so probable a conjecture; but what is the value of it? The count and his prisoner are apparently in conversation. That is all we can really gather from the tapestry.

This is followed by the inscription; underneath which, and over the head of a bearded dwarf who is holding the horses of the envoys, is worked "Turolde". This is evidently a proper name, and has been by common consent appropriated to the dwarf. The authors of *Les Recherches sur le Domesday* observe that "the name of Turolde was so common in the two countries of France and England at this period (temp. W.C.) that it is difficult at present to identify the family of this tenant. Aluredus (nepos Turolde) grandson or nephew of Turolde, held in Lincolnshire at the time

of the Survey the same lands he held during the reign of Edward the Confessor. A Turolde was sheriff of Lincolnshire after the Conquest, and founder of Spalding Abbey. His niece and heiress is said to have been Countess of Chester, and also to have married Ivo Taillebois, the Conqueror's nephew. A Gilbert Fitz-Turolde, apparently a feudatory of Odo, bishop of Bayeux, held Watelage at the time of the Survey, which had been previously held by Earl Harold. An Albert and a Richard Fitz-Turolde are also mentioned in Domesday. William the Conqueror's governor, or tutor, was named Turolde,—*Turoldeus teneri Ducis pedagogus*; but he was killed shortly after William became Duke of Normandy. Miss Agnes Strickland's assertion that Turolde was an artist, who designed the tapestry, is unsupported by any evidence. The figure holding the horses is certainly a singular-looking personage, and may have been a celebrated character of that day,—the Count of Ponthieu's dwarf, perhaps: for we know it was the custom of men of high rank to have such in their household. Be this, however, as it may, the introduction of the name without further explanation is one of the best proofs of the contemporaneous execution of the tapestry.

This is succeeded by a second embassy, the first having failed. Count Guy, we are told, was deaf to both the threats and the blandishments of the duke, and yielded only to a large sum of money, and a fine domain on the river Eaune.<sup>1</sup>

“Tant promis au comte et offri  
Tant manacha et blandi  
Que Guy, Heralt au due rendi.”

(*Roman du Rou.*)

We are then shown the envoy of Count Guy in the presence of Duke William. The figure of the envoy is very diminutive and apparently deformed; and it was therefore suggested by Montfaucon that it represented the same dwarf Turolde whom we have just seen holding the horses of William's ambassadors. M. l'Echaude d'Anisy, after a careful inspection of the tapestry itself, inclined to the same opinion, in opposition to Ducarel. But the name of Turolde is not repeated, and it is useless to recapitulate arguments which are unsupported by facts, and amount simply to a

<sup>1</sup> *Chronique de Normandie.* Thierry's *Histoire de la Conquête.*



conflict of speculations. If we could draw any inference from the attitude of personages so rudely represented, we might certainly presume that the envoy was approaching the duke with great reverence and some alarm, and that the actions of one of the men-at-arms in attendance, who appears to be placing his hand on the head of the envoy, indicates a familiarity only to be accounted for by the peculiar character of the individual subjected to it. William was no doubt angry at the delay of Guy to deliver up his captive, and at the little effect of his threats, until accompanied by bribes; and the count might have selected an ambassador who was likely to divert the duke and allay his irritation. No hint of this, however, has been yet discovered, and we only find "Wido conducting Harold to William, duke of the Normans"; the tapestry thus corroborating the account of Guillaume de Poitiers, William of Malmsbury, and Matthew Paris, who state that the Count of Ponthieu delivered Harold in person to William, and did not merely send him under a guard, as is asserted by Eadmer, Roger of Hoveden, and others.

Harold is next seen accompanying the Duke of Normandy to his palace, again in accordance with Guillaume de Poitiers, who states that William conducted Harold to Rouen, the chief city of his dominions—*In urbem sui principatus caput Rothomagum introduxit*. This subject is immediately followed by the palace, in which William is seen seated in state, and Harold speaking to him with considerable action. There is no inscription over this group, and the subject of the conversation must, as in the former instances, be left to the imagination.

We now come to inscription 14.—*Ubi unus clericus et Aelfgyva*—"Where a priest and Aelfgyva." This is one of the mysteries of the tapestry which has yet to be explained. Mr. Gurney says, "a woman, *certainly* Adeliza", William's daughter, promised to Harold,—a devotee whose knees are said to have become horny from incessant genuflexion in prayer, and who died afterwards affianced against her will to Alfonzo of Spain. Why "*certainly*" Adeliza I do not perceive. M. H. F. Delaunay asserts as positively that it is Adela, another daughter of the Conqueror, who was promised to Harold, and afterwards married Stephen, Earl of Blois. Indeed no two historians

seem agreed as to the particular daughter so promised; and none of William's daughters could at that period have attained the age of the woman represented as *Aelfgyva*. Besides, a scandal is implied, in my opinion, by this representation, which would have been a justification of Harold's refusal, and therefore not likely to have been introduced in this tapestry. Mr. Amyot has discussed this subject fully in his paper (*Archæologia*, vol. xix, pp. 199-202), but does not appear to have suspected the imputation on the fame of the lady, which appears to me to be conveyed, not only by the *unfinished* inscription, "Where a priest and *Elfgyva*—", but also by the character of the figures in the border of this compartment; the only other instance of grossness occurring in the same border, under what may be considered the commencement of this part of the story—the Deliverance of Harold to William. I have no wish to encumber this paper with theories of my own without something like facts to support them; I shall therefore limit my remarks on this obscure subject to facts. 1. Nothing has yet been detected in the contemporary chroniclers which throws light on the circumstance here intended to be represented, but which was doubtlessly as well understood at the time as the allusions to *Turold* and others still to be noticed. 2. The names given to William's mysterious daughter are *Adela*, *Adeliza*, *Agatha*, and even *Matilda*; but it does not appear she was ever called *Elfgyva*, which is a purely Saxon appellation, signifying literally, "the gift of the Fairies", or "Fairy Gift", and usually appropriated by them to royal personages. It is very improbable that even a Saxon embroiderer would have applied this title to one of William's daughters; besides which, Mr. Amyot has shown that "the history and even name of this injured princess are left in inextricable confusion". (*Archæolog.*, vol. xix, p. 200.) It is still more improbable that, if really intended to represent a young, chaste, and pious child, of eleven or twelve years old, the greatest age she could have attained at that period, her portrait should be desecrated by the association of gross caricatures, and her character hinted away by a purposely incomplete inscription. This latter fact has been entirely overlooked by every writer I have seen on the subject, and by some the inscription has been incorrectly copied. *Launcelot* gives it *Ubi clericus*

et *Ælfgyva*, omitting the word *unus*, and M. Delaunay writes, *Unus clericus et Ælfgyva*, omitting the more important word *ubi*, without which the inscription, though still obscure, would be complete, as (you will observe) are all the others throughout the tapestry. But we have here *Ubi unus clericus et Ælfgyva*—"Where a clerk, or priest, and *Ælfgyva*"; or, indeed, we may read it, "Where a certain clerk and *Ælfgyva*", the word *unus* allowing of such a particularisation. How can we doubt that the design of the embroiderer was to recall some scandal so generally known at that period as to render any plainer allusion to it perfectly unnecessary? Now, there were only two contemporary personages popularly designated as *Ælfgyva*, respecting whom I can find a scandal was in circulation. One was Emma *Ælfgyva*, sister of Richard II, Duke of Normandy, the queen first of Ethelred, King of England, and, secondly, of Canute the Great, and mother by the former sovereign of Edward the Confessor. According to some historians, she was accused by Godwin, Earl of Kent, and Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, of being accessory to the murder of her son Alfred, and also (which is more to our purpose) of a disgraceful intimacy with Alwyn, Bishop of Winchester.—(Knyghton, Brompton, Higden.) Her walking over red-hot ploughshares in order to prove her innocence, is a popular tradition, which has been known to us all from childhood. The other *Ælfgyva* is not so notorious, nor was she of royal birth. She was the rival of Emma *Ælfgyva*, being the mistress of Canute, and is distinguished from her by being called *Ælfgyva* of Northampton. She was the daughter of the Ealdorman Aldhelm, and the noble Lady Wulfruna; and we are told by Florence of Worcester, and other historians, that she caused the new-born child of a certain priest to be brought to her, and induced the king to believe that she had borne him a son. This child was Sweyn, to whom King Canute gave the kingdom of Norway. The chronicler goes on to say, "Harold" (*i.e.*, Harold, surnamed Harefoot) "also said he was the son of King Canute, by *Ælfgyva* of Northampton, although that is far from certain, for some say that he was the son of a cobbler, and that *Ælfgyva* had acted with regard to him as she had done in the case of Sweyn".—(Florence of Worcester, *sub anno* 1035.) I do not attempt to propound any theory, or

draw any inference from these circumstances. I only point out that the unscrupulous mother of Edward the Confessor, and the wily mistress of her second husband, were both called Elfgiva, and that both were suspected of conduct which might be darkly hinted at in the inscription,—“Where a certain priest and Elfgiva”. At the same time I honestly confess I do not see what connexion the peccadilloes of either have with the adventures of Harold, the son of Godwin.

The four next subjects, depicting the expedition against Conan, Count of Brittany, in which Harold assisted William, are highly interesting from the fact that they represent events unmentioned by any of the historians, and in one instance (that of Guillaume de Poitiers) positively contradict the chronicler, who states that William's forces never proceeded beyond Dol, and retired without striking a blow, having waited in vain for Conan, who continued retreating in lieu of opposing them. According to the tapestry, William pursued him to Rennes, and afterwards to Dinan, where the Count ultimately capitulated, and surrendered the city with the usual formality of the delivery of the keys. He is holding them out at the end of a lance to a knight on horseback, who is receiving them on the point of his own weapon,—a curious illustration of the manners of the period. It may, however, be Rennes he is surrendering, and not Dinan, as generally believed, as the inscription does not designate another city, but simply informs us that “here the duke's soldiers fought against those of Dinan—*contra Dinantes*”. Forces from Dinan might have marched to the rescue of the capital, and on their defeat Conan would be compelled to surrender. Everything is in favour of the tapestry. The details are too circumstantial to be the imagination of the embroiderer; and the next Inscription, 22, *Hic dedit arma Willelm Haroldo*—“Here William gave arms to Harold”, seems to corroborate Ordericus Vitalis, who tells us that William rewarded Harold's exertions with presents of splendid arms, horses, etc.; in contradiction to Wace, who, in the Roman de Rou, lays the scene of the presentation of arms at Avranches, when William was on his march to Brittany, and, of course, before Harold had exerted himself at all.

We next find William returning with Harold to Bayeux,

and are told, "Here Harold made oath to Duke William"; the said oath being to recognise the duke's right of succession to the throne of England on the death of King Edward. Harold is seen standing between and placing his hands on two shrines or reliquaries. After he had sworn, William is reported to have uncovered the shrines and alarmed Harold by the number and importance of the relics contained in them. William of Poitiers and Ordericus Vitalis place this incident previous to the expedition into Brittany.

The tapestry then represents Harold returning to England, and recounting to King Edward his adventures, or reporting the result of his mission.

Everybody has noticed, of course, the singular transposition of the two following subjects in this part of the tapestry. The funeral of Edward is made to precede his death, for we read in

Inscription 27.—*Hic Edwardus Rex in lecto alloquit Fideles*—"Here King Edward, in bed, addresses his friends." The king is supported by one attendant, who sits behind his pillow. At his bedside are two persons, supposed to be Harold and Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury; a third, at the foot of the bed, is a female, naturally imagined to be the queen. This is supposed to be important as corroborating the assertion of the Saxon Chronicle, Florence of Worcester, and Roger de Hoveden, that Edward on his deathbed declared Harold his successor; while others assert that he confirmed his previous bequest of the crown to Duke William. I protest, as before, against any inference being drawn from such a representation. The king's hand is extended towards Harold (if Harold it be), to whom he may be simply bidding farewell, or whom he may be enjoining to respect his oath to William. Each party may form its own conclusions; but I contend that there is nothing in the action which can positively be affirmed to settle this disputed point of history.

The death and funeral of King Edward is followed of course by the election of Harold. "Here", says the inscription, "they give the crown to King Harold". M. l'Anisy and Mr. Sharon Turner observe upon this, that although the tapestry evidently tells the story in the Norman way, and in favour of William, there is no indication here of Harold's seizure of the crown by violence, as intimated by

Malmsbury, Rudborne, and Ordericus Vitalis. We next read—"Here sits Harold, King of the English. Stigand Archbishop." Harold is seated on the throne, holding a sceptre in his right hand, and a globe surmounted by a cross in his left. On his left is Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, who is said to have crowned him in defiance of the Pope's interdiction. The tapestry, therefore, appears to corroborate this statement, and refute the majority of English writers, who assert that he was crowned by Aldred, Archbishop of York.

Inscription 31.—*Isti mirant. stella*—"They marvel at the star." This star is a comet, the appearance of which is mentioned by Guillaume de Jumièges, Matthew of Westminster, and the MS. Chronicles, Tiberius, B. 1, and B. 4, Brit. Mus., and was regarded by the English as a sign of impending great tribulation. At the time of the projected invasion of England by Napoleon I, a comet made its appearance; and the Emperor, who had caused the tapestry to be brought to Paris for his examination, is said to have contemplated the one depicted in it with considerable interest.

Inscription 31.—"Harold." Harold is seated on his throne listening to a man who appears to have brought him some important information, as the king's attitude is one of great attention. It has been suggested with some probability that the intelligence communicated by the messenger is that of the landing of Tostig and the Norwegians. Others consider it to represent the ambassador William sent to Harold to expostulate with him on the seizure of the crown; but in this case it should follow the next subject. And here, again, it is a mere matter of opinion—either may be right, both may be wrong.

Inscription 32.—*Hic navis Anglica venit in terram Willelmi Ducis*—"Here an English ship came into the dominions of Duke William"; bringing the news of Harold's accession; for this is immediately followed by

Inscription 33.—*Hic Willelm' Dux jressit naves edificari*—"Here Duke William commanded ships to be built." William, seated in his palace, is in conversation with a personage, who, from his tonsure, is evidently the duke's uterine brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and not his other brother Robert, Count of Mortain, suggested by Lancelot.

A man is in attendance with a hatchet in his hand ; and this group is followed by the representation of a forest, and men hewing down trees, shaping planks, and building vessels.

We then see the ships dragged down to the beach, and laden with arms and provisions. Soldiers are represented bearing hauberks on a pole thrust through the sleeves, the most convenient mode of carrying such body armour, the weight of which must have been considerable. The wagon laden with wine is ingeniously made to carry lances and helmets.

The scene is again shifted to this country, and we approach the great event which the lapse of eight hundred years has not deprived of interest. Seventeen or eighteen vessels are, more or less, perfectly depicted in the tapestry. The great ship, on board of which we are to suppose William, has the banner of the cross surmounting the mast, presumed by M. Lancelot to represent that which was sent to the duke by Pope Alexander I. At the back or prow of the galley is the head of a lion, and at the stern is the figure of a boy, holding in one hand a banner, and in the other a trumpet, which he is in the act of sounding. This does not agree with the description of Wace, who tells us the figure-head of the duke's vessel was a boy armed with a bow and arrow, which he appeared about to shoot in the direction of England ; but an ancient MS. tells us that Matilda caused a ship to be built for her husband, at the head of which was the figure of a boy in gold, with a trumpet in his hand ; an assertion curiously borne out by the tapestry, with the unimportant difference that the figure is placed at the stern instead of the head of the vessel.

They arrive at Pevensey, and we see them landing the horses from the ships, and then foraging parties riding towards Hastings to seize provisions.

This subject is immediately followed by the figure of a warrior on horseback, with the long Norman kite-shaped shield, and holding a baton in his right hand, over whom are the words, *Hic est Wadardus*—"Here is Wadard". He appears to be giving orders to a man with an axe on his shoulder, who is leading a horse. This is one of the inscriptions which clearly proves the contemporary character of

the tapestry, as this must have been some personage so well known at that period that no further description of him was necessary. Sir Henry Ellis was, I believe, the first person to point out, in his *Introduction to Domesday*, that a person named Wadard was an under-tenant of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (Earl of Kent after the Conquest), and held very large possessions in six counties, viz., Kent, Surrey, Wilts, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Lincolnshire, Mr. Hudson Gurney presumes he was William's Dapifer, through whom alone he could receive or make communications in his parleys with the English; but in that case I think we should have found him so named elsewhere. We know of two of William's Dapifers,—William Fitz-Osbern, *Dapifero*, who furnished him with sixty vessels, and Gerold *Dapifero*, who contributed forty. Mr. Amyot considered him to be a follower of Odo, by whom he appears to have been subsequently rewarded for his services. A third belief is that he was a Norman, resident near Hastings at the time of the invasion, and who assisted his countrymen on their arrival, which would account for his sudden introduction at this point into the tapestry. William of Poitiers informs us that a noble Norman, whom he calls Robert, the son of Guimara, a lady of high birth, and who was established on this coast, fearing that the duke, his natural sovereign, had undertaken a rash enterprise, sent a messenger to inform him of his danger and the strength and resources of Harold. That messenger might be Wadard; but the baton in the hand of the figure indicates command, and I incline to the belief of Mr. Amyot, that he was one of Bishop Odo's officers, who distinguished himself in this expedition, although no record of the precise services for which he was so handsomely rewarded has descended to us. The establishment of this great prelate was celebrated for its regal magnificence, and comprised a number of officers and attendants exceeding even those of the duke himself. An "Alured Dapifer" occurs in *Domesday* as holding many lands in the county of Kent, and is supposed by the author of *Les Recherches* to have held that office in the bishop's household.

Cooks are next seen dressing meat, and a banquet follows, where the chiefs are dining in truly warlike fashion, making tables of their shields. Bishop Odo is depicted saying grace at the ducal table, which is served



in state, an attendant kneeling with a napkin. Bishop Odo is on the left of William, and a very aged long-bearded personage on his right (the seat of honour), who is in the act of drinking, and leans with his left hand on the table most unceremoniously in front of the duke. This should surely indicate some very important personage, a Saxon, I presume, from his beard; but the chronicles afford us no clue to him, and I have met with no speculation concerning him. Dr. Bruce says, vaguely, probably William's Nestor; but who was his Nestor he does not inform us. Under the inscription [43], *Odo Eps, Willelm. Rotbert*, we see the three sons of Harleve, the Duke of Normandy, Bishop Odo, and Robert Count of Mortain, seated apparently in council.

[Inscription 44] *Iste jussit foderetur castellum at Hastings* — "He ordered a fort should be entrenched at Hastings." The English word "at" is here used in lieu of the Latin "ad", one of the proofs adduced of the Saxon workmanship of the tapestry, which I shall offer some remarks upon presently. Two of the workmen are represented fighting with clubs. Whether commemorating any particular quarrel or disturbance we have no means of deciding.

[Inscription 45] *Ceastra*, for *Castra*; another Saxon word for the camp, or one of the wooden castles erected at Hastings by William. The news is now brought to William of the approach of Harold's forces, and the next subject is the firing of a house by some soldiery. The inhabitants, a woman and a boy, are seen escaping. It seems to be the general opinion that this is not to be taken as a simple indication of the horrors of war, but the record of a particular fact that occurred at the time. The house is represented as one of some consequence; and as William strictly forbade plunder, I presume this to have been the act of Harold's soldiers in revenge on some person of importance, who had declared for, or was suspected of favouring the invader. An imaginative antiquary might point to the female and the boy as the wife and son of the man who was already in the camp of William.

The invading forces are now seen issuing from Hastings to give battle to the English. Duke William is on horseback at the head of his knights, and is armed with a club.

Two banners or standards are borne behind him ; one, the banner with the cross which has been already frequently seen in the tapestry ; the other a semicircular flag, with an indented border, and charged with a bird of some description. Sir Samuel Meyrick considered it to represent "the Ræfan", the celebrated raven ensign of the Danes, which their descendants might still be supposed to venerate and display on such an occasion.

The duke is next represented interrogating a warrior, who is named Vital, respecting the army of Harold. We have here a third person, who has not yet been positively identified. No mention of him occurs in the chronicles of the period ; but, as in the case of Wadard and Tuold, we find in the Domesday Survey a Vital or Vitalis holding lands under Bishop Odo, and cannot doubt his having been an equally well known personage at the time the tapestry was worked.

The tapestry next exhibits Harold receiving in his turn information respecting the army of Duke William.

The circumstance of Harold's spies returning with an account of William's army, and representing it as composed of priests, in consequence of the shaven and shorn appearance of the Normans, *tout rez et tondu*, is well known to every reader of English history ; but the tapestry furnishes us with a most curious illustration of the peculiarity which evidently gave rise to the remark, the Normans being thereon represented not only without beards or moustaches, but having the backs of their heads shaven in a most extraordinary fashion, which seems to be alluded to by the old chronicler Glaber Rodolphus, who, describing the followers of Constance of Poitou, queen of Robert, King of France, in 997, says that their manners and dress were equally fantastic ; "that they were bare from the middle of their heads", their beards shaven like minstrels, etc. Mr. Alfred Stothard, in his account of the tapestry (*Archæologia*, vol. xix), pointed out this singularity as a most important proof of the age and authenticity of the work, but was not aware of the corroborative testimony of a contemporary historian.

The Duke of Normandy is next seen haranguing his soldiers, and this subject is followed by the onslaught, over which there is no inscription ; but much has been said of

the representation in the tapestry of Taillefer, the Norman jongleur, throwing up his sword in the air, according to the description of Gaimar. Mr. Stothard quietly ended the controversy by pointing out the fact that the weapon in the air is a mace and not a sword, and that there is no figure which can be supposed to represent Taillefer. I have only, therefore, to remark, in addition, that the mace, as well as a javelin above it, is flying towards the Normans, and therefore has been hurled by a Saxon and not a Norman hand.

To this succeeds the death of Lewin and Gurth, brothers to King Harold. Ordericus Vitalis tells us they were not slain till after Harold had fallen; but the tapestry is, I think, a better authority on this point.

The next inscription informs us: "Here fell together English and French in Battle." This portion of the tapestry has been supposed by Lancelot and Sharon Turner to indicate that particular event in the battle when, deceived by a feigned retreat of the Normans, the Saxons were thrown into disorder, and the Normans themselves coming suddenly upon a great ditch, concealed by vegetation (and afterwards called, from the accident, "Malfosse"), perished in great numbers, dragging the Saxons also into the ruin.

Bishop Odo in complete armour is then seen on horseback, bearing, like other leaders, a club, with which, the inscription tells us, "he encouraged the youths"; *i.e.*, the young soldiers or raw levies. Wace makes particular mention of this fact:—

"Seated on a white horse,  
He was known by every one,  
Holding in his hand a baton;  
Wherever he saw great need,  
He made the knights turn,  
And stay the tide of battle."

Whether by exhortation or the actual use of the *argumentum baculinum*, we have no distinct information. Next follows the inscription, "Here is Duke William", almost the actual exclamation of the Norman leader, who, finding his ranks waver under the impression that he was slain, rushed amongst them, and throwing back his helmet, cried, "Behold me! I live". William is here depicted in the act of raising his helmet by the nasal and discovering his face.

Over a warrior beside the duke is the nearly obliterated name of "Eustatius". We are indebted to Mr. Stothard for the discovery of this interesting feature of the tapestry. It indicates Eustace, Count of Boulogne, who was a principal commander in that engagement, and to whom was intrusted the *ruse de guerre* lately alluded to. He is represented as pointing out William to the dismayed soldiery. He holds a standard on which is a plain cross, between four roundels; a near approach to a positive heraldic bearing. Roundels (*boules*) were afterwards the allusive arms of the Counts of Boulogne.

The general *mêlée* is followed by the death of Harold. He is first seen fighting beside his standard-bearer, who carries the royal ensign of the Dragon, long afterwards borne before the kings of England. He is next depicted endeavouring to draw out the arrow which has entered his eye. The weapon is nearly effaced, but is sufficiently visible to identify the subject. He is a third time represented, under the words *interfectus est*, falling on the ground, and a Norman knight on horseback inflicting the wound in his thigh, which wanton barbarity so excited the indignation of William that he disgraced its perpetrator on the field.

The English are then represented in headlong flight, pursued by the victorious Normans.

After this subject, the tapestry is "a mass of rags, in which", says Mr. Stothard, "I was fortunate enough to discover a figure on horseback, with some objects in the lower border. These are additional discoveries, not to be found in Montfaucon's print. The figure of the horseman certainly decides the question that the pursuit of the flying Saxons is not ended where the tapestry so unfortunately breaks off".—(*Archæologia*, vol. xix, p. 185.) It does not follow, however, that anything beyond the total rout of the Saxons was ever executed, and there is nothing in the appearance of that single horseman amongst the flying foot to contradict the opinion of Mr. Hudson Gurney, that "here the tapestry ends with figures of persons retreating in great haste, not complete in its ornamental work, but I think complete in its history".—(*Archæologia*, vol. xviii, p. 370.)

I will endeavour to be as brief as possible in the few observations which I have reserved for the conclusion of this



already too long dissertation. The subject of the costume, of all classes, depicted in this curious relic, has been pretty nearly exhausted in the course of the controversy respecting its age and origin. So little was really known of the dress, weapons, and ornaments of the eleventh century, when this tapestry first attracted the attention of antiquaries, that pages on pages have been wasted in assertions and speculations on points which are now perfectly understood and undisputed. The more the tapestry is examined, the clearer will it appear that it must have been executed as closely as possible upon the events it portrays, and whilst the most minute particulars in them were matters of public notoriety. Although the armour and weapons might be found similar in the reign of Henry I, the civil costume—particularly that of the ladies—had undergone great changes even as early as the end of the reign of William II; and the dress of the clergy, which is scarcely distinguishable in the tapestry from that of the laity, had progressed considerably towards the magnificence it attained in the thirteenth century. The custom of shaving the back of the head, which I have already described to you, was abandoned as barbarous and unbecoming very shortly after the establishment of the Normans in England, and, with the usual caprice of fashion, they seem to have run into the opposite extremes. As early as 1095, a decree was passed against long hair by the Council of Rouen, without effect, and the sermon of Serlo, which moved Henry I and his courtiers to tears, and induced them there and then to submit to be cropped by the enthusiastic prelate with a pair of scissors, which, at the critical moment, he whipped out of his sleeve, is an anecdote now to be found in every history of England. That the tapestry was the work of any Matilda there is no ground for believing, beyond the mere fact that it was most probably worked in the lifetime of the first, the queen of the Conqueror. The opinion that it owed its origin to the second Matilda, queen of Henry I, “the good Queen Mold”, as she was affectionately called, was founded on the Saxon words and orthography occasionally to be met with in the inscriptions. One important fact, however, seems to have escaped the notice of all the learned writers on this subject, both French and English, with the exception of Dr. Bruce. The people of Bayeux were of Saxon origin, and spoke,

even in the tenth century, a Teutonic dialect. "In this canton of Normandy", says M. Thierry, who, though he quotes the information from Guillaume de Jumièges, does not appear to have seen its bearing on this question, "the Norwegian idiom differing little from the popular tongue, became fused with it, and rendered it intelligible to the Danes and Scandinavians". Those who contended in favour of the third Matilda (the Empress of Germany and mother of Henry II) argued in total ignorance of the internal evidence presented by the tapestry itself, and were put to the rout nearly fifty years ago by one of the most intelligent and competent of all writers on the subject, Mr. Alfred Stothard. Now, when we take into consideration the strong arguments used by M. Pluquet in support of his opinion that the tapestry was worked by order of Bishop Odo, "who alone had the power to deposit and display the representation of a subject from profane history in a sacred edifice", and add to them, first, the fact that, next to the royal personages, the said Odo is one of the most prominent figures in the tapestry. Secondly, that the officers whose names alone are mentioned, are found after the Conquest holding large estates under him in England, and therefore must have been in his service, and consequently, well known to the people of Bayeux. Thirdly, that the dialect spoken in Bayeux was a mixture of Saxon and Norman, that would account for the characters of the inscription. Fourthly, that the width and length of the tapestry show it to be specially adapted to the purpose for which it is known to have been used<sup>1</sup> and presumed to have been intended by those who projected or executed the work; and lastly, that with the exception of its one visit to Paris, by order of Napoleon I, it appears never to have been out of the city with which it is so closely associated,—can we have any rational cause for doubting either its age or its origin?

It has been so often my disagreeable duty to disabuse the popular mind of a long-cherished tradition, that it is quite refreshing to me to fight in favour of the genuine antiquity of a monument of so much historical interest and importance as the one under consideration.

I do not profess to have thrown much additional light on

<sup>1</sup> It is of the exact length required to surround that portion of the church in which it was formerly exhibited.

this subject; nor in my description of it have I attempted to rival the graphic and powerful narrative of our esteemed fellow-labourer Dr. Collingwood Bruce, whose fervid eloquence we have all so frequently admired. My object has been to support, to the best of my ability, the critical opinions of such writers as Stothard and Pluquet, and pick out for clearer examination the few grains of wheat from the bushels of chaff in which they ran great risk of being buried. The poet has truly said "a little learning is a dangerous thing", but I question whether there is not quite as much danger in a large amount of learning when not under the direction of sound judgment. In the former case (at any rate as far as regards archæology), the damage is commonly confined to the reputation of the unfortunate individual; but in the latter, incalculable mischief is done to the many, who are awed by the apparent weight of the authority, and too much dazzled by the display of erudition to perceive "the baseless fabric" of the argument on which it is wasted. Those who have toiled through the principal archæological publications abroad and at home, during the last hundred years, will, I think, bear witness to the truth of this observation, as applied to the controversy respecting the Bayeux tapestry.