

always shown, they gently urged him through Archbishop William that he would not disdain their counsel. At first the king showed some bitterness at this intervention, but, after a little, somewhat rallying his strength, he seemed to consider the great injuries he had received from Robert, and then he spoke: "Since he has disdained to come here himself, it is with your witness and with the witness of God that I shall act. With such testimony I declare that I forgive him all the sins he has committed against me and I grant him the whole duchy of Normandy. This, before God and in the presence of the magnates of my court, I previously promised him. It will be your duty, however, to admonish him. I have pardoned him so often that he has learnt to take advantage of my leniency, and now he has brought down his father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. By so doing he has broken the commands of God and incurred the wrath of him who is our common Father." Having spoken thus, the king asked that the visitation and the unction of the sick should be celebrated, and Holy Communion was administered to him in due form by the hand of the archbishop. Thus he departed this life, and, as we believe, went happily to his rest. He died on 10 September<sup>1</sup> in the fifty-ninth year of his age, having reigned over England for twenty-two years.

This king excelled in wisdom all the princes of his generation, and among them all he was outstanding in the largeness of his soul. He never allowed himself to be deterred from prosecuting any enterprise because of the labour it entailed, and he was always undaunted by danger. So skilled was he in his appraisal of the true significance of any event, that he was able to cope with adversity, and to take full advantage in prosperous times of the false promises of fortune. He was great in body and strong, tall in stature but not ungainly. He was also temperate in eating and drinking. Especially was he moderate in drinking, for he abhorred drunkenness in all men and disdained it more particularly in himself and at his court. He was so sparing in his use of wine and other drink, that after his meal he rarely drank more than thrice. In speech he was fluent and persuasive, being skilled at all times in making clear his will. If his voice was harsh, what he said was always suited to the occasion. He followed the Christian discipline in which he had been brought up from childhood, and whenever his health permitted he regularly, and with great piety, attended Christian worship each morning and evening and at the celebration of mass. And so, at last, it seemed to everyone that he could be given no more honourable grave than in the church which out of love he had built at Caen to the honour of God and St Stephen, the first martyr. This, indeed, he had previously arranged. Therefore in that church he was buried, and a monument of gilded silver was erected over his tomb by his son, William, who succeeded him as king of England.

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, by a different reckoning, gives 9 September; Ordericus Vitalis (No. 7), 9 September; and the anniversary was celebrated on 9 September in the abbey of Jumièges (*Rec. Hist. Franc.*, XXIII, 421)

# Ordericus Vitalis: "The Ecclesiastical History" (1123-41)

The following essay on the life and death of William the Conqueror comes from the elaborate history written between 1123 and 1141 by Ordericus Vitalis, who was born in England in 1075, and at an early age became a monk in the Norman abbey of St Evroul (see above, p. 90). Further information on this writer will be found in the magnificent introduction by L. Delisle, in *Orderici Vitalis Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. A. Le Prévost, 5 vols, Soc. Hist. Franc. (Paris, 1838-55). It was the custom of Ordericus, after the manner of Thucydides, to place speeches into the mouths of the chief personalities in his story to illustrate their characters and policies. The speech which follows must be read in this sense. The description, though not contemporary, is of interest as representing the opinion concerning the Conqueror that was prevalent in the reigns of his two successors. It is printed in *ibid.*, III, 227-49; and in Marjorie Chibnal (ed. and trans.), *Ordericus Vitalis Historia Ecclesiastica*, II-IV, Nelson's Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969-73). The translation below follows, with some modifications, T. Forester, *The Ecclesiastical History of Ordericus Vitalis*, II (1854), 401-18.

The king, who during his whole life had followed the advice of wise counsellors, had feared God as became his faithful servant, and had been the unwearied protector of holy mother Church, maintained his exalted reputation to the end. His death was worthy of his life. To the very last, through all his illness, his intellect was clear and his conversation lively; repenting of his sins he confessed them to the priests of God, and humbly strove to appease his wrath according to the rites of the Christian Church. The bishops, abbots and men of religion never left him, and were indefatigable in opening to the dying prince the salutary doctrines of eternal life. When the noise of Rouen, which is a populous place, became insupportable to the sufferer, the king gave orders that he should be conveyed out of the city to the church of St Gervase, standing on a hill to the west, which his grandfather, Duke Richard, had given to the monastery of Fécamp. There Gilbert, bishop of Lisieux,<sup>1</sup> and Guntard, abbot of Jumièges, with some others, well skilled in medicine, carefully watched over him, devoting themselves zealously to their master's welfare, both spiritual and temporal.

At length, his disorder continually increasing, and perceiving that inevitable death was imminent, he became anxious about the future which was veiled from his sight. Therefore, reflecting on this with deep concern, he was frequently moved to sighs and groans. He summoned to his side his sons, William Rufus and Henry, who were in attendance on him with some of his friends, and gave them many wise and prudent directions for the government of his realms. Robert, his eldest son, had long before entered on a course of repeated quarrels with his father,<sup>2</sup> and had recently taken umbrage in consequence of some new follies, and retired to the court of the king of France.

The wise king hastened to make provision for the future welfare of himself and others, ordering all his treasures to be distributed among the churches, the poor and the ministers of God. He exactly specified the amount to be given to each, and gave directions to the notaries to reduce it to writing in his own presence. He also contritely sent large donations to the clergy of Mantes, to be

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Maminot, bishop of Lisieux, 1077-1101

<sup>2</sup> cf. No. 1, annal 1079

applied to the restoration of the churches he had burnt. He gave admonitions to all who were present relative to the maintenance of justice and good faith; about keeping the law of God and peace; about the privileges of the churches; and about observing the rules of the fathers. His eloquent discourse, worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance, and at times interrupted by tears, was to the following effect.

"I tremble," he said, "my friends, when I reflect on the grievous sins which burden my conscience, and now, about to be summoned before the awful tribunal of God, I know not what I ought to do. I was bred to arms from my childhood, and am stained with the rivers of blood I have shed. It is out of my power to enumerate all the injuries which I have caused during the sixty-four<sup>1</sup> years of my troubled life, for which I am now called to render account without delay to the most righteous Judge. At the time my father went into voluntary exile, entrusting to me the duchy of Normandy, I was a mere youth of eight years,<sup>2</sup> and from that time to this I have always borne the weight of arms. I have now ruled this duchy fifty-six years,<sup>3</sup> amidst the difficulties of incessant wars. My own subjects have often conspired against me and shamefully exposed me to serious losses and great injuries. They have perfidiously put to death Turchetil, my guardian, Osbern,<sup>4</sup> son of Herfast, steward of Normandy; Count Gilbert,<sup>5</sup> the father of his country, and many others, who were the pillars of the state. In these trials I had proof of the fidelity of my people: often by night I was secretly taken from the chamber of my palace by my uncle, Walter,<sup>6</sup> through fear of my own relations, and conducted to the dwellings and retreats of the poor, that I might escape from discovery by the traitors who sought my death.

"The Normans, when under the rule of a kind but firm master, are a most valiant people, excelling all others in the invincible courage with which they meet difficulties, and strive to conquer every enemy. But in other circumstances they bring ruin on themselves by rending each other. They are eager for rebellion, ripe for tumults, and ready for every sort of crime. They must therefore be restrained by the strong hand of justice and compelled to walk in the right way by the reins of discipline. But if they are allowed to take their own course without any yoke like an untamed colt, they and their princes will be overwhelmed with poverty, shame and confusion. I have learnt this by much experience. My nearest friends, my own kindred, who ought to have defended me at all hazards against the whole world, formed conspiracies against me, and nearly stripped me of the inheritance of my fathers.

"Guy, son of Rainald, duke<sup>7</sup> of Burgundy, by my aunt Adeliza, returned

<sup>1</sup> inaccurate: William was born in 1027 or 1028.

<sup>2</sup> William became duke of Normandy in 1035.

<sup>3</sup> fifty-two, perhaps (see n. 2)

<sup>4</sup> father of William fitz Osbern who became earl of Hereford shortly after the Conquest (see table 10). On him, see Douglas, *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lix, 66.

<sup>5</sup> father of Richard fitz Gilbert of Tonbridge and of Clare (see table 11)

<sup>6</sup> brother of Herleva (see table 2)

<sup>7</sup> count, not duke, of Burgundy

me evil for good. I had kindly received him on his arrival from a foreign country, and treated him with the regard due to an only brother, giving him Vernon, Brionne, and an important part of my Norman territories. Notwithstanding this, he did all in his power to injure me, both by word and deed, calling me bastard, degenerate and unworthy to reign, and defaming me as if I had been his enemy. Need I add more? Breaking his fealty, he rebelled against me, seduced from my service Rannulf of Bayeux,<sup>1</sup> Haimo "dentatus",<sup>2</sup> Nigel of the Cotentin,<sup>3</sup> and many others, forcing them by his nefarious counsels to be partakers of his perjury. Regardless therefore of the homage and fealty which he had sworn to me, he strove to strip me of the whole of Normandy. Thus, while I was yet a beardless youth, I found myself compelled to take up arms against him, and to fight on the plain of Val-ès-Dunes<sup>4</sup> against my cousin and liegeman. Then, by the help of God, the righteous Judge, I conquered my foes between Caen and Argences, and having by his permission utterly defeated them, I obtained entire possession of my paternal rights. I then laid siege to the fortress of Brionne, in which Guy, who fled wounded from the field of battle, had shut himself up, and I did not depart until I had driven the public enemy out of Normandy, and obtained possession of all his strongholds.

"Shortly afterwards, a still more grievous calamity befell me. My uncles,<sup>5</sup> Mauger, archbishop of Rouen, and his brother William, to whom I had gratuitously given Arques and the county of Talou, treated me with contempt as a bastard, and induced King Henry and Ingelram, count of Ponthieu,<sup>6</sup> to take up arms against me. I received this intelligence in the Cotentin, and lost no time in beginning my march contrary to the advice of most of my counsellors. Sending forward to Arques some light troops who were eager for the fray, I followed myself with the main body, which was far from considerable, to lay siege to the castle. But before I reached the country between the two rivers, the Sie and the Garenne, the advanced guard fell in with Count Ingelram pushing forward to occupy the fortress. Although he fought bravely as a valiant knight, they killed him and routed his squadrons.<sup>7</sup> Pressing the siege closely, I compelled the perjured count to go into banishment, and did not permit him to return to the domains he lost during all the days of his life. I also, by virtue of a papal decree, deposed the insolent archbishop, who neither observed his fealty to me, nor his duty to God, and raised to the see the

<sup>1</sup> Rannulf, *vicomte* of the Bessin

<sup>2</sup> father of Haimo, sheriff of Kent (see below, p. 424-5)

<sup>3</sup> Nigel, *vicomte* of the Cotentin

<sup>4</sup> The battle of Val-ès-Dunes took place in 1047, and Duke William was victorious with the aid of the French king. An interesting description of the battle is given in the *Roman de Rou* of Wace (ed. H. Andresen, II (1879), 172 f.).

<sup>5</sup> Mauger, archbishop of Rouen (1037-55), and William, count of Arques, were sons of Duke Richard II of Normandy.

<sup>6</sup> Ingelram of Ponthieu, brother-in-law of William, count of Arques, was elder brother of Guy, count of Ponthieu, who figures in the Bayeux Tapestry. For the family, see C. Brunel, *Recueil des Actes des Comtes de Ponthieu* (Paris, 1930)

<sup>7</sup> This revolt took place in 1053.

venerable monk Maurilius,<sup>1</sup> who was providentially sent from Florence, an Italian city.

"Henry,<sup>2</sup> in all his royal power, and in the fervour of his chivalric spirit, was often incited by my enemies to trample me under his feet as a defenceless man. He endeavoured to crush me and to assert unjust rights against me. He made frequent invasions of my territory at the head of large armies, but he was never able to glory either in the spoils of war or in the captives he took from among my subjects. He often crossed my frontiers with great military pomp, and terrible threats, but he never returned to his own kingdom without sorrow and shame. He brought in his train numbers of brave men who – alas! – never saw their own country again, since they fell by my sword, or were killed by my followers.

"On one occasion<sup>3</sup> King Henry was so enraged against me that he invaded my land with a vast army in two divisions so that he might overwhelm it by a double attack. He led one body of troops himself into the diocese of Evreux, and ravaged the whole country on this side of the Seine, while he gave the command of the other division to his brother Odo, with Rainald of Clermont, and the two counts, Ralph of Montdidier and Guy of Ponthieu,<sup>4</sup> who had orders to enter Normandy by the fords of the Epte, and, after raiding Brai, Talon and the whole province of Rouen, to continue their devastations to the sea-coast. Receiving intelligence of these movements, I lost no time in preparing to meet them. Stationing myself with part of my troops along the bank of the Seine against the king's tents, I kept him in check, and was ready to fall upon the enemy at whatever point he attempted to ravage my territories. Meanwhile I detached against Odo and his division, Robert, count of Eu,<sup>5</sup> with Roger of Mortemer, and other distinguished warriors, who encountered the French near the castle of Mortemer. Battle was then joined, and a desperate engagement ensued, in which the carnage was enormous, for the combatants on both sides were full of ardour and resolved to yield only with their lives. On one side, the French made furious assaults, inspired by the hope of gaining the spoils of victory; on the other, the Normans struck home, animated by their determination to repel the enemy and defend their lives and possessions. This battle was fought beyond the Seine in the winter season, before Lent, eight years after that of Val-ès-Dunes.<sup>6</sup> Guy,<sup>7</sup> count of Ponthieu, was taken prisoner and Odo, Rainald, and others were put to flight, owing their escape to the speed with which they ran away. Count Ralph would also have been taken, if Roger, my commander, had not favoured his escape on account of the fealty he had formerly sworn to him. In acting thus, in the hour of the count's utmost need, he paid him a noble and legitimate service,

<sup>1</sup> Maurilius, archbishop of Rouen 1055–77

<sup>2</sup> Henry I, king of France 1031–60

<sup>3</sup> February 1054

<sup>4</sup> Guy, count of Ponthieu, 1053–1101

<sup>5</sup> Robert, count of Eu, being a grandson of Richard I, duke of Normandy, survived until 1086. For the family, see Douglas, *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lxi, 135 f. Robert held extensive possessions in England, particularly in Sussex

<sup>6</sup> The correct date of the battle is February 1054

<sup>7</sup> successor of Ingelram

receiving him in his castle where he entertained him three days, and afterwards conducting him in safety to his own territories. Nevertheless, for this breach of his duty to me, I banished Roger from Normandy, but, being soon afterwards reconciled with him, I then restored him all his domains, except the castle of Mortemer, in which he had sheltered my enemy. This I think he justly forfeited. So I granted it to his cousin, William de Warenne,<sup>1</sup> one of my loyal young vassals. Guy, count of Bayeux,<sup>2</sup> was detained a captive during my pleasure; but two years afterwards I received his fealty on the terms of his being always my liegeman and doing military service every year, wherever I should appoint, with a hundred knights.<sup>3</sup> I then heaped favours upon him and dismissed him in peace thus honoured.

"As soon as I received certain intelligence of the issue of the battle of Mortemer, I dispatched Ralph of Tosny to the king of France with an account of what had occurred on the left bank of the Seine. On hearing the news, which reached him in the dead of the night, King Henry lost not a moment in putting his troops in motion, and, having made a precipitate retreat, from that hour he has never reposed for a single night on my territories.

"Thus, from my childhood, I have been continually involved in numberless troubles, but, by God's mercy, I have freed myself from them all with the highest honour. I became in consequence an object of jealousy to all my neighbours, but by his aid in whom I always put my trust, none of them were able to prevail against me. The Bretons and Angevins have found this; the French and Flemings are witnesses of it; the men of Maine have severely felt it.

"Geoffrey Martel, count of Anjou,<sup>4</sup> Conan, duke of Brittany,<sup>5</sup> and Robert the Frisian, count of Flanders,<sup>6</sup> engaged in perfidious enterprises against me; but as God was my protector, though they made great efforts and laid many snares for me, they were never able to accomplish their designs. I have placed on my brow a royal diadem, which none of my predecessors wore, having acquired it by the grace of God, not by hereditary right.<sup>7</sup> It would be difficult for me to recount my labours beyond sea, and the perilous conflicts in which I have been engaged with the people of Exeter,<sup>8</sup> Chester, and Northumbria,<sup>9</sup> with the Scots<sup>10</sup> and Welsh,<sup>8</sup> Norwegians, Danes<sup>11</sup> and other adversaries who attempted to deprive me of the crown of England: in all these I obtained the victory. But much as human ambition is disposed to triumph in such successes, I am a prey to cruel fears and anxieties when I reflect with what barbarities they were attended. I therefore humbly entreat you, the priests and ministers of Christ, to commend me in your prayers to Almighty God for the forgiveness of the sins with which my conscience is burdened, and that

<sup>1</sup> who later received large estates in England, particularly in Sussex; first earl of Surrey, and founder of Leves Priory; see No. 80

<sup>2</sup> a mistake for Ponthieu

<sup>3</sup> If this statement could be taken at its face value, it would provide evidence of an early imposition of the feudal *servitium debitum* by Duke William.

<sup>4</sup> count of Anjou, 1040–60

<sup>5</sup> died 1066

<sup>6</sup> count of Flanders, 1071–1111

<sup>7</sup> Contrast William of Poitiers (No. 4).

<sup>8</sup> see No. 1, annal 1067

<sup>9</sup> see No. 1, annal 1069

<sup>10</sup> see No. 1, annal 1072

<sup>11</sup> see No. 1, annal 1075



through his inexhaustible mercy he will vouchsafe to grant me salvation among his elect. I direct my treasure to be given to the churches and the poor, that what was amassed in crime may be dispersed among the saints and applied to holy uses. For you ought to remember how dearly I have loved you, and how stoutly I have defended you against all your enemies.

'I have never injured the Church of God, which is our mother, but have always paid her, as circumstances demanded, due honour. I never sold ecclesiastical dignities. I prohibited simony, which I always detested. In the election of prelates my choice was directed by meritorious conduct and wise doctrine, and, as far as it has been in my power, the government of the Church has been committed to the most worthy. This may be truly proved by my selection of Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury; of Anselm, abbot of Bec; Gerbert, abbot of Fontenelles; Durand, abbot of Troarn; and many other doctors of my realm, whose praise, I think, is spread to the ends of the earth. Such were the associates with whom I conversed, and in whose society I learnt the maxims of wisdom and truth; so that I always delighted to receive their counsels.

"Nine abbeys of monks<sup>1</sup> and one of nuns,<sup>2</sup> founded in Normandy by my predecessors, have, under God's blessing, been augmented by my care, nobly enriched with the splendid endowments of various kinds I have conferred upon them. Moreover, during the time I have governed the duchy, seventeen convents of monks and six of nuns have been erected, in which the work of God is regularly performed, and large alms are daily distributed for the love of the supreme King. With such fortresses Normandy is well protected, and in them men are taught to combat devils and the sins of the flesh. By God's inspiration all these abbeys have been either of my creation or foundation, and I became their zealous benefactor and kind promoter. Moreover, all the endowments, whether in lands or other revenues, which my barons have given to God and his saints, for the good of their souls, both in Normandy and England, I have graciously confirmed. And I have gratuitously ratified by my princely authority the charters granting them, against all claims and pretensions.

"Such have been my cares from my earliest years, and these duties I leave to my successors to be observed in all time to come. In these, my sons, be sure to follow my example, that you may be honoured for ever before God and men. I especially exhort you, who are my own flesh, to cultivate unceasingly the society of good and wise men, and to submit to their rule in all things, if you desire to possess lasting glory. From the teaching of pious philosophers you will learn to distinguish good from evil; to adhere to justice on all occasions; and to avoid iniquity; to spare the humble, the poor, and the pious, and to war-down the proud and malicious;<sup>3</sup> to refrain from injuring simple folk;

<sup>1</sup> Probably St Ouen; St Wandrille; Jumièges; Fécamp; le Mont-Saint-Michel; Bernay; Holy Trinity, Rouen; Cerisy; and Le Bec Hellouin.

<sup>2</sup> Montivilliers

<sup>3</sup> cf. Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 853: *parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*

to frequent with devotion the services of holy Church; to love the worship of God above all riches; and to observe unweariedly the divine law by day and night, in prosperity and adversity.

"Before I fought against Harold on the heath of Senlac,<sup>1</sup> I granted the dukedom of Normandy to my son Robert, because he was the eldest. He has already received the homage of nearly all the barons of this land. The grant thus made and ratified I cannot annul. But I know for certain that the country which is subject to his dominion will be truly wretched. He is proud, foolish and prodigal, and will have long to suffer severe misfortune.

"I appoint no one my heir to the crown of England, but leave it to the disposal of the eternal Creator, whose I am, and who orders all things. For I did not attain that high honour by hereditary right, but wrested it from the perjured King Harold in a desperate battle, with much effusion of human blood; and it was by the slaughter and banishment of his adherents that I subjugated England to my rule. I have persecuted its native inhabitants beyond all reason. Whether gentle or simple, I have cruelly oppressed them; many I unjustly disinherited; innumerable multitudes, especially in the county of York, perished through me by famine or the sword. Thus it happened: the men of Deira and other people beyond the Humber called in the troops of Swein, king of Denmark, as their allies against me, and put to the sword Robert Comyn and a thousand soldiers within the walls of Durham, as well as others, my barons and most esteemed knights, in various places. These events inflamed me to the highest pitch of resentment, and I fell on the English of the northern shires like a ravening lion. I commanded their houses and corn, with all their implements and chattels, to be burnt without distinction, and large herds of cattle and beasts of burden to be butchered wherever they were found. It was thus that I took revenge on multitudes of both sexes by subjecting them to the calamity of a cruel famine; and by so doing – alas! – became the barbarous murderer of many thousands, both young and old, of that fine race of people.<sup>2</sup> Having, therefore, made my way to the throne of that kingdom by so many crimes, I dare not leave it to anyone but God alone, lest after my death worse should happen by my means. I trust that my son William, who from his earliest years has always attached himself to me, and has been dutiful under all trials to the best of his power, may live long and prosperously in the influence of the Spirit of God. Should it be the divine will that he succeed to the throne, may his reign be illustrious!"

While King William discoursed thus, with much more to the same effect, the bystanders who cautiously scanned the dim prospects of the future, were lost in amazement. Henry, his youngest son, hearing that no provision was made for him out of the royal wealth, said sorrowfully to the king: "And what, my father, do you give me?" To which the king replied: "I bequeath to you five thousand pounds of money from my treasury."<sup>3</sup> Upon which Henry

<sup>1</sup> Ordericus appears to be the first to give this description to the battle of Hastings.

<sup>2</sup> *see* No. 1, e.g. annals 1070, 1085 f. <sup>3</sup> perhaps the equivalent of £375,000 today (*see* above, p. 55, n. 4.)

said: "What shall I do with this money, having no corner of earth which I can call my own?" To which the king answered: "My son, be content with your lot, and trust in the Lord. Suffer patiently your elder brothers to precede you. Robert will have Normandy, and William England. But you, also, in your turn, will succeed to all the dominions which belong to me, and you will surpass your brothers in wealth and power."<sup>1</sup> After he had said this, the king, fearing lest in such widespread dominions some sudden tumults might burst forth, addressed a letter to Lanfranc, the archbishop, on the appointment of a successor to the throne, and affixing his seal, gave it to his son, William Rufus, commanding him to embark for England without delay. He then kissed him, and, giving him his blessing, directed him to hasten his departure and cross the sea to secure the crown. The prince lost no time in riding to the port of Wissant, and there he received news of his father's death. Henry was equally prompt in securing the money allotted to him. He had it carefully weighed that there might be no deficiency, and, summoning his intimate friends in whom he could confide, sought a place of safety in which to deposit his treasure.

Meanwhile the physicians and royal attendants in charge of the dying prince, together with the nobles who had come to visit him, took an opportunity of speaking in favour of the captives who were detained in prison, humbly entreating him to have pity on them and order their release. The king replied to them: "I have long kept in captivity Morcar, the noble English earl; in this I have been unjust, but my fear has been that if he were liberated he would raise disturbances in the kingdom of England. I threw into prison Roger of Breteuil who opposed me with bitter animosity, and stirred up against me his brother-in-law, Ralph "de Guader", and many others,<sup>2</sup> and I swore that he should not be set free as long as I lived. In like manner I imprisoned many persons to punish them for their own offences, and others to prevent their causing rebellions. Justice requires this; and the divine law, through Moses, commands the rulers of the world to restrain the guilty that the innocent may not perish. I am now, however, at the point of death, and as I hope to be saved, and, by God's mercy, absolved from my sins, I order that the prison doors shall be forthwith thrown open, and all the prisoners, except my brother, the bishop of Bayeux, be released. Let them go free, for the love of God, so that he also may have mercy on me. They are, however, to be liberated only on condition that they first take an oath to my ministers, that for the security of the realm they will use every means to preserve the peace both in Normandy and in England, and will steadfastly resist the enemies of tranquillity to the utmost of their power."

When Robert, count of Mortain, heard that by the king's decision his brother was condemned to perpetual imprisonment he was much distressed. Herluin of Conteville<sup>3</sup> had married Herleva, the mistress<sup>4</sup> of Duke Robert, by

<sup>1</sup> A clear indication that this was written after 1106 when Normandy and England were again united.  
<sup>2</sup> see No. 1, annal 1075      <sup>3</sup> viconte of Conteville      <sup>4</sup> mother of the Conqueror

whom he had two sons, Odo and Robert.<sup>1</sup> William, who was first duke and afterwards king, had heaped honours and possessions on his father-in-law both in Normandy and England, and had enriched with large domains his sons, Ralph, born of another wife,<sup>2</sup> and Robert and Odo, his own uterine brothers. For, having expelled from Normandy on a slight pretext William, surnamed Warlenc, count of Mortain, son of Count Mauger,<sup>3</sup> he had conferred the county of Mortain on Robert, son of Herluin, and his own brother. Moreover, on the death of Hugh, bishop of Bayeux, son of Count Rodulf,<sup>4</sup> 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, on account of his overweening pride, as I have before fully related, and after detaining 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 count of Mortain, of whom I have lately spoken, was sore 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 now plead. Are you not 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 imprisoned 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 a destroyer of the abbeys 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 an untrustworthy man, ambitious, given to carnal desires, and of outrageous 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 earl.<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that if he is released, he will disturb the whole country and be the ruin of thousands.<sup>6</sup> I say this not from hatred, as if I were his enemy, but as the father of my country, watching over the welfare of a Christian people. It would indeed give me inexpressible and heart-felt joy to think that he would conduct himself with chastity and moderation, as becomes a priest and servant of God."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> see table 2. For a fuller discussion of these relationships, see Douglas, *Domesday Monachorum of Christ Church, Canterbury* (1944), pp. 33-6.

<sup>2</sup> Fredesendis, second wife of Herluin

<sup>3</sup> This relationship is improbable. The "Count Mauger" to whom Orderic seems to refer is Mauger, a son of Duke Richard I, but it is unlikely that this man was the father of William "Warlenc". For the county of Mortain at this period, see Douglas, *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lxi, 141-5

<sup>4</sup> Rodulf of Ivry, stepson of Duke William Longsword

<sup>5</sup> Compare this with the distinction made in the report of the trial of William, bishop of Durham (No. 84, p. 662)

<sup>6</sup> An allusion to the war of 1088 (No. 1, annal 1088).

<sup>7</sup> This estimate of Odo is generally endorsed. It may also be noted that Odo was a benefactor to Bayeux, and a patron of the arts and of scholarship.

When all the friends of the bishop pledged 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, as a punishment for his folly in quitting my service and going to Spain without my leave, 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 parts."

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

At length, on Tuesday, 9 September, the king awoke just when the sun was rising, and heard the sound of the great bell of the cathedral of Rouen. On inquiring what it meant, his attendants replied: "My lord, the bell is ringing for Prime 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 Lady, 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 and had watched the king all night while he slept (his repose being broken neither by cries nor groans), seeing him now expire so suddenly and unexpectedly, were much astonished, and acted like men who had lost their wits. Nevertheless, the wealthiest of them mounted their horses and departed in haste to secure their property. But the inferior servants, 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, they hastened away.

#### 8. William of Malmesbury: "The Deeds of the Kings of the English" (1135-40) and "The Modern History" (1140-2)

The passages which follow are taken from two works by this very voluminous writer: the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and the *Historia Novella*. Some notice of this author is given above, pp. 90 f., and further information will be found in Stubbs's edition of these two works, and also in R. R. Darlington, *Anglo-Norman Historians* (London, 1947). The *Gesta Regum Anglorum* was finished in 1125 but two new recensions appeared between 1135 and 1140. The *Historia Novella* was written in 1140-2. For the reign of Henry I and subsequently, William of Malmesbury is therefore a contemporary source. In these passages will be found his opinion of the Norman Conquest, his estimate of Henry I, his account of the wreck of the White Ship and his description of two important councils held during the reign of Stephen. He was present at one, at least, of these councils. The text is in *Willelmi Malmeshiriensis: Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols, Rolls Series (1887-9). It is translated by J. A. Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle* (1847); by J. Stevenson, *Church Historians of England*, III, pt 1 (1854); and most recently by K. R. Potter, *William of Malmesbury: Historia Novella*, Nelson's Medieval Texts (London, 1955).

#### (a) *On the English and the Normans*

(*Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. Stubbs, ss 245, 246)

This was a fatal day<sup>1</sup> for England, a melancholy havoc of our dear country brought about by its passing under the domination of new lords. For England had long ago adopted the manners of the "Angles" which had been very various at different times. In the first years after their arrival they were barbarians in their look and manners, warlike in their usages, heathens in their rites; but after embracing the faith of Christ, in process of time and by degrees, owing to the peace which they enjoyed, they came to regard arms as only of secondary importance, and gave their whole attention to religion. I say nothing of the poor, whom meanness of fortune often restrains from overstepping the bounds of justice; I omit men of ecclesiastical rank whom respect for their sacred profession, or fear of shame, sometimes restrains from straying from the true path; I speak of princes who from the greatness of their power might have full liberty to indulge in pleasure. Some of these in their own country, and some at Rome, changing their habit, obtained a heavenly kingdom and a saintly communion; and many during their whole lives to outward seeming so managed their worldly affairs that they might disperse their treasures on the poor or divide them among monasteries. What shall I say of the multitudes of bishops, hermits and abbots? Does not the whole island blaze with so many relics that you can scarcely pass a village of any consequence but that you hear the name of some new saint? And of how many have all records perished? Nevertheless, with the lapse of time, the love of learning and of religion decayed, and some years before the coming of the Normans it had declined. The clergy, content with a very slight measure of learning, could scarcely stammer out the words of the sacraments, and a person who understood grammar was an object of wonder and astonishment. The monks mocked the rule of their Order with fine vestments and with the use of every kind of food. The nobility, given up to luxury and wantonness, did not go to church in the early morning after the manner of Christians, but merely in a casual manner heard matins and mass from a hurrying priest in their chambers amid the blandishments of their wives. The common people, left unprotected, became a prey to the more powerful who amassed riches either by seizing the property of the poor or by selling their persons to foreigners. Nevertheless it is the manner of this people to be more inclined to dissipation than to the accumulation of wealth. There was one custom repugnant to nature which they adopted: namely to sell their female servants when pregnant by them, after they had satisfied their lust, either to public prostitution or to foreign slavery. Drinking in parties was a universal custom, in which occupation they passed entire days and nights. They consumed their whole fortune in mean and despicable houses, unlike the Normans and the French who in noble and splendid mansions live with frugality. The vices attendant upon drunkenness fol-

<sup>1</sup> the day of the battle of Hastings