



1066: The View from France

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This year marks the 900th anniversary of the celebrated Battle of Hastings [see SR, March 5]. Below, Horace Sutton, who has been traveling in Normandy, reviews the battle from the French side. In the accompanying article, Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, whose ancestor, Roger Montgomery, fought on William's right flank, gives a tactical analysis of the battle from the British side.*

BAYEUX, FRANCE.

WHEN IT CAME to celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, last year, France decided it wasn't very interested. Waterloo, after all, is in Belgium and not in France, and then, too, there was the technicality of Napoleon's defeat. On the other hand, official Frenchdom, while not eager to commemorate the English victory over Bonaparte, has shown considerably more enthusiasm for this year's 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, which marks the Norman invasion of England in 1066.

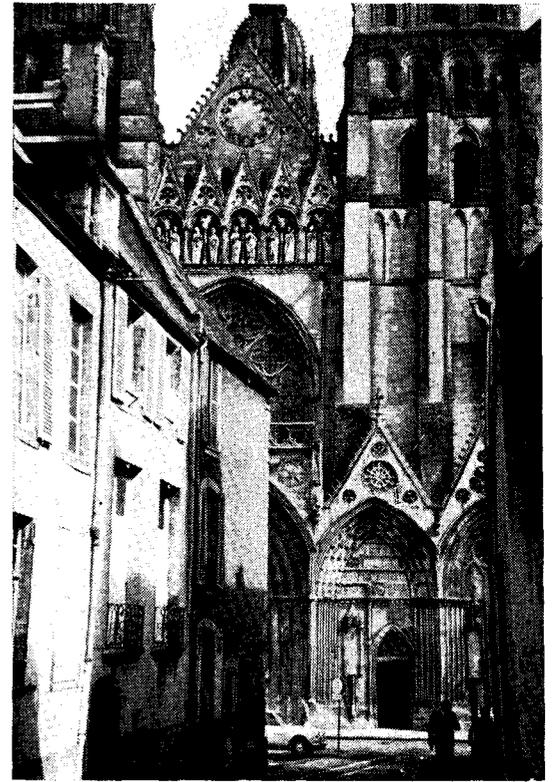
Rolling through Normandy, as I have done this spring, one feels vestiges of the great Norman duchy at every turn and every hamlet. At Dives-Sur-Mer, just west of Deauville, along the celebrated Côte Fleurie, William the Bastard, soon to be William the Conqueror, set his invasion fleet on a cross-channel course. Farther down the coast, that gem of ancient splendor, the town of Bayeux, still

stands intact, the seat of the Norman duchy and its birthplace.

The first town to fall in the invasion of 1944, Bayeux was liberated on June 7. It passed into British hands intact, without a shell fragment to mar an ancient wall, nor a panel of glass broken. An ambler along the old, narrow, curving streets of Bayeux these days comes suddenly upon the cathedral, a Norman and Gothic masterpiece that fairly explodes out of a square far too small for its grandeur. It was built by Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux, half-brother of William, who finished it in 1077. It was eleven years after the conquest that made William king of England and introduced the restless Norman blood to Britain. Much of the cathedral has been restored, but the aisles remain from the twelfth century, the high windows of the nave from the thirteenth, the crypt under the choir, from the eleventh.

In the former bishopric across the street hangs the famed Bayeux Tapestry, an embroidered history of the Battle of Hastings beginning with the political fulminations that caused it and ending with the total defeat of the English. Probably it was commissioned by Bishop Odo. It may well have been intended as a decoration for the new cathedral, though it is not listed in the inventory of the treasury until 1476.

The word tapestry is used so often that the treasure will prove a disappointment to visitors who have come to associate a



—H. S.

The famous cathedral in Bayeux.

tapestry with the large tableaux customarily woven at Aubusson. In actuality the Bayeux Tapestry is executed on a narrow strip of linen that is nearly as long as a football field. The representations are striking but primitive. Stitched in eight colors, it requires seventy-two different scenes in which to play out the narrative. Despite its rather unwieldy size, it has been artfully displayed around the walls of a specially built 100-foot-long room.

A commentary is piped in several languages over a wire-free earpiece obtained at the entrance. The commentary makes no bones about its point of view. Although William had been warring on the French as recently as eight years before the invasion of England, history—or at least French history—has found it convenient to overlook all of that. He is, hands down, the hero of Hastings, and Harold Godwin, whom he conquered, is reviled as a traitor. By invading England, William was only executing his duty to punish Harold for having maneuvered to obtain the crown of England, which William regarded as his rightful property.

It has been for some centuries a favorite scholastic exercise to argue the benefits or disadvantages that resulted from the conquest. There is no doubt that England boiled with revolt for years afterward, and that counter-invasions and centuries of war and distrust followed. Scholars who take the long view have insisted that the infusion of the adventuring blood of the Normans into England created a nation that was later to prove



—French Tourist Office.

Part of the historic Bayeux Tapestry—nearly as long as a football field.

unparalleled in its will to explore the world and colonize it. The Normans also gave England—and, ultimately, the world—Norman law; and they brought their talent for architecture which, merging with Gothic, became Early English.

All this birthright seethes from the streets of Bayeux. One can walk the curving cobbled alleys and imagine it captured by the Vikings under Rollo in 880. The name Norman derives from “northmen” and the town was Scandinavian long before Normandy had dukes. The first duchy was created in 911 when Rollo met Charles the Simple at St. Clair-sur-Epte, and completed the deal by placing his hands in those of the King of France. Now the Vikings settled down, were baptized and learned French ways. Rollo was succeeded by his son, William Longsword, later assassinated. Then came Richard the Fearless, followed by Richard the Good, who begat Richard III and Robert the Magnificent, also known as Robert the Devil. It is probably under the latter sobriquet that he met the girl Arletta, who was the daughter of a tanner of Falaise. While they never married they did have a son, William, and when Robert went to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage he persuaded Norman barons to accept William, his only son, as successor. When Robert failed to come home, William the Bastard became the seventh Duke of Normandy. He admired his title, but woe befall those who made fun of his grandfather the tanner.

It is said that in the war against Anjou, when he was twenty-one, he attacked a fortified bridge. Its defenders showed their contempt for the young battler by tacking furs and skins on the walls of the fort and beating them with their swords while calling out, “Hides for the tanner.” William stopped the siege of Alençon, turned his attention to the bridge and fort, and when it fell he lined up the thirty-two defenders and had their hands and feet cut off. “They shall crawl footless and handless for the rest of their lives to remind all men that I may be a tanner’s grandson but I am also the Duke of Normandy,” he is reported to have said.

Arletta, the tanner’s daughter, was faithful to Robert, but after his death she married the Vicomte de Conteville. Their two sons, William’s half-brothers, were Robert, Count of Mortain, and Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. Both were with William in the Battle of Hastings. William, who was thirty-nine at the time of the invasion, had married Mathilda in 1053. She traced her lineage back to Alfred the Great, giving William another handhold on the throne of England. Their ducal sons were Robert Short Socks, William Rufus, and Henry Beauclerc. It was Henry’s line that was later to produce Richard the Lion-Hearted.

The peculiar circumstance of the conquest of England arose over the rights to the throne of England. Edward the Confessor, according to William, had promised it to him. The other contender was Harold Godwin, son of the Earl of Wessex, King Edward’s chief minister. The Earl’s daughter was Edward’s Queen. (Harold Godwin had been dispatched to Normandy by King Edward and captured enroute. Rescued by William the Bastard, he swore that he would uphold William’s right to the English throne upon Edward’s demise. For that promise he got his freedom.) But when Harold returned to England, Edward died, and the Witan elected Harold as successor. Harold kept the title and was crowned. William was infuriated and vowed to march on England and seize the throne. He sold his barons on the plan, and then got the concurrence of the Pope under whose banner he would later sail and fight.

Despite the total demise of the House of Godwin and the conquest of England all within the daylight hours of one fall Saturday 900 years ago, there are apparently few hard feelings still felt in Hastings. An exuberant city planner in that city, which is making the most of the celebrations this year, has kissed it all off lightly. Speaking of 1066 he said, “We’ve gotten along well with the French ever since.” Truth to tell, the revolts and the riots went on for years after William’s conquest, and it began a succession of phenomena that included the Hundred Years War, Joan of Arc, the Seven Years War, and the endless campaigns of Napoleon.

Hastings may be a somewhat raunchy

1066: Montgomery at Senlac Hill

WHEN I was very young, a book was given me called *The Little Duke*. The hero of the story was Richard of Normandy, eight years old when the tale begins, and from that day my childish mind was intensely interested in the Normans.

William the Conqueror, who brought the Norman race to England, was the great-grandson of the little duke. Later I learned that my family has its origins in Normandy; there are many Montgomery memorials in Falaise, of which town I am now a Freeman; Roger Montgomery, a cousin of the Conqueror, fought on the right wing of the army at Hastings. And, curiously enough, my famous opponent Rommel received the wound which removed him from the Battle of Normandy (1944) in the village of St. Foy de Montgomery, near Lisieux—when I myself was commanding an army operating in the opposite direction to the army which Duke William had commanded.

The 900th anniversary of the Battle

seaside spa, but it knows the tourist business. It has decorated the place with crossed British and French flags, and it has even had the Royal School of Needlework run up its own tapestry. The English needlework version starts with the Battle of Hastings and ends with the invention of television and the reign of Elizabeth II. England may not have carried the day in 1066, but it has won the tapestry sweepstakes. Its embroidery is twelve feet longer than the Bayeux Tapestry.

While the commemorative events will be going on all summer and fall until the anniversary of D-Day on October 14, Hastings is distributing a sixteen-page newspaper, dated October 16, 1066. It is tabloid size and tabloid in style, and carries such headlines as “Mother Offers Gold for Son’s Body,” “Bishop Accuses Dead King,” and “Promise Extorted by Death Threat,” all in the vernacular dear to the copy desks of the British penny press. They all refer to the events of 1066 and the political machinations that set them in motion. The lead headline screams “Harold Killed in Battle Near Hastings.”

Though the English are very sporting about the 900-year-old-battle—especially if they can entice French tourists to British shores to wallow in the ancient victory—they have not altogether forgotten Harold. A current memorial to him reads, “He fell at the foot of the royal standard, unvanquished except by death, which does not count in honor.” It was written in frosting on a cake that appeared the other day in a bakery window in Hastings.

—HORACE SUTTON.

of Hastings falls on October 14 this year, and no doubt much will be written about it. The main historical source of our knowledge of the weapons and techniques used at Hastings is the Bayeux Tapestry. It may not be generally known that Napoleon in 1804 had the Bayeux Tapestry exhibited in Paris, in the hopes that it would arouse enthusiasm among the French for his contemplated invasion of England. I doubt if it produced the desired effect!

But let us examine the battle itself. In such cases many matters always interest me, but chiefly the causes of the war, the strategy and tactics, the generalship. It was an important battle; William conquered England when he won it, and altered the course of English history. I have always considered it was for the best; the Normans had much to give England.

Some people consider that William had a better claim to the throne of England than Harold. William obviously thought so, and when he heard that

Harold had been elected king by the Witan, he decided that the issue must be decided by battle. He would cross the Channel with his army and take the crown from the usurper who had broken his oath. But he needed two things—an army large enough for the conquest of a foreign country, and a fleet of transport vessels suitable for horses as well as men.

THERE was no difficulty about the army; the prospect of fighting and loot was tempting, and volunteers and mercenaries flocked to his standard from all over France, and some even from Italy. But the ships had to be specially constructed. He raised altogether perhaps 3,000 knights, many of them Normans—the hard core of his army. He also enlisted about 4,000 infantry, mainly archers and foot soldiers, so that his total force was in the region of 7,000 men.

Harold knew of the Norman threat. He called out his navy and maintained patrols in the Channel from Dover to the Isle of Wight. He himself waited in Sussex during the summer months with his housecarls—a personal force of professional soldiers reputed to be the finest infantry in Europe. During August the weather in the Channel was rough and Harold's fleet had to return to the Thames for repairs; this left the Channel unguarded. Shortly afterward, in early September, King Hardrada of Norway, and Harold's brother Tostig, who had become a bitter enemy, appeared with a large fleet off the Yorkshire coast; an army was landed, Scarborough was captured, and the city of York threatened.

Harold was now presented with a very pretty military problem, which may well become a happy hunting ground for students of military history in this 900th anniversary year. Against the background of my own practical experience when in command of the Kent and Sussex coasts in 1941, an invasion across the Channel by Hitler's forces being then considered likely, it is my opinion that Harold now committed the first of many errors which were to cost him his crown—and his life.

There were two threats. One was very serious, but it had not yet matured because of rough weather in the Channel—which was now without naval patrols. But invasion by a Norman army was known, from spies, to be imminent. The second threat had matured, and it could have unpleasant results if the Northern counties were ravaged by the invaders from Norway. A quick decision was necessary, and it came. Harold marched north with his housecarls and all the militia troops he could gather, and left the South coast unguarded—indeed, even unwatched. He reached York in time to save the city, and defeated Hardrada and Tostig on September 25 at Stamford Bridge.

On September 27, the weather changed, the Norman forces embarked, and with a favorable south wind the fleet crossed the Channel that night. On September 28, William of Normandy and his army landed on an empty beach in Pevensey Bay, a few miles west of Hastings—unopposed. On that day, Harold and his army were resting at York, 250 miles away, celebrating the victory over the Norsemen. Harold now had to make several more decisions; but generals are meant to do that—to make decisions, the right decisions of course, and to win battles. What did he do?

ON October 1, he heard the news of the Norman landing, and the next day started for London with his housecarls, leaving the rest of his soldiers to follow as best they could. He waited in London a few days to assemble his forces, and then marched to a rallying place for his army, a spur of the South Downs some six miles north of Hastings, near the town of Battle—which he reached on the evening of October 13. Meanwhile, his soldiers kept straggling in from the North, exhausted with forced marches; according to the historian, Florence of Worcester, only “a third of his army was in fighting order” on the day of the battle.

Early on the fourteenth, the Normans marched the six miles to Hastings and lined up for battle on Telham Hill—opposite the English position about one mile to the north. Harold had organized his battlefront with a shield-wall of housecarls in the center, and militia on the flanks; his position was carefully chosen, and the flanks and rear were secure; it had to be attacked frontally, and so long as the shield-wall remained unbroken and stood firm the English had little to fear.

The first Norman attack was delivered about 9 o'clock and made no impression

on the shield-wall; indeed, on Harold's flank the Normans fled, and some of the raw English levies rushed out from their line in pursuit—a fatal error. Duke William rallied his left and led renewed attacks; still no impression could be made on the English. In the early afternoon William tried an old Byzantine trick; he carried out a feigned retreat on his right, hoping the English would break their ranks and pursue as they had done on his left—which they did, but it made little difference because the housecarls stood firm.

In the late afternoon the Normans became tired and discouraged. William now played his last card. His archers were fresh; he drew them up in a long line and sent them up the hill against the English line, and when 100 yards from the shield-wall they halted and fired their arrows almost vertically into the sky, the arrows rained down on the English and, according to Wace, “all feared to open their eyes or leave their faces unguarded.” One struck Harold in his right eye, and he fell, mortally wounded. The knights made one final charge; the English line broke, and the battle was won just as it got dark.

NOW, a few remarks about generalship. I have always considered that Harold should have defeated William, and pushed him and his army into the sea. But as a general he was far inferior to William; his strategy was unsound, and his tactics were open to criticism. He was unlucky in that in early September he was faced with two threats. But to leave the South coast undefended and unwatched when he marched to York was not merely unwise, it was a fatal error—particularly since the fleet was wintering in the Thames and the Channel was unguarded.

Then, when he marched south from York he was too impetuous. By that time



“And I'll tell you why we're not flourishing—because we're not wicked.”

some of his ships were once again in the Channel; he should have calculated that William must fight a decisive battle quickly—and, what is more, must win. The enemy retreat across the Channel was cut off; the morale of the Norman army could not be too good; the proper tactic would be to remain in some area south of London, assemble the largest possible army, and force William to move northward and bring him to battle in the Weald, the forest area between Hastings and London.

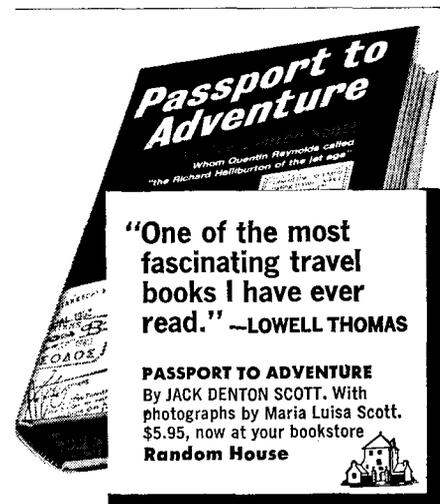
One further point—he could have saved the day if he had understood the value of sea power in war. When marching south from London toward the South Downs, why did he not order his navy to attack the Norman ships in the harbor at Hastings? Such action would have been a nasty shock to Norman morale! But in effect he did none of these things.

WILLIAM, on the other hand, was cool and calculating. He reckoned Harold would act impetuously; after all, he was Earl of Wessex and the Normans were ravaging his territory—a very subtle tactic on the part of William, since he thought Harold would never allow his tenants to suffer thus. He enticed Harold to Sussex and engaged him in battle before his army was ready to fight effectively. Even so, William did not find the going too easy. He had taken a terrific risk, but his gamble paid off.

One can sum it all up by saying that Harold should have defeated the Norman invasion. But he didn't understand the conduct of war on the higher level; in all he did he played into William's hands. So he lost. William took terrific risks; but he was lucky. And his strategy and tactics were sound. Also, he was bold—and boldness deserves luck. So he won, fortunately for England.

—FIELD MARSHAL VISCOUNT
BERNARD L. MONTGOMERY.

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Kenya

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President Joseph Murumbi, Finance's James Gichuru, Labor's Dr. Julius Kiano, Agriculture's Bruce McKenzie (the only European holding ministerial portfolio), and, above all, Development and Planning's Tom Mboya (whose "appreciation and grasp of economics . . . would have taken him to the top anywhere") are the country's real hope. If they can prevail over the extremist Odinga camp the pace of progress may well be accelerated. (A notably heartening development since the publication of *Kenya's Country* was the recent sudden departure of Odinga from the vice-presidency of KANU, then Kenya's single political party.) And Cox makes it clear that so long as Kenya itself remains in the driver's seat, progress, unity, and moderation will continue as the objectives of national policy.

Other bright spots are human rather than political or economic. An uproarious account of a Mau Mau "surrender" shortly after independence is alone worth the price of the book. So too are the portraits of some of the eccentrics who brought to the Kenya white settler his collective identity as one of colonial history's at once most magnificent and most absurd figures. The chapter on the Somali border fighting has all the sock of

a good war movie. The biographical sketch of Kenyatta summarizes one of the most incredible public—and private—lives of modern times.

Still, the fundamental tone of the book is decidedly pessimistic, and while I personally can't share quite so glum an outlook, it nonetheless seems to me that Kenya must gain nothing but good from being subjected to the rather harsh but totally honest and unmalicious criticism of so obviously genuine a friend of the country as Richard Cox.

The only real shortcoming I can find in *Kenya's Country* is what strikes me as a failure to discuss adequately the vital issue of an East African Federation which would include Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Granted federation is temporarily dead; but its ultimate acceptance (and I'm sure it will be accepted ultimately) is likely to put an end to some of the three countries' most vexing political and economic problems. Unfortunately, Cox examines this question only in its context as a stratagem once used to hasten Kenya's independence in 1963.

One other thing. Speaking of the possibility that radio broadcasts in Kenya might be confined to English and Swahili, Cox warns: "This would, for instance, hit the Kimvita service, which is all that 50 per cent of the Coast people understand." I find that a trifle puzzling: Kimvita is pure Swahili.

So Long at the Fair

By Miller Williams

MY father whose plans
have something over mine for being his
took me in torment to a thin bed
where when I lay
in strange important pajamas a chemical sleep
put out the flames and the fears
while the work of years gone bad was chiseled away.

Saved by the Holy Sisters
of St. Francis
from staph and bacillus
sleep and a quick death
I was sitting when the old Episcopal priest
came from reading the cards where my faith was put
as what my father remembered it to be.

—How were you christened? Is Jack Jack or John?
—It makes a difference?
—The prayer is yours. Your father knows your name.
—He doesn't know my face?
—Son, how would I put your face in the prayer?

The pagans believed
the little bones I lost were the seeds of wisdom
but when I walked away from the mad bright place
I left in some white can secreted there
not so much of wisdom as of grace
and I could not tell my waiting father
how there was less to spare.