

Quotes taken from Sharon Turner's 'History of the Anglo-Saxons' Book II (1841)

William arrived and made military works at Pevensey and Hastings, before sending monastic messengers to Harold, offering him a chance to hand back the crown without a fight. Harold refused and spent just six days trying to replace the large number of men he had lost, due to not providing food for his navy and not allowing the men who had defeated Harald Hardrada any reward for doing so. Both armies ended up spending the night on adjacent hills, waiting for dawn and the battle to begin.

Quote:

At the command of their leader, the Normans, who were in the camp, armed. William, with solemn devotion, heard mass,

and received the sacrament. He hung round his neck the relics

on which Harold had sworn, and proceeded to arrange his troops.

His standard was entrusted to Toustain the Fair.

He divided his army into three bodies. In front he placed his light infantry, armed with arrows and balistæ. Behind these were the heavy-armed foot. His last division was composed of

his cavalry, among whom he stationed himself.

He strengthened their determined valour by an impressive harangue. He reminded them of the achievements of Hastings, whose actions these pages have commemorated. He bade them to recollect Rollo, the founder of their nation, and the uniform successes of their ancestors against the Franks. He noticed their most recent exploits. He assured them that they were to fight not merely for victory, but for life. If they exerted themselves like men, glory and wealth were their rewards; if they were defeated, a cruel death, a hopeless captivity, and everlasting infamy, were the inevitable consequences.

Escape, there was none. On one side, an unknown and hostile country ; on the other, the blockaded sea precluded flight. He added, "Let any of the English come forward, of those whom our ancestors have an hundred times defeated, and demonstrate that the people of Rollo have ever been unfortunate in war, and I will abandon

my enterprise. Is it not then a disgrace, that a nation accus-
tomed to be conquered, a nation so broken by war, a nation
not
even having arrows, should pitch themselves in regular
battle
against you? Is it not a disgrace, that perjured Harold
should
dare to face me in your presence? I am astonished that you
should have beheld those who destroyed your fathers, and
my
kinsman Alfred, by the basest treachery, and that they
should
yet be in existence. Raise, soldiers, your standards. Let
neither
diffidence nor moderation check your anger. Let the
lightning
of your glory shine resplendent from the east to the west.
Let the thunders of your impetuous onset be heard afar, ye
generous
avengers of the murdered

While he was yet speaking, his men hastened to engage.
Their ardour could not tarry for his conclusion. One
Taillefer.
singing the song of Roland and Charlemagne, even
outstripped
his friends, and killed an English ensign-bearer. Another
also
became his victim. A third overpowered him, and then the
armies joined. The cry of the Normans was, "God help us."
The English exclaimed, "The holy cross ; the cross of God."

The English, chiefly infantry, were arranged by Harold into an impenetrable wedge. Their shields covered their bodies. Their arms wielded the battle-axe. Harold, whose courage was equal to his dignity, quitted his horse to share the danger and the glory on foot. His brothers accompanied him ; and his banner, in which the figure of a man in combat, woven sumptuously with gold and jewels, shone conspicuous to his troops, was implanted near him.

15.

Wilham, whose eye was searching every part of the field, inquired of a warrior near him, where he thought Harold stood. " In that dense mass on the top of the hill, for there his standard seems displayed," was the answer. William expressed his surprise at his presence in the conflict, and his confidence that his breach of faith would on that day be punished.

The English had possessed themselves of the hilly ground, which was flanked by a wood. The cavalry dismounted, and added to the firm mass of Harold's array. The Norman foot,

advancing, discharged their missile weapons with effect;
but the
English, with patient valour, kept their ground. They
returned
the attack with spears and lances; with their terrible battle-
axes,
their ancient weapons, and with stones, whose falling
masses
were directed to overwhelm. The battle glowed. Distant
wea-
pons were abandoned for a closer conflict. The clamour of
the
engaging soldiers was drowned in the clashing of their
weapons, and the groans of the dying. Valour abounded on
both sides,
and the chieftains fought with all the desperate firmness of
per-
sonal enmity and ardent ambition.

Befriended by the elevation of their ground, by the mass of
their phalanx, and by their Saxon axes, which cut through
all the
armour of their adversaries, the undaunted English not
merely
sustained, but repelled every attack. Intimidated by such
invin-
cible fortitude, the foot and cavalry of Bretagne, and all the
other
allies of Wilham in the left wing, gave way. The impression
extended along all his line. It was increased by a rumour,
that

the duke had fallen. Dismay began to unnerve his army; a general flight seemed about to ensue.

16.

William, observing the critical moment which threatened . destruction to his glory, rushed among the fugitives, striking or menacing them with his spear. His helmet was thrown from his head. The indignant countenance of their leader was visible:

"Behold me-I live; and I will conquer yet, with God's assistance. What madness induces you to fly ? What way can be found for your escape? They whom, if you choose, you may kill like cattle, are driving and destroying you .- You fly from victory-from deathless honour .- You run upon ruin and ever-lasting disgrace. If you retreat, not one of you but will perish."!

At these words they rallied-he led them to another onset. His sword strewed his path with slaughter. Their valour and their hopes revived. Their charge upon their pursuers was destruction; they rushed impetuously on the rest. But the main body of the English continued unmoved and impenetrable. All the fury of the Normans and their allies could force no opening. An unbroken wall of courageous soldiery was everywhere present.

Depressed by this resistance, Wilham's mind was roused to attempt a stratagem. He had seen the success with which his rallied troops had turned upon those who pursued them. He resolved to hazard a feigned retreat, to seduce the English into the disorder of a confident pusuit, and to profit by their ditfusion.

A body of a thousand horse, under the count of Boulogne, were entrusted with the execution of this manouvre. With a horrible outcry they rushed upon the English; then suddenly checking themselves, as if intimidated, they affected a hasty flight. The English were cheated. They threw themselves eagerly on the retreating Normans, and at first they prospered; for the Normans retired upon a great ditch, or excavation, some-what concealed by its vegetation. Driven upon this, great numbers perished, and some of the English were dragged into the ruin."

But while this incident was occupying their attention, the duke's main body rushed betwcn the pursuers, and the rest of their army. The English endeavoured to regain their position; the cavalry turned upon them, and, thus enclosed, they fell victims to the skilful movement of their opponents. Twice was the Norman artifice repeated, and twice had the English to

mourn their credulous pursuit. In the heat of the struggle, twenty Normans pledged themselves to each other to attack, in conjunction, the great standard of Harold. Eyeing the expected prize, they rushed impetuously towards it. In attempting to penetrate through the hostile battalions, many of the party fell; but their object not having been foreseen, the survivors secured it."

17.

The battle continued with many changes of fortune. The rival commanders distinguished themselves for their personal exertions. Harold emulated the merit, and equalled the achievements of the bravest soldier, at the same time that he discharged the vigilant duty of the general.' William was constantly the example to his troops. He had three horses killed under him; but, undaunted by peril, he was everywhere the foremost. Such was the general enthusiasm, that they who were exhausted by loss of blood and strength, still fought on, leaning on their supporting shields. The more disabled, by their voice and gestures,

strove to animate their friends."

The sun was departing from the western horizon, and the victory was still undecided. While Harold lived and fought, his
valorous countrymen were invincible.' But an order of the duke's, by occasioning his fate, gained the splendid laurel. To
harass the hinder ranks of that firm mass which he could not
by his front attack destroy, he directed his archers not to shoot
horizontally at the English, but to discharge their arrows vigor-
ously upwards into the sky. These fell with fatal effect on the more distant troops."

The random shafts descended like
impetuous hail, and one of them pierced the gallant Harold in
the eye. A furious charge of the Norman horse increased the disorder, which the king's wound must have occasioned; his pain disabled him, and he was mortally wounded. As the eve-
ning closed, one of the combatants had the brutality to strike
into his thigh after he was dead, for which William, with nobler
feelings, disgraced him on the field." Panic scattered the English on their leader's death."

18.

The Normans vigorously pursued,
though the broken ground and frequent ditches checked
their
ardour. Encouraged by observing this, a part of the fugitives
rallied, and, indignant at the prospect of surrendering their
country to foreigners, they fought to renew the combat.
William
ordered the count Eustace and his soldiers to the attack. The
count exposed the peril, and advised a retreat. He was at
this
instant vehemently struck in his neck, and his face was
covered
with his blood. The duke, undismayed, led on his men to
the
conflict. Some of the noblest Normans fell, but he
completed his
hard-earned victory.

The body of Harold was found near his two brothers, and
was
'carried to the Norman camp. His mother offered its weight
of
gold, for the privilege of burying it; but she was denied the
melancholy satisfaction. The two brothers of Harold fell
also
in the battle.