

AT THE DEATH BED.

JOHN SMITH.

For whom were shed those falling tears
 So unbecoming to thy years?
 Have not the sorrows of thy youth
 Turned painful knowledge into truth,
 Which moans and tears cannot avert
 Though great or small should be the hurt?
 The grief occasioned by this death
 Deserves, indeed, a sobbing breath;
 But ere you yield to nature's call
 Bethink what gainless tears may fall.
 Your will did not control your birth
 That linked you to this painful earth,
 Nor can it now recall that soul
 Whose flight extends to a heav'nly goal.
 Her silvered head befits a crown
 To symbolize the just renown
 She gained by pure and faithful love
 Toward friends below and God above,
 Recall the virtues she possessed
 And in thy solitude be blessed.

THE NORMAN CONQUEST.

The Norman Conquest may almost be said to have begun with the accession of Edward the Confessor, who was crowned king of England in the year 1042.

Having been reared and educated in the Norman court, Edward, though a descendant of the old Saxon family of kings, was thoroughly imbued with Norman ideas and customs, and had many intimate acquaintances in the Norman nobility; among them Duke William himself.

In consequence of this the French language and customs came to be much used in England, and the ambitious and enterprising Normans found but little difficulty in influencing the weak minded Edward to promote many of them to places of prominence and power. In fact some writers claim that Edward even promised Duke William the succession to the English throne. And others claim that Harold, the son of Earl Godwin, was once sent on a mission to William to announce to him the bequest of the English crown; and that while there Harold promised to marry William's daughter, and to support his cause in England at the death of Edward.

But whether these stories are or are not true, it is certain that Edward paid marked attention to his foreign favorites, that Norman influence became a considerable power in the English court, and that Edward did receive visits from Duke William. It also seems to be true that Harold was once shipwrecked on the French coast and held at the Norman court, and he may then have been compelled to promise to support the pretensions of William.

It was on the ground of these promises, whether true or false, that William based his claim to the English crown, and at the death of Edward, in January, 1066, he commenced vigorous preparations to carry out his designs.

The Norman nobles, at first unwilling to undertake so large a task as the conquest of a whole nation, were soon persuaded to give their united support; the French King favored and aided the project; and, as a result of the recent brilliant successes of Norman arms in Southern Europe, large numbers of soldiers and adventurers of other nationalities gathered to the Norman camp urged on by the hope of rich plunder to be taken from the conquered English.

The Roman church, too, then perhaps the most potent factor in influencing men's minds, put its aid to the conquest; for by William's charges of perfidy in Harold, coupled with the prospect of having so rich a kingdom brought within the Papal jurisdiction, the Pope was led to solemnly bless the Norman army and issue a bull of excommunication against Harold, who was now King of England.

Meanwhile the English were struggling with other enemies. Harold's brother, Tosti, who was in Denmark at the time of Edward's death, also laid claim to the kingdom; though it is probable that Norman influence had much to do with his movements.

In conjunction with the king of Norway, Tosti invaded England with a large force, and though defeated and killed in battle, greatly weakened