

Florence of Worcester – *Chronicon ex*

A.D. 1066. On Thursday, the vigil of our Lord's Epiphany [5th Jan.], in the fourth indiction, the pride of the English, the pacific king Eadward, son of king Aethelred, died at London, having reigned over the Anglo-Saxons twenty-three years, six months, and twenty-seven days: the next day he was buried in kingly style, amid the bitter lamentations of all present. After his interment, the subregulus Harold, son of earl Godwin, whom the king had nominated as his successor, was elected king by the chief nobles of all England; and on the same day was crowned with great ceremony, by Aldred, archbishop of York. On taking the helm of the kingdom, he immediately began to abolish unjust laws and make good ones; to patronise churches and monasteries; to pay particular attention and yield reverence to bishops, abbots, monks, and clerks; to show himself pious, humble, and affable to all good men: but he treated malefactors with the utmost severity, and gave general orders to his earls, caldormen, sheriffs, and thanes to imprison all thieves, robbers, and disturbers of the kingdom; and he himself laboured by sea and by land for the protection of his country.

On the 8th of the kalends of May [24 April] in this year, a comet was seen not only in England, but, it is said, all over the world, and shone for seven days with exceeding brightness. Shortly afterwards earl Tosti returned from Flanders and landed at the Isle of Wight. After making the islanders pay tribute and stipend, he departed and went pillaging along the sea-coast until he arrived at the port of Sandwich. As soon as king Harold, who was then at London, heard this, he assembled a large fleet and an army of cavalry, and he prepared to go in person to the port of Sandwich. When Tosti was informed of this he took some of the shipmen of the place, willing and unwilling, and bent his course towards Lindesey, where he burned many villis and put many men to death. Thereupon Eadwin, earl of the Mercians, and Morcar, earl of the Northumbrians, hastened up with an army and expelled him from that part of the country. Departing thence he went to Malcolm, king of the Scots, and remained with him during the whole of the summer. Meanwhile king Harold arrived at the port of Sandwich, and waited there for his fleet. When it was assembled, he crossed over with it to the Isle of Wight, and inasmuch as king Eadward's cousin William, earl of the Normans, was preparing to invade England with an army, he watched all the summer and autumn for his coming; and in addition distributed a land force at suitable points along the sea-coast. But about the feast-day of the Nativity of St Mary [8th Sept.] provisions fell short, so the naval and land forces returned home.

After this Harold Harvagra,¹ king of the Norwegians, and brother of St Olaf the king, arrived on a sudden at the mouth of the river Tyne, with a powerful fleet, consisting of more than five hundred large ships. Earl Tosti, according to previous arrangement, joined him with his fleet. They hastened their course and entered the river Humber, and then sailing up the river Ouse against the stream, landed at a place called Richale. King Harold, on hearing this, marched in haste towards Northumbria; but before his arrival the two brothers, earl Eadwin and Morcar, at the head of a large army, fought a battle with the Norwegians on the northern bank of the river Ouse near York, on Wednesday, being the vigil of the feast-day of St Matthew the apostle [20th Sept.], and they fought so bravely at the onset that many of the enemy were overthrown. But after a long contest the English were unable to withstand the attacks of

the Norwegians, and fled with great loss; and more were drowned in the river than slain in the field. The Norwegians remained masters of the field of carnage, and having taken one hundred and fifty hostages from York, and leaving there one hundred and fifty of their own men as hostages, they went to their ships. Five days afterwards, that is, on Monday, the 7th of the kalends of October [25th Sept.], as Harold, king of the English, was coming to York with many thousand well-armed fighting men, he fell in with the Norwegians at a place called Stamford-bridge, slew king Harold and earl Tosti, with the greater part of their army, and gained a complete victory; nevertheless, the battle was stoutly contested. He, however, permitted Olaf, the son of the Norwegian king, and Paul, earl of Orkney, who had been sent off with a portion of the army to guard the fleet, to return home without molestation, with twenty ships and the remains of the army; first, however, taking hostages and oaths [of submission] from them.

In the midst of these things, and when the king might have considered that all his enemies were subdued, it was told to him that William, earl of the Normans, had arrived with a countless host of horsemen, slingers, archers, and foot-soldiers, having brought with him powerful auxiliaries from all parts of Gaul, and that he had landed at a place called Pefnesca [Pevensey]. Thereat, the king at once, and in great haste, marched his army towards London; and though he well knew that some of the bravest Englishmen had fallen in his two [former] battles, and that one half of his army had not yet arrived, he did not hesitate to advance with all speed into South Saxony against his enemies; and on Saturday the 11th of the kalends of September [22nd Oct.], before a third of his army was in order for fighting, he joined battle with them nine miles from Hastings, where they had fortified a castle. But inasmuch as the English were drawn up in a narrow place, many retired from the ranks, and very few remained true to him; nevertheless from the third hour of the day until dusk he bravely withstood the enemy, and fought so valiantly and stubbornly in his own defence, that the enemy's forces could hardly make any impression. At last, after great slaughter on both sides, about twilight the king, alas! fell. There were slain also earl Girth, and his brother earl Leofwin, and nearly all the nobility of England. Then earl William returned with his men to Hastings.

Harold reigned nine months and as many days. On hearing of his death, the earls Eadwin and Morcar, who had withdrawn themselves and their men from the conflict, went to London and sent their sister queen Alghitha to Chester; but Aldred, archbishop of York, and the said earls, with the citizens of London and the shipmen, were desirous of elevating to the throne Eadgar the etheling, nephew of king Eadmund Ironside, and promised that they would renew the contest under his command. But while numbers were preparing to go out to fight, the earls withdrew their assistance and returned home with their army.

Meanwhile earl William was laying waste South Saxony, Kent, South Hampshire, Surrey, Middle Saxony, and Hertfordshire, and kept on burning the vills and slaying the natives until he came to a vill called Beorcham. There archbishop Aldred, Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, Walter, bishop of Hereford, Eadgar the etheling, earls Eadwin and Morcar, the chief men of London, and many more came to him, and, giving hostages, surrendered and swore fealty to him. So he entered into a treaty with them; yet, nevertheless, he permitted his army to burn the vills and keep on pillaging. But when the feast of our Lord's Nativity [25th Dec.] drew nigh, he went to London with his whole army in order that he might be made king. And because Stigand, the primate of all England, was accused by the pope of having obtained the pall in an

uncanonical manner, he was anointed king at Westminster with great ceremony on Christmas-day (which in that year fell on a Monday) by Aldred, archbishop of York, having previously (for the archbishop had made it a condition) sworn at the altar of St Peter the apostle, in the presence of the clergy and people, that he would defend the holy churches of God and their ministers, and would also rule justly and with royal care the people who were placed under him, and would ordain and maintain right law, and utterly prohibit all spoliation and unrighteous judgments.