CHAPTER FOUR

GUILLAUME, DUKE OF NORMANDY

Twenty-fourth in Ancestry

Section 1, Family of Guillaume.

SECTION 1.

*24. GUILLAUME, Duke of Normandy, surnamed Longue Épée, called by the English William Longsword, son of Rollo, Chapter 3, Section 1, assassinated December 18, 942. Married, first, to satisfy the desires of his noblemen, "épousée á la manière de Dannemarck," Esprota, a daughter of Herbert, the Count of Senlis, and sister of Bernard, Count of Senlis, surnamed the Dane. There was at this time a strong Norse spirit manifested in the Duchy and to have attempted a French or Christian marriage would have been hazardous to his succession to the Duchy. By this marriage was born his only child.

1. *23. RICHARD I, Duke of Normandy, Chapter 5, Section 1.

He married second Leutgarda de Vermandois, second daughter of Herbert II, Count of Vermandois and de Hildebrant, whom he married with much magnificence at Rouen. There were no children by this marriage. [Historie Genealogique et Chronol. des Pairs de France, by Anselme, vol. 2, page 464.]

On the death of Rollo, the first duke of Normandy, his son William Long-Sword became his successor. William possessed none of those great qualities which had enabled his father from being a fugitive leader of a band of Vikingar to become the founder of a powerful state. Having been educated by the monks, the successor of Rollo inclined rather to a life of monastic seclusion than to the exercise of the active virtues which could alone enable him to preserve what his heroic father had acquired. [History of the Northmen, by Henry Wheaton, London, 1831, page 287.]

Of the partial amalgamation of his subjects with the Franks, William Long Epée was a thorough representative. Born of a Frankish mother, he had been taught to consider himself a West Frank, and had been brought up as such. Indeed, his very character, his fickleness, brilliancy, and impulsiveness, all proclaim his Frankish rather than his Norse descent, while the legend that he was, in his later days, with difficulty dissuaded from becoming a monk, shows that he had embraced Christianity with all the sincerity of which he was capable. As such he was hated by the Norse party, and the death of Rollo seemed to have encouraged them to threaten revolt. It is not impossible that the struggle may bear some analogy to the later dissensions in the northern kingdoms themselves. There we find Christianity supported by the kings who are aiming at centralization and organization, while the minor princes fight for paganism and independence. The result in Normandy was a formidable rebellion which threatened to overthrow the ducal power, and to confine the French language and religion to

Evreux and Rouen. His want of spirit excited the contempt and discontent of his Norman subjects, who accused him of partiality for the Franks. His marriage with the daughter of the Count of Senlis was intended to allay this hostile feeling but nevertheless a confederacy of Norman seigneurs was formed, who sought to expel him from the duchy. For this purpose they marched upon Rouen, and duke William retired from the town with his troops to a lofty hill, from which he had a distinct view of the rebel army. The multitude of their forces filled him with consternation, and he would have fled to Senlis, to seek an asylum with the Count, but the severe reproofs of one of his chieftains, his brother-in-law, Bernard the Dane, saved him from this disgraceful course, and he determined to give battle to the rebels. [The Normans in Europe, by Rev. A. H. Johnson, M.A., page 48. History of the Northmen, by Henry Wheaton.]

William had encouraged the revolt as for a time he manifested the greatest weakness. The terms which he had stooped to offer had been rejected and he in despair, thought of leaving Normandy till, with that strange changeableness which seems to have been with him a physical as well as a moral failing, he suddenly became brave as a lion, pounced on the rebels, and utterly routed them. The danger he had escaped seems to have had an important influence on William's conduct, both in internal and external affairs, and in fact to explain the inconsistencies of his later life. This victory confirmed the authority of William over the duchy of Normandy. [Normans in Europe, p. 41, by Rev. A. H. Johnson.]

The question of succession was also involved in these rebellions, for there seems to have been more than one.

Brittany had been nominally granted to Rollo by Charles the Simple at the treaty of Clair of Epte, but Charles in so doing had granted that over which he had no power. The Bretons, proud of their Keltic descent, proud of having escaped the all-embracing empire of Charles the Great, resented this act. The want of unity between the various provinces had hitherto kept them quiet. They had perforce submitted to the continued devastations of the Northmen from the sea, who were seeking to carve out dependencies for themselves as Rollo had done, and to the galling yoke of the Norman Duke. But now, roused by the change of rulers at Rouen, they rose under two of their princes, Berenger and Alan, massacred the Northmen in their country, and invaded the Norman duchy. William, however, completely crushed the revolt, Berenger submitted, Alan fled to the court of Aethelstan, and when restored, on the intercession of the latter, was forced to accept the terms imposed by the conqueror at the first suppression of the rebellion. The result was an important increase of the Norman territory by the acquisition of the Côtentin and the Channel Islands, and the formal acknowledgment of the Norman supremacy over the rest of Brittany.

The door was thus opened to further conquests in the east and south, in Maine and Brittany. Normandy, advanced to the seaboard on the west, gained a boundary, important as well for its physical characteristics as for its two harbors; the dangerous Harfleur to the east, and the important Cherbourg to the west, marked out by the Romans as a stronghold, from whence perhaps it gained its name, Caesaris Burgus, and now the most important port of Northern France. The district thus acquired formed the kernel of Norman nationality which sent

forth in later times the conqueror of Apulia and Sicily, and many of the leaders in William the Conqueror's army. Through it all stands forth the one strong character, the brother-in-law of the Duke—Bernard of Senlis, surnamed the Dane, whose sturdiness and valor furnishes a bright background to the vacillating and at times weak spirit of the Ruler.

At first William strove to crush out the Danish party, and to become more thoroughly French than ever. Hence, perhaps, his adhesion given to Rudolph at this date, and his repudiation of the lovely Esprota, his first wife, whom he had married by Danish rite—that is, without the sanction of the Catholic Church—for Leutgarda, sister of Herbert of Vermandois, and his neglect of Richard, Esprota's son. His object then was to gain the favor of the Frankish nobles. To this we may perhaps also attribute his closer connection with the Church, and his foundation of the abbey of Jumièges. His vain attempts to gain lasting alliances in that faithless age did not succeed; nay, his own fickleness, his turn-coat policy, utterly prevented success. Thus, while he alienated the Danish party he had not succeeded in making friends amongst his allies and relations; they hated him as the captain of the Norse pirates, and he knew it. Later he returned to his first spouse and with the strong help of her family the Duchy became of greater force than ever in the counsels of the French nation. His conspicuous rank among the great vassals of the French crown induced him to take part in their quarrels respecting the succession. The Carlovingian line was now drawing to an end.

When William succeeded his father, Normandy was at war with France; that is, it was at war with Herbert of Vermandois, and Hugh of Paris, and with Rudolf of Burgundy, their king of the French. But Rollo, and after him William, acknowledged no king but the imprisoned Charles. From him Rollo had received his lands; to him Rollo had done homage; to him William repeated that homage on the earliest opportunity, and he never did homage to Rudolf till the death of Charles left the Burgundian Duke without a competitor for the kingly title. Peace was made and peace was again confirmed, without any acknowledgment of the usurper's claim. It was not until three years later (933), when Charles was dead, and when Rudolf, by his victory at Limoges, had shown himself worthy to reign, that William, seemingly of his own act and deed and without any special circumstances calling for such a course, did homage to Rudolf, and received from him a grant of the maritime province of Brittany. This grant probably included both a general confirmation of the superiority of Normandy over Brittany and a special confirmation of the transfer of Avranches and Coutances to the immediate dominion of the Norman Duke, which is an important incident in our family history, as later Avranches was conferred upon a descendant of Rolf Thurstan, who was first cousin of Duke William, and thus it later came by descent to Richard de Goz, father of Isabella, surnamed Lupus, who married Gilbert de Corbeil, they being also our ancestors. [The Norman Conquest, vol. 1, page 132-135, by Edward Freeman.]

King Charles had been deposed and imprisoned, and his queen Edgiva fled to England, to her father, Edward the Elder. On his death, Edgiva and her infant son Louis, surnamed Outremer, remained at the Anglo-Saxon court as the

guests of King Athelstane. An intercourse had been opened by Count Hugh with that monarch for the purpose of obtaining in marriage Ethilda, the sister of Athelstane. Splendid presents enforced the request. The wishes of Hugh were gratified and he became the brother of Athelstane.

It was on the motion of Hugh that the Assembly agreed to elect Louis as King of the West Franks, and to send an embassy to Athelstan, to ask for the restoration of his nephew to the throne of his fathers. Louis crossed the sea, he landed in the realm which was now his, he sprang on his horse, and rode on amid the cheers of his new subjects. He went to his royal city of Laôn, where he was consecrated king by Artald Archbishop of Rheims; he then went with his guardian on an expedition into Burgundy, more to his guardian's profit than to his own. He then visited his powerful vassal at Paris; but in the next year, 937, safe on the rock of Laôn, he threw off the yoke, he declared his independence of Duke Hugh, and sent for his mother Eadgifu, seemingly to take Hugh's place as his chief counsellor. William of Normandy took the oath of fealty to the young prince, in common with the other great vassals of the crown; but he was faithless to his engagement, and subsequently joined Count Hugh in making war upon the last descendant of Charlemagne, whom they had themselves raised to the throne of his ancestors. But Louis having made a truce with Hugh turned his arms against Normandy. William negotiated for peace with the king, and received from him a charter of confirmation of the duchy. [The Norman Conquest, by Edward Freeman, vol. 1, page 132-135. History of the Northmen, by Henry Wheaton.]

The reign of Louis—Louis From-beyond-Sea—is of itself enough to confute the common error of believing that the line of Charles the Great ended in a race of imbecile fainéants, like those whom Pippin had set aside. Louis may be called ambitious, turbulent, and perfidious, but no man was ever less of a fainéant. His life was in truth one of preternatural activity. Early adversity, combined with an education at the hands of Glorious Athelstane, had brought out some very vigorous qualities in his young nephew. If Louis was ambitious, turbulent and perfidious, he was but paying off Hugh of Paris and William of Rouen in their own coin. In truth no two positions can well be more opposed to one another than the position of the later Karlings and that of the later Merwings. The Duke of the French might now and then put on something of the guise of a Mayor of the Palace, but Pippin and Hugh had very different masters to deal with. The nominal ruler of a vast realm, led about as an occasional pageant and leaving the government of his dominions to an all-powerful minister, is the exact opposite to a king whose domains have shrunk up to the territory of a single city, and who has to spend his life in hard blows to preserve that last remnant of his heritage from the ambition of vassals whose territories are more extensive than his own. Louis had to contend in turn against Normandy, Vermandois, and Ducal France, and now and then he was able to give each of them nearly as good as they brought. And, small as was the extent of the king's actual domains, there was still an abiding reverence for the royal name, which breathes in every page of the chroniclers, and which was not without influence even on the minds of the men who

fought against him. [The Norman Conquest, by Edward A. Freeman, vol. 1, page 132-135.]

William again tired of warfare and the excitement of politics, and manifested his disinclination for the cares of greatness, and followed his disposition for ascetic life, by proposing to enter the monastery of Jumièges which he had just rebuilt. The Norman seigneurs persuaded him to postpone the execution of this design, but he still continued to wear the girdle of the order, and designated his only son Richard as his successor. The Norman nobility made him send his son Richard to Bayeux to be educated, because the Danish or ancient language of the North was there still retained, whilst the Roman or French was spoken at the ducal court at Rouen. [The History of the Northmen, by Henry Wheaton.]

While some parts of the Duchy had assumed the language and the manners of Frenchmen, the lately acquired district round Bayeux formed the exception, and this now became the nucelus for a strong Norse settlement. Here collected those who thought it a shame to cast off their old gods, their leaders to victory, and the language which they had learnt at their mother's knee. Their connection with the Norse part of England, the fiords of Norway, and the coasts of Denmark had apparently by no means ceased, and new comers in great numbers from the Scandinavian peninsula fostered the old Northman spirit of independence. [Normans in Europe, by Rev. A. H. Johnson, page 47-52.]

William was not unmindful of the trend of current events, therefore he could see the growing dissatisfaction among his own noblemen, so just before the end of his life, we notice another sudden change of policy. A fresh incursion of Scandinavians had taken place. He welcomed their arrival and allowed them to settle peaceably in the newly acquired district of Côtentin. His son Richard, suddenly emerging from obscurity, became the darling of his father, and, no doubt because the Danes demanded it, was intrusted to William's old tutor, Botho, the Danish born, and to his uncle, Bernard of Senlis, surnamed the Dane, and returned to Bayeux to be instructed in the Danish tongue. This change, we may well believe, contributed to William's ruin, although it resulted in placing his son on the throne of Normandy. There had long been a bitter enmity between William and his jealous and wicked neighbor Arnulf. The two rivals had married sisters, daughters of Herbert of Vermandois, but at that time such alliances served but to embitter the strife. The Count of Flanders was not likely to look upon the nest of pirates, so they called the Normans, with a favorable eye. Already causes of jealousy had occurred. Arnulf had offered a refuge to the defeated Bretons ten years before, and William in revenge had aided the Count of Ponthieu, whose dominions lay between Normandy and Flanders, and whose country Arnulf had coveted. Now William was openly allying himself with the Northmen who were again stirring and troubling England and Gaul by their renewed incursions. They were evidently again becoming dangerous, and William, in league with others, might well be preparing fresh troubles for Gaul. A dangerous coalition was arising, so Arnulf argued, and so the other princes thought, to which Louis was perhaps lending himself, and of which William was the soul and center. One remedy remained, a rude and decisive one; William must be murdered. Such, probably, were the main causes which led to the mysterious assassi-

nation of William. In that deed Arnmulf no doubt was the prime over; the actual assassin was, probably, one of the old Breton rebels who had the blood of relatives to avenge. It seems that Hugh also secretly favoured it. The plot being laid, William was treacherously invited to a negotiation with Arnulf of the Somme at Pecquigny, separated from adherents, and basely murdered on the Flemish side of the river, on the eighteenth day of December, 942.

William Longsword is one of those characters to whom history has accorded unmerited honor. He found a place among the acknowledged heroes of France. To the clergy he has been as though he were a martyr. The fame of the Norman name, the partiality of the Norman historians who wrote for Richard, his son, his tragic death, the romantic interest which surrounds the early life of his devoted son, his own attractive character, all have contributed to throw an unreal glamour round his name. In him we find the weaknesses, and the strength of his double nationality. His winning, gracious manners, his ready wit, and versatility, he gained from his gentle mother Popa. His bright features, his bravery, his rough sense of justice, his personal vigor, were the gifts of his father Rollo; and these earned him the love of his fellowmen. But the fair traits were shaded by darker tints. Fickleness and faithlessness, these were the faults of his mother's race, and of his age, and these he shared with the rest of his contemporaries. A creature of impulse, his justice seems to have had no firmer basis than that of natural inclination. Often seriously wishing to abandon his ducal throne for the seclusion of the cloister, he yet showed scanty regard for the things of Holy Church, and was niggardly in his endowments. The monasteries were the one redeeming element in those distracted times, and these, with one exception, he carelessly neglected. The paganism of his father seems in him hardly to have been eradicated, and, following his impulse and not his conscience, he was led by circumstances, from one shift to another, to the fatal meeting on the banks of the Somme. Had he pursued one consistent policy and remained true to his word, he would have been at least respected, if not loved, and the wicked coalition against his life might never have been formed. As it was, he was snatched away in the midst of a changeable, aimless life; and the existence of his race and name in France was endangered by the long rule of a minor.

But strange as it may seem, his last change of heart was the very act needed to insure the continuance of his line, as it raised powerful, loyal friends for his otherwise helpless infant son, Richard.

William, like his father Rollo, was buried in the Cathedral at Rouen. A few words concerning this church may prove to be interesting.

The first church at Rouen was built about the year 270; three hundred and thirty years subsequently, this edifice was succeeded by another, the joint work of St. Romain and St. Ouen, which was burned in the incursions of the Normans, about the year 842. Seventy years of paganism succeeded; at the expiration of which period, Rouen saw once more within its walls, by the munificence of the conqueror, a place of Christian worship. Richard 1st, grandson of Rollo, and his son Robert, the archbishop, enlarged the edifice in the middle of the tenth century; but it was still not completed till 1063, when, according to Ordericus Vitalis, it was dedicated by the Archbishop Maurilius with great pomp, in the presence of

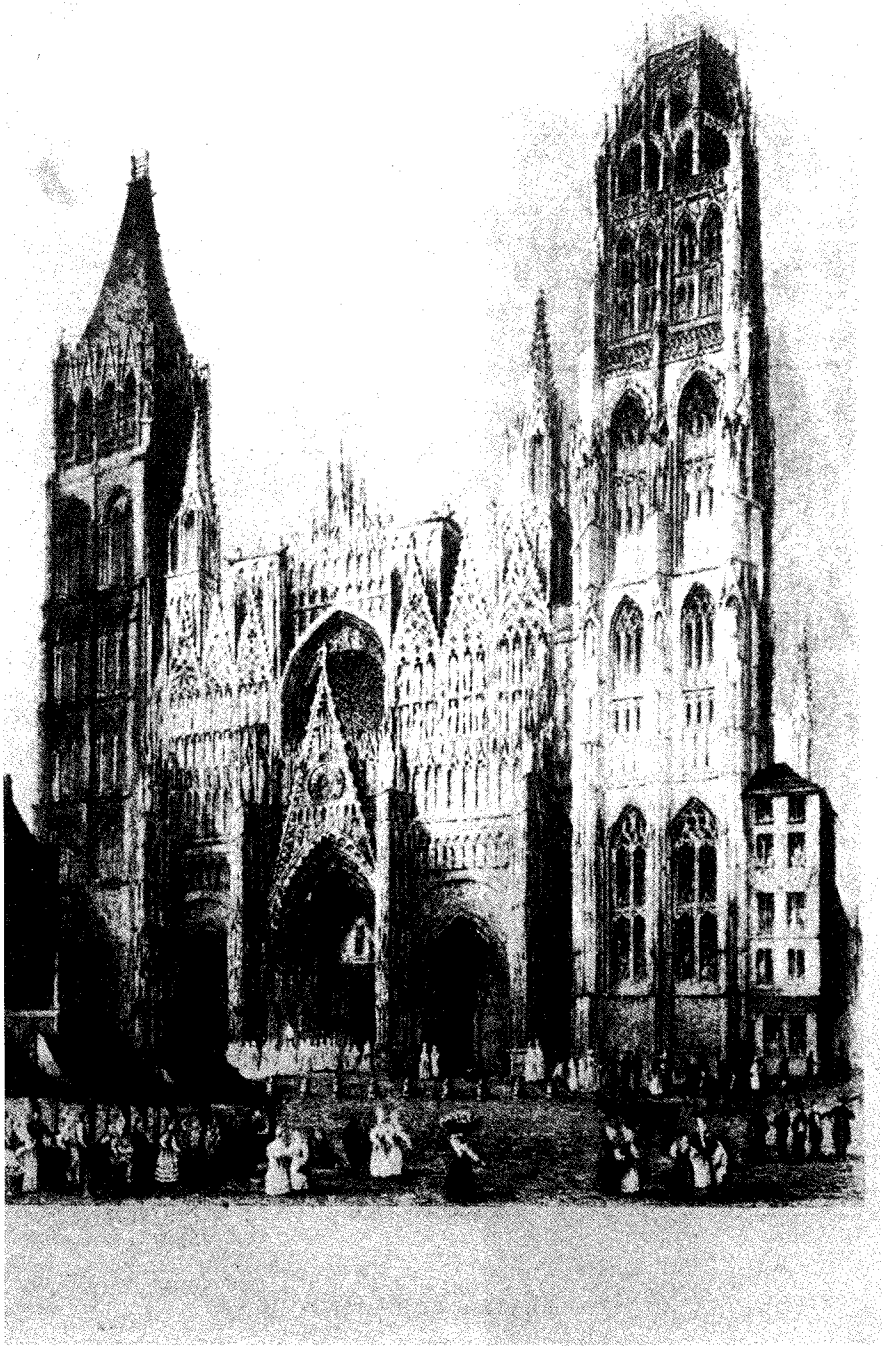
William, Duke of Normandy, and the bishops of the province. Of this building, however, notwithstanding what is said by Ducarel and other authors, it is certain that nothing more remains than the part of St. Romain's tower, and possibly two of the western entrances; though the present structure is believed to occupy the same spot. St. Romain's tower is the square tower, which is low and comparatively plain. It is the work of the twelfth century. It is itself more ancient than would be supposed from the character of its architecture; but it occupied the place of one of still greater antiquity, which was materially damaged in 1117, when the original spire of the church was struck by lightning. This first spire was of stone, but was replaced by another of wood, which was also destroyed at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The spire then raised, the second of wood, but the third in chronological order, is the one which was in existence at the time of the world war. This cathedral is the work of so many different periods, that it almost contains within itself a history of pointed architecture. [Account of a Tour in Normandy, by Dawson Turner, vol. 1.]

On the northern side of the cathedral is situated the cloister-court. Only a few arches of the cloister now remain; and it appears, at least on the eastern side, to have consisted of a double aisle. Here we view the most ancient portion of the tower of Saint Romain.—There is a peculiarity in the position of the towers of this cathedral not observed elsewhere. They flank the body of the church, so as to leave three sides free; and hence the spread taken by the front of the edifice, when the breadth of the towers is added to the breadth of the nave and aisles. The circular windows of the tower which look into the court, are perhaps to be referred to the eleventh century; and a smaller tower affixed against the south side, containing a stair-case and covered by a lofty pyramidal stone roof, composed of flags cut in the shape of shingles, may also be of the same era.

The northern transept is approached through a gloomy court, once occupied by the shops of the transcribers and caligraphists, the libraries of ancient times, and from them it has derived its name. The court is entered beneath a gate-way of beautiful and singular architecture, composed of two lofty pointed arches of equal height, crowned by a row of smaller arcades. In the farthest of the chapels, upon the south side, is the tomb of Rollo, first Duke of Normandy; in the opposite chapel, that of his son and successor, William Longue-Epée, who was treacherously murdered at Pecquigny, in 944, during a conference with Arnoul, Count of Flanders.

Note:—The reader will of course understand that this was written before the close of the recent world war, at which time we were entirely dependent upon the old records as they existed before the tides of battle swept through Rouen. As our family interest in this country ceased at the time of the Norman conquest of England it has been thought best to let the text stand as originally written.

The effigies of both these princes still remain placed upon sarcophagi, under plain niches in the wall. They are certainly not contemporary with the persons which they represent, but are probably productions of the thirteenth century. At the same time, they may possibly have been copied from others of earlier date. Even imaginary portraits of celebrated men are not without their value; we are



ROUEN CATHEDRAL

interested by seeing how they have been conceived by the artist. Above the statue is the following inscription:—

HIC POSITUS EST
ROLLO
NORMANNIAE A SE TERRITAE, VASTATAE,
RESTITUTAE,
PRIMUS DUX, CONDITOR, PATER,
A FRANCONE ARCHIEP. ROTOM.
BAPTIZATUS ANNO DCCCCXII,
OBIIT ANNO DCCCCXVII.
OSSA IPIUS IN VETERI SANCTUARIO,
NUNC CAPITE NAVIS, PRIMUM CONDITA,
TRANSLATO ALTARI, HIC COLLACATA
SUNT A B. MAURILIO ARCHIEP. ROTOM.
ANNO MLXII

Translation: Here lies
Rollo
Normandy having been by him terrified, wasted,
and restored,
He became its first duke, founder and father.
By Francone Archbishop of Rotom,
He was baptized in the year 912.
He died in the year 917.
His bones were taken from their former sanctuary
where they were preserved,
And were brought here and are now placed
In the altar at the head of the Nave
By B. Maurilius, Archbishop of Rotom.
Anno 1062.

Two other epitaphs in rnyming Latin, which were previously upon his tomb, are recorded by various authors; the first of them began with the three following lines. [Account of a Tour in Normandy, vol. 1, London 1820, by Dawson Turner.]

DUX NORMANNORUM,
CUNCTORUM NORMA BONORUM,
ROLLO FERUS FORTIS,
QUEM GENS NORMANNICA MORTIS
INVOCAT ARTICULO,
CLAUDITOR HOC TUMULO.

Translation: A leader of the Normans
A Norman with every good quality,
Rollo,
Ferocious, brave, who being dead,
His body is confined in this tomb.

STATUE OF ROLLO IN ROUEN CATHEDRAL

Over Gulielmus Longue-Epée, or William Long-Sword, is inscribed:—

HIC POSITUS EST
GULIELMUS DICTUS LONGA SPATHA,
ROLLONIS FILIUS,
DUX NORMANNIAE,
PREDATORIE OCCISUS DCCCCXXXXIV.

Translation: Here lies
William who was called Long Sword,
The son of Rollo,
The leader of the Normans,
He was murdered in 944.

with an account of the removal of his bones, exactly similar to the concluding part of his father's epitaph.