

**William the Conqueror**  
**Be Ye the Avengers of Noble Blood**  
**Battle of Hastings , 14 October 1066**

*In 1051 William, Duke of Normandy, visited his cousin, Edward the Confessor, the king of England. Edward had no children, and William sought the right to the throne when Edward died. But it was the Earl Harold of Wessex who was elected king upon Edward's death in 1066. William, also known as William the Conqueror, then invaded England with his army, defeating and killing Harold II at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. On the morning of that historic conflict, William reportedly roused his troops to battle with this speech. Although several medieval narratives recount the events of the battle, they were not recorded immediately, casting doubt on their historical authenticity.*

Normans! bravest of nations! I have no doubt of your courage, and none of your victory, which never by any chance or obstacle escaped your efforts. If indeed you had, once only, failed to conquer, there might be a need now to inflame your courage by exhortation; but your native spirit does not require to be roused. Bravest of men, what could the power of the Frankish King effect with all his people, from Lorraine to Spain, against Hastings my predecessor? What he wanted of France he took, and gave to the King only what he pleased. What he had, he held as long as it suited him, and relinquished it only for something better. Did not Rollo my ancestor, founder of our nation, with our fathers conquer at Paris the King of the Franks in the heart of his kingdom, nor had the King of the Franks any hope of safety until he humbly offered his daughter and possession of the country, which, after you, is called Normandy.

Did not your fathers capture the King of the Franks at Rouen, and keep him there until he restored Normandy to Duke Richard, then a boy; with this condition, that, in every conference between the King of France and the Duke of Normandy, the duke should wear his sword, while the King should not be permitted to carry a sword nor even a dagger. This concession your fathers compelled the great King to submit to, as binding for ever. Did not the same duke lead your fathers to Mirmande, at the foot of the Alpes, and enforce submission from the lord of the town, his son-in-law, to his own wife, the duke's daughter? Nor was it enough for you to conquer men, he conquered the devil himself, with whom he wrestled, cast down and bound him with his hands behind his back, and left him a shameful spectacle to angels. But why do I talk of former times? Did not you, in our own time, engage the Franks at Mortemer? Did not the Franks prefer flight to battle, and use their spurs? While you—Ralph, the commander of the Franks having been slain—reaped the honour and the spoil as the natural result of your usual success. Ah! let any one of the English whom, a hundred times, our predecessors, both Danes and Normans, have defeated in battle, come forth and show that the race of Rollo ever suffered a defeat from his time until now, and I will withdraw conquered. Is it not, therefore, shameful that a people accustomed to be conquered, a people ignorant of war, a people even without arrows, should proceed in order of battle against you, my brave men? Is it not a shame that King Harold, perjured as he was in your presence, should dare to show his face to you? It is amazing to me that you have been allowed to see those who, by a horrible crime, beheaded your relations and Alfred my kinsman, and that their own heads are still on their shoulders. Raise your standards, my brave men, and set neither measure nor limit to your merited rage. May the lightning of your glory be seen and the thunders of your onset heard from east to west, and be ye the avengers of noble blood.