

**THE EVE OF THE
CONQUEST,
AND OTHER POEMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649427055

The Eve of the Conquest, and Other Poems by Henry Taylor

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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HENRY TAYLOR

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BY HENRY TAYLOR,

AUTHOR OF "FRANZ VAN ARNHELM."

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

MDCCKLVII.

LONDON:
SPADBY AND SONS, PRINTERS, WHITEHALL.

THE HON. MRS. HENRY TAYLOR.

DEAR Alice, thro' much mockery of your's
 (Impatient of my labours long and slow
 And small results that I made haste to show
 From time to time) you scornfullest of reviewers,
 These verses worked their way : " Get on, get on,"
 Was mostly my encouragement : But I
 Dead to all spurring kept my pace foregone
 And long had learnt all laughter to defy.
 I thought moreover that your laugh (for hard
 Would be the portion of the hapless Bard
 Who found not in each comment grave or gay
 Some flattering unction) . . . In your laugh, I say,
 A subtle something glimmered ; 'twas a laugh
 If half of mockery, yet of pleasure half.
 And since, on looking round, I know not who
 Will greet my offering with as good a grace,
 And in their favour give it half a place,
 These flights, for fault of better, short and few,
 Dear Alice, I must dedicate to you.

MORTLAKK,
 Nov. 1847.



THE EVE OF THE CONQUEST.

A CLOUDY night descended on the slopes
Of Mountfield, and the scattered woods beyond,
Where lay the Saxon force ; and now the wind
Till sunset that had seemed to hold its breath,
Burst forth in gusts and flaws, the sea far off
Sounding a dirge a day before the time.
A flush of light was in the Southern sky,
Cast from the Norman camp, and more remote
At intervals around, from Lunsford-heath
To Broad-oak-cross, and Udimore to Hooe,
The frequent watchfire glimmer'd, where the boors,

Though scared yet greedy, grimly lurked aloof,
Expecting plunder when to-morrow's storm
Should leave the wreck of battle on the plain.
So fell the night.

Upon the Saxon flank

A forest stood, within whose wavering skirt
Was scoop'd a shelter for King Harold's tent.
And thither when the fitful wind was lulled
Came sounds of jollity and boisterous songs,
Which did not please the King.—“Leofwyn, Brand,
Go bid the chiefs abate this barbarous mirth,
And counsel them that cannot sleep to pray.”
They went, and shortly there was silence. Then
The King composed himself as seeking rest ;
But though his limbs were motionless, the Page
Who watched him, noted that his eyes were closed
More fast than if in sleep, and that his lips
Were ever and anon compress'd to curb
A quivering movement. Suddenly he rose,
And shouted for the Page—but he was there.