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William the Conqueror: The Bastard of Normandy

Peter Rex

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A new biography of the Norman king who conquered England in 1066, changing the course of the country forever. Of Franco-Scandinavian descent through his father Duke Robert 'the Magnificent', William the Conqueror's life is set against his true background, the turbulent Norman Duchy which, even after the Conquest of England, remained his primary concern. William is revealed as the brutal and violent product of his time, much given to outbursts of rage, capable of great cruelty, autocratic, avaricious and prone to a sort of grisly humor, yet, with all that he could also be a loyal friend and affectionate husband and father.

His military reputation rests mainly on his victory at Hastings but he showed little sign of strategic or tactical genius. A competent rather than inspired general, he benefited from the mistakes and disunity of his foes. Only at Hastings did he meet and defeat a man who was his peer as a leader of men. William inspired great loyalty in some and even greater hatred in others. His primary attribute was his ruthless will which made him the driving force behind Norman ambition in North Western Europe, while his propagandists shamelessly manipulated the facts to justify his conquest of England, a dubious enterprise if ever there was one.

REVIEWS

...did a splendid job in answering all of my questions.... a balanced view of William. He neither creates for the reader a hero, nor a monster. William, is a complicated person because of his polar personality. Impressions in Ink

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