hold his waiting army together was, in these circumstances, a great achievement, yet while he impatiently kicked his heels some of his greatest problems were being solved for him. In September Harold Hardrada, accompanied by one of his wives and several of his children, reached the Tyne and then defeated the northern levies in a pitched battle near York. As soon as he heard of the Viking landing Harold Godwinson marched north and routed Hardrada and his allies at Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066. Two days later the wind in the Channel changed direction. William set sail and was able to make an unopposed landing at Pevensey. During the next two weeks his soldiers fortified their beachhead and pillaged the area. But what then? Would William dare march far inland, losing contact with his fleet and the line of communication with Normandy? Fortunately the problem was solved by Harold who came rushing back from the north and allowed William to challenge him to battle. If Harold had held aloof it is hard to see what William could have done, but Harold was confident of his military prowess and, as a new king with an uncertain title, he wished to see the matter settled once and for all. Thus on 14 October 1066 the two armies met at Hastings.

After a long and desperately hard struggle William's skilful handling of a combined force of archers and cavalry enabled him to break down the English shield wall. The fact that Harold and his brothers died fighting meant that after Hastings there was no leader capable of organising further resistance.

The English earls and bishops hesitated, took a few indecisive steps and then decided to submit. On Christmas Day 1066 William was crowned in Westminster Abbey. In February 1067 he returned to Normandy leaving his half-brother Odo of Bayeux, now Earl of Kent, in charge. Apart from the destruction of the Godwinson dynasty he left the English scene much as he had found it. All this, however, was to change as a result of the events of the next four years. All over England revolts broke out. They were unplanned and unco-ordinated. Some of the leaders, like Hereward the Wake, passed into legend, but none of them was capable of more than local action. Thus William was able to deal with one minor uprising after another and by 1071 he had subdued the whole country. The turbulent north had been devastated. Several hundred castles had been built and within their walls the outnumbered Normans could sleep safely. William punished rebels by confiscating their estates and giving them to Normans. Thus the native English aristocracy was wiped out. Within the areas covered by the Domesday Book only two English landowners of any note survived the Norman flood.

The English Church suffered the same fate as the English nobility. At William's request papal legates deposed five English bishops in 1070. They were replaced by men from the continent. Outstanding among them was Lanfranc, the new Archbishop of Canterbury. From now on whenever a bishop or an abbot died the same policy was pursued. By 1096 there was not a single bishopric or important abbey in English hands. The traditional learning and liturgy of the English Church was treated with contempt by men educated in the schools of Europe. Probably no other conquest in European history had such disastrous consequences for the defeated ruling class. This had not been intended. For William was a conservative by temperament; but he was also ruthless and when events pushed him to destroy then he destroyed thoroughly. His own prestige and power were of course tremendously enhanced. He was able to bestow huge gifts of land upon his followers without impoverishing himself. As for England, that was now ruled by a French-speaking aristocracy and although the broad outline of the social structure