

stinctively he seized his sword which lay ever ready near him, and seemed, to all appearance, distraught; but presently recalling his scattered ideas, his features by degrees relaxed of their fierce and anxious cast, his half-drawn sword was slowly returned to its sheath, he seated himself on the nearest bench, and languor succeeded to the eagerness which had beamed from his eyes.

But what has caused this blanched cheek, this blood-shot eye, this perturbation of spirit in the King? It is a *dream*! With all his boasted courage, with all his headstrong impetuosity, in the midst of all his insolence of power, he has been terrified by—a *dream*!—Blasphemous and desecrating as he was in his daily ravages and self-willed commands, grinding as both church and churchmen ever found him, greatly as he shocked the public ear and the hearts of the devout by the license of his tongue upon holy subjects, this despotic and ruthless tyrant was the slave of superstition. A visitation of the night shook his very soul; the attendants round his couch perceived his convulsive motions, heard the muttered sounds which escaped from his lips during his disordered sleep, shrank with apprehension as the half-choked and unwonted cry escaped him of "Mercy, sweet Virgin! save me, blessed lady!" and marked the drops of cold perspiration which stood on that frowning forehead, whilst his bosom, heaving with uncontrollable groans, seemed to rend the iron frame of the commonly audacious sufferer. Astounded, they remained for a while uncertain how to act, but soon recollecting how dangerous it is to know too much of a powerful man's secrets, they deemed it expedient to awake the agonized monarch. In doing this, the sudden glare of light and the presence of armed men became mingled with the horrors of the scene he had shared while sleeping, and—*up, he sprang*!

Before the subject of that dream be related, it may be well to take a retrospective glance at the life and actions of this "bold bad man," for, without such glance, the mind would fail in the attempt to take in the force which shook the Red King's soul. Well indeed is the denunciation in the decalogue, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on their children unto the third and fourth generation, illustrated in the descendants of the Conqueror. Unnurtured in kindly affections towards each other, the whole of the first William were in constant hostility among themselves: the sons against the father, the brothers against each; selfish ambition or thirst of vengeance alternately

swaying their hearts and actuating their conduct. The eldest son only, Prince Robert, possessed any feelings of humanity and brotherly love. Yet his best qualities were rendered useless through the torpor of indolence which was his besetting vice. The second son, Richard, had indeed given promise of many a fine quality, but here the hand of Heaven may be said to have interfered, for in that very New Forest which had been appropriated to royal disposal at the expense of all that was humane, all that was just, did the ruthless Conqueror lose his finest scion of his house, by a fall whilst hunting. The third son, William, the Red, possessed not one virtue under heaven: nor one good quality save that of courage. His character may be summed up in few words; he was brave but crafty, false and treacherous: he was tyrannical, capricious, debauched, reckless, and impetuous. Rapacious in obtaining riches, prodigal in spending them, he was remorseless in breaking all ties to effect his ends, and as ready to break a ribald jest on holy things, as on the licentious pleasures of court and table. The fourth, and youngest, Henry, differed from the rest; he was no soldier, like his elder brethren, but had studied the learning of his age. His disposition was cunning, he pursued his ends by wiles, and schemes, and by watching the "signs of the times." Selfish and ambitious was this Henry, as any of his house, but he depended more on the sagacious head than the strong hand. Alternately fostering in each of his brothers, he shifted his side whensoever his crooked policy dictated, and although sometimes his case was desperate enough to lead weaker men to despair, yet did he live to triumph over opposition, and become himself the possessor of the English throne.

Such were the offspring of the first William, and well did the father understand the characters of his sons notwithstanding that the affairs of his "own times" left him small leisure to attend to them, and notwithstanding that from early years they had begun to lift up rebellious hands against him. That he did so is evident from his final bequests to them; his bequests, which had then nearly the authority of law and the sanction of religion. To Robert was left the patrimonial territory of Normandy, his own by indefeasible right, but indolence unfitting him for the rule over a large conquered and an impatient people, he was wisely excluded from authority in England; and, for as much as England was obtained by the sword, it was deemed that he could give as he pleased.