

own achievements, he assigned that kingdom to Rufus; well knowing that at least neither dissimulation nor sloth would make him relax his grasp. Was it a prescience like that of the patriarchs of old, which dictated to this father a bequest of but a small sum of money to his youngest son? Did his glance into the future enable him to see the future monarch of England and the avenger of filial impiety in Henry the *beau clerc*? And did he in anticipation receive that on all—even on the avenger himself—would fall that weight of Divine displeasure which awaits all who honour no. "their father and mother?"

Woe! to the prince that is surrounded by evil counsellors, might Robert have exclaimed. The restless Norman barons persuaded his easy nature that his father's will had despoiled him of right; he waged war with Rufus and was defeated. Many of the English, and some of the Anglo-Normans had joined Robert in his unsuccessful expedition,—these found, too surely, that the King was a Rehoboam in vengeance, and that he seemed to have said to them, "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." In this sense, his "little finger" was indeed 'thicker than his father's joints.'

The only person whom William Rufus held in respect, and who had any influence over his conduct, was Archbishop Lanfranc, and the only principle which ever continually held him in restraint, was superstition. Lanfranc had been his tutor, and towards him the King manifested some signs of regard. While that prelate lived, Rufus contained himself, and was not addicted to the excesses which subsequently broke out; but on the death of the Archbishop, all the most odious features of the King's character became fully developed. Bishoprics and abbeys, as they became vacant, were retained on his hands, that he might appropriate their revenues to himself; his rapacious usurer, Ranulph, well surnamed *Flambard*, or The Wolf, ground and oppressed the wretched people, particularly the English, and money was exacted without mercy or remorse, to gratify the insatiable desires of the grasping monarch.

And this money! Let the gluttony, the revelry, the vitiated appetites of Rufus and his crew, account for a part, and, for the rest, the splendor of his apparel, the sumptuousness of his palace, his taste for building and decoration, consumed the remainder. With unblushing

check justice was sold, with unfaltering voice blasphemy was uttered; rigorous as his father in executing the severities of the forest laws, he had been heard to exclaim against the justice of Heaven itself, which permitted an offender against them to escape; and although aware of the deep curses and maledictions which hung on the memory of his father, for the miseries consequent on the establishment of the New Forest, he added to those miseries, and to the execrations of all good men, by the destruction of four abbeys and seventeen churches more, with the spoliation and dispersion of the inhabitants in their neighbourhood, in order to enlarge the arena of his despotic and iniquitous pleasures of the chase.

Superstition, as it has been observed, held some sway over him; this, however, was only perceptible by fits and starts. His father had left the large sum of sixty thousand pounds, to be distributed among the church and poor of England, as some expiation of the enormities he had committed. Greedy and violent as Rufus undoubtedly was, he did not dare to divert that sum from the purpose of the bequest, and it was actually given according to the will of the donor. In sickness, also, this otherwise ruthless man would endeavour to propitiate offended Heaven by a temporary relaxation of severity, by some remission of claims, by promises of mild government and impartial laws; but a return to health brought a return to lawless rule and rapacious exactions: of him it might well be said—

'The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be,
The Devil was well, the devil a monk was he.'

Such was the monarch whose midnight slumbers were thus so unusually affected, and to whom, in this condition, the narrative thus returns.

Although now awake, and entirely in possession of his faculties, the King continued to shiver as though perishing of cold, and for a while he eyed his attendance askance. At length breaking silence, he related the horrid cause of his disturbance. His *dream* was a continuation of his sleep, which seemed to be interrupted by a constantly increasing cold wind. This, at first but annoyed him, by degrees it pierced him; he struggled to throw it off, it prevailed against him, it penetrated through his sides, it reached his heart; he felt all the agonies of a living death, and whilst bolts of ice seemed to pass through every artery, and to occupy every pore, he felt himself like the hopeless struggler against a powerful and devouring monster. In these horrible