

idents of which they were composed, before his disturbed recollection.

How true it is, that a life of dissimulation and falsehood towards others, produces finally self-deceit. Ever desirous of clearing ourselves in our own eyes, we become, at length, the victims of our own duplicity. And such was now the case with Henry Beau Clerc. He could not hide from himself, in an hour like this, all the atrocities of his atrocious life; but some he palliated under the plea of expediency, some he coloured by the circumstances of the times, of some he changed the hue by viewing them through a favourite medium, which converted them into apparent good, and against others he was still able to shut his heart and thoughts altogether. How truly did this self-deceiving King make good the beautiful doubt of the Apostle—"we trust that we have a good conscience!" But whilst the dying monarch is thus pursuing his devious course of retrospection, during the absence of the two ears, we may take a brief survey of the same scenes that occupy his attention, and enjoy a clearer vision of them than his distempered fancy and deceptive soul would permit.

Of all the sons of the Conqueror, Henry was by far the most sagacious by nature, and his intellectual qualities had been fostered with greater assiduity than was usual to knights, nobles, and princes, in that warlike age; hence he obtained the surname of the Beau Clerc.—But unhappily the nature of the studies at that time known, together with his position in the world, and the qualities of those with whom he found himself associated, had sown in him the germs of duplicity, cunning, and avarice. Like all his family, he was ambitious, he perceived that he was the cadet of his name, with but little probability of being distinguished in arms, for which, although no coward, he had no particular vocation; and it had even been suggested that with his intellectual qualities, and the royal influence of his family, his most probable road to eminence and power might be through the church. But no, it was soon the delight of this subtle prince, to attain difficult objects by the powers of his mind, however deflected from the straight course might be the means, and he seemed to rejoice at the mastery with which he managed the puppets which were his creatures, in the operations of his desires. Cruel, as well as treacherous, remorseless of consequences, as well as pertinacious in continuance, he neither allowed the ties of consanguinity, nor the affections of the heart to interfere with his pursuits. He was

the sleuth-hound, constant, persevering, and silent on the scent, and equally silent when the prey was in his clutches. These properties were early developed within him, and although he knew himself the youngest of a family of warriors, he saw in dim perspective, even whilst a boy, the English throne at a possibly attainable distance. When the water was thrown on the head of the hasty Robert, that which was sheer insolence in Rufus, was incipient design in the young Beau Clerc. He had already learned the meaning of "*divide et impera*," he had read the dispositions of his brothers, whilst his own was unscanned by either; involved in the insult of the moment, he knew how to withdraw himself from the consequences, and even throw a double portion on his fraternal associate therein. History shows how correctly he calculated thereon, and we know that from a circumstance so apparently trifling, sprang all the domestic squabbles with which the history of the Conqueror's family is so very replete. The first William was never fully reconciled to his son, Robert, and there is much reason to believe that the ill-feeling was covertly fomented by the artful Henry, who however does not appear to have prominent with his machinations. His father nevertheless, who was ever shrewd and observing, was well aware of the ascendancy which Beau Clerc would be likely to attain, in the course of years; and when he bequeathed to his youngest son the seemingly small legacy of five thousand pounds weight of silver, he replied to the young man's remonstrance, as with a prophetic spirit, "Be patient, thy turn will yet come." He was patient, and his turn did come. He perceived that his father had read him truly; he dissembled his impatience; his avaricious soul and grasping hand made sure of the treasure without delay, and he then set himself to "*bide his time*," to watching passing events, and avail himself at all opportunities to make advantage out of occasion.

Nor had he long to wait for a commencement of his designs. His brother Robert, indignant at the breach of the general law of succession at his expense, prepared to wrest the sovereignty of England out of the hands of Rufus; being actuated also by the Norman nobility both in England and on the continent, who desired not to hold estates under distinct sovereignties, and whose pride was touched at the idea of the apparent alienation of the conquest from the victorious duchy of Normandy. But Robert wanted money, and Henry was able to lend it; accordingly the latter advanced