

culated to additional severity, that he might rush at once and for ever all the hopes of English emancipation from the Norman authority.

But whatsoever might have been the maxims of his life, when the passions had their way in at least as ample a degree as reason and prudence, he has now reached the goal of his career; wounded, bruised, helpless; tortured by pain, goaded by the thousand reflections which had so long remained dormant in his mind, and conscious that his thread of life was almost spun out, here he is! Lingered between life and death, what a variety of horrid images are conjured up to his mental vision: what a legend do the annals of his life present to his perusal!

To a coarse and brutal jest on his corpulency, uttered by the King of France, the style of which was conformable enough to the manners of the period, William replied in the same strain, and bitterly promised to illuminate all France on his recovery. Little did he anticipate how the *churching* solemnity would be concluded, nor his own particular part therein! They are now nearly at an end; let us draw nigh and observe how the King performs the important remainder of the part which he had allotted to himself, and ask ourselves whether this catastrophe be not in keeping with the conduct of the great living drama which it concludes.

In the abbey of St. Gervais, near Rouen, on the pallet which was to be his last in life, lay the scourge of England and France; in agony both of soul and of body; the whole of his past life brought in fearful array before him, in hues and complexion very different from those which they wore in the times of action. He was surrounded by prelates and priests, by barons and knights, by physicians and attendants; his sons, William and Henry, were by his side, and all, according to their several vocations and capacities were endeavouring to alleviate his sufferings, all were earnestly striving to ingratiate themselves in his favour, and to derive some advantage from his present position. But vain were the consolations of the churchmen; they rang too hollow on his ear and on his perceptions, and conscience told him that he had used their sophistries and the sanctions of religion to the worst purposes of ambition; vain were the boasts of his warriors and the assurance of power by his courtiers, for he perceived that his victories and his dominion were to him fast fading into the oblivion of death; vain was the skill of the leech-

es to one who felt that mass of inward wound which was far beyond the craft of their calling; nay, vain were even the attentions of his children, for the observant father knew too well the duplicity of their souls, the absence of filial affection from their hearts. He closed his eyes, as if to shut out external objects, yet did he thereby only increase the crowd within. How rapidly does the soul glance over the past, throwing into the compass of a moment the events of many years, yet giving to each its clear identity and its full details!

Now arose to his admiring, yet heart-stricken recollection, the brave and unconquered Harold, the people's choice, their native prince, who nobly perished in the field of Hastings.— Now appeared to his distracted view the Saxon earls, Edwin, Morcar, and Waltheof, the defenders of Saxon liberty, who had so severely suffered by his fury and his injustice. The wholesale robberies which he had perpetrated upon a brave but helpless people, in order to satisfy the extortionate demands of his own followers, now gnawed upon his heart, and the tortures thence derived were farther augmented by the reflection that even they to whom he had given so much, turned traitors when there was no more to give. How did his heart echo to the "curses, not loud but deep," which from every nook of England heaped their weight upon his head, for lands abstracted, for towns made desolate, for freemen made serfs, for the degradation with insult added thereto under which a whole nation groaned incessantly.

As his memory glanced over the once fair plains and fertile districts of England, how did his heart recoil at the devastation from Humber to Tyne, and nearly from sea to sea; three thousand square miles laid bare, the inhabitants of which, after enduring famine and misery in their most frightful forms, were finally obliged to prey, as brigands and as pirates, upon their own countrymen and fellow-sufferers, urged by that most desperate and goading of reasons, "*Necessitas non habet legem.*" From thence he turns to the south, and what meets he there? The New Forest! Not ravaged and desolated through the fury of the soldier, but turned into a wilderness for the mere gratification of his pleasure. Thirty miles in extent in each section does the barbarian lay waste that he may in solitude or with his satellites enjoy the sports of the chase; thirty churches are demolished, the priests and the people driven forth like brute beasts, that the four-footed beasts might have the larger