

When Henry II was crowned in 1154, England was in complete chaos. People were robbed and killed and nobody protected them. Henry's first action was to bring back law and order to his kingdom. He was busy all the time, and it is said that he never sat down. He ate while on horseback and even took his secretary to church where he dictated letters to him during the service.



One of the questions of the time was whether bishops were to be nominated by the King or the Pope. Henry thought that Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, would obey him. But Thomas, a man of great character and willpower, proved as strong as the king, and refused to serve the King in church matters.

One evening, while Henry was gazing into the camp-fire somewhere in France, the news was brought to him that the Archbishop had excommunicated some of his men. Henry was furious and cried, "Will no one rid me of this low-born priest?" These words were fatal, because four knights secretly hurried to the coast, crossed the Channel in a small boat and rode on to Canterbury.

They found Thomas Becket in his Cathedral, where he was praying. When the other priests saw the knights with their drawn swords, they wanted to shut the doors. But the Archbishop did not allow it. "This is the House of God", he said. "Everyone is free to enter it." When the knights ran towards him, he stood without fear. The cross in his hands, he fell under their blows, just in front of the high altar.

Now people remembered what the Archbishop, in an hour of vision, had said during a sermon, "God will soon increase the number of martyrs in his Church." Henry himself was a broken man when he was told what had happened. He said he had never wanted this. He often went to Canterbury and prayed at the grave of Thomas Becket, who had been his best friend while they were both young.



crown: krönen
rob: ausrauben
protect: beschützen
law: Gesetz
nominate: ernennen
archbishop: Erzbischof
pope: Papst
obey: gehorchen

willpower: Wille
prove: beweisen
matter: Angelegenheit
gaze: starren
excommunicate: aus der Kirche ausschließen
rid: befreien
low-born: von niederer Geburt

knight: Ritter
pray: beten
fear: Angst
sermon: Predigt
increase: erhöhen
grave: Grab

Translate:

Das Land war in vollständigem Chaos.

Er diktierte die Briefe, während er im Sattel sass.

Sie wollten die Türen schließen.

Er ging oft nach Canterbury.

Sie eilten zu der Küste und überquerten den Kanal.

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