

in his hand, he went to the King's palace, and marching straight into the room where Henry and his Barons were assembled, he protested against the new laws, and revoked his late assent to them.

This conduct astonished and irritated the King, who now bitterly repented having placed Becket in so high a position; and yet further was he irritated when, a few days afterwards, news came that Becket had crossed the water on a mission to the Pope, and when this was followed by a sentence of excommunication against his chief ministers and all whom Becket considered as particularly his enemies.

It would take much time to relate all that passed from this period between the King and Becket. Both were wrong, and both in some points were right. The King gradually became more and more exasperated against Becket. Becket himself could not, or did not choose to yield in the least to the King, but rather seemed to take pride in thwarting him.

They were, however, at length outwardly reconciled, and had a meeting, at which the King forgave the Archbishop, and the Archbishop gave his blessing to the King; and Becket, after this, was over again to England.

But the manner in which he carried himself on his return, provoked Henry exceedingly. Instead of quietly retiring to discharge the duties of a Christian Bishop in his diocese, Becket made a journey through Kent, with all the splendour and state of a Sovereign, and proceeding towards London, he there excommunicated the Bishops of London and Salisbury, and suspended the Archbishop of York.

He also excommunicated one man for having spoken against him and another for having cut off the tail of one of his horses.

While this passed, King Henry was in Normandy; and when he heard of Becket's behaviour, and when the Bishops whom Becket had denounced came over from England to complain of their ill treatment, the King's anger passed all prudent bounds, and he hastily exclaimed, "Have I then no true friends among the cowards who eat my bread, not one who will rid me of this turbulent priest?"

His words were heard; and though no one dared to make answer, there were those in his presence who inferred that the King would be glad Becket were murdered.

There is no reason at all to believe that Henry had any such idea, though he was doubtless bewildered at the difficulty of dealing with this man: his words only expressed his wish that any one would devise a way by which he could conquer Becket's obstinacy.

Four, however, of the King's knights, catching at his words, hastened to Canterbury, with the full purpose of murdering the Archbishop.

And they executed this bad purpose but too soon. The appearance of these men in Canterbury occasioned immediate remark, and the Archbishop was advised to keep close within doors.

But he refused, and prepared as usual to attend vespers at the