

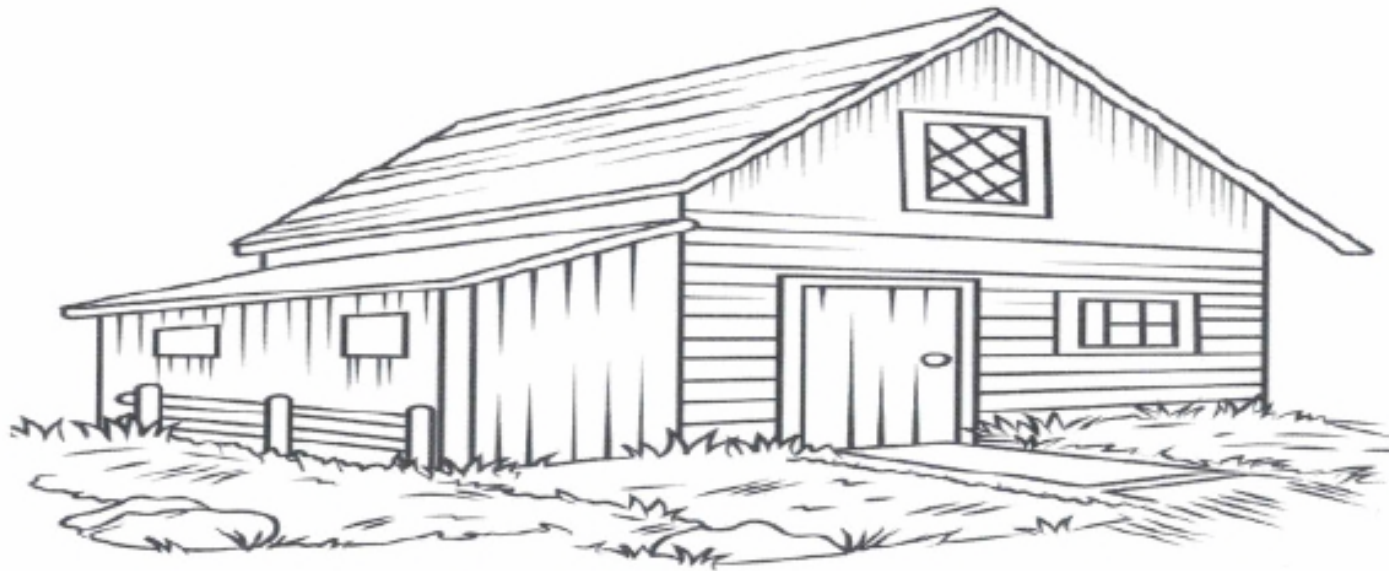
The Proud King and the Good Bishop

By Mark Giannotti





Once there were two men named Thomas Becket and Henry II. They lived in England. They were great friends during their childhood and loved to do good deeds. One day when the two boys were strolling through a town in London, they saw a boy around their age wearing little clothing. It was very cold and rainy that day. The boy was shivering and was also very hungry. They pitied the boy and asked if he wanted to come back to their village with them. Henry was wearing a rich cloak, but he took it off



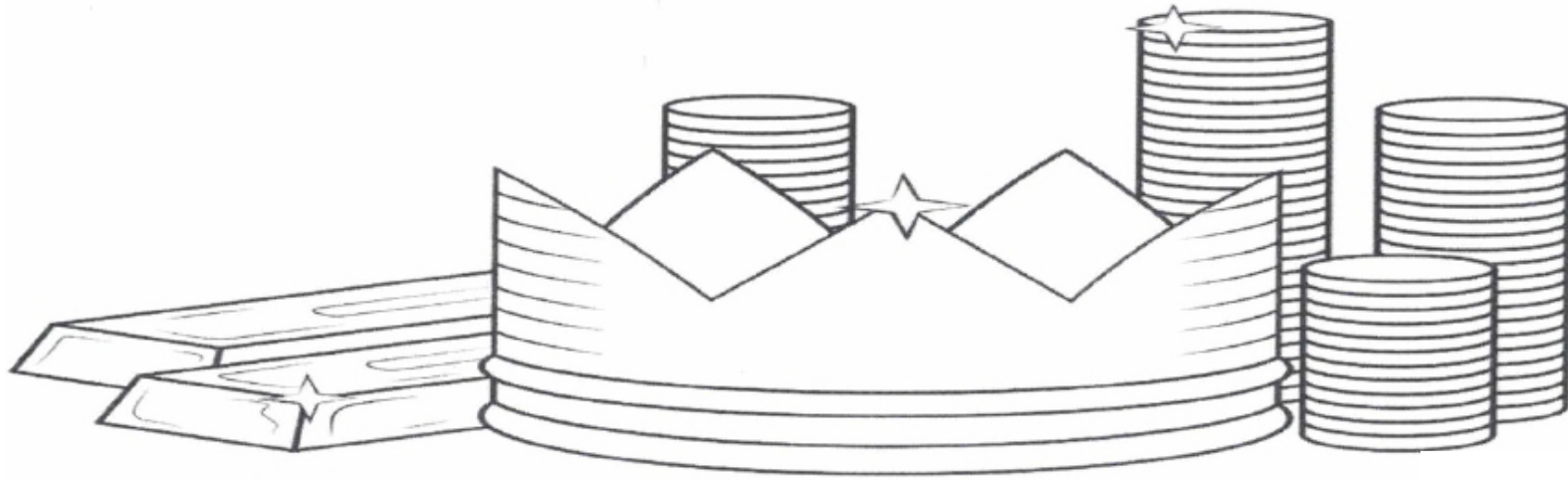
and wrapped it around the boy. The boy, having nowhere to go, followed them. They gave him food. Thomas let the boy stay at his home to rest. When he awoke and finished eating, Thomas asked, “What is your name?” The boy replied, “My name is Mark.” After the three boys talked for a while, Henry returned to his home. He said goodbye while Thomas and Mark waved. Thomas’ parents let Mark stay at their home for many years because Mark was an orphan. Mark was strong a boy and



was extremely helpful to Thomas' family in taking care of the house and farm. Thomas and Mark were like brothers. Henry remained good friends to both Thomas and Mark as the three grew older. Thomas loved the poor and wanted to be a bishop. With Mark as his assistant and trusted friend, Thomas became Archbishop. Thomas began to be more dedicated to God, and Mark helped Thomas serve the poor. They worked hard to raise money to give to poor people in England. They invited poor



men, women, and children to stay in the churches during the blustery winter. Mark was skilled at physical labor and taught the young men how to use equipment for building and farming. The people were thankful to Thomas and Mark. Eventually, Henry II became the King of England. Henry had many important affairs to deal with. Although he remained friends with Thomas and Mark, he began to make friends with powerful and greedy people in England. He began to use the clergy by persuading



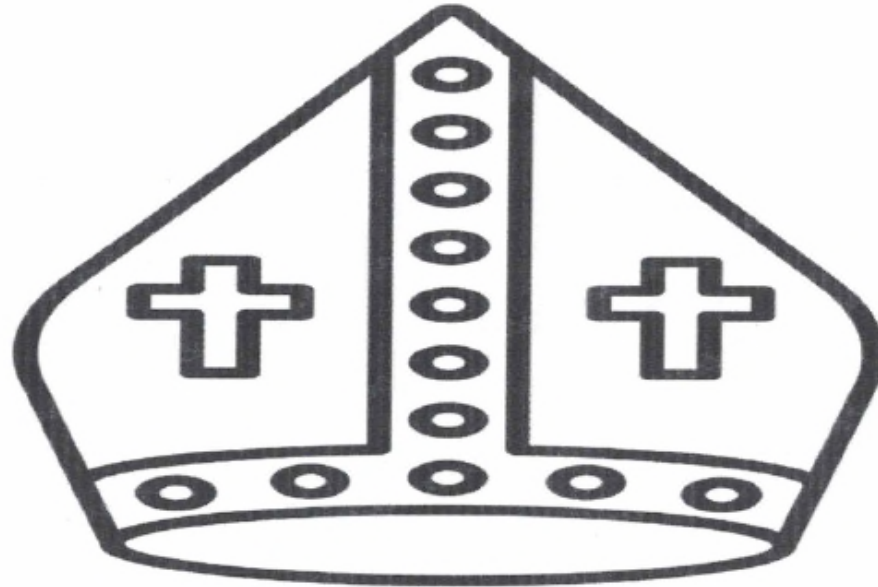
them to give him money. Most of the clergy were willing to give the King whatever money he wanted. However, Thomas and Mark started to grow apart from Henry. Thomas did not want to give Henry so much money. He would tell the clergy, “You are spoiling the king by giving him whatever money he wants.” The clergy responded, “We just want to make the king happy.” Henry had so much support from the clergy, but still, he would try to persuade Thomas to give up spending money on the poor



and instead to give it to him. Henry wrote to Thomas: “Dear Thomas, It would be much appreciated if you would donate more money to me. I have powerful friends who will not forget your generosity. One day you may need a favor from my friends, and they would be willing to fulfill your request. Very Sincerely Yours, King Henry I.” Mark tried to convince Thomas that it would be a mistake to accept such a bribe. He encouraged Thomas to ignore the letter and to keep giving to the poor.



At first, Thomas listened to Mark, but he started to worry that Henry would take vengeance on him for not agreeing to send him money. Without telling Mark, Thomas sent Henry the money he requested. However, Mark discovered what Thomas did and said, “Thomas! You are giving Henry money and neglecting the poor. Henry may be King, but your job is to serve God.” Thomas immediately realized that what he was doing was wrong. Henry was not using the money wisely and

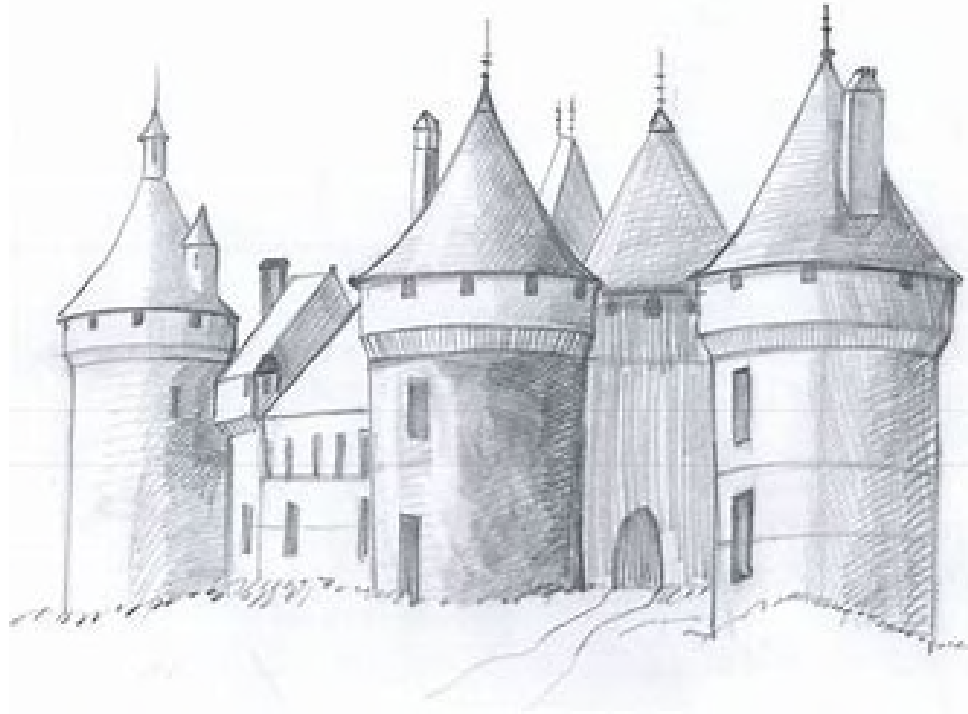


The poor were suffering. Thomas wrote to the Pope confessing his sins and asked for forgiveness. When Henry learned that Thomas was no longer sending him money, he became infuriated. The people of England started to turn against Thomas too because Henry started to spread rumors across England accusing Thomas of bad acts. The people wanted to see Thomas put to death for his corrupt behavior. Mark realized that King Henry's followers were determined to kill Thomas for treason. Mark

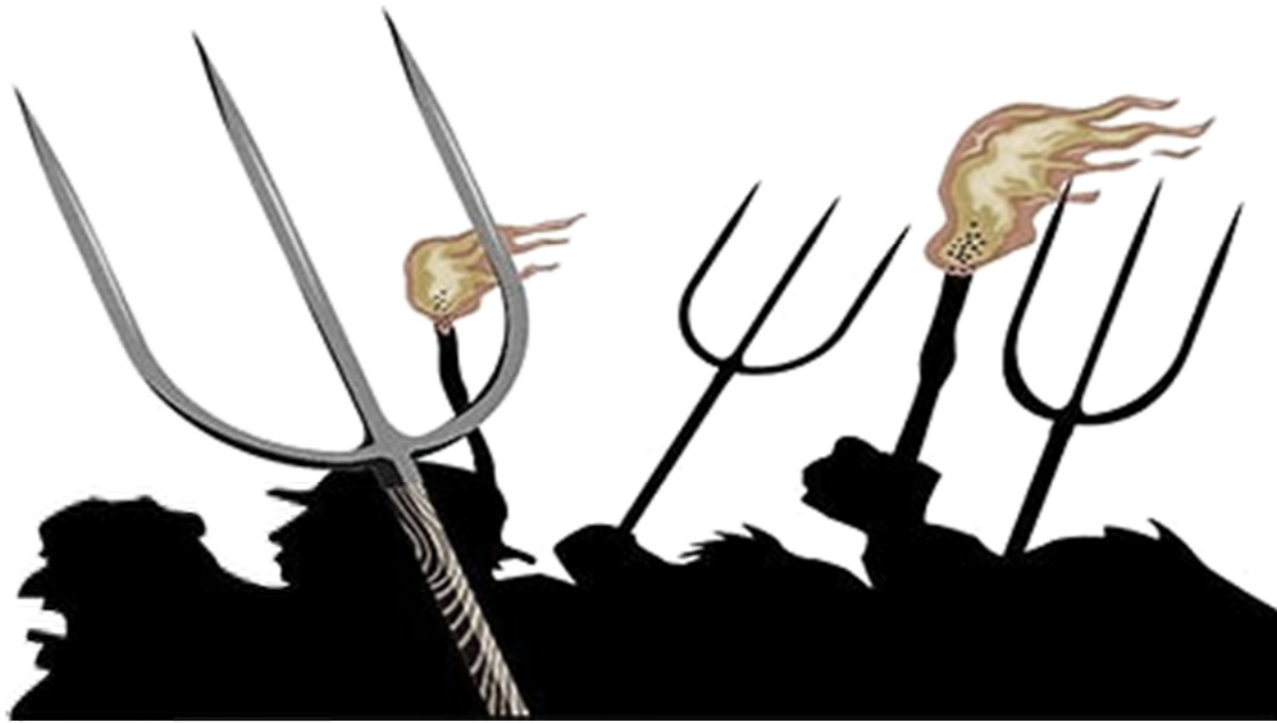


said to Thomas, “Dear friend, it is time for you to flee England immediately. It is not safe for you here right now. Let us go to France now and wait there. Maybe after some time, the people in England and King Henry will forget their anger toward you and we can return.” Thomas agreed with his good friend that it is too dangerous to stay, and both decided to flee to France immediately. The journey to France was long and treacherous. When they finally reached France, they were welcomed by the King of France. They

stayed in the castle for a long time. Just as Mark predicted, Henry wrote to Thomas asking him to



return to England. “Dear Friend, I am deeply sorry for how I treated you and for my ill-tempered manner. I promise that I will make it up to you when you return. I will not make any more requests for money from you. Please return to England and I will guarantee your safety. Sincerely Yours, King Henry II.” Thomas missed his friend and forgave Henry. He and Mark returned home to England.



However, Thomas began to punish the bishops who were continuing to give money to Henry II. He told the bishops, “You will pay for your sinful behavior toward God and to me. Stop giving money to King Henry. That money belongs to the poor.” Henry was furious when he heard what Thomas had told the bishops. Henry broke his promise to Thomas and let the villagers who hated Thomas go after him to kill him. Mark warned Thomas that his life was in danger. Therefore,



the two began to hide and do their work for the poor in secret. However, one night, the villagers learned that Thomas and Mark were visiting a poor family. They found him and chased Thomas into the church. Trapped, he knelt at a pillar in the church and folded his hands toward God. In front of Mark and on the alter, they killed Thomas. When Henry heard that Thomas was killed, he immediately realized that what he did was wrong. He killed his best friend and began to weep over his grave. Many



people who loved Thomas were deeply sad for the loss of their bishop. Mark went to Henry. Henry was so happy to see his old friend again. However, Mark was stern with the king and told him he must atone for his sins to the pope. Finally, Henry put aside his pridefulness and sought forgiveness from the pope. He also held a public speech apologizing for the wrong he had done to his friend. Henry ordered that a statue of Thomas Becket be placed in the middle of London in honor of the bishop who chose to serve God over the king.

The End.