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Edited by Eiríkr Magnússon

Excerpt

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**THÓMAS SAGA ERKIBYSKUPS.**  
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THÓMAS SAGA ERKIBYSKUPS.

PROLOGUS.

More than one writer on Becket known to the translator.

What one wrote well, another let alone.

Now it has been found wise to put together in one book all that has been said to the praise of Becket, for the perusal of people who lead a retired life, i.e., people of monastic habits.

LJÓST er vorðit af letrum þeim er lærðir menn leifðu eftir sik í kristninni, at fleiri enn einn eður tveir af þeira fjöld hafa skrifat á ýmissum tímum líf ok lofsamligar mannaunir hins ágæta Guðs píslarvotts 5 Thóme Cantuariensis in Anglia. Hafa þær iðnir farit sem verða kann, at þat er einn setti framarr¹ ok fullkomliga, lét annarr² um líða, því at þeim, er síðar³ var í veröld, virðist eigi nauðsynligt at setja sem með nýrri letrgerð þat, er áður var fært ok fagrliga samit, 10 frægt ok víða borit fyrir margan vísan mann. Enn nú á nýjum tímum sýndist góðfúsamönnum nytsamligt, at setja samt í eina bók, til lofs ok tignar sælum Thóme, þat er af hverra orðum hæst berr ok lofsamligast virðist vitrum mönnum, at hóglífismaðr hafi 15 nærhendis, hvat er hann girnist í Guðs lofi af þraut ok þolinmæði þessa píslarvotts; því at vel má segja, með teknu dæmi, at hans blezut ásjóna hefir dreift farit, sem þat skírasta gler kann auðsýna, er sundr tekst í marga luti, því at hver hans lífsbók, sem lesin varð, 20 lióðar enn leynir eigi, hver hæðar skuggsjó⁴ ok höfðingja spegill hann hefir verit formönnum kristninnar með hreinleik ok harðlífi, með ölmusugæði ok úbeygðri

¹ framarr, T.

² annar, T.

³ síðarr, T.

⁴ skuggsjó, T.; the single *g* leads

me strongly to suspect that the original reading here was *hugsjó*, the mind's eye-mark, example.

THE STORY OF ARCHBISHOP THOMAS.

PROLOGUE.

MANIFEST, indeed, it hath become, from such writings as learned folk have left behind them in Christendom, that more than one or two of their number have, at sundry times, written the life and the laudable trials of that excellent martyr of God, Thomas Cantuariensis in Anglia. Now it hath fared with such works as is like to befall, that whatsoever one set forth after a full and perfect fashion, another let pass by, in that he who was later in the world deemed it not expedient to compound as with a new manner of writing, that which had been already related and wrought in a fair way, the same being renowned withal, and having been widely borne abroad before many a wise man. But now in these latter times it hath seemed to men of goodwill profitable that in one book should be put together, for the praise and the honour of the blessed Thomas, whatsoever might seem to wise men to be most exalted and most full of praise in the words of each writer, in order that persons of still manner of life might have near at hand whatsoever by the will of God they might yearn for of the trials and the longsuffering of the martyr. For it may well be said, speaking by way of similitude, that his blessed visage hath become widely spread, even as the brightest glass sheweth which is scattered in sunder into many bits ; in that every book of his life being read pronounceth loudly but concealeth nowise what an exalted glass and lordly mirror he hath been unto the rulers of the church in purity and hardness of living, in almsgiving and unbent stead-

staðfesti, alt til krúnu blóðsins. Enn nú hēðan upp í frá kann vera, at nokkurum sýnist, sem þessi bók megi með rēttu kallast ein ok samhaldin ásjána með lífsþáttum, brēfum ok jartegnum hins sæla Thóme. Nú gefi þat Jesús Krístr, fyrir árnaðarorð sinnar sætu 5 móður¹ ok meyjar, Marie, ok verðleika hins heilaga Thóme, at þetta verk svá upp-byrist, framm-flytist ok lúkist, at honum sè til lofs ok dýrðar, enn þeim, er heyra, til andligrar gleði, ok árnaðarorðs við sælan Thómam. 10

KAP.² I.

HÉR BYRJAR SÖGU THÓMAS ERKIBYSKUPS.

Á dögum Urbani páfa, annars með því nafni, ok Heinreks Heinrekssonar, Mislendu³ keisara, vann Vilhjálmr Rúðujarl,⁴ er kallaðr var bastarðr, England undir sik 15 með herskildi af Haraldi Guðinasyni,⁵ ok ríkti xx. ár ok eitt. Hann átti eftir þrjá syni, ok hētu Vilhjálmr,⁶ Rodbert ok Heinrekr. Vilhjálmr tók ríki, því at hann var elztr; hann var kallaðr Vilhjálmr rauði;⁷ hann var úhentiligr maðr Englands kristni, því at hann var bæði 20 metnaðarsamr ok stórum ágjarn. Bræðr hans voru útignir menn í landi, þar til at Rodbert krossaðist til

William the earl of Rouen conquers England from Harold Godwison.

His sons.

William Rufus.

Robert goes on a crusade to Jerusalem.

¹ *modr*, T.

² This heading, with the accompanying number, is added by the editor throughout.

³ *misl'ndu*, T., an hapaxlegomenon which must be understood to mean Germany; formed from *míðr* (?), gen. *míðs*, midmost; *mislenda* qs. *míðs-lenda* (cpr. *mísesi* qs. *míðs-nesi* ?) midland, *mislendu keisari* therefore Midland emperor, emp. of central Europe, Henry IV., 1056–1106.

⁴ Earl of Rouen, 1035–1066; king of England, 1066–1087.

⁵ King of England from Jan. 6 to Oct. 14, 1066.

⁶ King of England, 1087–1100.

⁷ Here the story is confused, William being the second son, and Robert the rightly born to the crown who, while William seized upon the treasury and the kingdom at Winchester, and got himself fraudulently crowned in London, succeeded quietly to the dukedom of Normandy. Henry alone could be said to abide without honours in the land, since a certain sum of money was all he inherited after his father.

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THE STORY OF ARCHBISHOP THOMAS.

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fastness even unto the blood of his crown. But from this time henceforth belike it may seem to some folk as if this book might be rightly called one countenance, holden together by the life-tales, letters, and miracles of the blessed Thomas. May Jesus Christ now grant, by the intercession of his sweet Mother and Maiden Mary, and by the merits of the holy Thomas, that this work so begin, continue and end, that it be to the praise and the glory of Him, but for spiritual joy to those who hearken thereto, and be worthy of the intercession of the blessed Thomas.

CHAP. I.

HERE BEGINNETH THE STORY OF ARCHBISHOP THOMAS.

In the days of pope Urban, the second of that name, and Henry, the son of Henry, Mid-Europe emperor, William the earl of Rouen, who was called the Bastard, won for himself England with war-shield, from Harold Godwinson, and reigned twenty years and one. He left behind him three sons, hight William, Robert and Henry. William took the realm, being the oldest. He was called William the Red. He was a right unprofitable man for England's church, being both full of pride and mightily covetous. His brethren abode without honours in the land until Robert took the cross for Jerusalem,

Jórsala, ok tók óvægiligt¹ lausagóz² út af konungsgarði, at hann mætti vel fara lands ok lagar. Enn er fehirzlan var nálíga hreinsut, legst Vilhjálmr konungr í hernað, at afa fjár í þann stað, ok herjar eigi á heiðinn dóm eðr útlenzka höfðingja, heldr á hinn 5 saklausu svein, Drottin Jesúm; því at hann setr úpolligt gjald á klaustr ok kirkjur í Englandi; heldr byskupsstóla ok ábótadæmi svá lengi undir sínu valdi, sem hann lystir, síðan formenn falla frá, enn eigi skal aðra til kjósa; skutlar jarðir ok eignir kirknanna ok dregr 10 undir konungsgarð, ok er lítið leið, sögðu³ jústisar valdsins,⁴ at þat hefði æfinliga konungs eign verit. Kennimanna fundi⁵ í landinu, er þeir kalla sinodos, vildi hann einga⁶ hafa láta, ok svá mikil var sú eymdar ágirnd til fjár ok frelsis, er hann hóf ok efði 15 mót kristnum rætt í Englandi, at af þeim innleiðslum, siðleysum ok óvönnum leiddi svá langar limar, at margs manns líf dró til útleigðar, ok suma um síðir, sem greinast mun, alt framm í dauða dyrr.

Nú svá rasandi sem fór konungr þessi, fellr honum 20 handleggr himnakonungsins; því at á dýraveiði var hann skotinn í gegnum at úvilja sjálfs síns riddara, er Gallterus⁷ hèt; þá hafði hann verit konungr xiiij. ár. Lágu þá höfðingjalausir þrír byskupsstólar ok tólf klaustr, til vitnis um þat sem tjáðist fyrri. Eftir hans 25 dag var Rodbert næstr ok tók ríki at öldrum. Enn sakir þess at hann er nú fyrir utan haf, tekr Heinrekr⁸ bróðir hans konungdóm. Ok litlu síðar kemr Rodbert aftur ok hefr⁹ ákall til ríkis, enn Heinrikr vill eingum¹⁰ kosti upp gefa. Fara svá þeira skifti, at þeir 30

William resorts to extortion and all manner of oppression of the church.

Secularizes church property by means of his justices, forbids synods to be held, introduces royal customs, drives some people into exile, and puts others to death.

Is killed by a chance shot.

Henry Beauclerc becomes king.

¹ This measureless—literally unweighable—treasure amounted to 10,000 marks only.

² *lausagodz*, T.

³ *saugdu*, T.

⁴ *valldzins*, T.

⁵ So U.; *fund*, T.

⁶ *eynga*, T.

⁷ Sir Walter Tyrell.

⁸ Henry Beauclerc, king of England 1100–1135.

⁹ *hefr*, T.

¹⁰ *eyngum*, T.

carrying with him a measureless wealth from the king's court, that he might fare well by land and sea. But now that the treasury was well nigh cleared out, king William fell a-harrying to gather wealth instead thereof; not waging war, however, against heathendom or foreign lords, nay, but rather against that sackless child, the Lord Jesus, in that he laid unbearable taxes on cloisters and churches in England, holding bishops' seats and abbatships under his sway, as long as it listed him, after the death of the rulers, and forbidding others to be chosen in their stead; squandering moreover the estates and other properties belonging to the churches, and drawing them under the crown, which, when a short time had passed by, the justices of the kingdom said had ever been the king's very own. Of the meetings of the clerks in the country, which they call synods, he would let none be holden, and so exceeding great was that wretched greed for fee and freedom, which he raised and emboldened against Christian right in England, that from those enactments, evil customs and abuses spread such far-reaching limbs as did draw many a man's life into exile, and brought others, at last, as will be set forth hereafter, even unto death's door.

Now headlong as the king went on in his madness, the arm of the King of heaven fell upon him, in that he was unwilfully shot through, at a deer-hunt, by one of his knights, by name Walter, when he had been king for thirteen years. At that time there lay reft of their rulers three bishops' chairs and twelve cloisters, in testimony of what has been said before. After his day Robert stood next, and took the realm by right of age. But whereas he was even then beyond the seas, his brother Henry took upon him the kingdom. Now, shortly afterwards his brother Robert returned and laid claim to the realm, but Henry would give it up to him on no condition whatever. And in

He and Robert fight; the latter made prisoner for life.

eiga tvær orrustur, ok í þeiri síðari¹ er Rodbert fanginn² ok settr í varðhald. Leiddi hann svá sitt líf sem einn heremíta, því at bróðir hans trúði honum aldri. Ferr hann svá or sögu þessarri.

Punishment inflicted on an earl for appropriating church property.

Enn Heinrikr styrkist nú í konungs valdi; ferr 5 honum, sem háttr er veraldar höfðingja, at eingin þykkist úhalla krúnu bera, utan hann haldi með kappi þat, sem hélt hans forellri; ok því verðr, sem bók vottar, þykksettr stiginn í loganum, þá er hverr erfir annan í úleyfðum lutum. Af stiga þeim er lesit 10 in Speculo. Jarl einn dró rangliga undir sik heilagrar kirkju eign, ok þá sömu hældu³ ættmenn hverr eftir annan. Því birtist svá einni sál, at stigi þeira frænda stóð uppreistr í dýnjanda loga, með þeiri skipan, at sá er nýliga andaðist skyldi æ taka hit efsta stig, enn 15 aðrir skyldu þá um reit⁴ rýma niðr undan, þar til at Guðs mildi mæddist á þessu rættðæmi, því at sálin hvarf aftr í líkam, at boða þeim er enn lifði, hverr dauði honum var handviss, ok hann skipaði gjarna aftr eignina, at hann mætti forðast samsætisbruna 20 sinna ættmanna.⁵ Nú mun sýnast sem stigagrein þessi lúti at konunginum í Englandi, eigi því minnr þótt sagan lengist. Nú svá sem vér höfum byrjat konungatal í Englandi fyrir þeim stórtíðindum, sem eftir kvomu, svá sýnist vel fallit at greina með fám klausum, 25 hversu⁶ erkistóllinn í Cancia bíðr þess höfðingja, er hann fèkk frægastan um alla sína daga.

¹ *sidarri*, T.

² Taken prisoner in the battle of Tenchbray 1106; died in prison, in Cardiff castle, 1135.

³ *hielldu*, T.

⁴ *reit*, T.

⁵ This legend is, no doubt, drawn from one of the *Specula* of Vincent of Beauvais, but I have had to give up verifying it, after some search.

⁶ *huerssu*, T.

such wise their dealings turned out, that they fought two battles, in the latter of which Robert was taken prisoner, and put into a dungeon. So he led his life as a hermit, because his brother trusted him never afterwards. And thus he droppeth out of this story.

But Henry, gathering now strength in his kingly power, fareth after the ways of worldly lords, none of whom thinketh that he may wear an untottering crown, unless he hold with might and main that, which his parents held before him; and therefore, as witnesseth a book, the ladder in the flame waxeth thickly thronged, in that each succeedeth to the heritage of the other in things forbidden. Of this ladder you may read in the *Speculum*.

A certain earl seized wrongfully upon the properties of holy church, which same his kinsmen held, one after the other. Now it was revealed to a certain soul, that the ladder of these kinsmen stood raised up in the midst of roaring flames, by such ordinance, that each one newly dead had to take his station in the uppermost step, and all the others must needs move one step down; till at length God's mercy waxed weary with this rightwise award, so that this soul returned again into a body, to bring warning to him who was still alive what death unfailingly awaited him. But he was right fain to restore the property, that he might escape burning in fellowship with his kinsfolk. Now it will be seen that this tale of the ladder pointeth indeed to the king of England, and none the less so the longer the story groweth. And now, since we have begun the tale of the kings of England before telling of the great things which follow, it seemeth well fitting to set forth in a few clauses, how the chief throne at Canterbury awaiteth the most renowned lord whom in all its days it received.

KAP. II.

ANSELMUS VARÐ ERKIBYSKUP Í CANCIA.

Vilhjálmr bastarðr, sem enn var hann jarl í Rúðuborg, efldi hann klaustr af grundvelli í þeim stað, er Kadon¹ heitir, í sæmd hins signaða Stephani protomartiris.² Þar til fékk hann sæmiligan formann, er hét Lanfrancus,³ siðlætismaðr mikill⁴ ok meistari einkar djúpr, hann var áðr príór Beccensis; enn þann tíma sem bastarðr tók ríki í Englandi fylgdi hann erkistólnum í Cancia, at hann gaf upp sagðan Kadonensem⁵ ábóta, at hann yrði⁶ Kantuariensis erkibyskup. Þessi Lanfrancus vígði til krúnu Vilhjálms konung rauða; varð því nokkuru líkt um þeira samþykki, meðan þeir lifðu báðir, því at konungr lét⁶ sem hann skyldi þyrma honum. Eftir Lanfrankum úthafinn var Anselmus erkibyskup, áðr príór Beccensis.⁷ Reis miðil þeira Vilhjálms konungs svá hörð alda, at erkibyskup varð at rýma land, áðr dauði Vilhjálms konungs gaf honum afturvarf ok heimfararleyfi. Eftir Anselmum framm-farinn til Guðs, sem vel birtist í hans andláti, kemr Theóbaldu⁸ 20

St. Etienne de Caen founded by William the Bastard, Lanfranc the first abbat, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury.

Crowned William Rufus.

Anselm, prior of Bec, becomes archbishop of Canterbury: Anselm gets into trouble with the king and has to leave the country.

¹ Kadon = Cadomum, now Caen.

² This Benedictine monastery, originally called Sanctus Stephanus, now St. Étienne de Caen, was founded by William the Conqueror, in expiation of his unlawful marriage, a few years before the conquest, and soon rose to the first rank among the religious houses of Normandy. *Gallia Christiana*, xi. 421–422.

³ Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury 1070–1089, had formerly been prior of Bec from before 1050–1063, and afterwards abbat of Sanctus Stephanus 1063–1070. *Ib.* 422–423.

⁴ *michil*, T.

⁵ *uurði*, T.

⁶ *liet*, T.

⁷ Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury 1093–1109, prior of Bec from 1063 up to his translation to Canterbury. *Ib.* 424–425.

⁸ Theobald, prior of Bec 1127–1136, abbat of the same monastery 1137–1139, archbishop of Canterbury 1139–1161. *Ib.* 229. The space of thirty years, intervening between the death of Anselm and the accession of Theobald, and occupied, exclusive of vacancies, by the archiepiscopate of Ralph of Escures 1114–1122, and that of William Corbeuil, 1123–1136, is entirely ignored here.