

A.D. 1137. This year went the King Stephen over sea to Normandy, and there was received; for that they concluded that he should be all such as the uncle was; and because he had got his treasure: but he dealt it out, and scattered it foolishly. Much had King Henry gathered, gold and silver, but no good did men for his soul thereof. When the King Stephen came to England, he held his council at Oxford; where he seized the Bishop Roger of Sarum, and Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, and the chancellor Roger, his nephew; and threw all into prison till they gave up their castles. When the traitors understood that he was a mild man, and soft, and good, and no justice executed, then did they all wonder. They had done him homage, and sworn oaths, but they no truth maintained. They were all forsworn, and forgetful of their troth; for every rich man built his castles, which they held against him: and they filled the land full of castles. They cruelly oppressed the wretched men of the land with castle-works; and when the castles were made, they filled them with devils and evil men. Then took they those whom they supposed to have any goods, both by night and by day, labouring men and women, and threw them into prison for their gold and silver, and inflicted on them unutterable tortures; for never were any martyrs so tortured as they were. Some they hanged up by the feet, and smoked them with foul smoke; and some by the thumbs, or by the head, and hung coats of mail on their feet. They tied knotted strings about their heads, and twisted them till the pain went to the brains. They put them into dungeons, wherein were adders, and snakes, and toads; and so destroyed them. Some they placed in a crucet-house; that is, in a chest that was short and narrow, and not deep; wherein they put sharp stones, and so thrust the man therein, that they broke all the limbs. In many of the castles were things loathsome and grim, called "Sachenteges", of which two or three men had enough to bear one. It was thus made: that is, fastened to a beam; and they placed a sharp iron [collar] about the man's throat and neck, so that he could in no direction either sit, or lie, or sleep, but bear all that iron. Many thousands they wore out with hunger. I neither can, nor may I tell all the wounds and all the pains which they inflicted on wretched men in this land. This lasted the nineteen winters while Stephen was king; and it grew continually worse and worse. They constantly laid guilds on the towns, and called it "tenserie"; and when the wretched men had no more to give, then they plundered and burned all the towns; that well thou mightest go a whole day's journey and never shouldest thou find a man sitting in a town, nor the land tilled. Then was corn dear, and flesh, and cheese, and butter; for none was there in the land. Wretched men starved of hunger. Some had recourse to alms, who were for a while rich men, and some fled out of the land. Never

yet was there more wretchedness in the land; nor ever did heathen men worse than they did: for, after a time, they spared neither church nor churchyard, but took all the goods that were therein, and then burned the church and all together. Neither did they spare a bishop's land, or an abbot's, or a priest's, but plundered both monks and clerks; and every man robbed another who could. If two men, or three, came riding to a town, all the township fled for them, concluding them to be robbers. The bishops and learned men cursed them continually, but the effect thereof was nothing to them; for they were all accursed, and forsworn, and abandoned. To till the ground was to plough the sea: the earth bare no corn, for the land was all laid waste by such deeds; and they said openly, that Christ slept, and his saints. Such things, and more than we can say, suffered we nineteen winters for our sins. In all this evil time held Abbot Martin his abbacy twenty years and a half, and eight days, with much tribulation; and found the monks and the guests everything that behoved them; and held much charity in the house; and, notwithstanding all this, wrought on the church, and set thereto lands and rents, and enriched it very much, and bestowed vestments upon it. And he brought them into the new minster on St. Peter's mass-day with much pomp; which was in the year, from the incarnation of our Lord, 1140, and in the twenty-third from the destruction of the place by fire. And he went to Rome, and there was well received by the Pope Eugenius; from whom he obtained their privileges: -- one for all the lands of the abbey, and another for the lands that adjoin to the churchyard; and, if he might have lived longer, so he meant to do concerning the treasury. And he got in the lands that rich men retained by main strength. Of William Malduit, who held the castle of Rockingham, he won Cotingham and Easton; and of Hugh de Walteville, he won Hirtlingbury and Stanwick, and sixty shillings from Oldwinkle each year. And he made many monks, and planted a vine-yard, and constructed many works, and made the town better than it was before. He was a good monk, and a good man; and for this reason God and good men loved him. Now we will relate in part what happened in King Stephen's time. In his reign the Jews of Norwich bought a Christian child before Easter, and tortured him after the same manner as our Lord was tortured; and on Long-Friday (164) hanged him on a rood, in mockery of our Lord, and afterwards buried him. They supposed that it would be concealed, but our Lord showed that he was a holy martyr. And the monks took him, and buried him with high honour in the minster. And through our Lord he worketh wonderful and manifold miracles, and is called St. William.