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King Henry II - II

Lead: One of England's most important monarchs, Henry II saw his birthright begin to crumble even before his death in CE 1189.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Despite his undoubted administrative brilliance and successful imperial ambitions, Henry was not a popular leader, not well-liked, and found himself in almost constant conflict with his wife and sons. He married the remarkable Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, and together they had eight children. As

both were strong unbending personalities, their marriage was hardly a work in connubial harmony, and in Henry's later years he would come to regret the near-constant friction that from the beginning inhabited his household. Two great crises helped undermine the legacy he had worked so hard to build since becoming King of England in CE 1154.

Having appointed Thomas Becket, his long-time friend and Chancellor, as Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry thought he would be able to master the long-running dispute over sovereignty between the king and the English Church. Becket's transformation into a militant ecclesiast was a bitter disappointment to Henry. Their seven-

year dispute over who would reign supreme in Church affairs ended in the murder of the Archbishop in 1170. Henry was universally blamed for this tragedy, and the antagonistic publicity about it tossed up a rebellion by Eleanor and their three oldest sons, a mutiny that continued almost to the end of his life. Quickly after his death his empire began to crumble, yet Henry II remains one of England's and indeed Europe's most consequential monarchs.

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Resources

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