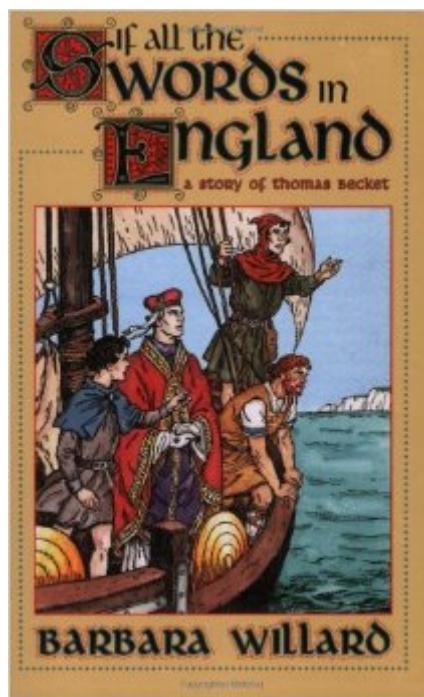


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# If All The Swords In England: A Story Of Thomas Becket (Living History Library)



## Synopsis

Young Simon, recently and tragically orphaned, becomes a scribe in the following of the exiled Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket. The uncertainty of the tumultuous years leading to the infamous cathedral slaying is heightened by Simon's separation from his twin Edmund, who is in the service of King Henry II.

## Book Information

Series: Living History Library

Paperback: 194 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (6 customer reviews)

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#20763 inÂ  Books > Reference

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Barbara Willard's *If All the Swords in England*, first published in 1961, makes a happy comeback in this quality paperback edition by Bethlehem Books. The drama unfolds during the turbulent years of the argument between King Henry II Plantagenet and Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, concerning juridical authority in church matters. After the tragic deaths of their parents, brothers Simon and Edmund Audemer are separated. Edmund becomes a page in the court of King Henry II, while Simon becomes a scribe in the household of Thomas Becket. Willard's use of the literary device of the two brothers allows the reader a "first-hand" glimpse into both the characters of Thomas Becket and Henry II as well as into the climate of the times. The book is full of exciting episodes (including a miracle), and interesting characters. Barbara Willard's *If All the Swords in England* presents a timeless story of courage and conscience. It is also an excellent introduction to the heavier Becket by Anouilh and T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Grades 5-7.

If All the Swords in England tells the well-known tale of St. Thomas Becket and King Henry II through the eyes of two twin brothers, Simon and Edmund. Separated in their youth by the death of their parents, Simon, who is lame in one hand, becomes a servant to Becket the exiled Archbishop of Canterbury. He witnesses the sufferings of the Archbishop's household in France and the numerous attempts to bring about a reconciliation between the estranged churchman and his sovereign. Meanwhile, Edmund comes of age in the royal court. He sees first hand the rages of a king obsessed with protecting his royal power and extending it even into the realm of the Church. The King will not reconcile with his former friend due to Thomas's insistence on standing up for the honor of God. This book starts off slow but the climax is exceptionally well done--even if you know what's coming. In St. Thomas Becket, one can see a reflection of Christ, who fearlessly stood face-to-face with brutal, murderous men having nothing to defend himself with but the cross. All in all, this book is a fine introduction to the life of a very admirable man, and is easily read by young folks 12 and up.

I have enjoyed reading about Thomas Beckett, but my sons have been less enthusiastic about this book. It offers a view of what was going on in 1170 in England and France, but is a little hard to follow.

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