

petual merit that he opposed the *bestias curiæ*, or court wild beasts, as churchmen called the anticlerical party. John of Salisbury, on the other hand, describes him as a magnificent trifler, a scorner of law and the clergy, and given to scurrilous jesting at laymen's parties.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, except in the arbitrariness of his character, he showed no features of the Becket of Catholic tradition.

Omnipotent as Wolsey after him, he was no less magnificent in his outward bearing. His dress was gorgeous, his retinue of knights as splendid as the king's. His hospitalities were boundless. His expenditure was enormous. How the means for it were supplied is uncertain. The king was often on the continent, and at such times the chancellor governed everything. He retained his Church benefices—the archdeaconry of Canterbury certainly, and probably the rest. Vast sums fell irregularly into Chancery from wardships and vacant sees and abbeys.<sup>2</sup> All these Becket received, and never

<sup>1</sup> 'Dum magnificus erat nugator in curiâ, dum legis videbatur contemptor et cleri, dum scurriles cum potentioribus sectabatur ineptias, magnus habebatur, clarus erat et acceptus omnibus.'—John of Salisbury to the Bishop of Exeter. *Letters*, 1166.

<sup>2</sup> At one time he was said to hold the revenues of three vacant bishoprics. John of Salisbury writes to him: 'Fama est apud nos quod trium vacantium episcopatumum reditus ad liberationem tuam dominus Rex concesserit.' His patron Theobald seems to