

bishops should take public offenders out of custody, absolve them, and let them go, was not to be borne.<sup>1</sup> It was against law, against usage, against reason. It could not be. The laity were generally of the king's opinion. Of the bishops some four or five (if Foliot was right, nearly all of them) agreed privately with Becket, but dared not avow their opinions. The archbishop perceived that the game was lost unless he could himself see the pope and speak to him. In direct violation of his oath not to leave the realm without the king's consent, he attempted to steal over from Sandwich, but the boatmen recognized him midway across the Channel and brought him back.

<sup>1</sup> The objection of Becket to the submission of the clergy to the secular courts was not entirely disinterested. John of Oxford explained it to the Empress Matilda: 'Asserens universa quæcunque facilis mentis elatione studioque dominationis inchoata: ecclesiasticam etiam libertatem non ad animarum lu-  
crum, sed ad augmentum pecuniarum episcopos vestros intorquere tam ipse quam alii nuntii regis affirmant: in Angliâ namque delinquentium culpe apud episcopos accusatorum, non muletantur injunctioe pœnitentiæ, sed datione pecuniæ.'—Nicolas of Rouen to Becket. *Materials*, vol. v. p. 146.