

the persons and the baggage of any one whom there was ground for suspecting, and on reaching the coast Becket learned that the three prelates who were to be excommunicated, the Sheriff of Kent, Sir Ranulf de Broc, and Sir Reginald de Warenne, one of the council of the young king, were waiting for him at Dover to ascertain whether he was the bearer of any such explosive missile. The future martyr was not select in his language. 'Archdevils,' 'priests of Baal,' 'standard-bearers of the Balaamites,' 'children of perdition,' were the common phrases with which he described the unfortunate bishops who were thus trying to escape their sentences. To outwit their vigilance, a day or two before he meant to sail, he sent over a boy in a small vessel whose insignificant appearance would attract no attention. The boy or nun (for there is reason to suppose that the bearer was a woman disguised) presented himself suddenly before the Archbishop of York in St. Peter's Oratory at Dover, placed the letter of suspension in his hands, and disappeared before he had time to learn its contents. In the same hour, and by the same instrument, the still more terrible letters of excommunication were served on the Bishops of London and Salisbury. Their precautions had been baffled. The shots had been fired which