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Miles of Gloucester, Earl of Hereford

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MILES OF GLOUCESTER, EARL OF HEREFORD

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MILES of Gloucester,¹ earl of Hereford, is one of the best known figures of the reign of Stephen. His career is the central feature of the history of his family. The grant of the earldom of Hereford in 1141 was the climax of his career. The purpose of this essay is to review what may be said of his life and to examine some aspects of the history of the earldom of Hereford which are particularly relevant to such a review.²

I

Miles was the product of a family with a long tradition of administrative service under the Norman kings. The arrival of the Empress in England in 1139 marked a turning point in his life. He had the good fortune to end a lifetime spent in the royal service with a brief, hectic spell of outstanding services to the Angevin cause. The prominence which he then achieved secured some remembrance of his life. As a local landholder, as lord of the marcher lordships of Brecknock and Abergavenny, and as the most prominent person in the local administration of Gloucestershire he exercised great influence in the shires bordering the southern marches of Wales. His local strength was a valuable asset for the Angevins. It was responsible for the close link between the Empress and Earl Miles, and, in the next generation, between Henry Plantagenet and Earl Roger.

The Gloucester family³ was founded by Roger de Pitres, who was first established in Gloucestershire in the earliest years of

¹ My thanks are due to Mr H. M. Colvin, with whom many of the problems raised here have been discussed to my great advantage.

² For an account of Miles of Gloucester see J. H. Round, *D.N.B.*, XXI (1890), pp. 438-40. There are many scattered references to his family and career in Round's *Geoffrey de Mandeville* (1892) and *Ancient Charters* (*Pipe Roll Society*, vol. x, 1888). See also *Complete Peerage*, New Ed., VI, 446 ff.

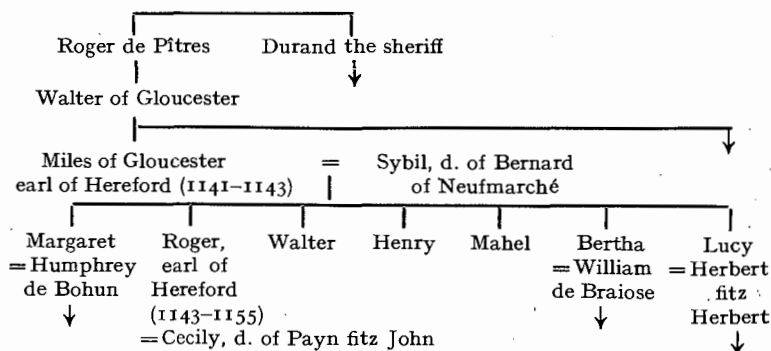
³ There is room for some confusion in the middle decades of the twelfth century between the 'Gloucester family' and their neighbours the earls of

the Conqueror's reign by William fitz Osbern, earl of Hereford. Roger de Pitres became sheriff of Gloucestershire and constable of Gloucester castle.¹ Both offices were held as hereditary possessions by his successors. He was dead by 1086. For a brief period his offices and the greater part of his lands were held by his brother, Durand, the Domesday sheriff of Gloucestershire, but the true line of succession was maintained by his son, Walter. Walter was the first of his family to use the style 'of Gloucester' regularly. He became a trusted royal official under Henry I, in whose reign he added to his local offices the greater one of a royal constable.²

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Gloucester. After the grant of the earldom of Hereford the family adopted the style 'of Hereford'.

The following genealogical table may be helpful.



The exact position of Miles's younger daughters in this table is not known. Margaret de Bohun was his eldest child. Giraldus Cambrensis also named a fifth son, William, who does not appear in any other context. (*Opera*, Rolls Series, VI., 29).

¹ Cf. a letter which Gilbert Foliot wrote between 1164 and 1179 in which he referred to 'Rogerum de Pitres cui post acquisitionem Angliae custodia castris Gloucestriae primo comissa est.' (*Hist. et Cart. Monasterii S. Petri Gloucestriae*, ed. W. H. Hart, Rolls Series, I, p. lxxvi).

² For the office of constable see the important article by G. H. White, 'The Constables under the Norman Kings', *Genealogist*, XXXVIII, pp. 113-27, and the summary of his views in 'The Household of the Norman Kings', *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th series, XXX, pp. 127-55.

It was as the son and heir of a royal servant of established reputation that Miles first became prominent in the reign of Henry I. He succeeded his father as royal constable, as hereditary sheriff of Gloucestershire and as constable of Gloucester castle. He was also a royal justice, and, almost certainly, local justiciar of Gloucestershire. He had reached the age of manhood by 1121, the year in which Henry I gave him in marriage Sybil, daughter and heiress of Bernard of Neufmarché, lord of Brecknock.¹ Miles succeeded to his hereditary offices before 1126.² His father had by that date retired to the monastery of Llanthony. Henry I issued a charter confirming the grant of part of Great Barrington (Glouc.) to the canons of Llanthony 'sicut Walterus de Gloucestria eam eisdem fratribus dedit et concessit et sicut Milo filius eius secum et post concessit.'³ Miles was first associated with his father in a gift which he afterwards confirmed. Both events had occurred before the royal charter was issued. It can be dated within the period 24 May 1125–15 August 1127.⁴ Miles had, however, succeeded his father earlier than the summer of 1127. In 1126 Robert, earl of Gloucester, and Urban, bishop of Llandaff, came to an agreement about all the claims which the bishop had against the earl and his men.⁵ This agreement was witnessed by Miles of Gloucester whose name followed those of Brian fitz Count and Robert d'Oilli, two men who, like himself, were royal constables. Although this style was not used here it is clear that, already by 1126, Miles had succeeded to his father's offices.

The local administration of Gloucestershire was controlled

¹ For the charter recording this grant see Round, *Ancient Charters*, p. 8, no. 6.

² The date hitherto accepted for this succession is c. 1128, or before 1129. (cf. Round, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 20, nos. 11, 12; J. Tait and V. H. Galbraith, *The Herefordshire Domesday*, P.R.S., N.S., 25. p. 126).

³ P.R.O., C 115/K2/6683. vol. A1 (Llant. A 1), III, no. 4. *Postea* would be a better reading but there is no indication that it was intended in the text.

⁴ The charter was attested by Simon, bishop of Worcester, consecrated 24 May 1125, and Richard, bishop of Hereford, died 15 August 1127.

⁵ J. G. Evans, *Liber Landavensis*, pp. 27–9; cf. G. T. Clark, *Cartae et Munimenta de Glamorgan*, I, 54–6. The agreement was recorded in a cyrograph, called in the text a charter and a 'contrascriptum.'

by the Gloucester family from the earliest years of Norman rule until 1159. Roger de Pitres and his successors were hereditary sheriffs of the county and constables of Gloucester castle. Miles and his son, Roger, were also, almost certainly, justiciars in their own shire. A charter issued by Stephen between 1135 and 1139 addressed to 'S. episcopo Wigornensis et iustic' et baronibus et vicecomite et ministris suis totius Glocestrescir' is confirmation that the office existed in Gloucestershire.¹ Miles was the magnate who, within those limits was most likely to have held this office. It does not appear in the charters issued to Miles by Stephen in the early months of the reign,² nor in Matilda's charter of 1141,³ where some mention of it might have been expected. But in the charter of confirmation which Henry II issued to Roger, earl of Hereford, there appears the clause 'concessi eidem Rogero omnes justicias et ministeria et tenementa que fuerunt patris sui.'⁴ The *ministeria* and *tenementa* of this charter can easily be explained. But what of the *justicias*? It can scarcely be maintained that the functions of an itinerant justice were intended. On the other hand the local justiciarship was regarded as an hereditary possession. The charters issued by Stephen and Matilda to Geoffrey de Mandeville emphasize Geoffrey's hereditary tenure of this office for his shires. In these charters the *justicias* used to designate the office was closely defined as the justiciarship of London, Middlesex, Essex or Hertfordshire.⁵ Despite the loose definition of Earl Roger's charter it is this office which appears to be at issue. The phrase used by the writer of the *Gesta Stephani* to describe Payn fitz John and Miles of Gloucester, 'ille Herefordensis et Salopesberiae iste Glocesterensis provinciae dominatum gerens,'⁶ since it refers to their

¹ P.R.O., D.L., Royal Charters, 10/13. Cf. for a similar address for Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, D.L.10/17, *Trans. B.G.A.S.*, IV, 319.

² Round, *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, pp. 11, 13 n.1.

³ Rymer, *Foedera* (Rec. Comm.), I, 14.

⁴ T. D. Hardy, *Rot. Chart.* (1837), p. 53.

⁵ Round, *op. cit.*, pp. 105 ff, 141, 142, 167.

⁶ R. Howlett, *Gesta Stephani, Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I* (Rolls Series), III, 16.

judicial activities, may be considered as a further indication of the office of local justiciar. The chain of evidence is not quite complete, but there is little doubt that Miles held this office.¹

The association between Miles and Payn fitz John was both personal and professional. Both were prominent as sheriffs and as itinerant justices in the western shires. The Pipe Roll for 1129-1130 bears witness to their activities,² for ameracements imposed by them were still outstanding in Gloucestershire, Staffordshire and Pembrokeshire. Between them they dominated the administration of justice from the Severn to the sea 'per omnes fines Angliae et Waloniae.'³ The record of their activities in Pembrokeshire in the Pipe Roll bears out the chronicler's claim. The two men arranged a marriage between their children, Roger, later earl of Hereford, and Cecily, who brought her husband a great inheritance. Together they were responsible for the appointment of Robert de Bethune, prior of Llanthony, as bishop of Hereford in 1131.⁴ A chance remark shows them together in Miles's marcher lordship of Brecknock. Giraldus Cambrensis was concerned to uphold the claims of the dispossessed lord of Brychieniog, Gruffydd ap Rhys. The birds of Llangorse lake would, he claimed, sing only for their true lord. For the Norman settlers they remained silent to the great embarrassment of Miles and of his neighbour Payn fitz John.⁵

This story implies that Miles was no stranger to his Welsh possessions, but it does not seem that he was greatly occupied with them. The absence from the Brecon cartulary of any charter issued by Earl Miles suggests that he had little interest

¹ Cf. H. W. C. Davis, *England under the Normans and Angevins*, p. 159 (quoted in another context, below p. 72, n. 2), where Miles is described as 'the sheriff and justiciar of Gloucestershire.'

² P.R. 31 Hy I, pp. 7, 73, 74, 78, 105, 136. Miles, acting no doubt in his capacity as constable, witnessed the quittance of two horses to Ivo de Heriz at Winchester. Cf. also the quittance which he witnessed for Hugh fitz Richard, this time with no indication of place (*ib.*, pp. 7, 105).

³ *Gesta*, *loc. cit.*

⁴ Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, II, pp. 304-5.

⁵ Gir. Camb. (Rolls Series), VI, pp. 34-5; cf. Lloyd, *History of Wales* (3rd ed.), II, p. 438.

in the priory or in the lordship of which it was part.¹ On the one occasion on which Miles is known to have played an active part in Welsh affairs he acted in response to a royal command. In 1136 Richard, lord of Ceredigion, one of the most powerful lords in the southern marches, was ambushed and killed by the Welsh during the period of unrest which was marked by the risings of Gruffydd ap Rhys in the south and of Owain and Cadwaladr, the sons of Gruffydd ap Cynan, in the north.² His wife, with a few retainers, found refuge at Cardigan castle where there were also gathered the survivors of the battle of Crug Mawr. Stephen sent Miles to effect the relief of the castle and the rescue of Richard fitz Gilbert's widow. This he achieved. His activity on this occasion arose, not from his own interest as a marcher lord, but from royal instructions.

The accession of Stephen was followed by the early adhesion of Miles of Gloucester, who, as Round has shown, did not wait for his powerful neighbour the earl of Gloucester to act before he recognised the new king. He was with the king at Reading at the beginning of 1136, and he appeared as Stephen's constable at the Easter court of that year.³ He remained loyal to Stephen until the arrival of the Empress in England in 1139. He was active on the king's behalf in Wales in 1136. He was with Stephen at the siege of Shrewsbury in 1138, a year in which he also welcomed the king on a visit to Gloucester, and he continued to be associated with Stephen for part of 1139. In February of that year Stephen appointed Gilbert Foliot as abbot of Gloucester at Miles's request.⁴ During 1138 the

¹ This stands in contrast to the fine series of charters which the priory obtained from Earl Roger, Cf. *Cartularium Prioratus S. Johannis Evangeliste de Brecon*, ed. R. W. Banks (London, 1884), reprinted from *Arch. Camb.*, 4th series, vols. XIII and XIV, *passim*.

² For an account of these events see Lloyd, *op. cit.*, II, 471 ff.

³ Round, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13, 262-63.

⁴ *Cont. Flor. Worc.* (ed. B. Thorpe, English Historical Society, 1848-9), II, p. 114. F. R. H. Weaver, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester, Anecdota Oxoniensia* (1908), p. 54, n. 1. One strand of the materials incorporated in the Continuation of Florence of Worcester's Chronicle contains matter relating to Gloucester, where a late copy of the Continuation was probably written.

Angevins assumed the offensive. Stephen's claims were challenged unsuccessfully at Rome, while in England his authority was challenged by a number of sporadic and equally unsuccessful rebellions. Throughout this period Miles remained loyal to the king.

Then in 1139 the Empress landed in England.¹ Robert, earl of Gloucester, left her at Arundel while with a small retinue he travelled to Bristol. He made contact with Miles of Gloucester and with Brian fitz Count, both of whom declared for the Empress. It is impossible to say when Miles decided to support the Empress, though it is a point which can hardly be ignored. Round saw in the charters which Stephen issued to him in the early part of 1136 'not so much a grant from the king to a subject as a *convencio* between equal powers'.² Such a view gives colour to the assumption that from the beginning of the reign Miles was ready to abandon a king whom he had accepted only with reservations. Miles did not attest many royal charters between 1135 and 1139 which might be taken as an indication that he kept aloof from the king's court, but there is ample

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(Ms. Trinity Coll. Dubl., no. 503 (E. 6.4), Weaver, pp. 5-6.) The writer was in a position to be well informed about local affairs at or near Gloucester. Unlike John of Worcester he was sympathetic to the Empress. For the period after 1140 his version is the source of the Continuation. The late date of the Ms. combined with an unreliable chronology make it necessary to treat the source with caution. Its readings were properly rejected as interpolations in the Chronicle of John of Worcester. Many of them are important for the life of Miles of Gloucester. Especially notable are the accounts of Stephen's visit to Gloucester and of the appointment of Gilbert Foliot. Despite its weaknesses this source has an independent value. It cannot be ignored.

¹ For the problems connected with the date of her arrival see Round, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-83, Appendix E, 'The Arrival of the Empress', which also contains a useful reconstruction of the events which followed her arrival.

² Round, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Cf. A. L. Poole, *Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, p. 134. H. W. C. Davis carried this view to the point of writing that in 1139 'Miles of Gloucester threw off the mask, received the Empress in the city, and placed at her disposal the shires which he controlled'. (*England under the Normans and Angevins*, p. 165). Of the events of 1138 he had written 'Stephen missed his opportunity. He failed to secure the friendship of Miles, the sheriff and justiciar of Gloucestershire . . .', a view which is not borne out by the evidence relating to Miles's life. (*ib.*, p. 159).

evidence that he was actively engaged on the king's business during this period. From the beginning of the reign, too, Miles acted independently of the earl of Gloucester. In 1138 he gave no countenance to the forces opposed to the king, while those who followed the earl of Gloucester rebelled. As late as that date his adherence to Matilda's cause was something to be won, not to be taken for granted. I suspect that he was not prepared in any circumstances to move unless the Empress herself were in England, and that part of the necessity for the earl of Gloucester's hazardous journey to Bristol in 1139 lay in the need to make certain of his aid as soon as possible. By the autumn of 1139, however, Miles had made up his mind. At Bristol he recognized Matilda as the rightful heir of England. He escorted her to Gloucester where he did homage to her and became her liege man.¹ From that liege homage he did not swerve for the rest of his life. His ability as a military commander was at the service of the Empress. He himself was frequently, though not constantly, in attendance upon her. His advice on certain crucial occasions was accepted and adopted.

He played a vital part in the initial successes of the Angevin cause. Stephen laid siege to Wallingford where he left a small containing force while he marched to the West. He captured Miles's fortress at South Cerney (Glos.) and regained possession of the stronghold of Malmesbury. The king was in a position to make a dangerous thrust into the heart of the country held for the Empress. But, as Round wrote, he was 'decoyed still further south' by Humphrey de Bohun, son-in-law of Miles of Gloucester, who garrisoned his castle at Trowbridge (Wilts.) against the king. While Stephen delayed in the south Miles was free to march to the relief of Wallingford which he achieved in a night attack. Returning to the West he attacked the castles held by Stephen and his supporters in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. Hereford and its castle were secured for the Empress and became for the rest of the reign one of the principal centres of the earls of Hereford. Meanwhile Worcester was taken and given

¹ Cf. Round, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-6.

to the sack. In 1140 after attacking Winchcombe, the greater part of which was burned, Miles tried to regain possession of Sudeley (Glouc.) which had been captured by the earl of Worcester in the last weeks of 1139. Here he was repulsed and his forces suffered some casualties.¹ As the year 1141 opened he was amongst those who marched to the relief of Lincoln and he played some part in the battle which delivered Stephen as a prisoner into the hands of the earl of Gloucester in February. The Empress was at Gloucester during these weeks and it was to Miles's castle that Stephen was first taken. There it was decided that he should be kept in captivity at Bristol.²

The defeat and capture of Stephen made it possible for the Empress to seek wider recognition. She set out on the journey which was to take her to Winchester and to London during her brief period of supremacy. Miles was with her at Wherwell where he swore that her oath to the legate should be maintained,³ but at some date before her entry into London he left her entourage and returned to Gloucester. Expelled from London, Matilda, with the king of the Scots and the earl of Gloucester, fled to Oxford. Thence she pushed on to Gloucester. There she was persuaded by Miles to return at once to Oxford and to use that town as a rallying point for her scattered forces. He returned to Oxford with her and it was there, on 25 July 1141, that she raised him to the dignity of an earl. At the end of the month she set out to restore her fortunes by a direct attack on Winchester and on the legate Henry of Blois. The bishop sent an appeal for help to Stephen's capable and energetic queen whose prompt response placed the Empress at an immediate disadvantage. She had to maintain her siege of the bishop's palace, to resist the vigorous attempts made by the Queen to dislodge the Angevins, and to keep open, with inadequate forces, her communications with the West. An incident arising from this stern necessity proved to be the crisis

¹ *Cont. Flor. Worc.*, II, p. 123; Weaver, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

² Cf. Round, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³ Will. Malmes, II, p. 573. The course of events during these weeks is discussed by Round, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-80.

of the campaign and, for the Empress, the prelude to disaster. The destruction by the royalists of John the Marshal's small force at Wherwell nunnery was followed by the decision to withdraw from Winchester. Within a short space of time an orderly withdrawal had given way to confusion and headlong flight. While the earl of Gloucester commanded a rearguard action the Empress fled, first to Devizes, then, for greater safety, to Gloucester. What part Earl Miles played in this campaign is not known. He was with the Empress at Winchester, but he did not accompany her on her flight. He was lucky to evade capture and to reach the safety of his own stronghold at Gloucester.¹

The last months of his life were dominated by a struggle which arose from his attempts to gain financial support for the Empress. He clashed violently with Robert de Bethune, bishop of Hereford.² The earl attempted to impose new financial burdens on the churches which lay in the area where he held sway. The bishop pleaded immunity for the wealth of his churches as part of the 'res ecclesiastica.' When Miles refused to admit this claim the bishop threatened excommunication. The earl sent his men to plunder the resources of the diocese and in retaliation the bishop promulgated his sentence against Miles and placed his lands under an interdict. In this dispute Gilbert Foliot, then abbot of Gloucester, supported the earl, who had close associations with his abbey.³ Two of his letters relating to this struggle have survived. The first was addressed to the legate, Henry of Blois.⁴ It contained a full account of the process against Miles. It was designed to present the earl in the most favourable light possible. The actions which led to Bishop Robert's sentence were carefully avoided. Gilbert was concerned instead with the manner in which the sentence had been promulgated. He argued that Miles had acted with the utmost propriety and that arrangements were made for postponing the

¹ *Cont. Flor. Worc.*, II, p. 135. Cf. Round, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

² There is an account of the struggle in the *Gesta*, pp. 101-3.

³ The two men were related but the exact kinship between them is not known.

⁴ *Gilberti ex abbate Glocestriae episcopi primum Herefordiensis deinde Londoniensis epistolae* (ed. Giles), I, 8, no. 3.

hearing of the case for any necessity arising from official duties. A first postponement was arranged mutually and a second day appointed for the case. Before that day arrived the earl invoked their arrangement to postpone the day yet again. The bishop ignored his action and promulgated his sentence without delay. He also required the bishop of Worcester to publish the sentence in the churches of Gloucester, which lay outside his own jurisdiction. The earl then made an attempt to have the case transferred from the court of the bishop of Hereford to that of the bishop of Worcester. Lest he should be suspected of any subterfuge or duplicity in this manoeuvre he called to his support three influential churchmen, the abbot of Tewkesbury, the prior of Llanthony,¹ and Gilbert Foliot. In the event neither the earl's humility nor the propriety which he claimed for his actions, nor the good faith of these dignitaries could influence the decision or secure the transference of the case to another diocese. Judgment was given against Miles and an interdict was imposed on his lands. The abbot's letter was intended to persuade the legate to moderate the sentence passed against Miles. It contained a veiled threat. The matter should, the abbot claimed, be settled within the limits of the legate's jurisdiction. The alternative, as he reminded the bishop of Winchester, was an appeal to Rome. He did not add that there the Angevins might hope to secure a favourable hearing. The second letter which Gilbert wrote on this occasion referred to 'the earl of Hereford' without further definition.² In it he used the style of abbot of Gloucester which provides the only indication of date. It belongs to the period 1139-1148 and there can be little doubt that it refers to this dispute.³ It was not a formal

¹ This was presumably William of Wycombe, prior of Llanthony Secunda, whose part in the struggle was later used, and perhaps distorted, by the canons of the house to discredit him and to secure his removal. (Cf. *V.C.H. Glouc.*, II, p. 88; *Monasticon*, v, pp. 132-3).

² *Gilberti [Foliot] Epistolae* (ed. Giles), I, 13, no. 6.

³ As bishop of Hereford Gilbert was later involved in disputes with Roger, earl of Hereford. There is room for some confusion in the letters which refer to both disputes. This can be resolved partly by the limits of date of the letters, and partly by the contrast in tone between those which refer to Miles and those which refer to his son.

document but a personal appeal. The abbot described the way in which the interdict affected his own house. He expressed his grief that he should have to regard as an enemy the earl who was the most obvious person to undertake the protection of the monastery in his own absence.

How far Miles and his advisers carried this case we do not know. By the end of 1143 no decision had been reached. On 25 December while he was hunting in the Forest of Dean, Miles was killed, accidentally shot by one of his companions.¹ He was then still under the ban of the church.² Controversy raged over the right to bury his body, which was claimed by the monks of Gloucester, and by the canons of his own foundation, Llanthony Secunda.³ He was buried at Llanthony.

The few incidents of Earl Miles's life which are adequately recorded represent only a small part of his activities. They suggest his quality but they do not provide a full picture of the man. He was, most certainly, able; and he was loyal. It was generally recognized that the grant of the earldom of Hereford was a recognition of that loyalty and of the great services which he had rendered to the Angevin cause.

The Continuator of the Chronicle of Florence of Worcester gives an interesting account of the services which had earned that honour. He makes the claim that the Empress was entirely dependent upon Miles of Gloucester's generosity throughout her stay in England, a claim which he has heard Miles himself make.⁴ It is a boast for which there is some foundation in Matilda's frequent visits to Gloucester. Behind its exaggeration lies a core of truth. The strength of the Angevin party in

¹ *Gesta*, p. 103; *Brut y Tywysogion*, ed. J. W. ab Ithel (Rolls Series), p. 185; *Annals of Tewkesbury, Annales Monastici* ed. H. Luard (Rolls Series), I, 46.

² *Gesta*, p. 103.

³ *Hist. et Cart. Monasterii S. Petri Gloucestriae*, ed. W. H. Hart (Rolls Series), I, lxxv-lxxviii.

⁴ *Cont. Flor. Worc.*, II, pp. 132-3; Et quia eiusdem Milonis praecipue fruebatur consilio et fovebatur auxilio utpote quae eatenus nec unius diei victum nec mensae ipsius apparatus aliunde quam ex ipsius munificentia sive providentia acceperat sicut ex ipsius Milonis ore audivimus, ut eum suo arctius vinceret ministerio, comitatum ei Herefordensem tunc ibi posita pro magnae remunerationis contulit praemio.

England rested largely on the local power of the earls of Gloucester and Hereford. The Continuator here gave the greater prominence to the earl of Hereford just as William of Malmesbury gave the greater prominence to the earl of Gloucester. The writer of the *Gesta Stephani*, too, held Earl Miles in high estimation.¹ He presents him as an elder statesman standing in the place of a father to the Empress, a rôle which, with a woman of her temperament, few can have envied him. There is an implication that he was mainly responsible for such success as the Empress could claim. To uphold this implication it would be necessary to ignore completely the earl of Gloucester's share in the promotion of Matilda's cause. Indeed the whole passage would be consistent as a description of the earl of Gloucester.² One writer, Walter Map, whose roots lay in Herefordshire, made the claim that Miles was the prime mover behind Matilda's attempt to gain the crown of England.³ The claim can easily be dismissed on internal evidence. It may be that Walter Map has preserved a local tradition which, though false as an assessment of Miles's contribution to the Angevin cause, is not without value as an indication of the reputation which he gained and retained among his own people.

II

The creation of the earldom of Hereford for Miles of Gloucester was, in part, a recognition of the *parvenu*. The traditions of an earlier Norman earldom of Hereford were ignored. But that earldom, created for William fitz Osbern, was not forgotten. Its traditions had some influence upon the course of events in Herefordshire during the Anarchy. One claim to the lands and

¹ *Gesta*, p. 60.

² It is tempting to believe that there may have been a distinction between the earl of Gloucester as the man responsible for planning the strategy of the Angevin enterprise and the earl of Hereford as the man responsible for the successful execution of such schemes in the field. But such a distinction is not borne out by the evidence.

³ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. M. R. James, *Anecdota Oxoniensia* (1914), p. 236.

honours of William fitz Osbern was put forward and actively pursued by Robert Beaumont, earl of Leicester, whose wife, Amicia, was descended from William fitz Osbern through his daughter, Emma, and her husband, Ralph de Gael. Amicia had rather stronger claims to the Norman lands of her great ancestor.¹ Earl Robert made a determined effort to gain his wife's inheritance on both sides of the channel. He received from Stephen the well-known charter which conferred upon him the 'comitatus' of Hereford.² H. W. C. Davis ascribed this charter to the period 1140-1145. Within these limits he considered that there were two possible dates to which it might be assigned. The later date is 1144, when Stephen was campaigning against Roger, earl of Hereford. But since by that date 'the Beaumonts had lapsed into inactivity' he preferred the earlier date, 1140, when Miles was actively engaged against the king and the future allegiance of Herefordshire was in the balance. Though this date has been questioned it has not been disproved.³ The nature of the grant recorded in this charter has aroused greater controversy. Professor Davis, following distinguished predecessors, regarded it as a grant of the earldom of Hereford.⁴

¹ When William fitz Osbern died in 1071 his earldom, with his English possessions, passed to his son, Roger de Breteuil. His Norman honours passed to his son, William de Breteuil, who was succeeded by an illegitimate son, Eustace. Eustace forfeited his lands to Henry I who granted them to Ralph de Gael. They formed part of the dower of Amicia who was intended as a bride for Henry I's bastard son, Richard. After Richard's death in the tragedy of the White Ship in 1120, Amicia was given in marriage to Robert, earl of Leicester. His claims to these Norman lands rested, therefore, on stronger grounds than an hereditary claim derived through the female line from William fitz Osbern.

² P.R.O., D.L. 10, no. 4. The charter has been printed frequently. Cf. Madox, *Exchequer*, II, p. 138; Nichols, *History of Leic.*, I, p. 25; Davis, 'Some documents of the Anarchy,' *Essays . . . presented to R. L. Poole*, p. 173. Davis's text was taken from a transcript in Ashmole Ms. 848, f. 68. The original is not seriously damaged and can be read with ease.

³ It was challenged by G. H. White, *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th series, XIII, p. 74), who later withdrew his objections. (*ib.*, XVII, pp. 33-4).

⁴ Earlier the same view had been upheld, notably by Eyton (*Antiquities of Shropshire*, IV, pp. 201, 306; V, pp. 246, 247), by Howlett (*Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, III, pp. xxxiii, li), and by L. W. Vernon Harcourt (*His Grace the Steward and Trial by Peers*, p. 38, n. 4).

Mr G. H. White has, however, argued convincingly that it was a grant of the shire, but not of the earldom of Hereford.¹

There can scarcely have been great hopes that this grant could be made effective. From the end of 1139 Miles of Gloucester, and after him his son, Roger, dominated Herefordshire.² Stephen and the earl of Leicester made a bargain which offered to the king an opportunity for challenging, and perhaps destroying, the strong local power of Miles of Gloucester, and to the earl an opportunity to reclaim, if he were successful, his wife's inheritance. In the event neither the king nor the earl gained very much from it. But the grant does not seem to have been merely formal. When, between 1147 and 1154, Roger, earl of Hereford, and William, earl of Gloucester, entered into a treaty of friendship they did so with the reservation 'saluo hostagio in quo Rogerus comes Herefordie posuit Willelmum comitem Gloucesterie erga Robertum comitem Legrecestrie.'³ This hints at a personal agreement between the earls of Leicester and Hereford similar to those baronial agreements to maintain peace which have survived. It suggests that Earl Robert made some attempt to establish himself in Herefordshire. Though he accepted defeat he did not do so without some struggle. If Stephen's grant was not made effective it was not, apparently, for want of effort on the part of the earl of Leicester. It is also clear that Earl Robert's claims on William fitz Obsern's inheritance did not remain an insuperable barrier between himself and the earl of Hereford.

III

Certainly not less interesting is a tenurial relationship which, during the twelfth century, linked the families of the earls of

¹ *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th series, XIII, pp. 72-7. Cf. Stenton, *English Feudalism*, p. 76.

² Payn fitz John, who more than any other magnate dominated Herefordshire at the end of Henry I's reign was killed fighting the Welsh in 1137. He was succeeded by Roger, later earl of Hereford.

³ P.R.O., Ancient Deeds, D.L. 25, no. 4. *Deputy Keeper's Reports*, no. 35, Appendix, p. 2.

Hereford of the first and second creations.¹ It is one of the curiosities of feudal history that a direct descendant of William fitz Osbern was recognized as the lord of Miles of Gloucester. The identity of the descendants of William fitz Osbern's son, Roger de Breteuil, earl of Hereford was established by Round.² Earl Roger rebelled against the Conqueror in 1075 at that 'Bride Ale that was many men's bale.'³ He forfeited his dignities and possessions and was sentenced to imprisonment. His sons, Reginald and Roger, were said to be struggling to regain the king's favour in the reign of Henry I.⁴ Their father's rashness had condemned them to the loss of their great inheritance, and to an obscurity which, for contemporaries, was unrelieved. But this Reginald, son of the earl, married Emmeline, daughter and eventually heiress of Hamelin de Ballon. As lords of Hamelin's modest but not inconsiderable fief Reginald and his heirs enjoyed some security and emerged from the obscurity to which they had been condemned. At least the identification of Reginald as 'son of the earl' was a reminder of his origin and of the inheritance which might have been his.

Between 1144 and 1148 Walter of Hereford, son of Earl Miles, gave the manor of Alvington (Glouc.) to Llanthony Secunda.⁵ A few years later, between 1159 and 1160, at Dudston (Glouc.), Walter was required to do fealty for this manor to William, son

¹ The earliest member of the Gloucester family, Roger de Pitres, had been a member of William fitz Osbern's following, and had held land of the great earl. Such links were severed on Earl Roger's forfeiture in 1075.

² 'The Family of Ballon and the Conquest of South Wales,' *Studies in Peerage and Family History*, pp. 181-215.

³ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, versions 'D', s.a. 1076, and 'E', s.a. 1075.

⁴ Ordericus Vitalis, *Hist. Eccles.*, ed. Le Prevost, II, pp. 264-5; quoted, Round, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

⁵ Llant. A1, IV, no. 1; a charter which can be dated by Walter's style as 'Walterus filius Milonis comitis' which he used before the death of his brother, Earl Roger; and by the attestations of Earl Roger (succeeded Christmas, 1143), and of Robert de Bethune, bishop of Hereford (died 1148). Cf. also confirmations issued by Walter of Hereford relating to Alvington (*ib.*, IV, nos. 96, 102). The latter confirmation indicates that Bishop Robert had secured a papal confirmation of the grant from Eugenius III (1145-1153).

Alvington was assessed at six hides and valued at £4 in 1086, when it was held by Thurstin fitz-Rolf. It is in keeping with Round's discovery that the lands of

of Reginald, son of the earl.¹ At some time between 1155 and 1160 William gave seisin of this manor to Walter of Hereford, possibly on the same occasion as the performance of fealty.² The record of these two acts which followed Walter's grant to Llanthony suggests that his lord refused to consent to this gift to a religious house. He took steps to reinforce the tenurial relationship which had existed in Alvington before the canons of Llanthony gained any interest in the manor. At the end of the century a second Reginald de Ballon made another attempt to regain possession of Alvington, but he, too, was unsuccessful.³

The connection between Walter of Hereford and William, son of Reginald, at Alvington is clear. So, also, is the evidence which points to the fact that it was Walter of Hereford who first gave the manor to Llanthony. There is, however, nothing in the charter evidence to suggest that Walter was the first of his family to hold Alvington. This assumes considerable importance in view of an entry in the list of tenants in Herefordshire which forms part of Balliol Ms. 350.⁴ This list relates to the period

continued from p. 81

Thurstin fitz Rolf provided the endowment of the Ballon family, that Alvington should appear in his, and later their, possession. It confirms what Round suspected, but could not establish, that Hamelin de Ballon as well as his brother, Wynebald, was given lands from Thurstin's fee. (Round, *op. cit.*, p. 190.) Difficulties are raised by the Domesday evidence because in Domesday Book Thurstin's manor is entered in Herefordshire as part of *Bremesse* hundred. (D.B., I, 185v; *Herefordshire Domesday*, p. 57.) Round identified this Domesday *Alwintune* tentatively as Alton Cross, near Ross, (Heref.) (V. C. H. Heref. I, p. 336). Tait identified it as Alvington (Glouc.) (*Heref. Domesday*, p. 104). The hidage mentioned in Domesday and in a later source (discussed in the text), the tenurial links, and, in particular, Llanthony's tenure help to confirm Tait's identification. In 1316 when the prior of Llanthony was said to be lord of Alvington, the manor was correctly included under Gloucestershire. (*Feudal Aids*, II, p. 273).

¹ Llant. AI, IV, no. 99.

² *ib.*, IV, no. 95.

³ He quitclaimed the manor by charter and by final concord. (Llant. AI, IV, nos. 2, 120). The concord which was issued on 14 October 1197 has not been printed.

⁴ Edited by J. Tait and V. H. Galbraith *The Herefordshire Domesday*, P.R.S., N.S., vol. 25.

c. 1126-1141¹. It names those who held lands in Herefordshire during that period. Miles of Gloucester was said to hold 'totum tenementum Durandi de Glocestria et preterea Aluinton' canonic' de Lant' de vj hidis.'² The list thus records that Alvington was held by Miles of Gloucester, but it also identifies his manor by reference to the canons of Llanthony, a form of identification which, so far as the existing evidence goes, could not have been used until 1144-1148.³ A considerable interval occurred between the period covered by the list of tenants (c. 1126-1141) and the date at which it was written in its present form (c. 1160-1170). It seems highly probable that the association of the canons of Llanthony with Alvington in this list is due to the incorporation in a late recension of marginalia added to an earlier version of the list of tenants.⁴ What the list does establish is that Miles himself held Alvington. He must have held it as a tenant of Reginald, son of the earl, who occurs as late as 1145-1146.⁵ Reginald's long life spanned the interval between the forfeiture of Roger de Breteuil in 1075 and the creation of Miles of Gloucester's earldom in 1141. For part of that interval the two families were linked by a tenurial bond in this manor. When he became earl of Hereford Miles knew, and may have had some personal contact with the man in whom rested the strongest hereditary claim to William fitz Osbern's

¹ The limits of date are provided by the appearance of the name of Miles of Gloucester in this list. For the earlier limit see above p. 68. The later limit is taken from the creation of the earldom of Hereford. The defection of Miles from Stephen in 1139 provides a slightly earlier limit which is also possible.

² *ib.*, p. 79. This should, I think, be extended 'canonicorum de Lantonía'.

³ The evidence is strong. Then, too, the grants made by Miles and his family to Llanthony are well recorded in the Llanthony cartularies, and it is unlikely that among so many charters this grant, had it been made earlier, would have been omitted. Walter of Hereford held Alvington before he succeeded to his patrimony in 1155. The manor was used to provide for a younger son without decreasing the family's tenure in chief. Since it was clearly set aside for this purpose it is unlikely that it should have been alienated before 1143.

⁴ The list may have been used in the same way as the main text of Balliol Ms. 350, a copy of the Domesday description of Herefordshire, annotated by twelfth century scribes, and often identifying later tenants of manors which had changed hands.

⁵ Round, *op. cit.*, p. 202, n. 1.

earldom and lands. Reginald ultimately outlived the man who had acquired his family's earldom. Both events would, no doubt, have afforded a certain satisfaction to the monk of St. Evroult who drew the moral from the fall of Roger de Breteuil and the eclipse of William fitz Osbern's dynasty.

IV

The creation of the earldom of Hereford gave tangible form to the edifice of power which Miles and his predecessors had built up over three generations. For the remaining years of Stephen's reign Earl Roger maintained the local autonomy which his father had established and, though still a young man, proved himself to be a powerful ally and a dangerous enemy. But in 1155, after so long an association between his own family and the Angevins, he was driven to rebellion against Henry II. It was not merely an act of folly; there was more to it than that. But its consequences were disastrous. He was formally reconciled with the king, but within a matter of months he was dead. This combination of events, his rebellion, his reconciliation and his early death gave the crown an opportunity to strike hard at a source of potential danger. His earldom was suppressed, not to be revived until the beginning of the 13th century. The earldom of Hereford conferred on Miles of Gloucester in 1141 was a product of the peculiar conditions which prevailed during the Anarchy. It survived the disappearance of those peculiar conditions only by a matter of months. That strong local autonomy which Miles and his son had made the basis of a stubborn and successful resistance to Stephen was not destined to remain as a feature of the new reign.