

RALEIGH LECTURE ON HISTORY

THE PLACE OF HENRY I IN ENGLISH HISTORY¹

By R. W. SOUTHERN

Fellow of the Academy

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I

NO English king in a reign of comparable length has left so faint an imprint on the popular imagination or even on the minds of students of history as Henry I. Yet the materials for his reign are neither scarce nor unexciting; they are more varied than for any previous period, and they tell a story of new beginnings in many fields. The earliest documents in the archives of several of the greatest families in our history go back to this reign; the earliest documents of dozens of religious houses belong to the same period. It is the first, and one of the greatest ages of English historical scholarship: if it produced nothing equal to Bede, yet what it produced was the work, not of a single supreme scholar, but of many hands working to meet a widely felt need. At the same time, we have the beginnings of the only purely English religious order; the beginnings of the University of Oxford; the earliest English scholastic writers; the rebirth of English science after a long decline. We have our first Charter of Liberties, which became the immediate inspiration of Magna Carta; the first foreign treaty in our history, embodying a line of thought only extinguished in 1914;² the first victory of foot-soldiers over mounted knights, foreshadowing in several particulars the victories of Crecy and Agincourt.³ We have the first

¹ My thanks are due to Mr. T. H. Aston, Professor V. H. Galbraith, and Dr. R. W. Hunt for their criticisms and help in the preparation of this lecture.

² *Foedera*, i. 7, and better in F. Vercauteren, *Actes des Comtes de Flandre, 1071-1128*, 1938. There has been a good deal of confusion about the date and details of this treaty. The correct date is 10 March 1101 (*Regesta*, no. 515), and the sum Henry I paid for the various benefits he was promised was £500 a year. In 1110 the treaty was renewed with reduced benefits, and the pension was reduced to 400 marks a year (*Regesta*, no. 941).

³ For Henry's tactics at the battle of Tinchebrai in 1106 see *E.H.R.* xxv, 1910, p. 296, and for the battle of Brémule in 1119 see Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, ed. A. Molinier, p. 91. At Brémule Henry drew up his force of knights under cover, placed ambushes to jump out unexpectedly, dismounted some knights as leaders of the infantry, and 'provided for himself with every military strategem'; Louis disdained all strategem and rushed on the enemy *indiscrete sed audacissime*.

treatise on English law; the first royal financial accounts; the first documents of manorial administration. For the first time it is possible to grasp in some detail the complexity of English government and society.

Why then have the reign and the ruler left so ambiguous an impression? No doubt the main reason is the absence of large personalities, great events, and clearly intelligible policies. Nothing happened of sufficient size to concentrate the attention of historians and to draw together the scattered impressions left by a multitude of unimportant details. Of all the general assessments of the reign, that of Stubbs, written nearly a hundred years ago, still remains the most penetrating.¹ Stubbs misunderstood many of the details, and his generalizations need a radical restatement; but what he tried to say is something which needs to be said. He saw the leading characteristic of the reign in the union of the king and the English people for the repression of feudal violence and the resuscitation of English institutions. Henry I, he says, 'from the first day of his reign, found himself compelled to seek the support of the native English'; 'during the greatest part of his reign he was not only in the closest alliance with the clergy, but the English people, who saw in the clergy their truest friends and champions, uniformly supported him'; and Henry's gratitude, in Stubbs's view, showed itself in the restoration of the local courts of hundred and shire, in the granting of municipal privileges, in strengthening the hands of Anselm and the reforming prelates, and in maintaining good peace by severe and even-handed justice. These are great claims, but it must be admitted that in detail not one of them will bear inspection. Henry had nothing to fear from the English people; there is not the slightest evidence that any one of his actions was taken to enlist or reward their support. He did not restore the local courts; they did not need restoration. He did all he could to weaken the position of Anselm. He gave municipal privileges as sparingly as possible, and purely for financial gain; and his severe and even-handed justice was more severe than either even-handed or just. Why then is Stubbs's assessment of the reign still worth reading?

In the first place, Stubbs was translating into language intelligible to himself and his readers the universally favourable estimate of Henry contained in all contemporary accounts. Secondly he was giving expression to a feeling which everyone who studies the reign cannot resist: looking to the future, it is

¹ *Constitutional History*, i. § 110.

here, we feel, that the history of England begins—a history which is neither that of the Norman conquerors, nor that of the Anglo-Saxons, but a new creation. And looking to the past, even if we disbelieve in Henry's goodwill to the English, we cannot help seeing that his reign preserved some of the fundamental features of old English society which the Conquest had threatened to destroy. This is the message of Stubbs, and I believe it has the truth of the matter. But if so, it is clear that his meaning must be expressed in very different terms and illustrated by facts very different from those which he chose as his illustrations.

II

We may look first towards the future. If we are right in thinking that the importance of Henry I in English history lies in his success in establishing certain broad lines of development which persisted for several centuries, we may expect to find some traces of this in the work of modern historians. Nor are we disappointed. A medievalist, who reads the works on modern English history which have caused most stir in recent years, has a curious feeling of having been there before. Namier and Tawney, and the host of supporters and opponents who have followed them, have succeeded in one unacknowledged aim: they have made modern history quite surprisingly medieval. They have described their subject in terms with which any medievalist is familiar from the time of Henry I onwards. The subjects with which they have dealt—patronage as an expedient of government and a means of social climbing, the trade in wardships and marriages, the debts of great landlords, the rise and fall of landed families, the intricate web of landlordly rights and interests as determinants of social change—these things are the very stuff of medieval history, observable in abundant detail from the early twelfth century but not before. It is strange that more attention has not been paid to this fact. If he had borne it in mind Tawney could never have fallen into the error of supposing that the principles of feudal land-ownership went down before the practice of economic efficiency only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; he could never have approved the hair-brained analysis of Thomas Wilson, who pretended that it was only in his own day that 'gentlemen, who were wont to addict themselves to the warres, are now for the most part growen to become good husbandes and knowe as well how to improve their lands to the uttermost as the farmer or

countryman'.¹ Wilson's farrago of misunderstandings, together with certain residual traces of Marxist doctrine, led Tawney astray. But looking at his account of social change from the far viewpoint of Henry I's reign, his main error lay not in his statistics but in his perspective. It lay in ascribing to so late a period as the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries developments in society which are perfectly familiar and proceed along very similar lines nearly 500 years earlier. Whether the gentry were rising or falling in the century before 1640, they had certainly played a far more important part in England since the twelfth century than anywhere else in Europe. And much of the credit for this—if it is a credit—must, as I shall try to show, be given to Henry I.

Henry I is also a significant figure in the history of another aspect of government which has greatly exercised modern historians—I mean the history of patronage as an instrument of government. If the history of patronage ever comes to be written, it will have to begin in the early twelfth century; and the same is true of that aspect of royal patronage on which Professor Trevor-Roper has lately insisted²—its importance as a factor in social change. Both these aspects of patronage, the governmental and the social, are of the very greatest importance in the Middle Ages. It would be an exaggeration to say that it was Henry I who made them so; but it was he who first directed the whole range of government patronage with which we are later familiar; it is under him that we can first observe the effects at all closely. It was Namier's greatest service to English history that he described with sympathy and vast knowledge, the system of patronage and its place in the work of government at the moment of its greatest articulation before the rise of parties and principles for ever destroyed it. In its details, the system of the eighteenth century is very far from that of the twelfth. But the motives of the men who took part in government 'to make a figure', to better their families and their friends, and to emerge richer than when they began, these motives are found perfectly developed—they needed no long period of evolution—in the reign of Henry I. Indeed, for what other reasons could men indulge in so dangerous, laborious, and sordid a pursuit. Ideals and principles may only faintly tinge the practice of politics in 1760; they are

¹ 'The Rise of the Gentry 1558-1640', *Economic History Review*, xi, 1941. The quotation is from Thomas Wilson's *State of England, A.D. 1600* (ed. F. J. Fisher, Camden Series, 1936, p. 18).

² *The Gentry 1540-1640* (*Economic History Review Supplement*, 1).

imperceptible in the secular government of Henry I. No king has been a more devoted Namierite than he. The men who sat at his Exchequer and were exempt from Danegeld, were in a position very similar to the recipients of secret-service money in the eighteenth century who were exempt from land-tax; they were both better off by about two shillings in the pound. And a score of Henry's friends can be found who might have used the language with which Charles Jenkinson in 1770 replied to Townshend's sneer that his pompous manner did not become 'a gentleman risen from the situation he has done': 'My rise is from as old a family as his own. I have risen by industry, by attention to duty, and by every honourable means I could devise.'¹ Some of them too, like Jenkinson, lived to become earls; but Henry I would have thought this was going too far, and perhaps George III thought the same.

In an earlier Raleigh Lecture Sir John Neale described the system of royal patronage in the government of Queen Elizabeth. Compared with the well-regulated machine of the eighteenth century, what he revealed was an immense and chaotic jungle of offices, bribes, and tips supporting the edifice of government. This is much nearer to the medieval situation: those who operated in this jungle did so at great risk and exposed themselves to much greater unpopularity than the quiet swallowers of pensions in the government of George III. Elizabeth's beneficiaries had to operate, so to speak, in the field, handling lands, debts, wardships, and monopolies and going through the whole grisly business in person of making a profit at someone else's expense. The situation is typical of a much earlier period; it is only the chaos which has grown. A twelfth-century ruler, having less to give, could not have afforded to leave so much to the play of factions as Elizabeth was forced to do; but, in the more restricted conditions of his time, Henry I operated a machine quite as potent as that of Elizabeth. What Neale says about the reign of Elizabeth can be applied with only minor modifications to that of Henry I, but only with very great modifications to any earlier period:

There were hundreds of offices in her gift, and others which could be diverted to her use by the device of recommendatory letters or verbal orders, sometimes amiable in tone, sometimes hectoring, but at all times difficult, if not dangerous, to resist. There were also royal lands to be leased or sold, or to be granted as reward for services; a source of great wealth and most eagerly solicited. Finally there were all those

¹ Quoted in *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, p. 11.

grants by letters patent, whether charters, licences, monopolies, or whatever they were, which conferred some benefit on the recipient.¹

All these elements—even the monopolies—were to be found under Henry I.

How powerful was this machine as an instrument of social change? It has recently been argued by Professor Trevor-Roper that the enjoyment of crown patronage was the most important factor in enabling landed families to better themselves in the century before 1640. Of course this is the sort of proposition that is incapable of proof. Even if we had many more and better statistics than we have, or are ever likely to have, they would always tell us more about the recipients of crown patronage than about quiet families putting a little aside year by year. No doubt, in the end, these quiet processes of economic growth count most in the redistribution of wealth. But, barring a revolution in agrarian techniques, economic growth is a slow business. A family will have to wait a long time to rise significantly by improvements in draining and ditching, manuring and breeding, and the keeping of accounts. For rapid growth some external impulse is needed, and I am quite sure that—whatever may be true of the seventeenth century—royal patronage was the chief external impulse to social climbing in the twelfth century; and it is in Henry I's reign that we can first see this impulse at work, operating in a modern fashion.

It is time to turn to his reign and to draw together at their visible point of origin these factors in the modern history of England: the exercise of patronage as a means of government; the emergence of royal patronage as an instrument of social change and especially as a means of consolidating the position of that class of society later known as the gentry.

III

Henry I was not a creator of institutions; he contributed nothing to the theory of kingship or to the philosophy of government. He created men. It was his contribution to English government and society to insert into the social fabric men with a direct interest in royal government; men who depended on royal government for their rise, and on its continuance for their survival. This essential fact about him was noticed by Orderic Vitalis in his famous passage describing the new men whom Henry raised, so to speak, from the dust and placed over earls

¹ *The Elizabethan Political Scene*, Raleigh Lecture, 1948, pp. 98–99.

and castellans in power and wealth.¹ Much has been said about the content of this passage; but there is one thing which is easy to overlook: to raise men was not in itself remarkable. William the Conqueror had done the same, and the loyalty of his new men proved to be of very short duration. Of his eight earldoms only one survived in its original family beyond the early years of the twelfth century. In the disloyalty of these men the Norman dynasty merely experienced the bitter truth of which the Merovingians and Carolingians had been made aware, that when a dynasty had exhausted its powers of rewarding its friends it could hope for no more loyalty. By the time of Henry I the Norman dynasty was ominously approaching that term of years which had proved fatal to the Carolingian family. New men alone could not save it; without new methods they could only hasten the decline.

Henry's earliest measures, though essential for his immediate survival, did nothing to delay the decline of royal power in England. Indeed they seemed simply designed to accelerate it. His coronation charter was no doubt necessary, but on a moderate estimate it can scarcely have cost less than £4,000 or £5,000 of annual revenue;² the treaty with the Count of Flanders was essential, but it cost another £500 a year; the agreement with Robert of Normandy was a great stroke of policy, but it cost another £2,000 a year.³ Within a year Henry had parted with perhaps a third of the revenue of Rufus—probably more. Moreover he had been obliged to give his earliest patronage to the families of the Clares, the Giffards, and the Beaumonts. These were dangerous friends. Robert of

¹ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. A. le Prevost and L. Delisle, iv. 164.

² The expensive clauses of the Coronation Charter were those relating to the exploitation of vacant churches (no. 1), exactions from heirs (no. 2), and the concession of freedom from Danegeld on the demesne of all military tenants (no. 11). As for the Church, the estimate of the Winchester Annals (which are very well informed on administrative matters at this time) that the sixteen vacant churches in the hands of Ranulf Flambard each brought an annual revenue of 300 to 400 marks is probably not very wide of the mark (*Annales Monastici*, Rolls Series, ii. 39). The 'extortions' from heirs under Rufus must remain uncertain and I put them simply hypothetically at £1,000 a year. The concession to knights, if we allow 4,000 knights only one hide in demesne, would cost £400 in Danegeld, which was or became annual under Henry.

³ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and *Annales de Wintonia*, 1101; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, Rolls Series, ii. 472. Ordericus Vitalis, iv. 114, says £3,000. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Robert forgave his brother this debt in 1103; according to William of Malmesbury, in 1102.

Beaumont, Count of Meulan, used his commanding position to enrich himself without scruple,¹ and, though he remained a loyal and malevolent force in Henry's counsels, he left a son ripe for rebellion. As for the Clares and the Giffards, the boasts of the Ely chronicler about his abbot, Richard of Clare, to whom Henry gave the abbey on his coronation day, show the dangers to which the king exposed himself by his earliest acts of patronage. The chronicler exults in his abbot's power as he stood in the royal court surrounded by his relatives, the Clares and the Giffards—families (he says) made illustrious by their strength and numbers, capable of overawing assemblies of nobles, so that none dared to resist them in their lawsuits or entertain their enemies, by reason of the many murders perpetrated at their hands; even the royal majesty (he adds) was shaken by the frequent terror they inspired.² These words let us see behind the façade of institutions and legalisms to the brute facts of the situation. It was not by men such as these that Henry was to maintain his position and settle the future of royal government in England.

The great forfeitures of 1102 which followed the destruction of the Montgomery family gave Henry his chance of survival. But they made it by no means certain. His whole situation was complicated by an ambition which was often to muddy the stream of English history in the future. He already had England; it was his great aim to have Normandy as well. This was an ambition indefensible in its general purpose, deleterious in its effects, and unjust in the measures by which he was obliged to encompass it. But we must accept it as the aim which in the last resort came before everything else.³ He spent most of his money,

¹ Ordericus Vitalis, iv. 167–8, gives a circumstantial account of the arrangement whereby Robert of Meulan agreed with Ivo of Grentemesnil, the most important landholder in Leicestershire, to make peace between him and Henry I, and to pay for his journey to Jerusalem in return for having all his lands in pledge for fifteen years and the marriage of Ivo's son for his niece. The marriage did not take place, the lands were not restored, and Robert of Meulan became Earl of Leicester on the strength of his new wealth.

² *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake, Camden Third Series, xcii, 1962, 226–7.

³ One small illustration of the primacy of Norman affairs may here be given. In 1118, at the height of Henry's difficulties in Normandy, a young baron, Richer de l'Aigle, who had recently succeeded to the Norman lands of his father Gilbert de l'Aigle, claimed his English estates also. Henry refused, on the ground that he had promised them to two younger sons who were members of his household. Thereupon the eldest son went off to the King of France and promised to hand over to him the fortress of l'Aigle on the south-east frontier of Normandy. The threat was sufficient; we hear no more of the younger sons

most of his time, and encountered a host of enemies and dangers in order to achieve this end. On England, it had two effects. On the one hand it involved Henry in his only act of folly in the distribution of his patronage. When he raised Stephen of Blois to a position of the greatest importance in both England and Normandy, it must have been clear even at the time that this was a dangerous step. In the event it was almost disastrous; but it was justifiable solely because of his difficulties in Normandy and the need for an understanding with the Count of Blois.¹ The defence of Normandy came before every consideration of political prudence. But the chief effect of Henry's Norman policy on English affairs was of a quite different kind. Since England was mainly valuable as a source of treasure for foreign war, the agents of government who provided this treasure had an importance and freedom which they could scarcely otherwise have obtained. This situation, which was often to recur, had a profound effect on the development of English society, and the first results are to be seen in Henry's reign.

IV

Henry left a large liberty to the men in England who provided him with the sinews of war. He did what he could for them, and they provided him with what he needed. It was rarely that and Richer succeeded to his whole inheritance. It was not often that Henry was thwarted in his designs; but the defence of Normandy, that *damnosa hereditas*, came first. (See Ordericus Vitalis, iv. 324-5.)

¹ Henry's position in Normandy was extremely precarious until his victory at Brémule in 1119, and it remained intermittently threatened until the death of William Clito in 1128. To widespread opposition in Normandy itself were added various combinations of alliances between the king of France, the count of Anjou, and the count of Flanders. In this sea of troubles it was essential to keep at least one ally, and Henry's policy until the Angevin marriage of 1128, was based on friendship with the count of Blois: the price and the guarantee of this was the reception of the count's brother Stephen into the highest circle of the Anglo-Norman nobility. During the vital period, and given Henry's main objective, it was a price worth paying. Only after the White Ship disaster was it necessary to make a second elevation on a similar scale as a counter-balance to Stephen: this was the elevation of Henry's illegitimate son Robert to the earldom of Gloucester in 1122—a move even more clearly justified by results. So far as can be judged from the Danegeld remissions in 1130 the English estates of Stephen and Robert were almost exactly equal (Stephen, 1,339 hides with further lands in Lancashire; Robert, 1,240 hides with further lands in Wales), but by 1128 Robert had replaced Stephen as Henry's right-hand man, just as Stephen had probably replaced the ailing Robert of Meulan fourteen years earlier. (For this obscure palace revolution see William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, ed. K. R. Potter, pp. 4-5, and the *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. J. R. H. Weaver, p. 27.)

he failed them; but they had to work for what they got. Stephen of Blois might float to the top with splendid ease, borne upwards by his family connexions and military usefulness. Far below him were smaller men clawing their way up the social ladder by the sweat of their brows and under a heavy burden of responsibilities. The struggle for power, which in Normandy was crudely military, in England was shifted from the political and military level to the courts; and here the advantage lay not with the very great, but with the men on the spot who worked and manœuvred and levered their way into the interstices of the feudal structure.

If we wish to see how such men operated, and how the king made it possible for them to operate, we cannot do better than to take a single example, which may in essentials stand for all. The men who rise to great places by a winding stair are necessarily grey figures, and their activities become monotonous by repetition. The Pipe Roll of 1130 allows us to trace the fortunes of Henry's servants in some detail, and none more clearly than those of Geoffrey de Clinton, the king's Chamberlain.¹ Clinton's family like that of many of Henry's most trusted servants came from western Normandy, and immediately (in all probability) from the village of Glinton in Northamptonshire. Their name is not one which appears in Domesday Book, and there is no sign that the family was of any social consequence before the time of Henry I. But in 1130 Clinton had exemption from Dane-geld in fourteen counties, with most of his property in the compact group of counties, Warwickshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire. If, as seems likely, he was wholly exempt from geld, his total estate amounted to 570 hides, which we may roughly estimate as being worth about £500 a year and possibly a good deal more. The real interest of his position, however, lies not in this large estate gathered apparently from small beginnings, but in the traces of the measures by which he was continuing to build it up. He had the wardship of the son of William de Dive; he held the land of Roger Witeng, and half the land of Norman de Martinwest; he had recently been holding some land of William de Roumara at farm; he had taken up some debts of the Earl of Leicester and of Nicholas fitz Godwin; he held the royal manors of Wargrave and Wallop at farm, as well as the lands of the vacant Abbey of Evesham. How much of all this he managed to hand on to his son we cannot say; but when it is added that he was also Sheriff of

¹ For these details, see *The Pipe Roll of 31 Henry I*, ed. J. Hunter, 1831. The main entries to which I refer are under Warwickshire.

Warwickshire where his main interests lay, the opportunities for tightening his hold on whatever he held, cannot be overlooked. He had built himself a castle at Kenilworth, and enclosed his own park (necessarily with the king's permission); and he had another castle at Brandon, also in Warwickshire, on the upper Avon. A small but significant detail in these castles to which Sir Frank Stenton has drawn attention is an appropriate symbol of the manner of his rise;¹ they owed their strength to water rather than earthworks—to subtlety rather than crude force. The picture might be that of one of the rising servants of Elizabeth or James I.

But there is another side to the picture. Clinton was both working and paying on a massive scale for every step he took. For the rights, wardship, and properties I have enumerated, excluding the royal manors, he owed the king about £170. For the royal manor of Wargrave, which was valued at £27. 6s. 8d. in Domesday Book, he was paying no less than £80 a year; and for Wallop, which was noted as being over-valued at about £30 a year in 1086, he was paying £20 a year. The second of these farms may have been a bargain, but on the whole he was paying the king handsomely for what he got. For the Abbey of Evesham he was paying £40 a year, and for his office at the Treasury which he had purchased at an unknown figure, he still owed £140, having paid £66. 13s. 4d. in the previous year.² In addition to all this, there were profits to the king amounting to £250 arising from his judicial activities in at least seventeen counties, no doubt a mere fraction of the total result of several years' work. But all this did not place him outside the range of minor retribution. He still owed £9. 11s. 8d. for some treasure he had lost in Normandy ten years earlier.

Like many others of his class, Clinton was the founder of a house of Augustinian Canons, beside his castle and park at Kenilworth. Mr. Dickinson has remarked on the large part which Henry and his servants played in building up this order in England.³ The sixty-four foundations of his reign, some of them very small, are the proof of the extent to which the Order satisfied the needs and came within the capacity of men like

¹ *The First Century of English Feudalism*, 2nd ed., p. 202.

² *P.R. 31 Henry I*, p. 37.

³ J. C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England*, pp. 125-30; but my calculation of the number of foundations during the reign is based on D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales*, 1953, pp. 125-60.

Clinton. It was an Order of compromise—between the world and its rejection, between the splendours of Benedictinism and the trivialities of disorganized colleges of clergy. Its houses could be humble, yet satisfy the founder's desire for independence. Giraldus Cambrensis later put the matter in a nutshell: 'This order is in the world, yet it avoids the corruptions of the world as far as possible; it is not notorious for drunkenness or excess, and it both fears and is ashamed to become a public scandal for luxury and licentiousness.'¹ These modest and inexpensive virtues appealed to men like Henry I, Roger of Salisbury, and Geoffrey de Clinton, and they did not appear unworthy of the support even of St. Anselm and Thurstin of York.

Clinton's benefactions to his new house were liberal. But even in this aspect of his activity it is remarkable how often he was able to divert to his use the lands of other men. The manor of Salford (Oxon.) was not his. It had been held in 1086 by an English nun; she lost it, but recovered it again in the court of King Henry. Nevertheless Clinton was able to give it to his canons.² The manor of Woodcote was on the fief of Nicholas of Stafford; it was held by Clinton as sub-tenant for the service of one knight; but Nicholas was induced for a mere £3. 13s. 4d., to relinquish all claim to service and to give the manor absolutely and in perpetuity (he repeats the words with fearful emphasis) to Clinton's foundation.³ The same procedure, at a cost of £8. 3s. 4d., enabled Clinton to obtain Hugh fitz Richard's manor of Newnham for his canons.⁴ The king contributed his manor of Hughenden, but an appropriation of royal rights was only to be had at a much higher price: Clinton paid over £70 for this manor, which had been worth £10 a year in 1086.⁵ Similar transactions enabled Clinton to gather together a sizeable estate for his new abbey, and to make it one of the largest of its Order in England. They were cash transactions. Instead of the familiar

¹ *Itinerarium Cambriae*, Rolls Series, vi. 46-47.

² Kenilworth Cartulary, British Museum Harleian MS. 3650, f. 10^v; cf. *D.B.* i. 244a.

³ Kenilworth Cartulary, British Museum Harleian MS. 3650, f. 14: The canons were to have the manor *absolute et in perpetuum* quit of the service of one knight which Geoffrey owed for it '... et absolute et definite dico quietum de omni servicio et auxilio et omni re erga regem et erga me et erga heredes meos exceptis communibus geldis regis quae communiter erunt in comitatu.'

⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 15.

⁵ *Regesta*, no. 1527; cf. *D.B.* i. 144b. Geoffrey was holding Hughenden *in feodo* from the king at the time of the king's grant to Kenilworth; nevertheless he paid the king 60 oz. of gold and 40 marks of silver for the concession.

spectacle of a great magnate combining with his tenants to found a religious community out of the resources of a well-defined feudal group, we see here a new kind of founder of a new kind of foundation, buying and bargaining, to gather a modest estate largely from the resources of his neighbours.

In 1130 Clinton was at the height of his greatness. His nephew had become Bishop of Lichfield in the previous year—at a cost, according to Symeon of Durham, of £2,000.¹ He himself probably sat at the Exchequer; certainly his friends sat there. This both increased his opportunities and softened the impact of his own payments to the king. Although his farms were paid with scrupulous regularity, it is noticeable in the Pipe Roll of this year that very little of the debts which he owed for his more speculative dealings had been paid. Since the officials of the Exchequer decided how much of any debt should be paid each year, it was clearly an advantage to have friends at the Exchequer. These friends at court could save a man from financial inconvenience. They could do more; they could save him from ruin. At Easter 1130 Clinton came as near to ruin as any servant of Henry I who lived to tell the tale. He was accused of treachery, brought before a great session of the court, presided over by the king's brother-in-law, King David of Scotland—and he was acquitted. But the nearness of disaster is revealed by a Norman charter which mentions that he gave a manor in Normandy to Engelgar de Bohun, another of Henry's new men, for making peace between him and the king.²

While the Bohuns continued to rise, the Clintons long remained where their great ancestor had left them.³ One member of the family in the fourteenth century followed the path of

¹ *Opera Omnia*, Rolls Series, ii. 283.

² Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, Rolls Series, p. 252; Ordericus Vitalis, iii. 403-4, where Clinton's charter is quoted. King David's progress from Scotland can be traced in the allowances for his journey in the Pipe Roll of 1130.

³ In 1166 Geoffrey's son, Geoffrey de Clinton, with 17 knights' fees, was much the largest tenant by knight service of William, Earl of Warwick; he also had 3½ fees of the honour of Wallingford (*Red Book of the Exchequer*, Rolls Series, i. 325, 309); but he seems to have played no part in the royal administration. In Stephen's reign he had married the daughter of the Earl of Warwick and his marriage settlement has survived. Its most remarkable feature is the earl's grant of the shrievalty of Warwickshire to Geoffrey and his heir, to hold *de me et meis heredibus eodem modo quo de rege habeo vel habere poterō*. The second Clinton thus achieved as an earl's son-in-law the position which the first Clinton had held as a servant of the king. See J. H. Round, 'A great marriage settlement', *The Ancestor*, xi, 1904, 153-7.

royal service in the steps of his great ancestor, and became Earl of Huntingdon; but he left no heirs. The senior branch of his family remained knights of the shire for another hundred years. They struggled into the Lords, struck a good patch with an earldom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a bad one with a succession of cousins and coheiresses in the eighteenth. Tawney lists them among the effete nobility who were victims of the rising gentry in the seventeenth century, but probably the failure of male heirs after a long direct succession did them more harm than anything else. Nevertheless the barony of the Clintons, now in abeyance, survived till the twenty-first baron, a Lord Warden of the Stanneries and Joint Parliamentary Secretary of State in our own day. The family retained a hold on the minor offices of government, but it seldom approached the centre of power. It soon forgot Henry I.

Yet in his own day the loyalty of Henry's servants was proverbial. William of Malmesbury says that only one of his officials was ever found to be disloyal.¹ Henry's vengeance was terrible and barbaric, but it was a most effective instrument of government. He knew how to play upon the two great motives of human action—fear and hope. And as the fear was a permanent feature of his reign, so was the hope. Clinton never had so much that he could not do with more. And Henry always had more to give, because what he gave came principally from the bottomless resources of those who came within reach of his feudal and legal rights.

In almost every county in England Henry raised up men of a middle station among the magnates, in situations similar to that of Clinton, by similar methods and for similar services. Another midland creation was Richard Basset with his estate of 176 hides in eleven counties centred on Leicestershire.² In 1130 he too was paying his way step-by-step. He owed £133 and six chargers for the right of succession to his brother's estate in Oxfordshire, which his brother had surrendered to the king.³

¹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, ii. 488, calls him a chamberlain of plebeian origin but does not give his name.

² This is the number of hides on which he had remission of Danegeld in 1130, and it agrees very closely with the return made by his son in 1166, reporting that in 1135 his father had held 184 carucates and 1 virgate for 15 knights' fees (*Red Book of the Exchequer*, i. 329-30). The core of this estate was the Domesday fief of Robert de Buci (Round, *Feudal England*, pp. 211-13; Stenton, *V.C.H. Leicestershire*, i. 343).

³ Like most of the estates built up at this time the origins of this Oxfordshire estate of Nicholas Basset are difficult to trace. It seems to have been

He was still paying for custody of the land of his father-in-law, who had died ten years earlier; he was paying for other odds and ends of land that had come into the king's hands; with his colleague Aubrey de Vere acting as sheriff in eleven counties he was producing a large additional revenue of £666 from the counties under their control.¹ Orderic Vitalis describes him returning to his native village in Normandy 'bursting with the wealth of England', building a stone castle and attempting to overawe his humble equals by the magnitude of his operations.²

Along the Welsh border there was a succession of families in a similar case; in Worcestershire, the Beauchamps who stepped into the forfeited estates of the Abitot family; in Herefordshire, Pain fitz John; in Gloucestershire and the cantreds of Brecknock, Miles of Gloucester; in the northern counties, William Maltravers, Eustace fitz John and Nigel d'Aubigny; in the eastern counties, William d'Aubigny; in the south and west, Humphrey de Bohun and Brian fitz Count. These men were the workers in Henry's administration. They worked and paid for what they got, but they got what they paid for—generally in the form of other men's widows, daughters, heirs, and lands which fell from their grasp for debts they could not pay or suits they could not prosecute; and withal a host of opportunities, privileges, and remissions of gelds and fines. Naturally they were not popular. William Maltravers paid for his unpopularity with his life as soon as Henry I was removed from the scene;³ and others like him must have trembled for their lives. There can be little doubt that if Duke Robert had succeeded in 1100, the opportunities of such men as these would have been greatly restricted by the growth of the great principalities in the kingdom; and the same is true of Stephen. Among

made up from several fiefs, but none of them royal demesne. The Domesday Book value of the lands was probably not more than about £20 a year (there was only one important holding—at Mixbury, on the fee of Roger d'Ivry, valued at £15), so the price paid by Richard Basset was a high one, especially for a transfer of land within the family. For Henry I's charter conceding this land to Richard Basset, see *Regesta*, no. 1668.

¹ The main entries relating to Richard Basset in the Pipe Roll of 1130 are grouped under Northamptonshire and Leicestershire (pp. 81–82) and Hertfordshire (p. 63).

² *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v. 68–69.

³ Richard of Hexham, *De Gestis Regis Stephani*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, Rolls Series, iii. 140. I have to thank Dr. W. E. Wightman, whose study of the Lacy family will I hope shortly appear, for drawing my attention to the interest of the career of this servant of Henry I.

all the cross-currents of the years after Henry's death, it is fairly clear that these men and their allies formed the hard core of the opposition to Stephen. It was the disinherited, the men whom Henry had built up and Stephen pulled down, who won the battle of Lincoln from which Stephen never recovered. Necessarily, they were loyal to Henry and to his memory, and to each other; not perhaps only because of self-interest but out of genuine attachment.

The words of Brian fitz Count are famous as an expression of this lasting loyalty to the memory of the king to whom he owed everything. In 1143 or thereabouts, the Bishop of Winchester accused him of being a reactionary, of clinging to the past. Brian gloried in the accusation, and Gilbert Foliot wrote approving of his tenacity in clinging to the memory of the 'good and golden days' of the king who 'brought you up from boyhood, educated you, knighted you, enriched you'.¹ Like most of the others I have discussed, Brian fitz Count owed all his advancement to Henry—the d'Oilly lands and constablership in Oxfordshire, the Crispin honour of Wallingford, a great position on the Welsh border. With his estate of 720 hides all exempt from Danegeld, he stood in an intermediate position between the very greatest of Henry's creations, Count Stephen and Earl Robert, and the toilers like the Bassets and the Clintons below him. But he spoke for them all—all except (by this time) Stephen.

Long before this testing of their loyalty came to the friends of King Henry, several of them had had to face a greater test. Some time before 1118 Nigel d'Aubigny, the king's chief agent in the north of England, believed himself to be dying. The letter he wrote to Henry has survived. It reads:

I beg you, dearest Lord, in whom after God lies my whole trust, to have pity on me in my great need, for the love of God, and for your own sweet nobility, because I have been yours while I could, and have loved you truly and served you most faithfully. In your service and in my own affairs, I have committed many great sins and I have done few or no good deeds; but trusting in your goodness and kindness I have now restored some small pieces of land which I took from various churches. I beg you therefore, dearest Lord, and, since I cannot be present in body, I fall at the feet of your majesty in spirit, with tears

¹ For this correspondence, see H. W. C. Davis in *E.H.R.* xxv, 1910, pp. 301-3. For his estates and family connexions, see especially J. H. Round, *Studies in Peerage and Family History*, pp. 210-11, and F. M. Stenton, *First Century of English Feudalism*, p. 236 n. The layout of his estates can be seen very clearly in his exemptions from Danegeld in the Pipe Roll of 1130.

and lamentation, begging your pious majesty to concede and confirm those things which I have returned to these churches from my demesne for the redemption of my soul.¹

D'Aubigny wrote another letter to his brother asking for his help in ensuring that these restitutions were made, and from this it appears that his depredations of church properties were not the only misdeeds he bewailed. Among laymen he had disinherited Robert de Cambos, Robert de Witville, William fitz Warin, Ralph de Paveli, Ralph de Buce, the sons of Anseis, Hugh of Rampan, Butin, Gerald, Burnulf, Humphrey Hastings, Russell de Langford, and others, of all or part of their inheritance.²

These letters suggest several reflections. In the first place they bear striking testimony to the deep sense of obligation of Henry's officials to the king who made them. It would be quite wrong to say that this kind of loyalty was something new, but it was certainly unusually lasting, and it owed much of its tenacity to a continuing dependence on the king who raised them. They had risen by influence in courts and in government, and especially by their knowledge of the ways in which central authority could be used to bolster up local power. They feared—and, as many of them discovered, they were right to fear—that if this influence were removed, they were lost. D'Aubigny's list of his misdeeds is very eloquent of the way in which he had used his influence, not by violence but by manipulation, to intrude himself into other men's shoes. We know very few of the details, but we do know that the Durham lands which he appropriated had a long and curious history of complicated descent before they found their way into his hands.³ When the author of the *Gesta Stephani* said that the leading friends and associates of King Henry were afraid to come to Stephen's court because they would have been overwhelmed by the complaints of the poor and the widows whose lands they had turned to their own

¹ *Feodarium prioratus Dunelmensis*, ed. W. Greenwell, Surtees Society, lviii, 1872, p. 151. I am obliged to Miss D. Greenway, who is making a study of Roger de Mowbray, the son and heir of Nigel d'Aubigny, for her help at this point. After the battle of Tinchebrai Nigel received from Henry I the forfeited lands of Robert de Stuteville, and shortly after this he married Maude, the former wife of Robert de Mowbray, whose estates had been forfeited after his rebellion in 1095. He repudiated Maude on the grounds of consanguinity after the death of her brother Gilbert de l'Aigle, and married Gundred de Gournay in 1118 (see *Complete Peerage*, ix, 367-9).

² *Historians of the Church of York*, ed. J. Raine, Rolls Series, iii, 54-57.

³ See the treatise *De Obsessione Dunelmi* in Symeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, Rolls Series, i, 215-20.

use, and that they would lose by lawful means what they had unjustly obtained, he was probably only partially exaggerating.¹

That widows and orphans were among the chief sufferers from the legal chicanery and pressure by which the new men grew to greatness, we may readily believe. The fortunes of nearly all these men were founded on marriage, and it was to the king that they owed this opportunity. Richard Basset, as a result of an elaborate agreement made in the royal court, married the daughter of his father's colleague, Geoffrey Ridel, a granddaughter of the Earl of Chester; he obtained the wardship of her brother, and finally (but this was not in the agreement) swallowed the lands he held in wardship.² Nigel d'Aubigny married the divorced wife of the forfeited Robert Mowbray, and succeeded to some of his lands and much of his authority in the north. Later he divorced his wife and remarried with the king's approval without losing the advantages his first marriage had brought him. Miles of Gloucester owed his great position on the Welsh border to his marriage with Sybil, the daughter of the Welsh princess Nesta and her husband Bernard; he seems to have pushed a son out of his inheritance, leaving a dramatic story of the transaction in the legends of the Welsh border.³ This marriage also was made by royal grant and was the subject of an elaborate royal charter.⁴ The invaluable fitz John brothers on the Welsh and Scottish borders, Pain and Eustace, both married heiresses who brought them a great increase of local strength.⁵ William d'Aubigny did the same in Norfolk.⁶ William

¹ *Gesta Stephani*, ed. K. R. Potter, pp. 14, 15.

² For this agreement, see F. M. Stenton, *First Century of English Feudalism*, 34-37, 259-60. Sir Frank Stenton's comments are chiefly concerned with the evidence provided by the agreement for 'the king's over-riding authority in the feudal sphere' and the amicable co-operation of various interests in a marriage settlement. But documents of course tend to conceal antagonisms and rapacity, and this document is also a testimony to the grip which men in official positions had on valuable marriages and wardships. Richard Basset, who had almost nothing in 1120, now had the granddaughter of an earl as his wife and the grandson of an earl as his ward. Whether, or for how long, this young man survived we cannot tell, but he never succeeded to his inheritance.

³ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium Kambriae*, Rolls Series, vi. 29.

⁴ *Ancient Charters prior to A.D. 1200*, Pipe Roll Society, x, 1888, pp. 8-9.

⁵ Pain married the heiress to the Lacy estates in Herefordshire; Eustace married the heiress to the honour of Alnwick (Northumberland) and Malton (Yorks.). For Pain, see *Ancient Charters prior to A.D. 1200*, pp. 35-38; for Eustace, *Complete Peerage*, xii. 2, Appendix B.

⁶ *Red Book of the Exchequer*, i. 397-8; 'Carta Willelmi de Albenia: Hoc est

Maltravers, by a more devious transaction, strengthened his position in Yorkshire by taking over the widow and lands of Hugh of Laval.¹

These examples need cause no surprise. If royal patronage was the readiest road to success in the struggle for power, marriage was the easiest road to ready-made wealth, and the king's favour provided the best opportunities for profitable marriage. Never again did the king have so extensive a control over marriage arrangements and the descent of property. The king's control over marriages was greatly enhanced at this time by the frequent habit of postponing marriage on the male side till relatively late in life, while the wives were often barely out of childhood. The practice no doubt had its roots in considerations of political and economic advantage. The right opportunity for a man to increase his power by marriage often did not arise till he was at the peak of his career, while the expectations of a woman were as clear at thirteen as they were ever likely to be. Hence arose marriages of wildly unsuitable disparity of age. But one unwelcome result of such unequal unions was seen in the high proportion of magnates who left minors as their heirs and women still young as their widows. Even under the terms of the Coronation Charter the king's control over the fate of wealthy orphans and widows was great; in practice it was much greater.

Henry had a further source of power in the uncertainties which still hung over the right of hereditary succession. His reign is a turning-point in this important matter. At his coronation he had set himself against the general uncertainty over inheritance which Rufus had found it profitable to exploit, and the charters of Henry's reign are the first to emphasize consistently the hereditary nature of feudal tenures. The same impressive phrases expressing the fullness of this hereditary right, occur again and again in Henry's charters. At the same time it is remarkable how often the charters in which these expressions occur are themselves an interference in some degree with what

tenementum Willelmi de Albeneia, pincernae domini regis, de dono regis Henrici, qui dedit ei de feodo quod fuit Corbuchon XV milites feffatos; et postea dedit ei feodum de X militibus feffatis de terra Rogeri Bigod, cum filia Rogeri Bigod, de manu sua. . . .

¹ *P.R. 31 Henry I*, p. 34: 'Willelmus Maltravers debet M. marcas argenti et C. libras ad dandas quibus rex voluerit pro uxore Hugonis de Laval cum tota terra Hugonis usque ad XV annos et post XV annos habere dotem et maritagium suum.'

would later be regarded as the normal course of descent.¹ Professor Thorne has recently pointed out that the king's right of taking seisin of the lands of a dead tenant was no empty formality in the early twelfth century. It gave the king and his officials many opportunities for interfering with the descent of property; and the official on the spot must often, like Nigel d'Aubigny, have been the chief beneficiary of all uncertainties.

Marriages, wardships, the fruits of forfeitures, the opportunities for cutting into the estates of magnates in difficulties of one kind or another—these were the great prizes of royal patronage. But there were other prizes less dramatic in their effects, but sufficiently compelling to induce a strong sense of gratitude in those who enjoyed them, and a grievous sense of dereliction in those from whom the stream of favour had been diverted. No single document provides so clear a lesson in the art of government through minor acts of royal favour as the *Registrum Antiquissimum* of the cathedral church of Lincoln. Henry's writs tell an elaborate story of a king who governed by giving or withholding his countenance in a multitude of small transactions, making life easier for those whom he favoured, and harder for those who stood outside the charmed circle of the king's pleasure. The bishops of Lincoln were among the lucky ones. They had earned their right to favour in the royal service, they knew the corridors of power and had the keys to the right doors. They used their opportunities; but they used them with a moderation characteristic of Henry's government. Except at the beginning of the reign there is no outright grant of royal demesne.² The fifty-five writs of Henry I were not the outflowings of a cornucopia, but the injections of a lubricant. When the bishop built his castle at Newark, the king gave him permission to divert the royal highway, to make his fishpond across the Fossway, to hold a fair, to build a bridge, and to use one-third of his knight service for castle-guard. He allowed him to exchange land to make a park at Thame. He gave him a vineyard in Lincoln, and a lodging in the Eastgate of the city, and allowed him to breach

¹ See, for example, *Regesta*, nos. 1719, 1722, 1778.

² In 1101 Robert Bloet got the manor of Nettleham, which formed part of the queen's dowry, and this remained one of the houses of the bishops of Lincoln throughout the Middle Ages (*Regesta*, nos. 534-6; cf. J. W. F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, 129 n., 239). Between 1103 and 1106 he also got the manor of Tixover from the queen, but Henry I later gave this to Cluny (*Regesta*, nos. 743, 1618, 1721). It may have been as a recompense for this that in 1132 Henry gave the bishop the manor of Biggleswade, Beds., which had formed part of the Domesday fee of Ralph de Insula (*Regesta*, no. 1746).

the wall to make a way to his house. He granted hunting rights in the sokes of Newark and Stowe and throughout the bishop's lands in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. He helped the bishop to build up the canonries of his new cathedral by grants of churches; he supported him in his lawsuits; he refrained from pressing royal claims; he forgave his debts; he made his officials available for enforcing legal decisions in his favour; he imposed heavy fines for breach of episcopal rights. In all these ways, with little actual expense to himself, the king could make life easier for his friends. For some reason Bishop Robert Bloet, that old and hard-bitten servant of three kings, was made to feel the difference between favour and disfavour towards the end of his life. Henry of Huntingdon found him in tears as he surveyed his household dressed not in silks but in woollens; his lawsuits going awry; pieces of his land claimed as royal demesne; instead of royal favours, fines imposed by men of low birth. The bishop knew too well the signs; and when his friends recalled the king's kind words about him to cheer him up, he replied out of a long experience, 'The king only praises those whom he wishes utterly to destroy.'¹ There was not much to complain of. No active violence. The king even restored one miserable scrap of land which Ralph Basset had claimed as royal demesne;² but Bishop Bloet's days of ease of mind and body were over for all that, until one day at Woodstock he sank down at the king's side and died.

V

All the men whom I have so far mentioned were very high in the king's service. They were new in Henry's day and for most of them their best days lay ahead. There could never at any one time have been more than about twenty such men at the top, pushing the interests of themselves and their families, and succeeding in varying degrees in their struggle for social eminence. But the touch of the royal court could avail men much lower down in the king's service. It could even do something to reverse the decision of the Conquest, and help families to regain something of what they had then lost. This aspect of royal patronage turns our attention to the past as well as the future.

It is in this connexion that a discovery of Round's may be mentioned, which has never been given the prominence it deserves; nor indeed did he himself notice all its ramifications.

¹ Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, Rolls Series, pp. 299-300.

² *Regesta*, no. 1254.

In a register of Merton Priory he found a collection of notes on documents which formed the archives of a minor official of Henry I, Bernard the Scribe.¹ What he did not notice was that their information can be supplemented from another unexpected source. Bernard's nephew, Peter of Cornwall, lived to become Prior of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, and in the early years of the thirteenth century he made a vast compilation of visions and revelations, culled from the literature and legends of the last hundred years. One section of this compilation deals with the experiences of his own family, starting with his great-grandfather, and including his two uncles, Bernard and Nicholas, both of them scribes in the chancery of Henry I.² The story which can be put together from these sources is of interest as the rare story of an English rather than a Norman family. Theodulf, the grandfather of Henry I's scribes had been a considerable landowner in Devon and Cornwall before the Norman Conquest. Like most men of his class, however, his sons had lost a great part of his estates, and the family survived with a shattered fortune as tenants of the Count of Mortain. Ailsa, the father of our two scribes Bernard and Nicholas, worked as a master-builder in the service of the canons of Launceston, and held some land outside the town.³ He had a strong visionary streak in him, and a strong attachment to the old church and its patron saint St. Stephen; his miraculous experiences remained a legend in his family, and were a strong influence in forming their later interests. His position—living in Launceston, working as a builder, but retaining some lands which he farmed outside the town—must have been typical of that of many others who had come down in the world as a result of the Conquest.

The documents of Ailsa's son Bernard, show that something could still be retrieved by a man who moved in the society of the court. They show Bernard pleading before William of Warelwast, Bishop of Exeter—himself a former royal clerk—and regaining a portion of his inheritance in Cornwall; pleading

¹ *E.H.R.* xiv, 1899, pp. 417-30.

² Lambeth Palace Library MS. 51. The section relating to his family is found on ff. 23-28. Peter of Cornwall's works and the manuscripts in which they appear are listed by Dr. R. W. Hunt, 'The Disputation of Peter of Cornwall against Symon the Jew', *Studies in Medieval History presented to F. M. Powicke*, pp. 145-52.

³ His tribulations in this service are recorded in the Lambeth MS. f. 23, where he is described as 'oppidanus et civis ex municipio quod vocatur Dunhevet sivi Lanstephonia . . . tamen extra oppidum illud terras habuit quas coluit'.

before the royal justices in the county court of Devon, and obtaining his grandfather's land at Launceston; pleading before the barons of the Norman exchequer, and recovering a copse and small piece of land in Calvados; regaining from another member of the royal court the churches which had belonged to his grandfather, with their lands and tithes. Besides this work of restoration he was able to step into the shoes of another royal scribe, drowned in the wreck of the White Ship, who had owned house property in Winchester and London. From various magnates of the royal court he obtained churches in Surrey and Northamptonshire; the king gave him a lodging in Launceston; in Winchester the chancellor contributed a tenement, Count Stephen remitted a small rent, and the king was present when he bought a small tenancy-in-chief in Buck Street. The king also gave him a comprehensive royal confirmation of all his lands and churches in Cornwall. In the end Bernard had recreated an estate which might well have supported the dignity of a pre-Conquest thegn. At every step he had been supported by a faithful core of royal officials, and his slightest transactions had the countenance of his immediate superiors in the chancery, Geoffrey the Chancellor and Robert de Sigillo, and other colleagues in the office like William Cumin, William the Almoner, Morel of the Chapel, and so on. He preserved with special care the names of these witnesses to his transactions. Without their backing it is unlikely that this English family would ever have seen better days.

The royal scribes Bernard and his brother Nicholas, were clerks and left no descendants. They devoted their wealth to enriching their brother's family, their local church at Launceston, and the priory of Merton where Nicholas became a canon. To Launceston they gave among other gifts, the silver-embossed ivory writing-case with silver ink-horn, which they had used in the king's service, and the church converted it into a reliquary.¹ As the instrument by which one English family had climbed back

¹ Their gifts are described thus: 'Hii duo fratres Bernardus videlicet et Nicholaus dederunt cum aliis donariis multis ecclesie sancti Stepheni vexillum unum quod est coloris indici auro brusdatum, in quo agnus in medio auro intextus est et inferius lapidatio sancti Stephani et ad quatuor cornua quatuor evangelistarum ymagines sunt depictae, quod adhuc in eadem ecclesia in magna habetur veneratione. Dederunt quoque predicti fratres eidem ecclesie tapetum unum et unam capsellam eburneam argenteis claviculis et bullis ornatam, in qua sunt reliquiae; quae capsella quondam fuit scriptorium eorum. Unde et in ea est adhuc cornu atramentarium eorum magnum argenteum' (Lambeth Palace MS. 51, fol. 25).

into prosperity, it deserved to be held in honour. To their brother Jordan they left the family inheritance. Jordan retained the local loyalties of the family, but he moved out of Launceston and set himself up as a country gentleman.¹ In the course of time Henry I's illegitimate son Reginald married a local heiress and became Earl of Cornwall, and the family of Ailsi were his relatives and friends. They held their heads very high, as Peter of Cornwall takes pride in assuring us.

In the nature of things little can be known about families which belonged to this level of society, but it is clear that court connexions could bring benefits as well for them as their betters.

VI

I do not think anyone will dispute that the men we have been considering rose by using opportunities which came to them from their association with the work of royal government. In the words of Namier, speaking of such men in the eighteenth century, they benefited from a situation which 'necessarily distinguishes the man, certainly in his own circle, and opens doors which would otherwise remain shut against him'.² The opportunities which were thus provided were essentially the same as those which government was to provide for its servants until the seventeenth century, when a new system had to be devised to take the place of the old patronage of the Crown. These opportunities for advancement continued to be a main motive for participation in government, and they did not greatly alter in character for many centuries after the reign of Henry I. But they can scarcely have existed, or at least can have existed in only a very attenuated form, before his time. For their full development, they required a sophisticated machinery of government, a highly developed system of royal courts and royal justice, a tenurial system at once complicated and yet subject to a unitary control, at once hereditary and yet full of doubtful points of law. I cannot venture to say that these features were not present

¹ He is described as 'rusticis suis quasi socius' and 'prae omnibus fratribus suis saecularium legum et consuetudinum peritus'; he was sought out 'ab omnibus qui necessitatem habebant—sed nullius causam fovebat pro munere'. In fact he was a model of the small country squire, living at Trecarrell four miles from Launceston, sometimes coming into the town 'cuius oppidanus et incola erat pater suus' to visit his daughter who had married an 'oppidanus'. He was the father of the writer Peter of Cornwall who was recording these family recollections in London in 1200. One of the stories is retold in G. G. Coulton, *Social Life in Britain*, p. 218.

² *Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, p. 12.

in Anglo-Saxon England; but at least we have no evidence that they were capable of creating an aristocracy as they did in Henry I's reign.

Yet though we think chiefly of the future when we think of these men—of the long history of their families in English affairs, of the rise of others after them along a similar route—nevertheless their rise was made possible by a survival from the Anglo-Saxon period. I am not thinking chiefly, as Stubbs would have us do, of the survival of the Anglo-Saxon local courts and central mechanisms of government, for these were important only because conditions favourable for their development also survived the Conquest. I am thinking above all of the survival of the tenurial complexities of Anglo-Saxon England. If William the Conqueror had chosen, and he might reasonably have done so, to divide England into compact fiefs among his tenants-in-chief, nothing of what I have been describing could have happened. It was tenurial complexity that gave royal officials their opportunities, that made all free tenants more or less equal in the royal courts, that made all men, however great, acquiesce in the growth of royal justice.

This was a state of affairs which foreigners, and Englishmen with continental experience, often viewed with dismay and disfavour. What we see as a basis for freedom, they saw as an opportunity for tyranny. This is how it appeared to a monk of Fécamp, who visited the English lands of his monastery early in the reign of Henry II. He found everything in inextricable confusion, and in explaining the difficulties of the situation he wrote: 'the land has as many lords as it has neighbours, and it is burdened with a multiplicity of dues—hidage, danegeld, "warscalve" and the aids of sheriffs and royal officials . . . as well as the tyranny of archbishop, archdeacon, dean, etc.'¹ Already England's destiny to be a much governed country was clear, and by some disliked. William of Malmesbury saw another side to the picture in pointing out the great difference between English and Norman society in his day. In Normandy civil strife could go on for years, and the countryside quickly recovered; in England, unless it was stopped at once, the country

¹ J. Laporte, 'Epistolae Fiscannenses: lettres d'amitié, de gouvernement et d'affaires', *Revue Mabillon*, xi, 1953, pp. 29-31. Dr. D. J. A. Matthew, *The Norman Monasteries and their English Possessions*, p. 51 n., has shown that this letter belongs to the early years of Henry II and not to Henry I's reign as its editor believed. But the state of affairs in the passage I quote would apply equally well to the earlier period. The date is certainly before 1161.

was ruined.¹ The tenurial structure was too complex to suffer easily the dislocations of civil war.

This complexity, which multiplied officials, also gave men of a middle station in society their opportunity. The dispersal and confusion of great baronial interests, whatever it may have meant politically, added immensely to the difficulties of an efficient economic exploitation of their interests, and virtually condemned whole areas of judicial and military rights to a rapid extinction. The situation described by Tawney as characteristic of the late sixteenth century stems directly from the post-Conquest settlement, and its results are already observable in the reign of Henry I: on the one hand, the difficulties facing men with 'property of a dozen different kinds in a dozen different counties', with majestic but unremunerative franchises, with cumbrous and unreliable methods of estate-management; and on the other hand 'the patient watchers on the shore bringing home fresh flotsam from the wreck'² of other men's estates. Already in Henry I's reign the twelfth-century equivalents of the Northumberlands and the Seymours were going down before the prototypes of the Duttons, Winstons, Donningtons, and Chamberlains. They had a long way to go, and they made some notable recoveries. But the tenurial situation which survived from the pre-Conquest period provided the conditions under which the struggle would develop, and ensured that however the battle ebbed and flowed the middle stratum of the aristocracy would always be thickly populated.

This situation was not created by Henry I, but it could only have been preserved after 1100 by a king of great determination and political insight. Henry was the first king in our history, so far as we know, who treated the business of government strictly as business. The numinous quality of kingship went out almost completely; the splendour of display had no place in his rule; even his passions were subordinated to policy. It is true that Geoffrey Gaimar tells us that he could say much of the feasts and the jokes and gallantry of his court.³ But he never did so, and it is hard to see what there was to joke about. It was an unlovable reign, and it set an unlovable stamp on much of English history; but it was immensely effective. Both of Henry's brothers had qualities of generosity and magnanimity which he

¹ *Gesta Regum*, ii. 473.

² *Economic History Review*, xi, 1941, p. 9.

³ Gaimar, *Lestoire des Engles*, Rolls Series, lines 6485-581. Gaimar complains that the account of the reign written by David (? Bishop of Bangor) at the request of Queen Adelaide said nothing about these matters.

lacked. Rufus had as much determination and ability, but his government was too predatory to last; it clashed with too many interests and stirred up an ever-growing body of opposition, which the devotion of a few friends and officials, and the admiration of the military world, could do nothing to check. He was preparing the way for a revolution, which might well have swept away much of the structure of royal government.

Henry I prevented this, and few other men could have done so. He made government predatory yet respectable. The symbol of the change is the replacement of the ready-witted, outrageous, rumbustious Ranulf Flambard, Bishop of Durham, by the sombre, shrewd, financial expert, Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, with his interest in good causes, and his wife of whom no one spoke. They were both men of great efficiency in business, but there can be no doubt which of them was best fitted for the period of elaborate compromises which began in the early twelfth century. The servants were the image of their masters. There have been greater kings than Henry, but none has understood better the art of government. In negotiation he was dilatory and double-faced until the moment for decision arrived, and then he moved rapidly and decisively. In war he never lost a battle because he had first won the struggle for allies and the battle of wits before the fight. Above all, he understood that the first art of government is the art of patronage: to reward his friends without ruining himself; to reward those who matter, and to ensure that those who were not rewarded continued not to matter. With the exceptions of Count Stephen and Earl Robert of Gloucester, when his hands were forced by the political necessities of the time, he raised no men to great positions at one bound. Some of those who served him rose very high, but they rose the hard way and worked long and hard for what they got. Their greatest incentive was the certainty that lasting gain would follow toil. Hence he never had to cast down again a man he had raised up, and he never lost a friend. By the same token he seldom forgave an enemy. He had a morbid dislike of ridicule, and he punished with a Byzantine ferocity already outmoded in the humaner society of feudal France, not only treachery and rebellion but slights to his dignity and honour. His brother and his cousin languished in prison for a quarter of a century, and no one knew whether they had been blinded by the politic king or not. It was certain that neither relationship nor friendship would have saved them.¹

¹ For these traits in Henry's character see especially Ordericus Vitalis,

In all this he had, as Stubbs rightly remarked, the support of the Church. Basically this was because the monastic communities, the chief arbiters of ecclesiastical opinion, preferred his government to any alternative that was available. Ecclesiastical landowners were in the position of lay magnates without the opportunities for playing the dynastic game on equal terms with their neighbours. They could not marry; they could not make family alliances; they could not recruit their wealth, condemned in the course of nature to constant erosion, by bringing in new blood. They could not direct their military resources with the same effectiveness as the lay baronage. It was only in the law-courts that they could wage war on equal, and indeed on advantageous, terms. The great Churches were extremely tenacious of their rights, and no case was ever lost which could be reopened at a later date. They had no special love for the rights of the king, but in supporting the king lay their chief hope of withdrawing the issues of property and rights from the field of action to the courts. Of course they too suffered from the depredations of royal officials. We have seen that the Church of Durham suffered from the activities of Nigel d'Aubigny; but in the end it recovered what it had lost. It suffered from Flambard's attempts to endow his own family, but this land too was recovered.¹ The *History* of the monastery of Abingdon is full of accounts of lands lost, only to be recovered again through action in the royal courts. Even land given to royal officials as a bribe for their good offices, even land seized by others with the connivance of royal officials, was not finally lost so long as the possibilities of legal action remained. Thus there arose a natural alliance of interests between the king and the monastic houses

iv. 167, 459-61. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, ii. 487-8, describes Henry as 'principio regni . . . ad membrorum detruncationem, post ad pecuniae solutionem proclivior'. But after the Norman revolt of 1122-4, Henry disgusted the Count of Flanders by blinding prisoners, among others Luke de la Barre-en-Ouche *pro derisoriis cantionibus et temerariis nisibus*. He objected in vain: 'Rem nostris ritibus inusitatem, domine rex, facis, qui milites bello captos in servitio domini sui debilitatione membrorum punis'. (*Ord. Vit.* iv. 460.) The Annals of Winchester (*Annales monastici*, Rolls Series, ii. 50) report that Duke Robert had been blinded in captivity. The same fate befell the king's cousin, William Count of Mortain, who was also captured in 1106 (Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 255). And for the atrocities which he allowed to be perpetrated on his granddaughters, see Henry of Huntingdon, p. 311, and Ordericus Vitalis, iv. 337.

¹ *Feodarium prioratus Dunelmensis*, p. 145 (cf. *Regesta*, nos. 1603, 1604). By a typical compromise the priory recovered its land but allowed the bishop's nephew and his descendants to continue as tenants.

which even the reign of Rufus could not shake, and which Henry I was wise enough to foster. He could give them security; they could give him their prayers and their good opinion. He needed both. In his last years he was oppressed by the weight of his sins and the sense of hostility to his exactions. The flow of his monastic benefactions became a flood as the shadows lengthened. He was a man nervous of his health, both physical and spiritual, and he liked to have physicians and men of religion on his side. Both professions served him well. After his death, a monk of Bec saw him in a vision thrust into hell each morning and rescued by the prayers of monks each evening.¹ The community of interests went beyond the grave.

But on this side of the grave, his death left a situation which threatened the destruction of all he had created. We shall not ask whether the reaction was inevitable, but only remark that it was unsuccessful. The best proof of the strength of the system of Henry I—it was more than a system of government, it was a social order penetrating every county to the Tweed and the Solway, and eating far into the Welsh march—was that it survived the dynastic and personal tangles of Stephen's reign. When we remember William of Malmesbury's words about the deep hurt which social disorder was capable of inflicting on English society, this survival must be seen as a triumph of Henry's genius for organization. This cold, hard, inscrutable man achieved something more lasting even than the Conqueror. The Conqueror gave England to the Normans. Henry did not restore it to the English, as Stubbs believed, but at the moment when the last traces of Old English civilization disappeared he ensured its social and governmental survival.

This is the truth which Stubbs understood, and in a sense it was already understood by the men of the generation after Henry I. They believed that they had found in Henry I the explanation of Edward the Confessor's mysterious death-bed prophecy. They saw in Henry's marriage with the English princess Matilda, and the succession of their grandson, the fulfilment of the prophecy about the regrafting of the fallen trunk on to the parent stem after three generations of ruin. On this view, Edward the Confessor was the seer, and Henry I was the instrument of English survival. The details of this interpretation, like those of Stubbs, are pure illusion; but the truth they enforced

¹ Cambridge University Library MS. Ff. i. 27, p. 217: 'Miraculum terrificum de primo Henrico Anglorum rege filio Willelmi.'

only becomes clearer when the illusions are swept away, and we see that these years when nothing happened—largely because nothing happened—were decisive in the development of English society. We see also in these years an illustration of the truth which Stubbs believed to be one of the great lessons of constitutional history, that 'the world owes some of its greatest debts to men from whose memory it recoils'.

APPENDIX

The Problem of the Royal Demesne

I

DID the friends and servants of Henry I, like those of Elizabeth and the earlier Stuarts, extend their ambition or avarice to the royal demesne? Did Henry I, in endowing these men, strip the Crown of a large part of its landed wealth and so give a new direction to the development of royal power in England? These are two of the most perplexing questions of the reign, and contradictory answers have been given to them. The traditional view, which goes back ultimately to the officials of Henry I who reorganized the royal finances under his grandson, has been that Henry I maintained the royal demesne more or less intact, and that Stephen was responsible for the heavy inroads upon it which are conspicuous in the Pipe Rolls of Henry II. This view received its most articulate expression from Giraldus Cambrensis who—though he wrote after Henry II's death and with a strong prejudice against the Angevin kings—simply gave a new edge to the official view.¹ According to Giraldus, it was Stephen and (he added) Henry II who were responsible for the lavish alienation of the royal demesne, which made it necessary for the Angevin kings to recoup their losses by the pitiless and unremitting exploitation of ancillary sources of revenue. Despite some evident exaggerations in this account, it agreed very well with the teaching of legal and constitutional historians about the developments of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It provided a contemporary testimony to the anomalous position of the English kings, at once wealthy yet poor in demesne lands, powerful yet dependent on consent to taxation. It fitted in with the evidence of the Pipe Rolls, which displayed long lists of *Terrae Datae* from the first year of Henry II onwards, in contrast to the virtual absence of such entries in 1130. And finally of course it fitted in with the general impression of Henry I's reign transmitted by contemporary chronicles. As R. L. Poole remarked, Giraldus came 'unexpectedly near the truth in the account he gives of the history of the revenue in the twelfth century'.²

But already in 1895 J. H. Round had made a large breach in this account of Henry I. In his *Feudal England* he analysed three surveys of different parts of England, and at least two of them suggested that Henry I was a dissipator of the royal demesne on a very large scale. Round claimed that his analysis of the Leicestershire Survey of 1124-9

¹ *Opera Omnia*, Rolls Series, viii. 316 (*De Instructione Principis*, iii. 30). See also William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, ii. 2 (*Chronicles of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, Rolls Series, i. 103).

² *The Exchequer in the Twelfth Century*, p. 136.

showed Henry I 'showing escheats and royal demesne on the trusty officials he had raised from the dust, as well as on his favourite nephew, Stephen, Count of Mortain'.¹ The Northamptonshire Survey, which Round dated basically to the reign of Henry I with later additions, showed 'how the Crown, not content with the lands at its disposal (by escheat and forfeiture) was steadily granting away the demesne it held in Domesday'.² The Lindsey Survey of 1115-20, which Round also helped to bring out of obscurity, was not used by him as evidence of the same process, but Professor Hoyt, who has done more than anyone in recent years to elucidate the problems of the royal demesne, has described its evidence as 'even more startling than that of Northamptonshire'; 'not a single place held by the king in 1086 is included among the seven holdings comprising the royal demesne listed in that document'.³ Already in the intervening years, Sir Frank Stenton in his assessment of the Leicestershire Survey, while dismissing some of the alienations of royal demesne alleged by Round, had declared that 'the royal demesne had been granted away wholesale'.⁴ Round and Stenton were concerned only with the detailed evidence of the documents under discussion, but Professor Hoyt has generalized their findings and examined the philosophy behind the widespread alienations of royal demesne which he believes to have characterized the fifty years between Domesday Book and the death of Henry I:

'If William Rufus and Henry I had increased the enormous income of the Conqueror, it was not by retaining or increasing the royal demesne, but the very reverse, that is, by exploiting the judicial and feudal possibilities of the monarchy and by letting more and more of the *Terra Regis* slip out of the king's hands.'⁵

II

The reversal of the earlier judgement about Henry I's treatment of the royal demesne proceeds from a consideration of the contrast between the description of the royal lands in Domesday Book and the evidence of the Surveys first analysed by Round. But this contrast is not confined to the Surveys. It can also be found even more sharply defined in the

¹ *Feudal England*, p. 197. R. S. Hoyt, *The Royal Demesne in English Constitutional History, 1066-1272*, p. 89, summing up the results of Round's analysis, says that of the twenty-eight manors or tenements held by the king in 1086 only ten were still royal demesne in the Survey of c. 1124-9.

² *Feudal England*, pp. 215-24; *V.C.H. Northants*, i. 357-89 (see esp. p. 359). Professor Hoyt, p. 89, again sums up: 'in half of the hundreds in which William the Conqueror held lands, all or more than half of the royal demesne had been alienated, while of the twenty-two tenurial or administrative units of this Domesday *Terra Regis*, only nine had been retained in the king's hands as held in 1086.'

³ Hoyt, p. 89.

⁴ *V.C.H. Leicestershire*, i. 343; the Survey is printed with a full commentary by Sir Frank Stenton, pp. 339-54.

⁵ Hoyt, p. 86.

Pipe Roll of 1130 and its related documents, and it will be convenient to start by giving a few examples of the contrasts they provide:

1. In Herefordshire, Domesday Book is very explicit about the sources of the royal revenue. In addition to the miscellaneous profits of justice, it tells us that the borough of Hereford and eighteen manors on the royal demesne contributed to the king's farm a total of £335 a year.¹ But in the reign of Henry I, the total farm of the county was only £164. 16s. 5d., and only four of the eighteen manors of Domesday Book contributed to it.² These manors contributed £80 to the farm; but since the Domesday value of these manors had been only £41, we seem to be left with the astonishing fact that seven-eighths of the royal demesne in Herefordshire—that is to say fourteen manors worth nearly £300 a year—ceased to contribute to the royal farm in the fifty years after 1086.
2. In Wiltshire, Domesday Book shows a royal demesne valued at nearly £1,300 a year, in addition to judicial and miscellaneous profits worth £160.³ But the combined farm of Wiltshire and Dorset in 1130 was almost exactly half this total, namely £723. Towards this total Wiltshire may have contributed £600, certainly not more.⁴ What had happened to the remaining £860?
3. In Northamptonshire, Domesday Book shows demesne manors valued at £473 a year in addition to a very curious list of miscellaneous profits which can be read in various ways but in any case appears to indicate an additional revenue of over £100 a year.⁵ Yet

¹ *D.B.* i. 179.

² Herefordshire is missing in the Pipe Roll of 1130, and our information about the farm in the time of Henry I comes from the *Herefordshire Domesday* c. 1160–70, ed. V. H. Galbraith and J. Tait, Pipe Roll Society, n.s. xxv. 75. The account of the royal farm in this manuscript is unique in describing the sources of the revenue actually received by the king. As the editors note, 'it naturally calls to mind the *rotulus exactorius* or *breve de firmis* in which, according to the Exchequer Dialogue are carefully noted the king's farms arising from each county' (p. xxxi; cf. pp. 125–6). If this is the source, it is the sole remaining fragment of a document which would have thrown a quite new light on royal finance.

³ *D.B.* i. 64b–65b. This total includes four manors which are simply described as paying the *firma unius noctis*. In Wiltshire this seems to be equivalent to £100; but of course this may well have been paid in kind until the reign of Henry I, and there is later evidence that these values were not maintained. Many valuable details on the manors of the royal demesne are to be found in the commentary of R. R. Darlington, *V.C.H. Wilts.* ii. 60–65, 115–19; also in *V.C.H. Wilts.* vii. 95–103, 180–2; and in R. C. Hoare, *Modern History of S. Wiltshire*, vol. iii. See also H. M. Cam, *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England*, p. 68 n.

⁴ In the Pipe Roll for 7 Henry II, the farm of Wiltshire (including the *Terrae Datae* in the total) was £551, and that of Dorset £130.

⁵ *D.B.* i. 219. The main items in the list are £30 for the *firma trium noctium*,

in 1130 the combined farm of both Northamptonshire and Leicestershire was only £259, towards which the former contributed perhaps £150.¹ It is true that the early years of Henry II show a rather better result with Northamptonshire alone producing a farm of about £240, but even this is less than half the sum accounted for in Domesday Book.

4. In Oxfordshire, Domesday Book shows royal demesne manors which, with Oxford itself, are worth £534 a year; in addition there is a list of miscellaneous profits amounting to another £254 a year: in all therefore an apparent revenue of £788 a year.² Yet the total annual farm in 1130 was probably in the region of £350.³ Once more the question arises, what had happened to the rest of the Crown's Domesday income?

One obvious answer to the questions raised by these examples is that there had been a massive alienation of royal demesne, exceeding in extent even the alienation of Stephen's reign. But the very extent of some of these presumed alienations suggests a doubt. Except for the first year of his reign, Henry I was never in real difficulties in England. Both he and Rufus enjoyed quite exceptional opportunities for rewarding their friends from the extensive forfeitures of 1088, 1095, 1102, and 1106; not to mention the evidence for Henry I's manipulation of every resource of royal power to reward the men who were faithful to him. What urgency could have persuaded him to go even further and to give away the basic landed resources of the Crown on a huge scale to men who were already bound to him by every tie of self-interest? Can we really believe that in these four counties alone, Rufus and Henry I between them abandoned land which was bringing them an income in the region of £2,000 a year? What evidence is there for such extensive gifts, and to whom were they made?

£42 for dogs, £10 as a gift for the queen and for hay, £10 for a hawk, £40 for the manors of Queen Edith, and £10 for the manor of Clive. The last two items appear later among the manors of the royal demesne.

¹ In 1155 the farm of Leicestershire (including *Terrae Datae*) was £116.10s.; Northamptonshire had gone up to £247 (*P.R. 2 Henry II*, pp. 40, 45).

² *D.B.* i. 154b. The main items in the miscellaneous list are £150 for the *firma trium noctium*, £25 in augmentation of this, £20 from the borough, £20 from the coinage, £10 for a hawk, £24 for dogs, and £105 for the land of Earl Edwin in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. The last item is also included among the demesne manors of each of these counties: it consists of Bloxham (Oxon.) valued at £67 and Brailes, Coton, and Sutton in Warwickshire valued at about £60. I have omitted Earl Edwin's lands from my figure of £254.

³ The Pipe Roll for 1130 is incomplete at the beginning and omits the amount paid into the treasury by the Sheriff of Oxfordshire. The other items (including £291 still owing) amount to £333. In 1155 the total farm including *Terrae Datae* was £338. It appears likely, therefore, that the amount omitted in 1130 was not very considerable.

There can of course be no doubt that some part of the royal demesne was alienated by Henry I, as it was by every ruler in the course of a long reign.¹ In Essex, for example, in the crisis of 1100-1, he made some

¹ Caution is needed here. Many charters which look like grants of royal demesne turn out on closer inspection to be nothing of the kind. In this connexion it may be mentioned that not a single one of the charters of Rufus quoted by Professor Hoyt as examples of the alienation of royal demesne resulted in a permanent alienation, and most of them are not (despite appearances) concerned with royal demesne at all. Sometimes the transactions, of which the royal charters are the result, are extremely complicated, but they illustrate the niggardly and businesslike attitude of the royal administration in the matter of royal rights. It must suffice here to quote one or two cases:

1. *Regesta*, no. 346 (Grant of the manor of Bayford in fee to Peter of Valoignes.) This was certainly a grant of royal demesne; but firstly, it was a payment for 'two manors which I owed him'; and secondly, though the grant was *in feodo*, and confirmed by Henry I, and later confirmed by Matilda *in feodo et hereditate*, it is clear from the fragmentary Pipe Roll of 1154-5 that the manor had not descended with the fee of Peter of Valoignes, but was already back in the king's hands. It remained royal demesne, subject to life grants and grants for terms of years until 1544. (See *Cartae Antiquae*, Pipe Roll Society, n.s. xvii. 1939, p. 144; *Red Book of the Exchequer*, ii. 651, 789; H. Chauncy, *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*, 1700, pp. 281-2; and the Pipe Rolls of Henry II, Richard, and John for the way in which the manor was used as a stipend for treasury officials.)

2. *Regesta*, nos. 301, 302, 400. These charters grant the manors of Haddenham (Bucks.), Lambeth (Surrey), and Aston-sub-Edge (Gloucs.) to Rochester. The first two are given to repair the damage done to Rochester in the rising of 1088, the third for the souls of the king and his parents. The king refers to Lambeth and Aston as *in dominio* (or *dominico*) *meo*. But none of them was royal demesne in Domesday Book. Haddenham was held by Lanfranc and was given by him to Rochester. The king demanded £100 for his consent to this gift, but finally agreed to accept the fortification of Rochester Castle in lieu of payment. This cost the bishop £60. In 1086, Lambeth was a manor held by the church of St. Mary of Lambeth; it had formerly belonged to Goda, the sister of Edward the Confessor, and (according to the Rochester account) she had given it to Rochester. Lastly, Aston-sub-Edge belonged to Lambeth in 1086, and the Bishop of Rochester gave the king £20 for this property which probably rightly belonged to him anyhow. (See, besides Domesday Book, the *Textus Roffensis*, ed. T. Hearne, pp. 145-8, 215-17, 218-20, 222.)

Further examples of this kind can easily be given from the reigns of both Rufus and Henry I. They are offered here simply as illustrations of the dangers of taking royal charters at their face value, and as some justification for the very different impression which these charters make on me as compared with Professor Hoyt. It is clear for instance that the phrase *in dominio regis* or the like cannot be taken necessarily to mean that the land is part of the *Terra Regis* or royal demesne; it may simply be land that has come under the king's lordship, no matter how (cf. Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, ii. 54; *Rex Henricus . . . archiepiscopatum in dominium suum redegit, et Anselmum suis omnibus spoliavit*;

valuable grants to Eudo Dapifer: the borough of Colchester and the manor of Witham were valuable gifts, worth perhaps as much as £80 a year.¹ But, considered in relation to the importance of Eudo's support in the gravest moment of his reign, and in relation to Eudo's total wealth and the size of the royal demesne in Essex, these are small matters, very different from the widespread and apparently aimless giving in which we are asked to believe. Nor were these gifts made as hereditary possessions but simply to Eudo himself; and, like the rest of Eudo's estates, they returned to the Crown on his death. Or again: Count Stephen—the greatest beneficiary of Henry's reign—came to hold a substantial amount of royal demesne in Leicestershire. In Domesday Book this land was valued at £25 a year, and it was then held by the great Yorkshire magnate Hugh fitz Baldric. But even if this were an outright grant of royal demesne—and there is no evidence on this point—it is quite clear that such grants cannot have formed more than a negligible part of Stephen's vast holdings made up from the honours of Eye, Lancaster, and Mortain, together with his wife's honour of Boulogne.²

The evidence of the men whose careers I have examined above tells a similar story. Very little of their lands can be traced to royal demesne; the vastly greater proportion comes from the fiefs of other men, whether escheated or not. The case of Geoffrey Clinton is instructive. Of all the lands and churches which he gave to his new abbey at Kenilworth, only the site of Kenilworth itself (assessed at three virgates in Domesday Book) can be shown to have been part of the royal demesne in 1086; and this must be set beside land and churches in fifteen places in five counties which were demonstrably not from the royal demesne. It is true that Clinton himself states that the king gave him the manor of Hughenden from his *dominium*.³ But this is open to misunderstanding. As we have already seen, the king did not give it, but sold it for a substantial sum; and it was not in any case royal demesne, but part of the forfeited

and see especially n. 3 below). It is clear also (quite apart from the example given above) that to be given land *in feodo* did not yet necessarily imply heritability. I do not of course suggest that *no bona fide* grants of royal demesne can be found, even under Rufus (see for example *Regesta*, no. 326); but they are not easy to find.

¹ *Regesta*, nos. 519, 552.

² Round's account ('The Counts of Boulogne as English Lords' in *Studie in Peerage and Family History*) of the endowment of Stephen by Henry I is one of the finest of his short studies. But he might have laid more stress on the fact that he did not receive the English lands of the forfeited Count of Mortain when he was given this Norman county. Some of his English endowment may well have been compensation for this omission.

³ Cf. Clinton's charter to Kenilworth, *Monasticon*, v. 221: 'dedi . . . manerium de Hichenden . . . concessione domini mei H. regis, ex cuius dono et dominio idem manerium teneo, assensu etiam et petitione Gaufridi de sancto Roerio, qui eandem terram de Hichenden de me tenebat.'

fief of Odo of Bayeux.¹ I believe that a study of the other beneficiaries of Henry's generosity will, in the main, confirm this general picture. The exceptions to this rule stand out very conspicuously in Henry's charters. Most conspicuous of all is his old master Robert Achard, whom he endowed with an estate drawn almost wholly from the royal demesne in Berkshire, worth at least £50 a year, in return for the service of one knight. But this grant is in every way exceptional, and it carried with it jurisdictional privileges unknown in any other grant to a layman.² It is much more likely that it was an act of exceptional generosity to an old companion—personal loyalty being the one virtue that Henry absolutely required from others and himself consistently displayed—than that it is an isolated example of prodigal dissipation of the royal demesne.

Henry's gifts of royal demesne to religious houses are much more evident in his existing charters than similar grants to laymen. But even here, the general character of Henry's generosity follows the pattern of his generosity to laymen. In place of forfeitures and marriages, we have grants of churches and tithes. These rights, together with markets, tolls, jurisdictional immunities, and similar amenities were the king's stock-in-trade. The royal demesne was seldom seriously encroached upon. It is true that there were two spiritual crises in the reign which produced gifts of considerable size. The first of these was the disaster to the White Ship in 1120, the second Henry's crisis of conscience in the years 1130-1.³ Both these events were followed by gifts on a very large scale; but the

¹ *D.B.* i. 141b.

² *Regesta*, no. 1134. The estate included the following manors on the royal demesne in Berkshire: Aldermaston (worth £20.10s. but rendering £26), Finchampstead (worth £8), Sparsholt (worth £19.5s. but rendering £23), and Challow (a portion of West Challow of no specified value); also Colthorp, apparently part of the Domesday demesne of the Count of Evreux, worth ten shillings. The grant carried with it exemption from suit of the shire court (on this, see *Regesta*, p. xx). The family thus founded continued in possession of its central manors at Aldermaston and Sparsholt until 1762 and 1622 respectively (*V.C.H. Berks.* iii. 390; iv. 312).

³ The first of these crises was followed by the beginning of the foundation of Reading Abbey, and very liberal gifts to Merton Priory, Nostell, St. Mary's Rouen, Holy Trinity Aldgate, Peterborough, and perhaps Chertsey and Bermondsey (*Regesta*, nos. 1238, 1241, 1244, 1289, 1301, 1316, 1350, 1435). The second crisis was followed by grants to Fontevrault, Cluny, and Holy Trinity Caen (*Regesta*, nos. 1580 and 1687, 1618 and 1691, and 1692). These last gifts—chiefly in the form of claims on the royal revenues at Rouen, Loudon, Winchester, and London—are on a quite unprecedented scale; the gift of Tilshead, Wilts., worth £100 a year in 1086, to Holy Trinity Caen is easily the biggest gift of royal demesne in the reign so far as I can discover. The prominence of nunneries among these latest and greatest beneficiaries suggests that the crisis was in some way connected with Henry's well-known licentiousness and the lack of a male heir, just as the first crisis was directly connected with the loss of his heir. Even at these bitter moments, however, there are some traces of reluctance: the royal sheriff who was the founder of

total value of the land involved was not more than a few hundred pounds a year: a considerable sum, but on a scale quite different from that suggested by the contrast between Domesday Book and the actual receipts of Henry I in the examples I have quoted.

III

The starkness of this contrast depends of course on the belief, which Domesday Book encourages, that the king actually received the profits which it sets out in detail. If this were so, the Anglo-Norman government would have attained a degree of efficiency nearer to the standards of the twentieth than of the eleventh century. That the king should take his full profit, leaving the sheriff to make an income out of casual pickings and obscure tyrannies, was no doubt an ideal to be aimed at. But the great independent sheriffs who gave the Norman kings so much trouble can scarcely have been satisfied with such a position. And we know that they were not. Within a very few years of 1086, the first Geoffrey de Mandeville was Sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire for annual farms of £300 and £60 respectively.¹ Yet Domesday Book shows a royal demesne in Essex alone valued at £503, with the sheriff actually receiving £616; and in Hertfordshire the royal demesne was worth £146.² The whole farm of these counties was therefore less than half the receipts from the demesne manors alone. Whether this was at all typical we cannot say. It is well to be prepared for very wide variations in these matters. But equally there is nothing to show that this was worse than the average return obtained by the early Norman kings.

It may even be that Domesday Book itself provides some hints of the gap between the revenue actually received by the king and the amount collected in the counties. I have already referred to the list of casual profits in Oxfordshire which appear to form a supplement to the profits of the demesne. The list is well known: £150 from the county as the *firma trium noctium*, £25 in augmentation of this, £20 from the borough, and so on, concluding with £105 from the land of Earl Edwin of Mercia (who survived till 1070) in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. The sum of these items is £359 a year.³ This list suggests several reflections. In the first place it is too large to represent the profits of courts and miscellaneous

Merton is represented as having tried for years to get the king to give his canons the manor of Merton without success—it was only in 1121 that the king gave way. And the main endowments of Reading Abbey are distinctly stated to be an act of restitution of church lands: 'Sciatis quod tres abbatae in regno Angliae peccatis suis exigentibus olim destructae sunt, Radingia, scilicet, atque Chelsey et Leominstria, quas manus laica diu possedit, earumque terras et possessiones alienando distraxit.' Foundation charter of Reading, *Mon. Ang.* iv. 40-41).

¹ J. H. Round, *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, pp. 166-7.

² *D.B.* ii. 1-7; i. 132-3.

³ See above, p. 160 n. 2 for details.

dues, and it is hard to see where it can come from if not largely from the demesne manors of the Crown. Secondly, what are the lands of Earl Edwin, which duly appear later among the manors of the royal demesne, doing in this list? Neither of these considerations is easily reconcilable with the view that these profits are *additional* to the profits of the royal demesne. But if the list of miscellaneous items represents the *total* farm of the county our difficulties disappear. The lands of Earl Edwin would then form a separate item because they were added to the demesne after the amount of the county farm had been fixed. It is true that we are now left with a royal administration considerably more wasteful and less efficient than we are accustomed to suppose, but this need cause no surprise, and the later financial history of the county falls into place without any need for dramatic explanations. The farm of 1130, amounting probably to about £350, would be strictly in line with a Domesday farm of £359—neither much better nor much worse.

If this can be accepted, then the same situation may be observed in Northamptonshire. Here the miscellaneous payments from the county and borough add up to £145.¹ Once more there are manors mentioned by name as contributing towards this sum—notably the manors of Queen Edith (d. 1075)—which appear later in the description of the royal demesne. Once more we must ask, what are they doing here if this list of payments is *additional* to the royal profit from the demesne? But if they are added to the *total* farm because they came into the king's hands after the amount of the farm was fixed, then this difficulty disappears and carries with it several others. Certainly £145 would be a miserable revenue from a county with demesne valued at £473 a year. Nevertheless it is closely related to the figure of about £150 for 1130.² Once more we would have a county farm in 1130 neither much better nor much worse than the farm in 1086.

Leicestershire provides a similar example. It was not a profitable county. The royal demesne in 1086 was worth only £83, and the list of miscellaneous payments amounts to £73 10s.³ If this latter figure formed the *total* farm in 1086, then Richard Basset and Aubrey de Ver with their farm of about £100 in 1130 were doing slightly better for the king than their predecessors of 1086.² I am inclined to think that such slight improvements are more consistent with what we know of the financial policy of Henry I and with what contemporaries tell us about him and with the evidence of his charters, than the alternative theory of a quite catastrophic decline in the royal revenue from the demesne.

It would be rash to attempt to arrive at any great degree of precision in these difficult questions of finance. The confusions, the local embroilments and struggles, not to mention the lack of evidence and misleading simplifying tendencies of the evidence that exists, make precision impossible. It is likely that the king did very much better in some counties than in others. In Kent, for instance, the 1130 receipts amounting to

¹ See above, p. 159 n. 5. ² See above, p. 160. ³ *D.B.* i. 230a-b.

nearly £600 seem a very good return in a county where the demesne in 1086, valued at £483, was stated to be rendering only £424.¹ In Worcestershire, too, the king received full value from his demesne manors, which produced £123 a year out of a total county farm of £179.² Here, as in Kent, the revenue showed no decline in the next two generations. The figures for 1130 are missing, but the farm was £225 in 1155-6, and can scarcely have been less under Henry I.³ So once more we have a story of a small but distinct improvement. But sometimes there was a decline. In Warwickshire for instance the Domesday farm was £185—a rich return in a county where the demesne was valued at only £90.⁴ In 1130 the farm was £133, a reduction perhaps made necessary by experience; but the decline was not catastrophic, and the years between 1130 and 1155 brought a slight improvement.⁵ The reasons for these local variations must largely elude us. But the problem of the alienation of the royal demesne cannot be seen in its true perspective unless we first ask what the king was actually receiving from his lands. For it is clear that in some cases judicious grants of royal demesne tended not at all to the weakening or impoverishment of the king himself but to the weakening of the sheriff. In these cases alienations could be a move of political prudence and not an illustration of weakness or careless liberality.

IV

It happens that the Surveys which provide the most convincing evidence for the reorganization of the royal demesne at the hands of the new men of Henry I are those of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. If I am right in suggesting that these were two of the counties from which the king got little profit from his demesne, we may here have a clue to the reason for this reorganization. But even here, the idea of widespread alienation must be received with some caution, as the following brief notes on the Surveys, which have provided the main evidence for the decline in the royal demesne, will show:

1. *The Lindsey Survey*. In the area covered by this Survey, there are only three pieces of land listed as *Terra Regis* in Domesday Book, and they all belonged to the single manor of Nettleham. This manor was part of the marriage portion of the Queen and it was only because the king was a widower that the land was in his hands in 1086. In the crisis of 1101 it was used as an endowment for the former royal chancellor Robert Bloet, and thereafter it was an estate of the bishops of Lincoln.⁶ It may, however, also be noted that while the Lindsey Survey correctly reports this alienation of 12 carucates of demesne

¹ *Pipe Roll 31 Henry I*, p. 63; *D.B.* i. 1-2b.

² *D.B.* i. 172.

³ *Pipe Roll 2 Henry II*, p. 62.

⁴ *D.B.* i. 238.

⁵ In 1155 the farm (including *Terrae Dotalae*) was £150.

⁶ See above, p. 146 n. 2.

land and some 10 carucates of sokeland, it balances this loss by attributing to the king $28\frac{1}{2}$ carucates which had not been *Terra Regis* in 1086, but had formed parts of the Feriers, Busli, and Bayeux fees. On balance, therefore, for what the evidence is worth, the Lindsey Survey shows an actual increase in royal land in the area.

2. *The Leicestershire Survey*. To understand the evidence of this Survey, it is necessary to understand the state of the royal demesne in 1086. The king had very few estates in the county, but some of these were very large and peculiar in their organization. Firstly, he had four estates in the north-east of the county, at Croxton Kerrial, Knipton, Herston, and Nether Broughton. They had belonged to Earl Morcar, but in 1086 they were held from the king at farm by the Yorkshire tenant-in-chief Hugh fitz Baldric, and they were valued at £25 a year. Secondly there was a group of estates in various parts of the county which had been held by the widow of Edward the Confessor. In 1086 these estates—Saddington, Whatborough, Thorp, Acre, and Ditchley—were held of the king by a certain Godric who had the first three at farm for (it would seem) £18 a year, and the fourth for an unspecified service. Thirdly, there were two loosely co-ordinated properties at Rothley and Great Bowden, each consisting of a small central demesne farm which received dues from a considerable number of properties mainly held by sokemen. The demesne farms of these properties were valued at £3. 2s. and £2 respectively, and the dues which they received from the sokeland at £31. 8s. 1d. and £7. 11s. 6d. Fourthly, the king had two other small pieces of land valued altogether at £3.¹

What the Survey shows is that the estates which had been held by Hugh fitz Baldric in 1086 were held fifty years later by Stephen, Count of Mortain—but on what terms or for what services, whether in fee or at farm we are not told. Of the second group of estates the Survey mentions only Whatborough, and it was still royal demesne. In the third group it tells us only about Rothley, where it shows that of the land held by sokemen in 1086 about a third was held fifty years later by the Earl of Leicester, Norman of Verdun, and Richard Basset (with King David of Scotland and Robert of Ferrers holding minute fragments). But it does not tell us whether they owed the same payments to the central manor as their predecessors of 1086, nor do we know who these predecessors were, nor how it was that men of high importance came to have such lowly holdings.²

It is clear that no precise conclusions can be reached from this evidence about the alienation of the royal demesne in Leicestershire, still less in general.

3. *The Northamptonshire Survey*. Much of the land described as *Terra Regis* in this county in Domesday Book was in baronial hands in the

¹ *D.B.* i. 230a-b.

² For these details see *V.C.H. Leicestershire*, i. 339-54.

twelfth century. This is proved not only by the evidence of the Survey which attributes a high proportion of this land 'to the fee' of King David of Scotland, of Courcy, of Salisbury, of the Earls of Warenne and Warwick, and of Balliol, but also by the histories of individual manors. It is true that there is a large measure of doubt about the date at which the property came into the hands of its later owners, and we know almost nothing at all about the terms on which the land was held, or how it had come to be held by these magnates.¹ Round gave reasons for thinking that a large part of this transfer of land had taken place by the time of Henry I, and though his arguments are not always convincing their cumulative force is powerful. There are of course many puzzles: when we have a grant of Henry I affecting land described in the Survey, it does not agree with the evidence of the Survey;² when we have transfers which are in appearance later than the time of Henry I, they nevertheless do not appear as *Terrae Datae* in the Pipe Rolls of Henry II.³ But when all allowances have been made, the situation of the royal demesne in Northamptonshire, when it first comes into view in the twelfth century, is very different from what Domesday Book would lead us to expect. Of the total Domesday demesne of £473 a year, the twelfth century survey ascribes land to the value of £160 a year to tenants other than the king; and it must also be added that land to the value of £58 a year is not mentioned at all, and a further block of land worth £116 a year is mentioned without any reference to its holder. At the very least, therefore, about one-third of the Domesday demesne was in private hands by about the middle of the twelfth century. But how, or exactly when, this transfer had taken place it seems impossible to ascertain with any exactitude, and if my interpretation of the

¹ Round's own words describe very well some of the ambiguities of this document: 'It is not easy to give the reader an idea of the unique difficulties presented by this Survey. Sometimes the tenant's name is that of the Domesday holder, sometimes that of his son or grandson. Indeed the names may belong to any date from the Conqueror's reign to the later years of Henry II. Again, we have sometimes the name of the tenant-in-chief himself, sometimes that of an under-tenant, and sometimes no name at all' (*V.C.H. Northants*, i. 358-9). He might have added the further difficulty that in this county Domesday Book tells us nothing at all about the variety of tenures underlying the reiterated formula *Rex tenet*. . . . The situation must certainly have been more complex than this bare recital implies.

² *Regesta*, no. 849: grant of the sokemen of Wold belonging to Faxton to Aubrey de Vere. This grant is not mentioned in the description of Faxton and its appurtenances in the Survey—perhaps an accidental omission.

³ Round, *V.C.H.*, p. 387, gives good reasons for thinking that the grant of Weekley to William, the son of King Stephen, belongs to the years 1148-59. Similarly the grant of Towcester to the Earl of Arundel must belong to the years after 1139-41 when the earldom was created. But no trace of these grants can be found (as we might have expected) in the Pipe Rolls of Henry II.

royal receipts from the demesne in this county is correct the effect on the royal finances was small.

V

To sum up the results of this inquiry. The treatment of the royal demesne in the fifty years after 1086 varies greatly from county to county. In some counties there is evidence of considerable alienation of royal demesne, and these alienations may well be connected with the unsatisfactory state of royal administration in the area, going back to a period before Domesday Book. The existing royal charters do not support the idea of a continuous or general relaxation of the king's grip on the royal demesne. We know as yet too little about the local conditions which prompted gifts of royal demesne to laymen; but all the other aspects of Henry's treatment of his officials suggest that they paid highly for what they got, and that the royal demesne did not form a major object of their ambitions, which were concentrated on other perquisites accessible to them through their connexion with the royal court.