The Reign of King John

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Chapter VII

The Seeds of Revolt

In discussing the reign of a king it is, of course, impossible to distinguish clearly between actions based largely on personal reasons and those that stemmed from essentially political considerations. While the last chapter was devoted primarily to the general political activities of John's government, behind these lay his personal ambitions and desires. This chapter will describe his personal quarrels with individual barons and with small groups of barons, but often general political considerations entered into these quarrels. Hence the two chapters fit closely together and must be grasped as a whole if one is to understand the period. As the nature, frequency, and seriousness of a man's personal quarrels depend largely on his character, this chapter must begin with a discussion of John as a man. The brief summary given in chapter two must be justified and supplied with sufficient illustration to make it vivid.

The central features of John's character were his pride, ambition, and jealousy. He wanted desperately everything that gave prestige to a feudal monarch—power, wealth, and military glory. He wanted to rule the greatest possible extent of territory as absolutely as possible. I am not using absolute in a technical sense. John was brought up in the feudal environment, and there is no evidence to indicate that he ever thought of the possibility of absolute rule in its modern meaning. While at least one of his clerks used expressions that would have pleased James I—the king was the rod of God's fury constituted to rule his subjects with a rod of iron and to crush the nobles in an iron hand—John seems always to have accepted the general feudal principle of limited authority. He simply wanted to develop his power as king and feudal suzerain to the greatest possible extent. While it seems likely that he abused his rights as a feudal monarch more enthusi-

1 Wendover, III, 53.
astically than his predecessors, he did so along the lines laid down by them and within the framework of feudal ideas.

The turning point in John’s career, the event that warped his character beyond repair, was probably the loss of Normandy, Maine, Anjou, Touraine, and Brittany. It seems unlikely that before the summer of 1203 it had ever occurred to John that King Philip could conquer these great fiefs. When Richard was a prisoner in Germany, the barons of Normandy led by the seneschal William fitz Ralph, and Earl Robert of Leicester had defended the duchy against Philip with little or no help from England. With its duke at its head and English knights to aid the duchy should be impregnable. Actually no modern historian has adequately explained the conquest of Normandy by King Philip. Lot and Fawtier certainly tell part of the story in demonstrating Philip’s superior financial resources. But the basic cause must have been the unenthusiastic if not actually treasonable behavior of the Anglo-Norman baronage. The loss was a cruel blow to John’s pride. From then on his chief preoccupation was to recover the lost lands and revenge himself on King Philip. Moreover it intensified his naturally suspicious nature and directed it against the English baronage. Finally the catastrophe dulled John’s delight in his young queen. It was, after all, his marriage to Isabella that gave the French king a legitimate excuse for seizing his fiefs.

History has not, I believe, fully recognized either the full scope of John’s plans to recover his prestige or how near they came to fruition. He succeeded in raising a large war-chest and in obtaining a mastery of England superior to that of any of his predecessors with the possible exception of his father, Henry II. He humbled the great Anglo-Irish barons and the native chieftains and vastly increased his authority in that lordship. He held the Welsh in check and firmly established the royal power in the middle and southern Marches. A humiliating peace was imposed on the king of Scotland. The king of Man became John’s vassal and moves were made to bring the Orkneys within the scope of his

\[2\] Lot and Fawtier, *Le premier budget de la monarchie française*, pp. 135-139.

\[3\] *Histoire des ducs de Normandie*, p. 104.
power. Through his relationship with Otto of Brunswick and generous subsidies he built a close alliance with the princes of eastern Germany. Three great vassals of the French crown, the counts of Flanders, Boulogne, and Toulouse were successfully seduced. A number of lesser French barons such as the count of Nevers were in John's pay. If Bouvines had been won, John would have been the dominant power in western Europe. With Philip Augustus humbled there would have been little chance that Otto's enemies could destroy his imperial power. The papacy would have to bow to the victorious cousins. And the English baronage appeared by the recovery of their continental lands would hardly have considered revolt against so powerful a monarch.

John's pride and ambition were essentially sources of strength—they impelled him to become a powerful monarch both within and without his realm. But his almost frantic jealousy was a real weakness. A feudal monarch could best control and obtain the support of his baronage through men of baronial rank who were devoted to him and whose competence, wealth, and power gave them prestige among their fellows. At the beginning of his reign John was served by at least four such men—Hubert Walter, William Marshal, Geoffrey fitz Peter, and William de Briouse. While other motives than jealousy had a part in his quarrels with William Marshal and William de Briouse, that emotion alone seems to have produced his dislike of Hubert Walter and Geoffrey fitz Peter. Moreover the chroniclers make clear that there was a general feeling among his contemporaries that John hated all men of wealth and power.\(^4\) This undoubtedly made it difficult for him to practice the time-honored device of feudal monarchs—to play off one great baron against another. The example of William de Briouse would hardly encourage any baron to become John's intimate.

Closely allied to jealousy was John's all-pervading suspicion. There were few men indeed whom he did not suspect of disaffection or disloyalty at some time or other. Among the prominent figures of the reign Peter des Roches, William Brewer, Richard

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 105.
Marsh, and John and Walter de Grey are the only ones who seem never to have incurred his serious displeasure. Even such devoted royal servants as Hubert de Burgh, Brian de Lisle, John fitz Hugh, William de Cornhill, and Peter de Maulay were out of favor for varying lengths of time. No one in John's realm could ever feel certain of the king's good-will. He was continually demanding hostages and castles from his barons as pledges of their good behavior. He seems even to have taken hostages from his mercenary captains who were completely dependent on his will. If, as I have suggested, it was the king's suspicion of his officials that gave us the chancery rolls, the historian must be duly grateful for it, but it was a grave source of weakness for John. No one trusts a man who trusts no one.

John was a man of ideas. He was ingenious—perhaps too ingenious. As we have seen he invented complicated counter-signs and then forgot what they were. His scheme for getting the English clergy to sign declarations that all the money extorted from them had been given of their own free will was most ingenious. While it may not be true that he forged letters to confuse his enemies, it was the sort of thing a chronicler was ready to believe about him. The idea of inventing counter-signs so that he could issue orders that he knew would not be obeyed was of the same variety. If, as seems probable, John himself thought of the scheme to surrender his realms to the pope and hence secure papal support against his foes, it is further evidence of the activity of his mind. Whatever John may have been he was not dull.

It is always hazardous to apply the term unscrupulous to a man who lived in a remote age because of our inadequate knowledge of the standards accepted by his contemporaries. Certainly John had no hesitation about making promises that he had no intention of keeping, and he lied whenever it seemed convenient to do so, but these are faults common to most kings if not to all governments in general. Still it seems clear that John carried this sort

6 Rot. claus., I, 162.
7 Matthew Paris, Chronica maior, II, 588; Coggeshall, pp. 176-177.
of thing beyond the limits allowed by the ethics of his day. He
solemnly approved Magna Carta with apparently the full intention
of asking the pope to declare it invalid. Yet his baronial foes re-
fused to issue charters promising loyalty and obedience to him
because they did not believe they could keep such promises. And
John valued highly such a charter from a baron whose loyalty he
suspected. In short John's own standards in this respect were
so high as those he felt confident his vassals would adhere to.
Then in the feudal environment as in later times a safe-conduct
was a sacred guarantee. Yet it is clear that Stephen Langton and
his fellow exiles had little confidence in those issued by John. He
insisted that John's letters be supported by those of an imposing
array of prelates and barons. It seems very likely that the king's
untrustworthiness was a major factor in the baronial discontent.
This flaw in his character was called to the attention of all by
the disappearance of Arthur. Before the march to relieve Mirabeau
John had promised William des Roches that if Arthur fell into
his hands, he would treat him in accordance with William's ad-
vise. There seems no reason for doubting the story that the fate
of Arthur was in the mind of Matilda de Briouse when she pre-
cipitated the bitter struggle between John and her family by re-
fusing to give her sons as hostages. It is doubtful that any
one took very seriously purely political promises like the king's
statements that he would give his barons their "rights"—all kings
made such promises and forgot them. But there were promises
that kings as well as other men were expected to observe. John
could be trusted to keep neither variety.

While it is extremely difficult to establish the ethical standards
of a remote period, it is even harder to judge its sense of humor.
I can simply cite two incidents that indicate to me that John had a
sense of humor. On May 27, 1212, a curious charter was issued
at Wolmere. The bishops of Winchester and Norwich, the jus-
ticiar, the earls of Salisbury, Chester, Arundel, and Oxford, Rich-
ard Marsh, Henry of London, archdeacon of Stafford, William de
Cornhill, archdeacon of Huntingdon, Hugh de Neville, William

\textsuperscript{8} Rot pat., p. 181. \textsuperscript{9} Wendover, III, 48-49.
Brewer, and thirteen lesser persons both lay and ecclesiastical stated that at their request John had restored his office to Peter de Maulay. They guaranteed that he would never again oppose the king's will. If he did, they would deliver his body to the king and would not resent any action John might take against the culprit. Then four of the guarantors agreed to pay penalties if Peter failed in his duty. Earl William of Salisbury would give John all his hawks. Peter des Roches would give him twenty palfreys and William de Cantilupe two. Henry fitz Count would allow himself to be whipped.\textsuperscript{10} When one considers that whipping was a disgraceful punishment reserved for servants and that Henry fitz Count was John's second cousin, illegitimate son of Henry I's bastard, Earl Reginald of Cornwall, I see a grim humor in the penalty demanded by John.

During the week before Christmas 1204 King John was at his castle of Marlborough in Wiltshire. Marlborough was an important royal stronghold. Its constable was Hugh de Neville, the chief forester, and it was the headquarters of the forest administration. Hugh had made preparations for the king's visit—a few days ahead he had bought two tuns of wine from John.\textsuperscript{11} Marlborough was also a favorite residence of the queen, and she may well have been there at this time. Be that as it may on the back of the oblate roll there appears an entry that has piqued the curiosity of many historians. "The wife of Hugh de Neville gives the lord king two hundred chickens that she may lie one night with her lord, Hugh de Neville." Her pledges were Hugh de Neville himself and Thomas de Sanford, constable of the neighboring castle of Devizes.\textsuperscript{12} The general appearance of this entry suggests that the clerk who wrote it had shared in the two tuns of wine. I fear we shall never know what it means. It has been cited as an example of John's tyranny, and it is conceivable that Joan de Neville was a hostage for her husband and needed the king's leave to enjoy her marital rights. It is also conceivable, perhaps more probable, that she was John's mistress and was buying her way out of the royal bed. Twelve years later Hugh de Neville was to surrender

\textsuperscript{10} Rot. chart., p. 191. \textsuperscript{11} Rot. oblatis, p. 237. \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 275.
this same castle to Louis of France without any attempt at resistance. Whatever the meaning or innuendo this document certainly reeks of a fine bawdy humor. Unfortunately this entry never got past the barons of the exchequer to find its way to the pipe roll so we do not know whether or not the chickens were delivered. Or perhaps the chief clerk of the chancery, Hugh de Welles, the future bishop of Lincoln, was sober when he sent the roll into the exchequer.

The contemporary chroniclers are almost unanimous in agreeing that John was lustful and adulterous. As a general accusation this needs no substantiation beyond his imposing list of illegitimate children. From the apparent ages of those known to us one would judge that they were the result of infidelities to Isabella of Gloucester rather than to Isabella of Angoulême. One of the elder ones was Joan who married Llywelyn, prince of North Wales, about 1204. Many years later the seduction of this lady, by then mature to say the least, resulted in the death of a grandson of William de Briouze at Llywelyn's hands. About the same age as Joan was Geoffrey who in 1205 was old enough to hold the honor of Perche and to be at least the nominal leader of a small expedition to Poitou. Geoffrey died before the end of 1205. Another son named John was being supported by the custodians of the see of Lincoln in 1201. He seems to have become a clerk. In June 1207 the king sent to the prior of Kenilworth Henry "who calls himself our son, but is really our nephew." In 1215 Henry fitz Roy was given the Cornish lands of Robert fitz Walter. Henry married a minor heiress and lived well on into the reign of Henry III fully acknowledged as Henry, the king's brother. Little is known about two other sons of John, Oliver

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13 Wendover, III, 63; Histoire des ducs de Normandie, p. 105; William of Newburgh, p. 521; Chronica de Melsa, p. 394; Giraldus Cambrensis, Opera, VIII, 319-320.
11 Rot. claus., I, 12; Rot. chart., p. 147.
17 Rot. claus., I, 86.
18 Ibid., pp. 200, 228.
19 Calendar of liberate rolls (Rolls series), I, 126; Close rolls, 1237-1242, p. 511.
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and Osbert Giffard. The latter is peculiarly elusive because there was a contemporary of the same name.\textsuperscript{20} The only one of John's bastards to attain baronial rank and play a part of some importance in the history of his day was Richard. Richard served as a captain during the baronial revolt. In 1214 he married Rohese of Dover, granddaughter of that Rohese who had suffered so much from the solicitude of William Brewer, and became lord of the castle and barony of Chilham in Kent.\textsuperscript{21}

Now licentiousness was no novel accusation against an English king. It was freely brought against both Henry II and Richard though as far as we know neither could compete in number of illegitimate offspring with either Henry I or John. I know of no contemporary suggestion that the amorous activities of either Henry disturbed their vassals though the rumor that Henry II had seduced Alis of France, fiancée of his son Richard, was probably one reason for Richard's disinclination to marry her. But the barons of Aquitaine are said to have complained to Henry II of Richard's freedom with their wives and daughters and John's assaults on the virtue of the female relatives of his vassals are generally mentioned as one of the chief reasons for their disaffection. It is for this reason that the names of John's mistresses are of historical importance.

Unfortunately little can be said on this subject that is based on anything more solid than contemporary rumor and modern speculation. Richard fitz Roy was clearly John's son by a sister of Earl William de Warren.\textsuperscript{22} The mother of Oliver fitz Roy was named Hawise and there is some reason for thinking that she was a Tracy.\textsuperscript{23} I can find no hint as to who were the mothers of John's other bastards. The chroniclers mention a few names, but their stories do not fill one with confidence as to their reliability. According to William of Newburgh the king hated "Eustace fitz John" because he had placed a common woman instead of his wife in the royal bed.\textsuperscript{24} The reference is clearly to Eustace de Vesci,

\textsuperscript{20} Rot. claus., I, 230, 234, 235, 238, 266, 276, 277, 326; Rot. pat., p. 140.
\textsuperscript{21} Rot. claus., I, 168, 268; Rot. pat., pp. 118, 186, 199.
\textsuperscript{22} Histoire des ducs de Normandie, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{23} Rot. claus., I, 326, 355.
\textsuperscript{24} William of Newburgh, p. 521.
son of William de Vesci and grandson of the baron known as Eustace fitz John. The story may well be true. It is difficult otherwise to explain Eustace’s bitter enmity for John, but the chronicler’s confusion of Eustace with his grandfather makes one doubtful. The *Histoire des ducs de Normandie* asserts that when Robert fitz Walter fled to France, he told King Philip that his break with John was caused by the latter’s seduction of his daughter Matilda, wife of Geoffrey de Mandeville, eldest son of Geoffrey fitz Peter. But the *Histoire* itself presents a different account of the origin of the quarrel and adds that Robert told Pandulf that he left England because he would not serve an excommunicate king. Obviously the author of the *Histoire* doubted the story of Matilda’s seduction. There is, however, a similar tale in a monastic chronicle, but its details are too melodramatic to be taken very seriously.

The rolls contain a number of references to the king’s mistresses, but only once is the lady named. Early in 1213 the royal tailor supplied the damoiselle Susan, the king’s friend, with a tunic and super-tunic. In 1212 John sent one of his mistresses a chaplet of roses from Geoffrey fitz Peter’s manor of Ditton. In 1209 Peter des Roches paid a royal mistress £30. If more of the records of the king’s chamber survived, we would probably have more such references, but they would add little to our knowledge. When a man enjoys a reputation like John’s, one is inclined to be suspicious of every favor he does for a woman. Thus one’s curiosity is aroused by an entry on the memoranda roll of 1 John “On St. Catherine’s day came Richard de Heriet and led a woman named Hawise de Burdels. The king says to give her a pension of a penny per day.” This pension was duly assigned on the revenues of Essex and Hertfordshire. Then in 1205 a Bristol wine merchant was directed to give Henry Biset a dolia of good wine.
"which we gave his wife." 32 On July 14, 1214, Engelard de Cigogné was directed to send to the king under the escort of two knights "Alpesia, the queen's damoiselle." 33 Such instances can obviously mean anything or nothing.

In only one case do the reasons for suspicion seem fairly strong. When Hawise, countess of Aumale, died in 1213, her heir was William de Fortibus, her son by her second husband. William was in France at the time of his mother's death. On October 1, 1213, he was given a safe-conduct to come to England to negotiate for his inheritance. 34 About a year later John issued a charter granting him the possession of his mother's lands when he had married Avelina, sister of Richard de Montfichet. Moreover the residue of the enormous fine offered by his mother for her inheritance at the death of her third husband and the relief owed by William were forgiven. Finally John himself would supply the bride with a marriage portion worth forty marks a year. 35 As Hawise had lived less than a year after offering her fine of 5,000 marks, she could not have paid much of it. According to John's standards several thousand pounds would not be too high a relief for Hawise's vast barony. John gave up all this and added a gift of forty marks a year out of the royal demesne. One cannot fail to suspect that such generosity on John's part could only be a reward for distinguished service in the royal bed.

The discussion of John's mistresses and bastards leads naturally to the question of his relations with Queen Isabella. In one of his additions to the chronicle of Roger of Wendover Matthew Paris puts a vicious attack on Isabella's character into the mouth of one of John's clerks, Robert of London. It is part of the strange tale of an embassy sent by John to seek an alliance with a Moslem emir. Robert of London tells the emir that Isabella is both incestuous and adulterous—that she had been convicted of adultery many times. Matthew says that he heard this story from Robert himself. 36 Without committing myself as to whether or not such an embassy ever took place, it seems safe to assert that little reliance

32 Rot. claus., I, 31. 34 Rot. pat., p. 104.
33 Rot. pat., p. 119. 35 Rot. chart., p. 201.
36 Matthew Paris, Chronica maiora, II, 559-564.
should be placed on what Robert said he said about Isabella. Leaving aside the fact that it is hard to conceive how Isabella could find anyone in England to commit incest with there is no evidence whatever that she was unfaithful to John or that even his suspicious mind accused her of infidelity. One chronicle states that in 1208 she was placed in custody at Corfe and in December 1213 Terric Teutonicus was ordered to take her to Gloucester and guard her in the chamber in which she bore her daughter Joan, but neither of these necessarily implies imprisonment.37 A few months after the second incident royal writs are addressed to the queen and Terric as joint commanders of the castle. I feel sure that in both cases custody and guard should be taken in the sense of safe-guard. John was undoubtedly unfaithful to Isabella—perhaps publicly and blatantly so—but all the evidence indicates that he treated her kindly and generously. One example must suffice. A week before her eldest son, Henry, was born John wrote to Peter de Joigny, brother of the count of Joigny in France, giving him a safe-conduct to come to see his sister “who desires him much and begs us for him.” 38

One of the most reliable of the contemporary chronicles describes King John as “a very bad man—cruel toward all men and too covetous of pretty ladies.” 39 I am afraid that the first charge is even more certainly established than the second. There seems to be no doubt that John ordered the murder of his nephew Arthur and the death by starvation of Matilda de Briouse and her son William de Briouse the younger.40 The murder in prison of Geoffrey de Norwich, the justiciar of the Jews, seems equally well substantiated.41 Peter of Pontefract was hanged with his son for prophesying the end of John’s reign in 1213.42 Honorius, archdeacon of Richmond, died in a royal prison where he had been thrown

37 Rot. pat., pp. 124, 143.
38 Ibid., p. 71.
40 Coventry, II, 196; Wendover, II, 48, 49, 57; Annals of Margam, pp. 27, 30.
41 Wendover, II, 52-53; Coggeshall, p. 165; Annals of Dunstable, pp. 33-34.
42 Coggeshall, p. 167; Wendover, II, 76-77.
ostensibly because he owed the king money but probably actually because he had failed to persuade Pope Innocent to accept John de Grey as archbishop of Canterbury.\textsuperscript{43} We do not know that he died violently, but it seems likely. Beyond the specific cases are the more general ones. In July 1212 John hanged twenty-eight sons of Welsh chieftains who were hostages for their parents' behavior.\textsuperscript{44} Now the Welsh chieftains had undoubtedly broken their promises, but John's act was savage beyond the custom of the day. While the stories of the tortures used to persuade the Jews to contribute adequately to the tallage of 1211 may well be exaggerated, it is hard to believe that they are purely imaginative.\textsuperscript{45} Then while we have no definite evidence of violence done to clerks during the interdict, the suggestions that such violence took place are too general to ignore.\textsuperscript{46} In short the evidence seems overwhelming that John was savage and brutal when angered. In the case of Arthur he seems to have been guilty of carefully premeditated murder of a dangerous political rival.

Recent historians have shown a marked inclination to rehabilitate King John's reputation. His crimes have been questioned and his virtues exaggerated. This tendency seems to spring from a failure to distinguish between the man and the monarch. In many, perhaps in most, respects John was an excellent king. His close attention to the business of government was in decided contrast to the negligent attitude of King Richard. He was intelligent and aggressive in trying to solve the political and financial problems that faced him. He seems to have fully appreciated the value of able royal servants. We have seen he took over the entire administrative personnel of his brother with a few exceptions when it would have been easy, perhaps even conventional, to have replaced Richard's men with his own. And while John was undoubtedly jealous of Geoffrey fitz Peter, he retained him as justiciar until his death. Moreover John's own favorites were clearly men of capacity. No more proof of this is needed than the success with which they ran the government in extremely difficult circumstances.

\textsuperscript{43} Annals of Dunstaple, p. 31. 
\textsuperscript{44} Coggeshall, p. 207; Wendover, II, 62. 
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., pp. 54-55. 
\textsuperscript{46} Coventry, II, 200.
after the king's death. Then I can see no justification for calling John a tyrant in the political or constitutional sense. He was an innovator who sought to develop the royal power as had his predecessors—hence he was bound to arouse opposition. He found the royal revenue nearly static in a time of rising costs and rising baronial incomes, and he sought to redress the balance. No effort to obtain for a government its share of increasing profits is ever popular. It is important to remember that the fact that Magna Carta forbade a practice, does not make that practice wrong on John's part.

While John was a far better king than his brother or his son—probably as good a one as his father—little can be said in favor of his private character. He was cruel, lecherous, and deceitful. His mind was always seething with jealousy and suspicion of his servants and vassals. He was as close to irreligious as it was possible for a man of his time to be. Against these major vices such minor virtues as generosity to small nunneries can carry little weight. And, as has been suggested before, his personal vices continually hampered his political effectiveness. While the policies of John as a king may have kept his vassals in a permanent state of discontent, it was his personal quarrels that supplied leaders for the disaffected.

King John's first major quarrel with a compact group of his barons involved the lords who dominated South Wales and its Marches and Ireland. The eclipse of Hubert de Burgh after his capture in Chinon left South Wales and the southern Marches almost completely in the hands of two men—William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, and William de Briouse. William Marshal ruled his palatine shire of Pembroke in south-west Wales, the lordship of Striguil between the Wye and the Uske, and the stronghold of Castle Goodrich on the Wye. He was custodian of the royal castle of Cardigan, the king's chief fortress in south-west Wales and of the forest of Dean with its castle of St. Briavel between the Wye and the Severn. In addition he was sheriff of Gloucestershire with the custody of the castles of Gloucester and Bristol.47 William de Briouse held as fiefs the Marcher baronies

of Abergavenny, Brecon, Radnor, Gower, and Kington. John had also granted him the three castles of Grosmont, Skenfrith, and Llantilio. He had the custody of the palatine shire of Glamorgan that lay between the lordship of Striguil and the county of Pembroke. He also had the custody of the heir of Baderon de Monmouth, young John de Monmouth, with his barony and of the heir of his own nephew, William de Beauchamp of Elmley, with his fief. Moreover his son Giles was master of the see of Hereford with its castles. Finally through an agreement with his son-in-law, Walter de Lacy, who was absent in Ireland, William de Briouse controlled the large Lacy barony with its castles of Ewyas and Ludlow. In short there were only three important fiefs in this whole region that were not under the control of William Marshal or William de Briouse—Henry de Bohun, earl of Hereford’s, share of the lands once held by Miles of Gloucester, and the baronies of Mortimer and Clifford. But Henry de Bohun was William de Briouse’s first cousin once removed, Walter de Clifford was his second cousin, and Roger de Mortimer’s son and heir, Hugh, was William’s son-in-law. As Walter de Clifford became sheriff of Herefordshire at Easter 1205, William had little to fear from that royal agent.

The same group of barons were the masters of John’s lordship of Ireland. William Marshal had acquired with his wife the vast lordship of Leinster. Walter de Lacy had inherited from his father the lordship of Meath. John had given Limerick to William de Briouse and had approved and confirmed the conquest of Ulster by Walter’s brother, Hugh de Lacy. These great baronies were practically palatinates and the king’s justiciar of Ireland had little power outside Dublin and its pale and a few other royal

48 Rot. chart., pp. 66, 80, 160; Calendar of charter rolls, III, 46; Rot. pat., pp. 19, 57; Pipe roll 1 John, p. 86; Pipe roll 4 John, p. 20; Pipe roll 5 John, pp. 58, 70.
49 William de Briouse, Walter de Clifford, and Henry de Bohun were descended from Walter de Gloucester. Hugh de Mortimer married Annora de Briouse. Rot. pat., p. 122.
50 Pipe roll 7 John, p. 272.
51 Rot. chart., pp. 84, 151.
And while John had not granted the city of Limerick to William de Briouse, he had placed it in his custody. From a purely political point of view, without any consideration of the personalities involved, so great a concentration of power in a few hands was bound to disturb so jealous and ambitious a monarch as John. It was almost inevitable that he should seek to establish some royal control in South Wales and its Marches and to develop the authority of his justiciar in Ireland. Once he conceived suspicions of the loyalty of any of the barons involved, his desire to accomplish these ends was certain to become acute. This situation arose in the spring of 1205. William Marshal did liege homage to Philip Augustus for his Norman fiefs and had a bitter quarrel with John about it. When in June 1206 William declined to follow John to Poitou because of his oath to King Philip, a still more savage quarrel ensued and the king took the earl's eldest son as a hostage.

Open hostilities between the royal government and the Marshal-Briouse-Lacy combination broke out in Ireland late in 1206, but it is impossible to say whether the initiative was taken by John or by his justiciar of Ireland, Meiler fitz Henry. Meiler, one of the last survivors of the original English conquerors of Ireland, was a turbulent and ambitious man who was anxious to extend his authority. While it is highly probable that John had directed him to weaken the great Irish barons in any way he could and quite possible that he had specifically ordered attacks on the lands of William Marshal, Meiler was perfectly capable of acting on his own initiative. At any rate Meiler attacked the Briouse lands in Limerick and seized the Marshal castle of Offaly in Leinster. Soon he was at open war with the vassals of William Marshal and William de Briouse who were supported by Walter de Lacy, lord of Meath.

When the barons of Limerick and Leinster informed their lords of the justiciar's actions, William Marshal and William de Briouse

53 Rot. chart., p. 107.
55 Ibid., pp. 153-154; Rot. claus., I, 77, 81.
protested to the king. John, apparently, hesitated to make an open break with them. Meiler was instructed to return any of William de Briouse's men he had captured and restore all booty taken, but to keep the city of Limerick if he had obtained possession of it. And John granted William Marshal's request that he be allowed to go to Ireland to see to his lands. A few days later, however, John thought better of this last concession. Most of Meiler's lands were held from the lord of Leinster and the latter's presence in Ireland would seriously hamper the justiciar. The king sent a messenger after William to demand his second son and his English and Welsh castles as pledges of his loyalty. The earl gave the pledges and proceeded to Ireland. But in the autumn at Meiler's request John summoned the lord of Leinster to England. He also made generous grants of land to certain barons of Leinster who showed an inclination to desert their lord's cause. Even William's nephew, John Marshal, accepted from the king the office of mar­shal of Ireland, but there is no evidence that he actively aided the justiciar, and he remained on good terms with his uncle.

Shortly after William Marshal's departure for Ireland, the king deprived him of the shrievalty of Gloucestershire and the custody of Cardigan and the forest of Dean. Moreover William de Briouse was replaced as bailiff of Glamorgan by one of John's foreign mercenary captains, Fawkes de Bréauté. Then when the lord of Leinster had returned to England in answer to John's sums­mons, Meiler pressed with all possible vigor his attacks on Lein­ster. But William had left several of his ablest English knights in Ireland and they were aided by Hugh de Lacy, earl of Ulster. Meiler was no match for these forces. His lands were devastated and he himself was captured. When he learned of this, John de­cided that he had been going too fast with too feeble agents. The justiciar was ordered to keep the peace and a compromise agree­ment was worked out with William Marshal. The earl offered 300 marks for the restoration of Offaly and agreed to accept a new charter for his lordship of Leinster which somewhat limited his

56 Ibid., p. 77.
57 Painter, William Marshal, pp. 146, 153-156.
58 Ibid., p. 147.
59 Rot. pat., p. 68.
rights and extended those of the crown. A month later Walter de Lacy accepted a similar charter. But John was determined to have a strong hand administering the royal power in Ireland. A local man who was the vassal of one of the great lords could not rule effectively. Hence about the time of his agreement with William Marshal he dispatched John de Grey, bishop of Norwich, to take over the government of Ireland.

While King John was engaged in making these arrangements with William Marshal and Walter de Lacy, he became involved in his bitter feud with the house of Briouse. There are two fairly full accounts of the origin and early stages of this quarrel. According to Roger of Wendover John feared that the proclamation of the interdict on March 24, 1208, would encourage disaffected barons to plot against him. Hence he decided to demand hostages of those he suspected. When his officers appeared at William de Briouse’s stronghold, the latter’s wife, Matilda, told them she would not give her sons to the man who had murdered his nephew. William himself, however, rebuked his wife and offered to submit to the judgment of John’s court for any offense he might have committed. But when John heard about Matilda’s remark, he sent men to arrest the whole Briouse family. Fortunately William received warning of this move and fled to Ireland with his wife and sons.

The other account is furnished by King John himself. After William’s escape to France and the capture of his wife and eldest son in 1210, the king issued his official account of the quarrel “so that all may know for what cause and what crime William de Briouse left our land.” The truth of this statement was solemnly witnessed by the justiciar, the earls of Salisbury, Winchester, Hertford, Hereford, and Derby, Robert fitz Walter, William Brewer, Hugh de Neville, William de Albini, Adam de Port, Hugh de Gournay, and William de Mowbray. Four of these barons, the earls of Hertford, Hereford, and Derby and Adam

60 Painter, William Marshal, pp.155-160.
61 Annals of Dunstable, pp. 30-31; Rot. pat., p. 79; Curia regis rolls, V, 200.
62 Wendover, II, 48-49.
de Port were related to William by blood or marriage. Perhaps it is worthy of remark that of the thirteen witnesses to this document six were to be among the twenty-five barons of Magna Carta. According to this statement the origin of the quarrel was purely financial—William had not kept up his payments on the 5,000 mark fine offered for Limerick. The exchequer had ordered his chattels in England distraint for this debt, but William had removed them. Hence Gerard de Athies was ordered to seize his chattels in Wales. Then Matilda de Briouse, William de Ferrers, earl of Derby, who was William de Briouse’s nephew, and Adam de Port, lord of Basing, his brother-in-law, went to the king and asked for a conference. William met John at Hereford. He surrendered the castles of his Marcher baronies and gave three of his grandsons as hostages. But when Gerard de Athies summoned the royal constables of these castles to come and get the pay for their garrisons, William and his two sons attacked the castles. This led to full scale war that culminated in William’s flight to Ireland with his wife and sons.63

Let us now examine these two stories in the light of the evidence that can be gleaned from other sources. At the very beginning of 1208 King John appears to have expected war in the southern Marches. On January 5 Richard de Mucegros who had succeeded William Marshal as sheriff of Gloucestershire was removed from office. In his place John appointed his most experienced mercenary captain—Gerard de Athies whom he had just ransomed after his capture in Loches. Gerard was supplied with large sums of money.64 This move may have been made in contemplation of possible war with William Marshal whose barony of Striguil was thus caught between two foreign captains—Fawkes de Bréauté in Glamorgan and Gerard in Gloucestershire. But it seems far more likely that it was made in preparation for an attack on William de Briouse. Despite his suspicions of William Marshal’s relations with Philip Augustus John must have known the earl of Pembroke well enough to feel pretty certain that he would not bear arms against him. Hence it looks as if John conceived his

63 Rymer, Foederæ, I, 107-108.
64 Rot. pat., pp. 74, 78; Rot. claus., I, 99, 100, 104, 114.
plan of attacking William de Briouse earlier than Wendover indicates. Nevertheless William was at least openly in favor on March 7—Gerard was directed to give him a manor. Then on March 19, the day after he began to seize the lands of the clergy, John announced that William de Briouse had delivered his son to Walter de Lacy as a hostage for his good behavior. This seems to fit in with Wendover’s account. When John first asked for hostages and Matilda was indiscreet, William de Briouse may well have tried to satisfy the king by such a compromise. But a month later, on April 18, an expedition under the command of Gerard de Athies was moving against William. Gerard was supported by Thomas de Eardington, sheriff of Shropshire and Staffordshire, with 500 infantry and 25 mounted serjeants. This must have been the expedition described by Wendover as an attempt to capture the Briouse family and by John as an effort to seize William’s chattels in Wales. This last explanation is most implausible. William de Briouse could hardly have removed all the stock from his vast English estates. The expedition seems to have taken about nine days. On April 27 Thomas de Eardington received a writ to enable him to collect the pay for the men he had led on it. On April 28 Walter de Clifford, sheriff of Herefordshire, was ordered to give Giles de Briouse possession of the see of Hereford that had been seized with the other ecclesiastical property, but to keep the castles of the see. The next day William de Briouse was ordered to pay Gerard de Athies 1,000 marks within four days to cover the cost of the expedition against him. As one chronicler states that this payment was part of the agreement by which William gave up some of his castles and supplied the king with hostages, this confirms that part of John’s account. There is no evidence to corroborate John’s claim that William and his sons then attacked the castles that had been surrendered, but it is clear that the peaceful settlement lasted less than a month. On May 23 Gerard de Athies was appointed sheriff of Herefordshire

65 Ibid., p. 105.  
66 Rot. pat., p. 80.  
67 Ibid., p. 81; Rot. claus., I, 112-113.  
68 Ibid., p. 113.  
69 Ibid.  
70 Rot. pat., p. 81.  
and given custody of the see of Hereford.\textsuperscript{72} Walter de Clifford offered a fine of 1,000 marks not to have an inquiry made as to his behavior while he was sheriff.\textsuperscript{73} While this probably refers to the cavalier manner in which Walter had been accounting for the profits of the shire, it could indicate that he was considered to have been too lenient with his Briouze cousins. Sometime during the summer John summoned William to appear before his court, and William excused himself on the ground of sickness.\textsuperscript{74} On September 29 John confirmed an agreement between Gerard de Athies and William's vassals by which they promised not to return to William's allegiance. At about this time William fled to Ireland.\textsuperscript{75}

William de Briouze took with him his wife and his sons, William and Reginald. Giles joined his fellow bishops who were in exile in France.\textsuperscript{76} William de Briouze on landing in Ireland took refuge with William Marshal who had returned to Leinster. The new justiciar of Ireland, John de Grey, promptly ordered the lord of Leinster to deliver the fugitives to him. William replied that he was performing his feudal duty in harboring his lord. He knew nothing about any quarrel between William de Briouze and the king. Considering the complexity of feudal relationships, it is perfectly possible that William de Briouze was William Marshal's lord. The other statement is a little hard to accept. John in his account stated definitely that he had forbidden William Marshal to receive the fugitives. This seems unlikely. It was not William Marshal's policy to defy the king directly. But he must have known of the quarrel. His new charter for Leinster was issued on March 28—nine days after John announced that William de Briouze had freed his son to Walter de Lacy and only three weeks before Gerard's expedition. The most one can say for William Marshal's claim of ignorance was that he may have left for Ireland

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} Rot. pat., p. 83.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Pipe roll 10 John, p. 191.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Curia regis rolls, V, 152.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Rot. pat., p. 86; Annales Cambriac (ed. John Williams ab Ithel, Rolls series), p. 66.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Annals of Worcester, p. 396; Annals of Margam, p. 29; Histoire des ducs de Normandie, p. 112.
\end{itemize}
in one of the brief truces that marked the early stages of the quarrel. Be that as it may William kept his guests for three weeks and then escorted them safely into Meath where they were welcomed by Walter de Lacy. For the time they were safe. The justiciar of Ireland had no military force that could cope with the lords of Leinster, Meath, and Ulster.

One of the most puzzling questions in connection with John's feud with William and Matilda de Briouse is why he left them unmolested in Ireland for a year. There are several possible answers. The king may have hoped that he and John de Grey could persuade Walter and Hugh de Lacy to surrender the fugitives. A military expedition to Ireland would be an enormously costly venture, and the king may well have wanted to avoid it if possible. Then there was much to do in England. Llywelyn was giving trouble, and both John and the earl of Chester made expeditions against him in the spring of 1209. Moreover, as we shall see, John suspected with reason that some of his barons of the north of England were disaffected. An alliance between them and the king of Scotland while he was absent in Ireland could be extremely dangerous. So in July John led his feudal host to the frontiers of Scotland and held a conference with the king of Scotland at the castle of Norham. King John accused King William of receiving and aiding his foes. As he had no army capable of resisting John's formidable force, the aged king of Scotland made a humiliating peace. He promised to pay an indemnity of 15,000 marks and gave his two legitimate daughters as hostages. This treaty made John feel that the north was secure and provided funds for his expedition to Ireland. There could be no better example of John's ingenuity—getting one foe to pay the costs of suppressing another one.

In May 1210 King John mustered his host for an expedition to Ireland. In addition to the feudal levy of England he had a bodyguard of Flemish mercenary knights and several companies

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77 Painter, William Marshal, pp. 162-163.
78 Rot. pat., p. 88; Annals of Waverley, p. 262.
79 Ibid.; Wendover, II, 50; Coventry, II, 200; Chronica de Mailros, p. 108.
of mercenary serjeants and cross-bowmen. With the king was William Marshal, earl of Pembroke and lord of Leinster. While William might on occasion press closely on the limits of feudal propriety, he never openly crossed them and he felt obliged to obey John's summons to the host.\(^80\) On June 3 the royal army reached Cross-on-the-Sea near Pembroke. Meanwhile William de Briouze had returned to Wales leaving his wife and sons in Ulster. According to John's official account he had obtained a safe-conduct from John de Grey to go to the king, but had not actually proceeded beyond the Marches. This seems very plausible. William may either have hoped to make peace at the last minute and so prevent the invasion of Ireland or to create a diversion in Wales that would oblige John to stay there. John's statement goes on to say that Earl William de Ferrers went to him at Pembroke and asked leave to seek out William de Briouze to ask what he intended to do. The king sent one of his trusted followers, Robert de Burgate, with the earl. Soon William de Briouze sent messengers offering a fine of 40,000 marks for benevolence. John replied that peace with William was useless while Matilda was free and independent in Ireland. In short John wanted Matilda de Briouze—a fact that supports strongly Wendoover's story that her indiscreet remarks started the quarrel. Had the king been less determined, William's attempt to keep him busy in the Marches might well have succeeded. Supported by his Welsh allies he recovered a fair part of his lands. John's officers were forced to lead an army against him and shortly after his return from Ireland the king despatched Roger de Lacy with a strong force to restore order in the Marches.\(^81\)

From Cross-on-the-Sea John crossed to Crook near Waterford. He then proceeded through the lordship of Leinster to his city of Dublin. There he was met by some vassals of Walter de Lacy who offered their lord's submission, but John refused to accept it and seized the lordship of Meath. He then marched on Ulster. Hugh

\(^80\) "Praestito roll of 12 John" in Rot. liberate, pp. 172-244; Painter,William Marshal, p. 163.
\(^81\) Annals of Worcester, p. 399; Annals of Dunstable, p. 32; Coventry, II, 202; Pipe roll 12 John, Public Record Office.
de Lacy, earl of Ulster, ordered his men to resist the royal host, but he himself fled to Scotland with Matilda de Briouse, her sons William and Reginald, and William's wife and sons. Hugh and Reginald de Briouse made good their escape. Matilda and her family were captured by a Scots lord, Duncan of Carrick, and held for King John. With the irony that came so easily to him the king sent John de Courcy who had held Ulster before Hugh de Lacy conquered it to bring the fugitives to England. When Matilda arrived in England, she offered John 40,000 marks ransom for herself and her family and William de Briouse went to the king at Bristol and agreed to this arrangement. Then William departed to attempt to raise the money, but instead of doing so fled to France. When the first payment fell due Matilda was unable to meet it.82 John's account of the affair stops here. Perhaps it was issued just after William's flight and Matilda's failure to pay the first installment of the ransom. Or perhaps John preferred not to mention the sequence. For the chroniclers agree that the prisoners were consigned to a royal castle where Matilda and William the younger were starved to death at John's command.83

John's account of his quarrel with the house of Briouse was skilfully contrived. Only one assertion—that William de Briouse had removed his chattels from his English lands—seems extremely dubious. While I rather doubt the statement that John formally forbade the Irish lords to shelter William de Briouse, I do so simply because I prefer the word of William Marshal to that of the king. For the rest John's story seems entirely accurate in all essential points. But it can hardly have convinced anyone that it was complete. It asks us to believe that John incurred the enormous expense of an expedition to Ireland to capture some defaulting debtors and punish those who harbored them. This inconsistency appears in the story itself. Before John left Pembroke William de Briouse offered a fine of 40,000 marks for the king's benevolence, but it was declined because Matilda was still free. Then the same offer was accepted when made by Matilda. In short it was worth an expedition to Ireland to get a wife to join her

husband in offering a fine. This fine of 40,000 marks was, of course, a mere form—no baron could pay so enormous a sum in any reasonable time. Both parties knew perfectly well it could not be paid. By setting so high a figure John was essentially saying that he had no intention of releasing his captives, and William recognized this by fleeing the realm. All this must have been clear to those who read or heard the official story. It was fairly accurate, but it did not make sense.

The real story of the feud between John and the house of Briouse emerges fairly clearly from the available material. William de Briouse had been an energetic supporter of John’s claim to the crown after Richard’s death. Perhaps he had persuaded Richard to name John as his heir—he may even have concocted the story that Richard had done so. He became one of the new king’s prime favorites and was generously rewarded with lands and castles. But John was always cautious. His chamberlain, Hubert de Burgh, was given a position in the Marches that would serve to check William’s ambitions. Moreover John demanded a very large fine, 5,000 marks, for the grant of Limerick. He probably felt pretty certain that William would not pay it, and this default could be used against him if the occasion should ever arise. Then William de Briouse captured Arthur at Mirabeau and turned him over to the king. As Powicke has so well shown he was one of the few men who positively knew the young prince’s fate. For the moment this was to his advantage—John’s grants grew more and more generous. When Hubert de Burgh was captured in Chinon, William obtained his lands in the Marches. But William’s power was becoming too great and was bound to disturb John. Then too the king had become suspicious of William’s friend and neighbor, William Marshal. Finally Matilda de Briouse talked too much. King John decided that the Briouse family must be wiped out. William’s heavy debts to the exchequer formed an excellent excuse for action against them. John pursued the family at enormous expense in money and other resources until William and Reginald were in exile and Matilda and her eldest son starved to death in prison.

The quarrel with William de Briouse and his family was the
greatest mistake John made during his reign. It should have been avoided at any cost. For one thing it made his cruelty known to all his barons. They may have suspected, as did Philip Augustus, that Arthur had been murdered, but no one knew for certain. William de Briouose made sure that Arthur’s fate was known in both France and England. Then the death of Matilda and William the younger showed what John was capable of doing to his foes. This example might terrify the disaffected barons, but it did not make them fonder of John. Then there is a clear though tenuous thread linking the Briouose affair to the great baronial revolt. Two baronial leaders, Henry de Bohun, earl of Hereford, and Richard de Clare, earl of Hertford, were closely related to the Briouose family. 

Giles de Briouose who returned after the peace between John and the church was in the baronial councils. In fact only one thing prevented this quarrel from leading to the destruction of John and perhaps the end of his dynasty—the deep essential loyalty of William Marshal. When the earl of Pembroke returned to the king’s favor in 1212, he brought with him the support of the lords of the south Marches who had been alienated during the quarrel with the Briouses. During the baronial revolt the only troops John could rely on beside his mercenaries were those of the Marcher lords—Ranulf of Chester and William de Ferrers from the north and William Marshal, Walter de Lacy, John de Monmouth, and Hugh de Mortimer from the south. Except for the earl of Chester all these barons were closely connected with the house of Briouose, but they followed William Marshal into the royal camp. After the destruction of the house of Briouose the next open break between King John and a group of his barons came in the summer of 1212 with the sudden flight from England of Robert fitz Walter and Eustace de Vesci. But even before the climax of the Briouose affair events were taking place that were either direct antecedents of the Fitz Walter-Vesci conspiracy or had an important bearing on later baronial revolts. While the quarrel with Williáム de Briouose was one of the seeds of the great rebellion against John, other seeds were germinating during the years 1209

84 William de Briouose the younger had married Earl Richard’s daughter. Rot. pat., p. 101.
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to 1212. To examine the first of these we must glance at the north of England in the year 1209—the year of John's expedition against King William of Scotland.

Under the Angevin kings the protection of England against invasions or major raids from Scotland was primarily the responsibility of four royal officers, the sheriffs of Cumberland, Westmoreland, Northumberland, and Yorkshire, and two barons, the bishop of Durham and the earl of Richmond. At Easter 1200 John appointed Robert fitz Roger sheriff of Northumberland in place of William de Stutville.\(^85\) Robert fitz Roger was the son of Roger fitz Richard by Alice de Vere sister of Aubrey de Vere, first earl of Oxford, and widow of Robert de Essex.\(^86\) Through his mother Robert was first cousin of the earls of Oxford and Norfolk. Roger de Lacy, constable of Chester, was the son of his half-sister, Alice de Essex. By his own marriage to the widow of Hugh de Cressi he became the stepfather of Roger de Cressi who played an important part in the baronial revolt. Robert was not originally a northern baron. The lands of his inheritance lay largely in Essex—the manor of Clavering, a demesne of the forfeited barony of Henry de Essex, and some twenty fees held as mesne tenant. But Henry II, Richard, and John had worked industriously to move the center of his power to Northumberland. He received the castle and manor of Warkworth, the barony of Walton, and four royal manors.\(^87\) In 1204 royal letters patent appointed him hereditary constable of Newcastle-on-Tyne "as long as he serves well."\(^88\) When one considers John's obvious distaste for hereditary officials, this strange compromise shows how greatly he valued Robert fitz Roger as one of the guardians of the north.

During the winter of 1204 and the spring of 1205 John placed the northern frontier of England in strong hands. On December 1, 1204, Roger de Lacy, constable of Chester, was appointed sheriff of Cumberland and Yorkshire.\(^89\) In March 1205 Westmoreland was granted as a barony to Robert de Vieuxpont.\(^90\) The same

\(^85\) *Pipe roll 2 John*, p. 1.


\(^87\) *Rot. chart.*, pp. 6, 116, 133, 143.

\(^88\) *Rot. pat.*, p. 42.

\(^89\) Ibid., p. 48.

\(^90\) Ibid., p. 51.
month saw the Yorkshire lands of the earldom of Richmond given to Earl Ranulf of Chester. Thus Robert fitz Roger, Roger de Lacy, Robert de Vieuxpont, Philip of Poitiers, bishop of Durham, and Ranulf of Chester were established as guardians of the Scots border. Three of these men were closely connected by blood and feudal ties. As we have seen Robert fitz Roger was the uncle of Roger de Lacy who was the chief baron of Cheshire. Although Robert de Vieuxpont had inherited lands in Westmoreland, his grant of the shire as a fief was the result of his military capacity and favor with John. When the bishop of Durham died in April 1208 the military command of his castles and men was entrusted to one of John's captains, Philip de Ulecotes.

While no English baron of the first rank had interests in the far north, several secondary lords did and some whose interests were purely local were powerful enough to be of considerable importance. In the first of these groups were the count of Aumale, Robert de Ros, and Eustace de Vesci. The count of Aumale held the castle and barony of Cockermouth in Cumberland, Robert de Ros the castle and barony of Wark in Northumberland, and Eustace de Vesci the stronghold of Alnwick in Northumberland with its fees. The chief barons whose interests were local in Cumberland were Richard de Lucy, lord of the barony of Copeland, and Robert de Vaux. Gilbert fitz Renfrew held in addition to his wife's inheritance in Lancashire the barony of Kendal. This region is now part of Westmoreland, but it was not included in Robert de Vieuxpont's fief. In Northumberland there were two local barons of outstanding importance—Hugh de Balliol and Richard de Umfraville. Hugh was also one of the chief vassals of the bishop of Durham from whom he held his castle, Barnard Castle. Richard de Umfraville held the fortress of Proudhoe and in addition ruled Redesdale in the Northumbrian back country from his castle of Harbottle.

There were close ties between the barons of the northern shires and the king of Scotland. King William's father had borne the

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91 Ibid.
92 In 1211 he took credit on his account for guarding the castle of Norham for 3½ years. Pipe roll 13 John, Public Record Office.
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title earl of Northumberland and his elder brother had held both Northumberland and Cumberland from the king of England. When John succeeded to the throne, King William had claimed these two shires. While he had been unsuccessful, he had not abandoned his claims. He held as John's vassal the English liberty of Tindale that bordered on Richard de Umfraville’s fief of Redesdale. Moreover King William had married two of his bastard daughters to Northumbrian barons—Robert de Ros and Eustace de Vesci. Finally a number of northern barons held lands in the earldom of Huntingdon ruled by William's brother David. King William was also bound by ties of blood to several English barons. The father of Robert fitz Walter had been his first cousin and Henry de Bohun, earl of Hereford was his nephew. In short the King of Scotland was an important figure in the internal as well as the external politics of England.

There is substantial reason for believing that a conspiracy against King John was taking shape in the north of England in the year 1209. One of the registers of King Philip Augustus now in the Vatican library contains a most interesting document—a letter from the French king to “his beloved John de Lacy.” 93 John had sent word to Philip by one of Philip’s liege-men, Roger des Essarts, that he, his friends, and his allies planned to make war against King John both in England and in Ireland. While the letter makes the intentions of John de Lacy perfectly clear, King Philip’s end of the bargain is extremely vague—perhaps intentionally so. He seems to say that when he has clear proof that John has carried out his promise he will see that he receives justice in regard to his ancestors’ land in England. John de Lacy was the eldest son of Roger de Lacy, constable of Chester. I have been unable to find any claim this house had that was unsatisfied. Only one hypothesis seems to explain this letter. John de Lacy had some reason for thinking that Philip Augustus planned to invade England and wrote to ask him to promise him possession of his lands if he and his friends made war against John. If it had been written in 1212, this letter would be easy to understand. Philip

93 Archives des missions scientifiques et litteraires, third series, VI, 332, 344-345.
was then preparing to invade England at the pope's behest, and John de Lacy might well have feared that the barons who had stood by their excommunicated king might suffer. But the letter is definitely dated 1209, and the reference to Ireland seems to support that date. By 1212 Ireland under William Marshal's leadership was firmly behind King John. One can only conclude that Philip was thinking of the invasion of England as early as 1209 and that Roger des Essarts either told John de Lacy or sent word to him through relatives in England. Roger des Essarts had started his career as an English knight holding land in Essex of the Earl Warren and of the Valognes barony of Benington. By 1203 he had joined King Philip and had received a fief from him. He eventually held several small fiefs in Normandy. His younger brother Richard obtained the English lands of the family. When Roger de Lacy, constable of Chester, died in 1211, a number of his officials headed by his seneschal, Robert Walensis, offered fines to be excused from rendering their accounts. The first name on the list after Robert Walensis was Robert des Essarts who promised the considerable sum of £100. While I have no positive evidence of any relationship between this Robert des Essarts and Richard and Roger des Essarts, it seems safe to conclude that one existed. Hence it is not difficult to see how John de Lacy may have known of Philip's plans and offered his aid. This letter was cancelled on the register, but it is not quite clear what such cancellation meant. It may mean that the letter was never sent, but from similar cancelled entries it seems more likely that cancellation was simply an indication that the agreement had never taken effect and had no permanent importance as a record.

This letter raises several interesting questions, but unfortunately we have no evidence that might furnish answers to them. The reference to Ireland suggests that John de Lacy was in communication with William de Briouse and the Irish barons who were shel-

94 Ibid., p. 382; Book of fees, I, 579; Curia regis rolls, I, 174, Farrer, Honours and knights' fees, III, 406-408; Récueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France, XXIII, 245, 640, 714.
95 Rot. claus., I, 328.
96 Pipe roll 13 John, Public Record Office.
tering him. In this connection it is interesting to notice that William Marshal the younger, eldest son of the earl of Pembroke, who was a hostage for his father was probably living in Newcastle-on-Tyne in the custody of Robert fitz Roger. John de Lacy, William Marshal the younger, and John fitz Robert, son and heir of Robert fitz Roger, were to be important leaders of the baronial revolt. Perhaps this was a young men’s conspiracy growing in the north. Beyond this it seems useless to speculate as to whom John de Lacy had in mind as his “friends and allies.”

It seems likely that King John knew that this conspiracy existed and was aware that John de Lacy was involved in it. The king’s actions in 1209 show that he was disturbed over the state of his realm in general and particularly in regard to the north. In addition to making his expedition against King William of Scotland he at least made gestures toward coming to terms with Stephen Langton and the papacy. Moreover in September of that year he summoned all his vassals to Marlborough to swear fidelity to him and his infant son, Henry. Then sometime during the latter part of the year John deprived Roger de Lacy of both his shrivelalties. In Cumberland he was replaced with the king’s favorite man for troubled spots, Hugh de Neville, and in Yorkshire by Gilbert fitz Renfrew who was already sheriff of Lancashire and custodian of the honor of Lancaster. Roger was not actually in disgrace—John sent him into Wales in command of a body of troops in the late summer of 1210, but the king was unwilling to leave him in charge of vital border shires. Roger de Lacy died in 1211. Not until September 1213 did John make any move toward giving John de Lacy possession of his inheritance. While John may have been a minor, it seems rather unlikely. Then the conditions imposed by the king were extremely unusual and very onerous. John de Lacy offered the very large fine of 7,000 marks. He was to pay 3,000

97 Rot. pat., p. 94.
98 Wendover, II, 51; Coventry, II, 200; Annals of Waverley, p. 262; Annals of Margam, p. 29; Gervase of Canterbury, II, 104.
99 Pipe roll 12 John, Public Record Office.
100 Dugdale, Monasticon, VI, 315.
101 Rot. oblatis, pp. 494-495.
marks the first year, 2,000 marks the second year, 1,000 marks the third year, and the final payment of 1,000 marks for the fourth year was to be forgiven. He was to swear fidelity to John and give a charter guaranteeing his loyalty. Twenty of John de Lacy's knights were to be pledges for his loyalty and the payment of the fine. Finally King John was to keep in his own hands the castles of Pontefract and Donington, but John de Lacy was to pay £40 a year for their custody. These severe terms seem to me to indicate that the king had grave doubts of the loyalty of John de Lacy.

The awe engendered by King John's expedition against Scotland in the summer of 1209 and the humiliating peace accepted by King William seems to have convinced the northern conspirators that the time for action had not yet come. The crushing of the house of Briouse in the following year must have still further dampened their ardor. As we shall see John de Lacy was a decidedly fickle man whose mind rarely held the same intention for very long. But some of these barons may well have written the letters to the pope that Pandulf and Durand spoke of in 1211. Actually, however, between 1208 and 1212 there is no evidence of the existence of any general conspiracy. What is of interest during these years are various incidents that seem to throw light on the reasons that moved particular barons to place themselves among John's foes.

Perhaps the most striking case was that of William de Mowbray. William spent at least four years in Vienna as a hostage for King Richard and may well have felt that he deserved well of the house of Anjou.102 Yet when John came to the throne, he permitted William de Stutville to sue William de Mowbray for his entire barony on the rather specious grounds that the settlement made between Roger de Mowbray and Robert de Stutville had never received royal approval. William de Mowbray offered 2,000 marks for justice in the case, but he lost and was obliged to give William de Stutville a demesne manor and nine knights' fees.103 Nevertheless King John insisted on the payment of the fine. In 1209 John resorted to the highly unusual device of having the exchequer collect

102 Curia regis rolls, I, 48.
103 Ibid., pp. 380, 440; Rot. oblatis, p. 102; Cartae antiquae rolls, no. 102; Hoveden, IV, 117-118.
from William's vassals an aid to pay this debt. 104 Ironically enough the largest single sum was due from Nicholas de Stutville. Nicholas was already disaffected because of the enormous relief of 10,000 marks that he had been required to pay for his brother's lands and the withholding from him of the barony of Knaresborough. 105 Certainly this royal maneuver did not increase his love for John. The next heaviest obligation fell on Eustace de Vesci who also held from William de Mowbray. William himself must have deeply resented this royal procedure, and William was one of the most powerful barons of the realm. His influence was great in Yorkshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Lincolnshire. His mother was a Clare, probably a sister of the earl of Hertford, and the great Lincolnshire baron Gilbert de Ghent was his cousin. 106 Nicholas de Stutville was Gilbert de Ghent's stepfather. 107 Thus we see the group later to be called the "northerners" built up by King John's policy.

During these years the king seemed determined to alienate his barons as rapidly as possible. In 1210 the two chief barons of Cumberland, Robert de Vaux and Richard de Lucy, felt obliged to offer fines of 750 marks and £100 respectively for his benevolence. Their offenses were not, apparently, political. Robert de Vaux was in trouble over someone's wife—in addition to the fine for benevolence he offered five palfreys to have the king "keep quiet" about the lady. Richard de Lucy was hereditary forester of Cumberland and his fine was nominally offered to clear himself from the charge of poor custody of the forest. 108 Yet the year 1210 seems a poor time to offend these two lords. Then in 1211 Gilbert de Ghent and Saher de Quency, earl of Winchester, were pressed about their debts to the crown. Gilbert was ordered to pay the

104 Pipe roll 11 John, Public Record Office.
105 Rot. claus., I, 45.
106 A monastic account calls William's mother daughter of Edmond, earl of Clare. There was no such person, but as she held Banstead, Surrey, a Clare manor, she was probably a sister or daughter of Earl Richard. Dugdale, Monasticon, VI, 320. Curia regis rolls, I, 368, V, 205. William's grandfather, Roger de Mowbray, married Alice de Ghent, aunt of Gilbert.
107 He married Gunnora daughter of Ralph de Albini and widow of Robert de Ghent.
108 Pipe roll 12 John, Public Record Office.
large sum of 1,200 marks in two years. Saher was to reduce his obligation of £1,276 at the rate of 200 marks a year. Lesser men were being imprisoned and forced to buy their way out—Robert de Castlecarrock, Roger Bacon, and Walter de Stoke. In 1211 Eustace de Vesci lost a plea in the king’s court. The decision may have been in accord with the law, but as one reads the case one can easily see why Eustace might have considered the decision outrageous. To add to the injury the roll bears a note that Eustace was to be summoned to answer for his debts to the Jews. All these actions of John’s government may have been justified, but they did not earn the good-will of the barons concerned.

By the spring of 1210 King John was openly at odds with the lords of the southern Marches of Wales—William de Briouse, William Marshal, Walter and Hugh de Lacy, and their friends, relatives, and vassals. He was on extremely bad terms with an important group of northern lords—William de Mowbray, Eustace de Vesci, Nicholas de Stutville, and John de Lacy who was soon to be lord of Pontefract. Then in the course of that year he became involved in a bitter quarrel with an even more dangerous group of barons headed by Robert fitz Walter, Henry de Bohun, earl of Hereford, and the two sons of Geoffrey fitz Peter, Geoffrey and William de Mandeville. These men were bound closely together by marriage alliances. Geoffrey and William de Mandeville were married to the two daughters of Robert fitz Walter. Henry de Bohun’s wife, Matilda, was the daughter of Geoffrey fitz Peter and the sister of the two Mandevilles. It seems likely that Robert fitz Walter and Henry de Bohun were moderately disaffected before 1210. As we have seen in an earlier chapter John had created Henry de Bohun earl of Hereford on the condition that he give up his claim to the generous grants made to his father by Henry II. While Henry may have felt it necessary to accept this compromise, it can hardly have fully satisfied him. He may also have resented John’s treatment of his Briouse cousins. Robert fitz Walter

109 Pipe roll 13 John, Public Record Office.
110 Pipe rolls 12 and 13 John, Public Record Office.
111 Curia regis rolls, VI, 136.
112 Histoire des ducs de Normandie, pp. 115, 118.
probably betrayed John when he surrendered Vaudreuil to Philip Augustus. Whatever reasons moved him to that probably still existed. Moreover it was well known that John never forgot nor forgave an injury but simply awaited the time for revenge.

The first open break between King John and Robert fitz Walter grew out of long-standing ill-feeling between Robert and the abbey of St. Albans. Early in John's reign Robert and the abbey had quarreled over the possession of a wood. Robert based his claim on a charter that according to the abbey's chronicler he had bribed a monk to forge for him. In 1201 the dispute was compromised. Robert gave up the wood in exchange for land worth £10 a year.¹¹³ Then some years later Robert and the abbot of St. Albans disagreed over the latter's rights in the priory of Binham, a cell of St. Albans, that had been founded by the ancestors of Robert's wife. According to Robert the abbot brought too large a retinue when he visited Binham, put too many monks in the priory, and took too much of its revenue for the mother house. Then while Robert was with the king in Ireland, the abbot replaced the prior of Binham with a man of his own choice. Robert claimed that the foundation charter of the priory limited the abbot's retinue on visits, the monks he could place in the house, and the revenue he could draw from it. He also maintained that the abbot could not appoint or remove a prior without the consent of the patron of the priory.¹¹⁴ The abbey chronicler states that the charter shown by Robert in support of these claims was another forgery, but the abbot does not seem to have made any such charge—he simply argued that Robert was not the heir of the founder, Robert de Valognes.¹¹⁵ As Robert fitz Walter's wife was still alive, this argument was extremely feeble for she was the unquestioned heiress of the Valognes lords of Benington. But Robert was a proud and arrogant baron. When he returned from Ireland to find a new prior at Binham, he resorted to force instead of to the law. He laid siege to the priory and plundered its possessions. The abbot appealed to King John.

¹¹⁴ Curia regis rolls, VI, 56.
¹¹⁵ Ibid.; Gesta Sancti Albani, I, 226.
According to the chronicler the king was shocked at the story "Ho, by the feet of God, who ever heard of such a thing in time of peace in a Christian land." John promptly despatched troops to Binham, but they found that Robert and his men had retired. Shortly after this Robert fitz Walter and his wife brought their case against the abbot of St. Albans to the king's court. Having failed to win by violence, they tried their luck at law. Unfortunately there is no record of the disposition of the case, but it seems unlikely that John would decide in Robert's favor under the circumstances.

The story of Robert fitz Walter's contest with the abbot of St. Albans over the priory of Binham is well established—the chronicle account is in general confirmed by the Curia regis rolls. For his next quarrel with King John we have only one unsupported source albeit a good one—the Histoire des ducs de Normandie. One day the king and his court were travelling toward Marlborough. Geoffrey de Mandeville sent a servant ahead to reserve quarters for him. The servant secured the quarters, but was soon ejected by men looking for lodgings for William Brewer. When Geoffrey arrived on the scene, he ordered William's men to leave and a brief fight ensued in which he killed one of them. William Brewer complained to the king who swore he would hang Geoffrey. Meanwhile Geoffrey had gone to his father-in-law, Robert fitz Walter. Although Robert was annoyed at Geoffrey for getting into such a scrape, he went to John and asked him to pardon him. John insisted he would hang the culprit. Robert was indignant. "You would hang my son-in-law! By God's body you will not. You will see 2,000 laced helms in your land before you hang him." Robert did, however, promise to produce Geoffrey for trial before the royal court, but he had his doubts of the impartiality of that body and arrived at the session with 500 fully armed knights. The trial was postponed, and Robert repeated his performance. A little later Robert and his family fled to France to escape John's wrath.

While the Histoire des ducs de Normandie is generally reliable as chronicles go, this story presents several difficulties. As the

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116 Ibid., pp. 226-228.
117 Histoire des ducs de Normandie, pp. 116-118.
events described must have taken place before the summer of 1212 when Robert fled, Geoffrey de Mandeville’s father, Geoffrey fitz Peter, was still alive. Why did not Geoffrey seek his aid? Then there is no evidence whatever that Geoffrey de Mandeville was seriously at odds with John before the spring of 1215. There is no indication that any action was taken against him at the time of Robert’s flight, and when his father died he was given possession of most of his vast lands.\textsuperscript{118} The tale of the escort of 500 knights sounds more like a \textit{chanson du geste} than history—certainly Robert could muster no such force. I am inclined to think that the incident described actually took place, and that Robert and probably Geoffrey fitz Peter as well procured Geoffrey’s pardon. The affair may well have aggravated the mutual hatred of John and Robert fitz Walter. But it seems very doubtful that it resulted in an open break and led directly to Robert’s flight. As we have it in the \textit{Histoire} the story is clearly distorted and exaggerated.

As I have indicated in discussing John’s character, the story of the seduction of Robert fitz Walter’s daughter by the king rests on very feeble evidence. The \textit{Histoire des ducs de Normandie} mentions it as a tale told to King Philip—presumably because Philip would have been inclined to sympathize with John in the affair of Geoffrey de Mandeville and the serjeant.\textsuperscript{119} The other source is a chronicle of Dunmow priory printed in the \textit{Monasticon}.\textsuperscript{120} According to this account John had Matilda poisoned. It sounds like a wild tale of no credibility. Matilda did die about that time, but it seems unlikely that John poisoned her. I suspect that the stories of King John’s seduction of Matilda fitz Walter and his attempted violation of the wife of Eustace de Vesci arose to fill a need—to explain why those particular barons were the leaders in the revolt against John.

It is extremely difficult to work up much sympathy for Robert fitz Walter. It seems fairly certain that he betrayed Vaudreuil to Philip Augustus. While his arguments against the abbot of St. Albans may well have been sound, he chose to settle the question by

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Rot. oblatis}, pp. 502-503.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Histoire des ducs de Normandie}, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{120} Dugdale, \textit{Monasticon}, VI, 147.
force instead of by law. In the case of Geoffrey de Mandeville's difficulties, he was obstructing the ordinary course of justice. From the feudal point of view he was acting like a proud and high-spirited baron. But no king worth his salt could have permitted such high-handed actions to go unpunished. It was probably the realization of this that made Robert one of the chief conspirators against John.

The *Histoire des ducs de Normandie* states that at about the same time as the affair of Geoffrey de Mandeville John quarreled with Geoffrey fitz Peter and forced him to offer a large fine for his good-will.\(^\text{121}\) While there is no evidence to confirm this statement, it is perfectly plausible. Certainly in the spring of 1212 the king was conducting an indirect campaign against Geoffrey and his son-in-law, Henry de Bohun. Late in April of that year Earl William of Salisbury and Ela his wife instituted suit in the king's court against Henry de Bohun for the entire barony of Trowbridge, Henry's chief sief.\(^\text{122}\) On the same day Geoffrey de Say reopened his old claim against Geoffrey fitz Peter for the Mandeville barony.\(^\text{123}\) Neither of these suits could have been brought against John's will, and he actively assisted Earl William's case. Henry de Bohun was summoned to court to explain to whom he did service for the barony. Henry sent word that he was sick and could not come to court and four knights were sent to "view" him at his castle of Caldecot in the Marches. They found him sick and "gave him a day" at the Tower of London on June 2, 1213. But the court ruled that an "essoin" or excuse for absence could not be presented in the summons to explain to whom he did service, and the barony was taken into the king's hand.\(^\text{124}\) Some time later Henry tried to recover his lands by replevin, but he apparently did not succeed as they were still in the king's hands in August 1214.\(^\text{125}\) In fact there is some reason for thinking that Earl William had actual possession of the barony although the suit had never been decided.\(^\text{126}\) The suit of Geoffrey de Say against Geof-

\(^{121}\) *Histoire des ducs de Normandie*, p. 116.

\(^{122}\) *Curia regis rolls*, VI, 270.

\(^{123}\) *Ibid.*


frey fitz Peter was not heard until after the latter's death when it was pressed against his heir Geoffrey de Mandeville. It came up in court at a time when John was trying to win Geoffrey away from his foes and was dismissed on a technicality. Geoffrey de Say had sued for the barony held by Geoffrey and William de Mandeville under Henry II, and Geoffrey de Mandeville did not hold all that fief.\textsuperscript{127}

Now both these suits had a sound basis in law. When Earl William de Mandeville died in 1189, his nearest relative was his aunt, Beatrice, widow of William de Say, lord of Kimbolton. But no king was likely to take seriously the claims of an elderly widow to the great Mandeville barony. Beatrice had two sons—William and Geoffrey de Say. William had died in 1177 leaving two daughters the elder of which was the wife of Geoffrey fitz Peter. Thus the succession to the Mandeville lands lay between Geoffrey fitz Peter and Geoffrey de Say. Geoffrey de Say offered Richard a large fine and had seisin of the barony for a short time, but he had trouble paying the fine and with Richard absent on the crusade he could not cope with the political power of Geoffrey fitz Peter who was one of the board of justices ruling the realm. The main basis for Geoffrey's suits in later years was his brief seisin. It is interesting to notice that his claim to the Mandeville barony resembled that of John to the English crown—that of a younger brother against the child of a dead elder brother. As we have seen the barony of Trowbridge was partially, perhaps entirely, composed of lands given by Edward of Salisbury to Humphrey de Bohun in marriage with his daughter. By the custom of the realm no homage was due for such a gift for three generations. Earl William of Salisbury had a good claim to the homage and service of Henry de Bohun for any lands of the honor that had once belonged to Edward of Salisbury, his wife's great-great-grandfather. He had no sound right to actual possession of the barony.

What is difficult to explain is why King John permitted these two suits to be started in the spring of 1212. His quarrel with the papacy had reached a crucial stage, and he was at odds with

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p. 168; Curia regis rolls, VII, 110-111.
several important groups of barons. Why offend one of the chief props of his realm, Geoffrey fitz Peter, and another powerful baron closely related to him who had on the whole been steadily loyal? There are several possible explanations. In the case of Geoffrey de Say's suit he may have hoped to frighten Geoffrey fitz Peter and his sons enough to make sure that they did not ally with his enemy Robert fitz Walter—just a reminder to Geoffrey that his position was none too secure. The case against Henry de Bohun may have been meant to serve the same purpose, but it is also possible that it was an effort to satisfy the ambitions of William Longsword. With so many barons disaffected John would be anxious to make sure of the loyalty of those he could trust. Earl William had never been satisfied with his position. Although he held the title of earl, his fief was not large and he had received meagre gifts from the crown. John gave him a pension, but the king had successfully resisted his attempt to be recognized as hereditary sheriff of Wiltshire and hereditary constable of Salisbury castle. William may well have felt that his position as a royal bastard entitled him to more generous treatment. By allowing and even encouraging the suit against Henry de Bohun John could please William at no cost to himself.

The years 1209 to 1212 were ones of almost continuous military activity. In 1209 John made an expedition against the Welsh and led his host to the borders of Scotland. In 1210 while the king invaded Ireland, the justiciar waged war on William de Briouse and his Welsh allies. In 1211 there was a major expedition against Wales that obliged Llywelyn and his fellow chieftains to sue for peace and give hostages. February 1212 saw Saher de Quency leading a mercenary force to Scotland to help King William suppress a revolt there.128 As the Welsh showed no inclination to keep their promises, the spring and early summer of 1212 were spent in preparing a really large scale invasion of their land. Hence military preparations such as the hiring of additional mercenary troops and extensive building programs at the great royal fortresses

128 Coventry, II, 206; Curia regis rolls, VI, 290; Saher had apparently also led a force to Scotland in the early spring of 1211. "Praestito roll 12 John," Rot. liberate, p. 240. Pipe roll 13 John, Public Record Office.
do not necessarily imply that John feared a baronial revolt. Still it is interesting to notice what castles received most attention. Hanley, a new castle on lands belonging to the honor of Gloucester in Worcestershire, was completed, St. Briavel's in the forest of Dean extensively improved, and small sums were spent on Ludlow and other Marcher fortresses. These could be intended to check danger from Wales. The very large sum of £645 was spent on the bishop of Durham's fortress of Norham on the Scots border and over £100 each on Bamborough and Newcastle, the chief castles of Northumberland. These works could be a further precaution against an invasion from Scotland or measures of security in case of trouble with the Northumbrian barons. Then nearly £2,000 were used to improve the fortifications of Scarborough and £440 on those of Sauvey. Knaresborough was strengthened at a cost of £140 and Rockingham at a cost of £126. These fortresses did not guard England from foreign foes. The expenditure of such large sums on them must mean that John feared a baronial rising.

Ever since his expulsion from Normandy John had kept some mercenary troops in England under such captains as Gerard de Athies, Engelard de Cigogné, Philip Marc, and Fawkes de Bréauté. By 1209 he had a group of Flemish knights more or less permanently in his service and on the Irish campaign they seem to have formed a special service corps. While it is impossible to form any reliable estimate of the mercenary knights and serjeants employed during these years, it seems unlikely that they were very numerous. But in June 1212 an energetic campaign was undertaken to enlist more troops from Flanders. Count Reginald of Boulogne who had done homage to John early in May, Hugh de Boves, and Adam de Keret, castellan of Bruges, were instructed to raise as many men as possible. Of course this may have been simply part of the preparations for the expedition into Wales, but it seems rather unlikely that it was. Flemish knights were ex-

129 Pipe rolls 12, 13, and 14 John, Public Record Office. 
131 Rot. pat., p. 93.
pensive luxuries—they expected to be given generous money fiefs to be enjoyed in both peace and war. The feudal levy of England was more than able to cope with the Welsh. One is forced to conclude that in June 1212 John felt the need of foreign troops to guard against internal troubles.

King John devoted June and July of the year 1212 to preparations for a great invasion of Llywelyn's lands in North Wales. Large amounts of supplies of all kinds were gathered from the whole realm. All men who held of the crown by knight service or serjeantry were summoned to the host. John de Grey, bishop of Norwich and justiciar of Ireland, and William Marshal were ordered to be at the rendezvous with 200 knights and as many serjeants as could be spared from the defense of Ireland itself. Agents were sent to Flanders to recruit mercenary knights and serjeants, and Alan of Galway, constable of Scotland, was directed to hire 1,000 Scots for John's service. The towns of England were ordered to supply about 800 armed serjeants. Sheriffs and custodians of lands in the hands of the crown were instructed to send over 8,000 laborers for building fortresses. John had completed his system of alliances against Philip Augustus and the Welsh were the only external foes who could threaten England while he conducted his long-planned expedition to the continent. He was determined to crush them—and to have mercenaries on hand in case of baronial revolt.

The host had been summoned to muster at Chester on August 19. On the fourteenth John hanged at Nottingham twenty-eight Welsh boys, sons of chieftains, who had been given to him as hostages the previous summer. Clearly he planned a real attempt to break Llywelyn's power rather than the usual parade into Wales followed by a negotiated peace. But soon rumors came to the king

132 Pipe rolls 13 and 14 John, Public Record Office; Rot. claus., I, 121.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid. Rot. pat., p. 93.
137 Ibid., p. 131.
138 Ibid., p. 131.
139 Wendover, II, 61; Coventry, II, 207.
of a baronial plot. While the campaign was in progress, he was to be either murdered or handed over to his Welsh foes. Wendover states that this news was carried by letters from his daughter, Joan, wife of Llywelyn, and from the king of Scotland. While this seems perfectly possible, it is equally likely that similar rumors were picked up by members of the king’s household among the gathering host. Nottingham seems to have buzzed with wild reports. The barons were ready to depose John and replace him with Simon de Montfort. The queen had been raped; Prince Richard, the king’s second son, had been murdered; the king’s treasury at Gloucester had been plundered. Whatever tales he heard were enough to convince John that the danger was real. On August 16 he called off his muster against the Welsh and directed his knights, serjeants, and workmen who had started for the meeting place to return to their homes. On the same day he ordered Stephen de Turnham to allow no one to see Henry, his eldest son and heir, who did not bear special letters authorizing the visit. John then despatched messengers to the barons whom he suspected of being involved in the plot to demand hostages for their good behavior. The recent fate of the Welsh boys would guarantee that this request would not be considered a mere formality.

The abandonment of the Welsh expedition and the demand for hostages had a dramatic result—Robert fitz Walter and Eustace de Vesci fled from England with their families and households. Robert crossed to France to join the exiled bishops and pose as a martyr to John’s hatred for conscientious Christians while Eustace retired to the lands of his father-in-law, King William of Scotland. Two other barons against whom John’s suspicions turned very strongly gave him full satisfaction. Richard de Umfraville agreed to surrender his castle of Prudhoe and to give four sons as hostages. If it were proved that he had been in the conspiracy, he

141 Annals of Dunstable, p. 33.
142 Annals of St. Edmunds, p. 23.
143 Rot. pat., p. 94.
144 Rot. claus., I, 121.
145 Wendover, II, 62.
would lose his sons and castle and suffer as a traitor. David, earl of Huntingdon, immediately gave his second son as a hostage, but seems to have hesitated to surrender his castle of Fotheringay. Hugh de Neville was despatched to take it by force if necessary. Henry de Braybrook, who was under-sheriff of Northamptonshire for his father Robert, Simon de Pattishall, Walter de Preston, and the citizens of Northampton were ordered to aid Hugh if Earl David tried to resist. Alice Peche, widow of Gilbert Peche and sister of Robert fitz Walter, gave hostages for her loyalty, and John placed her late husband's lands in the custody of the Flemish captain Hugh de Boves. It seems likely that Earl Richard de Clare and Richard de Lucy of Egremont gave hostages at this time. In all probability there were other barons who were obliged to give hostages. It is hard to believe that John's suspicions with such excellent fuel to feed them would have operated in a narrow range.

The treason of Eustace de Vesci and his strong suspicions of the loyalty of Richard de Umfraville made John fear for the safety of the vital border shire of Northumberland. While it is clear that the king did not suspect Robert fitz Roger of being involved in the conspiracy, he was the great uncle of young John de Lacy about whose reliability John had grave doubts. Hence he seemed hardly the man to leave in so crucial a post. A man in whom John had complete confidence, Philip de Ulecotes, custodian of the see of Durham, was on hand in the north and could easily take over Robert's shirealty, but he was a man of no feudal position, and the king felt that the prestige of a great baron was needed in the troubled shire. Only two English earls had interests in the north, and one of these Ranulf of Chester, was at the moment fully occupied with the Welsh. The other was William de Warren, lord of Conisborough in Yorkshire. Earl William gave pledges that he had known nothing of the plot and was sent north to watch over Northumberland with Philip de Ulecotes and Aimery, arch-deacon of Durham. The earl does not seem to have been ap-

147 Rot. claus., I, 122.
148 Ibid.; Rot. pat., p. 94.
149 Ibid., pp. 94, 101.
150 Ibid., pp. 96, 101.
151 Ibid., p. 94.
pointed sheriff and as soon as the emergency was over, he was withdrawn leaving Philip and Aimer as joint sheriffs.\textsuperscript{152} Apparently Philip was a choice cut-throat whom John was unwilling to leave in full command despite his undoubted loyalty and ability as a captain. There is some indication that John was worried about other critical commands. John fitz Hugh was replaced as castellan of Hertford, a castle surrounded by vassals of Robert fitz Walter, by John de Bassingbourn.\textsuperscript{153} While I know of no reason why the king should suspect John fitz Hugh, he was for a time deprived of most of his offices, and he was one of the few intimate servants of John who later joined the baronial rebellion.\textsuperscript{154} The replacement of Alexander de Pointon by Hugh de Boves as custodian of the Peche barony seems to have had a similar motive. But Robert fitz Roger retained the shrievalty of Norfolk and Suffolk.

King John moved vigorously against the two fugitive barons and their adherents. The two castles of Robert fitz Walter, Benington in Hertfordshire and Castle Baynard in London, were razed.\textsuperscript{155} Robert and nine of his men were solemnly outlawed by the shire court of Essex.\textsuperscript{156} Only four of these men deserve mention by name. One was William fitz Walter, archdeacon of Hereford. His name suggests that he was a brother of Robert fitz Walter. Certainly he furnishes a possible link between his bishop, Giles de Briouse, and Robert's conspiracy.\textsuperscript{157} The other three were William, Philip, and Gervase de Houbridge. Now Gervase de Houbridge was a prominent canon of the cathedral of St. Paul in London and there were very intimate relations between the canons of St. Paul's and the officials of the royal exchequer.\textsuperscript{158} John was fully aware of this connection. As we have seen Richard Marsh was stationed in Westminster to keep an eye on the sessions of the

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{152}] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[\textsuperscript{153}] \textit{Ibid.}
\item[\textsuperscript{154}] \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 94-96.
\item[\textsuperscript{155}] \textit{Histoire des ducs de Normandie}, p. 118; Coventry, II, 207; Coggeshall, p. 165; Matthew Paris, \textit{Chronica maiora}, II, 544; \textit{Annals of Dunstable}, p. 35.
\item[\textsuperscript{156}] \textit{Rot. claus.}, I, 165-166; Coggeshall, p. 165.
\item[\textsuperscript{157}] In the court's official statement he is called simply the archdeacon of Hereford. His name appears on \textit{Rot. pat.}, p. 101.
\item[\textsuperscript{158}] On Gervase de Houbridge see H. J. Richardson, "Letters of the Legate Guala."}
\end{itemize}
exchequer in the autumn of 1212. At least three exchequer officials, William de Cornhill, archdeacon of Huntingdon, William de Neckton, and Geoffrey de Norwich felt the weight of the king's suspicions. William de Cornhill apparently was imprisoned and forced to offer a fine for benevolence, but he was soon restored to full favor. William de Neckton fled to France. The fate of Geoffrey de Norwich requires more extended discussion.

The story of Geoffrey de Norwich deserves attention partly for its own sake as an account of one of King John's atrocities and partly because so eminent an authority as Mr. H. G. Richardson has called it "a stupid fable." It appears in its fullest form in Roger of Wendover. This chronicler states that in 1209 when King John had been excommunicated by Innocent III but the decree had not been formally published, reports of the pope's action spread over England by word of mouth. One day at Westminster during a session of the exchequer Geoffrey, archdeacon of Norwich, began to talk with his colleagues about the sentence and remarked that it was not safe for beneficed clerks to remain longer in the service of an excommunicate king. He then started for home without asking leave. When John heard about Geoffrey's words and departure, he was gravely troubled and sent a knight named William Talbot to arrest him. William captured Geoffrey and imprisoned him in chains. A few days later a cope of lead was put on him by the king's order. Oppressed by the weight of the cope and poorly fed, Geoffrey died. Ralph de Coggeshall tells what is apparently the same story in much briefer form and places it in 1212. He says that Geoffrey de Norwich who was involved in the conspiracy of Robert fitz Walter and Eustace de Vesci died after a long imprisonment. The Annals of Dunstable carry the tale under the date 1210, but place it after the same baronial plot. They state that Geoffrey, a faithful and innocent man, was captured near Dunstable by the earl of Salisbury and imprisoned in

159 Annals of St. Edmunds, p. 25.
160 Matthew Paris, Chronica maiora, II, 537.
162 Wendover, II, 52-53.
163 Coggeshall, p. 165.
Bristol castle where he died after a long and severe confinement.¹⁶⁴ The *Annals of St. Edmund's* place the event in 1212 after the flight of Robert fitz Walter. Geoffrey de Norwich, a noble clerk who recited the pope's letter to the barons of the exchequer, was captured at Nottingham and died in irons.¹⁶⁵ These various versions completely confused Matthew Paris when he composed his *Chronica Maiora*. Under 1209 he repeated Wendover's account without change.¹⁶⁶ Apparently he did not identify the Geoffrey de Norwich of most of the accounts with the Geoffrey, archdeacon of Norwich, of Wendover. Hence when he came to the events of 1212 he inserted the story in Wendover's text. John ordered his faithful, prudent, and elegant clerk, Geoffrey de Norwich, captured and tortured to death in Nottingham castle. This alarmed Geoffrey's associate, William de Neckton, who promptly fled to France.¹⁶⁷ But by the time he came to write his *Historia Anglorum* Matthew had decided that the two Geoffreys were one. The scene of Geoffrey's death is still Nottingham castle. He was a faithful and moral clerk of the exchequer who died in a leaden cope.¹⁶⁸

There is no doubt that Roger of Wendover was in error both as to the date and the man involved. Geoffrey, archdeacon of Norwich, was Geoffrey de Burgh, brother of Hubert de Burgh. Geoffrey de Burgh lived to become bishop of Ely in 1225. The other accounts call the victim simply Geoffrey de Norwich—the usual name of the justice of the Jews. Geoffrey de Norwich, justiciar of the Jews, was alive on June 14, 1212, but there is no later record of him.¹⁶⁹ Hence he could not have been killed in 1209, but could have been after the flight of Robert fitz Walter. One feature of Wendover's version is supported by the *Annals of Dunstaple*. Wendover has Geoffrey captured by William Talbot while the *Annals* have it done by Earl William of Salisbury. Earl William was sheriff of Cambridge and Huntingdonshire and William Tal-

¹⁶⁴ *Annals of Dunstaple*, pp. 33-34.
¹⁶⁵ *Annals of St. Edmund's*, p. 25.
¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 537-538.
bot was one of his favorite knights.\textsuperscript{170} In short Roger of Wendover was in this case as in many others highly inaccurate, but his mistakes do not justify one in rejecting Ralph de Coggeshall and the \textit{Annals of Dunstaple}—especially as Geoffrey de Norwich, justice of the Jews, did disappear at the time the chronicles indicate.

It seems clear that shortly after the flight of Robert fitz Walter Geoffrey de Norwich left Westminster and was captured at John's command by either Earl William of Salisbury or his knight, William Talbot. He was imprisoned in a royal castle where he died of mistreatment. Whether his offense was being involved in Robert fitz Walter's conspiracy or making remarks about serving an excommunicate king, what castle he died in, and just how he died cannot be determined conclusively. It is, however, quite conceivable that even if Geoffrey did suffer because of being involved in the conspiracy, his friends would concoct the other tale. It is far nobler to die as a martyr than as a traitor. And Robert fitz Walter himself is said to have told Pandulf that he fled England because he would not serve an excommunicate king.

Robert fitz Walter, Eustace de Vesci, and their adherents were included in the peace between John and Innocent III.\textsuperscript{171} On May 27, 1213, letters patent of safe conduct were issued to enable them to return to England.\textsuperscript{172} But John could not resist the temptation to strike one last blow. On the same day he issued the safe conducts he ordered Philip de Ulecotes to raze Eustace de Vesci's castle of Alnwick.\textsuperscript{173} On July 19, the king directed his officials to give Robert and Eustace possession of their lands.\textsuperscript{174} On the twentieth two of Robert's men were freed from the king's prison.\textsuperscript{175} The next day they both received advance payments on the damages due them—Eustace £100 and Robert 100 marks.\textsuperscript{176} In November the men who were estimating the damages suffered by the church were directed to inquire about those of Robert fitz Walter as

\textsuperscript{170} "Praestito roll 12 John," \textit{Rot. liberate}, pp. 181, 196, 223; \textit{Rot. claus.}, I, 82, 120.
\textsuperscript{171} Migne, \textit{Patrologia}, ccxvi, 772-775.
\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Rot. pat.}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{175} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Rot. claus.}, I, 146.
well. But these two barons remained John's bitter foes and were to be the leaders of the great revolt.

During the early months of 1213 while King John was still actively hunting down men whom he suspected of being involved in the conspiracy of Robert fitz Walter, he took some steps to appease at least part of his baronage. On February 25 he addressed letters patent to his subjects in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. He was deeply moved by complaints that sheriffs and other royal officials had been extorting money from them that never found its way to the exchequer. He was sending Robert de Ros, William de Albini, Simon de Kyme, and Thomas de Moulton to investigate. The people of the shires were to inform these commissioners what sums the royal officials had taken since the king left England on his way to Ireland in 1210 and what pretexts had been used for taking them. They were also to report by how much the revenues of the hundreds, wapentakes, and tithings had been increased. The king also wanted to know whether any of his officers had been hearing pleas of the crown. Finally John asked for a complete report of all landed property held by Jews. This is an extremely interesting document. The king was moved by the complaints of his subjects—but he seems to have been chiefly disturbed by the fact that he was not getting the money that was extorted. Thus while the letters start out as if their chief purpose was appeasement of discontent, the inquest they provided for was calculated to serve the interests of the king more than those of his subjects. All four of the commissioners named in the letters were to be either among the rebels mustered at Stamford in the spring of 1215 or among the twenty-five barons chosen to enforce Magna Carta. While there is no indication on the patent roll that similar letters were sent to other shires, the Annals of Dunstable speak of an inquest into the behavior of sheriffs as if it were general. Walter of Coventry mentions such an inquest, but places it after the making of peace with the church. I am inclined to think that the inquest was restricted to these two shires and that

177 Ibid., p. 154.
178 Rot. pat., p. 98.
179 Ibid., p. 97.
180 Annals of Dunstable, p. 35.
181 Coventry, II, 214.
the chroniclers were thinking about the rather vague general measures proposed in August.

Three changes in the holders of English shrievalties made during these same early months of 1213 may well have been connected with this campaign of appeasement. On January 30 Robert de Ros succeeded Hugh de Neville as sheriff of Cumberland.\textsuperscript{182} Then on the same day that he despatched his letters ordering the inquest in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire John removed the sheriffs of these two counties. In Yorkshire Gilbert fitz Renfrew was replaced by Robert de Percy while Alexander de Pointon relieved Hubert de Burgh as sheriff of Lincolnshire.\textsuperscript{183} Gilbert fitz Renfrew had paid extremely large profits into the exchequer and may well have enriched himself on the side.\textsuperscript{184} As Hubert de Burgh had been in Poitou for some time, it was really his under-sheriff who was removed.\textsuperscript{185} John's efforts to appease Lincolnshire and Yorkshire seem to indicate that he considered the barons of those shires the most seriously disaffected of his vassals.

While the political situation in England during the first four months of 1213 was essentially a continuation of that of the previous four years, that year as a whole saw extremely vital changes. The most significant of these were the result of the peace with the papacy. When King John came to an agreement with Innocent III, he cut one of the bonds that had bound his discontented barons to him. The basic issue in John's quarrel with the pope was the royal rights of patronage, and the question as to what privileges should be enjoyed by patrons was fully as important to the barons as to the king. The significance of this point is made clear by a letter addressed by Stephen Langton to the barons and knights of England in 1210.\textsuperscript{186} He assured them that the pope had no intention of attacking their powers as patrons. But it must have been fairly easy for the king to convince his vassals that if he could not defend his rights, they had but little chance of

\textsuperscript{182} Rot. pat., p. 96.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., p. 97.
\textsuperscript{184} Pipe rolls 12 and 13 John, Public Record Office.
\textsuperscript{185} Rot. pat., p. 97.
\textsuperscript{186} Gervase of Canterbury, II, lxxviii.
doing so. While the king's eventual defeat cannot have served to lessen their fears, it destroyed his position as the fearless defender of lay privileges.

Then the peace reinstated in power in England three leaders of the disaffected barons—Eustace de Vesci, Robert fitz Walter, and Giles de Briouse, bishop of Hereford. While the part played by Bishop Giles in the baronial revolt is extremely obscure, he served as a link between the earlier and later risings. Through him the bitter hatred of the Briouses toward King John was passed on to other baronial elements. The existence in the minds of the barons of a strong memory of the Briouse affair seems the only reasonable explanation of the condemnation of Gerard de Athies and his relatives in Magna Carta. They had been John's chief agents in the crushing of the Briouses, but none of the rebels of 1215 except possibly Henry de Bohun had had any contact with them. As for Eustace de Vesci and Robert fitz Walter it seems clear that neither they nor the king ever pretended that the past had been forgotten or forgiven. John continued to hate these two barons, and they took their former place at the head of the disaffected.

The most important result of the agreement with Rome was the establishment in a dominant position in English politics of a truly great man—Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury. Stephen was highly intelligent and had received the best education known in his day. He was the master of theology and canon law both in theory and practice. He was a man of strong character and personality, one inclined to be intransigent and with no love of compromise. Moreover Stephen was both a high ecclesiastic and a member of the English feudal class. Although he had spent his adult years in the service of the church, he had a deep interest in the internal policy of his native land. Therein lay the roots of his later difficulties with the papacy. Throughout the years when he was seeking admission to England as her primate, he fought John both as a foe of the church and as an unworthy king. In short he desired the full application in England of the canon law as interpreted by the papal court and also the proper observance of English secular law and custom by the royal government. Before
he absolved John from excommunication Stephen obliged the king to promise to restore the good laws of his ancestors and invalidate all bad laws. The king also swore to give all men justice according to the judgment of his court. In Stephen's mind John's peace with the church involved a promise to observe both canon and secular law.

Stephen Langton was trained to think of law, rights, and privileges in general terms. He was not primarily interested in who should hold a castle but rather in the law governing the possession of castles. He sought to have England governed by an orderly regime based on generally accepted legal principles. Now it is obvious that most English barons must have been fully capable of comprehending this idea. The feudal system was based on the assumption that every fief would have its customs formed by the lord's court. The law molded by the court of the English king was the common law of England. The idea of obliging the king to define this law and promise to observe it was not new—Henry I, Stephen, and Henry II had issued charters of liberties. But there is no evidence that before the return of Stephen Langton the opposition to King John had any general program of reform. We hear of individual grievances and of personal desires and ambitions rather than of basic principles. While it seems highly improbable that the English barons did not know about the charter of Henry I until it was shown to them by Langton, Wendover's tale may well contain an essential truth—that it was Stephen who led them to seek a general statement of legal principles instead of various benefits for individuals. In this connection it is interesting to notice that Robert fitz Walter who became the accepted leader of the baronial party had spent some time in France where Stephen was in exile. Is it too much to believe that Stephen had sold his program to Robert? But whether or not Stephen was responsible for the innovation of the line of thought that led to Magna Carta, he was clearly its doughty supporter and adherent. From the time of his consecration in 1207 to his suspension in 1215 he worked steadily to bring about a regime of established law in England.

187 Wendover, II, 81.
It seems likely that his ideas were expressed in their earliest form in the so-called unknown charter by October 1213.

While John's submission to the papacy strengthened the baronial opposition by removing a strong reason for adherence to the king and by supplying it with more effective leadership, it also improved the king's own position. The Welsh had used John's excommunication as an excuse for their continual attacks on the Marches. After John's submission Pandulf and Langton persuaded them to make a series of truces. But of far greater importance was the fact that the king obtained the pope's support against his barons. As long as John defied the papacy, Innocent III was glad to use against him any weapon that came to hand, and he had no objections to Langton's attacks on John as an unjust king. But the pope had no real interest in the internal polity of England. Innocent's chief aim was to increase the power, prestige, and dignity of the church and its head. By making his submission and becoming a papal vassal John had greatly furthered these ends to which Innocent was devoted. It immediately became to the pope's interest to show the value of papal support to a secular monarch. Moreover any movement against John became indirectly an attack on his overlord, the pope. We shall find Innocent piously exhorting John to deal justly with his barons, but he had little interest in the matter. What he cared about was the political and economic status of his vassal—the king. When Langton's fierce struggle for the principles of Magna Carta led him close to the baronial camp, he was suspended by the pope. Thus John by his submission obtained full papal support for his internal policy.

During this same year two events that had no connection with the conclusion of peace with Rome served to strengthen John's position. One was the restoration of William Marshal to the royal favor and to his former position in England. By this John gained the active aid of a wise and experienced counselor and administrator and a highly effective captain. Moreover the death of William de Briouse had left William Marshal the undisputed leader of the barons of the southern Marches of Wales. In July Walter de Lacy came to terms with the king and received possession of his lands.

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188 Rot. pat., pp. 100, 103.
in England and the Marches. The return to favor of William Marshal and Walter de Lacy made the adherence of the lesser lords of the region fairly certain. And it was Walter de Lacy, Hugh de Mortimer, John de Monmouth, and Walter and Roger de Clifford who supplied through their knightly vassals and Welsh mercenaries a large part of the military force that John relied on during the baronial revolt. This group of Marcher lords was the only compact body of barons that remained consistently loyal.

Another event that probably strengthened John's position more than it weakened it was the death in October 1213 of Geoffrey fitz Peter. There seems to be no doubt that Geoffrey was steadfastly loyal to his master, but his last years must have been most unhappy. According to the *Histoire des ducs de Normandie* he had a bitter quarrel with John in 1212. It certainly must have deeply embarrassed the aged justiciar to see the father-in-law of his two sons flee England under the stigma of treason. In short by 1212 Geoffrey was unable to keep his relatives and associates in order and was himself the victim of John's jealousy—perhaps even of his suspicion. It seems doubtful that had he lived he could have done anything to avoid the baronial revolt. While his death placed the great Mandeville barony in the possession of an enemy of the king, young Geoffrey de Mandeville, it also enabled John to appoint as justiciar a man who was completely his creature and in whom he had full confidence, Peter des Roches.

King John hoped that as soon as he made peace with the church and was absolved from excommunication, he could launch his long-planned expedition to the continent. He summoned his host to muster at Portsmouth in late July. It was a thoroughly foolish proceeding. The season was too far advanced to begin so ambitious a campaign and the king’s vassals had already served in the host earlier in the year—in the army mustered to repel the threatened French invasion. The feudal levy had been called out in each of the last four years. To then summon it twice in a year was decidedly overdoing it. This was one of the objections voiced

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189 *Rot. claus.*, I, 147.
191 *Rot. pat.*, p. 110.
192 Wendover II, 82.
by the barons, but apparently they could think of others as well.\footnote{Ibid.} The realm was still under interdict.\footnote{Ibid., p. 80.} Then according to Walter of Coventry they tried the old argument that they owed no service outside the realm. This last excuse is credited to the "northerners."\footnote{Coventry, II, 217.} John wrote to the count of Toulouse that a great wind prevented him from setting forth.\footnote{Rymer, \textit{Foedera}, I, 114.} It seems clear that whatever their reasons were the barons refused to go. The king was enraged and mustered what troops he had available to punish those he considered the chiefs of the opposition—the northerners. Langton went to him to remind him that when he was absolved he had promised to rule justly and that he had no right to attack a vassal without a judgment by his court. John told him to stay out of lay affairs, but apparently did not actually attack his foes.\footnote{Coggeshall, p. 167; Wendover, II, 83.} Such is the story given by the chroniclers and there seems no reason for doubting it, even though there is no corroborative evidence.

While John was attempting to get his expedition under way in early August, Geoffrey fitz Peter and Peter des Roches presided over a council at St. Albans. Its chief purpose seems to have been to lay plans for inquiring about the damages suffered by the church, but it seems also to have made a gesture at reform in the government. The laws of Henry I were to be observed and the king's officers were not to commit extortions.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 82-83.} This sounds as if Langton had insisted on doing something to implement John's pre-absolution promises and had gotten the usual vague statements. King John had no objection to pleasant references to the good old days, and he disliked extortion that did not profit his exchequer. He was obviously seeking to keep the barons contented so that he could make his expedition to Poitou.

When Nicholas of Tusculum arrived in England in October 1213, he offered himself as a mediator between King John and the "northerners." Ralph of Coggeshall simply states that the two parties were reconciled.\footnote{Coggeshall, p. 167.} But it seems likely that this was the agreement that is recorded in the so-called Unknown Charter.
of Liberties. This document will be discussed at length among the antecedents of Magna Carta. It is apparently a set of rough notes on an agreement between John and his barons. The first item deals with the question that had arisen between Langton and the king when John sought to punish the "northerners" for refusing to sail for Poitou—the king agreed that he would not take a man without judgment. Another clause looks like a compromise in the actual dispute between king and barons. John granted that his men should not go in the host outside England except to Normandy or Brittany.

On February 9, 1214, King John set sail for Poitou. With him went at least twelve of the barons who were to appear in the rebellious group that gathered at Stamford in the spring of 1215—John de Lacy, constable of Chester, Richard de Montfichet, William de Mandeville, William de Beauchamp of Bedford, William de Huntingfield, William Malet, William de Lanvalay, Fulk fitz Warin, Maurice de Ghent, John fitz Robert, Nicholas de Stutville, and Thomas de Moulton. Saher de Quency, earl of Winchester, Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk, and Robert de Ros sent sons in their places. But John's most bitter foes, the leaders of the disaffected vassals, Robert fitz Walter, Eustace de Vesci, William de Mowbray, Richard de Clare, earl of Hertford, Henry de Bohun, earl of Hereford, and Geoffrey de Mandeville, earl of Essex stayed in England. Thus while a fair number of the future rebels followed John to Poitou, the larger part including the leaders remained at home. On July 9 the king sent letters patent to England promising forgiveness of old grievances toward anyone who should cross to join him. There is no evidence that any baron took advantage of this offer. Previously, on May 26, John had directed the justiciar, Peter des Roches, to levy a scutage at

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201 Wendover, II, 98; Coggeshall, p. 168.

202 The first nine were present when the truce was concluded with Philip Augustus. Layettes du trésor des chartes, I, 405-406. The others received loans on the campaign. Pipe roll 16 John, Public Record Office.

203 Ibid.

204 Rot. pat., p. 118.
the high rate of three marks per fee on all who did not have letters of quittance.\textsuperscript{205}

There is ample evidence that while he was campaigning on the continent John was greatly disturbed over the situation in England. He had left the royal administration in the care of Peter des Roches and William Brewer. While it seems unlikely that he suspected their fidelity, he may well have had doubts about their discretion. The fact that the justiciar chose that summer to press attacks on the franchises claimed by two powerful and loyal barons, William de Vernon, earl of Devon, and Aubrey de Vere, earl of Oxford, indicates that such fears on the king’s part were justified.\textsuperscript{206} At any rate John twice sent special emissaries to England. On May 22 Peter des Roches and William Brewer were informed that the king was sending Richard Marsh to join them. They were to consult him on all the king’s business.\textsuperscript{207} On August 16 Thomas de Eardington was despatched to England to give secret instructions to a long list of royal officials.\textsuperscript{208} Apparently William Marshal was entrusted with a special function—the making of all the necessary arrangements for the relaxation of the interdict.\textsuperscript{209} It seems likely that he was also expected to serve as a check on the activities of the disaffected barons. On June 28 the earl of Pembroke went to St. Edmunds in an effort to prevent the election of the candidate for the abbacy who was supported by Earl Roger Bigod and Robert fitz Walter.\textsuperscript{210}

John was fully aware that the barons were plotting against him during his absence. He complained to the pope about the activities of Eustace de Vesci and directed the justiciar to make certain that the sister of Robert fitz Walter was not elected abbess of Barking.\textsuperscript{211} In October he requested the legate to act against the conspirators.\textsuperscript{212} He also took steps to build up the strength of the

\textsuperscript{205} Rot. claus., I, 166.
\textsuperscript{206} Curia regis rolls, VII, 158-159, 184.
\textsuperscript{207} Rot. pat., p. 139.
\textsuperscript{208} Rot. claus., I, 202.
\textsuperscript{209} Rymer, Foedera, I, 118.
\textsuperscript{210} "Electio Hugonis," pp. 76-77.
\textsuperscript{211} Rot. claus., I, 202; Rymer, Feodera, I, 126.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., p. 175.
royal party by giving important baronies to men on whom he could rely. In April Peter de Maulay was given Isabella, daughter of Robert de Turnham, with her barony.\footnote{Rot. pat., p. 113.} In July the king's bastard son Richard was given Rohese of Dover and her barony of Chilham.\footnote{Ibid., p. 118; Rot. claus., I, 168.} Another royal favorite, Richard de Rivers, received the heiress of the barony of Ongar with her lands.\footnote{Rot. oblatis, pp. 517-518.} Finally Ralph de Lusignan, count of Eu, was placed in possession of the great fiefs of Hastings and Tickhill.\footnote{Rot. pat., p. 116.} Ralph's wife, Alice, countess of Eu, was the undoubted lady of Hastings and had a good claim to Tickhill. As Ralph was soon bought by Philip Augustus, this maneuver was of little actual value, but it was a sound idea. Ralph was a hardy warrior and might have been able to hold the honor of Tickhill against its chief mesne tenants who were mostly in the rebellious party. This was not, of course, John's chief purpose in placating Ralph de Lusignan—he needed his aid in Poitou—but it may well have been in his mind.

By far the most interesting feature of King John's domestic policy during the year 1214 was his relations with Geoffrey de Mandeville, eldest son of Geoffrey fitz Peter. As we have seen the Histoire des ducs de Normandie asserts that it was a quarrel between John and Geoffrey de Mandeville that led to the flight of Robert fitz Walter. When Geoffrey fitz Peter died, the king promptly accepted the homage of Geoffrey for the great Mandeville barony, but other possessions of the late justiciar were kept in the hands of the crown.\footnote{Rot. oblatis, pp. 502-503.} The king's German favorite, Terrie Teutonicus, was given custody of the castle and honor of Berkhamsted and Geoffrey de Buckland was given charge of the manor of Ailsbury.\footnote{Rot. pat., p. 105; Rot. claus., I, 154.} While this may have annoyed Geoffrey de Mandeville, it was an essentially proper proceeding. Berkhamsted and Ailsbury had been granted to Geoffrey fitz Peter and his heirs by his second wife, Aveline, whose eldest son, John fitz Geoffrey, was
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under age. Then Geoffrey was ordered to surrender the Tower of London to William de Cornhill, archdeacon of Huntingdon. The Mandevilles had since the eleventh century claimed to be hereditary custodians of the Tower, but no strong king had ever acknowledged their right. This important stronghold was usually entrusted to the justiciar of England, and Geoffrey fitz Peter had held it in that capacity. John seems to have withheld only one thing to which Geoffrey de Mandeville had a clear right—the sword of the earldom of Essex and the third penny of the shire. While the chronicles accord Geoffrey the title earl of Essex, and I have followed their practice, he was not formally girt with the sword of the earldom and did not have the third penny.

On January 26, 1214, King John gave his former wife, Isabella of Gloucester, to Geoffrey de Mandeville with the major part of the vast honor of Gloucester. The king retained the town and castle of Bristol. He also insisted that the men to whom he had granted fiefs from the escheated lands of the honor should retain their holdings and that those to whom he had given custodies pertaining to the honor should remain in possession. Gilbert de Clare, son of Isabella's sister, shared two demesne manors of the honor with the widow of Amauri de Montfort and held some thirty of its knights' fees. But Geoffrey received the palatine shire of Glamorgan, ten demesne manors in England, and some 270 knights' fees. For this he offered the enormous sum of 20,000 marks to be paid within a year. As the gross annual revenue of the lands of Geoffrey received cannot have been more than £550, it is hard to see how he could hope to meet these terms. As a matter of fact he failed to make the first payment.

219 Rot. chart., pp. 127-128, 151.
220 Rot. pat., p. 105; Rot. claus., I, 154.
221 Curia regis rolls, VII, 110-111.
222 Rot. pat., p. 109; Rot. claus., I, 162, 209.
223 Ibid., p. 155; Red book of the exchequer, I, 156.
224 Ibid. Rot. pat., p. 109; Rot. claus., I, 209.
225 Rot. oblatis, pp. 520-521.
226 Like most such figures this is largely a guess. The English manors assigned to Geoffrey yielded about £330 in 1205. Pipe roll 7 John, pp. 102-104. Glamorgan was farmed for £100 in 1208. Pipe roll 10 John, p. 24. An allowance of £100 for miscellaneous revenues seems ample.
227 Rot. claus., I, 163.
This grant has been interpreted as an effort on John's part to win over Geoffrey de Mandeville from the party of Robert fitz Walter. It seems to me equally likely that it was an attempt to get Geoffrey completely in the king's power. A baron who did not meet his payments at the exchequer could be imprisoned at the king's will and the lands for which the payments were due could be seized. The basic question is—was 20,000 marks anything like a reasonable fine for what Geoffrey obtained? It was twenty-four times the normal gross revenue of the entire honor without Bristol. We could judge the reasonableness of this ratio more adequately if we knew the age of Isabella. As she married John in 1189, she could not have been much under forty in 1214. She died in 1215, but she need not have been aged at that time. While it seems clear that she was most unlikely to produce an heir, Geoffrey may have hoped to enjoy her lands for a decade or more. Still the fine was extremely large and the terms of payment onerous. I cannot believe that John expected Geoffrey to be able to meet them.

While Geoffrey was trying to find the money for his first payments, John made another move. On July 11 he informed the justiciar that Geoffrey de Say had offered a fine of 15,000 marks for the Mandeville barony.\textsuperscript{228} Peter was to consult with Richard Marsh and William Brewer about the matter. The result was a suit in the \textit{curia regis} where Geoffrey de Say's claim was dismissed on a technicality—he had sued for the barony as held by Earl William de Mandeville when he died in 1189 and Geoffrey de Mandeville did not possess the barony in its entirety.\textsuperscript{229} One cannot but wonder whether John toyed for a moment with the idea of giving Geoffrey de Mandeville the honor of Gloucester and Geoffrey de Say the honor of Mandeville, collecting 35,000 marks in fines, and having two grateful barons—or two who were at his mercy because they could not pay their fines. In all this weird series of maneuvers only one thing seems certain. If John was trying to win over Geoffrey de Mandeville, he was doing it very clumsily. Both Geoffrey de Mandeville and Geoffrey de Say remained stanch adherents of the baronial party.

\textsuperscript{228} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 166. \textsuperscript{229} \textit{Curia regis rolls}, VII, 110-111.