CHAPTER VII

LORD OF LONGUEVILLE

There could be no better testimony to the dominant personality of Richard Plantagenet than the course of events in the continental possessions of the Angevin house after his death. To the casual observer the balance between the Capetians and their rivals would seem to have been changed in only one respect by the tragedy at Chalus—because of his claim to the English throne the intrigues of Arthur of Brittany and his mother Constance were a more serious menace to John than they had been to his brother. The new king was slightly if at all inferior to his predecessor in military capacity and was probably a more able administrator. He inherited the support of Richard’s allies, the counts of Flanders and Boulogne and the powerful house of Guelf. John’s deficiencies lay in a lack of force and stability of character. This is most clearly shown by the part played in the first years of his reign by his mother, Eleanor. While the strong hands of Henry and Richard held the reins of government, she had remained in the background, but under John she became one of the staunchest bulwarks of the throne. The case of Constance of Brittany was somewhat similar. She had intrigued against Richard without success—she succeeded in drawing Brittany out of John’s sphere of influence. John needed the support of Eleanor and could not handle Constance. A more serious sign of his weakness was his utter inability to retain the confidence and loyalty of his barons. Outside of a few protégés, clerks and mercenary soldiers of low birth, he never completely trusted anyone. When Richard forgave a penitent rebel, the offence was, apparently at least, forgotten. The slightest suspicion would cause John to demand hostages and guarantees from his most loyal vassals. Suspicion breeds suspicion, and no one had much faith in John. When one combines these considerations with the continuous and skilful
aggression of Philip Augustus and John's occasional periods of torpor, one has the explanation of the loss of Normandy.

At first John was fairly successful. In May 1200 he concluded a reasonably favorable peace with King Philip. Arthur gave up his claims to Maine and Anjou and was to hold Brittany as a fief from John. Philip obtained the Norman Vexin, with the exception of the region about Les Andelys, and the city and about half the county of Evreux. The English king promised to give up his alliance with the counts of Boulogne and Flanders and to pay his suzerain a relief of 20,000 marks for his continental fiefs. The agreement was sealed by the marriage of Philip's heir, Louis, to John's niece, Blanche of Castille. Richard would never have accepted such terms, but a genuine peace might have been worth the sacrifices involved. John then turned his attention to strengthening his position in Anjou and Poitou. The ablest and most powerful of the Angevin baronage, William des Roches, was reconciled with the king and accepted the office of seneschal. Poitou, that most turbulent of fiefs, was a more serious problem. The district had been torn for years by the rivalry between the counts of Angoulême and the house of Lusignan. Except when they allied to rebel against their duke, their strife kept Poitou in continual confusion. No suzerain could hope to keep on good terms with both of them—Richard had simply succeeded in keeping both in semi-subjection to his authority. John, moved partly by a good healthy lust for a most charming young girl and partly by policy, formed a marriage alliance with the count of Angoulême. As the lady Isabel, daughter and heiress of Ademar of Angoulême, was already affianced to the son of Hugh de Lusignan, count of La Marche, John earned the undying enmity of the Lusignans. More serious yet, the stealing of a girl under his vassal's protection was a serious breach of feudal law and gave the Lusignans a valid excuse for an appeal to King Philip. From

1 For good secondary accounts of the conquest of Normandy see Powicke, The Loss of Normandy, Chapter VI; Norgate, John Lackland, Chapter III; and Cartellieri, Philipp II August, Vol. IV.
this developed John's condemnation by the French king's court which, theoretically at least, deprived him of his continental fiefs.

Little is known of William's part in the affairs of these first years of John's reign. He accompanied the king to Normandy in June, 1199, and during that year and the next he seems to have been almost continuously in attendance at the court. His name appears as a witness or guarantor on all the important treaties of the period. In June, 1200, he was one of the ambassadors despatched from Chinon to escort the count of Angoulême and his half-brother of Limoges to Lusignan for a conference with the king. Despite his confirmed hatred for the house of Lusignan, William's sense of feudal propriety was probably too strong to permit him to urge John's marriage with Isabel, but one may suspect that it gave him considerable secret satisfaction. He had never forgotten nor forgiven the killing of his uncle, Earl Patrick. But the author of the History who may be supposed to reflect William's sentiments feels called on to disapprove of John's violation of feudal law.

In the spring of 1201 the Lusignans rose in revolt, but were soon forced to make their submission. The king seized their lands and refused to give their complaints a proper hearing in his court. Pleading denial of justice, they promptly appealed to Philip as John's feudal suzerain. In March 1202 the French king ordered the duke of Aquitaine to appear before his court to answer the charges of his Poitevin vassals. When John refused to obey, he was declared contumacious and deprived of all the fiefs he held of the French crown. King Philip immediately set about enforcing the decree of his court—the conquest of Normandy had commenced.

In order to understand William's part in the defence of Normandy it is necessary to have some idea of the geography of

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3 Rot. Chart., p. 97.
4 cel larrecin, Hist., 11996. 6 See Norgate, John Lackland, p. 81-84.
that part of the duchy which lay north of the river Seine. From the channel to the river the north-eastern frontier of Normandy was defended by a line of fortresses. At the extreme northern point of the duchy stood the town of Eu which with Aumale some thirty miles further up the river Bresle guarded the actual frontier on that side. But as Ralph of Exoudun, count of Eu, was one of the de Lusignan brothers, this line was of little value. Some twenty miles within the Norman border lay the main line of defence consisting of the castles of Arques, Drincourt, and Gournay. The region between Gournay and the Seine had originally been covered by the great fortress of Gisors, but as this had been in French possession for some years, its place was filled by Lyons which lay in the center of the forest of the same name. The valley of the Seine was held by the most formidable of Norman strongholds, the castle of Gaillard with its subsidiary works. The region west of the river Bethune which forms practically a straight line from Drincourt to Arques and Dieppe, lay the royal forest of Awi, and beyond it stretched the broad lands of William’s county of Longueville. The safety of William’s Norman fiefs depended on the success with which the great frontier castles were defended. But it was not simply as a landholder of the region that William was involved in the defence of the Pays de Caux. As early as the summer of 1200 he seems to have been the king’s chief representative in the district. In the following spring one of his knights, Jordan de Sackville, was strengthening the fortifications of Arques in preparation for the expected defection of the count of Eu. This castle was of particular importance as it not only covered the entrance to Normandy from the side of Eu but also controlled the access to the port of Dieppe and thus one of the routes to England. As soon as the war began in earnest, the command of this region became a post of great re-

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* For a complete description of the Norman defences see Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, Chapter VII.
* Ibidi., p. 35.
sponsibility. Considering his personal interest in the safety of the Pays de Caux and his high reputation as a soldier, it is easy to understand why John entrusted this task to William Marshal.

Early in April 1202 before hostilities had actually commenced, John took steps to remove Eu from the control of the rebellious Ralph of Exoudun. On the pretense that he had learned of the death of Ralph's wife in whose right he held the county the king sent one of his knights, John of Eu, to take possession as the rightful heir. William Marshal was directed to send to his aid as many knights and serjeants as he could spare. These measures were of no avail. With the assistance of the count of Boulogne and probably of King Philip himself Ralph of Exoudun easily overran the country between the Bresle and the Bethune and recovered his strongholds of Eu and Drincourt. William was authorized to seize the Norman possessions of the count of Boulogne including the castle of Lillibonne. These he parcelled out at the king's direction to various Norman barons whose lands had been occupied by the enemy. William apparently held Lillibonne until June when he turned it over to Earl William de Warren whose Norman fief was in the hands of the count of Boulogne.

William's position in the Pays de Caux was officially confirmed by letters patent issued at Les Andelys on April 25th. The inhabitants of the bailiwicks of Arques and Caux were ordered to obey him as the king's representative. The next day he received a sum of money from the camera to enable him to provision the castle of Arques and to strengthen its garrison. A month later he was given one hundred marks to increase still further the force of knights and serjeants in this important fortress. During the latter part of May one hundred and fifty marks were issued from the camera to pay these

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10 Ibid., p. 9 b.
11 Rotuli Normanniae, p. 45.
12 Ibid., p. 47.
13 Rot. Pat., p. 9 b.
Meanwhile King Philip had taken Lyons and laid siege to Gournay. William redoubled his efforts to put Arques in a state of defense. Between June 3rd and 28th the very considerable sum of one thousand six hundred pounds Angevin passed through his hands or those of his deputies for improving the fortifications and paying the garrison of the castle. William did not take command of Arques in person. William de Mortimer and William Martel acted as constables while William Marshal had general supervision over the whole district.

Early in July Gournay capitulated, and Philip marched against Arques. John ordered the barons of the Cinque Ports to prevent the French army from receiving supplies by sea. At the same time he gave William four hundred pounds for the garrison of the castle. This sum was apparently insufficient, as the earl was forced to borrow another hundred pounds from the mayor of Rouen. While William de Mortimer valiantly defended Arques, William Marshal, William Longsword, earl of Salisbury, and Earl William de Warren at the head of a mobile force harassed the besiegers. The king himself had gone to Le Mans to watch Arthur's activities. That young man had done homage to Philip for Brittany, Aquitaine, Anjou, and Maine and had set out with a French army to conquer these fiefs. At Le Mans John learned that his nephew and the de Lusignans were besieging Queen Eleanor in Mirabeau. With one of those terrific bursts of energy that made him at times so formidable an antagonist the king swept down upon Mirabeau and captured or destroyed Arthur's entire army. The count of Brittany himself and two of the de Lusignan brothers were made prisoners. It was a signal victory. The Poitevin revolt was crushed, and John was left free to devote all his attention to Philip Augustus.

16 Miscellaneous Records of the Norman Exchequer, p. 67.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid. Hist., 12052-12054.
19 Rot. Pat., p. 15.
20 Miscellaneous Records of the Norman Exchequer, p. 67.
21 Rot. Pat., p. 15 b.
22 Hist., 12119-12132.
Immediately after the victory John despatched a monk to convey the news to William. The good tidings were received with profound joy by the three earls in their camp near Arques, for it meant that Philip would be forced to raise the siege. William was particularly delighted, but his pleasure could not be complete until he had shared the news with the third of the de Lusignans, Ralph of Exoudun, who was with King Philip. Much against his will the monk was sent on to the French camp to inform the count of Eu of his brothers' misfortunes. Meanwhile, Philip had learned of the capture of his protégé Arthur and his Poitevin allies. He was already discouraged by the stern resistance of William de Mortimer and his men, and the knowledge that John was free to concentrate all his forces against him persuaded him to raise the siege. After striking their tents and dismantling their siege engines, the French marched away in good order. This movement was observed by William's scouts. The three earls were too weak to risk an attack on the retreating army, but they decided to go out with their cavalry to watch the enemy's march. As they had no intention of fighting, they laid aside their helms and hauberks, and so being lightly armed they quickly arrived in full view of the French host. Philip knew that their force was too small to be dangerous, but it occurred to him that if he could capture these three earls, he could exchange them for men whom John had taken at Mirabeau. Summoning William des Barres he told him to take three hundred knights, ride down a valley which would conceal his movements, and attempt to surprise the English party. But the fully armed French knights were easily outdistanced by the more lightly clad English. As observing a vastly superior force seemed too hazardous an amusement, William and his companions rode towards Rouen whither they had previously sent their baggage and infantry. At the gates of the city they were received by the mayor and his principal burghers. The good citizens were greatly disturbed by the sudden appearance of the three earls. Had Arques fallen, and was Philip marching on Rouen itself? William decided to take
advantage of their fears to procure entertainment in Rouen which the privileges of the town prevented him from demanding. He informed the burghers that the French were near at hand. Solicitude for the safety of the city had moved him to come to its defence. The grateful citizens entertained the troops lavishly with the best of food and drink. The three earls sat in a hostelry while their hosts placed before them their choicest delicacies and rarest vintages. There were wines clear and sparkling, sweet and dry; wines perfumed with cloves, and spiced wines. For dessert there were pears, apples, and nuts. William's diplomacy must have seemed exceptionally brilliant to the tired soldiers. A good dinner at the expense of the fat burghers—what could more thoroughly delight the heart of any knight?

While the three earls were enjoying the discomfiture of King Philip, John was disposing of the prisoners taken at Mirabeau. The Middle Ages knew few more delicate problems of state than the proper use of important captives, especially when those captives were rebels who had a fairly just cause of revolt. John seems to have made every possible mistake. At first he treated all his prisoners with extreme severity and so quite unnecessarily irritated both them and their friends. Then he took hostages from the de Lusignan brothers and released them. Arthur disappeared into Falaise, then into Rouen, and eventually in all probability into the Seine. The de Lusignans were capable, dangerous, and incorrigible rebels. It would have been wise to have kept them in confinement until the end of the war. Arthur on the other hand was far more dangerous in prison than at liberty. He had no great ability and with due care could easily have been confined to this county of Brittany. But this scion of the house of Anjou had powerful and devoted friends. The proud and turbulent Breton baronage was only too ready to rally to the support of its lord. Still more formidable was William des Roches whose ability and vigor had

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23 Ibid., 12132-12400.
24 On Arthur's fate see Powicke, The Loss of Normandy, Appendix I.
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maintained John’s power in Touraine and Anjou. William was ambitious, but not unscrupulous. He considered Arthur the rightful heir to the old Angevin lands—Touraine and Anjou—and had supported him as such at Richard’s death. He had gone over to John in the hope of establishing permanent peace within the royal house and incidentally improving his own position. The king had made him seneschal of Anjou and Touraine and had promised to follow his advice in all affairs pertaining to the region and in his relations with Arthur. Now he calmly ignored his protests against the treatment accorded the prisoners. When one considers that William des Roches and his men had formed the largest part of the army that John had led to Mirabeau, one can comprehend the seneschal’s chagrin. He promptly went over to Philip, and the same strong hand which had held the district for John soon secured it for his new master. The defection of William des Roches combined with the immediately renewed rebellion of the de Lu-signans meant the end of English rule in Maine, Anjou, Touraine, and Poitou. Meanwhile in Normandy John dallied with his fair young wife. Dreaming of aid from pope and emperor, the king displayed an incredible lethargy while Philip reduced his fortresses. A wild contagion of treason spread through the Norman baronage. They had lost all confidence in John—all hope in his cause. Count Robert of Alençon and Hugh de Gournay went over to Philip. Robert fitz Walter and Saher de Quency surrendered without a struggle the stronghold of Vaudreuil.

William spent most of the spring and summer of 1203 following King John about his rapidly diminishing domains. In December 1202 he had been at least temporarily relieved of his responsibility for the Pays de Caux by letters patent which gave the custody of the castle of Arques and the bailiwick of Arques and Caux to William de Mortimer and William Martel.35 There is little or no evidence as to what William Marshal’s activities were during this dismal period. Small sums

35 Rot. Pat., p. 22.
were issued to him from the camera to expend in the king's service. The castellan of Gaillard was ordered to permit the passage of a cargo of wine consigned to him. King John did little or nothing, and William was usually in his train. One day while Philip was besieging Conches, the king sent William to the French camp to attempt to make peace. The earl soon discovered that Philip would make no terms, but before leaving his court, he remonstrated with the king for his encouragement of the Norman traitors. "Fair Sire," he said, "I would like to know, if you please to tell me, why traitors who in days gone by were burned, cut to pieces, and torn apart by horses in France, are now so deeply rooted in the land that they are all lords and masters." "By my faith," replied the king, "that is but natural; it is now a matter of business. They are like torches which one throws in the latrine when one is done with them." Philip would discuss the propriety of his policy with an old friend, but he would not make peace with John.

By August Philip had taken Vaudreuil and Radeptont. Only Chateau-Gailllard with its gallant garrison under the command of Roger de Lacy, constable of Chester, blocked the road to Rouen. Late in that month the French king occupied the peninsula formed by a bend of the Seine opposite Les Andelys, threw a pontoon bridge over the river, and laid siege to the walled town of Andeli at the foot of the castle rock. The investment of Gailllard had begun. John made one ineffectual attempt to relieve the fortress and then abandoned it to its fate. One authority asserts that William Marshal commanded this expedition, but no other source mentions his name in connection with it. It seems incredible that the author of the History with his taste for battles would have neglected to mention this combat if William had taken part in it. William le Breton

26 Miscellaneous Records of the Norman Exchequer, p. 68.
27 Rotuli Normanniae, p. 65.
28 Hist. 12675-12704.
29 Philippidos, book VII, line 144 et seq. In describing this same incident in his prose chronicle William le Breton makes no mention of William. (Gesta Philippi Augusti, pp. 213-216.)
30 See Meyer's note Hist., III, 173, note 5.
probably used poetic license in attaching a well-known name to one of the most colorful passages of his *Philippidos*.

John’s inability to relieve Gaillard was the last blow to the confidence of the Norman barons. Those who had remained loyal were convinced that the conquest of the duchy by Philip was inevitable. In these circumstances their interests demanded peace at any price. If a treaty were made, Philip might allow them to retain their lands as his vassals—if he conquered the country by force of arms, their Norman possessions were doomed. William fully shared this point of view. His own lands at Longueville were still safe, but they could not be held indefinitely. In fact at his camp before Gaillard Philip promised to give one of William’s castles to the count of Boulogne as soon as it should come into his possession. But if peace were made, the earl felt certain that his friendship with the French king would assure him his Norman fiefs. Early in October he advised John to come to terms with his enemy, but the king insisted that he would continue the contest for at least a year. The earl even had the temerity to point out to his master that it was his own fault that he had no friends. The king had irritated his barons—he had better make peace with his enemies. Although he was unquestionably loyal, William was urging the surrender of Normandy. It was the first portent of his fall from royal favor.

On December 5th both William and the king sailed from Barfleur for England. Except for a few isolated strongholds such as Gaillard, Rouen, and Arques, Normandy was lost. The earl’s part in the defence of the duchy had not been particularly brilliant, but so utterly ineffective a campaign rarely raises generals to fame. What glory was to be distributed to John’s supporters went to such loyal and gallant castellans as William de Mortimer, Roger de Lacy, and Peter des Preaux who conducted magnificent defences of single fortresses. Still, William Mar-

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82 *Hist.*, 12721-12742.
shall, either through his own energy and ability or through good fortune, had been remarkably successful in holding the region entrusted to him. His mobile force must have seriously hampered the army besieging Arques—at the same time that it protected his own lands from Philip's foragers. With the channel patrolled by the ships of the Cinque Ports and with William's troops hovering on his flanks the French king must have found it difficult to provision his army. As the field officer in charge of the threatened district a part of the credit for its successful defence must go to William. His own lands were never actually conquered, but this may have been due in part to Philip's forbearance. After the fall of Gaillard and the enemy's advance on Rouen, their position was hopeless. William had been loyal and more successful than most of his fellow commanders in John's service. On the political side there is no evidence as to William's influence on or responsibility for the king's policy. The History makes clear that the earl disapproved of John's freeing of the de Lusignans, of his treatment of William des Roches, and of his general attitude toward his barons. If he tendered wise counsel, it had no great effect. Doubtless when he urged the king to make peace, he was considering his own interests and those of his fellow barons. Believing the king's cause hopeless, he wanted to save his own fiefs. John was not a master to inspire much unselfish devotion.

The French conquest of Normandy forced the Anglo-Norman barons to make their choice between the two monarchs and content themselves with their possessions on one or the other side of the channel. In general, as one would expect, they followed their major interests and entered the allegiance of the sovereign who controlled the larger part of their lands. No English baron of any importance went over to Philip, and the lands seized by John as terrae Normannorum were comparatively insignificant. But those English families which had held considerable fiefs in Normandy could not be easily reconciled

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*4 For a discussion of the fate of the Norman baronies see Powicke, The Loss of Normandy, Appendix II.*
to their loss, and their insistence on the return of their continental possessions was to be for many years an important factor in Anglo-French relations. During the years following John's retirement from Normandy they formed a strong party favoring a definite peace which would allow them to hold their fiefs on both sides of the sea. Earl Robert of Leicester probably had the greatest stake in Normandy of any English baron, but William Marshal because of his power and prestige in England, his favor at John's court, and his friendship with Philip Augustus became the leader of this group. Opposed to them were those who had no personal interests on the continent. This party, led by Archbishop Hubert Walter, argued that peace with Philip would involve the formal surrender of John's rights in the conquered territory. It was better to have a claim without actual possession than to have neither. England's honor would be abased if she resigned her rights. These two parties struggled to control John's policy in his relations with Philip.

In the spring of 1204 John still had some hope of making a compromise with Philip. While Rouen, Arques, Verneuil, and the fortresses of the west held out, the French king might not feel completely certain of his ultimate success. In April John sent an embassy consisting of the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Norwich and Ely, and the earls of Leicester and Pembroke to attempt to conclude an honorable peace. When they reached the French court at Bec, they discovered that Philip would not listen to any terms acceptable to John. He demanded that either Arthur or his sister be surrendered to him to hold from him all the continental domains of the house of Anjou. The king turned a deaf ear to all the counter suggestions of the English ambassadors. While he was not certain as to Arthur's fate, he probably suspected the truth. According to Ralph de Coggeshall he threatened to devote his life to driving John from the English throne if it were true that Arthur

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had been murdered. Philip finally announced that any baron
who wished to hold lands in Normandy should do him liege
homage. The two earls were in a quandary. They dared not
risk the loss of their English lands by doing homage to Philip
without John’s permission, yet they were exceedingly anxious to
retain their Norman fiefs. At length they reached a compromise
with the king by which they were given a year in which to
make their final decision. For this respite each of them was to
pay Philip five hundred marks. The exact terms of the agree­
ment between William and the French king have been pre­
served. The earl was to surrender at once his castle of Orbec,
and Philip would put a garrison in it. The castles of Longue­
ville and Meullers were to be turned over to Osbert de Rouvrai,
a Norman knight in Philip’s service, who was to hold them
until June 24th when they also were to receive French garrisons.
If within a year William did liege homage to Philip for his
Norman fiefs, they were to be returned to him to be held for
the customary service. For this delay he would give the king
five hundred marks—two-thirds to be paid on June 24th and
the rest on August 1st. If he failed to pay the money or to do
homage before the end of the year, his lands and castles would
be forfeited to Philip. William was betting five hundred marks
that within a year he could persuade John to make peace or at
least give him permission to do homage to Philip.

In the spring of 1205 William succeeded in stealing a march
on the party opposed to peace by persuading John to send him
with Hugh, archdeacon of Welles, to negotiate with Philip.
Before he left the king, William brought up the question of his
Norman fiefs. "Sire, I am not certain that I can make peace,
and the respite for my Norman lands is nearly over. If I do
not do homage to the king, I shall suffer great loss." John re­
plied, "I know you to be so loyal that no consideration would
draw your affection from me. I wish you to do the homage to
save yourself from loss, for I know that the more land you

36 Hist., 12891-12898.
37 Layettes du Trésor des Chartes, I, no. 715.
38 Hist., 12935-12946.
have, the better you will serve me." 89 The king gave William letters which informed Philip that he was authorized to perform the required homage. 90 The two envoys found the French court at Compiègne. Philip showed a disposition to negotiate and agreed to discuss the matter in eight days at Anet. But meanwhile Hubert Walter, who had been kept in ignorance of the plan to make peace, learned the nature of William’s mission. Ralph d’Ardern was just setting out on a royal errand across the sea, and the archbishop took the occasion to send a private message to Philip to the effect that William and his fellow envoy had no power to make peace. 41 Ralph gave this information to the count of Boulogne who passed it on to the king. When the ambassadors appeared at Anet, Philip refused to negotiate and reproached them for deceiving him as to their powers. 42 Despite William’s initial advantage, the archbishop had won the game.

Although William’s official mission had ended in failure, he was successful in settling his private affairs. After he had presented to Philip John’s letters authorizing the ceremony, he did him “liege homage on this side of the sea” for his Norman fiefs. 43 The exact meaning of this most unusual expression is far from clear. Bracton in explaining that Frenchmen could not ordinarily plead in England pointed out that William Marshal and several others could plead in both England and France because they owed fealty to both kings. If the two countries should go to war, these men would serve in person the king to whom they had sworn allegiance and send to the other the service owed by their fiefs. 44 Glanville also used the term allegiance to designate the relationship between a vassal and the

90 See statement made by William’s son in 1220. (Layettes du Trésor des Chartes, I, no. 1397).
41 Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum (ed. T. D. Hardy, Record Commission), I, 28.
42 Hist., 12995-13020.
43 hominagium ligium citra mare, Layettes du Trésor des Chartes, I, no. 1397.
44 fidei contrasted with ligeantiam. Bracton, De Legibus, VI, 374-376.
chief of several lords. Both of these writers show that homage and fidelity could be separate from allegiance which involved a close personal relationship and could be due to but one lord. But Bracton’s elucidation of William’s position cannot be reconciled with the latter’s conception of his obligations to Philip of France. Within a year after performing this homage William was to refuse to accompany John to Poitou on the ground that he was the “man” of the French king. To him “liege homage on this side of the sea” obviously meant that he was John’s liege man in England and Philip’s in France. If the French invaded England, he could fight against them, but he could not participate in John’s attempts to recover his continental possessions. The earl had definitely divided his allegiance.

When William returned to England, he found that Ralph d’Ardern had already told John of his oath to Philip. The king received him with a reproach, “I know beyond a doubt that you have sworn fealty and allegiance to the king of France and have done him homage against me and to my disadvantage.” “Sire,” the earl replied, “whoever told you that loved me not and lied to you. You know right well that I did nothing against you and what I did, I did by your leave.” “By the faith,” said John “you did not.” Despite this denial William insisted that the king had told him to do homage to Philip rather than lose his lands. John was not convinced and demanded a judgement by his barons, but no decision seems to have been reached at the time. The grievance remained to rankle in the king’s mind. It is impossible to ascertain where the truth lay in this controversy. The king had not only given William verbal permission to do homage to Philip, but had sent the latter letters to the same effect. But John may have envisaged simply a secondary homage as described by Glanville

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[47] fait al rei de France feelse, ligance, et homage contre mai et pur mon damage. Ibid., 13062-13064.
[48] Ibid., 13068-13090.
and Bracton. He had expected the earl to do homage and swear fidelity to Philip, but not to enter his allegiance. As the expression "liege homage on this side of the sea" seems to have been invented by William and the French king to fit the occasion, John could hardly have foreseen the exact obligations involved. If, as seems probable, the earl had divided his allegiance without the king realizing that he intended to do so, John had decidedly the better case. One has difficulty in believing that William was not guilty of intentional deception.

This question arose again when, in June of the same year, King John mustered his army at Portsmouth in preparation for an expedition to Poitou. One day as the king and his entourage were sitting on the shore, John asked William why he had made an alliance with Philip of France. The earl replied, as he had before, that he had done nothing against John and what he had done, he had done with his leave. Once more the king denied this and demanded the judgement of the barons. Again William insisted that he had acted with the king's permission, and again John denied it. Finally the king brought the argument to a crisis. "You will go with me to Poitou," he told William, "to reconquer my inheritance from the king of France to whom you have done homage." "Ah, Sire!" replied the earl, "it would be a felony for me to go against him, for I am his man." The king called the assembly to witness that this statement of William's proved his offence. He was the man of Philip Augustus and could not follow John to battle. Still William insisted that he had acted with perfect propriety and offered to prove it in combat with any man in the realm, but John insisted on a judgement by his barons. Accepting the king's proposal, William turned to the barons, "Lords, look at me. Today I am an example and mirror for all of you. Attend closely to the king, for what he plans to do to me, he will do to you all and worse yet if he can." These words, not unnaturally, enraged the king, and he demanded a decision from his barons—had William been false to him when he did

homage to Philip? The barons glanced at one another and
drew away without replying. They had no desire to become
involved in so delicate a question. Ordinarily this should have
closed the incident. John charged that William had committed
a felony: William denied it, and the question was put to his
peers, his fellow barons, for decision. Their refusal to answer
amounted practically to an acquittal.

John, however, was not satisfied. "By the teeth of God! I
see that none of my barons are on my side. I know whom I
can trust. I shall converse in private with my bachelors about
this treason." While the king walked off a short distance with
his bachelors, William sought the counsel of his friends, but
of all his familiars only Henry fitz Gerold and John d'Erley
dared brave the king's wrath by speaking to him. Meanwhile
John requested his bachelors' opinion of William's offence.
In general, they agreed that a man who under the present cir­
cumstances refused to follow his lord to war, could not hold
land from him. This view was expressed by John de Bassing­
bourn—"whoever fails his lord can no longer hold land." At
this point William's old companion in arms, Baldwin de
Bethune, count of Aumale, intervened in the discussio n. "Be
silent," said he, "it is not fitting for you or me to judge in
court a knight of the Marshal's eminence. On all this field
there is no man strong enough to prove in combat that he has
failed his lord." John tried hard to find a champion willing to
challenge William, but no one was anxious to face so famous a
warrior, and the king was forced to let the matter drop.50

This whole incident is most perplexing. In general the term
bachelor was used to designate either young men who were
aspirants to knighthood or young knights who had not yet
made a name for themselves.51 It is used at least once in the
History in the latter sense.52 But neither of these definitions can
apply in this case. John de Bassingbourn was a tried servant of
the king whom two years later he made constable of the great

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50 Ibid., 13107-13256.
51 See Gautier, La Chevalerie, Chapter VI.
52 Hist., 11252.
castle of Corfe. Baldwin de Bethune had served in the household of young Henry, had followed Richard to the Holy Land, and as count of Aumale ranked as an earl. Although Aumale was in the hands of Philip, Baldwin was far from landless as he held a number of fiefs in England. Apparently in this context the bachelors were men in the king's pay as semi-permanent members of his household as distinct from the barons who were present in fulfilment of their obligations as tenants-in-chief. Baldwin may have been a member of John's mesnie, but he was no untried, landless knight. This use of the term bachelor to describe any one serving under another's banner was common in England in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The king was seeking from a select group of his vassals, those most dependent on him, the decision which the barons had declined to render. John de Bassingbourn was undoubtedly correct in his expression of feudal law, but Baldwin was equally so when he asserted that the bachelors could not judge William. Except for men like Baldwin himself, who was a baron as well as a member of the household, they were not his peers.

When John discovered that he could not punish William, he pretended to forgive him. As he still had grave doubts of the earl's loyalty, he demanded his eldest son as a hostage. William, who had no intention of injuring the king, readily complied. Thus started the estrangement between John and William Marshal. One of the ablest and most powerful of the king's barons had done homage to his mortal enemy and had refused to follow him to war. This destroyed John's confidence in William's loyalty—therein lay the root of their quarrel. One is forced to sympathize with both these men. The king was justified in objecting to William's division of his allegiance. On the other hand John had shown himself unable to protect William's Norman fiefs, and the earl felt entitled to do what was necessary to retain them. The king should have realized that

63 Rot. Pat., p. 74.
64 E. F. Jacob in Chivalry, p. 40 (ed. E. Prestage, in The History of Civilization).
65 Hist., 13272.
William was incapable of treason, but John's suspicions always overpowered his judgement. The impartial observer must conclude that while William had not acted with complete honesty, John showed a woeful lack of comprehension of his great vassal's character.

Although William's homage to Philip Augustus was the basic cause of his estrangement from John, the more serious phases of their quarrel grew out of other circumstances. The earl's power in England and the marches of Wales had developed to an extent that the king could not view with equanimity once he had lost his confidence in its holder's trustworthiness. At the beginning of his reign John had given William the shrievalty of Gloucestershire with the custody of the castles of Gloucester and Bristol. The earl had also obtained the custodianship of the forest of Dean with the castle of St. Briavells. Early in 1202 the king gave him the custody of the royal fortress of Cardigan with an annual allowance of four hundred marks for its maintenance. This castle, situated near the mouth of the river Teifi, was the key to the mountainous region south of that stream which was continually in dispute between the earls of Pembroke and the native Welsh princes. John had given Kilgerran, one of the most important strongholds in this region, to Maelgwyn ap Rees, prince of South Wales, but in the summer of 1204 William captured this castle and made himself master of the whole country between the Teifi and the lowlands of Pembroke. Earlier in that same year the king had given him Castle Goodrich which controlled the valley of the Wye some miles below Ross in Herefordshire. By the end of 1204 William's position in south Wales and its marches closely rivalled that of the earl of Chester in the north. When one considers that William was also sheriff of Sussex

56 Pipe Rolls 1-8 John, Public Record Office.  
57 Ibid. Rot Pat., p. 65b.  
60 Rot. Chart., p. 124.
and had the custody of the important fortress of Chichester, one can easily comprehend why John feared his power once his loyalty was called in question.\(^61\)

A still more active factor in widening the breach between William and the king was the situation in Ireland.\(^62\) John was lord of Ireland, but this title carried little real power outside a few small districts on the east coast. The larger part of the country occupied by the Anglo-Norman invaders was under the control of barons who possessed palatine authority. Hugh de Lacy, earl of Ulster, Walter de Lacy, lord of Meath, William Marshal, lord of Leinster, and William de Briouse, lord of Limerick, were the real masters of Ireland. These feudal potentates and the minor tenants-in-chief varied their usual amusement of fighting the Irish with furious feuds among themselves. Although John’s policy in Ireland was so vacillating that it is difficult to distinguish any definite purpose behind it, in general he strove, as one would expect, to maintain order and to extend the authority of his agent, the justiciar, at the expense of the palatine powers of the great barons. Soon after he ascended the English throne, John appointed to the office of justiciar one of the original group of Norman conquerors, Meiler fitz Henry. Meiler was a tenant-in-chief of comparatively small fiefs, and the bulk of his lands were held of the lord of Leinster. In the attempt to carry out the continually varying policy of his master and at the same time promote his own interests, he succeeded in quarreling with the most of the barons of Ireland. By the end of the year 1206 he was at odds not only with William de Briouse but also with the latter’s son-in-law Walter de Lacy, lord of Meath. He had even infringed on the possessions of William Marshal in Leinster by seizing, with the king’s consent if not by his express command, the castle and fief of Offaly.\(^68\) But as both William Marshal and William de

\(^{61}\) *Pipe Rolls* 1-6 John, Public Record Office.

\(^{62}\) For a complete discussion of contemporary events in Ireland see G. H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*. There is a brief summary in Norgate, *John Lackland*, pp. 137-145.

\(^{68}\) *Rot. Pat.*, p. 72.
Briouse were absent from Ireland, the justiciar had only to contend with their vassals supported by the lord of Meath. For the moment Meiler had the upper hand.

Although William Marshal had been lord of Leinster since 1189, he probably had never visited Ireland. Now in the spring of 1207 he felt that the situation there required his presence to protect his lands and vassals. Several times the earl sought in vain the king's permission to inspect his Irish possessions. Meiler had his hands full with the barons already in Ireland, and John had no desire to increase his justiciar's troubles by adding to the opposition the formidable lord of Leinster. But at length in February 1207 John gave way before William's insistent requests. He issued letters patent of protection for the earl's possessions in England and for those of Henry Hose and John d'Erley who were to accompany him. A few days later messengers arrived at court bearing money from the Irish exchequer and letters from the justiciar. Probably Meiler insisted that the king keep William out of Ireland. He was a far more dangerous opponent than the de Lacys and was besides the justiciar's feudal suzerain. His presence would seriously hamper Meiler's activities. John repented of having given William permission to leave England and sent Thomas de Sanford to intercept him at Striguil and demand his second son, Richard, as an additional hostage. Thomas de Sanford was an old friend of William's, and his brother, Hugh, was one of his knights. When Thomas arrived at Striguil, the earl sent him to dinner while he took counsel with his countess and his knights. Although they advised him to defy the royal mandate, William insisted on obedience. When Thomas had dined, the earl took him familiarly by the hand, "Sir, you know well that if the king wished, I would willingly send him all my children, but tell me, for God's love, what he has against me." Thomas explained that John was most anxious to prevent him from visiting Ireland and was sorry that he had given him leave to

go. To this William replied that he was going whether the
king liked it or not. This insistence naturally served to widen
the breach between him and the king.

As William had intentionally defied his wishes, John felt
justified in depriving him of his positions of trust in England.
Cardigan was turned over to William de London, while Richard
de Mucegros received the castle of Gloucester and the shrievalty
of that county. The castle and forest of St. Briavells were
united to the general forest administration under Hugh de
Neville. William had lost the office of sheriff of Sussex when
he first fell in disfavor in 1205. Now he was deprived of the
custody of Chichester castle. John also seized all the earl's
castles in England and Wales as additional guarantees of his
good behavior. William had lost all his official positions in
the English administration, his two eldest sons and his castles
were in the king's hands, and he was completely out of favor at
court. For the next five years his activities were to be centered
in Ireland to the great benefit of his lands in Leinster.

The reasons suggested above for William's fall from royal
favor may well seem insufficient. To this objection there are
two possible answers, each of which partially removes the diffi-
culty. In the first place, John's quarrel with William never grew
particularly bitter as did for instance the one with William
de Briouse. All through their estrangement one will find a defi-
nite restraint on both sides, an unwillingness to carry matters
too far. Then the influence of the Irish question is difficult to
estimate. In the absence of a thorough study of John's policy
in Ireland from the point of view of the royal administration
any suggestions made on this subject must be purely tentative,
but one is inclined to believe that Irish affairs had a very de-
cided influence on the king's general policy. If the supposition

68 Hist., 13355-13419.
70 Rot. Pat., p. 71.
71 Pipe Roll 7 John, Public Record Office.
72 In February 1208. Rot. Pat., p. 79. 73 Hist., 14334-5.
that John had set his heart on an increase in the royal authority in Ireland at the expense of the feudal lords is correct, it goes far to explain his desire to weaken the position of the lord of Leinster. While the roots of the estrangement between William and his king are found in the closing events of the defence of Normandy, its immediate causes seem to lie in the earl's opposition to the royal policy in Ireland.