

GEOFFREY DE MANDEVILLE

A STUDY OF THE ANARCHY

BY

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"Anno incarnationis Dominicæ millesimo centesimo quadagesimo primo inextricabilem labyrinthum rerum et negotiorum quæ acciderunt in Angliâ aggredior evolvere." — *William of Malmesbury*

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PREFACE

"THE reign of Stephen," in the words of our greatest living historian, "is one of the most important in our whole history, as exemplifying the working of causes and principles which had no other opportunity of exhibiting their real tendencies." To illustrate in detail the working of those principles to which the Bishop of Oxford thus refers, is the chief object I have set before myself in these pages. For this purpose I have chosen, to form the basis of my narrative, the career of Geoffrey de Mandeville, as the most perfect and typical presentment of the feudal and anarchic spirit that stamps the reign of Stephen. By fixing our glance upon one man, and by tracing his policy and its fruits, it is possible to gain a clearer perception of the true tendencies at work, and to obtain a firmer grasp of the essential principles involved. But, while availing myself of Geoffrey's career to give unity to my theme, I have not scrupled to introduce, from all available sources, any materials bearing on the period known as the Anarchy, or illustrating the points raised by the charters with which I deal.

The headings of my chapters express a fact upon which I cannot too strongly insist, namely, that the charters granted to Geoffrey are the very backbone of my work. By those charters it must stand or fall: for on their

relation and their evidence the whole narrative is built. If the evidence of these documents is accepted, and the relation I have assigned to them established, it will, I trust, encourage the study of charters and their evidence, "as enabling the student both to amplify and to check such scanty knowledge as we now possess of the times to which they relate."¹ It will also result in the contribution of some new facts to English history, and break, as it were, by the wayside, a few stones towards the road on which future historians will travel.

Among the subjects on which I shall endeavour to throw some fresh light are problems of constitutional and institutional interest, such as the title to the English Crown, the origin and character of earldoms (especially the earldom of Arundel), the development of the fiscal system, and the early administration of London. I would also invite attention to such points as the appeal of the Empress to Rome in 1136, her intended coronation at Westminster in 1141, the unknown Oxford intrigue of 1142, the new theory on Norman castles suggested by Geoffrey's charters, and the genealogical discoveries in the Appendix on Gervase de Cornhill. The prominent part that the Earl of Gloucester played in the events of which I write may justify the inclusion of an essay on the creation of his historic earldom, which has, in the main, already appeared in another quarter.

In the words of Mr. Eyton, "the dispersion of error is the first step in the discovery of truth."² Cordially adopting this maxim, I have endeavoured throughout to correct

¹ Preface to my *Ancient Charters* (Pipe-Roll Society).

² *Staffordshire Survey*, p. 277.

errors and dispose of existing misconceptions. To "dare to be accurate" is, as Mr. Freeman so often reminds us, neither popular nor pleasant. It is easier to prophesy smooth things, and to accept without question the errors of others, in the spirit of mutual admiration. But I would repeat that "boast as we may of the achievements of our new scientific school, we are still, as I have urged, behind the Germans, so far, at least, as accuracy is concerned." If my criticism be deemed harsh, I may plead with Newman that, in controversy, "I have ever felt from experience that no one would believe me to be in earnest if I spoke calmly." The public is slow to believe that writers who have gained its ear are themselves often in error and, by the weight of their authority, lead others astray. At the same time, I would earnestly insist that if, in the light of new evidence, I have found myself compelled to differ from the conclusions even of Dr. Stubbs, it in no way impeaches the accuracy of that unrivalled scholar, the profundity of whose learning and the soundness of whose judgment can only be appreciated by those who have followed him in the same field.

The ill-health which has so long postponed the completion and appearance of this work is responsible for some shortcomings of which no one is more conscious than myself. It has been necessary to correct the proof-sheets at a distance from works of reference, and indeed from England, while the length of time that has elapsed since the bulk of the work was composed is such that two or three new books bearing upon the same period have appeared in the mean while. Of these I would specially mention Mr. Howlett's contributions to the Rolls Series,