LAST WORDS ON THE TEWKESBURY CHARTER.

It is more than time to bring to an end the controversy on this subject. The only ground for prolonging it so far has been that an important principle was at stake—the infallibility of "inspeximus" charters. Mr. Kirk now requests me "to confess to a considerable amount of wholesale blundering and unjust accusation." I have no blundering to confess, nor anything to retract. I do not swerve one hair's breadth from my original argument that unless, and until, my *catena* of charters is demolished, the Tewkesbury *inspeximus* charter is worthless, and its evidence disproved. Mr. Kirk sees this difficulty, but declines, in spite of miscellaneous bluster, to upset my charters.

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The only mistake which I have committed is that of wasting time in arguing at all on such a question. To hold that the evidence of *inspeximus* charters must not be questioned is simply to throttle historical research. That it can and should be questioned has long been familiar to scholars. I may refer Mr. Kirk to Sir Francis Palgrave and to the ridicule he poured on these "fabrications," which, though they deceived mediæval lawyers, "now reveal the secret fraud to the lynx-eyed antiquary."

"The real question," says Mr. Kirk," "is whether King Edward I. and his Chancellor were liable or likely to have been imposed upon," and after scornfully rejecting such a possibility, Mr. Kirk proceeds :—

"Nor does Mr. Round produce any recorded instances of an early King having been imposed upon by a spurious charter, as he was challenged to do. Surely he can have no difficulty in doing this if, as he professes to believe, the fact is, or should be, familiar."

It is always rash to provoke your opponent into a crushing rejoinder. I need only meet Mr. Kirk's challenge by observing that Riley, long ago, pointed out that even so late as the days of Richard II., the critical faculty was so undeveloped that an *Inspeximus* of July 7, 1393, (Patent Rolls) recites and confirms the charters of Ethelbald and Edred to Croyland, as recorded in "Ingulf,"—two of the most notorious impostures on record. In Mr. Riley's word :—

A charter of *Inspeximus* and confirmation was granted by the unsuspecting officials of King Richard II . . . and with the object of obtaining that confirmation, these two charters were fabricated . . . the forgery of ecclesiastical and other documents, there seems reason to believe, had, in the 14th and 15th centuries, become an established trade in the Metropolis.

So much for *Inspeximus*.

As to "unjust accusation," I have nothing to withdraw in my article on Adeliza, "the Viscountess," with its comments on Mr. Kirk's amazing suggestion that she might have derived that title from her (supposed) grandfather Thorold. I observe that Mr. Kirk cannot deny the blunder, though he considers it "disgraceful" in me to have commented on it. I leave his language to speak for itself.

J. H. ROUND.