ROBERT, EARL OF LEICESTER.

As one of the most useful functions of *The Genealogist* is to expose and correct error in matters of genealogy, I need not apologise for calling attention to the following passage (*ante*, p. 139), in which Mr. Kirk assails my accuracy on the strength of a statement which other genealogists have long known to be a strange blunder. Mr. Kirk writes :—

"So far from Robert, Earl of Meulan, or Leicester, having been a 'boy' in 1121, he himself claimed to have been brought up at Abingdon in the time of King William I (Chronicles of Abingdon, vol. ii, pp. lxvi, lxxvii, 229) ! He must, therefore, have been of a great age at his death in 1168 ; but this is not surprising, for he occupied the earldom for fifty years after he succeeded his father, who was an old man in 1118. Perhaps it will be allowed that I was not the person who 'gave himself away' in dealing with this subject."

Let me first clear the ground by explaining that Mr. Kirk's interpolation "Robert, Earl of *Meulan, or* Leicester," is based upon nothing but a recent desperate suggestion of his own that this Earl of Leicester was also Earl (*i.e.*, Count) of Meulan, though that is well-known to have been the title of his brother Waleran. This Robert, Earl of Leicester, is never styled Count of Meulan, nor has anyone suggested such a thing till Mr. Kirk found himself "in a corner" over the Tewkesbury Charter, and made this last attempt to escape.

Secondly, I did *not* state that the Earl of Leicester was a "boy" in 1121 (*sic*), but that he was a boy at his father's death in 1118 (*sic*).[1] And to that statement I adhere.

And now for the facts. As I was selected to write the lives of Robert, Count of Meulan (d. 1118) and of Robert, Earl of Leicester, and Waleran, Count of Meulan, his sons, for the "Dictionary of National Biography," it will, probably, be allowed that I am at home in the subject. The Robert, Earl of Leicester, who is the subject of this note, was born, according to his contemporary, Orderic, in 1104, and died, it would seem, in 1168, aged 64. These dates, as I wrote in the "Dictionary of National Biography," are "fatal to the story in the Abingdon Chronicle (ii, 229), that he had been at the Benedictine Monastery there, as a boy, 'regis Willelmi tempore,' *i.e., ante* 1099." But I was by no means the first to point out the discrepancy. No less an authority than the late Mr. Eyton, wrote, in a work familiar to all students of early genealogy, that, according to the Abingdon story, the Earl

"will have alleged himself to have been an eye-witness and recollector of things

[1] *Genealogist* (N. S.), vol. viii, p. 94.

which took place some five years before he was born, probably ten years before he could read, and at least fifteen years before he could have apprehended the mode and ratio of the matters on which he deposed."

To this I may add that the known date of the marriage of the Earl's parents is quite as fatal to the story as that of his birth.

It may have been observed that Mr. Eyton and I have taken "regis Willelmi" to refer to William Rufus, but Mr. Kirk, in his eagerness to convict me of error, plunges as usual deeper into the snare, and makes the anachronism even worse by insisting that this King William (as the editor of the Chronicle imagined) was the Conqueror himself !

I now continue the Earl's life, by pointing out that "at his father's death," in 1118, he would be fourteen, and, therefore, (exactly as I said), a "boy." As such, he was brought up by King Henry, with his brother, in the royal household, and accompanied him to the Gisors interview in Nov. 1119, where the two youths "are said to have astounded the Cardinals by their learning."

Surely it would be better if Mr. Kirk no longer persisted in attempting to convict me of "blunders," when those attempts merely expose his own uncritical credulity and his own strange ignorance. This case of Robert, Earl of Leicester, is but the case of Adeliza "the Viscountess," over again. It relieves me from the need of illustrating further the value of Mr. Kirk's criticism. And it enables me to adopt his own words :—"Perhaps it will be allowed that I was not the person who 'gave himself away' in dealing with this subject."

J. H. ROUND.