ROBERT, EARL OF LEICESTER.

It would not be necessary to reply to Mr. Kirk if he had merely covered his retreat by miscellaneous braggadocio; but when he endeavours to brazen out his blunders by rejecting the historical facts and dates which convict him of having blundered, he cannot be allowed to alter history for his own convenience.

I might content myself with referring our readers to Mr. Watson's learned article, with which this volume of the *Genealogist* opened. I have not the pleasure of Mr. Watson's acquaintance; and he wrote quite independently of any controversy. But his masterly article stated the facts precisely as I have stated them.

The two points in dispute are so exceedingly simple that I need not occupy, like Mr. Kirk, some eight pages in raising a cloud of dust in which everything is lost to sight.

[1] The Committee would have been unanimous but for the dissent of the Earl of Redesdale

FIRST POINT.

Mr. Kirk, finding it difficult to defend the authenticity of the Tewkesbury Charter as a document of 1116, made the despairing suggestion that "it may have been of later date, say 1121, when the King was at Winchester . . . Till this point is settled, why talk of forgery?"[1]

Well, I "settled" it at once by shewing that Robert, the great Count of Meulan, who is among its witnesses, died June 5, 1118,[2] so that he could not have witnessed a charter in 1121.

Robert, Count of Meulan,
d. June 5, 1118.

Waleran, Count of Meulan, born 1104.	Robert ("le Bossu"), Earl of Leicester, born 1104.

This descent is well ascertained and beyond dispute.

But Mr. Kirk, finding himself in a "corner," tried to break through and escape by the wild suggestion that Robert "le Bossu" *might* have adopted his brother's title of Count of Meulan[3] when witnessing a charter in 1121. Round this point he has guessed and guessed; but what evidence has he produced for so wild a conjecture? Absolutely none. His 1121 suggestion is left without a leg to stand on.[4]

SECOND POINT.

I stated that "Robert [Le Bossu] was a boy at his father's death" [1118].[5] Mr. Kirk retorted, with much triumph :—

"So far from Robert, Earl of Meulan, or Leicester, having been a 'boy' in 1121 (*sic*), he himself claimed to have been brought up at Abingdon in the days of William I.[6] (*sic*)!"

I at once shewed that Mr. Kirk had fallen into a notorious trap, that the dates of Robert's birth (1104) and his parents' marriage were well-known, and that they utterly demolished the idea of his having been "brought up" in the days of William the Conqueror.[7]

Replying now at great length,[8] Mr. Kirk finds himself reduced to impugning the *only* definite evidence we have as to the date of Robert's birth, evidence of which, I shall shew, there is ample confirmation. It is admitted, on all hands, that Orderic states the birth of the twin-brothers, Waleran and Robert, to have taken place in 1104. He does *not*, as Mr. Kirk tries to imply,[9] assign that event to any other year.

[1] N.S., vii, 178; viii, 92.
[2] See also *ante*, p. 2.
[3] See *ante*, p. 3.
[4] It is not the case that Roger of Wendover, as alleged (viii, 208), styles Robert "le Bossu," Count of Meulan. Even if he did, his evidence would be valueless, as he wrote much later. But all that he does is, in describing the rising of Waleran, Count of Meulan, against Henry I (and even his part in the battle of Lincoln, 1141), to style him Robert (instead of Waleran) by a slip. The passages have nothing to do with Robert "le Bossu."
[5] N.S., viii, 93.
[6] N.S., ix, 138.
[7] N.S., ix, 219.
[8] N.S., x, 109-116.
[9] *Ante*, p. 114.

Let us see how far this date agrees with the contemporary evidence. How are Robert and his brother spoken of after their father's death (1118) when, according to me, they were "boys," and according to Mr. Kirk, young men, of *at least* one and twenty?[1]

The first passage I shall quote is taken from Orderic, with Mr. Kirk's garbled paraphrase, convicting him, by its side :—

Ipse rex [Henry I] filios Rodberti, comitis Mellenti . . . *post mortem patris*, ut propriam sobolem dulciter educavit.

"This helps to explain Orderic's statement . . . it seems probable that the twin brothers were taken under the royal care *long before his* [their father's] *death*, possibly by William II in the first place" (*ante*, p. 115).

This is how evidence is treated by Mr. Kirk, and how he "proves" his guesses against me. Here is the second passage, 1119 :—

"*Imberbes* quoque filii Rodberti consulis de Mellento, Gualerannus et Rodbertus regi adhærebant."

"Imberbes," if born in 1104, not if born "not later than 1097."

The third passage is taken from William of Malmesbury, who was, like Orderic, a strictly contemporary writer. Mr. Kirk, from his silence, seems never to have heard of it. It refers to November, 1119.

"filios comitis de Mellento ut contra cardinales de dialectica disputarent subornavit [Rex Henricus] . . . Horum *puerorum* pater erat Comes de Mellento Robertus."

"Pueri," if aged fifteen, as I maintain; not if aged twenty-two *at least*, as Mr. Kirk would have us believe.

Let it be remembered that 1104 is the only definite date given us, that there is no evidence against it, and that Mr. Kirk only assails it because it is fatal to a casual statement in a monkish story. Having been imposed upon by this statement, he now feels bound to uphold it at the cost of rejecting the whole of our direct contemporary evidence.[2]

I may add that, in addition to the above evidence, there is further evidence known to me which I could produce, if necessary, of Waleran's youthful age at his father's death.

And now let me show that in attempting to refute me, Mr. Kirk, as usual, comes to fresh grief. He reminds one of the man of whom it was said that he could not open his mouth without putting his foot in it.

Mr. Kirk writes of the twins :—

"I have shewn that one of them—or could they have acted jointly?—attested a Royal charter in 1119."[3]

The discovery thus proudly referred to was this :—

"in a royal charter of the year 1119, and in another dated between 1119 and 1123, 'the Earl of Meulan' appears as a witness." (These charters will be found in Mr. Hart and Mr. Lyons' edition of Ramsey Cartulary, i, 244, 245)."[4]

[1] "We are justified in placing the date of birth of the twin Earls at not later than 1097" (*ante*, p. 115).
[2] Reference to p. 115 *ante*, will shew that Mr. Kirk has had to drop the interpretation of "King William" as the Conqueror, magnificently observing that he "did not think it worth awhile" to distinguish between him and his son.
[3] x, 114.
[4] viii, 208.

Now, putting aside the wild suggestion of the twins acting as "two single gentlemen rolled into one," we find that no date is mentioned in these charters. Mr. Kirk has hastily accepted those assigned them by the editors without noticing that they passed in England (at "Burnham"). Now the King was out of England from Easter 1116 till the close of 1120, so that the charter appealed to by Mr. Kirk cannot possibly belong to 1119. Thus another of his pompous discoveries goes by the board.

But I must follow the matter out. The editors clearly got their limit from the fact that Herbert, Bishop of Norwich, died June 22, 1119. So he did. But this only proves that, being granted in England, the charter (clxviii) must be previous to the King's departure just after Easter, 1116. Consequently, the attesting witness was *neither* of the twins, but simply their great father, Count Robert himself! The charter of 1119-1123 (clxix) is not in question, but I may as well observe that it clearly belongs to the same occasion as the preceding.

Here I digress for a moment to explain that the charter appointing Reinald, Abbot of Ramsey (pp. 240) though assigned by the editors to "1114-1119," must, in the same way, be previous to the King's departure in 1116, for it passed at Thetford, and mentions Bishop Herbert of Norwich. This is an important chronological correction.

Having shewn, in spite of Mr. Kirk's bluster, that my own position is unassailable, I will sum up briefly the latest inaccuracies on the strength of which he has endeavoured to assail it. (1) It is *not* the case that "the title of 'Earl of Meulan' was at first given to the second Robert, as well as to Waleran" (x, 110), and Mr. Kirk has failed to adduce one scrap of evidence for this contention (2) It is *not* the case that the second Robert was called an earl by Orderic ("in contradiction of" my views) in 1118 (x, 114); he is not so styled, as a matter of fact, by him till 1135. (3) It is *not* the case that either of the twins witnessed a charter to Ramsey in 1119. (4) It is *not* the case that any date of birth is assigned to them but 1104. (5) It is *not* the case that Robert the second is styled "Count of Meulan by Roger of Wendover" (viii, 208). (6) It is *not* the case that I style him a boy "in 1121."

These are not matters of opinion: they are all matters of fact. May one not once more suggest to Mr. Kirk that it would be wiser for his own genealogical reputation to desist from a controversy of which each stage does but illustrate further his curious ignorance of Anglo-Norman genealogy.

J. H. ROUND.