NORTHUMBRIAN SEPARATISM IN 1065 AND 1066.

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The great political crises of 1065 and 1066 should not, perhaps, be regarded simply as arising out of, or dominated by, the disruptive force of regionalism. The importance of this element in them is evident and has often been described; possibly it has been over-stressed. There were, it will be suggested below, both centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in England at this period; and probably the former was the stronger and more enduring force. Chief amongst the latter was the famous or infamous separatism of the North. But this great and constant factor in medieval English history has not always been properly understood, least of all in the great crises under review.

The North has sometimes been considered loosely, in 1065 and 1066,—largely by virtue of the short-lived and unsubstantial connection under Edwin and Morcar—as consisting of both Northumbria and Mercia; whereas in truth the real political division in England in 1066 was still the Humber or the Trent, and Mercia was indissolubly connected with the South. No evidence has so far been produced, and no evidence is likely to be produced, in spite of the relationship of Edwin and Morcar, of any attempt of the Mercians to isolate their fortunes, in these years, from those of Wessex and London. It is a mistake to read


2 It is perhaps true that the Danes of Lincoln "submitted with suspicious readiness to Sweyn of Denmark when he made Gainsborough his headquarters" as late as 1014 (Stenton, "The Danes in England," in Proceedings of the British Academy, XIII, 242); but Fraena Frithgist and Godwin had fought strenuously enough against them in 993, and Ulfkytel of East Anglia was one of their most
too much political significance into the very great social and economic differences between the Danelaw and Wessex.\(^1\) It was quite possible, in eleventh-century England, for a real measure of political unity to exist alongside a bewildering variety of local customs and conditions. There are signs that, as far as Mercia at least was concerned, the groundwork for this unity had been securely established long before the end of the tenth century; and neither the disasters of the second Danish invasions nor the rivalry between the Earls in the eleventh century could undo the consequences flowing from this.\(^2\)

Northern separatism, we must conclude, was Northumbrian separatism; and even this, it is probable, has been wrongly assessed, at least in the century preceding 1065. It has been claimed that for a century and a half the men of Northumbria persisted in a sullen antagonism to the political supremacy of famous opponents. Much significance has been attached to the diffidence of King Edgar when enacting dooms for the Danish population shortly after 952, but the political significance of this should not be exaggerated. Edmund had already "legislated," in the interests of the Church, with the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury and York probably for North and South (Robertson, A. J., The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I, p. 7; I, Edmund); the same is true of certain of Edgar's laws (ibid., p. 21; II, Edgar); Ethelred and Cnut issued secular laws to both English and Danes (ibid., pp. 65, 141, 147, 175). It is difficult to assess the political separatism of the Danes from the right, within these limits, to enjoy and administer their own laws. This was compatible with a considerable degree of political centralisation. After all, there was a Mercian (and probably a Northumbrian) law, as late as Henry I. And it should not be forgotten that when Edmund reconquered the shires between Watling Street and the Humber, he was regarded as a deliverer by its Danish inhabitants—a deliverer from the Northmen (Stenton, "The Danes," p. 242).

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1 For a description of these see F. M. Stenton, "The Danes in England," in Proceedings of the British Academy, XIII, 203-246.

2 The treaty of Olney shows that, only fifty years before the Conquest, ancient ideas of dividing England into two could be revived, under terrible stress. But those fifty years had been years of rapid change, in which national unity had become much more secure. The danger now was that of the ambition of the Earls acting within the framework of the national state. There was, in any case, no real parallel between the revival of the Alfredian traditions in Wessex in 1017, and the supposed defalcation of the North in 1066. Northumbria and Mercia did not desert Wessex in 1017; they were wrested away by the Danes. Edwin and Morcar are supposed to have fallen away, not under stress, but out of selfish ambition, even before the battle of Hastings had been fought, and when their defeat at Fulford had been gloriously avenged by Harold at Stamford Bridge.
Wessex; but the evidence for this is not easy to find. It is true that a northern legend represents the sons of Ethelred the Unready as offering Northumbria to Olaf of Norway as the price of his assistance in their struggle with Cnut, but the significance of this legend is not very clear. For Northumbria in the eleventh century, or indeed, for some time before, there was no real alternative to the political supremacy of Wessex. The balance of power in the North had, indeed, been decisively altered by the loss of Lothian; after this it must have become increasingly evident that Northumbria could not alone withstand the pressure from the Scots. It is not surprising therefore, that, on the eve of the Norman Conquest, a Northumbrian writer could conclude a legal text with a prayer that the land might be one kingdom for ever.

It has, indeed, been further asserted that the Northumbrians at first refused to accept Harold as king. But no single writer, except William of Malmesbury (and that not in his *Gesta Regum*), records the striking fact of the Northumbrian refusal; though writers like William and Florence of Worcester were very hostile to his succession, and Orderic Vitalis goes so far as to assert that "potentiorum nonnulli fortiter & sistere parati a rejecione ejus omnino abstinerunt." Freeman thought that this described the refusal of the Northumbrians; but there is no justification for taking it, as it stands, to refer to any regional opposition. The only direct assertion that the refusal of Harold was particularly by Northumbrians comes in the Life of Wulfstan by William of Malmesbury. But this is not a very trust-

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1 Stenton, *William the Conqueror*, p. 9.  
3 Whether King Edgar gave Lothian as a gift or whether Eadulf Cudel was compelled to yield it, at a later date, in either case the transference was one of the great turning points in the history of Northumbria, tending to transform its relations with the South.  
7 *N. C.*, III, 637. It is Orderic, it must be remembered, who especially asserts the support which Edwin and Morcar gave to Harold.  
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worthy account. It portrays the exiled Tostig as the inspirer of the opposition; it represents Harold as overcoming this only through the influence of the saintly Wulfstan himself.\(^1\) It looks more like hagiography than history. Against it there is the assertion of Orderic Vitalis that Edwin and Morcar were Harold's zealous supporters.\(^2\) And there are the inherent probabilities of the case. Tostig in exile would seem to have ensured the allegiance of both Morcar and the Northumbrians to Harold. It was the latter, whatever his motives (these will be discussed below), who had negotiated the agreement at Northampton, in their favour, in 1065.

There is thus little more definite evidence of Northumbrian than there is of Mercian hostility to the West Saxon kings, or even to Harold in 1066. Strong regionalism is one thing, political isolationalism is another; and though the two might well, they do not necessarily, go together. What the Northumbrians aimed at, in their relations to the South in 1065 and 1066, will have to be ascertained from an examination of the facts, such as are available;\(^3\) it is not to be discovered in the social and economic peculiarities of the North, nor can it be deduced from any theory of a general and political Northumbrian hostility towards the rulers in the South.

The Northumbrian rising of 1065 is important both on its own account and, still more, as the prelude to the disasters of the following year.\(^4\) How far it was occasioned by a straightforward hostility to a Southern magnate it is impossible to say. It is reasonable to argue that no such spontaneous rising would

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1 Wulfstan had, indeed, had an earlier connexion with York. This helped him to be of use to Harold, according to W. Hunt in *D.N.B.* But William's account is not even consistent in itself. It describes Tostig as re-converting the Northumbrians, after the labours of Wulfstan: "Et profecto perseverassent, nisi eos Tostinus ut dixi, averteret." But William has said no such thing unless in a reference to Tostig's armed invasion of the North in 1066; nor have we any other evidence that the Northumbrians persisted in any opposition.


3 The crisis of 1051, also throwing light on the Northumbrian outlook, has been discussed, ante, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 368-388.

4 It was discussed by Freeman, in some detail, in the *Norman Conquest* (3rd edition), 1877, II, 495-506, 711-716. Professor F. M. Stenton gives the best modern account in *William the Conqueror*, pp. 59-60.
have occurred against a descendant of Siward; on the other hand no contemporary source suggests this hostility as the cause of the rising; and the rising can be quite satisfactorily explained by the reasons the chroniclers set forth — by the personal vindictiveness and oppressiveness of Tostig, about which they are all agreed.¹

One source² does indeed record, but only to reject, the rumour that Harold himself had a hand in bringing about the revolt, through jealousy of his brother’s favour with the King. The rumour (almost if not quite incompatible with the theory of Northumbrian hostility to Harold’s accession in 1066, though some historians seem to have accepted both) was so strong that Harold cleared himself by oath; but the writer of the *Vita Aeduuardi* thought that he was too ready to do this; and it is permissible to infer from his language that the scribe did not think the oath was necessary³; whilst in the earlier discussions of the revolt there is no record that the rumour was mentioned at all.⁴ There is no other evidence of any sort to lend it support. The different versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, not all friendly to the house of Godwin, gave no hint of it; whilst, of the later writers, William of Malmesbury explained Harold’s conduct by the fact that he “magis quietam patriae quam fratris commodum attenderet.”⁵

On the whole, Harold’s conduct during the crisis, as far as it can be discerned, is in complete conformity with this. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, at least, represents him as working hard to reconcile Tostig and the rebels: “and earl Harold was there


² *Vita Aeduuardi Regis*, edited by H. R. Luard, in *Liues of Edward the Confessor* (R.S.), 1858.

³ *Ibid.*., p. 422, “sed ille citius ad sacramenta nimis (proh dolor) prodigus, hoc objectum sacramentis purgavit.”

⁴ The cause which was then accepted was Tostig’s misrule. This seems to be a permissible inference from the account in the *Vita Aeduwardi* (p. 422). But Freeman thinks that Tostig may have “brought forward” the charge, apparently not as a result of any existing rumour.

⁵ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, edited by W. Stubbs (R.S.), I, 246.
and would work their reconciliation if he could, but he could not." Afterwards, he probably advocated that the demand of the rebels should be conceded; but this is far from suggesting that he had fomented the rebellion; and he argued in common with the majority of the King's advisers and obviously strove to prevent war. The ultimate decision to dismiss Tostig was made by Edward himself. There seems to be no evidence for the view that the concessions to the demands of the rebels were only made by Harold after Edward had been incapacitated by illness. Both the *Vita* and Florence of Worcester inform us plainly that Edward's health began to fail after, and presumably partly as a result of, his failure to protect Tostig. Nor is there anything to suggest that Harold had not faithfully represented Edward throughout the crisis itself. Harold, we may conclude, did not incite the Northerners to rebel; but he did nothing to forfeit the possibility of their later support.

The importance of the factor of regionalism must be deduced from events during and after the actual revolt. First of these is the choice, by the rebels, of Morcar as their future earl. But it was not narrow regionalism which dictated this choice. Rather the reverse. Leaving aside the obvious dictates of policy, the choice in itself illustrates the fact that the time was gone when Northumbria could stand entirely alone. For good or ill, after they had obtained recognition of their choice, the rebels had bound Northumbria and Mercia closely together. It may be argued that this event merely expanded Northumbrian regionalism to include the Midlands, and revived the possibility of that division of England which had been recognized as late as 1017, in spite of the ravaging of the Northumbrians in the

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1 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Canterbury), edited Thorpe, I, 163. Plummer, I, 192 (MS. C.): "wolde heora seht wyrcan gif he mihte. ac he na mihte."

2 *Vita*, p. 423: "instabant quidam ferventem regis anirnum sedare, et ne expeditio procederet suadere."

3 *Ibid.*, p. 423: "at Deo dilectus rex cum ducem suum tutare non posset, gratia sua multipliciter donatum moerens nimium quod in hanc impotentiam decidet, a se dimisit." The King's illness began from the time when he found that the majority of his advisers opposed extreme measures against the Northumbrians, "Quo dolore decidens in morbum ab ea die usque in diem mortis suae aegrum trahebat animum." After this point, Florence of Worcester said, King Edward's health began gradually to fail; *Chronicon*, I, 224.
neighbourhood of Northampton. This can only be properly discussed in relation to the events of 1066. But it can be stated at once that there is no real evidence of a new territorial unit including both the areas at any time after 1065—less indeed than before, for example in 1051. Edwin and Morcar naturally tended to act together in 1066; but William of Malmesbury thought that they intended retiring to Northumbria (apparently leaving Mercia to William) after Edgar's coronation. There was no attempt to co-ordinate the opposition of Northumbria and Mercia to William after 1066. It seems probable that—somewhat paradoxically—the election of Morcar as Earl in 1065 served to bind Northumbria still more closely, not to Mercia alone, but through Mercia to the South. Through Harold's marriage to Morcar's sister Ealdgyth, and his defence of the North against Tostig, subsequent events may well have seemed to restore, and perhaps more than restore, the growing political unity which had been temporarily shaken by the complete failure of the rule of a West-Saxon magnate in the North.

The second event is the Northumbrian advance towards the South. This, again, is far from illustrating the operation of Northern particularism alone; it also, though less obviously, shows the importance, perhaps the increasing importance, of the conception of a united England, operating even in the North. The Northumbrian rebels did not simply elect Morcar to be their earl or think that they could appoint him their earl without any consultation with or recognition from, the South: the whole point of their advance to Northampton seems to have been to force an acceptance of Morcar upon the reluctant king. Thus, whilst at York they "senden efter Morkere Aelfgares sune", this does not suggest any community of interest. But of course the rebels had to live. And Godwin and Harold did as much in Wessex in 1052.

On the whole this is Freeman's view, as quoted elsewhere, though in one place Freeman suggested that by declaring Tostig an outlaw the gathering at York perhaps "intended to claim the character of a lawfulGemot." Liebermann (op. cit., p. 19, cf. also p. 65) believed that "the witan of Northumbria in perfect autonomy deposed their earl against the wish of the central government." It is hard to believe that the rebels believed themselves to have any constitutional right either to depose or to outlaw Tostig. Their subsequent acts do not give that impression.
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1 gecuron hine heom to eorle,” 1 subsequently, at Northampton, they prayed “that they might have Morkere for their earl.” The Abingdon chronicle records them 2 as renouncing Tostig finally only at Northampton and/or Oxford—“they then took to them Morkere for earl.” According to the Vita Eduwardi, 3 the rebels did not make Morcar earl at all, but only head and lord—“caput sibi et dominum faciunt ducis Alfgari filium juniorem.” Simeon of Durham at this point makes a rare addition to Florence of Worcester’s account of the assemblies at Northampton and Worcester and the outlawry of Tostig. After these things he goes on to record, “jussu regis Morkarus Northumbris est praeelectus comes.” 4 It was something more than a mere recognition which was to be effected at Oxford. This assembly was an important expression of the tradition that “to depose and elect an Earl was a stretch of power beyond the constitutional authority of a local gemot.” 5

1 Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Canterbury), edited Plummer, I, 190.
2 Plummer, I, 192, “hig namon heom þa Morkere to eorle.”
3 Lives of Edward the Confessor (R.S.), p. 421. They declared, later on, “aut eundem ducem [Tostig] suum citius a se et a toto Anglicae regno amitteret, aut eos in commune hostes hostis ipse haberet.”
4 Historia Regum, edited by T. Arnold, II, 179. Florence of Worcester (Chronicon, II, 223; tr. Stevenson, p. 294) does not mention the “choice” of Morcar as Earl at the beginning of the rising: “After that, nearly all the men in his earldom assembled, and went to Northampton, to meet Harold, earl of the West Saxons, and others, whom the king, at Tostig’s request, had despatched to restore peace between them.”
5 Freeman, op. cit., p. 494. But Freeman elsewhere maintains that the Northumbrians “elected” Morcar at York and advanced to Northampton led by their earl, ibid., pp. 490-491. Similarly Hodgkin, Political History, p. 471, and, apparently, Liebermann, National Assembly, p. 19. Similarly, we must notice, the outlawry of Tostig seems to have been formerly declared at Oxford. The authorities are not unanimous on the point, but it is reasonable to infer it from the wording of the A.S. Chronicle (Abingdon version, Plummer, I, 192). There was, the writer says, a gemot at Northampton, and so at Oxford on 28th October. And Harold could not bring about a reconciliation, but, the chronicler says, all his earldom renounced and outlawed Tostig. Florence (Chronicon, I, 223) says explicitly that Tostig was expelled after 1st November. He seems to have got hold of an additional, and valuable, date here, and we have no reason to reject it. If, as the Peterborough and Worcester MSS. tell us (Plummer, I, 190, 191), the rebels had already declared their outlawry of Tostig at York, this is one more illustration of the fact that they did not regard the acts of a gathering of local magnates or soldiers as necessarily acceptable to the whole of the country.
This seems to be why, after the demands of the Northumbrians were conceded by Harold, in the name of the King, at Northampton (he "made known the same to them and gave his hand [and seal?] thereto") some, or all, of the rebels, more probably only a part, continued to Oxford. It is true


2 This was the view of F. Baring in 1893 (E.H.R., XIII, 1898, pp. 295-297), based on the evidence of wastage in Domesday, and probably that of Plummer (Two Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, II, 252). It has not, however, been accepted by modern writers (cf. F. M. Stenton, William the Conqueror, p. 60). Mr. Baring's view is also supported, however, by the assertions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, to the effect that the rebel army penetrated as far as (and apparently no further than) Northampton. The Canterbury and Worcester versions are almost identical at this point (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (R.S.) II, 162; Plummer, I, 192-193). The Abingdon version says simply: "very shortly after, there was a great gemot at Northampton; and so at Oxford, on the day of St. Simon and St. Jude." Florence of Worcester, besides being a late authority, is not clear as to the details, especially as to whether all or part of the rebel host advanced from Northampton to Oxford (translated Stevenson, p. 294); and he seems to have got his dates wrong—probably a slip in following the Abingdon version of the Chronicle. William of Malmesbury is of no help on this point (Gesta, I, 343), nor even the important Symeon of Durham (Historia Regum, II, 178); Henry of Huntingdon does not mention an advance to Oxford (Historia Anglorum, p. 198); the St. Alban's tradition seems to have regarded the object of the rebel march south as being to make Edward confirm the election of Morcar (Flower Historiarum, I, 585). The only authority to set against the Canterbury and Worcester versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is the Vita Eduardi, not quite so untrustworthy, perhaps, as Professor Bloch suggests ("La Vie de S. Edouard le Confesseur par Osbert de Clare," in Annales Bollandiani, t. xli, 5-134; but more trustworthy, he thinks, for the events of 1065; p. 26). According to the Vita (p. 422), "conglomerati in infinitum numerum, more turbinis seu tempestatis, hostili expeditione perveniunt ad Axoneuorde oppidum, satis scilicet pergavati ultra mediae Angliae terminum." On the whole it seems possible to reconcile the sources best on the assumption that the main army remained behind at Northampton, but that a sufficient number advanced to Oxford to justify the remark of the Biographer, who was obviously impressed by the extent of the advance. It is just possible that the ravages around Northampton, noticed by Mr. Baring, were committed specially on Tostig's lands, or those of his supporters, but this was not the view of Horace Round in the V.C.H. for Northampton (1902), pp. 257-298. Nor do Earl Tostig's lands seem, in fact, to have been ravaged—ibid., pp. 333a, 348b. It is most unlikely that the Northumbrians would make such fine distinctions (in that age) between Southerners: as late as 1461 we read "[The Northern men] with the Queen and Prince took their way towards the Southern parts... and in every place through which they came, on both sides of the Trent, but especially on this side, they robbed, despoiled, and devastated" (Whetstone's Register (R.S.), pp. 388-392).
that this view presupposes some real difference between the assemblies at Northampton and Oxford, to account for the fact that the latter was summoned, and to explain the need for the presence of the Northern leaders there, a distinction which historians seem to have been reluctant to concede. It was implicit, it may be argued, in Freeman's assertion that the election of an earl was not possible in a local gemöt; but Freeman did not draw out the logical consequences of this assertion; whilst both he and Liebermann tended to minimise the differences between the Witenagemot and other assemblies, particularly assemblies of the here.\footnote{Freeman believed that “the army, as representing the nation, takes on itself in times of war the functions which belonged to the regular Gemôt in times of peace” (N.C., II, 105). But he makes little distinction between war and peace. Thus he discerned the military gemôt in 1049, when there was an army, it is true, but no war, and at Gloucester, in 1051. He sees the military gemôt also, possibly, at York in 1065 and Stamford Bridge in 1066. But there is no real evidence that any of these assemblies either acted as, or were regarded as, the Witenagemot. On the contrary, those at Gloucester and York were possibly superseded by other assemblies (cf. Freeman, N.C., II, 106, 141; III, 422). Liebermann believed (op. cit., p. 36) that “the old double sense revives in the here of the Denalague and the Anglo-Danish court.” He distinguishes, however, between here and Witenagemot: “the here banishes Swen, but the witan confirm this outlawry; and his father is banished by the king in his council with the army’s consent.” The second of these episodes is commented on elsewhere; the first demands further consideration. There does not, unfortunately, seem to be sufficient evidence for this distinction between here and witan in 1049; on the other hand it is possible that Freeman has exaggerated the share of the here in the banishment of Swegen. Freeman believes (p. 105) that “it was doubtless the army, in the same sense [of a military gemôt] which had just before [i.e. before the murder of Beorn] hearkened to, and finally rejected, his [Swegen’s] petition for restoration of his estates.” But this is not clear from the A.S. Chronicle accounts. There does not seem to have been any question of a formal trial; Swegen had, indeed, so far as we know, never been formally tried or outlawed for his offence against the Abbess of Leominster. He was now seeking a personal reconciliation with the king: “\textit{j} com Swegn eorl in mid \textit{vii} scipon to Bosenham. \textit{j} griodo wido \textit{fone} cyng. \textit{j} behet man him \textit{p} he moste wurde \[beon] \textit{lec} \textit{feara} \textit{tinga} \textit{te} he \textit{aer} ahte” (Plummer, I, 168, MS. E. Peterborough). The Abingdon Chronicle (MS. C., \textit{ibid.}, p. 168) agrees with this, though it is not so full, and so the Worcester version (\textit{ibid.}, 169). The differences, not relevant to our immediate problem are well brought out by Plummer (II, 230-231). Neither Florence of Worcester nor William of Malmesbury have anything to add here. The accounts seem to agree, at least that Swegen petitioned Edward himself, for something which Edward could grant or withhold. According to the Peterborough Chronicle quoted above, Edward had already promised him
that these differences were, even in the eleventh century very obscure. They could be, and were at times, either ignored or simply assumed by contemporaries. To the Abingdon writer each of the Northampton and Oxford assemblies was a "mycel gemot." Yet there is some reason to believe that, in the reign of Edward the Confessor at least, some differences are to be

(directly or through intermediaries) the restoration of his lands, when objection was made by Harold and Beorn (Abingdon and Peterborough). There is no suggestion of any discussion by anybody else. This is intelligible. To get back all Swegen's lands would probably have needed the consent of the witan; though, according to Liebermann, "the king by himself could revoke outlawry" (op. cit., p. 70). But the preliminary decision was Edward's; and since he ultimately decided to do nothing, no Witenagemot was required. Before the matter had gone so far Harold and Beorn had made their opposition clear, as they might easily have done, presumably having direct access to the king. On the other hand it is fairly certain (though we have only one A.S. Chronicle version for it) that the here declared Swegen nithing after Beorn's death (Abingdon Chronicle, Plummer, I, 171). But it is not so certain that "the outlawry and disgrace of Swegen were decreed" (N.C., II, 106). Here again, it seems likely that Freeman extended the scope of the action performed by the here. It is, indeed, quite conceivable that an army could declare a man nithing, but would hesitate to pass a formal "sentence" (N.C., 106) of outlawry on him. There does not seem to have been any need, in this case. Swegen was already, in fact, an outlaw (cf. J. Goebel on outlawry, in Felony and Misdemeanor, pp. 418-423), and public opinion kept him one. There seems to be no clear evidence, in these instances, of the here acting as Witenagemot in the reign of Edward the Confessor. Perhaps the differences between the two assemblies were more clearly recognized than Freeman would allow. It seems permissible to attach some importance to these differences in attempting to understand the crisis of 1065.

The relationship of army and witan at an earlier period is outside the province of this discussion. We must notice, however, Liebermann's conclusion that: "When the army was gathered with its leaders, king, bishops, caldermen, king's thanes and reeves, these noblemen, though summoned for the military purpose only, might constitute a witenagemot, legislating, settling suits, or conveying bookland" (op. cit., p. 43). He cites charters conceded "in hoste" (825), or "in expeditione" (882), (Birch, Cartularium Saxonum, nos. 389, 390, 550; I, 540, 541-542, II, 171): they were apparently conceded in the presence of bishops, or archbishop and bishop, as well as of the secular magnates. Indeed, no "duces" were amongst the witnesses of 825. It is, of course, evident that we have here, on both occasions, a gathering which was primarily one of the army. But it was also, we may venture to suggest, something more: "Egberto rege una cum praedicto episcopo Wigstegno. caeterisque consiliariis quorum nomina subter adnexitur, notantur." The identity of witan and army is not suggested by Liebermann in Glossar, under Witan.

1 Plummer, I, 192.
discerned, and were in fact recognized by contemporaries on two important occasions at least. In 1051 the trial of Godwin was deferred from Gloucester to what must at least have been regarded as a more regular meeting of the witan in London; and it seems to be arguable that a precisely similar transference took place from Northampton to Oxford in 1065.

Thus the famous revolt against Tostig was indeed a local insurrection, followed by an invasion and ravaging of the Midlands; but the rebels were apparently fully conscious of the strong political bonds which bound them to the rest of England. Behind the localism of 1065 there emerges the broader nationalism expressed by the Witenagemot as being distinct from and distinguished from all other assemblies, representative, however imperfectly, of national as distinct from local interests, of political as distinct from military considerations, of the constitutional and legal as opposed to the way of rebellion and force—the tractatus de negotiis regis et regni of a later age. Behind the simple destructiveness of the rising, there may perhaps be dimly discerned an awareness of "constitutional" procedure in a community which had not yet embraced the tradition of feudal revolt. At any rate, Northumbrian isolationism in 1065 seems, on closer examination, to be by no means the simple destructive movement that is frequently assumed.

The same is still more true of its operation in the following

1 It is worth noticing perhaps that there was no attempt made to describe the assembly at Bretford as a Witenagemot. Freeman, indeed, thinks that "it doubtless professed to be a Witenagemot of the whole realm" (N.C., II, 499), but there seems to be nothing to support the assertion. His further claim that "it could hardly have been more than a meeting of the king's immediate counsellors, or at most of the local Witan of Wessex" is not borne out by the only authority on the subject, the Vita Aeduardi, which says that there was a consilium "accitis undique regni primatibus" (p. 422). Consilium may, but does not necessarily, mean Witenagemot, as used in this context.

2 Liebermann (op. cit., p. 50) thought that the assemblies at Gloucester and London in 1051 were the same Witenagemot. It seems more probable that the Witenagemot at London was called because of (amongst other reasons) some deficiency of the assembly at Gloucester. It is doubtful if anything resembling a Witenagemot met at Gloucester. The source which represents it as meeting and passing resolutions (the Canterbury MS. of the A.S. Chronicle) is very suspect; see "Freeman and the Crisis of 1051" cited above. The Worcester MS. does not talk of a Witenagemot at Gloucester, but only at London.
year. Here, the problem is essentially that of the conduct of Edwin and Morcar immediately before and after the battle of Hastings. Freeman made the two brothers "keep back from the war" against William, preoccupied with "their darling scheme of a divided kingdom," and his reconstruction of events seems to have been substantially accepted by later writers. Yet it involves some very dubious speculations as to the characters and motives of Edwin and Morcar. The two earls are represented as seeking either their own elevation to the throne, or alternatively, a division of England. But neither of these views seems to be beyond question; whilst some historians seem to have been tempted to hold both at once. As so often in the confusion of this period, the issue resolves itself, in the end, into a question of how far it is possible to accept the later, more detailed embroideries of writers like William of Malmesbury or Florence of Worcester, against the bald, sometimes cryptic, assertions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The various redactions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle have nothing to say against Edwin and Morcar. The theory of Northern separatism in 1066 depends entirely on the assertions of William of Malmesbury and Florence of Worcester. Yet these writers are notoriously untrustworthy on some of the events of 1066. Even Freeman found Florence's various statements hard to reconcile with each other, whilst William, in spite of the general high level of his work, has some things to say, at this point,

1 N.C., III, 423-424; cf. "Treason of Edwin and Morcar," ibid., p. 531. The action, if not the motive, of the earls, seems to be generally accepted; F. M. Stenton, op. cit., pp. 192-193; Corbett, C.M.H., V, 501, who thinks that the earls were secretly intriguing to prevent the crowning of Edgar, and "soon retired to their estates without summoning their men to fight for him." Oman, Art of War (2nd edition), I, 151, talks of the "slack or treacherous earls."

2 J. Corbett in the C.M.H., V, 501, regards it as one more example of separatism: "once more it was clearly shown that the English race had as yet developed no true national feeling." Professor Stenton believes that there can be little doubt that the brothers intended a partition of the kingdom after Hastings (op. cit., p. 213).

3 Cf. N.C., III, 424, n. 1. Freeman cites Florence of Worcester—"comites Edwinus et Morkarus, qui se cum suis certaminis subtraxere"—Chronicon, I, 228. "These are words," he says, "which no ingenuity can get over." He does not seem to envisage the possibility that, on this point, Florence was simply unfair, or misinformed.
which have never been believed. If it is dangerous to argue from the silence of the Chronicle, it is equally dangerous to accept without the most careful scrutiny the assertions of two later writers such as these.

The first assertion which has been generally accepted, is that of Florence of Worcester, to the effect that Edwin and Morcar "withdrew themselves and their men from the conflict." Florence almost, though not quite, asserts that this was before the battle of Hastings. He has been variously interpreted. Professor Stenton quotes Florence, but points out that the brothers had, in any case, insufficient time to join Harold at Hastings. Freeman described them as being "on their tardy march, waiting to see what course events would take." But, if the brothers had no time to get to Hastings, what is there to support Florence’s assertion that they “withdrew from the conflict”? All we know suggests a different attitude on their part. The sheriff Marleswegen was given command in the North by Harold, when he marched to meet William; William of Malmesbury himself tells us that Edwin and Morcar were directed to raise the levies of the North. The brothers were actually in London, William further informs us, when they heard of Harold’s death. It is true that this conflicts with Florence of Worcester, who says that they went to London on receiving this news; but we have no means of deciding (as Freeman does) between the two. In any case, we may conclude, they were present in London shortly after the battle, and were probably on their way when it was fought. The facts, such as they are, do not lend any support to Florence of Worcester’s assertion, and do not reconcile much better with Freeman’s modified view.

At this point we should consider another relevant question. Even though not all historians might accept Florence of Worcester’s assertion without question, nevertheless there is a tendency to build on it a most important theory with regard to the battle of Hastings itself. It is argued, or sometimes assumed,
that the treachery or selfishness of Edwin and Morcar was a major factor in determining Harold to give battle at Hastings when he did. He hastened on the battle because he had nothing to gain, and much to fear, from delay.¹ This, it must be strongly stated, is pure speculation; attractive though it may be as a hypothesis, there is scarcely a single relevant piece of evidence which can be brought in its support. Not even William of Malmesbury or Florence of Worcester will go so far as this.

William of Malmesbury said, more than once, that Harold hastened on the engagement through an over-confidence in victory.² The chronicler of Abingdon agrees that it was through too great a faith in his strength.³ Florence of Worcester implied, if he did not state, the same motives as influencing Harold. No writer suggests that he despaired of further support. On the contrary, Florence clearly believed that this would have been forthcoming—“one half of his army had not yet arrived.”⁴ In this he is supported by the Peterborough (Canterbury) Chronicle: Harold fought, the writer says,⁵ “before his army had all come.” If there is any truth at all in the tradition that

¹ Cf. Stenton, op. cit., p. 193: “And then there remains the fact that the loyalty of Mercia and Northumbria was at least doubtful; delay on Harold’s part might only mean that Edwin and Morcar with their forces would have time to come over effectively to William’s side.”

² Gesta Regum, I, 281; II, 298, 300, and finally, 311: “Tunc Edwini et Morcardus, Haroldo jubente, manubiales praedes Londoniæ tulere; nam ipse ad Hastingensem pugnam festinabat, unde jam partam victoriam falsa praesagius somniabat.” Harold had alienated support, William believes, but only by forcing himself on the English and (p. 300) by refusing to share out the spoils of Stamford Bridge. William does not suggest (rather the reverse) that it was the Northumbrians who withheld support. Similarly Orderic Vitalis, in Historia Ecclesiastica, in Migne’s Patrologiae, CLXXXVIII, cols. 297-298; edited Prevost, II, 146.

³ Chronicon Mon. de Abingdon (R.S.), edited by J. Stevenson, I, 483: “suis nimium viribus fidens ... aggressus comitem ... itaque in bello corruens, tam ipse quam cuncti ejus socii secum interierit.”

⁴ Edited by B. Thorpe, I, 227: “et licet de tota Anglia fortiores quoque in proelii duobus bene sciret jam cecidisse, mediamque partem sui exercitus nondum convenisse, quam citius tamen potuit, in Suth-Saxonii suis hostibus occurreræ non formidavit, et novem miliaris ab Hastina, ubi sibi castellum firmaverat, priusquam tertia pars sui exercitus ordinaretur ... cum eis proelium commissit.”

⁵ Plummer, I, 198: “Harold com Norðan j him wið feahþ eðr þan þe his hæo come eall.”
Gyrth advised delay, at least one member of Harold's family did not despair of support.

The assumption, indeed, that Harold brought on the engagement because he had nothing to gain by delay, is based on a further assumption which is not, with the existing evidence, entirely capable of proof. This is, that it was by Harold's intention and through his deliberate tactics, that the engagement was brought about on 14th October. "The position," Professor Stenton argues, "was undoubtedly chosen by Harold with the object of forcing his enemy to an immediate battle." Now there is a great deal of evidence that, as Mr. Corbett concluded, Harold was "in no mood to remain on the defensive" in face of William's invasion. "He did not hesitate," Florence of Worcester says, "to advance with all speed into South Saxony against his enemies." It was easy for the generation which followed, and it has been easy ever since, to construe his actions as a simple and immediate attack. Yet, here again, we are in danger of elevating conjecture and hypothesis into the rank of evidence. It is hard to speak with any confidence as to Harold's intentions. And what slight evidence there is in the facts at our disposal leaves the question very open. One fact is that Harold chose a very strong position which might have seemed, in his eyes, so formidable that William would hesitate some time before he attacked. It is true that the position was narrow and cramped, and did not invite a long stay; yet even a few days'
delay might have made all the difference to the forces he controlled. What he wanted was trained men to replace the hastily gathered levies who formed a part of his host. It is very curious—if Florence of Worcester is right—that many Englishmen retired from his ranks simply because—and this is the specific reason Florence gives—they were drawn up in a narrow space; curious, that is, if they expected an engagement on the following day. Harold did not fortify his position; but he was given no time. He may have intended to do so. Finally, and most important of all, our most reliable informants seem to be agreed on one point which it is not easy to over-stress. William, not Harold, attacked; and he attacked before the latter was prepared: "Wyllelm him com ongean on unwear aer his folc gefylced waere." Seven (or nine) miles was a good distance from which to challenge an immediate engagement, from a strongly defensible post. We cannot leave out of account the hypothesis that Harold's rashness was in venturing so near such a redoubtable enemy without his full strength, and that William attacked so precipitously precisely because it was he and not Harold who had nothing whatever to gain by delay. At all events, the details of Harold's strategy lend very dubious support to the theory that it was greatly influenced by any fear of the disloyalty of the North.

When we come to the events following the battle of Hastings, the theory of Northern disloyalty has even more questionable support. Florence of Worcester and William of Malmesbury are greatly at variance as to the conduct of the Northern earls; and Freeman's dismissal of their differences as "apparent discrepancies" not only illustrates his belief that he could combine the most discordant sources, but also (apparently)

1 *Chronicon*, I, 227. Harold, Florence says, did not hesitate to give battle on 22nd October, "sed quia arto in loco constituiti fuerant Angli, de aici se multi subtraxere, et cum eo perpacci constantes corde remansere: ab hora tamen diei tertia usque noctis crepusculum suis adversariis restitit fortissime."


3 Plummer, *op. cit.*, I, 199.


5 *N.C.*, III, 527, n. 3.
his resolute determination not to discredit the story of the treachery of the North. At this juncture William betrays considerable ignorance. He does not believe that Edgar was actually elected to succeed Harold. He says that the brothers withdrew to the North before the time of the election; Florence implies that they withdrew afterwards, and, in this particular detail, is almost unquestionably right. It is William alone who ventures the view that, in withdrawing, the brothers believed William would not molest them in Northumbria. It is quite evident that this assertion, coming from such a late authority, is very poor evidence as to the motives and beliefs of Edwin and Morcar at this critical time.

We have seen that Edwin and Morcar were in London (presumably with the host they had gathered) at the time of, or shortly after, the battle of Hastings. Most historians are agreed that there they took part in the election of Edgar to be king, but that, disgusted at the rejection of their own claims to election, they then retired to Northumbria, feeling that William would leave them intact, and pursuing "their darling scheme of a divided kingdom," which had probably been for some period in the back of their minds. When the election occurred we do not know; possibly early in November. There is no

1 He defends William of Malmesbury by saying that men hardly knew how to describe an election which was followed by an abdication of the king-elect before the day of coronation came. But this did not justify William in saying that Edgar was not elected. As Freeman himself says, "Young Edgar was regularly elected king."


3 *Chronicon*, I, 228. But cf. n. 5 below.

4 Plummer, I, 199: "Aldred arceb þa Eadgar cild to kynge, eall swa him wel ge cynde waes; þ Eadwine. þ Morkere. him beheton þ hi mid him feohtan woldon." There is little doubt that the earls shared in the election; see Freeman, *N.C.*, III, 527; cf. Orderic Vitalis, ed. Prevost, II, 154.


6 It is assumed above that Edgar was elected, but it is curious that the language of the A.S. Chronicle and of Florence of Worcester is so vague; see above,
support in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for either William’s or Florence’s version of the departure of the earls, and one incident at least is difficult to reconcile with the departure; that, namely, of their submission, with the rest of the magnates, to William at Berkhamstead early in December. It is possible, but not very likely, that the brothers went North in November and immediately returned to make their submission to William, when he advanced on London. It was the magnates who had concentrated on London who seem to have submitted, when the city was cut off from the North.

This is so evident that, though Florence of Worcester accepted the Chronicle version, William of Malmesbury omitted the incident altogether, from his story, and Freeman felt compelled to omit Edwin and Morcar from the list of those who submitted in December, preferring to make them submit at Barking, after the coronation, on the authority of William of Poitiers: “For once,” he says, “I venture to set aside the authority of the Chronicles. I do not think that Eadwine and Morkere could have been at Berkhamstead.” Yet it is hard to accept a simple arbitrary preference for William, as against the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Florence of Worcester combined. Nor is it very convincing to argue that William “is and Chronicon, I, 228: “Aldredus . . . et iidem comites . . . clitonem Edgardum . . . in regem levare voluerat.” It is probably because, as Freeman points out, he was only designated, not crowned. Orderic Vitalis has no doubts on the subject; Hist. Eccles., col. 300; edited Prevost, II, 154.

3 Migne, Patrologiae Latina, t. 149, col. 1262: “Egressus e Londonia, dies aliquot in propinquo loco morabatur Bercingus, dum firmamenta quasdam in urbe contra mobilitatem ingens ac fere populi periferentur . . . Ibi veniunt ad obsequium ejus Edeiuin et Morcardus, . . . Algardi illius nominatissimi filii, deprecantur veniam, si qua in se contra eum senserant, tradunt se cunctaque sua ejus clementiae; item aliis complures nobiles et opibus ampli.”


5 Professor Stenton unfortunately lends the weight of his great authority to Freeman at this point: “William of Poitiers, whose authority is preferable on a point of this kind” (op. cit., p. 222). Yet it is hard to see why this should be so. Plummer plainly disagreed; op. cit., II, 257.
not likely to have cut the Berkhamstead mission into two, or to have imagined a submission which did not take place."

There is no more reason why the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle should be in error at this point.

When William of Malmesbury says that the Northern earls left London before Edgar's election he was wrong. When Florence of Worcester says that "while numbers were preparing to go out and fight, the earls withdrew their assistance and returned home with their army" (despite the fact that, as he says, they were present at Berkhamstead), he may have been correct, though this must be a matter of very grave doubt. When William says that they did this in the belief that William would never pursue them into Northumbria, he is interpreting motives, possibly giving scope to his bias, in any case indulging in speculation, on a point concerning which he can have had no intimate knowledge. We have every reason to distrust him at this juncture; and the facts, such as are available, lend him no support. Edwin and Morcar made a prompt submission to William, without waiting for any move from him against the North. They made this submission, so far as we can judge, in harmony with, and at the same time as, all the other surviving leaders of the English nation; if they betrayed the English leaders in November, by December they had been received once more into the fold! The whole story of their betrayal and of their hopes must remain open to the suspicion that it is the product of the rationalizing imagination of two writers, wise after the event, who found the readiest explanation of the collapse of the English resistance in this theory of treachery and division in the English ranks. Perhaps they half-consciously preferred this to the other obvious explanation, that the English opposition was paralysed by the lack of a clear-cut hostility to William himself.¹ It is not necessary to have recourse to a theory of separatism along with military weakness to explain either the failure of Harold at Hastings or the English defection.

from Edgar. A theory lies obvious and ready to hand in the strength of the personal claims (as Edward’s rightful heir) and qualities of William himself. Unfortunately for Florence and William it entailed a necessary corollary, the story of the great subsequent betrayal by William, as the price he owed his supporters, of those leaders of the English nation who had been attracted by his claims.

We may perhaps summarize as follows. Freeman and those who have followed him have started from an assumption of Northern separatism in 1066, a separatism which was, indeed, very real, but which was being met, already in the eleventh century, by a feeling of the necessary unity of England. Both forces, and not the one only, it has been suggested above, are evident in the Northern revolt of 1065. Indeed the interlude of Tostig’s rule in Northumbria, despite its tragic end, shows the expanding power of the second conception; it suggests a growing unity before 1066, which the events of the Conquest and the harrying of the North did not expedite quite as much as is often supposed. The alliance of Northumbria and Mercia through Edwin and Morcar, the very close contact of the brothers with Harold, and the battle of Stamford Bridge might have been, under happier circumstances—perhaps were in any case—landmarks in the process of dissolving the isolation of the North. We may argue that, when the catastrophe of William’s invasion occurred, this process had only just begun, so that it was natural for Edwin and Morcar to betray the South by withdrawing to their own lands; or we may argue that the idea of unity was so far established that neither the brothers nor William could conceive a conquest which would stop short at the boundary of 1017 which had only been accepted by a process of exhaustion. There is, indeed, much to be said on both sides; so much that we cannot, with Freeman, simply assume the former as the basis for our interpretation of events. We have to weigh the evidence very carefully indeed; and on the whole it seems to oppose rather than support the general interpretation which Freeman set forth. Florence of Worcester and William of Malmesbury on whom Freeman relied had clearly neither a first-hand nor intimate knowledge of events in 1066.
Their interpretation was both natural and reasonable; but it is still a questionable one, and it receives very little support from such facts as we can gather elsewhere.

It is, indeed, impossible, from the facts at our disposal, to show that Edwin and Morcar betrayed Harold before the battle of Hastings. All we know is that they followed quickly behind him to the South. They then joined the other leaders of the English in electing Edgar to be their king; afterwards, on the failure to organize an effective opposition, they, with the rest, transferred their allegiance to William. These seem to be the most certain facts. As to their interpretation, the simplest and most obvious interpretation would seem to be preferable; and this is strongly supported by the absence of any accusation against the Earls in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle itself. Edwin and Morcar, we must conclude, like many other Englishmen, had no great preference, as between Harold and William, for the former as their ruler in 1066. Having given him their allegiance, they supported him adequately, if not enthusiastically until his death. In the first reaction of the news of Hastings they indulged in the gesture of electing Edgar, but they quickly repented of this in the face of William’s determined advance. Their heart was not in the struggle. Perhaps it never would have been, if William the Conqueror had proved a second Cnut.

It seems safer, until more evidence is forthcoming, to cling to the conception of opposing forces in eleventh-century England, centrifugal and centripetal, fairly evenly matched. William the Conqueror certainly helped to give victory to the latter. But on the one hand it was a victory not quite so complete as is sometimes thought—the long and fascinating story of Northumbrian

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1 Plummer, op. cit., I, 199-200 (MS. D: Worcester).
2 Cf. William of Malmesbury, II, 297: “Anglia dubio favore nutabat, cui se rectori committeret incerta, an Haraldo, an Willelmo, an Edgaro.”
3 This may be one explanation of the bitter words of the Worcester scribe, cited above: “ac swa hit æfre forðlicor beon sceolde. swa wearð hit fram dæge to dæge lætre j wyrrre” ; Plummer, I, 199-200. William of Malmesbury says that the English could have resisted still after Hastings, if they could have agreed together. William implies that the dissension was due to Edwin’s and Morcar’s ambitions for the throne; but surely the most important difference of opinion must have been as to whether or not William ought to be resisted further; Gesta Regum, II, 307; Freeman, N.C., I, 531.
regionalism, for instance, after 1066, has yet to be worked out; on the other, his achievement was based essentially on the same traditions of monarchy which supported Harold. Nor were his difficulties very much less. It is sometimes forgotten that the Conquest was a triumph for the French magnates as well as for the Norman duke. We have no certain criteria for judging that Harold would have fallen very far short of his rival if he had triumphed at Hastings. At least there is no reason to believe that the weaknesses of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy itself, or more particularly the strength of the regionalism which opposed it, was actually responsible for the failure of the English to withstand William in 1066.