THE HISTORIA ELIENSIS AS A SOURCE FOR TWELFTH-CENTURY HISTORY

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THE Historia Eliensis has long been known as one of the lesser monastic chronicles recording the fortunes of the abbey, and later the bishopric and the cathedral priory, of Ely. In its earliest form its subject matter is neatly divided into three books. The first takes the foundation of St. Etheldreda to its destruction during the Danish invasions. The second covers the history of the abbey, restored by King Edgar and Bishop Ethelwold, to the death of the last abbot, Richard, in 1107 and the third tells of the acts of the first two bishops of Ely, Hervey (1109-31) and Nigel (1133-69). In later versions the Historia was continued, with many alterations from its original plan and substance, to the sixteenth century. Deservedly it occupies a humble station in the rank of monastic chronicles. Not particularly distinguished in design or execution and making little attempt to digest its manifold materials, it is little more than a collection of records and memories which bear on the island and church of Ely with a running commentary to expand and explain them.

1 In the oldest existing manuscript, Trinity College, Cambridge, 0.2.1, fol. 33 the work is called Historia Eliensis Insule. It is more commonly referred to as Liber Eliensis. The latter title has become familiar through the edition of D. J. Stewart (Liber Eliensis, Anglia Christiana Soc., 1848) and the bibliography of C. Gross (Sources and literature of English History, 2nd edn., London, 1915, no. 1372). It was applied by M. R. James to Trinity, 0.2.1 (Descriptive Catalogue of the MSS. in Trinity College, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1912, iii. 79-82) and taken over by W. Holtzmann (Papsturkunden in England, Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist. Klasse, Dritte Folge, no. 14, 1930-6, ii. 79). References to Books I and II will be cited from Stewart’s edition and those to Book III from Trinity, 0.2.1; where chapters of Book III are cited the numbering will refer to that used by Holtzmann’s index to Book III (op. cit. ii. 79 ff.) and that in the edition planned for publication by the Royal Historical Society under the title Liber Eliensis.
No original draft remains to reveal precisely by what process or in what stages the various materials were adapted to this new form nor have we any "definitive", polished edition of the whole. All we have are remnants of a work continuously or intermittently—as is the habit of monastic chronicles—in the process of composition. There must have been at least one recension earlier than any now extant. The earliest which survives is in a manuscript of the twelfth century, Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 0.2.1 (Gale), a part of which—dealing with the early years of Bishop Nigel's pontificate—seems in its erasings and marginal additions to show a compiler at work and which was apparently left unfinished. It does not end, as would be expected from a finished design planned to cover the acts of the first two bishops, with the death of Bishop Nigel. This event is recorded twice without any final flourish and is followed by four charters executed during his lifetime after which Book III concludes somewhat abruptly with a Passio of St. Thomas Becket. Nearest to a polished edition comes a manuscript in

1 In Trinity 0.2.1 the index of chapter headings for Book II, which is written in the same hand as the text preceding and following it, gives a number of chapters in an order different from the order of chapters in the text. The index must therefore have been copied without change from an earlier version, while in the text the order was revised.

2 That it was so planned is clear from the preface to Book III, fol. 107, "Textus autem libri huius de duorum constat episcoporum, tempore Herevei . . . et Nigelli. . . ."

3 Chapters 137, 138 (fols. 172v, 173v).

4 The Passio is one of the type printed by J. A. Giles as Passio Quarta (Vita S. Thomae, xv, Patres Ecclesiae Anglicanae, xxxvii. 157-64) and Passio Quinta (ibid. pp. 164-80) and by J. C. Robertson as No. X (Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, R.S., 1876, iv. 431-41). These Passions are in many places identical in phrasing. The Ely Passio is an abbreviated version most closely related to Passio Quinta, but occasionally following Passio Quarta and Robertson No. X where these diverge from Passio Quinta and from each other. It stands alone in having the first sentence of Giles' Passio No. X by the Lambeth Anonymous (op. cit. p. 72; Passio Quinta has the second sentence, ibid. pp. 164-5.) and in giving a phrase from the middle of the Vita by John of Salisbury ("ad modicum . . . protelavit", Robertson, op. cit. ii. 317) and an abbreviated version of its end (ibid., pp. 321-2). All these Passions, apart from one phrase echoing the Vita by Benedict ("Sed necum in ecclesia sua per mensem rese­dit . . . ei facere debes", ibid. ii. 1), owe most to the Vita by Edward Grim and in a few instances the Ely Passio is closer to Grim's Vita than to the other Passions. Their relationship cannot be adequately established without a thorough
the possession of the Dean and Chapter of Ely—the Liber Eliensis—written, as far as the handwriting suggests, in the thirteenth century. But while it retains the form and incorporates the marginal additions of Trinity 0.2.1, it already introduces a number of independent alterations into the text. More radical changes occur in its successors and the plan of the twelfth-century Historia is gradually abandoned. Bodleian MS. Laud. misc. 647 is continued to 1290, adds many charters and cuts much of the narrative, especially the miracles, again having no clear-cut end. Further and more ruthless cuts were made, this time in both charters and narrative, when a new recension appeared about 1388 in the form of a Chronicon Abbatum et Episcoporum Eliensium—an edition which was continued from time to time and eventually brought up to 1486. The last rough continuation to the time of Bishop Thomas Thirlby's translation from Norwich in 1554 was never transferred to a fair copy.

Even in print the Historia has not found a final, comprehensive form. Its seventeenth-century editors were either unable or not prepared to print the whole work. James Bentham, admirably examination of the manuscript material, but there seems no reason to follow Giles in rejecting the authorship of Edward Grim for Passio Quinta (op. cit. p. x) without further evidence.

1 I am greatly indebted to Professor D. Whitelock for advice on various points connected with the Historia and for her loan of a photostat copy of the Ely MS.

2 It breaks off after an account of the accession of Bishop William of Louth in 1290.

3 In Brit. Mus., MSS. Cotton, Nero A. xv and xvi the Chronicon is taken to 1388 (the translation of Bishop Thomas Arundel to York) in one hand and thereafter continued in snatches to 1486. There are a number of copies: Brit. Mus., MS. Harley 3721 (to 1486); Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 286 (of the bishops only); Lambeth Palace, MS. 448 is a fragment which has been completed from 1373 to 1486 by the addition of fols. 78-91 from the manuscript which is now Brit. Mus., MS. Cotton, Titus A.i pt. ii. The resulting deficiency in Titus A. i was made up to 1435 by five folios taken from the manuscript which is now Bodleian, MS. Laud. misc. 698 which remains incomplete.

4 Lambeth Palace, MS. 448, fols. 89-90.

5 Leland transcribed parts of the Chronicon (De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea, ed. T. Hearne, London, 1770, i. pt. ii, 588 ff.). There are a few excerpts in Monasticon Anglicanum, ed. R. Dodsworth and W. Dugdale (1655), i. 87 ff.; Anglia Sacra, ed. H. Wharton (London, 1691), i. 593 ff. includes the Chronicon and a fragment of Book III from Brit. Mus., MS. Cotton, Vespasian A. xix; Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Benedicti ed. L. D'Achery and J. Mabillon (Lutetiae
fitted by his knowledge of the materials to make good this deficiency, preferred to provide in his History and Antiquities of the Cathedral and Conventual Church of Ely, published in 1771, what is in content and spirit yet another continuation, and the first—and last—modern edition of the first two books in their twelfth-century form, appearing in 1848, was not based on a critical study of the sources. Book III has never been printed in full. What is no more than a fragment of it from an inferior manuscript was included in Wharton’s Anglia Sacra. Its documents, taken from a related cartulary, and some of the narrative chapters, taken from a miracle book of the fourteenth century, were added to the Life of St. Etheldreda in the Bollandist Acta Sanctorum and the index of chapter headings with most of the papal letters has been published by W. Holtzmann in the only critical edition of any part of the work.

As a history, distinct from a cartulary or mere catalogue of the routine acts connected with episcopal office, only the twelfth-century version of the Historia need be considered. It is a good example of the charter-chronicle being produced in monastic scriptoria about this time. The reason for its production—or at least for the particular time at which it was produced—is connected with the creation of a bishopric at Ely in 1109. When the convent had exchanged abbot for bishop they still considered themselves as the rightful heirs to the privileges Parisiorum, 1669), ii. 738 ff. prints Book I from Brit. Mus., MS. Cotton, Domitian xv and transcripts of the same manuscript and of Brit. Mus., Cotton Titus A. i, pt. i were used by D. Papebroch who printed Book I, part of Book II, the documents of Books II and III, a Book of Miracles and a tract on the second translation of St. Etheldreda in the Bollandist Acta Sanctorum Junii (Antwerp, 1707), iv. 489 ff.; T. Gale published a version of Book II based on two manuscripts in his possession, now Trinity, 0.2.1 and 0.2.41 (Historiae Britanniae . . . Scriptores XV (Oxford, 1691), pp. 463 ff.).

1 Liber Eliensis. D. J. Stewart used a transcript and rough notes made by H. Petrie which were transferred from among the P.R.O. Transcripts 31.5 to the Secretary of the Anglia Christiana Society.

2 Pp. 682 ff.

3 Acta Sanctorum Junii, iv. 489 ff.


and income of the abbey and saw in the monastic chapter the rightful advisers of the bishop. Their claims involved them in frequent disputes and, when—after Bishop Hervey’s division of the abbey lands—they were granted the right to administer their own share of the estates, in dealings with the king’s court and missions to Rome. A successful defence of the new priory’s privileges demanded a thorough knowledge of the muniments of the old abbey, and a record of them in their historical context would be more useful to those who conducted the priory’s affairs than individual documents and cartularies. That this thought was at the back of the chronicler’s mind is suggested by the general concern for the rights of the convent which informs the whole work, and it may well be that the Historia is a by-product of research in the abbey records directed towards the first major litigation pursued independently by the priory. To a work intended to sustain the economic and legal status of the priory the Life and Miracles of the patron saint would be no less relevant than charters and privileges. Abbot Richard’s translation of St. Etheldreda to his new church in 1106 no doubt helped to rehabilitate her after the Norman conquest, but it is quite clear that much propaganda was still needed to establish her claims among Bishop Nigel’s following and perhaps even to maintain the self-respect of the monks. This general impulse to gather all the materials bearing on the liberty of the Isle and the abbey received a particular stimulus from Bishop Hervey and from a scriptorium fired with literary ambitions. Most of the records of early benefactions were written in Anglo-Saxon and at Hervey’s command the most important collection—of the benefactions of Bishop Ethelwold—was translated into Latin. The translator took this opportunity to put the new craze for rhetoric and dialectic to worthier use in the service of the saints. His book now exists in a version written between 1139 and 1140 where it is followed by a Collectio Privilegiorum and the Inquisitio

1 The details of this development are set out in my dissertation, An Edition of Historia Eliensis Book III (Cambridge University Library).
2 The litigation over the right to the manor of Stetchworth (Cambs), infra, p. 311.
3 Stewart, pp. 289-98.
4 Ibid. pp. 94-5.
In this manuscript we may well have the ancestor and the inspiration of the Historia. Only slight use was made of the Inquisitio, but the Libellus ... Aedelwoldi and the Collectio Privilegiorum make up the core of Book II and part of Book III. The more ambitious form of the Historia no doubt owes something to the arrival of the "rhetor" Julian who took shelter at Ely in the bad years of Stephen's reign and there continued a teaching career previously practised at London and across the Channel. It is known that one of his pupils wrote a Life of St. Etheldreda of which the saint herself was miraculously revealed to have been most proud, and the author of the narrative portions of the Historia must have learned his vigorous, if unclassical, Latin about this time.

The value of so comprehensive a work—ranging over some six centuries—cannot be the same for all its parts and of course depends on the date of its composition and the identity of its author. The authorship has been variously, and inconclusively, ascribed to one of two monks of Ely, Thomas and Richard. The name of Thomas occurs in a miracle story which is found both as Chapter 61 in Book III of the Historia and as miracle no. 29 in the Liber Miraculorum in Brit. Mus., MS. Cotton, Domitian XV: "quoddam quod contigit miraculum in instanti..." (Stewart, p. 275).

1 Trinity, 0.2.41. The handwriting changes after a letter of Pope Innocent II of April 1139. After this the manuscript was used as a register for further papal correspondence. Two groups of letters follow. The first include one letter of 1140 and six of 1144, all written in the same hand. The second gives letters of 1150 and 1152 written in a hand different from both preceding hands.

2 E.g. for evidence of sub-infeudation at Ely "sic liber terrarum prodit" (Stewart, p. 275).

3 Chapter 93, Trinity 0.2.1, fol. 153, "rhetor quidam Iulianus nomine ..." vir scientia admirabilis, in grammatica nulli secundus quibusque Latinorum preferendus, in opponendis ac rationem reddendis disertissimus ... Docuit enim grammaticam primo ultra mare et artes quas liberales vocant, philosophiam quoque et rhetoricam in sua civitate Lundonie capite Anglie, atque processu temporis theologiam experientibus monachis sophistico Iepore ipsius clarere sermones et dicta schematibus ornata rhetoricis semperque sane dicere inter familiaria colloquia consueverat atque ex his nonnullos decentissime ad scripturas promovit."

4 Trinity, 0.2.1, fol. 141.

5 Fol. 60. The following notes are based on the introductory remarks in the editions cited above: Stewart, pp. v-viii; Wharton, Anglia Sacra, i, pp. xxxix ff.; Papebroch in Acta Sanctorum June, iv, 489; Mabillon, Acta Sanctorum, ii. 107; Gale, Scriptores XV, pp. 463, 489.
tempore in me ipso Thoma nomine . . . dignum duxi omnibus exponere "". Gale, who owned a twelfth-century version of the *Historia* and did not know the Domitian MS., therefore attributed the whole work to Thomas and in this he was followed by Stewart. Wharton, on the other hand, knowing no manuscript of the *Historia* in its twelfth-century form nor Gale’s edition which appeared in the same year as his own,¹ found the reference in the Domitian MS. only. Here the miracle book and a tract on the second translation of St. Etheldreda are placed between Books I and II of the *Historia*, while Book III is not given at all.² Wharton deduced that Book II had the same author as Book I from a passage referring forward from Book I to Book II as "sequentis libri".³ He deduced that the miracle book with its reference to the authorship of Thomas must have the same author as both these books on the grounds that a passage in miracle no. 36,⁴ "in libro suo primo de virtutibus ipsius virginis S. Etheldredae edito ", clearly refers back to Book I. Books I and II could therefore be attributed to Thomas, while there is no evidence to connect him with Book III. Richard’s claim is derived from Book III, where two chapters on the life of Bishop Nigel refer to certain *opuscula* of a monk Richard, "historiarum studiosissimi deserti et eloquentissimi viri ".⁵ Also later in the book the phrase occurs: "ad hoc monacus Ricardus auctor huius operis et hanc historiam stilo commendavit ".⁶ In view of this evidence Wharton claimed that whoever compiled the third book "omnia ex Ricardi historia desumpsisse agnoscit " and therefore felt himself entitled to print his fragment of Book III under Richard’s name. Gale and Stewart go no further than to admit that Thomas was indebted to Richard for some of his material.

In spite of these arguments Thomas of Ely has no strong title to the authorship of the *Historia*. The miracle story in

¹ Wharton nowhere refers to Trinity 0.2.1 nor to the Ely Liber Eliensis.
² Book I on fols. 7-31v ; Second Translation on fols. 31v-5 ; Book of Miracles on fols. 35-74 ; Book II on fols. 74-94.
³ Stewart, p. 92.
⁴ MS. Cotton, Domitian xv, fol. 64 ; also Book III, Chapter 94 (fol. 154).
⁵ Chapter 44 (fol. 126), 45 (fols. 126-6v).
⁶ Chapter 96 (fol. 155).
which his name appears is unique in style and does not belong intrinsically to either the miracle book or Book III. It is written in an elaborately-rhymed prose, interspersed with indifferent hexameters, quite foreign to the terse sentences of most of the Historia. It was probably taken by both from an earlier collection of miracles. The worth of Richard's claim depends mainly on what interpretation we place on the phrase "auctor huius operis". It occurs in a chapter introducing a long process of litigation over the possession of Stetchworth. Bishop Nigel had confirmed the priory’s right to the manor against the clerk Henry, son of William, archdeacon of Cambridge, but was forced—after an appeal heard before Archbishop Theobald and Bishop Hilary of Chichester—to reverse his decision:

. . . prenotatorum simul consilio episcoporum atque precepto adversarium illum Henricum monachis inconsultis in possessionem quam petebat de Stevesworde . . . introduxit. Ad hoc monacus Ricardus auctor huius operis et hanc historiam stilo commendavit, causam negotiumque pro ecclesia suscipliens solus ex omnibus restitit . . . et de arbitrio domini pape decidendum appellavit. At first sight this could be readily translated: "For this purpose (i.e. conducting the Stetchworth case) the monk Richard, author of this work (i.e. the Historia as a whole), wrote also this historia (i.e. an account—or brief—of the Stetchworth case), and on the strength of it Richard could be inferred at the most to have written, at the least to have instigated or planned, the three books of the Historia." It has on the other hand been plausibly suggested that the opus here referred to is no literary work but the business of litigation and appeal to Rome of which Richard was indeed the auctor or originator. It was he who lodged the appeal and who took the priory's letter to Rome. If this latter interpretation is correct, as I reluctantly suspect it is, it might then be said that the phrase "et hanc historiam stilo commendavit" refers to the Historia as a whole. But it is more reasonable to suppose that the demonstratives hoc, huius and hanc all refer to the same object and that the historia dealt only with the Stetchworth case.

1 A similar style appears in a number of miracles appended to the Life of St. Etheldreda in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 393.
2 Trinity, 0.2.1, fol. 155.
3 I owe this suggestion to Dr. G. R. C. Davis of the British Museum.
The only clear evidence, then, of Richard's contribution to the *Historia* must be sought in the reference to his *opuscula*. The compiler's phrases in chapters 44 and 45, "Pretermitto plurima que in opusculis fratris nostri historiarum studiosissimi deserti et eloquentissimi viri plenius referuntur" and "Hec quidem latius scriberem, sed quoniam in venerabilis iam dicti patris Ricardi opusculis plene inveniuntur ad alia festinamus", make it clear that the compiler is not merely alluding to them but taking extracts from them. They included therefore a full account of Nigel's accession and installation, the subject matter of chapters 44 and 45. The only other matter which can be said with certainty to have been included is the Stetchworth *historia*. But there are traces elsewhere in Book III that a local source was used. The death of Nigel, for instance, is recorded twice and there are verbal similarities which suggest that this is not a case of accidental repetition, but that the related phrases were twice adapted from the same source. Furthermore the chapter in which the bishop's death is mentioned for the second time was originally part of a longer, coherent narrative, parts of which are inserted at other points in the *Historia* and which was

1 "... ut vix aliquantulum *flatus* in eo remaneret ... Ille ut auidvit vehementer obstipuit et dixit: ‘Indubitanter his *fidem* adhibeo, nec miror si male nobis contingat, quia in dispendiis semper adtendimus domus huius ... Et *sedens in ecclesia* episcopus oppressus est *infirmitate valida*’ (ch. 137). "Episcopus similiter *sedens in eadem ecclesia* ... *graviter infirmari* cepit *vix manente in ipso flatu* vite, foris deportatus exanimis, ut qui *audit diffide* non debet quod veraciter dominus vindictam reddit in hostibus alme virginis sue Aedeldrede." (ch. 138, fols. 173v-4).

2 It continues an account of St. Etheldreda's vengeance given in chapter 92, which in its turn follows on the narrative split between chapters 73, 78 and 89, where the offences against the saint are described. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear. That these last three chapters belonged to one consecutive narrative seems clear.
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concerned mainly with the struggle between the monastic chapter and the bishop's familia over the right to advise the bishop and to administer the old abbey lands. The chapters among which this basic narrative is dispersed exhibit a literary style which recalls chapters 44, 45 and 96, the three chapters known to derive from Richard's opuscula. Needless to say, we have not much scope in three short chapters for identifying the style of a writer otherwise unknown, especially since he avoids the more complicated constructions. But they display certain stylistic extravagances which, while found elsewhere in the Historia, are by no means general throughout.¹ We find some of these characteristics in roughly half the narrative chapters of

alienation of possessions or treasures here referred to follow in this or any chapter before chapter 78 to which it must therefore look forward, "quos sibi ad modum familiares putaverat secrecius convenit, Gozelinum videlicet clericum, Willemun cognomine monacum, Henricum peregrinum, Radulfum Holof, Alexandrum dapiferum, quibus usus est in omnibus concilio Achitofel in damnis ecclesie accipiat incuntanter admonere satagunt " (ibid. fol. 146). The original connection between chapters 89 and 92 is also evident. They are interrupted by two charters and chapter 92 has to join the break with the introductory phrase: "Et nunc dum stilus in manibus est que de supradictis viris memoranda sunt exaramus " (ibid. fol. 151). This narrative, divided in the Historia between chapters 73, 78, 89, 92 and 138 may also originally have been linked with chapters 47, 51, 52 and 53 which in themselves also form a consecutive narrative concerning the malpractices of Nigel's clerk, Ranulf of Salisbury, who administered the bishopric between 1134 and 1137 (ibid. fols. 127-7v, 132-4). The subject matter is similar, e.g. "Tunc quippe Eliensis ecclesia . . . diabolica invidia carere non potuit . . . Nam ab invidis et malignis, qui res monachorum monachis a sua potestate deiectis dispensare cupiebant, crudelis parabatur delatio ". But as the story about Ranulf is the only section of the Historia modelled on classical sources (i.e. Sallust's Bellum Catilinae; the echoes were pointed out to me by Mr. A. E. Douglas, Lecturer in Classics at Southampton University), chapters 47, 51-3 may have formed an independent opusculum.

¹ Richard enjoyed a jingle (e.g. "Itaque cara et preclara Eliensis metropolis luxit et elanguit suo orbata presidio a iugo destituta solatio . . . et de more pro pastore in vigiliis, in ieiuniis . . . " (ch. 44, fol. 125v). He liked to string together a series of main verbs without any form of conjunction and to pile on his epithets (e.g." . . . cuius honestas totam curiam illustrabat, potestas regebat, largitas extollebat " (ibid. fol. 126); "verba pretendit . . . monita adiungit . . . ferre commonuit . . . devote spopondit " (ch. 45, fol. 126); "vir impius, inventor sceleris . . . multipliciter afflxit, . . . gravamina intuit . . . contumelii lascissivit . . . rapere non timuit " (ch. 96, fol. 154v).
There are a few instances in Book II and scarcely any in Book I. It is possible that they indicate borrowings from Richard’s *opuscula*. Taken by itself the evidence from style is far too slight to warrant any definite conclusion. But there are further considerations which help to promote a plausible speculation. Firstly, it is unlikely that these characteristics of style are merely extravagances which the compiler occasionally allows himself. They occur in the three chapters known to have been taken from Richard and it is the compiler’s habit when he uses local sources—with one exception—to retain the wording of the original. Secondly, the subject matter of all the chapters with traces of this style is sufficiently homogenous in content to have formed one or more *opuscula* and it comprises roughly what we would expect Richard’s *opuscula* to have contained. He is not likely to have written a work containing nothing but an elaborate account of the accession and installation of Nigel. Moreover, we know that what made him compose the *historia* of the Stetchworth case was the part which he himself played in conducting the appeal at Rome. But when at Rome he did not confine himself to complaints over Stetchworth. At the same time he started an action against Archdeacon William who had usurped the abbey’s rights in the Isle. His preparation for

1 Especially Chapter 37 (concerning the archdeacon’s rights in the Isle), Chapter 39 (Bishop Hervey’s attempts to retrieve alienated lands), Chapter 41 (the death of Bishop Hervey), Chapter 82 (Geoffrey de Mandeville’s occupation of the Isle in 1144), Chapter 86 (Nigel’s reconciliation with Stephen in 1144 or 1145), Chapter 122 (the purchase of the treasurership for Richard Fitz Neal), Chapter 93 (the arrival of the “rhetor” Julian), Chapter 121 (the fate of a priest and associate of Ranulf of Salisbury who neglected the Ely saints).

2 Possibly in Chapters 96 and 97 (the invasion of Ely lands by Esgar the Staller and Hugh de Munford) and more probably in the chapters about Abbot Simeon (Chapters 118, 137). It again occurs in Chapter 141 where Abbot Richard refuses to be consecrated by the bishop of Lincoln.

3 The resemblances are slight and appear in a few passages which are not derived from any known *Life* of St. Etheldreda (Stewart, pp. 46, 76, 109).


5 See the letter of Eugenius III (Chapter 102, fol. 157v), “presentium lator Ricardus Elyensis monacus ad nostram presentiam veniens conquerest quod Will” archidiaconus Cantebrigie iniustre consuetudines accepit de ecclesiis insule que ad matrem ecclesiam pertinere noscuntur et gravamina infert”.
this case was presumably also written up as a historia and from this the relevant chapters in Books II \(^1\) and III \(^2\) would derive. Not content with these two actions Richard aired the general grievances of his house at Rome in 1150.\(^3\) On the analogy of the Stetchworth historia these grievances were presumably recorded in writing and would concern the alienations of church lands and the intrusion of the bishop's familia into the rightful place of the monastic chapter—subjects which are treated in the chapter reflecting Richard's style. There are therefore grounds for connecting Richard's opuscula with those chapters which display the stylistic extravagances noted. That the compiler did not acknowledge the full extent of his debt need not disturb us. He does not acknowledge a similar debt to a Life of St. Etheldreda which is absorbed into Book I nor to the Libellus . . . Aedelwoldi used in Book II. The reason why the opuscula are expressly referred to in chapters 44 and 45 is probably not because they were the only two chapters derived from them, but because these chapters abbreviated the original and consequently cited the source where a fuller version might be found.

It is, I think, a plausible speculation that the compiler of the Historia drew on one or more narrative accounts covering episodes in the careers of Abbots Simeon and Richard \(^4\) and of Bishops Hervey and—in greater detail—Nigel, composed by the

\(^1\) Chapter 54 (Stewart, p. 170) which includes a letter from Henry of Huntingdon to Prior Alexander regarding the rights exercised in the Isle by Henry's father, Nicholas, as archdeacon of Cambridge.

\(^2\) Chapters 37 and 96.

\(^3\) \". . . de necessariis, de incommodis ecclesie sue cum eo (Eugenius III) contulit et sermonem conquerendo ostendit, maxime quod dignitates atque libertates decise collapseque fuerunt de loco per cupidorum invidorumque detestabilem ingluviem\" (Chapter 101, fol. 157\(^v\)).

\(^4\) Abbot Richard would naturally have come within the scope of Richard's researches. See the letter of Eugenius III of either 1150 or 1153 (Chapter 95, fol. 154\(^v\)) regarding the alienations of Bishops Hervey and Nigel and Abbot Richard. A concern with Abbot Simeon—except in the matter of church lands—is not so easy to account for. It is difficult to see how Richard could have turned Simeon's fight for independence from the bishop of Lincoln to account against a bishop who was also the head of their house. More probably Richard's concern with the Stetchworth case led him to Simeon. The clerk Henry based his claim on a charter which has not survived and which the monks alleged to be a forgery. But Simeon did issue a charter to Henry's father to confirm the grant of Pampisford and it is more than likely that he did the same for Stetchworth (cf. E. Miller, The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely, Cambridge, 1951, p. 280).
energetic historian Richard. His name would lend more authority than an anonymous compilation could enjoy. Not only was he deeply involved in the affairs of the priory, but he can most probably be identified with a subprior of that name ¹ and with the Richard who succeeded Salomon as prior of Ely in 1177.² Speculation apart, we can conclude more certainly that the Historia was compiled by a monk of Ely of whose life nothing is known. For Book III he used Richard’s historia of the Stetchworth case and the same author’s notes on some parts of Bishop Nigel’s life. He used also an account of the administration of the clerk Ranulf of Salisbury and of the activities of Nigel’s familia. But, even without any immoderate attributions to Richard, for the episcopate of Bishop Nigel at least the Historia ranks as a contemporary account. The time of writing, it is true, is nowhere clearly stated. All we know of the date of Book I is that there was some delay between its completion and the writing of the proem to Book II.³ Book II, as it stands in Trinity 0.2.1 cannot have been finished before 1144 ⁴ and probably not before 1150.⁵ Book III was completed after

¹ A subprior Richard was one of the party which represented the monks at the election of Geoffrey Ridel (MS. Cotton, Titus A. i, fol. 54⁴).

² James Bentham, History and Antiquities . . . of Ely (2nd edn., Norwich, 1812), i. 216-17. He should not be identified with the Richard who wrote the Gesta Herewardi who must have been dead by the time that Book II was copied into Trinity, 0.2.1. See the reference to him in Book II: “in libro autem de ipsius gestis Herwardi dudum a venerabili viro et doctissimo fratre nostro beatae memoriae Ricardo edito” (Stewart, p. 239). The Richard of the Stetchworth case, although mentioned later in Trinity, 0.2.1 is nowhere referred to as “beatae memoriae”. The Prior Richard is said to have been succeeded not before 1189 (Bentham, op. cit. p. 217) and his successor Robert Longchamp does not occur before 1194 (Ely Diocesan Registry, Liber M, p. 318). Cf. D.N.B. under Thomas and Richard of Ely; also F. Liebermann, Uber Ostenglische Geschichtsquellen des 12 13 und 14 Jahrhunderts, Neues Archiv, etc., xviii, no. 10.

³ Book I I I was completed after the issue raised in Henry of Huntingdon’s letter (Stewart, p. 170) was aired before the papal curia (Trinity, 0.2.1, fol. 157⁷). Cf. Papsturkunden, ii, no. 65. Chapter 54 must have been written before 1155 when Henry had been succeeded as archdeacon of Huntingdon.
1169, when Nigel died, and, as no mention is made of his successor Geoffrey Ridel, before 1174. Within this period the Passio of Archbishop Thomas could have become available.

In any study of the contribution of the Historia to political and monastic history a clear distinction must therefore be made between the first two and the third book. All books are patchworks of local materials, set in a historical framework and interconnected by the compiler’s own narrative commentary. But in Books I and II our interests must lie primarily in the materials themselves, many of which have survived and are more profitably studied in an earlier form, while the historical framework presents little that is new, being taken largely from Bede and Florence of Worcester, and the narrative commentary adds little except fluency and sometimes even error. In Book III on the other hand the narrative commentary itself, being contemporary with the events mentioned in the materials used, deserves our attention; the historical framework cannot be traced back to any known source, and the opuscula from which most of the interesting matter is excerpted are not available for study except in the Historia itself.

Our first reaction may be to congratulate ourselves on the survival in Book III of the Historia of a contemporary account of English history between 1109 and 1169 as it affected the Isle and priory of Ely and particularly of the accession, capture and restoration of Stephen, of the not inconsiderable part played by Bishop Nigel in tempore guerre, and not least of the making of a cathedral

Note the phrase “Tempore adhuc superstitis domini Nigelli episcopi” as early as chapter 57 (fol. 136v).

This is corroborated by the calendar which precedes the Historia in Trinity, 0.2.1. It gives the obit for Nigel, but not for Geoffrey Ridel. Cf. F. Wormald, Benedictine Kalendars after 1100 (Henry Bradshaw Soc. Publications, 1939), ii; also B. Dickins, “The Day of Byrhtnoth’s Death and Other Obits from a Twelfth-Century Ely Calendar” (Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages, no. 6), p. 15.

According to the arguments put forward by E. Walberg all the Lives used in the Ely Passio were written before 1174 (La Tradition Hagiographique, Paris, 1929, pp. 133-4). That Ely would show an immediate interest in the martyrdom is clear from the report that the prior of Ely visited Canterbury a few days after the murder “asserens se, cum esset Rotomagie, nimium in aere rumorem (ruborem?) vidisse” on the day of the murder (Robertson, Passio X, op. cit. p. 441).
priory at Ely. It is therefore disappointing that in the accuracy and significance of the information conveyed the book falls short of its promise. Unfortunately for the student of political history, of its two main subjects the less indispensable—describing the manner in which the monks of Ely adapted the economy and administration of their house to its new status—is treated adequately, while the other, which promises to fill in gaps in our knowledge of Bishop Nigel's early years and to provide a commentary on the activities of the family of Bishop Roger of Salisbury at the beginning of Stephen's reign, is neglected. Out of twenty years of continuous activity in politics and war the author of the *opuscula* seems to have recorded, or at least the compiler to have excerpted, only a few incidents. In these excerpts the historical narrative aims no higher than at a fluent recital of events, and judgement of character does not exceed the conventional appraisal: blessed are the benefactors of St. Etheldreda. The bishop's personality nowhere emerges. Perhaps more serious than the regret at what has been left out is a certain suspicion which attends much of what has been put in. There are instances where the compiler in his attempt to correlate the appropriate documents to the narrative account which he used as his source has upset the chronological order and the sense of the narrative itself. Elsewhere it is doubtful how far the author of the *opuscula* himself was aware of the motives behind and the significance of incidents of which information had come to his ears. The compiler's errors can often be put right. The author's speculations on the other hand can neither be fully substantiated nor utterly rejected. The value of his references to the career of Bishop Nigel depends therefore on the degree to which we can recover from the author's interpretation the events which give rise to it.

A good example of both the difficulties attached to an examination to this end and the benefit to be derived from it is afforded by the account of an insurrection prepared at Ely some time after the death of Henry I. Bishop Nigel, we are told, soon after his accession had entrusted the care of his bishopric to the clerk and ex-monk of Glastonbury, Ranulf of Salisbury.¹

¹ Trinity, 0.2.1, fols. 127-7v.
Ranulf gradually managed to make the bishop impatient of the monks’ interference especially in the administration of the possessions of the cathedral church. The lands set aside for the upkeep of the monks by Bishop Hervey were taken away from them.\(^1\) Prior William was deposed and the convent proceeded to exist at the mercy of Ranulf. The chronicler accuses him, “nostri temporis Catilina”, of aspiring to the kingdom. He gathered round him, apart from two close associates, Henry Peregrinus and Ralph Burgundio,\(^2\) a host of wastrels and debtors, criminals and fugitives from justice. At a meeting held in Stretham church oaths were taken to the general destruction of all *francigenae* including the bishop himself. Ely became an armed camp and Stretham an arsenal. Ranulf

\[
de fatuo insanus factus cepit regnum disponere, 
regem futurum designare, episcopatus et comitatus 
distinguere, libertatis ac pacis adversarius quasi 
pro libertate et pace leges promulgare. 
\]

In the midst of these preparations he lost his nerve and absconded with what he could take with him. Ralph Burgundio, hoping to earn the bishop's pardon, uncovered the plot safely within the sanctuary of St. Etheldreda, who could thus be credited with its miraculous detection. Nigel hurried to Ely and a trial was held. Laymen were hanged, clerks exiled and Ranulf became “as another Cain, a fugitive and a vagabond ... on the earth”. While not impossible, this story sounds wildly improbable. The only two other chronicles who report it cannot be appealed to for independent confirmation. Ralph of Diceto extracted his information from the *Historia* itself. The wording of his brief summary derives from it and his connection with Ely is amply

\(^1\) Trinity, 0.2.1, fols. 115-16. Cf. Miller, op. cit. p. 76.
\(^2\) Ralph was a member of Bishop Hervey’s *familia* (Miller, op. cit. p. 171; Ely Dean and Chapter, charter no. 52(2)). Henry Pelryn occurs as a witness to Bishop Nigel’s charters (e.g. Brit. Mus., MS. Cotton, Claudius C. xi, fol. 339) and Nigel confirmed his grant of certain fisheries to Thorney abbey (C.U.L., MS. Add. 3020, fol. 171d). He is presumably connected with the William Pelryn enfeoffed in the fee of Littlebury by Bishop Hervey (Miller, op. cit. p. 171, n. 4). My knowledge of the Ely muniments owes much to the advice of Mr. E. Miller who placed his collection of Bishop Nigel’s charters at my disposal.
attested. The other account of it, given by Orderic Vitalis, while no mere summary of the Historia, is clearly in some way related. He speaks of a conspiracy to kill all Normans on a certain day. This was revealed to Bishop Nigel by some of the conspirators, who are not named. Detection and punishment follows except for those who had already fled and gone into voluntary exile. So far Orderic’s description accords with the information and to some degree echoes the wording of the Historia. But for him the conspiracy was not peculiar to Ely—which is not mentioned—but general, with the over-all objective to surrender the regni principatum to the Scots. It was not quelled by Nigel single-handed, but reported by him to other magnates and royal officials. It was not confined to the bishop’s men in the Isle, but there were more powerful conspirators who allied themselves with the Scots, Welsh and others and were determined to fight it out. Both wording and content suggests that this account is built round a report of the rising at Ely. Orderic and his abbey had their contact with the monasteries of the fenland. Abbot Warin of St. Evroul, when a visitor at Thorney, a house dependent on Ely, had at Bishop Hervey’s request composed a miracle story which found its way into both the Historia and Orderic’s history. Orderic himself had spent some time at Crowland. It seems as though he had before him some information which the compiler of the Historia also used and to which he added what appeared to him relevant facts from other sources. Orderic does not therefore so much corroborate the Historia as represent the same tradition current at Ely.

Without outside confirmation what reliance are we to place on this local legend? How accurately can we expect the author of the opusculum adapted by the compiler to report happenings in the Isle and to reflect the inner counsels of the bishop and his familia? He was on the spot, writing soon after the event and either, it seems, from personal recollection or recording the

1 Opera Historica (ed. W. Stubbs, R.S., 1876), i. 252-3. For his connection with Richard Fitz Neal who was brought up at Ely and with William Longchamp, bishop of Ely, see ibid. i. 248 and introduction, pp. viii-xvi, xxxi-ii, xciv.
3 Ibid. iii. 122.
confession of Ralph Burgundio. On the other hand, he would be subject to the local chronicler’s tendency to exaggerate the importance of local excitements and this tendency would find further outlet in the form in which the narrative is presented. It is modelled fairly closely on small sections of Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae* and his choice of expression may owe more to the language of his model than to the nature of the events which actually occurred. Similarly, to enhance the merit of St. Etheldreda, whose detective work was given the status of a miracle, it would be essential to make the offence one fully worthy of her intervention. Of the bishop’s designs and ambitions in the wider field of “national” politics the author’s knowledge would be less and the danger of misrepresentation proportionately greater and even where this knowledge must have been more substantial—as of the bishop’s plans for the administration of the lands and liberty of Ely—we must not expect them to be assessed on their merits so much as judged by the effect which they had on the monastic community and by the degree to which their resentment at losing full control of the lands and rights enjoyed by the abbey before 1109 and at losing their place in the bishop’s counsels to his *familia* was aroused.

There is fortunately a certain amount of factual information and documentary evidence which helps to expose the extent of bias and exaggeration employed. We can, for instance, establish the date of the alleged insurrection. Ralph of Diceto inserted it under the year 1139, but only because he found it convenient to add it to another incident concerning Nigel which did happen in that year.\(^1\) The *Historia* does not give the year but states that the “affliction of the monks” lasted two years beginning and ending on the Vigil of St. Leonard (5 November). The beginning must be the day when Ranulf took over the possessions of the priory and the end when St. Etheldreda detected the plot. The place assigned to the event in the *Historia* suggests that it began about the time of the death of Henry I. Orderic includes it in a series of rebellions which obliged Stephen to return from Normandy in Advent 1137.\(^2\) The *Historia*’s “biennium” would therefore last from 5 November 1135 to the same date in

\(^1\) Op. cit. i. 252.  
1137. We know further of certain aspects of Bishop Nigel's administration during this period which may have given rise to some of the incidents interpreted here as part of a general insurrection. Ranulf was probably appointed about January 1134 when both he and Nigel were present at Ely and witnessed an inventory of the treasures of the cathedral church.¹ This stock-taking was accompanied by a check of the resources of the bishopric ending in a plea for the reclamation of alienated lands and followed by the establishment of additional knights' fees.² It is presumably this policy which was resisted by the prior who was deposed and by the chapter which were deprived of the management of even the monastic share of the Ely lands. By November 1137 Ranulf had been dismissed and sometime before the spring of 1139 the bishop had confirmed and increased the monks' endowment.³ The dramatic conspiracy may thus resolve itself into the dull prose of a domestic dispute. The muster of Ranulf's associates may be no more than a rhetorical description of the new enfeoffments and the oath taken at Stretham no more than the customary swearing of fealty. It may be that Ranulf used the opportunity to promote his own rather than the bishop's profit. It may be that the carving out of knights' fees caused disputed claims to possession or even forcible eviction⁴ which, promptly adjusted by Nigel, left no mark on the records but furnished enough material for the monks to raise doubts in Nigel's mind of the competence and loyalty of his procurator. But on the whole it seems too big a jump, even for a partisan chronicler, from these domestic differences to the wild talk of wholesale slaughter and something more perturbing must have been afoot. What this background knowledge more certainly suggests is that—whatever excesses Ranulf may have indulged, for which he was to be dismissed—the mobilization of the

¹ Trinity, 0.2.1, fol. 128v.
³ His grant is confirmed in a privilege of Innocent II of that year.
⁴ Cf. the later dispute over Stetchworth where the claimant Henry "armata manu ecclesie nostre monach(um) inde abiecit, eandem villam nobis violenter abstulit" (Trinity, 0.2.1, fol. 158), having previously resorted to "predationes possessionum nostrarum et post ... combustiones domorum nostrarum et bladi nostri" (fol. 155).
resources of the bishopric and the marshalling of new knights was the policy not of the clerk but of his bishop and that in their determination to ascribe all possible improprieties to the clerk the monks fastened on to a congenial interpretation which distorts the real motive behind the activities which they witnessed or heard by report. It is of course possible that Ranulf did break with his bishop and that when Nigel acclaimed Stephen at the Easter court of 1136 the loyalty of his clerk remained with the Empress. The occasion of the rising might have been the false report of Stephen’s death later in the same year and the threatened destruction of the *francigenae* could have been directed at the leading men of the kingdom. But there are difficulties. So great a scheme is unlikely to have been planned by men so little and it is particularly remarkable that the three rebels who are mentioned by name have no reason to be hostile to their bishop. Ranulf had been worthy to have charge of the see for several years. Ralph Burgundio had been a member of Bishop Hervey’s *familia* and with some of his colleagues had presumably entered the service of his successor.\(^1\) Henry Peregrinus occurs as witness to Nigel’s charters.\(^2\) In the account of the punishments of the conspirators no names are mentioned except theirs and the account of their fate is not clear enough to give strong support to the allegation that they had plotted against the bishop’s life. Ranulf disappears without trace but was apparently not out of pocket. Ralph won the protection of the saint and Henry was to remain active in the bishop’s entourage. That Henry remained close enough to the bishop to stand surety for him seven years later in the company of the leading members of the episcopal *familia*\(^3\) suggests not so much that he was concerned in a conspiracy against the bishop’s life as that he was engaged in some operation under the bishop’s orders. Certainly, the responsibility for the alienation of church land of this period “in milites” is later ascribed to Nigel himself\(^4\) and, independently from the *Historia*, the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, speaking of events in 1139,

\(^1\) Miller, op. cit. p. 171.
\(^2\) See above, p. 319, n. 2.
\(^3\) Trinity, 0.2.1, fol. 146.
\(^4\) When he was appealed to Rome in 1143, ibid. fol. 145\(^V\).
tells how Nigel had hired knights qualified and prepared for any crime, words which recall the qualifications of Ranulf's confederates.1

The obvious conjecture is that preparations for armed insurrection during 1136 or 1137 had been authorized by Bishop Nigel. What support do other sources lend to this conjecture and how is it to be reconciled with the account in Orderic Vitalis? From 1140 to 1145 Nigel was one of the most consistent supporters of the Empress. His allegiance was not openly declared until he prepared to fortify the Isle against Stephen in the winter of 1139 2 and until, after the defeat of his knights, he sought the Empress's court at Gloucester.3 But six months earlier he had been with his relatives, the bishops of Salisbury and Lincoln and the chancellor Roger le Poer, accused of complicity in her plans 4 and in his case the accusations seem well-founded. While the others were seized at the Oxford council in June 1139, he had the foresight to take up quarters at some distance from the king's court which made possible his escape.5 It is difficult to see why he should have withdrawn to his uncle's castle of Devizes in preference to his own stronghold at Ely unless in order to secure Devizes against the expected arrival of the Empress. This interpretation would explain both his reluctance to surrender Devizes even at Roger's request and that this

2 The account in the Historia of Nigel's fortification of the Isle and his compact with local magnates for its defence, while possibly referring to 1138 or even earlier, probably applies to 1139 (Trinity, 0.2.1, fol. 142-v). The Gesta Stephani, p. 56 places Nigel's open insurrection after the death of Roger of Salisbury in December 1139.
5 " . . . ut erat animi versutoris agilitatisque expeditioris, celerrime aufugit, et ad castellum . . . quod Divisa dicebatur, itinere sub festinatione protenso, ad obisendum regi viriliter se acceinit" (Gesta Stephani, p. 52). "Eliensis autem praesul, qui nondum ad curiam regis venerat, sed extra urbem in villa cum parasitis suis hospitatus fuerat, diris rumoribus auditis, quia male sibi conscius erat, ad Divisas . . . confugit . . . et contra regem totis nisibus munire decrevit (Orderic Vitalis, Hist. Eccl., v. 120).
reluctance first convinced Stephen of the bishop’s guilt.  

The Gesta Stephani suggest that Nigel’s plan to move against the king, “quod dudum conceperat”, goes back well before 1139. But the wording lacks precision and, as no distinction is made between Nigel’s two aims—to hasten the succession of Henry I’s offspring and to avenge the humiliation of Bishop Roger, which latter aim cannot have been conceived before June 1139—we may not exploit this suggestion. Apart from this we have only the speculation that Nigel must have been counted among those “ministeriales” in Henry I’s service who could not trust in Stephen’s will and power to protect them and that Stephen’s illness and reported death in 1136 made it not only convenient but necessary for those prominent in the royal service to look to the future.

As for Orderic, the proposed emendation would eliminate the strange assertion that Nigel as late as November 1137, by imposing severe penalties, antagonized the supporters of the Empress—an unequivocal declaration of allegiance which in the uncertainty attending the succession would have been most imprudent and for a man with Nigel’s connections improbable. It is not necessary—although a case could be made out—to convict him also of an intrigue with the Scots, because most probably Orderic assembled under one head all the reports

1 “Salisburiensis episcopus, accepta regis licentia cum nepote suo locutus est, ipsumque multum redarguit quod, seditionem oriri videns, non propriam diocesim repetisset, sed alienas res furibundus divertisset . . . Turigo nepote cum suis assecitis in rebellionone pertinaciter persistente et irato rege . . . Fractus itaque antistes Eliensis, cum reliquis complicibus suis, moerens deditione quievit . . . Non multo post Rogerius praesul mortuus est, et Eliensis publicus hostis totius patriae factus est” (ibid. v. 120). “Audiens vero rex Eliensem episcopum adversum se arma sumpsisse, quae sibi prius dolose et aemulante suggesta fuerant, vera credebant tantoque in episcopos vehementiori indignatione succensus, ad eorum possidenda municipia totus intendit” (Gesta Stephani, p. 52).

2 “Audiens episcopus Eliensis avunculum defunctum, quod animo dudum conceperat, adversus regem agere studuit, quatinus et injurias in avunculum a rege, ut dictum est, irrogatas, in eum quanto nisu posset vindicare, et regis Henrici filios ad regnum maturius consequendum pro posse adiuverat” (ibid. p. 65).


of disaffection in England and wrongly identified the voluntary exiles from Ely with those known to have sought refuge at the Scottish court who were pressing for King David's intervention.\(^1\)

In amending the Ely legend to make Nigel responsible for the seditious activities attributed to Ranulf of Salisbury we are clearly moving in the realm not of proof but of probability. The evidence from independent sources is not enough to confirm that Nigel's active support of the Empress goes back as far as 1136: it merely makes the conjecture more tempting, perhaps more plausible. This frustrating uncertainty mars every piece of information on Nigel's public acts which the *Historia* offers. Not one can be accepted without some emendation. Not one fact can be established beyond doubt. With this reservation we can elicit from the *Historia* such items as that Nigel, after personally protesting against his expulsion from Ely at the papal curia in October 1140,\(^2\) was restored to his see by the authority of the Empress's writ;\(^3\) that, after his knights had been a second time defeated, he made his formal peace with Stephen in 1142;\(^4\) that his attempt to join the Empress for the offensive planned in 1143 was discovered when he fell foul of a party of king's men at Wareham and that, when he was subsequently appealed to Rome, the need to defend himself there cut short his personal contribution to this campaign and in fact marked the end, formally pledged in a second concord in 1144 or 1145, of his active opposition to the king.\(^5\)

1. E.g. the son of Robert of Bampton and Eustace Fitz John "regis Henrici summum et popularem amicum, aliosque quamplures, qui vel questus gratia vel justitiae, ut sibi videbatur, defendendae occasione discordiam amiebant" (*Gesta Stephani*, p. 36).
2. A papal letter, dated October, which the compiler wrongly includes among a number of letters procured by a delegation of Ely monks in April 1139, begins "Accepimus autem venerabilem fratrem nostrum Nigellum Elyensem episcopum absque iusticia et ratione expulsum" and must belong to 1140 (Chapter 68, fol. 143v).
4. Ibid. fols. 145-6.
5. These points will be treated more fully in the introduction to the projected edition of the *Historia*. Most of them have been discussed by J. H. Round (*Geoffrey de Mandeville*, London, 1892) but his findings cannot always be accepted. Others who have used Book III in manuscript or in Wharton's edition include notably E. Miller, op. cit., James Bentham, op. cit., D. Knowles, *The Monastic
We must regret that Nigel lacks the biographer whom his long and distinguished career deserved. But it would be improper to censure the Ely historians on that account. They were after all historians, not of the bishop, but of the priory whose memory and interests are far more ably served. Out of the many documents and attendant commentary we can see an administration independent of the bishop arise on the endowment settled on the monks by their first two bishop-abbots. As this was their chief concern—to trace the rights of the cathedral priory from the privileges and customs of the old abbey—they must be excused from noting the episcopate of Nigel primarily for the set-backs and advances in this development and for commenting on him only in his least adequate capacity—as the head of their house.