of the gift of my father, and one butt[3] near the enclosure to the north which Syward held, in full pure and perpetual gift for the health of my soul, of my ancestors and successors, with the common pasturage and other easements and liberties pertaining to such a tenement. That neither I Walter nor any of my heirs can exact any charge on the said land except their alms and prayers. The said land, with its appurtenances, I the said Walter and my heirs for ever guarantee to the said priests against all men. These being witnesses. Adam de Mulinaus,[4] William Blundell,[5] Robert de Mulinaus,[4] John de Lee,[6] Roger de Ireland[7] and others.

The following Papers were read :—

I.—Memoir of the Earls of Chester,

By W. Williams Mortimer, Esq.

Part I.—On the Saxon Earls.

The antiquity of the City of Chester can no more be doubted than the influential position which it formerly occupied in the civil, political and military arrangements of Britain. It is impossible, however, to ascertain the date of its origin, which seems buried in obscurity. The conjecture of Sir Thomas Elliot that it was called Neomagus, from *Magus* the grandson of Japhet, about 240 years after the escape of the latter with his father from the flood, is as little entitled to credit as the legend of the Monk of

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[3] The "butt" occurs frequently as a measure of land. According to a deed quoted by Kennet (Antiq. Amb. p. 402) it contained half an acre.

[4] Adam de Molyneus, (Mulinaus in the deed,) Lord of Sefton, (12 Hen. III, Baines,) eldest son of Richard de Molyneus and Edith, daughter of Almeric Pincerna, married Letitia de Brinley. Almeric died soon after 1233, leaving his heir a minor, for in 1235 William Earl of Ferrers gave £100 "pro habenda custodia terræ et hæredum Aumerici le Butiller una cum maritagio eorundem."—(Coucher Book of Whalley, p. 417.) Robert de Mulinaus was brother of Adam.

[5] The Blundells held Ynes, now known as Ince Blundel under the Botilers of Warrington. This William, son of Richard the first of the family, gave to the Abbey of Stanlawe his mill on the Alt, and the deeds are, among others, witnessed by Adam and Robert de Molyneus, John de Lee, and Walter de Scaresbreck.—(Coucher Book of Whalley.)

[6] John de Lee, Lord of Lea, ob. 27 Hen. III, (1242.) His son Henry de Lee was Sheriff of Lancashire 1276, 1277, 1283. John de Lee frequently occurs in the Coucher Book of Whalley as witness to deeds. He was son of Henry, who was son of Warin, a benefactor to Cockersand. Lea is a hamlet of Preston.

[7] Roger de Ireland, (de Ybernia of the deed,) son of John de Ireland, Lord of Hutte, descended from John de Hibernia, buried at Hale, 1088. This Roger, who is also a frequent witness to deeds in the Whalley Coucher Book, is in that collection (p. 556) seen as the granter of one bovate of land in Childewall to the Abbey of Stanlawe.

It will thus be seen that this deed is of the first half of the thirteenth century.—H. C. P.

Chester, who, in the Polychronicon, attributes its foundation to Leon Vawr, the fabulous great giant of Wales.

The city was of importance anterior to the arrival of the Romans, who made it one of their principal stations; the Soldiers of the XX or Victorious Legion, which was placed there after the defeat of the Britons under Caractacus, erecting the castle and other defences.

Entrusted, as the command of this valuable post was, to the imperial troops, it continued to be an object of their especial care and solicitude. Few places were more benefitted by the presence of the Romans than Chester, and none,—in England at least, yet retains so strong an impress of their skill, ingenuity and refinement. When they were finally obliged to withdraw their legions, the castle and fortifications they had erected enabled the Ancient Britons to bid defiance to the Saxon tribes, and maintain their independence until after the subjugation of all the surrounding country, except North Wales, of which Chester was then considered the capital. At length it yielded, and was, with the entire County of Chester, then comprehending all the lands between the Ribble and the Mersey, and the greater portion of Flintshire and Denbighshire, constituted a part of the Saxon Kingdom of Mercia: but the chain which attached that kingdom together was frequently broken.

During the dominion of the Romans in Chester, the controul of all civil, as well as military affairs, was most probably invested in the chief commander of their troops. Such is the almost invariable practice in early conquered states, but in this instance we are ignorant even of the names of their local governors, our information extending only to a portion of their consuls, or governors of the entire province.

For three centuries after the evacuation of the Romans, little is found in the old writers relative to Chester. A dreadful slaughter of upwards of a thousand of the monks of Bangor was perpetrated under the walls of the city, by order of Ethelfred, the Saxon King of Northumbria, after he had defeated the troops of the Welch monarch, who escaped with only about fifty of his followers. This chieftain—Brockmael Yscothioc—King of Powis, is sometimes in the ancient chronicles called Earl or Consul of Chester, shewing that there was then an officer of importance bearing that appellation. The Britons soon gained possession of the city, and, according to

Holinshed, a council of the Welch princes was held there in 613, when Cadwan was elected king; and his son Calwall, who was afterwards crowned at Chester, made the city one of the chief seats of his sovereignty. It was not until 828 that Egbert, having finally united the states of the heptarchy, was enabled to expel the Britons from the city, which, with few intermissions, they had held for upwards of two centuries. Egbert built a royal residence there, and his son, we are told, was crowned in "his City of West Chester with all royal estate."

We are now arriving at a period whence we can follow the governors of the ancient city under the illustrious title which has reached us through an almost uninterrupted descent of upwards of one thousand years.

The Earls of Chester may be divided into three classes; *first*, the Saxon, which continued until the Norman conquest; *secondly*, the Norman, which extended over one hundred and sixty years, when, in default of heirs male, the earldom was attached to the crown of England. The heir apparent yet bears the title of Earl of Chester, as well as Prince of Wales, hence this the *third* class is frequently denominated the Royal line.

Towards the close of the ninth century, a large body of the Danes, retreating before the troops of the Anglo Saxons, forced the gates of Chester, where they were immediately besieged by their pursuers. These, though unable to take the city or the castle by storm, reduced the garrison to the greatest extremity for want of food, so that they were forced to retire, leaving the city in heaps of ruins. Having thus again obtained possession of Chester—the undoubted key to North Wales—Alfred, who had led his Saxon troops in person, placed its government under the especial care of the Earls of Mercia, who from that time bore the name or title of Earls of Chester.

Ethered or Ethelred was the first of these chief governors. To him Chester was greatly indebted, for "he restored the city after it was destroyed by the Danes, and enclosed it with new walls, and made it nigh two such as it was before."* He was the son-in-law of the great Alfred, having married Elfleda, celebrated as "The Ladye of Mercia," whose praises are sung, as the undegenerate daughter of that great monarch, in all the Saxon

* Trevisa's Translation of the Polychronicon, lib. 6, cap. 4.

chronicles—and well she deserved the eulogies of her national annalists. Having separated from her husband immediately after the birth of her first child, they nevertheless continued united in numerous acts of munificence and piety, "restoring cities, founding and repairing abbeys, and removing to more suitable places the relics of departed saints." Chester was greatly benefited by their exertions. The Monastery of St. John, which yet presents the most splendid remains of Saxon architecture in the city, was founded by them, as also the Church of St. Peter, and much of the present Cathedral. She died the 12th June, 919,† at Tamworth, from whence her body was removed to Gloucester, where she had, with her husband, founded an Abbey dedicated to St. Peter. For several years after the death of Ethelred she governed the entire province of Mercia, with the exception of London and Oxford, with a valour and wisdom exceeded by none. In consequence of the ability she evinced, and the interruptions caused by the continued encroachments of the Danes, no appointment of earl is recorded, until that of Alfer, the second governor. Little is known of him; he is mentioned as "destroying abbeys, turning out the abbots and their attendant monks, and replacing them with clergymen and their wives;"‡ and in 983, according to William of Malmsbury, (p. 61,) "he was eaten unto death with lice." He was the companion and cousin of King Edgar, to whom it would have been unnecessary here to have alluded, had not his residence and regal display on the shores of the Dee attracted the notice of some of our local antiquaries. Edgar's name affords a memorable instance of the inutility, or rather impropriety, of attaching too much weight to characters drawn by partisans or followers, By many he is described as the greatest king that ever ascended the throne of England. The monks, their legends and their chronicles, are unanimous in the enthusiasm of their praises; yet much of the oft vaunted virtues and qualifications which he is said to have evinced must, more properly, be attributed to Dunstan, his preceptor, whom he afterwards exalted to the highest honours of the state, rather than to Dunstan's royal pupil. But even, if distinguished as a statesman, a general, or a monarch, why endeavour

† So Florentius, Matt. Westminster, Huntington, and the Polychronicon; but Hovenden dates her death in 915, and so does Ethelwerd, lib. 4, cap. 4.

‡ A.D. 975. See Florentius, 427; Hovenden, 361.

to elevate his moral character as a man, and as a great saint, while every authentic record of his life proves that, disreguarding the restraints of civil and religious institutions, it was disgraced by a series of libidinous and criminal excesses.

It would be difficult to condense into any moderate space the various acts of insubordination, treason, and cowardice which distinguished the life of the third Earl, Alfric, previously to his banishment in 986. Afterwards forgiven, he was restored to power, and appointed to the command of the naval forces of the Anglo-Saxons; but he again committed treason by betraying their fleet to the Danes. He was killed in battle in 1016. Edric, the fourth earl, who was appointed in 1037, was, if possible, a more infamous character. He is described as "a most perfidious man, the son of Elgericus, of low kindred, and to whom, nevertheless, his eloquent tongue and crafty wit proved great riches and honour; and for envy, falsehood, pride and cruelty, exceeded he all men at that time."* Soon after the cruel murder of Edmund Ironsides, committed by his order, if not by himself personally, he met the just reward of his numerous crimes, being beheaded by order of Canute, and his head affixed to the tower of London, "for that he would be higher than all the noblemen in England."† Leofric—the son of Leoforine, Earl of Leicester—who became fifth governor of Mercia, is the first who adopted the title of Earl of Chester.‡ He was a man of amazing wealth and influence, and of unblemished character. During his long life, which extended through the reigns of the Danish monarchs, and part of that of the Confessor, he built and enriched various monasteries in Worcester, Evesham, the two in Chester, and particularly that at Coventry, which he endowed with greater possessions than any other in the kingdom. He married the Lady Godiva, so celebrated in the annals of Coventry; to which place he was removed for interment after his death, which took place at his own town of Bromley, in August, 1057.

Algar, the eldest son of Leofric, succeeded him as sixth Earl. On several occasions, during the life of his father, he had been banished for

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* Florentius, 373.

† So various authorities, but others say for fear of tumult he was privately strangled, and his body thrown into the Thames. See Matt. Westm., 402, and Ingulphus, 892.

‡ Leofricus Consul Nobilissimus Cestriæ. Henry Huntingdon, lib. 6, p. 366.

treason; but by the intercession of his son-in-law, Griffith, King of Wales, and other of the Saxon princes, he was recalled, and ultimately rewarded with greater honours than those which he had previously held. He was not in possession of his father's dignities more than one year, ere repeating the crimes for which he had been punished he was again banished the kingdom. Aided, however, by Griffith and a strong fleet from Norway, he recovered his earldom by force; but in the course of the following year death arrested his short yet turbulent career.

His marriage, if not otherwise worthy of notice, is at least celebrated as the foundation of a family of unequalled distinction in those days. His two sons and two daughters occupy most conspicuous places in English history. The Annals of the Conquest make frequent mention of the two former—the two great Saxon Earls, Edwin and Morcar—of whom more hereafter. The elder daughter Adith married Griffith, King of North Wales; a prince whose influence was so great as to enable him again to recover by force, for Algar, that earldom which had by Edward the Confessor been previously yielded to his entreaties. After his death she married the unfortunate Harold, King of England, whom she appears to have deserted immediately after his great victory in Yorkshire, three days before the Norman Conqueror landed in Sussex. Much of the mystery which attaches to the fate of Harold may, perhaps, have arisen from his sister's subsequent residence in Chester, to which she returned, under the protection of her brothers, to spend the remainder of her days either in that city, or in some of the adjacent parts of the territories of her first husband, Griffith.

Algar's second daughter, Lucy, was also celebrated for the splendour of her matrimonial alliances. Her first husband was Ivo Tailbois, Earl of Anjou, and Captain of the Angevine troops, who received as her dower all the ancient demesnes of the house of Algar. By her second husband, Roger de Romara, she had William de Romara, the great Earl of Lincoln; and afterwards she married Randle de Meschines, Viscount Baieux, who became the third Palatinate Earl of Chester. This Lady Lucy, or Lucia, at once Countess of Chester and of Lincoln, founded several monastic establishments of the Cistercian order, and much of her life was devoted to religious purposes. She survived her three husbands, and it is recorded of her that she gave £266 13s. 4d. for livery of her father's lands, and also five hun-

dred marks fine that she might not be compelled to marry within five years.*

Edwin, the seventh Earl, succeeded his father Algar in 1059, and was in possession of Chester and other component parts of Mercia, when the Norman Conqueror landed, seven years afterwards. While directing the vast power and resources of this part of the kingdom, his brother Morcar ruled those of Northumberland, possessing an influence unequalled at that period, and even rendered more powerful by their connexion with their brother-in-law Harold. They had long been united in arms to assist Harold, who was engaged in suppressing the rebellion of his own brother Tostig, aided by a fleet of three hundred Norwegian vessels, under the personal command of their monarch. While the attention of Harold was directed to the defence of the south-eastern part of his kingdom, the Norwegians were so far successful as to defeat the two earls and to capture York, where Tostig proceeded to establish his authority by compelling the inhabitants to do homage to him. His triumph was short-lived. So difficult was the conveyance of intelligence in that period that even armies might be surprised without notice, and many poetical incidents were then probable, which in more modern and scientific warfare have become impossible. With a dispatch almost incredible, Harold presented himself before York, and a great conflict took place, which terminated in the annihilation of the invaders and the death of Tostig and of every leader of any note.† The victory of Harold over the Norwegians was, however, rather prejudicial than favourable to his interests. In the action he had lost many of his principal officers and best soldiers, and it is alleged that he disgusted others with his distribution of the spoils of that great field. Many of his veteran troops, either from fatigue or discontent, deserted his standard; among these were his great supporters, Edwin of Chester and Morcar of Northumberland. The Saxon Chronicles indeed state that they moved towards the aid of Harold; but so slowly was their march, that they did

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* Pipe—Roll, 5 Stephan. Lincoln.

† This battle, the most fatal recorded in our annals, was fought 25 Sept. 1066; for fifty years the site was whitened with the bones of the slain.—Storre, 156—165; Chron. Sax. 172; Ord. Vital. 500.

not reach in time to join in the battle of Hastings, to which Harold hastened upon hearing of the Norman Duke having landed in England. The tidings of this event reached Harold while attending a festive banquet at York in honour of the great victory he had obtained only four days previously.

The result of the battle of Hastings is well known; but had Harold survived the conflict, and continued firm to his country's cause, the possession of the throne would have been far distant from his victorious opponent. It was the death, or the presumed death of Harold, that placed the sceptre in the hands of William, for had unanimity marked the councils of the Anglo-Saxons, or had there been one chieftain to have counselled, and to have directed all, their country might have spurned from its soil the foot of the Norman Conqueror. But dissensions prevailed among the leaders, and there was none of courage or importance to ascend the royal throne, and appeal to the nation to maintain its dignity. Edwin and Morcar withdrew with their forces to their respective provinces, there to await the issue of their country's fate; and the other principal chieftains of the north, in sorrow following their example, retired to their own lordships. They were, however, soon afterwards summoned to the court of the Conqueror, where they remained more as prisoners or hostages than as guests or freemen; although from being treated with respect by the Normans, they were, with others, induced to acknowledge their supremacy, and swear allegiance.

Having thus, partly by conquest and partly by negociation, secured the promised homage of the most powerful barons and leaders of the Anglo-Saxons, William went over to Normandy with the treasures he had captured. The rapacity of his officers during his absence drove the Saxons to the verge of insurrection, and many who at an early period had despaired of the common cause, and yielded—apparently a voluntary but actually—a forced submission to the Conqueror, now repented. Among the principal of these were Edwin and Morcar, who, having escaped from the Court of the Conqueror, set out for the North to raise their followers, "the good wishes of the poor," say the English historians, "accompanying them, all the priests, and the monks that were faithful to their country offering up prayers for their safety."* No sooner had they reached their respective govern-

* A clericus et monachis crebra pro illis fiebat oratio.—Orderic. Vital. p. 511.

ments, than all the country from Oxford to the Tweed was in arms. But, though aided by the Welsh, and many from the Court of Malcolm, King of Scotland, they were unable successfully to oppose the Norman Conqueror, whose former clemency gave place to the most unrelenting severity. Oxford, Warwick, Leicester, Derby, Lincoln, successively fell before him, and under the walls of York he defeated his combined opponents, the few that escaped retreating to Scotland. "Thither," says an old chronicler, "retired the noble chiefs Edwin and Morcar, with many others of great distinction, bishops, clerks, and men of all conditions, sorrowful at seeing their own cause the weakest, but not resigning themselves to slavery."*

The confiscation of their estates and the destruction of their property appear to have subdued the courage and the confidence of the Saxon chiefs, and a reconciliation ruinous to their cause took place on the banks of the Tees, where the two earls again tendered to William those oaths of allegiance which they had previously broken.

The conquest of the north-west part of the country, bordering upon Wales, and of Chester, the only great town in England whose streets had not resounded to the tread of the Norman cavalry, next attracted the attention of the Conqueror. The most exaggerated accounts had been circulated of the difficult nature of the roads and the obstinate courage of the natives;† to surmount which, William resolved upon a general attack by three great divisions of his army. Guilbert de Lacy, commanding the northern, to whom the immense domains of Pontefract were allowed for his services, crossed the mountains west of York and invaded the County of Lancaster—then considered as part of that of Chester—which fell an easy prey to his arms.

Edric, the great partisan chief of Wales, leader of the confederated Saxon and Welsh forces, was defeated by Raoul de Mortimer, who commanded the southern division of the Norman troops, with which he penetrated into the lands of the Cambrians.

The main body of the Norman forces, led by the Conqueror in person,

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* Mat. West. Flor. Hist. p. 225.

† Locorum asperitatem et hostium terribilem ferocitatem.—Orderic. Vital. Hist. 515.

proceeded by roads previously impassable to Chester, which, on his approach, surrendered without opposition.

According to his usual custom he built a strong fortress in the city, and having confiscated all the estates of the Britons, conferred the earldom upon Walter de Gherbaud, a Norman warrior, thus terminating the Saxon line of the Earls of Chester.

Of the fate of the last earl, Edwin, and his brother Morcar, little can now be said. Their former rank, extensive possession, and great military prowess, all tended to attach vast influence to their name. After enduring much distress, they are both found, in 1072, in the Isle of Ely, whence Morcar—for the third time the dupe of false promises—quitted the Saxon Camp to join the Norman Court; but scarcely had he got beyond the entrenchments raised by his countrymen, than he was taken prisoner and sent in chains to Normandy. The last time he is mentioned in history, is immediately previously to the death of the Conqueror, when, says Robert of Gloucester, "the king, aware of the approach of death, sent money to the churches, the convents, and the poor; to purchase remission for the robberies he had committed,"* and ordered Morcar and the other Saxon prisoners to be set at liberty.

Edwin left the Camp at Ely immediately after his brother, not to surrender himself, but to attempt the deliverance of Morcar. For months he was occupied in assembling his partisans in England and seeking assistance in Wales and Scotland, but when his forces were sufficiently numerous to attempt the execution of his plans he was betrayed to the Normans. Aided by a few horsemen he defended himself with desperate valour against a much superior body of the enemy, by whom he was attacked near the coast of the North Sea, towards which he retreated in expectation of finding some means of escape. The rising tide having swelled a rivulet he was anxious to cross, he was unable to proceed, and overpowered by numbers, he fell. His betrayers cutting off his head carried it in triumph to the Conqueror, who, as some historians relate, wept over the fate of a man whom he loved, and whom he wished to attach to his fortunes.

With the fall of Edwin and Morcar the power of the Anglo-Saxons and

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* To bete thulke roberye that him thoghte he hadde ydo.—Chron. 369.

Britons in Cheshire may be truly said to have ended. Every chieftain and noble that had not perished in the battle-field was driven from his estates, and the indisputable evidence of the Doomsday Book shews how quickly their confiscated lands were divided among the rapacious followers of the Norman Conquerors. Nothing remained in the possession of the Saxon landholders save a few townships belonging to the monastic institutions of Chester. Even these they were allowed to retain only a few years, ere they were wrested from them, and given to the Benedictine Abbey founded by Hugh, the first Norman Palatinate Earl of Chester.

II.—Closing Address.

By H. C. Pidgeon, Esq., Honorary Secretary.

On the close of this the Second Session of the Society's operations, the more than realization of anticipated success,—even in the face of difficulties and imperfections inseparable in a new Society,—may, I think, fairly lead me to congratulations; though generally I think suggestions and improvements more useful than mere mutual compliments.

When, two years ago, we first met in this room, it was with something like fear that we looked forward to the working of such a society; but a year's experience shewed us that we had nothing to dread, either as to its scope or to the means of carrying it forward. We found on every side matter of interest to illustrate and preserve, and gentlemen eager to lend us their assistance and support. We found that so far from our Society interfering with other Societies, we were but fellow-labourers in a field ready to yield to all *earnest labourers* a rich reward for any exertions bestowed on it. We found many kindred minds anxiously waiting for a channel in which they could put forth the result of their enquiries; and at the end of our first Session we had secured to ourselves, by the first volume of our Proceedings, a station among the foremost Societies of the kind.

Our Second Session has been wanting in no good feature which our first possessed, while I think I may venture to say we have had more energy and more practical efficiency. The Papers read have been more elaborate, while they have embraced as wide a range, and elucidated as many of our great divisions of investigation.