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ENGLAND AS THE NUCLEUS OF THE FOUNDATION OF COMMERCIAL TOWNS

THE ORIGIN OF THE LOHENGRIN SAGA TRACED
ACCORDING TO ENGLISH HISTORY

by

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THE period in the Middle Ages at which, at first in England and then extending from there over the whole of Europe, towns sprung up as centres of a new economic order, corresponds actually to the time at which humanity passed from the dream world into the modern economic order.

Towns serve not only as protective means against attacks by wild neighbours who, devastating the land, terrify the population so that the latter are driven to seek refuge behind strong ramparts, but are also centres of commerce and industry. In the Middle Ages the towns served both ends: strong fortresses and centres of economic life. English towns which were attacked by the Danes had almost all succumbed to their conquerors who, from thence, held the surrounding country in a state of constant excitement, fear, and armament. For this reason Edward the Elder rebuilt Chester as well as Witham (Essex), Towcaster, and Hertford. His sister Ethelfleda erected castles for defence against the Welsh and Danes at Bransbury (Hereford), Stafford, Tamworth, Scergeate (Sarratt, Hertford), Wardborough, Warwick, and others. A newly discovered method of constructing fortresses by means of walls of rock and bricks made the erection of these fortresses an easier task (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, A.D. 921).

In Germany the Hungarians stormed victoriously forward,

and Henry the Fowler had to protect his people just as the English had to protect themselves against the Danes.

The fact that the towns served not merely as fortresses but also as acknowledged centres of economic activity is due primarily to the laws enacted by Edward the Elder (cf. *leges Eduardi*, 1, 2). Edward the Elder commanded that all trade transactions were to be carried on only inside the city gates. The German king laid down the law that all business transactions were to be carried on only within the towns and that all festivities and meetings were to take place therein. "Concilia et omnes conventus atque convivia in urbibus voluit celebrari" (*Wittekind Corvey*, 1, 1).

William of Malmesbury in the fifth chapter of book II, tells of the deeds of Edward and his sister Ethelfleda. "He invented a plan, by means of which he circumvented the onslaughts of the Danes, namely, at appointed places he re-erected old towns and built new ones, supplying them with armed men who protected the inhabitants and warded off the enemy."

Edward had a brother called Ethelward. The son of the latter was named Turketul. Towards the end of Edward's reign Turketul took over his father's inheritance. The latter died in 918 or 920. The King offered Turketul various ecclesiastical honours, for example a bishopric and the episcopate of Winton. Turketul, however, declined all these honours, so the King, recognizing his worth, raised him to the position of High Chancellor and entrusted to him all temporal and spiritual affairs (*negotia temporalia vel spiritualia*). This Turketul has been honoured in Saga as a Knight of the Holy Grail. Wolfram von Eschenbach mentions him in his poem *Parzival* (III, 364) as a Knight of the Holy Grail, and writes his name thus: "Turkental." More recent saga converted him into the knight Lohengrin.

After the death of King Edward in the year 924, Turketul continued as Chancellor in the reign of Edward's son Athelstan, who, according to the chronicle of William of Malmesbury (book II, chap. 6), had been reared at the court of Ethelfleda and her husband Ethelred. During the reign of Athelstan an insurrection occurred of Northumbrians, Scots, and Cumbrians. It led to a battle at Brunford in which Danes and Norwegians also fought against Turketul and Athelstan. In this affray Turketul led the Londoners and Mercians. In the battle Turketul fought Constantine, King of the Scots, but was almost slain while attempting to take the King prisoner, and was only saved by the bravery of one of his men, the centurion *Singinus*, who killed the King of the Scots. Turketul gave thanks to God for his salvation, and was thankful that he had not been called upon to kill or wound anyone. Ingulph, in depicting the battle,

mentions *Turketul*. *Henry* of Huntingdon and *Roger* of Hoveden also refer to this battle.

As conqueror in this important battle of Brunford, Turketul was now given the honour of escorting two English princesses, Eadgitha and Elfgifa, to Germany to present them to the King's son in order that he might choose one in marriage. Roswitha von Gandersheim explicitly refers to this incident. Otto, the son of Henry the Fowler, fell in love at first sight with Eadgitha, the elder daughter, and decided to marry her. (*Hrotsuith*, 117, 324, "Ut sibi quam vellet sponsam licito sociaret.")

Eadgitha was about seventeen years of age at this time. Elfgifa was affianced to the Burgundian Duke Alberich (*Jahrbücher der deutschen Geschichte*, p. 10).

Turketul conducted the two English princesses to Cologne on the Rhine. This event is mentioned in the poem *Lohengrin*. Lohengrin comes as ambassador from England, as the messenger of the Holy Grail, sent by Arthur to Cologne on the Rhine. He then accompanied Henry the First on all royal missions and processions, and took part in the battle against the Hungarians. Thus runs the saga.

It has been historically established that the towns were founded and defended on the same economic plan as Turketul introduced into England. In this sense it is also associated with the repulse of the Hungarians.

Eadgitha received the town of Magdeburg as the bridegroom's gift. She lived happily by the side of the German king for over sixteen years, and presented to him a son Liudolf. Eadgitha and Elfgifa had three more sisters; one of these, called Edgyfu, married Charles III. Ludwig Ultramarinus is the offspring of this marriage. The latter was espoused to Gerberga, daughter of Henry I. The Dukes of Lower Lothringia are descended from him.

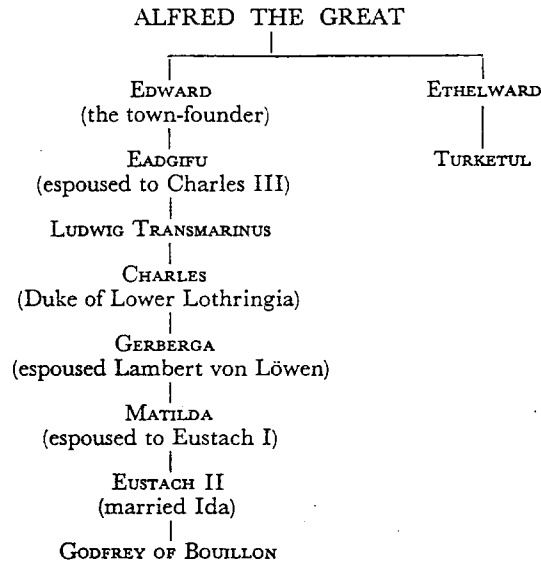
From this we can see how tradition, making use of historical events, according to the account of Wolfram von Eschenbach, calls Turketul by his real name, converting Lothringian, Loherain, into Lohengrin. The legend of Godfrey of Bouillon, who is supposed to be descended from the Swan-Knight, i.e. Lohengrin, is also well known. On page 8 is a genealogical tree from which a comparison between Saga and history can be made.

Elgive, another sister of Eadgitha, married Ludwig of Aquitania, as recorded by William of Malmesbury and Ingulph. Lastly, Eadhilda was espoused to Hugo of France, the forbear of the Capet (forbear, at all events, by his first wife, Hadwiga, daughter of Henry I).

From this we can see that the English princesses were espoused to all the principal European dynasties, and this fact opens up a most important, far-reaching Continental political issue under-

lying these matrimonial alliances, of equal weight as regards legend and history.

Ingulph relates the following: "When the news of the victory of Brunford spread throughout the whole Christian world, all the Kings of the earth desired to contract friendly relations with Athelstan and in some way or other to conclude a holy Peace Pact." He then goes on to relate how they "all sent ambassadors to solicit the hands of the Royal Princesses of England. In this



process of courting the English princesses the ambassadors brought many rare gifts such as the English had never seen nor heard of in centuries: portions of the Crown of Thorns of Jesus Christ set in crystal, the sword of Constantine the Great, the banner of Mauritius the Martyr, as also the lance of Charles the Great to which the French attach no small importance."

These presents are likewise mentioned by William of Malmesbury (book II, chap. 6).

As we already know, Eadhilde married Hugo the Great, the son of Robert, Duke of Neustria, Burgundy, and France. The bridegroom was a cousin of Athelstan, Adalof, Count of Boulogne, son of Baldwin of Flanders and of Aelfthryde, sister of King Edward, who in Hugo's name conveyed the numerous valuable and rare bridal offerings to the collection of the nation's display of treasures at Abingdon. And then the gifts are described as

we already know. By the marriage of Eadgitha's sister Eadhilde they were transferred from Kalingian possession to England. Amongst them was to be found the Holy Spear which is mentioned in the Grail story by Wolfram von Eschenbach as the "bleeding spear" which is carried in front of the Grail, and which was then at Malmesbury at the Court of Athelstan. In the Lohengrin poem this spear is referred to and is identified with the lance of Longinus, and it is therein related that Henry I captured the spear from Rudolf II of Burgundy, who in turn had it from Count Samson, the Councillor of King Hugo of Italy.

The actual history of the spear is a novel in itself. It is in existence to the present day, and now rests in the secular treasury in the Royal Palace at Vienna, whither it was brought from Nürnberg for safety during Napoleon's campaign. It belongs to the insignia of the German Empire.

The Lohengrin poem runs as follows:

As blood and water emanated therefrom
The blind man (Longinus) touched his eyes therewith
They were instantaneously restored
The spear belongs to the Kingdom.

For the history of the spear, see *Jahrbücher der Deutschen Geschichte König Heinrich I*, by Georg Waitz, Leipzig, 1885, p. 67.

The marriage of Eadgitha and Otto took place in the year 929. In 930 Eadgitha gave birth to a son Liudolf, and in 931 to a daughter Liudgard. But Turketul returned to England. Turketul's most trusted friend was Dunstan, who was banished for a time, recalled however at Turketul's request and made Abbot of Glastonbury. Turketul presented to him, for his monastery at Glastonbury, a most valuable chalice, which was preserved there up to the Norman epoch and was famed as Turketul's chalice. Edmund the Magnificent succeeded Athelstan, and, after his assassination in 946, Edward's youngest son, Edred, came to the throne. In the second year of his reign the Northumbrians made an insurrection, and Turketul was called upon to undertake an embassy. He is here honoured and appointed lord of sixty benefices. On his journey he came upon the Monastery of Croyland, which is situated near Peterborough in the English province of Holland. We have here the origin of the Dutch Lohengrin Saga. Whoever goes there, up to this very day, must needs be astonished at the Dutch character of the landscape. One can see windmills, canals raised high above the ground, ponds, and swans. As Turketul arrived, three monks came forth to greet him, and led him into the ruined monastery in order to show him the relics of Saint Guthlac. At that time Croyland was an island. The monastery had been founded in 716 by

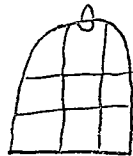
King Ethelbald. Saint Guthlac and his sister Saint Pega were living here. Coelwulf demolished the monastery. Turketul listened to the account of the Danish invasion of 870. He was seized with compassion, and promised aid to the monks. Then he appealed to the King that he should do something for Croyland. Turketul himself wished to become a monk there, but the King would not allow it; he needed his Chancellor. The King actually went on his knees to Turketul, beseeching him not to forsake him. But Turketul invoked the Holy Apostle, Paul, and the King gave way. Then Turketul wended his way to Croyland. He found but three aged monks alive. With a large retinue he travelled round the island. The chronicler here relates: "It is here worthy of note that at this time such a drought reigned that over the whole of England there was no rain for a period of three years, and this drought was for the most part referred to as the 'Drought of Elias.'" In the Dutch saga the knight known as Lohengrin is not called Lohengrin, but Knight *Helias*. Turketul returned all his sixty principalities to the King and became Abbot of Croyland. Here he established a very special cult. Meanwhile the death of King Edred took place in 955. Edwy succeeded and reigned till 959, when the sixteen-year-old Edgar became king, at whose birth the saintly Dunstan had heard the singing of angels. The chronicler, when speaking of this king, writes as follows: "He was what Romulus was to the Romans, Cyrus to the Persians, Alexander to the Greeks, Arsases to the Parthians, Charles the Great to the French, and Arthur to Britain." Turketul visited him in 966. He was known as Edgar the Peaceful. This is the sixth king during whose reign Turketul lived. Turketul received a privilege for Croyland, and met Dunstan once more. What joy! Turketul was now approaching his closing years. He had Croyland's history chronicled. He lived in retrospection. This history embraces the period from the foundation up to 973. He lives in his memories of the past, relating them to others. He presents to the monastery a golden chalice and two silver cups lined with gold, which were given to him by the German Emperor, Henry I. Now his hour draws nigh. He is surrounded by his highly prized friends. He outlives them all, and tends them during illness with devoted fidelity. First his beloved Clarenbald dies, next Swarling followed by Brun, then Aio his notary, and lastly Turgar, who as an eye-witness had related to him the history of the monastery. By 973 they have all departed, the old and trusted companions. And now approaches the year 975, in which King Edgar also dies. Turketul becomes ill. For three days he lies in a fever. On the fourth day he calls for the relics given him by the German Emperor, Henry the Town-planner, Hugo of France, and Ludwig

the Aquitanian. For him they are not merely relics; they are the landmarks of his life which he now reviews. They are the emblems of the history inaugurated by him. In his mind's eye he sees the five princesses whose migration he witnessed from England to the Continent, thus inaugurating history by forming alliances with the highest Continental rulers. He views this history, studies England's connection therewith. His gaze rests on the relic of the Apostle Bartholomaeus. He corresponds to the same person who, in the Bible, is called Nathaniel, the fifth apostle chosen by Jesus (cf. John i. 45-51). Jesus had delegated him as a representative of His people. This relic serves as a reminder to Turketul that he also has fought for his people, fighting for all he held sacred. He received it as a young man when, for the first time, he put on the warrior's girdle at a festive ceremony. The monarch who had initiated him had made him a present of this relic as a reminder that he also should fight for his people. The monarch had received it from the Duke of Benevent. Every article surrounding him represents holy or secular history, emperors and kings have handled or worn the objects. His mind now dwells on this fact in retrospect. Through storm and stress this relic has protected him by virtue of its admonishing power throughout all the battles. They now appear in his mind's eye—the battle of Brunford as well as others. In spirit he reviews the attacking Danes, the Hungarians on their steeds. He experiences what it signifies to consolidate and protect Western civilization, behind walls and fortresses, in peaceful cities. He has lived through the reigns of six kings, the last of these having earned the title of the Peace-maker. Then his gaze falls upon the relic of Saint Leodegar. The Duke of Aquitania had presented it to him. He sees Leodegar, the Bishop of Autun, whose mother Sigrade was the sister of the Duke Eticho, father of Saint Odile. Leodegar belonged to that princely family from which it is claimed by the old chroniclers that all European rulers were descended. Maxmilian I was proud to trace his origin to this family. Rudolf of Habsburg, Robert the Brave, and Hugo Capet did likewise. The latter bishop lived at the period at which the battles took place, which lent the background to certain parts of the Nibelung Saga. He died a martyr's death, enveloped in the tragedy of such occurrences. To Turketul he stood as the representative of those races who, on continental soil, depicted the protectors of the Precious Blood, of the Holy Grail.*

* Proof of this fact is to be found in my book *Weltgeschichte im Lichte des heiligen Grales*, Orient-Occident Verlag, Stuttgart, Den Haag, London, 1928, wherein I have proved that Hugo of Tours, a descendant of Eticho, conveyed the relics of the Holy Grail to Charles the Great.

All these facts were passing before the soul of the dying Turketul. He viewed his own life bound up with the history of Europe, and he mused how, introduced into the intermingling of nations by royal matrimonial alliances, the secrets of Christianity had achieved a perpetual mission, not yet complete. He realized that it was a matter of import to promulgate this Christian mission in the future, and turning to the monks and lay brothers around his couch, whose immediate concern this future was, he addressed his farewell words to them. "Preserve the fire of your zeal." He uttered these words and expired. He now addresses the peoples of Europe. "Preserve the fire of your zeal." He said these words at the end of his life, which has been dedicated to the task of connecting the history of the Continent to that of England, knowing full well that the establishment of towns would continue for a thousand years. We are now at the end of this thousand years.

At Cowbit, close to the Monastery of Croyland, there stands a chapel. There is a document preserved in a niche in the wall of this chapel. It contains particulars concerning the swan mark, which was branded on the foot of the swans as an indication that the latter were the property of the King. This swan mark is a remarkable sign.



What is the significance attached to it? It is Turketul's lamp, which it was customary to hoist in Cowbit, the most elevated point in the surroundings of Croyland, as a signal that the Danes were about to launch an attack. The hoisting of the lamp served as a signal for the populace that they should seek refuge behind their ramparts as the Danes were about to attack. The old Chancellor of the King, the Town-founder and builder of fortresses, warned his people. This symbol was branded on the swans, as Turketul was known as the Swan-Knight. The saga of the Swan-Knight, however, does not, as some would have us believe, derive its origin from Brabant, Holland, or Cleve, but in the English province of Holland in the vicinity of Peterborough. But in this case it is no longer saga—it is history. The time has now arrived, after the passage of a thousand years, when history should be retrieved from the mists of legend.

Sent forth by Arthur as Knight of the Grail, fighting for sanctity, finally serving the peace-loving King, the messenger of the Holy

Grail founded the cities. Now, at the expiration of a thousand years, these cities have become what they are—gigantic forces. Thus we see their development throughout history, but the mission still remains, even if changed in outward formation. Just as of old, the peace-loving economic character was bestowed on the development of towns by means of valiant encounters; in like manner we of to-day are called upon to fight for a similar peace-loving, economic significance in the evolution of the countries throughout the world. This can no longer be achieved by matrimonial alliances. It is possible to-day only by appropriate co-operation in concrete fields of endeavour; yet the mission still remains—to impregnate the world with the economic impulse in the light of the precious and most unselfish Blood that was shed for all humanity. The task has still to be undertaken—the method alone has altered.

Thus we can see that the words of warning clothed in the garments of saga have now once more to be extricated from the mists of saga and presented in the light of history. And now one is constrained to ask: Where is the kindling fire to preserve it? Should it not be possible, delving back into the veritable all-embracing depths of the history of England, to renew the fire that slumbers in the souls of men, and thus consciously to tread the path leading from town culture to world economic culture from the year 1000 to the year 2000, from slumbering saga to present-day transactions?