

2 GERMANY AND THE GERMANS

we count back our progenitors to the twenty-first generation, they number something over two millions. When we trace an ancestry so far, therefore, we must know something of the multitude from which the individual is descended, if we are to gather anything of value concerning his racial characteristics. The solace of all genealogical investigation is the infallible discovery, that the greatest among us began in a small way.

If you paddle up the Elbe and the Havel from Hamburg to Potsdam, you will find yourself in the territory conquered from the heathen Wends in the days of Henry I, the Fowler (918-935), which was the cradle of what is now the German Empire.

The Emperor Sigismund, who was often embarrassed financially by reason of his wars and journeyings, had borrowed some four hundred thousand gold florins from Frederick, and it was in settlement of this debt that he mortgaged the territory of Brandenburg, and on the 8th of April, 1417, the ceremony of enfeoffment was performed at Constance, by which the House of Hohenzollern became possessed of this territory, and was thereafter included among the great electorates having a vote in the election of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.