. . . AND I'M THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND

Emma, my manicurist, who comes from Bolivia, tsk-tsks at me for picking my left thumb. I worry the cuticle of my thumb with my index finger until it bleeds, and then the thumbnail grows in dented and scarred. I tell Emma, "I think I'm too old to change," and then I tell her my theory, that I pick at my thumb because when I was a baby I sucked it and Mother's relatives told her that would ruin my teeth, so she put mittens on me and sometimes tied my hands behind my back. That may have stopped me from sucking my thumb, but later I developed the habit of picking at it. Once I was startled to see a grown woman sitting in a subway station with her thumb in her mouth. Then I realized she wasn't sucking her thumb, she was just chewing her thumbnail.

Emma from Bolivia is not related to me. Both my mother and grand-mother, however, carried the name Emma, and Emma turns out to be the name of an ancient queen of England. One of my mother's middle names, Edythe, also echoes that of a queen of England. Not only that, but my grandmother Emma's husband was called Alfred, the name of one of the greatest English kings. So, I said to myself, why not create an imaginary family tree based on the British kings and queens whose names are shared by members of my real family? A genealogy by nomenclature, as it were.

I, of course, always connect my name with that of Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III of England.

ꕥ

Your name is the first thing people learn about you. It is also the first inkling many people have of their personality. From an early age, I had delusions of grandeur, fed by the discovery that I had the same name as Queen Charlotte of England. Born Princess Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Charlotte married King George III of England in 1761 and was crowned queen shortly afterward. George III was the "tyrant" from whom the thirteen United States of America declared their independence on July 8, 1776.

I discovered my royal namesake in the glossary of names ("A Pronouncing Biographical Dictionary Containing More Than Three Thousand Names of Noteworthy Persons") printed at the back of my father's *Webster's Collegiate*

Dictionary, Fifth Edition. The dictionary was inscribed on the inside front cover "To Paul F. Potter from Mother and Dad, April 21, 1938." That would have been my father's twenty-seventh birthday. The dictionary also contained "A Pronouncing Vocabulary of Common English Christian Names," where I learned that Charlotte is the feminine form of the name Charles [Teutonic], meaning "strong, manly," and that the name's diminutive forms are Lottie and Lotta. No one ever called me that, although when I was around twelve the boys in my class took to calling me "Whole lotta Carlotta," which embarrassed me a whole lot.

In the dictionary's "Pronouncing Gazetteer" I found a list of places named in honor of Queen Charlotte, such as Charlottesville, Virginia; Charlotte, North Carolina; the Queen Charlotte Islands off the coast of British Columbia; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada; Charlotte Harbor, Florida; and Charlottenburg, a district of Berlin. There's a folksong, too: "Charlotte Town is burning down, goodbye, goodbye. Burning down to the ground, goodbye Liza Jane." I had assumed that the song dated from the Civil War, perhaps referring to the burning of Charleston. But its origins appear to be murky, and Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, also has a devastating fire in its history.

I was delighted to discover that Queen Charlotte and I share an interest in music. Queen Charlotte knew Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, studied with Johann Christian Bach, and was crazy about the music of Georg Friedrich Handel, who came to England in 1710 and lived there until his death in 1759. Queen Charlotte played the harpsichord, and she is said to have whiled away the ten stormy days it took to cross the English Channel before her marriage by playing her harpsichord and singing. Her library contained volumes of printed music for harpsichord, violin, flute, and cello, for use by her and her family. King George also played the harpsichord, and the king and queen held weekly private concerts at St. James's Palace.

Johann Christian Bach, the eleventh son of Johann Sebastian, was Queen Charlotte's music master ("Master of the King's Musick") for twenty years. When eight-year-old Mozart visited London with his family, Queen Charlotte sang to his accompaniment. She was also an amateur botanist, honored in the name of the Bird of Paradise plant (*Strelitzia reginae*). Queen Charlotte loved dogs and brought large white Pomeranians with her when she married George III. Her Pomeranians were only three-quarters the size of my Samoyeds, but they had the same thick fur, curly tails, and Arctic ancestry.

Among the many things I do not share with Queen Charlotte is having given birth to fifteen children. Actually, Mother denied that I was named after Queen Charlotte. She said she just liked the name.

But back to the Emmas in my family tree. The name derives from an Old High German word, *ermen*, meaning "strong." My grandmother Emma and then my mother were of unbroken German descent (the family recorded births, deaths, and marriages in an old German Bible), so they might have been aware of the name's Germanic origin, but probably not.

The Old High German language dates from approximately the sixth to the eleventh centuries A.D. The story of the English queen with the same name as my maternal grandmother takes us back to that era, a thousand years ago, in what used to be called the Dark Ages, and into the pages of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a project begun in the ninth century by King Alfred the Great.

Queen Emma is unique in history—the wife of two kings of England, as well as the mother or stepmother of no fewer than four others. Charles Dickens wrote about her in *A Child's History of England* (1905), and she has been the subject of several recent biographies. Although Emma's birthdate is unknown, it is estimated to have been around A.D. 985. She was the younger sister of Richard II, Duke of Normandy, who succeeded his father in 996. In 1002, when she would still have been a teenager, Emma of Normandy crossed the channel to marry Æthelred II, king of Wessex, the kingdom of the West Saxons in southwest Britain.

Wessex, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, was founded by the Saxon King Cerdic and his son Cynric in the sixth century. The Saxons had begun attacking Britain even before the Romans pulled up stakes at the beginning of the fifth century. The Romans had ruled Britain, or Britannia, for nearly 500 years, and their departure in the early fifth century A.D. left the Britons with a serious defense gap. The same tribes that had plagued the Romans—Picts, Scots, Irish, and others, in addition to Saxons—descended on southern Britain. In A.D. 446 the Britons appealed to the military leader of the western Roman empire for help in what is known as the "Groans of the Britons" ("the barbarians drive us to the sea, the sea drives us to the barbarians, between these two means of death we are either killed or drowned"), but the Romans were busy fighting a losing battle with the barbarians and did not respond.

In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the king of the Britons seeks help from tribes in northern Germany, with the first mercenaries, the brothers Hengest and Horsa (meaning respectively "stallion" and "horse"), arriving in about 450. This story is probably a myth, like the legend of the founding of Rome by the twin brothers Romulus and Remus. Hengest and Horsa might have been part of an ancient Germanic horse cult, twin gods who were written into Anglo-Saxon history just as Romulus and Remus were written into Livy's and Plutarch's histories of Rome. Not a few emperors and kings have bolstered their credibility by claiming divine ancestry. The royal genealogies in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for example, trace

the ancestry of King Cerdic to the chief Norse god Woden (Odin), and that of King Æthelwulf, father of Alfred the Great, to Adam, the first man.

The myth of Hengest and Horsa symbolically represents the migration of Germanic tribes—Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and others—to Britain over the next two hundred years. By about A.D. 600, these peoples, known collectively as the Anglo-Saxons, had established a system of kingdoms and subkingdoms in Britain. The main kingdoms were Northumbria in the north, East Anglia in the east, Mercia in the west, and Wessex in the south, with minor kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, and Essex. The kingdoms jockeyed for power, with East Anglia and Kent dominating at one point, Mercia at another, Northumbria at another, and Wessex continually consolidating its power.

Then in the late 700s, another wave of invaders struck Britain, described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as "Northmen from the land of robbers . . . the first ships of the Danishmen that sought the land of the English nation." These were the Vikings, the rulers of the sea, the leading explorers, colonists, and raiders of the Middle Ages. The invading Vikings plundered Northumbria and destroyed the abbey at Lindisfarne, an island off the northeast coast of England and the site of a monastery founded in about 635. The chronicle for the year 793 records the invasion and its attendant horrors as follows:

> This year came dreadful fore-warnings over the land of the Northumbrians, terrifying the people most woefully: these were immense sheets of light rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons flying across the firmament. These tremendous tokens were soon followed by a great famine: and not long after, on the sixth day before the ides of January in the same year, the harrowing inroads of heathen men made lamentable havoc in the church of God in Holy-island [Lindisfarne], by rapine and slaughter.

Within ten years Northumbria, East Anglia, and nearly all of Mercia fell to the invaders. Only the kingdom of Wessex survived.

King Æthelred was in his early thirties when he married Emma and had already fathered six sons and four daughters. The marriage, arranged by the king and the Duke of Normandy, was a diplomatic one. The alliance was intended to protect the Anglo-Saxons in Britain against invasion by the Normans (which worked for about sixty years, until the Normans themselves invaded) and to give mutual protection against the marauding Viking "sea pirates," known to the English as Danes. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that the year before Emma

arrived, "there was great commotion in England in consequence of an invasion by the Danes, who spread terror and devastation wheresoever they went, plundering and burning and desolating the country . . . ." As Dickens told his young readers, ". . . [King Æthelred] thought it would be a good plan to marry into some powerful foreign family that would help him with soldiers. So, in the year one thousand and two, he courted and married Emma, the sister of Richard Duke of Normandy; a lady who was called the Flower of Normandy."

Emma was married to the king and crowned queen of his kingdom in a combination wedding and coronation rite. The Anglo-Saxons gave their new queen the English name Ælfgifu. It was a common name, and also that of Æthelred's previous wife, which might be one reason Emma preferred her Norman name. To us, at such a far linguistic remove from the language of the Anglo-Saxons, known as Old English, Ælfgifu seems an odd name, but it is, in fact, a fitting name for a queen. Ælfgifu means roughly "gift of the gods," or more precisely, "gift of the elf." To the Anglo-Saxons, elves weren't mischievous, malicious little fairies wearing pointy green hats (much less diminutive helpers in Santa Claus's workshop, or animated cookie bakers living in a tree) but beautiful, human-like, supernatural beings.

The Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies are full of names beginning with *Ælf,* which suggests the importance of elves in the culture. People in Iceland still believe in elves, according to the handball team Iceland sent to the 2008 Olympic Games. "Yeah, the elves are on the streets, having fun with the people there," said one of the players, who returned to Reykjavík with silver medals. "Of course our elves celebrate for us. It's Iceland, there are many people who believe in elves."

It is unknown whether Emma spoke any English when she arrived in Britain. She would have grown up speaking Old Norman, which falls into the same linguistic family as Old English, but the two languages are not mutually intelligible. The Old English poem *Beowulf,* composed sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries, gives a sense of how the king's councilors, or *witan,* would have sounded to Emma. She attended the witan's meetings as a witness from the beginning of her reign even if she could not understand its language. But because Emma's mother's language was Danish, she might easily have talked with the Danes, descendents of the Viking invaders, who had settled in England by that time. Normandy, Emma's birthplace, was originally a Viking colony, and Emma was the great-granddaughter of Rollo, its founder (in 911). When Emma became queen of England, the Normans were still providing a safe harbor for the Scandinavian raiders and a market for their English plunder.

Emma was probably familiar with spoken Latin. At any rate, later in life (1041) she commissioned a book in Latin, *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (In praise of Queen Emma), written by a Flemish monk. Nowhere does Emma's book

mention her marriage to Æthelred. The translator of the *Encomium* regards it as "written purely for the glorification of Emma and her relatives." The book might, however, have been intended to support the claims of Emma's sons to the English throne (more below).

Emma might also have had personal reasons for omitting her first marriage from her book. Æthelred gave Emma royal standing and thus a place in history, but he was a disastrous ruler. He is the king known to history as "the unready," actually a mistranslation of the Old English *unræd* (bad counsel) but an apt description of his incompetent, disorganized reign, which left England in despair and confusion. While king, Æthelred repeatedly taxed the population to pay off the Danes ("danegeld") and put his trust in devious men such as his son-in-law Eadric Streona, described in Emma's *Encomium* as "skilful in counsel but treacherous in guile" and whose double-dealings between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes are detailed in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*

To be fair, other Anglo-Saxon kings before Æthelred had also paid tribute to the Danes to protect their subjects from pillage and slaughter. However, on St. Brice's Day 1002, seven months after he married Emma, Æthelred ordered the murder of "all the Danish men who were in England." Although the edict was an exaggeration and could not have been carried out to the letter, the sister of Sweyn Forkbeard, King of Denmark, was among the victims of the resulting slaughter.

The next year, a vengeful Sweyn invaded England. His forces burned and plundered Exeter, a fortified town whose profits had been given to Queen Emma on her marriage. (The queen also held land elsewhere in England.) The queen's profits were collected by stewards known as reeves. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* blames Emma's reeve in Exeter for opening the city's gates to the Danes: "This year was Exeter demolished, through the French churl Hugh, whom the lady [Emma] had appointed her steward there." Sweyn sailed away after sacking Salisbury, but the Danes returned year after year for more plundering and burning. Before Æthelred II died, the Danes had seized control of England.

In 1013, Sweyn, with the help of his son Cnut, invaded England and defeated the Anglo-Saxons. Emma's book describes Sweyn's fleet of longships as covered with gold and silver, decorated with birds, bulls, dolphins, lifelike images of men in silver and gold, centaurs, and fire-breathing dragons. Emma and her children (two sons and a daughter) sought the protection of her brother Richard in Normandy. Æthelred joined Emma in exile, even though Duke Richard was helping Sweyn. Soon after conquering the Anglo-Saxons, however, Sweyn died (possibly murdered). That year (1014), England was devastated by a "great sea-flood, which spread wide over this land, and ran so far up as it never did before, overwhelming many towns, and an innumerable multitude of people," according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

Æthelred and Emma returned to England to reclaim the throne, but it was not long before the Anglo-Saxons were again under attack. In 1016, Cnut readied an assault, gathering a fleet of 160 ships that rivaled those of his father Sweyn in magnificence, as described in the *Encomium*:

> Gold shone on the prows, silver also flashed on the variously shaped ships. So great, in fact, was the magnificence of the fleet, that if its lord had desired to conquer any people, the ships alone would have terrified the enemy, before the warriors whom they carried joined battle at all. For who could look upon the lions of the foe, terrible with the brightness of gold, who upon the men of metal, menacing with golden face, who upon the dragons burning with pure gold, who upon the bulls on the ships threatening death, their horns shining with gold, without feeling any fear for the king of such a force? Furthermore, in this great expedition there was present no slave, no man freed from slavery, no low-born man, no man weakened by age; for all were noble, all strong with the might of mature age, all sufficiently fit for any type of fighting, all of such great fleetness, that they scorned the speed of horsemen.

At the time of Cnut's invasion, Æthelred lay mortally ill and soon died. After the king's death, Cnut and Edmund Ironside, Æthelred's son by his first wife, battled each other around the country until Cnut defeated Edmund. A compromise (brokered by none other than Eadric Streona) was reached by which Cnut and Edmund Ironside shared the country. Within weeks, however, Edmund Ironside died. Neither the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* nor Emma's *Encomium* explains why, but he was long believed to have been assassinated by order of Eadric Streona, who had changed his allegiance more than once between the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes. Cnut was left as sole ruler, to begin a twenty-year reign as Cnut I, King of Denmark and England.

Emma stayed in England after Æthelred's death. She had been queen for fourteen years and had amassed power and property. In 1017, Cnut took Emma as his queen. Cnut was already married, to an aristocratic woman, Ælfgifu of Northampton (yet another Ælfgifu!), and the king did not divorce his first wife when he married Emma. It may have been a commonlaw marriage, but in any case the bishops turned a blind eye to Ælfgifu's existence when Cnut married Emma. Emma's book describes Cnut at the time of their marriage as "yet in the flower of youth, but . . . nevertheless master of indescribable wisdom." Cnut was about ten years younger than Emma. And from the description in the 13th century Icelandic *Knýtlinga Saga* of Cnut's descendants, the king was an appealing man:

> exceptionally tall and strong, and the handsomest of men, all except for his nose, that was thin, high-set, and rather hooked. He had a fair complexion none-the-less, and a fine, thick head of hair. His eyes were better than those of other men, both the handsomer and the keener of their sight.

Cnut took decisive action on succeeding to the throne. He ordered the death of numbers of Anglo-Saxon nobles, who could have opposed him; he had the traitorous Eadric Streona executed; he rid himself of possible claimants to the throne by having Æthelred's remaining son, Eadwig, killed, and by exiling into Hungary two sons of Edmund Ironside; and he demanded 72,000 pounds from his subjects to pay off the Danish army, most of whom went home to Denmark.

After the initial bloodletting, Cnut's reign settled into a more peaceful mode. To help reconcile him to his subjects, he held a meeting between Anglo-Saxons and Danes at Oxford during which he agreed to follow the laws laid down in the time of Æthelred's father, Edgar the Peaceable. He sent a letter to the English people from Denmark, whose throne he had gone to claim after his brother died, promising no more Danish raids, a promise that was largely kept.

Cnut and Emma together gave lavish gifts to the church. Emma donated the arm bone of Saint Bartholemew to Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury, and she and Cnut presented a huge gold cross to New Minster in Winchester. (The Scandinavians who originally invaded England were pagans, but Cnut's grandfather, Harald Bluetooth, had converted, after which Christianity grew in Norway and Denmark.) Cnut had a minster (a large church attached to a monastery) built where he had defeated Edmund Ironside, he sent a donation to France when the cathedral at Chartres burned down, and he traveled to Rome and negotiated a relaxation on tolls for the Anglo-Saxons and Danes who traveled on the continent. During that trip, Cnut passed through the city in Flanders where the monk who wrote Emma's *Encomium* lived. The monk testified in Emma's book as to the pleasure Emma and Cnut took in their marriage:

> . . . it is hard to credit how vast a magnitude of delight in one another arose in them both. For the King rejoiced that he had unexpectedly entered upon a most noble marriage; the lady, on the other hand, was inspired both by the excellence of her husband, and by the delightful hope of future offspring.

Cnut died in 1035, before he was forty. Because the king had not named a successor, his death was followed by a period of political intrigue, during which both Emma and Ælfgifu of Northampton schemed on behalf of their sons by Cnut. Harthacnut, Emma's son, insisted on staying in Denmark, where he had succeeded his father as king. Emma's two sons by Æthelred, Edward and Alfred,

were still in Normandy. Emma wrote to them, seeking their help and advice. Alfred responded by sailing to England, where he was murdered by the Danish claimant to the throne, Harold Harefoot, the son of Ælfgifu and Cnut. In Harthecnut's absence, Harold Harefoot was proclaimed king in 1037. Emma fled to the continent and sought refuge in Flanders.

When Harold Harefoot died in 1040, of natural causes, Emma returned to England and her son Harthacnut became king. After reigning for only two years, Harthacnut died. He was succeeded by his half-brother Edward, whose accession ended the rule of the Danes and returned England to Anglo-Saxon control. About this time, Emma commissioned her *Encomium*. The work is divided into three books. The first deals with Sweyn Forkbeard and his conquest of England. The second deals with his son Cnut's reconquest of England, his marriage to Emma, and his reign. The third deals with events after Cnut's death and the accession to the throne of Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor.

One of Edward's first acts on becoming king was to seize Queen Emma's assets. As the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* puts it, Edward, who had been essentially abandoned by his mother in Normandy, turned against her "because she was formerly very hard upon the king her son, and did less for him than he wished before he was king, and also since." Emma retired to her house in Winchester and remained in England until her death in 1052. Emma was nearly seventy when she died, having outlived two royal husbands and four other kings of England.

Known as the Confessor, King Edward was canonized in the twelfth century and, according to Wikipedia, is regarded as the "patron saint of kings, difficult marriages, and separated spouses." Westminster Abbey contains a shrine to Saint Edward, with a bench where sick people were customarily laid to be cured. Among other royalty in the shrine to Saint Edward lies his consort, Queen Edith—Eadgyð to the Anglo-Saxons.

My mother's first middle name was Edythe, a variant spelling of Edith and almost identical to the spelling of Queen Eadgyð's name. Eadgyð was the daughter of Godwin, Earl of Wessex, the most powerful man in England next to the king. (Her mother was Godwin's Danish wife, Gytha.) She married Edward the Confessor and became queen in 1045. It was said that Edward never consummated the marriage. At any rate, he and Queen Eadgyð had no children, and at one point Edward banished her to the nunnery at Wilton where she had lived before her marriage. Queen Eadgyð, however, received extensive lands throughout England from her husband and was made wealthy by their revenues.

Edward the Confessor died in January 1066, and Queen Eadgyð's brother, Harold Godwinson, was immediately crowned king. His succession was contested by King Harald Hardrada of Norway and Duke William of Normandy, who both invaded Britain in September 1066. The English defeated Harald Hardrada in late September but were beaten by William of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings on October 14. King Harold died at the battle. The Battle of Hastings marked the beginning of the Norman Conquest. William of Normandy, known thereafter as the Conqueror, was the great-nephew of Queen Emma.

Like Emma, Queen Eadgyð commissioned a book that celebrated her husband, *Vita Ædwardi Regis qui apud Westmonasterium Requiescit* (Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster). Queen Eadgyð was known not only for her learning but also for the sweetness of her character (the contrast between her and her warlike father gave rise to the saying, "As comes the rose from the thorn came Edith from Godwin") and for her skill in needlework ("In this accomplishment we are assured she had no equal as far as Constantinople"). Some historians consider it possible that Queen Eadgyð commissioned the Bayeux Tapestry, a long piece of embroidery on linen cloth that tells the story of events leading to the Norman Conquest. Queen Eadgyð died in 1075 and, as noted, was interred at Westminster near Edward.

Bayeux Tapestry scene: William the Conqueror's flagship en route to England

Towering over other monarchs of the middle ages, and preceding by more than a century Queen Emma and Queen Eadgyð, was King Alfred the Great, namesake of my grandmother Emma's husband. Alfred, or Ælfred ("elf counsel"), reigned over the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex from 871 to 899. King Alfred is called "the Great" because of his defense against the Danish invaders and for his farsighted reforms in administration and education, as well as

for his learning and his contributions to literature and history. Alfred's life is described in *Vita Ælfredi regis Angul Saxonum* (Life of Alfred, king of the Anglo-Saxons), written in 893 by the Welsh monk Asser of Dyfed.

When Alfred became king, the island of Britain had suffered invasions by the Danes for a hundred years. Alfred began fighting against the Danes with his brother Æthelred and continued after he became king in 871, at age twenty-two, when Æthelred died. In that year, known as "Alfred's year of battles," Alfred and his brother fought nine battles against the Danes. After more years of battles, Alfred finally subdued the Danes and in 878 entered into a peace that divided England into lands held by the Danes (the Danelaw) and territory ruled by Alfred. The Danish attacks resumed in 892, but after Alfred destroyed the Danes' ships in 895, they gave up and retired to other parts of England or to the continent.

During the period of calm between 878 and 892, Alfred reoccupied London and set about restoring the city, which had been badly damaged during the first Viking invasions. He also redeveloped Winchester, an ancient Roman city that had become the capital of Wessex, and laid out the street plan still visible today. All during his reign, Alfred had been rebuilding towns and founding new ones. He also reorganized the military by establishing a mounted, standing field army, a network of garrisons, and a small fleet of ships that could navigate rivers and estuaries. At the heart of Alfred's defense system was a network of *burghs* (boroughs) about 20 miles apart, which meant that soldiers were only one day's march away from an attack anywhere in Wessex. Alfred also issued a law code (*dombok*), consisting of 120 chapters and to which he contributed a long introduction. Asser writes that Alfred looked carefully at all judgments passed in his absence and required his judges to be literate. Alfred also reformed the minting of coins. One of the nicest stories Asser tells about Alfred is that he invented a lantern, "beautifully constructed of wood and white ox-horn," that protected the candle inside from drafts. The lantern was a sort of candle clock. Each candle burned for four hours, so that six candles burned in succession marked twenty-four hours.

Alfred was a learned man. Asser records that on November 11, 887, Alfred decided to learn to read Latin. He was thirty-eight years old. Asser also tells the story that as a child, Alfred won a book of English poetry from his mother for being the first of her children to memorize it. In the 880s, while he was reorganizing his kingdom's defenses, Alfred set about a revival of learning, as had Charlemagne on the continent in the previous century. He gathered scholars such as Asser about him and established schools for his children, those of other noblemen, and even those of lower birth.

Alfred famously lamented that "learning had declined so thoroughly in England that there were very few men on this side of the Humber [an estuary in east England flowing into the North Sea] who could understand their divine services in English, or even translate a single letter from Latin into English: and I suppose that there were not many beyond the Humber either." He therefore began a project of translating himself, or having translated, what he considered to be "most necessary for all men to know" from Latin into Old English. These works included Pope Gregory's *Liber regulae pastoralis* (Pastoral care, c. 590) and the most popular work of the Middle Ages, *De consolatione philosophiae* (The consolation of philosophy) by the sixth-century Roman philosopher Boethius. Alfred described his translation method as "sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense." In about 890, Alfred ordered the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to be compiled. The work, which begins with the arrival of Roman ships to Britain in 60 B.C., was carried out mostly by monks and drew on earlier histories such as the Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical history of the English people).

Alfred died in 899 and was buried at Winchester. The cloister at Winchester, but not the church, was demolished during the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. The graves were left intact but later disturbed, and Alfred's bones have not been found. The bones of other Anglo-Saxon monarchs, possibly including those of Emma and Cnut, are gathered into wooden mortuary chests that lie in Winchester Cathedral.

The following example of King Alfred's writing is from his translation of *De consolatione philosophiae.* The italicized passages are by Boethius; the rest is by Alfred:

> *You know that I never greatly delighted in covetousness and the possession of earthly power, nor longed for this authority*, but I desired instruments and materials to carry out the work I was set to do, which was that I should virtuously and fittingly administer the authority committed to me. Now no man, as you know, can get full play for his natural gifts, nor conduct and administer government, unless he has fit tools, and the raw material to work upon. By material I mean that which is necessary to the exercise of natural powers; thus a king's raw material and instruments of rule are a well-peopled land, and he must have men of prayer, men of war, and men of work. As you know, without these tools no king may display his special talent. Further, for his materials he must have means of support for the three classes above spoken of, which are his instruments; and these means are land to dwell in, gifts, weapons, meat, ale, clothing, and what else soever the three classes need.

> Without these means he cannot keep his tools in order, and without these tools he cannot perform any of the tasks entrusted to him. I have desired material for the exercise of government that my talents and my power might not be forgotten and hidden away, for every good gift and every power soon grows old and is no more heard of, if Wisdom be not in them. Without Wisdom no faculty can be fully brought out, for whatsoever is done unwisely can never be accounted as skill. To be brief, I may say that it has ever been my desire to live honourably while I was alive, and after my death to leave to them that should come after me my memory in good works.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* ends with the death of King Stephen in A.D. 1154. Stephen is famous for engaging in military campaigns to defend his crown against his cousin, known as Matilda to the Normans and Maude to the Anglo-Saxons. Considering that my father's father was named Stephen Sherman and my father's mother was called Maude Gertrude, I might add these two figures from British history to my imaginary family tree.

Maude was named as the heir to the throne of England by her father Henry I, but Stephen got to England first after Henry died. Both Maude and Stephen were direct descendants of the first Norman king of England, William the Conqueror. Maude's father and Stephen's mother were brother and sister, two of the nine (or ten) children of William. Maude was also descended from the Anglo-Saxon kings of England, back to Alfred the Great, through her maternal grandmother, the Saxon Saint Margaret, who was married to Malcom Canmore, King of Scotland.

Maude is known as Empress Matilda because she was married as a child to Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. She called herself Lady of England. At the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, Maude defeated Stephen and was made queen. Maude was never crowned, however, but was deposed because of what the people deemed her arrogant behavior. For one thing, she refused to halve the taxes of the Londoners.

* * *

Sources

I learned about the lives of Queen Emma and Queen Eadgyð from two recent historical studies. Harriet O'Brien published her book, *Queen Emma and the Vikings*, in 2005 (New York and London: Bloomsbury). Emma's life was also the subject of a 2004 study by Isabella Strachan titled *Emma the Twice-Crowned Queen: England in the Viking Age* (London: Peter Owen).

Emma's book, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, edited and translated by Alistair Campbell, was published in 1949 by the Royal Historical Society of London as the Camden Third Series, no. 72. The translation is available online at <http://www.archive.org/stream/publications72royauoft>. The quote from Alistair Campbell about the intent of Emma's book is on p. xxi of the online text. The text of Emma's book is quoted regarding the character of Eadric Streona (*Encomium*, p. 24), Sweyn's and Cnut's fleets of longships (*Encomium*, pp. 13 and 20), the appeal of Cnut (p. 30), and Emma's and Cnut's marriage (*Encomium*, pp. 33, 35)

I also consulted the text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, as translated in 1823 by the Rev. James Ingram, which has been made available online by Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/657/657.txt>. The text includes additional readings from the 1847 translation of Dr. J. A. Giles.

Specific information and other quotations in my account can be found in the following sources:

The details of how Princess Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz passed the time on her way across the channel to marry George III of England (p. 2) come from the journals of Mrs. Papendiek, assistant keeper of the wardrobe and reader to the queen (*Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte*, edited by Charlotte Louise Henrietta Papendiek, London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1887).

The Groans of the Britons (p. 3) were recorded by the sixth century British cleric Gildas in his history of post-Roman Britain, *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* 1.20. Quoted in Wikipedia, "Groans of the Britons" [accessed December 26, 2011].

Charles Dickens's *A Child's History of England* is available from Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/699>. The quote on p. 5 about Æthelred's courtship of Emma of Normandy is from pp. 39–40 of Dickens's history.

The Icelandic handball player's comments about elves (p. 5) were published by Reuters on August 23, 2008.

The description of Cnut's good looks (p. 8) is from the Wikipedia article "Cnut the Great," which cites M. J. Trow, *Cnut–Emperor of the North* (Stroud: Sutton, 2005), p. 92, and H. John, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings* (Penguin, 1995), p. 122.

The descriptions of Queen Eadgyð's character and skills (p. 10) are from Georgina E. Troutbeck's guidebook, *Westminster Abbey* (London: Methuen and Company, and Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1900).

Details of King Alfred's life and the description of the lamp he invented (p. 11) are from the online translation of Asser of Saint David's *Annals of the reign of Alfred the Great from A.D. 849 to A.D. 887*: <http://www.globalfolio.net/medievalist/eng/a/asser-reign-of-asser-the-great/index0018.php>.

The quotation from King Alfred about his translation method is from the Wikipedia article, "King Alfred the Great." The example of King Alfred's writing (pp. 12–13) was on the official website of the British monarchy when I drafted this chapter but has since been removed, possibly because the attribution of the translation to King Alfred is now questioned.

I relied on Wikipedia for information about King Alfred, King Cnut, Queen Charlotte, King Stephen, and Empress Matilda; for further details about the lives of Queen Emma and Queen Eadgyð; for information about the general history of Anglo-Saxon England, including the Viking invasions; and for miscellaneous facts about, for example, the origins of the folksong "Charlotte Town."