

XIV.—THE HANSEATIC CONFEDERATION, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE ENGLISH FACTORIES AND TRADING CONNECTION WITH NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

BY ROBERT COLTMAN CLEPHAN.

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PART I.—GENERAL SKETCH.

IT is impossible to deal intelligibly with the Hansa factories in England without an introductory sketch of the history, aims, and government of the League in general. The outline to-night must necessarily be brief. The subject is so interesting and so pregnant with vast issues bearing on the history and trading policy of medieval northern Europe, that it is a matter for astonishment that historians have too often rather shrunk from grappling with its subtle and somewhat obscure ramifications. Dynasties and wars form more concrete subjects for the historian, but trading aspirations have given the keynote and provided the sinews of war to many a scheme of empire, thus pulling the wires of history, so to speak, to an extent not always recognised.

The German and Lombard towns laid the foundation for future corporate greatness by strenuous efforts made to lighten the oppression of the feudal system, which existed nowhere more conspicuously than in medieval Germany. Cities organised themselves against aggression, and associated themselves together with others for mutual protection against the injustice and exactions of a rapacious nobility. The feudal lords, instead of protecting the third estate, harassed and oppressed it. Little by little the towns began to organise their resources with a view of at least mitigating the grievous disabilities under which they groaned. They contended for safety of person and goods against freebooters; the clearance of robbers from the high seas and highways; right to own land; the substitution of regular tribunals instead of the barbarous trial by combat; or the test of hot iron, the

so-called 'judgment of God';¹ an equitable regulation of dues and taxes; authorised weighing of goods; machinery for the enforcement of debts; municipal government; and many other reforms which we should now consider absolutely necessary for the most elementary condition of society. At times buying the protection of their liege lords, or setting one baron or princeling against another; by slow degrees they achieved power, with freedom to organise their community, and pursue their commerce unfettered and unmolested. From the reign of the great Frederick Barbarossa, the so-styled holy Roman emperors were constantly engaged in wars in Italy and elsewhere, leaving Germany a perfect cockpit of faction. The cities, being frequently called upon for levies of men and money, gradually exacted privileges and monopolies in return, which, by and by, resulted in opulence, independence, and power, their alliance being eagerly sought after by powerful princes. Associated together they became irresistible, their citizens enjoying even wider immunities abroad than under their own rulers, and at length were a power to be reckoned with by the great states of Europe. Many of them became free cities of the empire, with most of the attributes of independent states. Eventually some eighty cities banded themselves together, forming a league powerful enough to dispose over fleets and armies, dethrone and set up kings; and to dictate their conditions more or less to all the northern sovereigns.

The political condition of northern Europe, and especially that of Scandinavia in the middle ages afforded this association, so remarkable for diplomatic astuteness, opportunities for pushing its protectionist and exclusive trading policy, which it used to the utmost, but which eventually rendered it intolerable.

ORIGIN, MEANING, AND APPLICATION OF THE TERM HANSE OR HANSA.

The word Hansa or Hanse was in use in north-western Europe, particularly in England, from a very early period. It invariably indicated a merchants' guild or association.

The first mention I can find of the word in the middle ages occurs as early as 799, when the merchants' guild of Regensburg, in South

¹ Carry a bar of red-hot iron, or walk over a red-hot ploughshare.

Germany, is styled 'Hanse.' It is very rarely met with in old Teutonic records, but frequently crops up, after Domesday Book, in early English history; and it was the use of the word in England that probably suggested its adoption by the early confederacies trading with the British Isles, and subsequently by the Hanseatic Bund. We find the term in an undated charter signed by Archbishop Thurstan (about 1120), granting to the citizens of Beverley, the same privileges as enjoyed by those of York: 'Volo ut burgenses mei de Beverlaco habeant suam hanshus'. King John conferred a charter on Dunwich in Norfolk which runs: 'Concessimus etiam eis hansam et gildam mercatoriam'. These examples may suffice—there are many others.

The origin of the word would seem to have been low German, probably the middle low German of the old dukedom of Saxony, or what is very similar, Anglo-Saxon, though it occurs in Bishop Ulfilas's Gothic translation of the bible, written about A.D. 350: 'Judas nam Hansa' (Judas took council); and the very early trading relations between the merchants of Cologne, 'homines Imperatoris,' and Wisby on the island of Gothland, might point to a Gothic derivation.

I came across a report from the *Edinburgh Review* dated October, 1877, of a most interesting article entitled 'Ulfilas, the Apostle of the Goths,' on which it is impossible to dwell this evening. The article is unsigned, but is, if I am not much mistaken, from the pen of our learned colleague Dr. Hodgkin.

That the name was not confined to German unions is clearly shown by the fact of the Flemish federation of twenty-four towns associated together for trading purposes in England, styling itself 'The London Hansa,' and curiously enough the 'London Merchant Adventurers' at one time called their association by this very name also.

HISTORIC SUMMARY.

The Hansa Bund sprang out of the early Teutonic trade with England, which dates back to Roman times. The League of the cities of Westphalia, and those of the Rhine generally, with its Friesland and Flemish allies, led by Cologne, was clearly the prototype for the association of Baltic cities, with Lübeck at its head; and eager was the rivalry and competition of the two confederacies until

they merged together in the Hansa, with Lübeck as its acknowledged queen. The Hanseatic Bund was thus clearly a development of the earlier Teutonic unions. The city of Lübeck was engaged in trade with Denmark before the dawn of the thirteenth century, and took part in a campaign against the celebrated Waldemar Seir; and the crushing victory of Bornhöved in 1227 was largely contributed to by the Lübeck contingent. The Danes were also beaten in Livonia and Courland, and their last stronghold, the castle of Reval, taken. The foothold then obtained resulted in the establishment of German factories at Reval, Dorpat, and Riga, but the position was lost again in 1238, when the treaty of that year gave Reval back to Denmark. The German influence soon after regained predominance, and these stations were re-established, by and by to be incorporated in the Bund. The victory of Bornhöved wrung concessions from Denmark for the herring fishery in the Baltic, and the possession of this trade clearly marked out Lübeck for the leadership of the Wendish cities, which union formed the nucleus for the future Hanseatic Confederation. Already at this period the little herring had begun to play an important part in the history of Europe; it was the loadstone that specially attracted the Germans to Baltic waters.

It is impossible within the limits of a short paper to give more than a mere outline of the dynastic history, so to speak, of the League. Anyone wishing to pursue the subject in this direction, would be amply repaid by a perusal of Miss Zimmern's charming book, published in England. For what may be described as the archaeological and commercial sides of the question, I have freely availed myself of the labours of Dr. Lappenberg, and the writers of a series of papers published by a society styling itself 'Verein für Hansische Geschichte,' whose field of operations covered most of the towns and factories, beginning 1870 and extending over the following decade.

The oldest records of the Baltic League are to be found in the laws and compacts of the old Wendish towns of Lübeck, Rostock, and Wismar, dated 1259, 'Lübische Recht' (Lübeck laws) they are called; they are written in Latin, but a German version dated 1240 lying in the town archives of Kiel, points to a still earlier origin. The co-operation of these towns, together with Gadebusch, Stralsund

Elbing, Kiel, Greifswald, and Hamburg goes still further back, and these common laws may be regarded as the corporate foundation of the Hanseatic League, which, however, did not adopt the designation before the middle of the fourteenth century, 'Hanse der Deutschen,' when the two sections united and the League became formally constituted.

There is an agreement of a slightly earlier date between Hamburg and Lübeck, but this concerns merely the mutual protection of the highway between the two cities.²

The first of these Wendish compacts provides for a common action against pirates and robbers, but there is no special mention of commercial union; while the second, dated 1265, decrees in addition that the necessary expenses be subscribed by all. The first document expressly states that it is compiled for all merchants using the 'Lübische Recht,' 'zum Nutzen aller Kaufleute, die daes Lübische Recht gebrauchen,' runs the later high German translation. Provision is made that all bad citizens be banished their towns, carrying away no property save and except 'apron and knife,' and the cities contract not to harbour the criminals of each other. Bigamy incurs the penalty of death by the axe, but this punishment was soon found too drastic, and but a little later was commuted to a fine of ten marks, later still increased to forty marks; two-thirds to go to the town treasury, remainder to judge or court, and the offender to hand over half his property to the woman he first married.

Shipwrecked goods (Strandgut) and prizes taken in war to be delivered to the Rath of the League, or their agents, for realisation for revenue purposes. Offenders against this article to be mulcted ten marks, or in default, banishment from the allied cities.

Common action is arranged for in cases of disputes between the cities and their liege lords, with the saving clause that only money, not men, be subscribed by the cities not primarily interested.

The punishment of whipping on the seat was inflicted for fraud, bribery, and minor offences. 'Qui falsa et nequam emptione seu

² Disraeli, in his *Curiosities of Literature* ('Feudal Customs'), says: 'There was a time when the German lords reckoned amongst their privileges that of robbing on the highways of their territory; which ended in raising up the famous Hanseatic Union to protect their commerce against rapine and avaricious exactions of toll.'

vendicione promeruerit sedere in sede que dicitur "scupstol" arbitrio consulum et iudicio eorum subiacebit.' Which may be rendered :—'He who by fraudulent and wicked buying and selling shall have deserved to sit in the seat which is called "scupstol," shall be ducked at the discretion of the counsellors and according to their judgment,' so here we have not only the word but the application. The word 'scupstol' recalls the punishment in the old Scottish law 'cukstule,' cucking or tossing the culprit up and down and in and out of dirty water. In the England of the Normans the punishment was expressed by 'tumbrel,' and later by cucking or ducking stool; in France 'tombereau' or 'tomberel,' and in Latin 'tumbrellum.'

We are far too apt to look upon the middle ages as entirely a rude and rough page in the world's history, and to plume ourselves on the supreme refinement of our own age as against all that preceded it; as if the application of steam to the locomotive was more wonderful than the genius that breathed life in the creations of Phidias and Praxiteles. Such generalizations are often hasty and very misleading. The world's history is made up of rising civilizations that culminate and set in luxury and effeminacy; then darkness prevails, when almost all experience is lost or hidden, and the world has to begin again, as it were. So it has gone on for many thousand years, and so it will go on to the end. We owe much to the middle ages, which were progressive, and contained a great deal that was sturdy and good; in them lay the resurrection of art, liberty, and jurisprudence.

The early history of the Wendish League was characterised by singular astuteness in negotiation, both with foreign powers and the feudal lords of its cities, and the political condition and combinations of northern Europe in the middle ages materially assisted its development. It invariably exhausted all the resources of diplomacy before drawing the sword, rightly judging that the baleful influence of war on commerce is but badly compensated for even by a successful appeal to arms. That the Wendish towns, including Hamburg, were more or less acting together for common objects with those of Westphalia, the Netherlands, and Livonia, is shown by an early treaty between the Gothic city of Wisby (Gothland) on the one hand, and the prince of Smolensk and burghers of Lübeck, Soest, Munster, Gröningen, Dortmund, Bremen, and Riga on the other. All the earlier efforts of the

League were concentrated on extending trade and acquiring influence in the Baltic, and the Norwegians, once the terror of the seas, became restricted to their own coasting trade, while the English were ousted from a great part of their oversea traffic.

In 1278 Magnus of Norway granted extensive trading privileges to the Wendish cities and Bremen, and the foundations for the important factory of Bergen were then laid down.

The constant friction and frequent wars among the three divisions of Scandinavia gave the League opportunities for pushing its influence in Baltic waters, which it used to the utmost, and its success became so evident that Waldemar III., surnamed Atterdag (a day will come), determined at all hazards to attempt to check its growing power. The Confederacy sustained its first reverse in the opening campaign, when Waldemar took and sacked the rich city of Wisby in 1361, the then richest and most important emporium of the League; the king thereupon assuming the title of king of the Goths; his success was, however, but transient, as the Lübeck fleet led by the burgermeister Johan Wittenberg, assisted by Henrik of Holstein, soon afterwards completely defeated him before Helsingborg. Wittenberg meeting with a serious reverse after this was recalled and beheaded, a common fate for Hansa leaders whose operations were not crowned with success. Lübeck now made a league with 77 cities, Wendish, Westphalian, Netherlands, and Livonian; the compact being signed at Cologne in 1367. The struggle for supremacy between the cities of Cologne and Lübeck will be touched upon more particularly in the second section of this paper, as it has a special bearing on English trade, but at this crisis they became united in common aims and objects, and the Hanseatic Confederation was now formally constituted. The forces now wielded by the Bund became very formidable, and their fleets took and sacked Copenhagen. The peace of Stralsund signed in 1370 gave the now powerful Confederacy undisputed sway in the Baltic, and a veto on the election to the Danish throne. Following is a list of the Hanse towns in alphabetical order:—

Amsterdam.	Brandenburg.	Buxtehude.	Duisburg.
Anklam.	Braunsberg.	Danzig.	Bimbeck.
Arnheim.	Braunschweig.	Deventer.	Elbing.
Berlin.	Bremen.	Dordrecht.	Elburg.
Bielefeld.	Breslau.	Dorpat.	Emmerich.
Bolsward.	Briel.	Dortmund.	Frankfurt a. O.

Gardelegen.	Kiel.	Osnabrück.	Stettin.
Gollnow.	Koesfeld.	Osterburg.	Stolpe.
Goslar.	Kolberg.	Paterborn.	Stralsund.
Göttingen.	Köln.	Pernan.	Tangermünde.
Greifswald.	Köln-on-Spree.	Quedlinburg.	Thiel.
Gröningen.	Königsberg.	Reval.	Thorn.
Halberstadt.	Krakau.	Riga.	Uelzen.
Halle.	Kulm.	Roermonde.	Unna.
Hamburg.	Lemgo.	Rostock.	Utrecht.
Hameln.	Lippstadt.	Rügenwalde.	Venlo.
Hamm.	Lübeck.	Salzwedel.	Warburg.
Hannover.	Lüneburg.	Seehausen.	Watershagen.
Harderwyk.	Magdeburg.	Soest.	Wesel.
Hasselt.	Minden.	Soltbomel.	Wisby.
Helmstedt.	Münster.	Stade.	Wismar.
Herford.	Nordheim.	Stargard.	Zierixee.
Hildesheim.	Nymwegen.	Staveren.	Zülphen.
Kampen.	Oschersleben.	Stendal.	Zwolle.

The list covers an immense and almost international area. Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, and even Sweden being all represented. Many have sunk into insignificance and others have disappeared altogether. The roll was ever a changing quantity, as cities joined or left the Confederacy, or were 'unhansed.' Discipline among the towns was strictly maintained, and any contumacious towards the diet were subjected to 'unhansing,' that is ejection from the Bund, and were only readmitted after abject submission and the imposition of a heavy fine. The important city of Bremen, which pressed her views as to leadership, remained unhansed for thirty years, and many cities once recalcitrant were never allowed to rejoin.

The diet, presided over by a syndic, was composed of deputies from each town on the roll, but there was always great reticence displayed to the world outside as to the numbers composing the League. A deputy questioned on this head would answer evasively, 'Those who fight the Hansa's battles.' The meetings were generally held at Lübeck, the deputies being received with great pomp and ceremony; heavy fines were inflicted for non-attendance without good cause assigned, and the decisions of the majority bound the entire Confederacy. The diet was the grand court of appeal for all questions and quarrels; it controlled all diplomatic action, and held in its hands the issues of peace and war. The Hansa had no regular seal of association, but all documents were sealed with the arms of the town in which the diet happened to meet. The usual symbol attached to all Hansa guildhalls was the double eagle with the legend 'quo omnes

utimur in praesenti.' The remaining years of the fourteenth century were characterised by unwearied efforts of the League to consolidate and increase its influence in the Baltic ; but in the beginning of the fifteenth the rich and influential towns of the Netherlands withdrew in a body from the Association, allying themselves with king Eric against the Hansa. The Lübeck fleet under Tidemand Steen was defeated in the Sound, and an attempt on Copenhagen in 1428 was unsuccessful. The rival Confederacies continued the struggle for Baltic supremacy until 1445, when a truce between them was arranged.

At the close of the war Bergen became the complete vassal of the Hansa, and its extensive fishing industry a source of great riches to the Association. This northern factory calls for a passing notice, and our tourist countrymen may spend an interesting hour or two in inspecting the last settlement built after the great fire in 1702, soon after which the hated foreigners were driven out by the government under the Danish crown.

BERGEN.

After the times of the Vikings when the coast towns of Norway ceased to be enriched by the spoils of other nations, the Norwegians were thrown back on their own resources, which, with the exception of extensive fisheries, were of a trifling character. Although still in possession of a considerable fleet, they were unable from some cause or other to do their own carrying trade in fish, possibly because of the horror and detestation with which the Norsemen were still regarded on the other side of the North Sea, or more likely by a wave of decadence passing over them.

A competition for this trade ensued between the Wendish towns and England, the former completely ousting our countrymen, by reason of their more powerful fleet. The Germans soon made good a foothold on the land itself at Bergen, which they successfully maintained for centuries, in spite of the bitter opposition of the citizens.

The relentless policy of monopoly nowhere showed itself in darker colours than in the Hansa's arbitrary and oppressive dealings with Norway. The maritime position of Bergen with its unrivalled land-locked harbour and fishing grounds marked it out as a centre for this important trade, and the factory grew rapidly ; already in the middle of the fourteenth century it assumed the name of 'Hansiche Kontor.'

The factory consisted of twenty-two strongly built buildings of timber facing the fjord, connected with the water by a gangway for loading and discharging. The frontage was narrow, but warehouses extended far behind. The dwelling portion of each tenement was styled the 'Hof,' and the accommodation for the 'Hansebrüder' was of the rudest description. Each house contained a 'family' of about 120 persons, the majority coming from one particular Hanse town; all men were sworn to celibacy and presided over by a 'Husbonde.' These were divided into classes, such as managers and clerks, svender, bootsjunger, cooks, and servants. At the back was a large yard and garden, in which numerous ferocious dogs were kept. The most curious of the offices rearwards was the 'Schütting,' an old Norwegian fire annex, with a single entrance, windowless beyond a hole in the roof with an adjustable shutter, to let light in and smoke out. This shutter was closed when the fire cleared. During summer the 'family' lived in the 'Hof,' eating and sleeping in their own rooms, but in the winter months they all lived in common in the capacious 'Schütting,' where a table stood for each. The fleet being laid up during the winter months, all business was at a standstill at that season.

A large branch of the import trade was the highly prized pepper, and merchants of the Hansa at Bergen rejoiced in the nickname of 'Pebersvende' (pepper lads), which name still survives in the languages of Scandinavia for a bachelor over forty, the members of the factory being all celibates. I may perhaps suggest to our philologists that the word nickname was necknavn (neken—to tease).

All marriage was forbidden, and no woman permitted within the enclosure; but for all that great laxity of morals prevailed, deepening as the central control became weaker.

A manuscript of the fifteenth century was found in one of the houses giving an account of a carousal held over a barrel of beer by one of the 'families,' the ale being the fine imposed on a clerk for an illegitimate child; the manuscript ends thus 'may our brother soon be found tripping again.'

The factory was really a fortress, entrance by a bridge surmounted by the arms of the station, viz., half the double eagle and a crowned cod's head. The total number of inhabitants varied from two to three thousand, and the community was governed by two Oldermønd,

assisted by a council. They made their own laws, had their own churches, and generally set the Norwegian authorities at defiance.

It was at Bergen where the German of the middle ages and renaissance was seen at his very worst, his otherwise genial though somewhat coarse humour here took the form of tyranny, licentiousness, and brutality of the most odious type. The bestial games and orgies indulged in when candidates from German towns presented themselves for admittance to the 'families' to fill up gaps in the community caused by removal or death, were a scandal even in that rough age. These were subjected to the most dreadful barbarities, smeared with filth and garbage, underwent terrible whippings, which some did not survive; duckings in the sea occasionally ending in drowning; compelled to ascend a chimney under which filth was burnt, so as to cause a nauseous smoke that frequently overcame them. These are but a sample of the horrors that took place, and no wonder that the Hansa continues a term of reproach in Norway down to our own day. The games, harmless enough when instituted, clearly degenerated into a device for the limitation of immigration from the parent towns.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

Evidence of a very early connection of our own city with the Hansa, or more properly with the older associations whence it sprang, is not wanting, and it is certain that a considerable trade was carried on soon after the Conquest, and probably much earlier. I have found direct testimony of trading operations on a large scale at the beginning of the fifteenth century, which by implication may be set much further back. A despatch preserved in the archives of Stralsund, dated 5th September, 1401, from the mayor of Newcastle-upon-Tyne,³ addressed to the Rath of Stralsund, thanks the latter for the agreeable audience given to an ambassador from the former, and promises a like favourable reception to the Stralsund ships and merchandize to the Tyne. A promise is given by the magistrate to convey the sense of these negotiations to king Henry IV.

I have ventured to give the document *in extenso* as having a local application. It runs as follows:—

³ Sykes states that Sir Peter Scott was the first chief magistrate of Newcastle, having the title of mayor in 1251, but there was a mayor in 1243. See *Arch. Ael.* iii. 125, N.S.

‘Reuerendis et discretis viris Consulibus et Burgimagistris Ciuitatis Stralesundensis, Maior, Vicecomes et Communitas ville Noui Castri super Tynam in Anglia salutem cum reuerencia pariter et honore. Scire dignetur vestra discrecio, veneranda nos vestras literas honorabiles per manus Johannis Sterneke, nostri burgenis, nuper recepisse, cui vestram beneuolenciam ac multiplices grates nostre dileccionis intuitu prout nobis retulit, amicabilem intimastis; eundemque Johannem in suis agendis efficacius pertractando, vnde vobis ex toto nostri cordis desiderio-intime regraciamur cum affectu. Et quantum ad grauamina, prout in dictis literis vestris continetur, vestratibus illata, aut quod aliqua discensio inter vos et aliquem nostrorum esset inita seu orta, multipliciter condolemus. Insuper quoad literam vestram excellentissimo principi et domino nostro Regi Anglie et Francie directam, ipsam eidem Serenissimo principi domino nostro Regi festinatione qua commode poterimus, secundum formam copie litere nobis transmissa presentabimus cum affectu. Scientes pro firmo, quod cum et quando placuerit aliquibus vestrorum partes et villam nostram cum vestris nauibus seu mercibus visitare, quantum in nobis est et secundum totum nostrum posse, digne et amicabilem recipientur, que consimilia mercatoribus nostris apud vos fieri semper cupimus et speramus. Vestram prosperitatem, prout nostram, perpetuam conseruet altissimus gloriose Virginis intemerate filius per tempora longius duratura. In cuius rei testimonium has literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes, nostro sub sigillo consignatas. Datum apud dictam villam nostram Noui Castri super Tynam: quinto die mensis Septembris, Anno Dni: Millesimo quadringentesimo primo.’

We find mention of the trade of Newcastle with the Hansa, towards the end of the same century, in a memorandum by a certain priest Clement Armstrong, he says:—

‘These merchants bring to England pitch, tar, wood for quarterstaves, wax and pork from the north; wine from Spain; alum from Italy; madder, silk, and many other articles from Flanders; and to buy cloth bring with them gold and silver in bars, whence the name (E) sterling money comes. England is stuffed and pestered⁴ with foreign goods.

He sermonizes on the good old times before England determined to dominate the channel. Then comes the following remarkable passage:—‘There were towns besides London that had steelyards, viz., Hull, York, Newcastle, Boston, and Lynn.’ There were undoubtedly factories or steelyards at both Boston and Lynn, and I shall give some account of them in Part 2, but I have not found any evidence in corroboration of this statement as to York, Hull, and Newcastle. The term steelyard implies a residential German settlement, and I am of opinion there were never more than depôts at these three towns. Investigation among local or imperial records should define what the position of the Germans here really was, but I have not yet been able

⁴ Pestered (pest—black death).

to find anything more bearing on the question. In 1443 Copenhagen became the capital of Denmark, and the almost always nominal union of the three Scandinavian kingdoms came to an end.

It was king Eric who first instituted the Sound dues, so fiercely contested by the Wendish cities.

The renaissance had now succeeded the middle ages, and Martin Luther was preaching his propaganda, soon to exercise such a disintegrating influence on the fortunes of the Hansa.

Norway had become a Danish province when Christian II. ascended the throne in 1513. He invaded and again subdued Sweden, for the last time to be united to the Danish monarchy. The Hansa, true to its traditional policy of preventing the realisation of a strong and united Scandinavia, determined at all hazards to break the union which always aimed at its exclusion from the Baltic, and declared war against the king. In the campaign that ensued Christian was completely defeated, losing both his liberty and throne. The Hansa then placed Gustav Wasa on the Swedish throne, and Frederik of Slesvig Holstein on that of Denmark, and for a time the Bund enjoyed vast privileges in Scandinavia, but even the kingmakers were never quite able to close the Sound against the Frieslanders, their most formidable rivals in the Baltic, though its most strenuous efforts were directed to that end.

The great and lucrative trade enjoyed by the League at this epoch, with a well equipped trading fleet, quickly and easily convertible into powerful squadrons for war, resulted in a great accumulation of wealth, which, coupled with an unrivalled diplomacy and successful wars, had made it the arbiter of Northern Europe, and secured it the almost entire monopoly of the Baltic trade. Its factories extended to Norway and Russia on the one side, and England and Lisbon on the other, with depôts at Venice and many other important centres; the merchants were like great princes in the wool, cloth, tallow, wax, salt, hides, timber, wine, and beer trades, besides spices, to say nothing of herrings and stockfish, which in these fast fading catholic days continued to swell the sails of the mighty confederacy. The other maritime nations could barely keep the seas, and became restricted mostly to their own coasting traffic, but times were at hand which were soon to have a disastrous influence on the further progress of the League, which never could realise that competitive power and influence was fast accumulating in other directions.

In 1533 the democratic burgomaster of Lübeck, Jurgen Wullenwewer, made a supreme effort to obtain possession of the entrance to the Sound, the key to the Baltic. The city of Lübeck, as representing the Bund, under the leadership of this ambitious man, again attacked Denmark. The allied Scandinavian kingdoms assembled their forces to oppose him, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Hansa fleets before Assens, which sadly weakened her power and prestige, and becoming a potent factor towards her downfall. Wullenwewer paid for his failure with his life as he suffered at the hands of the executioner; the lessons of his career are not the least interesting pages of the history of this hitherto successful Confederacy. The key to the prosperity of the League lay as ever in the Baltic trade, which now began rapidly to decline, owing to these frequent wars, the rising power of the Frieslanders, and relative political consequence and wealth of other nations. The Reformation began to sow dissension among the cities, and the discovery of America and the ocean route to India told heavily against them, for they made the blunder of using Lisbon as the depôt for the oversea traffic, instead of tracking the trade to its source. Dissensions in the League itself, brought about by divided interests, new political combinations, and religious bigotry, rapidly weakened its power and prestige. The loss of Livonia and Bornholm, the final closing of the station of Novgorod, and gradual loosening of discipline and co-operation, all combined for the now inevitable disruption of the Bund. The Hansa still possessed influence enough to keep the Sound closed against the English, but even here the fates were against her, as the discovery of the Arctic route to Russia by Sir Hugh Willoughby in 1553, gave our countrymen direct access to Russia, and the formation of a company styled 'The London and Moscovy Merchant Adventurers' was another severe blow to the League.

In 1562 the Swedes took forty ships of the League in the waters of Narwa. To avenge this outrage the Hansa once more drew the sword and this time, during the seven years' war, not without a flickering amount of success, as it succeeded in exacting from Sweden an indemnity of 75,000 Thalers, and a free passage through the Sound, a privilege it was only destined to retain for a single year. In 1577 the operations of the League were forbidden in England, and the steelyard temporarily closed in 1598.

The Hansa at length began to realise the weakness of her position ; as these successive blows fell heavily upon her, she now held but weakly together, and but fifty towns remained on the roll, only a very few of which continued to contribute to the general fund ; and from this time the famous Bund, which had played for centuries such a leading part in history, ceased to be the great connecting link between the east and west of Europe.

A letter written by a certain Dyrik Busselborch at Brunswick on the 10th November, 1586, gives a contemporary glimpse of the condition of the Hansa Bund at that time. Written in the time-honoured Low German of Lübeck, which had become after Latin the diplomatic language of the League, the letter is addressed to the Rath of that city. Following is a short digest :—

‘He sees with sorrow that the Bund is falling to pieces, its trade daily more and more restricted by arbitrary and oppressive duties, rapidly becoming prohibitive. Referring bitterly to a heavy duty recently imposed by Denmark on piece goods, he sorrowfully contrasts the now impotent condition of the League, as compared with its dominant position but a short few years before, when the will of the Hansa was law to Denmark. He sees arrogance and reprisals on every side ; privileges and monopolies enjoyed for centuries, arbitrarily and suddenly curtailed. He refers to the abandonment of trading routes, owing to rancorous opposition from abroad, and to the selfish policy of the cities as pursued towards each other. Then follows a philippic against the blasphemy prevailing, the deplorable religious differences, the rioting, indolence, and luxury —he sees in all this the judgment of God.’

This picture has many parallels in history and vividly portrays the pass the Hansa had now reached. She had sown monopoly and oppression, and the harvest was ready. On the close of the sixteenth century it became impossible to get a quorum for the diet. The thirty years’ war had played havoc with what remained of the once great trade. The *coup de grace* was reached when Christian IV. of Denmark drove the Lübeck fleet into its own river the Trave, and publicly proclaimed that the exceptional privileges so long enjoyed by the League in the Baltic had ceased for ever. On the signing of the peace of Westphalia in 1648 the Hanseatic Confederation ceased to be a corporate body. A portion of the towns continued to act together, but at length only Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen remained to carry down the Hansa legend to our own day.

PART II.

THERE is no chapter in the history of the Hanseatic Confederation so interesting and suggestive as that relating to its English trade and factories, for in England the association had its birth, and there it received its death-blow at the hands of that energetic and enterprising corporation the Merchant Adventurers of London, led at that time by the famous Sir Thomas Gresham. Its fall was brought about by changing times and a commerce developing by such leaps and bounds that the old Hansa monopoly was simply crushed out of existence.

The trading of the Teutonic nations with the British Isles dates from a very early period; indeed, before the closing days of the Roman empire. Tacitus, in the year 97, refers thus to Londinium:—‘Londinium . . . copia negotiatorum et comœtuum maxime celebre.’¹

Anglo-Saxon England sent missionaries to convert the Germans to Christianity, but these were conveyed in German ships.

The first historic mention of extensive trading between the two nations is to be found in Wilkins’s *Concilia*, wherein is reproduced a letter from the emperor Charlemagne to king Offa of Mercia, guaranteeing safety and justice to English merchants trading in Germany in consideration for reciprocity in this respect by England. Thus in the year 758 a system of reciprocity in trade prevailed, which certainly ceased for the most part soon after the German traders had made good a footing on English soil.

The ravages of the Vikings during the ninth and greater part of the tenth centuries seem to have effaced all record of German trade with England during that period, but that the Easterlings had again secured a preferential position there by 990 is shown by a document of the reign of Ethelred II., in which the Germans are described as ‘homines Imperatoris,’ and the annual tax of two grey handkerchiefs and one brown one, ten pounds of pepper, five pairs of men’s gloves, two casks of vinegar, and one barrel of oysters, shows clearly that they at this time formed a corporate body on English soil. This acknowledgment was made at Christmas, and it is therefore certain that they were not merely bringing and taking away goods in ships, but living in England all the year round, as oversea shipping was invariably laid up during the winter months.

¹ *Taciti Annal.* 1, xiv. 33.

During Canute's reign there was a lively trade and an intimate relation between the peoples; his daughter Gunhilda was married to a son of Conrad II. Early in the eleventh century we again find mention of the 'Emperor's people' in the judicial records of London, and a petition was addressed by the merchants of Tiel and Waal to the emperor Heinrich II. in 1018 (Canute) praying him to command the Frieslanders to cease from placing hindrances in the way of their trading with England. The designation 'Leute des Kaisers' was at this early period applied generally to all the traders of the lower Rhine, and Maas, Dordrecht and purely Dutch towns, Cologne, and towns in the old Duchy of Saxony, and on the Elbe, constituting the larger portion of the Hansa's field of operations in later times; but at this period there is no mention of Lübeck and the Wendish towns proper. Regulations regarding tolls show that inland cities such as Brunswick, Magdeburg, and towns of the Harz district, largely participated in the trade of the period with the British Isles.

Cologne was the queen of this early Confederacy, and the trade in the then so highly prized Rhine wine was very considerable. She was the dominant factor of the League and visible head at the Gildehalle.

The career of the Hansa and kindred associations from start to finish was always characterised by jealousies and dissensions among the roll of cities forming its membership, which, as set forth in Part I, was always an uncertain quantity. It is very remarkable that a magnet so potent as English trade should have been able for centuries to keep this mass of conflicting interests and ambitions from falling asunder.

In monkish chronicles frequent mention is made of the Easterlings. William of Malmesbury states that London and York enjoyed a considerable trade with the empire in the reign of Henry I. A connected account of the trading relations of Germany with England begins with the reign of Henry II. (1154), and a letter from this monarch to the emperor Frederick promises protection to the Cologne house at London, its inhabitants, and goods. 'Henricus Dei gracia rex Anglie, etc., etc. . . . Precipio vobis, quod custodiatis et manuteneatis et protegatis homines et ciues Colonienses, sicut homines meos et amicos et omnes res et mercaturas suas et possessiones ita quod neque de "domo sua London."' It may thus be inferred

that the Germans had a settlement in London, certainly as far back as Anglo-Saxon days, and the tax paid in kind in the days of Ethelred was doubtless an acknowledgment or rent for land occupied as a factory; and distinct reference is made in the letter of Henry II. to 'domo sua London.' In 1175, the king takes the house of the Easterlings under his protection, 'as if they were my own people.'

Richard Cœur de Lion in passing through Cologne, homeward bound from his captivity in Austria, after first remitting all charges in kind, settled the annual tribute for 'de Gildhalle sua London' in money, viz., two shillings English currency. Richard borrowed large sums from the Easterlings for the Crusades, granting in return extensive privileges and monopolies. Besides assisting the king with loans, the League was useful to the nation in bringing over large quantities of corn, then much needed in England by reason of an extensive failure of the crop in 1260. It was in this year when on leaving England for the second time, the king gave instructions to his brother Henry, running thus:—'I give my protection to the merchants of the German Empire, who possess the house in London usually called "the Gildhalle of the Germans," and guarantee to them all the privileges they have ever enjoyed in my kingdom.'

In 1269, owing to continuous complaints of bad weight, the beam and scales of the Easterlings were forcibly taken from them, and publicly burnt at Eastcheap, after which all their goods were required to be weighed on the public steelyard.

The Easterlings, unlike the Lombards, were always more a trading than a banking association; still as far as the English crown was concerned they bought and successfully maintained their extraordinary privileges, which for centuries weighed so heavily on English trade, by making themselves useful, nay indispensable, to the kings of England as bankers, and it was this fact alone that enabled them to resist the constant efforts of the English mercantile class to oust them from their favoured possession of English trade.

There is no record when or from whom the piece of land was acquired on which the first 'Gildehalle Teutonicorum' stood, but a memorandum in the archives of Cologne, dated 1260, states that William son of William Reyners, sold to Arnold (Thedman's son)

Altermann of the Germans, for two marks² Easterling, the yearly rent (interest of two shillings), a piece of ground east of the Gildehalla. This mention of Arnold reveals the interesting fact that at that time an English merchant, though of German origin, held the office of alderman of the Easterlings. In 1344, we find the lord mayor of London, John Hammond, figuring in this capacity, but the office must have been merely honorary in such a case as this. Fifteen golden nobles, inside a pair of gloves, could be merely an acknowledgment to a friend at court. Dr. Lappenberg gives a list of the 'Altermanner,' from which it would appear that the said John Hammond held the office as above stated, after him coming the senior alderman of the City of London, Sir William Walworth. Then follows a long list of German names, from which it is obvious that the system in vogue, for a short time, of having highly placed members of the City of London holding the office, had not answered, most likely owing to the growing impatience of the citizens to the Hansa monopolies; and the factory clearly reverted to officials of its own order and nationality. Presents were freely distributed among the corporation and government officials—the lord mayor receiving yearly a cask of the finest Rhine wine.

There was a movement among the German merchants during the latter half of the thirteenth century to cease lodging with London citizens, and to reside within the factory enclosure; doubtless for the better security of person and goods, and from this time no chance of acquiring any land or buildings east of Cosins lane was allowed to slip.

King John was well disposed towards the Easterlings, who supplied his pressing needs for money. In his reign we find trading privileges first accorded to Bremen, and reference made to Hamburg (Hamborch). Frequent mention is made of Sandwich, Winchester, Yarmouth, Southampton, Winchelsea, and Lynn, as trading centres of the Germans.

We hear nothing of Lübeck before the reign of the succeeding monarch (Henry III.) in 1226, but this city is destined soon to supplant its archiepiscopal rival as leader of the League, now rapidly developing into the Hanseatic Confederation of history. The glimpse we get of the social life of the times of the successors of the Conqueror

² An old English mark was of the value of two-thirds of a pound sterling.

and Plantagenets, shows how highly prized by the ruling class were the wines of the Rhine, the beverage of the knights and nobles, just as much as mead was that of the peasantry. One can thus well understand how Cologne, as the chief emporium of this trade, was so long able to dominate the councils of the League, in spite of her distance from the seaboard. After the signing of 'Magna Charta,' when the peasantry began to be a more important factor in the state, and some signs of a middle class were becoming apparent, the trade in dried and salted fish took very large dimensions in our islands, particularly as it formed the staple food for the armies of England abroad. Lübeck as the centre of this industry, with a large fleet of vessels at her command, quickly and easily convertible into formidable squadrons for war, began to press hard for the leadership, which did not so much imply prestige as a policy. Fierce became the rivalry between the two cities in the thirteenth century. Petitions to the emperor for equal rights became frequent, and at length Frederick III. sharply reprimanded Cologne, and compelled her to extend equal rights in England to the Wendish towns and Wisby in Gothland. These commands were seconded by the English themselves, in the interest of the ever growing importance of the trade in fish, and as early as 1260 Lübeck began to take the lead among the cities. In 1266 Lübeck and Hamburg were formally invested by the English crown with the same rights and privileges as those so long enjoyed by the League under the leadership of Cologne, against an annual acknowledgment of five shillings each. It will be seen that the English crown was ever careful to fix a limit of time to the immunities enjoyed by the Easterlings; and merely nominal acknowledgments were exacted, so that a revocation was possible almost at any time, but as we know all too well in our own day, vested interests have a faculty of growing, and are not so easily set aside as created, limits of time notwithstanding.

During the remainder of the century the relations between the League and England were in the main peaceable and progressive, though chequered by obstacles and difficulties placed in the way of the trade of Boston, Hull, Newcastle, and Berwick, with Bergen and Iceland. There was also a serious dispute with the English crown regarding the reparation of the Bishopsgate,

which gate had been, strange to say, for centuries in the watch and ward of the Easterlings. How it ever came about that a colony of foreigners should have been entrusted with the keeping of one of the gates of London, and responsible for its armament and repair, is unknown and most remarkable; the fact alone goes far to show what an exceptional position the Easterlings held in England, and how little is really known of their earlier history. It also goes to show how deeply rooted the connection was, and in some measure explains the invincible tenacity with which the Hansa held to privileges that in the face of it seemed unreasonable and excessive. In 1282, the gateway had got into a dilapidated condition, and, after much negotiation, the Easterlings paid 240 marks sterling towards its repair, undertaking to bear a third of the cost of manning it, and to provide one-third of the necessary force. All further wall dues, *Muragium*, to be remitted. In other matters the Easterlings carried their points, greatly owing to the prestige the League enjoyed as the undoubted mistress of the seas, and the development it assured to English trade, by the system of barter that prevailed, whereby English products, such as wool, hemp, hides, and even iron and tin found a ready exchange in wine, fish, tallow, wax, spices, and many other articles now rapidly becoming indispensable to the growing necessities of England. Above all, the factory was conducted in a manner calculated to give little umbrage to the English authorities and a judicious application of presents and bribes in high quarters, and a readiness to meet the views of the crown in the way of loans, all helped at this period to smooth over matters in dispute.

Towards the end of the reign of Edward II., the power of the crown, which had hitherto invariably stood between the Hansa and popular clamour, became deplorably weak. This encouraged the citizens of London to agitate against the privileges enjoyed by the Easterlings, which had not been formally renewed on the king's accession, as was usually the case at the beginning of each reign, and a court of enquiry into the whole question was decided on in January, 1325. The heading of the warrant is interesting. It runs:—
 ‘Placita coram domino Rege apud Westmonasterium de termino Sancti Hilarii, anno regni Edwardi, filii regis Edwardi decimo octavo
 G. le Scrop.’

The enquiry was concluded two years afterwards, shortly after the coronation of Edward III., and the crown, having regained its customary control, with vast schemes of aggression in prospect, all privileges were renewed and even extended. The rights of the Easterlings to appoint their own alderman was formally recognised, with the reservation, however, that he must possess property in the City of London. The nomination of this official by the Germans henceforth required confirmation at the hands of the lord mayor and court of aldermen, to whom he was to be presented then and there to make oath that he would govern his constituency in strict accordance with the laws of England, and so as not to impinge on the time-honoured rights and customs of the citizens of London.

King Edward III. showed a disposition to befriend and further the views of the League from the very commencement of his reign, doubtless concluding that this powerful association would be an extremely useful ally in the schemes of conquest he meditated. He soon made use of it as bankers, and quickly demanded or was proffered a loan for military purposes, depositing as security certain jewels of the crown. Being unable to meet his acceptances at maturity, he offered on the 14th November, 1342, the security of a great Flemish financier, Paul de Montefiore, and his associates.

In 1346, the king contracted another loan with the Easterlings, lodging his royal crown as security, which remained deposited at Cologne for three years, being redeemed on February 17, 1349:³ In the year following there must have been another transaction of a similar nature, as Edward lodged with the Germans several gold cups and tankards, besides ornaments adorned with precious stones.

In August, 1347, the Black Prince mortgaged the tin mines of Cornwall to the Easterlings, and the king the produce of the wool tax, *subsidiū lanarium* (forty skillings, or about equal to three shillings per sack), for three years, against a loan for the equipment of the armies for Crecy and Poitiers.

The riches of some of the magnates of the Hansa at this period must have been enormous. In 1350, king Edward conferred on one of them (Tideman von Lymburgh) estates in seven counties for services rendered to the crown.

³ *Calendars of the Exchequer*, vol. i. p. 156:

The Hansa fleet was at the king's disposal during the French wars, and the Easterlings were styled 'the allies of the English crown,' and are so mentioned in all treaties with France.

In 1367, Lübeck became the acknowledged queen of the now formally constituted Hanseatic Confederation. This city had risen to great power and influence, not only in the councils of the League, but as the centre of northern banking operations and general communications.

The career of the Bund went on progressing until the Wars of the Roses, when the rivalries of York and Lancaster induced corresponding divisions in the League itself, brought about by conflicting aims and interests, and the desirability of keeping on the winning side as the fortunes of war swayed in either direction, or as continental influence and intrigue were brought to bear on the struggle.

There seems to have been some reciprocity in the case of Stralsund in 1401, as shown in its relations with Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but this was clearly local and exceptional, the rule being for the Germans to take everything and give nothing, or as little as possible in return. In fact, the constant bone of contention, now as ever, between the merchants of London and the Easterlings was that the continental towns would not extend reciprocal treatment to English trade.

During the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV. English shipping enjoyed a considerable trade with Danzig, and for a time England was represented by a consul or agent there, as in the case of Stralsund.

In 1400 an ordinance of the Privy Council decreed that the towns of Lübeck and Wismar be requested to send an ambassador to London to answer certain charges made against them by English merchants for insult to person and damage to the goods of English traders. These negotiations would lead one to infer that the English oversea traffic at this time was far from being so insignificant as has been generally supposed, and this renders the Hansa's position in England all the more remarkable. Of a verity were they allies of the crown of England, and it was this favoured position that enabled them to keep their English competitors so long at bay.

There was a continued considerable English trade with Danzig, and in 1432 a petition from the House of Commons was presented to Henry VI. praying that the London factory be made responsible for

all loss and damage sustained through the ill-treatment of English merchants at Danzig. The king, however, refused to interfere in the matter. In 1434 the Council of the Hansa sent as ambassadors to London the burgomasters of Cologne, Lübeck, Hamburg, and Danzig to settle these matters, which were fast becoming burning questions, but the negotiations came to an end in the fatal 'black death' year, 1435. Soon after this the English were much embittered against the Hansa by reason of being shut out from trading with Iceland by Eric of Denmark, a measure which the English properly ascribed to the machinations of the League, then all-powerful with Denmark. Henry VI. threatened to annul the privileges enjoyed in England unless this objectionable edict was revoked. The Hansa at this juncture found, or bought, a friend at court in the person of cardinal Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, who had great influence with the king. The cardinal agreed that what the Hansa required was merely the continuance of a time-honoured privilege, while the English demands had simply no warrant at all.

On 22nd March, 1437, a highly-advantageous treaty for the Hansa was signed at London, and countersigned by the king the same year; the English merchants being permitted to trade with Stralsund and Danzig when furnished with free passes by the League. A poem written by John Lydgate⁴ showed how the Hansa formed part and parcel of the civic life of London in the reign of Henry VI. The poet commemorates the rejoicings at the king's coronation in verse, describing how the lord mayor was bravely clad in satin, the sheriffs and aldermen riding on horseback in their scarlet mantles trimmed with fur; then came the citizens in grand array marching 'to mete withe the Kyng.'

'And for to remembre of other alyens,
 Fyrst Jeneneyes, thoughe thé were straungeris,
 Florentynes and Venycyens,
 And Easterlings, glad in her maneres,
 Conveyed withe sergauntes and other officeres,
 Estatly horsed aftyr the maier riding,
 Passid the subbarbis to mete withe the Kyng.'

Following are a few of the old statutes and regulations of the Steelyard; the first series of which we have any knowledge dates from 1320 :—

⁴ Lydgate's Minor Poems. Percy Society, p. 4.

The first provides for fine and punishment for leaving straw or other rubbish about the yard. Small fines were payable in wax, which was used for providing 'All Hallows,' the church frequented by the Hansa community, with candles.

In 1348 the fine for libel, fighting with the fists, or using the knife, was £5.

Any German bringing an Englishman into the Steelyard to fight or play at ball, £1.

The gate was locked at 9, and it was forbidden to knock or call out later—penalty, £1.

There were many complicated regulations, as the levying of dues, which are very interesting, but too bulky for treatment here.

Throwing dice in any tavern, £2. One noble to go to the informer.

No merchant shall place any hindrances in the way of his fellow doing business, or make any effort to tempt a customer once in any one warehouse into another. £2.

Samples not allowed to be drawn from bulk and shown secretly to merchants outside the Steelyard.

Small fines below four pfenninge were the perquisite of the alderman.

Etc., etc., etc.

During the Wars of the Roses, the attempt made by the Wendish towns to close the Baltic to the English led to heavy reprisals, and the Cologne section of the League protested violently against the selfish policy pursued by their northern colleagues, which was fast endangering the very existence of the English factory. The English colony at Danzig had been driven away and British trade with Iceland prohibited. This so embittered the Merchant Adventurers that their privateers sought to intercept the fleet of vessels bringing over Princess Marie of Gueldres, the bride of James II. of Scotland. They missed the convoy, but met with and attacked a large fleet of vessels laden with salt and wine, from Lisbon to the Baltic, in spite of the ships being provided with a safe-conduct granted by the English Crown. This act of war or piracy resulted in fierce reprisals, and Lübeck captured an English ship laden with cloth, bringing her into Bergen, selling ship and cargo there. In 1458 the earl of Warwick, governor of Calais and Admiral of the Fleet, attacked twenty-eight Lübeck ships, laden with wine and salt. His flotilla consisted of only twelve ships, but he succeeded in capturing six of the enemies' vessels, and brought them in to Calais. The privileges of the Hansa were nevertheless renewed by Henry VI. and Edward IV., but for all that a state of war prevailed, during which seventy Lübeck ships of an estimated value of £20,000 were taken by the English. These matters at length resulted

in Lübeck on the 1st May, 1460, recalling the Hansa merchants from England, and forbidding the sale of English cloth in any of the cities of the northern Bund. The confusion of these events, both in England and the Hansa cities can only be explained by the civil war in England, and the conflicting interests of the northern and southern branches of the League. The Steelyard was handed over to the merchants of Cologne, the earlier possessors of the factory, who sided with the Red Rose of Lancaster, and a judgment of the privy council was registered against the Bund in favour of the Merchant Adventurers for £13,520 towards the recoument of their losses at the hands of the Germans. The Hansa fleet then ravaged the English coasts, and captured our ships on the high seas.

Edward had to fly the country on the restoration of Henry VI., but returning with a small armament within six months recovered the throne. Although then at war with the Northern League, for some reason that we cannot quite follow, it assisted Edward's descent on England, by lending him seven ships, the remainder of the squadron being chartered at Walcheren, and paid for by an advance of 50,000 St. Andreas gulden, made by Charles the Bold of Burgundy. Through the mediation of Charles peace was restored between England and the Hansa, by the Treaty of Utrecht, and an Act of Parliament dated 6th October, 1473, confirmed its conclusion. It runs:—

'The Kyng calling vnto his tendre remembrance how that in tymes passed vnto nowe of late the marchaunts & people of the nation of Almayn hauing the howse in London commonly called Gyldhalle Theutonicorum that by Gods grace the warre and hostilitie, that hath been betwixt boothe parties, maye vtterlie cease and be avoided, the oolde freendliehode also betwixt them to be renouelled in such wyse, as it maye abide and endure for ever, by the aduis and assent of the Lordes spirituallie and temporallie and the commons in this present parliament assembled'

King Edward not only confirmed all the old privileges, but granted new ones. He bound himself to pay £10,000 solatium, but the amount remained still unpaid in 1486 after Henry VII. had obtained the throne, and it seems in every way probable that the amount was eventually written off as a set-off against some concession or counter-claim.

The Treaty of Utrecht brought about by Charles the Bold of Burgundy was decidedly the culminating point of the glories of the

Hansa in England, and its provisions formed the basis for all future negotiations of the Germans with the English crown; but the ink was barely dry when fierce disputes between the English merchants and the Steelyard broke out afresh. An English fleet of merchantmen attacked the Hansa settlement in Iceland, and Lord Lomely (Lumley?) with some ships from Hartlepool despoiled several Lübeck vessels.

The Merchant Adventurers now began to have some influence at court, and they induced the Government to impose a limit on the enjoyment of the Hansa's monopoly in cloth; but the citizens of London were up in arms for the abolition of all preferential advantages whatever. In March, 1493, a London mob invaded the Steelyard and plundered some of the dwellings and warehouses, but after a hand-to-hand fight the Easterlings, always well armed and organised for such an emergency, drove out the rabble and succeeded in closing the gate. The mob, being reinforced, assailed the gate with clubs and crowbars, when the lord mayor came to the assistance of the foreigners and quelled the tumult, taking eighty of the rioters prisoners and lodging their leader in the Tower.

The sons of the German merchant princes caused much bad blood in London by reason of their luxury and love of dress, vieing with the English nobles in this respect, and there exist many regulations on the Steelyard minutes for keeping this competition in check, as highly detrimental to the best interests of the League, in making enemies at court.

At the close of the reign of Henry VII. some very remarkable events happened. Columbus discovered the West Indies, John Cabot landed in America, and Vasco de Gama had doubled the Cape and reached India by sea. These extraordinary discoveries gave an immense impetus to English trade, and the Corporation of Merchant Adventurers became a power in the land with influence enough to press the Steelyard hard, and it became rapidly apparent that the extensive monopolies enjoyed by the Hansa were quite incompatible with the legitimate growth of English trade, and would not be very much longer tolerated by the country, now bounding towards the first place among the nations in adventure and commerce.

The Merchant Adventurers were recognised as a corporate body by the Government in 1505. In 1509 an enquiry was held into the

Hansa's 'title' to the possession of the Steelyards of London, Boston, and Lynn. The warrant for the enquiry is:—

'Be it hadde in remembrance that a Commission by writte was directed oute of the Kyngs Esceker to the Sheriffs of London in anno XXII Henrici VII, nuper regis Angliae, to enquere who were the occupyers of the tenements hereafter folowyng, that is to say, one that kyng Richard II gave to Richard Stratford, chapleyn, the VIII yere of his reign, the XXII day of September, called the diehowse, with 11 tenements thereto adioyning etc.'

Henry VIII. and his minister Wolsey were favourable to the Hansa pretensions, and all her privileges were renewed at the beginning of the reign, but the diminished prestige of the League abroad, owing to the reverses of Wullenwewer, began to react on its English relations, and popular clamour against its monopolies grew steadily more pronounced. This ill-feeling and impatience was much accentuated by a proclamation of neutrality in the war with Francis I., when the Hansa reaped a rich harvest by supplying both combatants with munitions of war, a policy so different from that pursued by the Association in its relations with Edward III., when England warred with France.

The old privileges were, however, again renewed on the accession of Edward VI., but it soon afterwards became apparent that the League would not be able to hold its own for long against the rising power and influence of the Merchant Adventurers and general consensus of English opinion. This is not surprising in the face of the fact that the Hansa's export of cloth exceeded that of the English traders by forty times, the latter being handicapped by nearly a like proportion of extra duty and expense.

A manuscript in the British Museum,⁵ being a return of the Hansa's export of cloth, dated 1552, headed—

'Shipped by the Merchauntes of the Stillyard, from the first yeare of King Edward II. unto Michaels last past, as by the King's recordes of his Grace's exchequer it dothe plainly appeare, as hereafter followith.'

As follows are a few examples:—

The first yeare of King Edward II. (1307) owt of this realme of England but VI clothes.

The first yeare of King Henry VI. (1422) the said merchauntes shipped owt of this realme the number of IIII^m IIII^c LXIII. clothes, XXII. yeardes.

⁵ Cotton Manuscript. Claudius E. VII. Fol. 99.

The first yeare of Edward IV. (1461) VI^m I^c LIX. clothes.

The fifteenth yeare of Henry VII. (1500) XXI^m III^c IIII^{xx} IX. clothes.

The XXVIII. yeare of Henry VIII. (1537) XXXIII^m VI^c IIII^{xx} XIII. clothes, and XI. yeardes.

The XXXVIII. yeare of Henry VIII. and first yeare of Edward VI. (1547) XXIX^m VI^c IIII^{xx} IX. clothes.

The second yeare of Edward VI. XLIII^m V^c IIII^{xx} III clothes.

During the reign of Henry VIII., Cardinal Wolsey ordered all writings concerning the Reformation propaganda to be burnt. A great quantity of these writings from Germany, such as Luther's *De Captivitate Babylonica*, *De Castitate*, and Tyndal's English Testament, printed at Antwerp, smuggled into England, hidden in bales of merchandise, were consigned to Steelyard merchants, and, in fact, a lively trade in this forbidden literature was carried on. At length, on January 28th, 1526, Sir Thomas More visited and rummaged the Steelyard. Nothing contraband was discovered, owing, doubtless, to some hint received as to what was in store for them, but the alderman and eight elders were cited before a court of enquiry, regarding which a lively correspondence ensued between the English king and Sigismund I. of Poland.

With Henry VIII. the Hansa's absolute domination of the foreign trade of England came to an end, and the reign of his successor saw her shorn of many privileges and advantages, a pear ripe for the gathering by her young and vigorous rival. Popular clamour grew apace, and in 1551 an English secret society was discovered, the members of which had bound themselves by an oath to attack the Steelyard on the 1st May. The head quarters of the League became alarmed, and at a meeting of the Rath at Lübeck the deputy from Hamburg advised that the valuable plate at London, together with the archives of the Steelyard, should be taken to a place of safety on the Continent.

Sir Thomas Gresham made strong representations to the king that a continuance of the Hansa monopolies would be fatal to the development of English trade, and advised that as no reciprocity was to be obtained, the exports of the League should be confined to her own cities, urging that the rate of exchange for gold was seriously prejudiced by the freedom from duty enjoyed by the foreigners for almost the entire export of cloth, which they refused to carry under any other

flag than their own, to the great detriment of the English mercantile marine and development of the Royal Navy, and that the revenues that must accrue to the English crown by a national trade would far more than compensate for the loss of the very inadequate dues paid by the Hansa.

At a meeting of the Privy Council held 23rd February, 1553, Gresham stated that the Hansa records had been examined with the following result:—

1. That the Hansa was no properly constituted corporation.
2. That their members names and countries supposed to be invested with her privileges were unknown or ill-defined.
3. That Edward IV. had renewed the privileges, but subject to the express condition that no adulterated goods were to be introduced into the country, and that this condition had been persistently violated.

It was represented to the Council that the League began its operations by exporting only six pieces of cloth yearly, then a hundred, which increased gradually to a thousand, then six thousand, and in 1552 had increased to 44,000 pieces.⁶ This enormous increase in weavings had been greatly brought about by the immigration of the exiled Flemings. These arguments, supported as they were by facts and figures, proved irresistible, and on the following day a decree was issued depriving the Hansa of all exceptional privileges as regards the export of cloth, placing her in this respect on the same footing with other foreigners and English merchants, the Hansa's 'title' to the possession of the Steelyards in England was not called in question. In the following May this decree was countersigned by the king. Thus, for the time at least, the Merchant Adventurers had triumphed; indeed the struggle was an unequal one. The Hansa grown effete and shorn of all powerful political support, had only her musty parchments to set against the telling arguments of the English nation, hard indeed she fought, but the new order of things simply overwhelmed her and her sophistries, her work was done, and the foundations of a mighty trade, destined to enrich England and colonize new worlds, were laid on her ashes. She was still destined fitfully to regain part of her lost privileges, as the forces of reaction had their play, but her death blow had fallen. That she had been so long able to maintain

⁶ A report of these proceedings may be seen in the King's Pocket Diary.

her English monopolies practically unimpaired can only be explained by a chain of political circumstances, the innate conservatism of England and English respect for treaties.

The Hansa had meanwhile not yet given up everything for lost, and the Rath sent ambassadors again to London, craving for a renewal of the privileges as set forth in the Treaty of Utrecht, and at length with some success, as certain modified monopolies were restored to her.

Under the reactionary government of Mary, the Hansa, with Philip II. as her advocate, temporarily regained the fiscal position as enjoyed under Henry VIII., and the League took joyful part in the public welcome accorded to Mary on her state entry into London, having fountains cascading Rhine wine in the streets, and spending something like £1,000 in gifts and street decorations. The ambassador sent over to felicitate the queen on her accession had barely reached home again when violent disputes broke out afresh, and the Adventurers succeeded in obtaining a substantial curtailment of the privileges so very recently renewed. The negotiations were endless until the death of Mary in 1558.

Elizabeth on her accession showed the Hansa a certain degree of favour, for she remitted some vexatious restrictions placed on the landing of certain goods at the Steelyard wharf, and permitted all sorts of goods to be received there.

Gresham, who had lost influence under Mary's reactionary regime, soon got the ear of her enterprising and sagacious successor, and he strongly represented that if it were just for the Hansa to enjoy monopolies in England to the detriment of the English trading classes, surely the League should be compelled to extend reciprocity to English trade in German territory. This was the one thing the Hansa had always been unwilling to do; but, Elizabeth herself taking a personal interest in these negotiations, an arrangement was arrived at under which it was agreed that the Merchant Adventurers were to be assigned a station at Hamburg for ten years. Sir Richard Clough was appointed English resident at the head of the establishment. This factory's operations were attended with complete success, as in 1569 the admitted value of the cloth imported in that year amounted to little short of a million thalers.

The Hansa, alarmed at the lamentable effect produced on the Steel-

yard export of cloth, withdrew permission to continue the station, and the English got notice to quit possession of their factory at Hamburg.

For the Hansa, with such a roll of monopolies behind her, to give England notice that the Hamburg concession would be withdrawn, was clearly a dangerous step to take, especially at this critical juncture of affairs, but indeed the League began to find itself unable to compete with its English rivals under anything like equal conditions. It was, besides, torn by dissensions from within, owing to conflicting interests and ambitions among the cities still on the roll. In fact, the League was everywhere tottering to its fall. Her cloth export had begun to shrink coincident with the competition of the English depôt at Hamburg, as the following figures show :—

1550-1555—	50,000	pieces,	average	annual	export.
1560-1562—	40,000	"	"	"	"
1570-1575—	30,000	"	"	"	"

The Hansa in her negotiations with England at this time found an opponent anxious and able to deal with facts and plain issues. It had ceased to be a question of old treaties and privileges, bought at a price and handsomely paid for long ago, and it became clear to both parties that the Hansa had had her day. Secret information as to the possible seizure of the Steelyard induced the fathers to send all important documents and silver plate to Lübeck, these documents had now amply served their turn.

The long impending blow fell on 7th April, 1579, when the Privy Council withdrew in a word all the Hansa's privileges and monopolies. The question as to the Steelyard 'title' being left in abeyance.

The Hansa herself, torn by conflicting councils, and unable to tell friends from foes, was unable to make any headway against the storm, and confusion reigned at the Steelyard.

The Merchant Adventurers were refused access to all German ports by the emperor, but had still a settlement at Stade, on the Elbe, established 1587, in succession to that of Hamburg.

Lord Leicester, writing to Secretary Walsingham in 1585, says :—
'Hamborou ys a villanous town and wholly the kings of Spayn, my lord Wyllouby was in great danger to be taken in there territerye. But yf yt please her Majesty to bestow her merchants in other places, I believe verily more to their proffyt, but far more to their safety.'

Elizabeth seemed now determined to carry the war into the enemies' country, for she dealt another important Hansa staple a crushing blow, by granting the trading monopoly in steel, practically long enjoyed by the Hansa, to Robert and Richard Cammerlane.

The war with Spain brought about the final catastrophe. Sir Francis Drake, finding the Hansa supplying the Spanish fleet with grain and munitions of war, took forcible possession of sixty of their vessels redhanded.

All English merchants were thereupon ordered to quit Germany, and on 13th January, 1598, the Steelyard merchants received notice to quit England within fourteen days. On 25th July the lord mayor and sheriffs took possession of the Steelyard in the queen's name, and on the 4th August following the Hansa merchants, with their belongings, and headed by their alderman, Heinrich Langerman, marched out of the Steelyard, shutting the gate behind them.

THE STEELYARDS OF LONDON, BOSTON, AND LYNN.

The house which was originally the 'Gildehalle Teutonicorum,' stood in Upper Thames street, eastward of Cosen's lane; the other factory buildings extended in the direction of All Hallows' lane. The oldest house was doubtless of wood, like the early halls of the London guilds, and the German buildings at Bergen and Novgorod. The word 'Gildehalle' is probably of Old Saxon, or Anglo-Saxon origin, and the structure built, or at all events owned by Cologne may possibly go back to the times of *Colonia Agrippini*, when we know a considerable trade existed between that Roman city and *Londinium*.

In 1260 there is mention of the hall as situated in the parish of All Hallows (*in parochia omnium sanctorum*), but its locality in Dowgate, Downgate, or Dovegate ward does not appear before 1383. It lay on the bank of the Thames in close proximity to the ancient wall and fortifications already ruinous in the days of Henry II.

In all probability the wooden building was replaced by one of stone in the time of Henry III., in whose reign it was styled the house of the Easterlings. Even then the factory must have consisted of several houses and buildings, as we find in a taxing record of the period the phrase *domus et mansiones in Warda de Dovegate*. The new Gildhall was about 32 feet broad and 100 feet long; it had com-

munication with a quay. The façade faced Cosen's lane, and the building was provided with a tower in which the records of the association and valuable collection of silver plate were kept. It had accommodation for ambassadors and foreign deputations of importance, and was the place of meeting of the alderman and council of twelve. Near it stood the *buden* (booths) which provided dwellings for the merchants and their apprentices, then came the warehouses, offices, and stables.

The factory had now grown too small for the accommodation required within its walls, and the State Papers contain many records and agreements concerning the acquisition of new ground, river frontage, and buildings, of which I quote a few :—

Sir Thomas of Salisbury makes over to Reynand Loue, citizen of London, for £20 sterling, the buildings adjoining the quay in St. Dunstan's parish (1365).

Richard II. confirms the purchase of Sir Richard Lyon's house and quay (1383).

Richard Medford, bishop of Chichester, declares that he placed at the disposal of J. Northampton the houses used for dyeing, 2 houses by the stairs, and the cellar in Windgoos lane (1391).

Robert Comberton transfers to his son-in-law, Robert fitz Robert, jun., all his possessions in Dowgate ward (1410).

Th. Ferrars and others let the piece of ground and quay in Wind goos lane for 20 years for £66 13s. 4d. (1417).

The Hansa transfers to the citizens of London and Sergeant J. Russel the watch house in the Bishopsgate, and rent of the dwelling house in the same (1438).

The Hansa bought the five houses westwards in Windgos lane in 1475, but it was the house eastward in the same lane, acquired in 1384 'with the steelyard,' that most likely gave the factory its latest designation, as at one time the royal weighing beam, for determining the weight of goods subject to duty, stood on this very spot. Indeed, it is quite likely that this very beam was retained in use by the Hansa merchants. The government weighing station had been transferred to Cornhill, but the name steelyard (stilliard) continued to stick to the piece of land now taken possession of by the Hansa, and we find the Easterlings referred to in 1411 as the steelyard merchants. In my parent's home the household weighing beam was called the stilliard, and perhaps such machines are still so called; but I greatly fear our housewives of to-day do not use such things as much as their grandmothers did.

There is evidence of steel, iron, and other goods being weighed here, and a tariff of charges fixed for the Hansa porters, dated 22nd February, 1449, mentions steel on its list of articles. Dr. Minscheus, in 1617, refers to the steelyard as a broad place or court where 'much steel is sold.' The mention of steel in connection with 'steelyard,' is, however, most probably a mere coincidence, still there remains some difficulty as to the derivation of the name.

In the reign of Elizabeth the Gildhall, then known as the Old Hall, is described as a great stone building with three round doors to the street, the middle one being the largest, the others bricked up. Above the doors were placed the following inscriptions:—

'Haec domus est laeta, semper honitate repleta;
Hic pax, hic requies, hic gaudia semper honesta.'

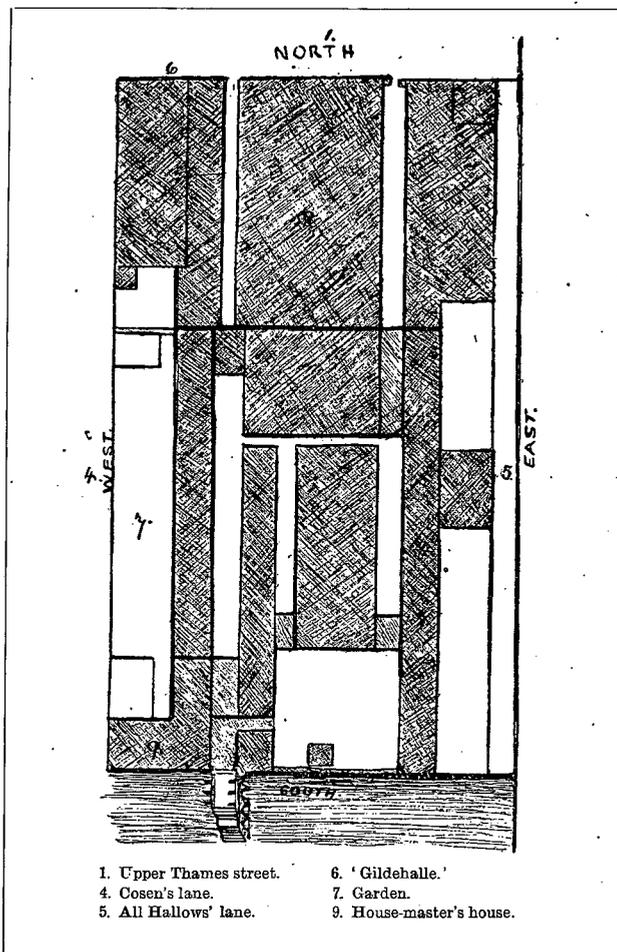
'Aurum blanditiae pater est natusque doloris;
Qui caret hoc moeret, qui tenet, hic metuit.'

'Qui bonis parere recusat, quasi vitato fumo in flammam incidit.'

The middle inscription also surmounted the celebrated picture by Holbein, painted about 1535, which adorned the dining hall. This picture was destroyed with the buildings in the Great Fire.

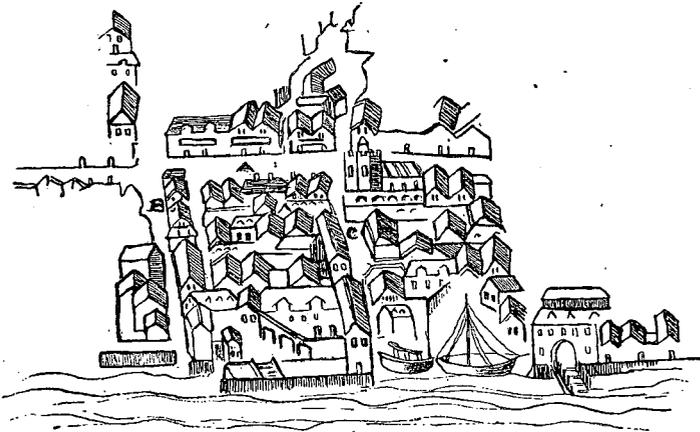
Next we have the dwelling of the housemaster, a stone building overlooking the Thames. Here was the great kitchen. Between this house and the Gildhall lay the garden, in which fruit trees and currant bushes flourished. Then comes Sir Richard Lyon's house, called the Rhenish wine house. In Nash's book (1592), *Pierce penilesse his supplication to the diuel*, the lazy man says, 'Let us goe to the Stilliard and drink Rhenish wine.' A few years later we read in one of Webster's plays, 'I come to intreat you to meet him this afternoon at the Rhenish winehouse in the Stilliard.' The rooms above the public drinking hall were sometimes used by ambassadors, and at the back of the house was a large apartment called the 'winter hall.' The summer-house lay on the Thames, and the remaining buildings consisted of booths, etc., as previously described. On an open space facing the river stood the big crane.

The factory was walled in as a provision against sudden attacks by mobs, and every man in the factory had his arms and was taught how to use them.



GROUND PLAN OF OLD FACTORY.

The accompanying sketch is from an old print of the time of queen Bess. The ground plan herewith is not that of the old factory, though doubtless the old walls and foundations were used as much as possible and the old plan more or less adhered to, as the resources at the command of the Hansa after the Great Fire were very limited indeed. The ground plan is dated 1667. Another I have seen of 1797 shows some very important changes. The clearly-marked site of the factory is now shrouded by the lower end of Cannon street station, but the homogeneous character of the Steelyard block under the projecting station still retains its old form, extent, and general features. Bounded on the north by Upper Thames street, with a frontage of something like 200 feet, on the south by the river Thames, and on the west and east by Cosen's and All Hallows' lanes respectively, with an average depth towards the quays from Thames street of about 400 feet.



A—Upper Thames street. B—Cosen's lane. C—All Hallows' lane.

After the closing of the Steelyard in 1598, it was acknowledged by the king in council on the 8th April, 1663, to be still the property of the Hanse towns. Sir John Evelyn had been desirous of securing the site for a new exchange, but this could not be arranged. The Great Fire on Sunday morning, the 2nd September, 1666, laid the Steelyard in ashes.

Boston and Lynn were both early factories, the former, under its old name of Hoyland, was first established. Henry II. issued

letters of protection for the Easterlings here, and Leland refers to the station in his *Itinerary*. This factory was closed in 1550. Lynn Episcopi, after the Reformation, Lynn Regis, was the other important factory. King John endowed it with extensive privileges. Among the public archives is an immense amount of correspondence regarding the Hansa's 'title' to the freehold of these stations.

With Elizabeth, the Hansa monopoly in England, and indeed practically the League itself came to an end, and but for the possession of the freeholds of the Steelyards of London, Boston, and Lynn, we should have heard very little more of the Hansa in England, after her reign. The possession of these places, however, gave rise to continued negotiations and correspondence, and the Steelyard was rebuilt after the Great Fire in 1666, with the German traders pretty much on the footing of other merchants.

Pennant, in his work on London (1790), referring to the Steelyard, says:—'Next to the waterside are two eagles, with imperial crowns round their necks, placed on two columns.'

In 1853 the Steelyard was sold by the citizens of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck for building purposes for £72,500, and the site is now nearly equally divided between the premises of a large wholesale wine merchant and a gigantic colonial meat refrigerating company.

'Quicquid excessit modum
Pendet instabili loco.'

Seneca.