

# Something *is* Rotten

July 17, 2022  
Kronborg Castle



*“Something is rotten in the state of Denmark”*

-William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, scene iv,

We visited Kronborg Castle today. Shakespeare modeled Hamlet’s *Elsinore* on this majestic fortress located north of Copenhagen.

In high school, we were asked to memorize ten lines of any stanza from *Hamlet*. I chose the “*To be, or not to be*” soliloquy.

While we were alone on the ramparts of the castle, I attempted to recite the verse, but my mushy old brain could only recall the first three lines....

... **Something *is* rotten** in the state of Denmark.



**To Be,**




**Not To Be....**

## HAMLET’S SOLILOQUY.

SHAKESPEARE.

To be, or not to be, that is the question :—  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And, by opposing, end them. To die—to sleep ;  
No more ; and, by a sleep, to say we end  
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, — 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die—to sleep ;  
To sleep ! perchance to dream ; ay, there's the rub ;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause.

 **Quotes.**

# WTF, Aunt Margaret?

July 17, 2022

## Kronborg Castle

*King Eric of Pomerania's head was more than just a place to set his crown.*

King Eric built Kronborg Castle in the 1400s on the narrowest point of land on Øresund, an opening to the Baltic Sea. The king offset the cost of building the castle by charging a *sound toll* on ships entering or leaving through Øresund. The tax was levied as a percentage of the value of the goods aboard each ship passing through the sound.



Sound tolls were assessed on an honour system, with a catch. The ship's captain would state the value of the cargo, without an inventory count. The king could either accept the stated value or purchase the ship's contents for the declared amount.

Quite ingenious when you think about it.

### Kronborg Castle

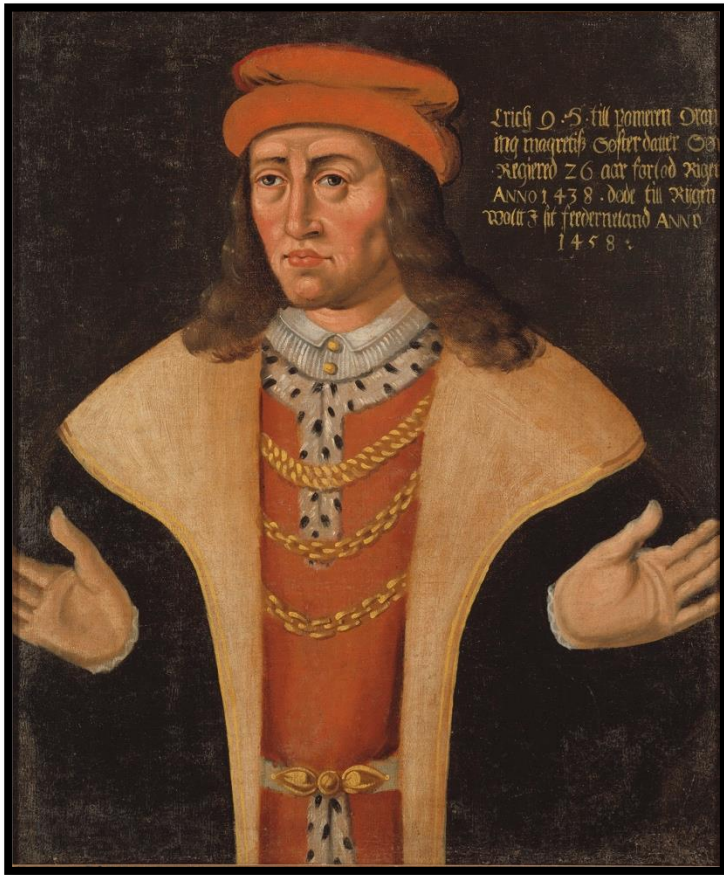
King Eric was not only intelligent, but he was also reportedly quite handsome. Pope Pious II described Eric as having “*a beautiful body, reddish yellow hair, a ruddy face, and a long narrow neck*”. With such rugged good looks “*all women were drawn to him in a feeling of longing for love*”, according to the Pope.

Powerful, handsome, and intelligent, Eric could attract any girl he wanted. But nobles don't always have the luxury of choosing their mates. In Eric's case, his aunt, Queen Margaret of Denmark, and King Henry IV of England, wanted to form an alliance. They decided that King Henry's daughter Philippa was the best strategic choice for Eric. A marriage was arranged between Eric and Philippa to cement a union between England and Denmark.



Philippa of England

Eric wasn't enthralled with the idea of marrying Philippa. In fact, he never even showed up for the wedding. On 26 November 1405, Philippa was married to Eric by proxy in Westminster, with Swedish nobleman Ture Bengtsson Bielke as stand-in for the groom.

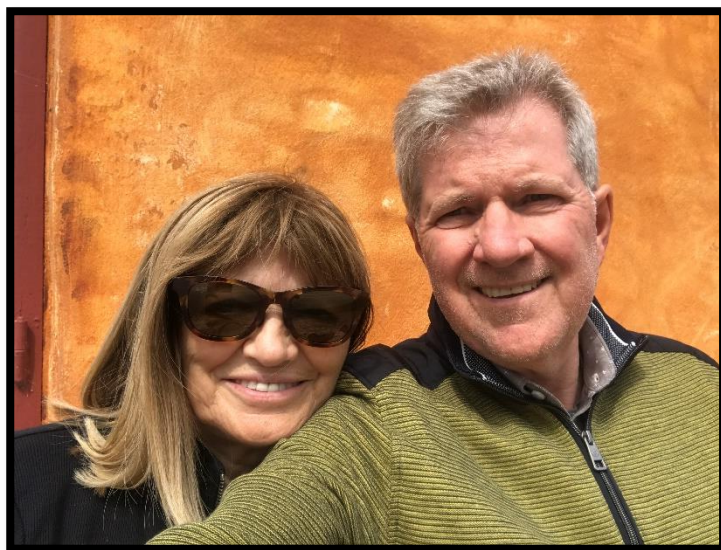


Eric of Pomerania, seen here asking...

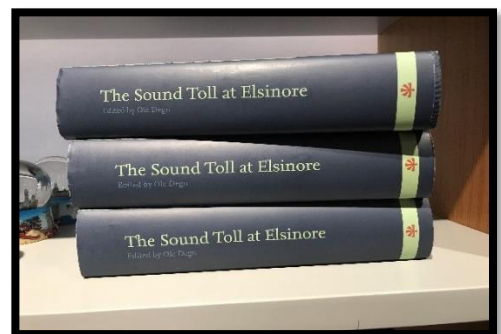
**...WTF, Aunt Margaret?**



*Eric and Philippa's robes, on display at Elsinore*



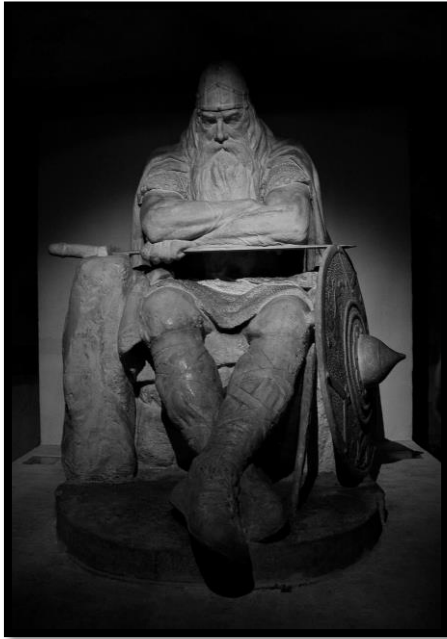
*Eric and (not Philippa), on display at Elsinore.*



# The Weary Warrior

July 17, 2022

Kronborg Castle, Denmark



This is Holger Danske.

Holger has been asleep for centuries but please don't disturb him, he is not ready to wake up yet.

Holger sleeps in Kronborg Castle and has since he walked here from France in the time of Charlemagne, 1200 years ago. He has been asleep for so long his beard has grown to the floor.

Holger Danske is a symbol of Danish identity and patriotism, as well as anti-German nationalism. Danes believe that Holger will sleep until some day when the country of Denmark is in the greatest peril. On that day he will rise and save the nation.

Maybe so, but Holger slept through two world wars when Denmark could have used a little help. I am skeptical.

Bear and I decided to grab a cup of coffee while we were at the castle. We gave Holger a whiff, but we couldn't roust ...

... the weary warrior.

An armed group of Danish resistance fighters during World War II was named after the legend. Members of *Holger Danske Militia* are seen here arresting German collaborators.



Tomorrow, we head for Fole, the Bekker ancestral hometown. Fole is in the heart of Viking territory. Bring your broadsword, we may need protection.



To Be Continued.....