

CHAPTER II

FROM THE TIME OF THE OCCUPATION OF THE COUNTRY
BY THE BOHEMIANS (ČECHS) TO THE DEATH OF PRINCE
BOLESLAV II (451-999).

As has already been mentioned, the Cechs, who after the extinction of the Marcomanni settled in Bohemia, were a branch of the great Slavonic race. It is probable that the Slavs inhabited a large part of Eastern Europe from the earliest historical times, though all attempts to identify the lands they occupied are mere conjectures.

As Bohemia was henceforth to be inhabited by the Slavonic race, it will be well to throw a glance on the social and political condition of the Slavs at that period, as far as the scanty records that have reached us render it possible.

Of the religion of the ancient Slavs hardly anything is known. The writers of the earlier part of the nineteenth century, in the absence of all genuine records often relied on documents that have since been proved to be forgeries. Such were the so-called MSS. of Zelena Hora and Kralové Dvůr, and particularly the notes that were interpolated in a genuine MS. entitled the "Mater Verborum." It is to the learned Mr. Patera, formerly librarian of the Bohemian Museum, that the discovery of the fraudulent insertions in the "Mater Verborum" is due.

The earliest political institutions of the Slavs were of the most primitive nature; they appear when we first read of them to have known neither princes nor nobles, and the only existent authority was that of the starosta or elder of each village. We hear that the Slavs in the earliest times were less warlike than their Germanic neighbours, which perhaps accounts for the absence of any military institutions, and for the facility with which they were conquered and partly extirpated by the Germans.

The great struggle known as the migration of nations, forced the Slavs to imitate their neighbours by strengthening their organization. The Slavs of Bohemia were, at a time which it is difficult to determine, divided into tribes, each of which was ruled over by a chief named "voyvode." The voyvode of the most important of these tribes, the Čechs—a name which was gradually extended to all the

Slavonic tribes in Bohemia—appears to have exercised a certain supremacy over the other voyvodes, and to have been known as the kněz (prince). When some of the tribes increased in number the voyvodes divided them into several župa (districts), over each of which they appointed a župan (chief). The voyvodes, as well as the supreme voyvode or knez, were elected by the members of their tribe; but this selection soon tended to become merely nominal, as it became established that the choice should be limited to members of certain powerful families.

The kněz or prince, as well as the voyvodes and župans, seem to have united all civil and military authority in their persons. The prince was judge over the whole people, and the voyvodes and župans acted in the same capacity with regard to their tribe or district. These same chiefs were also the leaders in time of war.

Hardly any record of the conquest of Bohemia by the Cechs has reached us, and the date is also uncertain, though it seems sure that this event occurred during the fifth century.¹ The modern Bohemian historians, Palacký and Tomek, consider the year 451 the most probable date. According to old legends, Cechus, or Čech, a noble of Croatia²), having committed homicide, fled from his country, and with his companions sought a new abode in Bohemia. Old traditions tell us that Čechus and his followers, after having crossed three rivers,³ first fixed their abode on the mountain Rip (Georgsberg, mountain of St. George), a hill near Roudnice, overlooking the Elbe.

Scarcely anything is known to us of the history of the Čechs in the earliest times after their settlement in Bohemia. The old legends referring to this time tell us of numerous wars with the neighbouring German tribes, probably the Thuringians and the Franks, and already show a spirit of racial hatred against the western neighbours.

At some period in the sixth century the Bohemians, or Čechs,⁴ became tributary to the Avars, a tribe of Asiatic

¹ See, however, p. 2, where I have mentioned that there was probably a Slavic population in some parts of Bohemia long before this period.

² The situation of this Croatia is very uncertain. It may have been the present Austrian province of Galicia.

³ Many not very successful attempts have been made by Bohemian historians to identify these three rivers.

⁴ The Bohemian historians, when writing in German, always designate

origin, which, having conquered Hungary, now began to invade Western Europe. Nothing is known either as regards the duration or the extent of the domination of the Avars over Bohemia. Recent research has, however, proved that their power was greater in Pannonia (which roughly corresponds to the present Hungary) than in Bohemia. It is not even certain that the Avars ever permanently occupied Bohemia, where no archaeological traces of their sojourn have been found. It is, however, certain that they frequently plundered and ravished the country.¹ The old German chronicles tell us that in the year 623 Samo, who probably belonged to one of the Slavonic tribes that then inhabited Northern Germany, aided the Bohemians in their struggle against the Avars, and that with his help they succeeded in freeing their country from alien domination.

The grateful Bohemians chose Samo as their king, and he is said to have been the founder of the first great Slavonic State. Bohemia was the centre of his dominions, and Samo's residence was traditionally believed to have been the castle of the Vyšehrad.²

The formation of this great Slavonic State excited the jealousy of Dagobert, king of the Franks, and he invaded the lands of Samo in several directions. His main army was, however, defeated in a great battle fought at Wogastisburg (probably near the present town of Cheb),³ which lasted three days. After this victory Samo is said to have still further extended his dominions. He appears to have lived up to the year 658.

From this date up to nearly the end of the eighth century the history of Bohemia is a complete blank, and our only authority for this period is Cosmas of Prague, who lived four centuries later, and whose writings deserve the name of fairy-tales more than that of history.⁴ These tales, un-

their countrymen as Bohemians, not Čechi; and I shall henceforth follow their example.

¹ This has been clearly shown by Dr. Niederle in the *Cesky Časopis Historick* (Bohemian Historical Journal) for 1909, p. 345-349.

² A hill near Prague, now incorporated with that town.

³ In German Eger.

⁴ The modern Bohemian historians Palacký and Tomek quote the so-called MSS. of Zelena Hora and Kralové Dvůr as authorities for this period. Recent research has proved that they are forgeries dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

doubtedly founded on old traditions, have remained widely popular in Bohemia, so that it may be well briefly to notice them. Cosmas tells us that the Bohemian prince Krokus (or Krok), whom he calls the first ruler over the country, had three daughters, Kázi, Teta (or Lethka), and Libussa. Kázi, the eldest, was equal to the Colchian Medea in her knowledge of medicine and poisons; whilst the second, Teta, was learned in religious rites, and taught the ignorant people to worship Oreades, Dryades, and Hamadryades.¹ "The Third (sister), smaller in the number of years but greater in wisdom, was called Libussa . . . she was a wonderful woman among women; chaste in body, righteous in her morals, second to none as judge over the people, affable to all and even amiable, the pride and glory of the female sex, doing wise and manly deeds; but as nobody is perfect, this so praiseworthy woman was, alas, a soothsayer."² Libussa, though the youngest of the three sisters, was chosen by the people to be their ruler; whether in consequence of her many qualities that he enumerates, Cosmas does not tell us. Libussa reigned for some time over the people, and is said to have founded the city of Prague at the foot of the Vyšehrad, and to have foretold its future greatness.

At length, however, the Bohemians became discontented with female rule, and when Libussa was judging a dispute between two nobles, the one against whom she decided insulted her, and said that his country was the only one that endured the shame of being ruled over by a woman. Libussa then said to the people that she saw they were too ferocious to be ruled over by a woman. She begged them to disperse, and on the following day to choose a man to rule over them; whomsoever they might choose she promised to take as a husband. The people replied by asking her to choose a husband, whom they would acknowledge as their prince. Libussa consented, and on the following day said to the assembled people, pointing to the distant hills, "Behind these hills is a small river called Belina, and at its bank a farm called Stadic. Near that farm is a field, and in that field your future king is ploughing with two oxen marked with various spots. His name

¹ Under these classical denominations Cosmas evidently designated the Rusalky or fairies, in whose existence the heathen Bohemians believed.

² Cosmas, *Pragensis Chronica Bohemorum*, pp. 2, 3.

is Přemysl, and his descendants will reign over you for ever. Take my horse and follow him; he will lead you to the spot." The people chose several out of their number, who immediately set out, and following the guidance of Libussa's horse reached the place described by her, and there found a peasant, whose name they ascertained to be Přemysl, ploughing his field. They immediately saluted him as their prince, and conducted him to the castle on the Vyšehrad, where he was married to Libussa, and seated on the princely throne. Modern Bohemian historians assert that Přemysl was the vojvode of the Lemuzes, one of the tribes into which Bohemia was then divided; and they have also made various not very successful attempts to identify the locality where he was found. According to the old traditions, Přemysl was a great law-giver; and in later times all the most ancient laws and regulations were attributed to him.

Beginning with Přemysl, the ancient Bohemian chroniclers have constructed a regular genealogical table, and his successors in the male line ruled over Bohemia for more than five centuries (up to 1306); whilst the Habsburg dynasty, now reigning over Bohemia, also descends from him in the female line. Nothing except their names,¹ not even the length of their reigns, is known of the first successors of Přemysl; though Hajek of Libočan, and other Bohemian writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, give long but entirely imaginary accounts of their reigns.

Towards the end of the eighth century the German chroniclers again begin to throw some light on the events that occurred in Bohemia. Ever since the beginning of the greatness of the Carolingian dynasty these sovereigns had attempted to extend their power in Eastern Germany; and had succeeded in subduing not only the Saxons, but also some of the Slavonic tribes that then inhabited a large part of North-eastern Germany.

The Slavonic tribes of the Cbotrites, Wiltes, and Sorbes—whose dwelling-places may be roughly identified with Mecklenburg, Brandenburg, and Saxony—were successively overcome by the Carolingian monarchs, especially by Charles the Great. As was inevitable, Bohemia, which in so many directions joined the lands he had conquered, also

¹ These names will be found in the list of sovereigns of Bohemia contained at the end of this volume.

attracted the ambition of the great Emperor ; particularly after that his coronation in Rome (800) had, according to the then prevalent ideas, invested him with supreme power over Western Europe.

There are no historical records as to the direct cause which induced Charles the Great to attempt the conquest of Bohemia ; we only learn from contemporary German chroniclers that he (805) attacked that country from several directions, the main army being commanded by the Emperor's son Charles. The campaign does not appear to have been a successful one, nor do the Germans seem to have remained long in Bohemia. It is, however, probable — though evidence is very contradictory — that Bohemia became to a certain extent tributary to the Carolingian monarchs. Should the Bohemians then have consented to pay a tribute, we have every reason for supposing that such payments only took place during the lifetime of Charles the Great, and not during the reigns of his successors. During the intestine disturbances, which broke out in the empire of the Franks after the death of Charles the Great, his successors were too much occupied to think of attempting any new attack on their Slavonic neighbours. It was only after the treaty of Verdun (843) that the Bohemians again had to defend their independence against the Germans. By the partition which had been agreed on at Verdun, Louis, surnamed the German, had become ruler of Germany, and, as such, heir to the claims of supremacy over the neighbouring Slavonic tribes. It was not, however, against Bohemia that he first turned his arms, but against the sister-land, Moravia.

The earliest history of Moravia, up to the beginning of the ninth century, is involved in even more complete obscurity than that of Bohemia. We have, however, every reason to believe that in those days it shared the fate of that country ; that it was conquered by the Avars, then liberated by Samo ; and that it formed part of his empire.

About the middle of the ninth century Moravia was governed by Mojmir, who, from the scanty record that has reached us, appears to have been a ruler of great ability. He united the scattered tribes under his dominion, and was the real founder of the great Moravian Empire, which for some time included Bohemia also. In 846 Louis "the German" sent a large army into Moravia, and appointed

Mojmir's nephew, Rostislav, ruler of the land. Moravia having been forced to acknowledge German supremacy, the German army now attacked Bohemia. The Bohemians, however, were successful in their resistance, and defeated the invading army. From this time forth war raged between Germany and Bohemia for thirty years. The vague and contradictory reports of battles that have reached us are of no interest to English readers. It is of more interest to turn our attention to an event of immense importance to Bohemia that occurred about this time, namely, the conversion of the country to Christianity.

It is probable that Christianity penetrated into Moravia earlier than into Bohemia, and Palacký gives documentary evidence that as early as the year 836 a Christian church was consecrated at Neutra in Moravia by the Archbishop of Salzburg. In 884 we read that fourteen Bohemian nobles appeared at the court of King Louis "the German" at Regensburg, and that they were baptized on the 1st of January, 845. It is very probable that these nobles had been obliged to fly from Bohemia in consequence of one of the many feuds that then desolated the country, and that they hoped by accepting the Christian faith to secure German aid against their internal enemies.

Christianity introduced through the agency of Germany was not likely to gain many adherents, as the Christian faith was necessarily in the eyes of the Bohemians connected with the hostile German race. It was from the east that Christianity completely and permanently penetrated into Moravia and Bohemia. In 862 the Moravian Prince Rostislav, who, though invested with sovereignty by the Germans had soon renewed the national feuds with them, sent a mission to the court of the Greek Emperor at Constantinople, asking him to send Christian teachers of the Slavonic race to Moravia.

The envoys thus addressed Michael, the then ruler of the Eastern empire: "Our people have rejected paganism and already observe Christian law. But we have no teachers who can in our own language teach us the true Christian faith, so that other countries, seeing this, may follow our example. Send then, O Emperor, such a bishop or teacher, you from whom all good law proceeds."¹ It is probable

¹ Dr. Pastruck, *Dějiny Slovanských apoštolů Cyrilla a Methoda* (History of the Slavic apostles Cyrillus and Methodius).

that these simple words, as noted in the legend, express the true purpose of Rostislav. The mission had, however, undoubtedly also a political purpose. Rostislav and his uncle intended to form a great Moravian empire independent of the Franks, and for this purpose to free themselves from the Frankish hierarchy; for the German priests in Moravia endeavoured to serve the interests of their race, as well as those of their religion.

The emperor Michael received the envoys favourably and selected two priests, the brothers Constantine and Methodius, to accompany them to Moravia. "You are," he said, "citizens of Soluň,¹ and the citizens of Soluň generally speak pure Slavic."

We read that when the brothers started on their journey Constantine brought with him a translation of the Bible written in the language of the Slavic inhabitants of Macedonia. For this translation Constantine used the letters of the new alphabet, which he had himself invented, and which from the name he afterwards assumed became known as the Cyrillic alphabet. It renders with great precision the sounds peculiar to Slavic languages, and it is still largely used in Eastern Europe. This event is undoubtedly of great importance. Not only did the Slavic language thus become a written one, but by its use in religious services it took its position with Latin and Greek as a liturgic language.

The undertaking of the saintly brothers was fully successful. Numerous churches were built, and the inhabitants of Moravia eagerly flocked to the religious services, which were held in the Slavonic tongue. The fame of the new preachers spread beyond the borders of Moravia, and the Slavonic inhabitants of the adjoining districts of Pannonia (Hungary) also accepted the teaching of Constantine and Methodius.

It seems more than probable that the German priests, and particularly the Archbishop of Salzburg, to whose diocese these lands belonged, regarded the brothers as intruders, and attempts were repeatedly made to denounce them to the Holy See as heretics. These attempts were favoured by the Eastern origin of Constantine and Methodius. It became known that they had, while at Constantinople, enjoyed the favour of the patriarch Photius, through

¹ The present Salonike.

whose influence the schism between the Eastern and Western Church took place. It should, however, be noted that the brothers, from the time of their arrival in Moravia, always sided entirely with the Church of Rome.

To justify their conduct before the Pope, the brothers proceeded on their first journey to Rome. Constantine, shortly after their arrival there, feeling his end approaching, entered a monastery and there assumed the name of Cyrillus, by which he is generally known. He died a few weeks afterwards. Shortly afterwards Methodius left Rome and proceeded for a short time to Pannonia, on a visit to Kocel, the prince of that country, who had requested the Pope to send him a priest who was acquainted with the Slavic language. After a short stay in Hungary, Methodius returned to Rome to report to the Pope on the success of his mission. He then returned to Moravia, where he continued almost up to the end of his life to be subject to the persecutions of the German priests. During a third visit to Rome, Methodius obtained from the Pope the title of Archbishop of Moravia and Pannonia, and the formal recognition of the Cyrillic alphabet.¹

Though we have no direct evidence to the purpose, it seems highly probable that the differences between the German and Slavonic priests were in some sort of connection with the ever-recurring hostilities between Germany and Moravia. In 864 and 868 we again find the armies of the German King Louis attacking the domains of Prince Rostislav, who received assistance from the Bohemians. These wars, in which the Germans do not appear to have been successful, were ended by a treaty; but Rostislav's downfall, which the Germans had so long vainly attempted to achieve, was at last brought about by treachery. Rostislav's nephew, Svatopluk, who governed the district of Neutra under the supremacy of his uncle, allied himself with the Germans. He succeeded in making his uncle prisoner, and delivered him over to Carlomann, son of the German King Louis (870).

¹ Dr. Pastruck's book, to which I have already referred, renders it certain that Methodius in no way opposed the *dogma* of the Roman Church. It also proves that the attitude of the Pope towards Methodius was a somewhat "opportunist" one, perhaps based on the desire to found a Romanist Church with Slavic rites in opposition to the schismatic Photius.

Immediately afterwards Carlomann entered Moravia, conquered the whole country, and appointed two brothers, Margraves of Austria, its governors. The German governors seized the Archbishop Methodius, and delivered him as prisoner to his enemies the German bishops. Shortly afterwards they caused Svatopluk also, whose fidelity they mistrusted, to be imprisoned and sent to Germany. He appears to have ingratiated himself with the German conquerors; for when an insurrection broke out in Moravia, shortly afterwards, he was appointed leader of the German army sent to suppress it.

Svatopluk now requited by treachery the treachery that had been used against him. Deserting the Germans, he put himself at the head of his countrymen, and defeated the Germans in a decisive battle in which both the Austrian Margraves fell (871). Svatopluk, now uncontested lord of Moravia, tried to strengthen his power against the Germans (who were certain again to attack him) by an alliance with the Bohemian Prince Bořivoj—a relation of whom, probably a sister, he subsequently married. The relative positions of Bohemia and Moravia at this period are very uncertain; but it is probable that when Svatopluk's power increased Bořivoj became to a certain extent subject to him.

The following year (872) the Germans again attacked both Bohemia and Moravia; and though they succeeded in penetrating into Bohemia, they were on the whole unsuccessful. After Svatopluk had in the following year carried the war into the enemies' country by attacking Carlomann in Germany, his father, King Louis, who had come to his aid, considered it wiser to enter into negotiations for peace. These negotiations resulted in the treaty of Forchheim (874), which was favourable to Svatopluk, and secured to him the possession of his conquests in Northern Hungary, though under German supremacy.

After this treaty Methodius was released from custody, and returned to Moravia. One of his first deeds after his return was probably the baptism of the Bohemian Prince Bořivoj; both the locality and the exact date of this important event are uncertain.¹ At the same time Bořivoj's

¹ The legend that Bořivoj became a Christian because, dining with Svatopluk, he was requested to sit apart on a low stool, since he, being a heathen, was unfit to sit at table with Christians, is of recent origin, and is treated with contempt by modern Bohemian historians.

wife, Ludmilla, was also received into the Christian Church; and the example she set by her saintly life greatly aided the rapid spread of Christianity in Bohemia. Bořivoj is said to have built several churches: the one at Levy Hradec, near Prague, is specially mentioned as having been built by him, and is the oldest Christian church in Bohemia.¹ The earliest church on the Hradčany hill at Prague is also believed to have been built during the reign of Bořivoj.

In 885 Methodius, "the apostle of the Slavs," died. The numerous legends which supply almost all the evidence concerning him give a very touching account of his death.

Svatopluk of Moravia, after having secured for his country independence from Germany, extended his dominion in all directions, and he soon became the chief of a mighty Slavonic empire. It is equally difficult to specify the limits of his dominion, and the names and number of the minor Slav States that acknowledged his supremacy. We are told that Cracow and the surrounding part of Poland, Silesia, a large part of Northern Germany reaching as far as Magdeburg, and a large part of Northern Bohemia, had probably long before acknowledged his supremacy; but after Bořivoj's death, Svatopluk only recognized his sons Svytihněv and Vratislav as local chieftains (voyvodes) over certain districts, and himself became supreme ruler over Bohemia, thus temporarily effacing the dynasty of Přemysl.

Hostilities between the Germans and the Slavs were renewed not many years after the treaty of Forcheim. In 890 Svatopluk was involved in a great war with the German King Arnulph, an illegitimate son of Carlomann. In 892 Arnulph obtained aid from the wild Magyars or Hungarians, who had then recently appeared in Europe, and whose dwelling-place at that period probably was the present Moldavia.

Svatopluk successfully resisted these various attacks, but the greatness of the Moravian Empire ended with his death (894). The quarrels between two of Svatopluk's sons, Mojmir and Svatopluk, hastened the ruin of the country. The Bohemian Prince Svytihněv seized the opportunity, which the intestine struggles in Moravia afforded him, for the purpose of shaking off Moravian supremacy and re-

¹ This church is still in existence, but was considerably altered in the fifteenth century.

establishing the rule of the dynasty of Přemysl over the whole of Bohemia.

To strengthen himself against Moravia, Spytihněv sought the alliance of Germany; and he and his brother Vratislav appeared at Regensburg, at the court of the German King Arnulph, imploring his aid. Taking into account the close connection then existing between political and ecclesiastical affairs, it seems certain that the Bohemians accepted the supremacy of the Bishop of Regensburg, and with it the Latin liturgy. The Slavonic liturgy, however, also continued side by side with the Latin one: and we find evidence even late in Bohemian history that the memory of the original Eastern origin of Christianity in the country remained unforbidden among the people.

Whilst Germans and Slavs were exhausting their forces in constantly-recurring struggles, the new Asiatic tribe, which the Germans had originally called in to their aid, had widely extended its power. The Germans and Slavs now made common cause against the Magyars; but in a great battle which took place at Presburg (907) they were totally defeated. The Magyars now ravaged Germany and the neighbouring Slavonic lands with impunity. About the time of this great battle—the exact date cannot be ascertained in the complete absence of contemporary evidence—the Magyars entirely conquered Moravia, which remained in their power for more than half a century; only a small western district fell to Bohemia.

“The invasion of the Magyars and their establishment in Hungary is one of the most important events in the history of Europe; it is the greatest misfortune that has befallen the Slavonic world during thousands of years. The Slavonic races in the ninth century extended from the frontiers of Holstein to the coast of the Peloponnesus, much divided and disconnected, varying in habits and circumstances, but everywhere able, diligent, and capable of instruction. In the middle of this extended line a centre had been formed by Rostislav and Svatopluk, round which, both by inner impulse and through the force of external circumstances, the other Slavonic tribes would have grouped themselves.”¹

In the complete absence of contemporary records it is impossible to ascertain how Bohemia escaped the fate that

¹ Palacký.

befell Moravia. The ability of the princes of the house of Přemysl, who then ruled over Bohemia, may have largely contributed to preserve the country from the Magyar invaders. Old legends tell us that Vratislav, who about this time succeeded his brother Spytihněv, was a glorious prince, so that we may infer that he was successful in defending the country against its numerous enemies. Vratislav died about the year 930,¹ and after his death dissensions arose in the reigning family. Vratislav left three sons — Venceslas, Boleslav, and Spytihněv, the last of whom died in early youth. The widow of Vratislav, Drahomira of Stodor, daughter of a prince of the still heathen tribe of the Lutices (in the present Lusatia), assumed the guardianship over her two other sons. She is described to us as a proud and imperious woman, who soon became jealous of the influence of her mother-in-law, the saintly Ludmilla, who had educated Prince Venceslas in the Christian faith. She sent murderers to the castle of Tetin, whither Ludmilla had retired, and these, finding her kneeling at prayers, strangled her with her own veil (921). Ludmilla was afterwards canonized as a saint of the Catholic Church.

The regency of Drahomira did not prove advantageous to the country. Bohemia was soon involved in war with Henry the Fowler, the great king who was then reigning over Germany. King Henry had recently subdued many of the Slavonic tribes in the region of the upper Elbe. It is probable that Drahomira incurred his hostility by assisting these tribes, to one of which—the Lutices—she herself belonged; or Henry the Fowler may have considered his victories incomplete, as long as he had not subdued the Slavonic Bohemians also.

Though hostilities had probably begun before, it was in 928 that King Henry entered Bohemia with a large army and advanced as far as Prague. Venceslas, who by this time had assumed the government of the country, felt the impossibility of resisting the German power, and a peaceful settlement was agreed to. Venceslas consented to pay an annual tribute of six hundred marks of silver and one hundred and twenty head of cattle. Venceslas, according to the contemporary records, appears to have been a peaceful and pious prince. We are told that he spent a great part of the night in prayers, and that he was in the habit of him-

¹ The chronology of Bohemia is at this time still very uncertain.

self cutting off the wheat and grapes that the priests required to prepare the holy wafers and the wine for the sacrament. His great generosity to churches seems to have caused discontent among some of the nobles; and the ambition of Wenceslas's younger brother Boleslav induced him to become the head of a conspiracy against the prince. Wenceslas had the pious habit of attending the anniversaries of the foundation of churches—*posviceni*, as they are called in Bohemia—in every part of his dominions, and on the invitation of his brother he repaired for a festivity of this description to Stará Boleslav, where Boleslav then resided.

On his way to early mass on the 28th of September, 935, Wenceslas was attacked by his brother and other conspirators, and murdered after a brave defence. Wenceslas was canonized by the Catholic Church, and the 28th of September is still one of the great religious festivals of Bohemia.

Boleslav, surnamed the Cruel, now became sovereign of Bohemia. He was "one of the most powerful monarchs that ever occupied the Bohemian throne."¹ He greatly extended the frontiers of the country, and also consolidated it internally. His reign began with a renewal of the intermittent but ever-recurring war against Germany. Probably King Henry considered the murder of his ally Wenceslas as a sufficient reason for resuming hostilities.

Henry died before he had had time to open the campaign; but in 938 the powerful king and emperor Otho I, who succeeded him, sent two armies into Bohemia. Though the records of this war are very obscure, it seems probable that Boleslav succeeded in defending his country against the invaders, at least for a time; it is also reported that he succeeded in subduing some of the Bohemian nobles who had allied themselves with the national enemy. War now continued between the two countries with varying success, but few details concerning this struggle have reached us. We read that in 946 the Bohemian prince sent hostages to Otho; but this evidently does not indicate a decisive victory of the Germans, for in 950 Otho himself entered Bohemia with a great army. Boleslav, seeing that his forces were insufficient to resist the whole power of the victorious Emperor, consented again to pay the tribute which Wenceslas had promised. Boleslav henceforth lived

¹ Palacký.

on peaceful terms with his western neighbours, attempting rather to extend his dominion in the direction of the east.

In the year 955 we find the Bohemians as allies of the German monarch. The Magyars, or Hungarians, who ever since the battle of Presburg had almost annually ravaged Western Europe, in that year attacked Germany with greater force than before. They were, however, signally defeated in a great battle near Augsburg—one of the most sanguinary and decisive battles fought during the Middle Ages. A Bohemian contingent of a thousand men formed part of the victorious army, but Boleslav himself, with the greater part of his troops, remained to guard the frontiers of Bohemia. The defeated Hungarian army, having attempted to force a passage through Bohemia, was completely defeated by Boleslav, who took the Hungarian leader, Lehel, prisoner.

We have very little information as to the successful wars that filled up the later years of the reign of Boleslav. Only a list of the lands which he conquered has reached us. He probably, soon after his victory over the Hungarians, succeeded in freeing Moravia from their domination and in uniting it with Bohemia. We learn that Boleslav also conquered a large part of the present Hungary—the wide lands between the Carpathian mountains and the Danube.

The country north of the Carpathian mountains, then known as Croatia,¹ is also included among the countries then subject to the Bohemian princes; but we have little knowledge whether the conquests in this country were made by Boleslav I, or by his son. It is, however, certain that the possessions of Boleslav I at this period joined the territory of the Polish dukes, and amicable relations were established between the two princes. Boleslav married his daughter Dubravka to the Polish Duke Mieceslav I, and her influence over her husband induced that still heathen prince to accept the Christian faith. His conversion was soon followed by that of his subjects.

Boleslav I died in 967, and was succeeded by his son Boleslav II, surnamed the Pious. It seems probable that the natural detestation that the old chroniclers felt for one

¹ This Croatia, the extant and geographical position of which is very uncertain, must not be confused with the present Croatia. It was probably situated in the lands north of the Carpathians now known as Galicia.

who had obtained the throne by the murder of his brother induced them somewhat to praise Boleslav II at the expense of his father, and to attribute to him conquests that had already been made by Boleslav I. It is certain that early in the reign of Boleslav II we find the Bohemian frontiers more widely extended than at any other time, even during the reigns of Ottokar II and Charles IV.

Besides Bohemia itself, Moravia, a large part of Hungary stretching from the Carpathians to the Danube, the greater part of Silesia including Breslau, wide districts of Poland reaching nearly up to the town of Lemberg, and touching the frontiers of the Russian rulers of Kiew, were subject to Boleslav II.

The great power acquired by Boleslav allowed him to assume a more independent attitude towards the German kings; and ecclesiastical affairs then being so intimately connected with the political situation, he now endeavoured to render the Bohemian Church less dependent on Germany.

On the occasion of an interview with the Emperor Otho (973), Boleslav obtained his consent to the separation of Bohemia, and the wide lands then incorporated with it, from the diocese of Regensburg. Prague was to become the seat of a bishopric; and the Pope gave his consent, though under the express conditions that the new bishopric was not to be considered a continuation of the old Moravian archbishopric, and that the liturgy should be the Latin, not the Slavonic one, which still had many adherents in the country. The Bohemian bishopric was also placed under the supremacy of the German archbishops of Mainz. On the proposal of Boleslav, Thietmar, a German who had long lived in Bohemia and was thoroughly versed in the language of the country, was, by the clergy, the nobles, and the people, elected first bishop of Prague (973).

Thietmar only lived nine years after his election, and Adalbert or Voytech, a Bohemian noble, son of the voyvode of Libitz, was then chosen as bishop. It was through the efforts of Adalbert that Christianity was finally established in Bohemia; for the German priests of the diocese of Regensburg, to which the country had formerly belonged, had made little impression on the people, whose language they mostly did not understand.

Adalbert, however, found the ruling of his extensive diocese very difficult, and his efforts to extirpate polygamy

and other still-prevailing heathen customs unsuccessful. Becoming discouraged, he obtained permission to retire to Rome, where he entered a convent; but he returned to Bohemia three years later on the urgent request of Prince Boleslav. Adalbert, however, later again left Bohemia in consequence of a feud with other nobles, in which his brothers had become involved, and in which Boleslav had taken the part of their enemies. The castle of Libitz, to which Adalbert's brothers had retired, was stormed, and they were put to death by order of Boleslav. Adalbert himself died as a martyr (997) during a journey in the country of the heathen Prussians, whom he had attempted to convert to the Christian faith.

The reigns of Boleslav I and II are memorable for the great centralization of the sovereign power which was achieved by these princes. It has been mentioned¹ that the Bohemian princes originally only governed directly a certain part of the country—the centre of which was probably the castle of the Vyšehrad near Prague—and that they only exercised a certain ill-defined supremacy over the voyvodes who ruled the other parts of Bohemia. This organization, or rather absence of organization, had led to innumerable feuds among the voyvodes, as well as to constant revolts on their part against the prince. The Bohemian historians, referring to this period, give numerous descriptions of these small intestine wars, which have been omitted here as being of no interest to English readers.

Boleslav I and II succeeded in successfully subduing these local rulers; and after the death of the lords of Libitz, mentioned above, there was no hereditary voyvode in Bohemia except the prince. Bohemia was henceforth only divided into districts (*župa*), at the head of each of which a *župan* (burgrave) appointed by the prince was placed.

These government officials soon formed a new nobility, which gradually took the place of the old territorial nobles or voyvodes. During the powerful reigns of the two first Boleslavs the princely authority was greatly strengthened, and the assemblies or Diets which still took place ended by having a merely nominal character; their purpose was rather to hear the prince's will than to formulate the wishes of the people.

¹ See page 9.

Boleslav II died in 999, and with him for a time also the greatness of his country, which rapidly declined during the rule of his successors.

CHAPTER III

THE BOHEMIAN PRINCES FROM THE DEATH OF BOLESLAV II TO THE ACCESSION OF PŘEMYSL OTTOKAR I (999-1197)

THE great Bohemian Empire of Boleslav II, like most Slavonic States at that and even later periods, was not destined to be of long duration. As after the death of Vratislav I of Bohemia and Svatopluk of Moravia, dissensions in the reigning family were the first cause of the decline of the country. Boleslav II had three sons—Boleslav III, who succeeded him, Jaromir, and Ulrich.

Boleslav III is described as being cruel, avaricious, and distrustful. An old chronicler¹ tells us that he "*vice basilisci noxii regnans populum ineffabiliter constrinxit.*" The dissensions between Boleslav and his brothers appear to have begun immediately after their father's decease; and in the very year of the death of Boleslav II (999) the Polish Prince Boleslav, surnamed Chrobri (the Brave), son of the Bohemian Princess Dubravka, invaded the territories of his brother-in-law. Boleslav (the Brave), first attacked and stormed Cracow; the Bohemian garrison of which town was slaughtered after a brave defence. We are told that in the almost incredibly short period of one year Boleslav the Brave also conquered Moravia, Silesia, and the whole dominion over which Boleslav II had reigned, with the exception of Bohemia itself. Poland now for a time took the place of Bohemia as the great West-Slav power.

Boleslav III, entirely occupied by the internal divisions of Bohemia, seems to have made little or no effort to defend the dominion to which he had succeeded. Having driven his two brothers out of Bohemia, he hoped now to reign uncontestedly; but the Bohemian nobles and people, to whom his tyranny and cruelty had become intolerable, called to the throne the Polish Prince Vladivoj, a brother of Boleslav the Brave, and son of the Bohemian Princess

¹ Thietmar of Merseburg, quoted by Palacký.