CHAPTER IV

THE BOHEMIAN KINGS FROM THE ACCESSION OF PŘEMYSL OTTOKAR I TO THE DEATH OF JOHN OF LUXEMBURG (1197–1346)

At the time when Přemysl Ottokar I became undisputed ruler of Bohemia, the internal condition of Germany was favourable to the interests of the Bohemian princes, for whom the only possible policy consisted in maintaining their country's independence from Germany, as far as the political situation enabled them to do so. At this period Bohemia's connection with Germany, formerly so burdensome, suddenly became the source of many advantages. During the internal struggles in Germany the Bohemian king, as the most powerful and the most independent of the princes of the Empire, was able to obtain preponderance for whichever of the claimants to the German crown he favoured.

The German Emperor Henry IV died in the year of Přemysl Ottokar's accession to the throne (1197). The Electors did not agree as to the choice of his successor; while some wished to elect Philip, Duke of Swabia, guardian of Henry VI's minor son, as king, others wished to exclude the house of Hohenstaufen, and to raise Otho, Duke of Brunswick, to the throne.

Ottokar at first sided with Philip, though not before he had obtained some important concessions. Philip renounced all claims to the nomination of the rulers of Bohemia, and contented himself with a nominal right of confirmation. He also renounced all claims to the appointment of the bishops of Prague, and lastly conferred the hereditary title of king on the Bohemian sovereigns for all time. Ottokar was crowned king of Bohemia (1198) at Maintz at the same time as Philip received the German crown. The Bohemian king now became Philip's ally in the civil war that broke out between him and Duke Otho, but the alliance did not continue long.

Philip continued the struggle with the Pope, then Innocent III, which had embittered the reigns of the former emperors of the house of Hohenstaufen. The Pope, in consequence, summoned the German princes to recognize Philip's rival, Otho, as their sovereign. Ottokar was obedient

to the wishes of the Pope; and about the year 1203 we find him fighting in Thuringia on Otho's side against the adherents of Philip. Otho naturally rewarded him by confirming his title as hereditary king; and the Pope also for the first time recognized the kingly title of the Přemysl princes, and guaranteed to them all the privileges they had obtained from the German monarchs (1204). Ottokar seems to have pursued a dynastic policy, striving to increase the power of the house of Přemysl, and alternating in his allegiance between the rival German sovereigns. In 1206 we again find him an adherent of Philip, and it was only after that prince's murder (1208) that he again recognized Otho as king.

Otho, now undisputed ruler of Germany, soon became involved in the same dissensions with the Pope as his former rival; and Innocent III therefore invited the German princes to raise to the throne Henry VI's son, Frederick II, who was afterwards to become so dangerous an enemy to the Papacy. Ottokar was again subservient to the wishes of Rome; and Otho attempted unsuccessfully, though aided by an insurrection in Bohemia, to revenge himself on Ottokar for his desertion. The Bohemian king became an ally of Frederick II, who, besides confirming all former privileges of the Bohemian princes, granted them permission to liberate themselves, whenever they wished it, from the obligation of sending three hundred men to escort the German kings on their journey to Italy by the payment of three hundred marks of silver. Frederick further decreed that the attendance of the Bohemian monarchs at the Imperial Diets should only be obligatory when these assemblies were held in towns near the Bohemian frontier —Bamberg, Nürnberg, and Merseburgh were specified as being such towns. Ottokar was present at Frederick's coronation (1213), and the German king became undisputed ruler after Otho's death (1218).

About this time Přemysl Ottokar, to prevent the renewal of the troubles so often before caused by the uncertainty of the succession, persuaded the Bohemian nobles and Vladislav, Margrave of Moravia, to recognize his son Venceslas, then only eleven years of age, as heir to the throne (1216).

The later years of the reign of Ottokar were troubled by difficulties with the ecclesiastics, of which we have only

scanty and contradictory contemporary records. They seem to have been a reflection of the greater struggle between the German emperors and the popes, which is known as the contest as to investitures. Andrew, bishop of Prague (from the year 1214), seems to have been a priest of an austere but authoritative nature, who carried the claims of the Church further than any of his predecessors had done. He claimed absolute immunity from the temporal law-courts, not only for all ecclesiastics, but also for all their servants and dependents; and, while demanding perfect freedom from taxation for all Church property, he attempted to enforce on the whole country the payment of Church-tithes, to which only certain estates had hitherto been liable. He further denied to laymen all right of conferring ecclesiastical offices, though he himself appears to have accepted investiture from King Ottokar.

These claims were energetically resisted by the king and people of Bohemia; and Andrew, fearing for his life, fled to Rome, and there declared Bohemia to be under interdict. It is curious to notice, as a proof of the independence of the Bohemian clergy, that the interdict—according to which all religious services were to be suspended—was not generally observed, and that the canons of Prague and most of the lower clergy continued to celebrate mass and perform the religious functions as before.

Negotiations between the Pope and the king continued for many years, and a temporary settlement was achieved; Bishop Andrew even returning to Prague (1222). The quarrel, however, broke out afresh almost immediately; Bishop Andrew again fled to Rome, where he died soon after (1224).

Pope Honorius himself succeeded, during the vacancy of the See of Prague, in ending this struggle in a manner favourable to the Church. By an agreement between him and the king, it was decided that the Bishop of Prague should in future be elected by the canons of the cathedral. The right of investiture, which had been exercised first by the German and later by the Bohemian kings, was abolished. This right, as in Germany, appears to have been the principal cause of discord; the minor differences were also settled favourably for the Church. Shortly before his death Ottokar caused his son Venceslas, whom the nobles had already recognized as heir to the throne, to be crowned as

king of Bohemia (1228). Přemysl Ottokar I died in the year 1230.

His successor, Venceslas I, ascended the throne without any opposition, such as had almost always arisen on the occasion of a change in the person of the sovereigns of Bohemia. His reign is notable for the great increase of German influence in his dominions. Přemysl Ottokar I had in the last years of his reign begun to favour the immigration of German colonists to Bohemia, and this immigration became far more extensive during the rule of his son. Venceslas, to encourage the German settlers, granted them a large amount of autonomy, allowing them to administer law in their settlements, independently of the Bohemian law-courts, according to the "law of Magdeburg," which had at that time been accepted by many towns of Northern Germany. Such privileges were first granted (about the year 1235) to the part of Prague where the Germans had settled,[1] then to the Moravian towns, Brno (1243) and Iglau (1250), and later to a considerable number of towns in Bohemia. The Germans—partly to defend themselves against the enmity of the Bohemians, partly to mark the limits of their privileged jurisdiction—were allowed to enclose their settlements with walls. The custom of fortifying the cities soon became general in Bohemia.

Perhaps in emulation of the towns, the Bohemian nobles also began to fortify their castles about this time. Following the fashion of the court, they mostly gave their castles German names, and these names soon became the surnames of their owners; indeed, it was only from the reign of Venceslas I that hereditary family names came into use in Bohemia.

There is but little record of the political events during the earlier part of the reign of Venceslas; but we read that Bohemia, as was inevitable, soon became involved in the great struggle between the German Emperor Frederick II and the Popes Gregory IX and Innocent IV. The policy of Venceslas during this contest, dictated as it was entirely by the interests of Bohemia, was not consistent, and he undoubtedly changed sides several times.

[1] The present "old town." The three towns so often mentioned by historians were the old town, new town, and the "small quarter" (Malá Straná).

Almost at the beginning of his reign we find Venceslas at war with Leopold, Duke of Austria (1231), and the King of Bohemia was on the whole successful in this contest. The Emperor Frederick, then his ally, decreed the ban of the Empire against the Austrian duke (1236).

The friendly relations between the German Emperor and the King of Bohemia did not continue long. Frederick's power was at this time (1237) at its height; he had suppressed all insurrectionary movements in Germany, he had at last defeated the Lombards, and had also united the kingdom of the Two Sicilies with the Empire. Though the contemporary records are very obscure, it seems most probable that Frederick now wished again to render Bohemia as dependent of the Empire as it had at one time been. The nominal cause of the quarrel was Frederick's demand that Venceslas should restore to him certain castles on the frontier of Bohemia and Saxony, which had for some time been in the possession of the sovereigns of Bohemia.[1] Venceslas now reconciled himself with the Pope Gregory IX, and on his request became the ally of Duke Leopold of Austria against the Emperor Frederick. Leopold promised to add the part of the Austrian duchy north of the Danube to the Bohemian kingdom; but failing to keep his promise the friendly relations only lasted a short time. The e contests between the German princes were suddenly interrupted by a most unexpected event, the invasion of Eastern and Northern Europe by the Mongols or Tartars, as they were generally, though incorrectly, called.

The Tartars left their original homes in Asia, probably North of China and not far from the region of Lake Baikal, in the first years of the thirteenth century, and, conquering all the countries through which they passed on their march, reached the boundaries of Europe. They easily defeated the disunited Russian princes; and when it became known that they had stormed and burnt the cities of Kief (1240) and Cracow (1241), terror spread all through Europe. Bohemia was directly menaced after the defeat of the Polish and Silesian princes by the Tartars at Liegnitz (1241). Venceslas seems to have behaved with courage and prudence in this emergency. He hastily fortified the

[1] The Bohemian frontier, in the direction of Saxony, then extended further to the north-west than at present, reaching as far as the fortress of Königstein.

passes leading from Silesia into Bohemia. When the Tartar army attempted to force these passes they were bravely repulsed by the Bohemian soldiers. After three weeks the Tartars abandoned all hopes of entering Bohemia, and turned their attention to Moravia. They ravaged the open country in Moravia, though they were unable to storm any of the towns.[1] After devastating also Hungary and the neighbouring districts of Lower Austria, the Tartars disappeared from Europe almost as suddenly as they had arrived there.

As soon as the danger from the Tartars had passed over, both the struggle between the Pope and the Emperor, and the feud between Venceslas and Duke Frederick of Austria, which was to a large extent influenced by the greater conflict, began afresh. Venceslas at this period took the part of the Pope, and became one of the supporters of William of Holland, whom the Papal party in Germany had chosen as king (1247).

In the following year a great insurrection broke out among the Bohemian nobles, the causes of which are not certainly known, though the great extravagance of the king appears to have been the principal one. Venceslas's son, Přemysl Ottokar,[2] who now governed Moravia under his father's supremacy, became the leader of the insurgents, who chose him as king.

The pretext for this insurrection was the king's command to his nobles to take part in the crusade which Pope Innocent IV had again decreed against the German Emperor Frederick II. Civil war continued in Bohemia up to the year 1250, when an agreement was arrived at. Přemysl Ottokar made submission to his father, who, on the other hand, again entrusted the government of Moravia to his son.

In the following year the Estates of Austria chose Ottokar as their duke, and he made his entrance into Vienna shortly afterwards. Though his deceased brother had been married

[1] Many legends referring to the defence of the Moravian towns, and particularly of Olomouc, afterwards sprang up; some of them are reproduced in the so-called MS. of Kralové Dvůr.

[2] Přemysl Ottokar (II as king of Bohemia) was the second son of Venceslas. His elder brother, Vladislas, who had been Margrave of Moravia, and who, during one of the temporary truces between the two countries, had married the daughter of Duke Frederick of Austria, died in 1247.

to the daughter of the last duke of Austria,[1] Ottokar had no hereditary rights to the duchy. In order to strengthen his position by an alliance with the former reigning dynasty, he married Adela, sister of the late Duke Frederick, though she was then forty-six and he only twenty-five years of age.

The duchy of Styria had long been connected with that of Austria, and Ottokar therefore claimed it after his election by the Austrian Estates. He thus became involved in war with Bela, King of Hungary, who had long coveted Styria. Whilst occupied with this war, Ottokar received news of the death of his father, King Venceslas (1253). The necessity of returning to Bohemia induced him to conclude peace with Hungary (1254); and it was settled that while certain districts of Styria—since incorporated with Upper and Lower Austria—were to be made over to Ottokar, the greater part of the disputed lands, consisting of Styria in its present limits, was to be ruled by King Bela's eldest son Stephen, with the title of duke.

Přemysl Ottokar II, who now became ruler of Bohemia, was certainly one of the greatest sovereigns that country has ever had. Though his reign ended disastrously, he undoubtedly for some time raised Bohemia to the rank of a great European Power. The great reproach levelled against him by Bohemian writers is that he unduly favoured the German element; and it is undeniable that he endeavoured by all means to attract German colonists to Bohemia. The towns of Bohemia and Moravia during his reign became almost entirely German, and in consequence of the large degree of autonomy that was granted them, governed themselves according to the old German town-laws.

One of the great motives of Ottakar's policy was, no doubt, the intention of counterbalancing the excessive power of Bohemian nobility by the formation of a middle class, composed of the citizens of the towns; but he may have been influenced by other less obvious considerations. As Duke of Upper and Lower Austria, and later of Styria and Carinthia, Ottokar had become lord of vast German lands, and indeed the most powerful prince of the German Empire, over which he aspired to rule either with the title of king or by his influence over an insignificant and nominal

[1] Frederick II, Duke of Austria, commonly known as "der Streitbare" (the Warlike), died in 1246; he was the last Austrian duke of the Babenberg line.

king[1] It was therefore good policy for him to strive to hide his Slav origin, and to appear as a German prince ruling over a mainly German population.

At the beginning of his reign Přemysl Ottokar II, aided by several German princes, engaged in a campaign against the heathen Prussians (1255), and after defeating them in several battles succeeded in converting a large part of the population to Christianity. The town of Königsberg was founded at this time, and called after the King of Bohemia.

Probably in consequence of this successful campaign, the German princes (1256) offered the sovereignty of their country to Ottokar. The Bohemian king at this period does not seem to have desired the German crown, but to have favoured the choice of a weak and powerless prince, who would be unable to interfere with his plans for the aggrandizement of Bohemia. Ottokar, therefore, contributed to the election of Richard of Cornwall, with whom he remained on terms of friendship during the whole of his nominal reign.

By the treaty concluded with Hungary in 1254, that country had retained the supremacy over Styria; but this soon became very irksome to the Styrian nobles. In the year 1259 they chose the occasion of a new dispute, that had arisen between King Přemysl Ottokar II and Bela, King of Hungary, for revolting against the Hungarians; and Ottokar, arriving at Gratz in the same year, took possession of Styria and appointed a Bohemian governor of the country.

The Hungarians immediately decided to repel this aggression, and during the following winter they raised an

[1] Though the comparison may seem far-fetched, there is some analogy between Přemysl Ottokar II's policy and that pursued by the Austrian Government during the earlier part of the nineteenth century (1815–1866). Austria, holding the right of presidency over the German Diet at Frankfort, was still nominally the greatest German Power; and the Austrian Government constantly endeavoured, by attempts of "Germanizing" the non-German populations of the Empire, to justify the predominance of that country in Germany. It may be remembered that the Austrian ministers several times attempted to obtain the inclusion of the whole Empire in the Germanic confederation. It is only a natural reaction against this attempted "Germanization" that, since the treaty of Prague (1866) has dissolved all the bands that connected Austria and Germany, the German influence and language have constantly receded and still recede in Austria.

enormous army, which is said to have consisted of 140,000 men. Daniel Romanovic, King of Russia and Prince of Kiew, the Prince of Cracow, and many of the tribes of Eastern Europe, Servians, Bulgarians, and Wallachians, joined the Hungarian standard.

In the meantime Ottokar had also assembled an army of 100,000 men, and—a mountainous country like Styria not being adapted to the movements of enormous armies, which largely consisted of cavalry—the plains on the frontier of Hungary and the duchy of Austria, through which the river March flows, became the seat of war. On the banks of this river, near the village of Kressenbrunn, a great battle took place (1260), in which the Hungarians were defeated with great slaughter; we read that they lost 13,000 men in battle, and that 14,000 more were driven into the river March while flying from the field. King Bela now renounced all rights on Styria; and Ottokar, to strengthen his hold on that country, induced the German King Richard of Cornwall to invest him with it as a fief. After their great defeat at Kressenbrunn the Hungarians, though they were in 1270 already again in arms against Ottokar, avoided meeting the Bohemian army in the open field till they obtained a powerful ally in Rudolph of Habsburg.

In 1268 King Přemysl Ottokar concluded a treaty with his nephew Duke Henry of Carinthia, by which that prince recognized him as his heir in case of his dying without male descendants. On Duke Henry's death in the following year Ottokar was able to add Carinthia, with the dependent lands of Carniola and Istria, part of Friulia, and the town of Pordenone, to his already vast dominions; several towns of Northern Italy, Treviso, Feltre, Verona, and others, also recognized him as their "over-lord."

Ottokar's power had now attained its summit (1269); but dangers arising from the election of a German king already began to menace it. Ottokar was probably not anxious to obtain the German crown, which indeed he had declined before, as long as that crown remained in the hands of King Richard, who had no power of his own in Germany, and was entirely in accord with the Bohemian king.

The death of Richard of Cornwall (1272) caused a complete change in the prospects of Ottokar; his great conquests had aroused the animosity of the German princes, specially of Louis, Count Palatine of Bavaria; and the

choice of the German electors was therefore likely to fall on one of the Bohemian king's many enemies.

Přemysl Ottokar II was thoroughly aware of this animosity, which his Slav nationality[1] probably rendered more bitter, and, consequently, of the difficulties which stood in the way of his obtaining, and far more of his retaining, the German crown. It was only after a declared enemy had been chosen by the German electors that Ottokar, when it was already too late, attempted to obtain the German crown by the aid of the Pope.

On September 29, 1273, Rudolph, Count of Habsburg, was elected German king—unanimously, since the German Electors declared Ottokar's own right of voting as cupbearer of the Empire to be invalid. The German princes at the same time signed a declaration, according to which all fiefs granted since the death of Frederick II were to be considered as void. This was aimed directly at Ottokar, who had acquired Austria, Styria, and Carinthia since that date. Ottokar disputed King Rudolph's election,[2] and, as mentioned above, appealed to the Pope; but it was from the first moment certain that the fate of war only could settle the difference.

At a Diet held at Regensburg in 1274, Přemysl Ottokar II's rights to all his newly-acquired lands were declared invalid; and his subjects in Austria, Styria, and Carinthia were called on to rise against the Bohemian domination. In 1275 the ban of the Empire was decreed against the Bohemian king; and in the following year (1276) German armies invaded his dominions in all directions, while the Hungarians also chose this moment to seek revenge for their former defeats. Styria and Carinthia were soon conquered by the Germans, a large part of the nobility having deserted the Bohemian cause. The principal German army, commanded by Rudolph in person, entered

[1] Pubitschka (*Chronologische Geschichte von Böhmen*) tells us, quoting from a contemporary chronicler, "Rex Bohemus Odoacrus (Ottokar) nuntios et multam pecuniam et numera ad curiam domini Papae Gregorii transmiserat eo quod ipse ad imperium aspiraret. Papa munera non attendens circumsedentibus dicebat: Cum in Allemania plures principes et Comites habemus quare vellemus *Sclavum* ad imperium sublevare."

[2] Space does not admit of my entering into the controversy as to the election of Rudolph of Habsburg; the details will be found in all histories of Germany or Bohemia dealing with this period.

Austria by Passau, and, rapidly traversing Upper Austria, soon arrived before Vienna.

Ottokar, who appears at first to have expected to be attacked in Bohemia, now hurried to the aid of Vienna, which town bravely resisted the invaders, and seems almost alone to have remained faithful to the Bohemian king. Unfortunately, while the king was in Austria an insurrection against him broke out among the Bohemian nobility. This last blow induced Ottokar to seek for peace and not to risk a battle, the result of which was absolutely certain—seeing that his army, in consequence of numerous defections, consisted of only 20,000 men, while that of his enemies numbered five times that amount.

The conditions of peace were very onerous; Ottokar was obliged to renounce all claims to Styria, Austria, Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, and the towns of Eger and Portenau (Pordenone). He only retained his hereditary lands, Bohemia and Moravia, and recognized Rudolph as his over-lord. A marriage was arranged between Ottokar's son, Venceslas, and one of the daughters of King Rudolph.

On November 26, 1276, Ottokar appeared in the German camp to do homage to the German king. In presence of the German princes, most of whom were his bitter enemies, the King of Bohemia bent his knee before Rudolph, who was seated on the throne, swore fidelity to him, and was invested with Bohemia and Moravia as fiefs of the Empire.[1]

It was almost impossible that this settlement should prove definitive. It was difficult for Ottokar to reconcile himself to the loss of the vast dominions of which he had been deprived almost without having struck a blow; on the other hand, Rudolph, and still more Ottokar's enemies at Rudolph's court, did not consider their victory complete till they had completed the humiliation of the proud king of Bohemia.

Dissensions broke out almost immediately. Rudolph attempted to interfere in the internal government of Bohemia to a far greater degree than any of his predecessors

[1] The story, which has been often told—in a most amusing way by Carlyle (*History of Frederick the Great*, Book II, chap. vii)—that Přemysl Ottokar requested to do homage to King Rudolph privately, and that the ceremony took place in a tent, the sides of which were suddenly drawn up, is entirely unhistorical. Aenaeas Sylvius (*Historia Bohemiae*, chap. xxvii), who wrote two hundred years after these events, is the first historian who mentions it.

had done, and specially claimed a right of protection over the Bohemian nobles, who, as mentioned before, had rebelled against King Ottokar. The only choice that now remained to the king was between renouncing his inherited independent sovereignty over Bohemia, or again appealing to the fortune of war. Ottokar chose the latter alternative. In the year 1278 he entered Austria with a large army, and advanced to the banks of the river March, near the scene of his former victory at Kressenbrunn. Rudolph was not unprepared, as, not thinking that the former settlement would be final, he had remained in Austria. His army was almost immediately joined by a large Hungarian contingent. On the advance of the Austrians, Ottokar retreated as far as Durrenkrut, and near this place a decisive battle took place on the day of St. Rufus (August 26), a day destined then, not for the last time, to be fatal to Bohemia's kings. Ottokar was decisively defeated, principally through the treachery of Milota of Dědic and other Bohemian nobles. When the Bohemian king saw that the battle was lost he plunged into the thickest ranks of the enemy, and died fighting desperately.

The reign of Přemysl Ottokar II, one of Bohemia's greatest kings, ended with complete disaster; and it is difficult to understand the complete and sudden downfall of such a powerful empire. The fact that Ottokar had, by the privileges he granted the towns, alienated many of the powerful Bohemian nobles, who therefore deserted him in the hour of peril, was undoubtedly one of the principal causes of his downfall. Another still more potent consideration was the question of nationality. Ottokar was, justly or unjustly,[1] accused of favouring the Germans to the disadvantage of his own countrymen, and he had thus become unpopular with the Bohemians. The stimulus of national pride, which has sometimes animated the Bohemians to most heroic deeds, did not therefore incite them to rally round their king, whom many of them considered nearly as much a German as his opponent.

Rarely has the death of one man had such melancholy results for a whole empire. The Bohemian people, vanquished by their enemy in a murderous struggle, were suddenly deprived of the strong hand which for twenty

[1] Palacký, whose national feeling is very strong, yet denies that Přemysl Ottokar II unduly favoured the Germans.

years had held the reins of the State. It was inevitable that the country should now become the scene of internal anarchy as well as the prey of aliens.[1]

Rudolph's victorious army immediately marched into Moravia, and the German king was favourably received by a part of the inhabitants, specially by the population of the Moravian towns, most of whom were Germans. In Bohemia complete anarchy prevailed, and it was at first uncertain who had the strongest right to the guardianship of Ottakar's son Venceslas, then only seven years of age. After some dispute the Bohemian nobles recognized Ottokar's nephew, Otho of Brandenburg, as the guardian of the young Prince Venceslas. Otho appeared in Bohemia with a small force, and the country prepared to resist Rudolph, whose army by this time entered Bohemia.

A treaty was, however, soon concluded (1278) by which at least a temporary settlement was obtained. Otho was to govern Bohemia as Venceslas's guardian for five years, and Rudolph Moravia in the same capacity and for the same period. It was also arranged that Venceslas should marry Rudolph's daughter Gutta; and the German king's son Rudolph, Agnes, daughter of the deceased King Ottokar.

Otho of Brandenburg had hardly obtained the government of Bohemia when he began shamefully to misuse the power of guardianship that had been conferred on him.[2] Aided by the German part of the population of Prague he seized the heir to the throne, and imprisoned him in the castle of Bösig. This treachery caused great indignation among the Bohemian nobles, and a great number of them entered into a confederacy for the purpose of rescuing their future sovereign. Civil war broke out while Margrave Otho had temporarily returned to his own country, carrying Venceslas as a prisoner with him to Brandenburg. Otho had left Bishop Everard of Brandenburg, a warlike and unscrupulous prelate, at Prague, as his representative, and the latter energetically defended the margrave's authority.

[1] Palacký.

[2] Recent German historians have endeavoured to defend Otho against the unanimous condemnation of the contemporary chroniclers. Dr. Novák has in an interesting article in the *Cesky Casopis Historicky* (Bohemian historical year-book) proved that the traditional account is correct.

To resist the Bohemians Everard called in a large number of German mercenaries, who, aided by the German settlers in the country, pillaged and ravaged Bohemia in every direction. It was said that the Germans thought the time had come when the Slavs of Bohemia were to share the fate of their countrymen in the formerly Slav lands of Northern Germany. The result of this civil war was just the reverse. The greater part of the Bohemian nobility, indignant at what they considered the insolence of the German townsmen, drew nearer to their own countrymen; and, out of hatred to the Germans, largely abandoned the use of the German language, which had before this time been widely adopted, particularly at the court of the Bohemian sovereigns.

The anarchic state of Bohemia brought about the interference of the German King Rudolph (1280); through his mediation a truce was agreed to, and a Diet assembled at Prague to restore order to the country. It was decided that Otho of Brandenburg should retain the guardianship of Prince Venceslas up to the end of the five years for which it had originally been conferred on him. He was obliged to promise in future to appoint a native only as his representative whenever he should absent himself from Bohemia. He further promised to withdraw his German mercenaries from the country, and to order all Germans, not resident in Bohemia, to leave the country within three days;[1] otherwise they were to be treated as thieves and murderers. Otho lastly promised to allow Venceslas to return to Bohemia on payment of 15,000 marks of silver; but though this agreement was made in 1281, it was not until the year 1283 that the young prince returned to his country.

Though only twelve years of age Venceslas II nominally assumed the government of Bohemia, as the office of guardianship, after the late events, naturally inspired distrust. The real ruler was one of the nobles, Zavis of Falckenstein, with whom Ottokar's widow Kunhuta had formed a connection; on the birth of a son secrecy was no longer possible, and a marriage between Zavis and Kunhuta took place in 1280. Though she died not many years after the marriage Zavis retained the high positions at court that he had obtained through her influence, and became the

[1] All the Bohemian historians agree in stating that only this almost incredibly short respite was granted.

principal councillor of the young king. His influence for a time seems to have been unlimited; and the towns of Landskron and Policka, and the castle of Landsberg, are mentioned as only a few of the many estates that Venceslas granted to him.

Zavis was undoubtedly a great statesman. His policy provided a link between the reigns of Ottokar II and Venceslas II. He constantly reminded the young king of the greatness of Bohemia during the reign of Ottokar.[1] He thus naturally incurred the displeasure of Rudolph, and Habsburg intrigues were undoubtedly the cause of his fall. To secure a foreign alliance Zavis obtained the consent of King Ladislas of Hungary to his marriage with the king's sister Jutta, and after his marriage retired to one of his castles. It is probable that he knew that the Habsburg party at the Bohemian court had already influenced the young king against him; still Zavis, on the birth of a son, requested Venceslas to be present as godfather at the christening; and the king, thinking he had now found an opportunity of ridding himself of his over-powerful vassal, accepted the invitation on condition that Zavis should first come to Prague and escort his sovereign to the castle where the baptism was to take place. On arriving at Prague, Zavis was immediately confined in a dungeon; he was accused of having illegally appropriated lands belonging to the Crown, and all his estates were confiscated. The powerful relations of Zavis, supported by other Bohemian nobles, took his part against the king, to whom they refused to give up his castles, which they had occupied with armed forces. Venceslas, it is said, on the advice of the German King Rudolph, resorted to a cruel device for the purpose of subduing their resistance. He obliged his step-father to accompany, as a prisoner, the force with which he besieged the castles held by the rebels, and forced them to capitulate by the menace of immediately putting Zavis to death. The menace was successful in several cases; but when the king's forces arrived before the castle Hluboka,[2] which was held for Zavis by his brother Vitek, the latter, not believing the king capable of the cruel act which he threatened to do, refused to capitulate. Zavis was thereupon decapitated in a meadow just outside of the castle walls in view of his brother.

[1] Dr. Novák (in the *Česky Casopis Historicky*).
[2] In German Frauenberg.

It is only from this date that Venceslas can really be said to have reigned over Bohemia. After a short interruption he resumed the policy, hostile to the house of Habsburg, which Zavis had adopted. It is probably for this reason that the contemporary chroniclers—mostly Germans —have done scant justice to Venceslas. Bohemia was certainly very prosperous during his reign, and we read that the silver mines of Kutna Hora, the great source of prosperity for Bohemia in the Middle Ages, were again worked during the reign of Venceslas II. The richness and prosperity of the country at this period no doubt attracted notice in the neighbouring countries, Hungary and Poland, and inspired the people with the wish of also being under the mild rule of King Venceslas.

During more than a hundred years Poland had been in a state of complete anarchy, principally caused by the rival claimants to the throne and by the incessant and ever-varying partitions of the country, which were made to satisfy the numerous pretenders. In the year 1291 Venceslas was requested by a large party in Western Poland to undertake the government of their country. The king consented, and occupied these lands after very slight resistance, assuming the title of Grand Duke of Cracow, from the name of the principal city in the district. A few years later (1300) King Venceslas, again at the request of the Polish nobles, occupied the whole of that country, and was crowned King of Poland at Gnesen. Bohemia and Poland were thus again for a short time under one king.

In the following year, on the extinction of the old royal family of Hungary, a large party in that country wished to elect Venceslas II as king. They sent envoys to Bohemia, and Venceslas declared to them that, being already King of Bohemia and Poland, he feared the burden of another crown, and advised them to elect his son Venceslas, then only twelve years of age, as their king.

King Venceslas may also have thought that his son, because of his youth, would be more likely to adapt himself to the customs of Hungary. The Hungarians followed the king's advice, and the younger Venceslas was crowned as King of Hungary at Stuhlweissenburg (1301), and for some time resided at Ofen, the Hungarian capital.[1]

[1] The first wife of Venceslas, Gutta, daughter of King Rudolph, died in 1298; he shortly afterwards—about the time of his coronation at Gnesen—married a Polish princess.

King Rudolph, father-in-law of King Venceslas, had died in 1291, and, contrary to the expectations of his son Albert, Adolphus, Count of Nassau, had been chosen as Rudolph's successor. Venceslas, between whom and his brother-in-law Albert a personal enmity existed, favoured the election of Adolphus of Nassau. Later on Albert's sister, the Bohemian queen, appears to have exercised her influence over her husband to such an extent, that he at least did not oppose the deposition of Adolphus and the election of Albert. The death of Adolphus of Nassau at the battle of Gellenheim (1208) made Albert undisputed ruler of Germany.

Friendship, however, proved impossible between the kings of Germany and of Bohemia. Albert seems to have been irritated by the power of the Bohemian king in Poland and Hungary; he therefore favoured the Papal cause, when the ambitious Pope Boniface VIII contested the rights of Venceslas over Poland and Hungary, declaring that the right to confer the crowns of both these countries rested with the Holy See. War broke out between Albert and Venceslas (1304), and the German king invaded Eastern Bohemia, hoping to possess himself of the silver mines of Kutna Hora; but he was forced to retreat before the Bohemian armies. In the following year Venceslas II was preparing to invade Austria, when he died suddenly at the age of thirty-four (1305). Though the unfavourable political situation and his early death prevented him from carrying out his ambitious plans, it appears certain that Venceslas for a time seriously contemplated the re-establishment of the great Bohemian empire of his father.

His successor, Venceslas III, was then only sixteen years of age; and as he only reigned one year, it is difficult to understand where the contemporary chroniclers found the materials for their long—mostly unfavourable—reports on his character and his actions. He undoubtedly concluded a somewhat disadvantageous treaty with the German king, to whom he ceded lands (forming part of the present kingdom of Saxony) to the north-west of Bohemia that had belonged to his father. On the other hand, Albert promised not to interfere in the affairs of Poland and Hungary; his claim to the latter kingdom, however, Venceslas ceded to the Duke of Bavaria,

perhaps despairing of maintaining his hold on the country against the rival claimants.

Though Venceslas had given up his claim to the Hungarian throne, he determined to maintain his hereditary rights upon Poland.

An insurrection against the Bohemians having broken out in that country, Venceslas marched to Poland to suppress it. Before reaching Poland he was murdered at Olomonc [1] by unknown assassins.[2]

The male line of the dynasty of Přemysl, that had reigned over Bohemia nearly six hundred years, thus came to an end.

The sudden extinction of the house of Přemysl left Bohemia without any legitimate successor to the crown. Of the royal family only Elizabeth, widow of Venceslas II, Violet, widow of Venceslas III, and four daughters of the former king remained. The eldest of these daughters, Anne, was married to Henry, Duke of Carinthia, and popular feeling greatly favoured the election of that prince to the throne of Bohemia. Venceslas III had left him as his representative in Bohemia when he started on his expedition to Poland, and it was hoped that by this choice the Přemysl dynasty would be continued in the female line.

The German King Albert, however, declared Bohemia a vacant fief of the Empire, and appointed as king his eldest son Rudolph. The nobles assembled at Prague, and, probably intimidated by the power of the German king, elected Rudolph. They further, on the request of King Albert, who accompanied his son to Bohemia, declared Rudolph's brothers heirs to the throne in case of his death without children. As a concession to the feeling in favour of the old national dynasty, a marriage between Rudolph and Elizabeth, widow of Venceslas II, was arranged.

[1] In German Olmütz.

[2] Many historians have accused King Albert of being the instigator of the murder of his nephew. The chronicler of the monastery of Klosterneuburg, whose evidence, as being that of an Austrian, may be somewhat partial, writes—

"Wenceslas . . . propter insolentiam contra optimates suos in Olomucz civitate Moraviae a suis occiditur . . . sicque contra vaticinium in gente illa ab antiquo vulgatum Bohemiae regnum exhaeredatur" (*Per Scriptores Rerum Austriacarum I. Chronicon Claustro-Neoburgense*). The last words refer to Libussa's prophecy (see Chapter II).

Rudolph's great parsimony, which contrasted with the splendour of the former Přemysl dynasty, rendered him very unpopular, and many of the nobles refused to do homage to him. While besieging Horazdovic, the castle of one of the opposing nobles, Rudolph suddenly fell ill and died (1307), having reigned less than a year over Bohemia.

One of the first consequences of the extinction of the line of Přemysl had been the ending of Bohemia's domination over Poland. The Bohemian governors of Cracow and Gnesen left the country as soon as they ascertained that, in consequence of the disturbed state of Bohemia, they had no hopes of obtaining aid from their country.

In consequence of the early death of Rudolph, the Bohemian nobles had for the second time in one year to decide on the succession to the throne of their country. Whilst one party wished to maintain the hereditary rights of the house of Habsburg, which had been recognized only a year before, a larger number of the nobles now desired to choose Henry of Carinthia as their sovereign, and declared the claims of the house of Austria invalid.[1]

The Diet which had assembled at Prague in 1307 was a very stormy one. The leader of the Austrian party, Tobias of Bechyn, being called on by his opponents not to favour the claims of foreigners and enemies to rule over his countrymen, answered, "If you wish at any price to obtain a native prince, go to Stadic,[2] among the peasants there you will perhaps find a relation of the extinct royal family; bring him here and seat him on the throne of your country."[3] Infuriated by this insult against the old dynasty, Ulrich, Lord of Lichtenburg, rushed across the council-room and stabbed Bechyn to death. Several other nobles were also murdered before the eyes of the widowed Queen Elizabeth, who was present at the council. These stormy discussions were ended by the election of Henry of Carinthia, who, accompanied by his wife, arrived in Prague in the same year (1307), where they were received with great enthusiasm by the people.

[1] The reason, or rather pretext, was that after Rudolph's election Albert had formally appointed his son King of Bohemia; thus throwing doubt on the validity of his previous election by the nobles of the country, and reaffirming the claim of the German kings to appoint the sovereign of Bohemia, a claim that the Bohemians always contested.

[2] See Chapter II.

[3] Palacký.

King Albert had, however, no intention of giving up peacefully the right he had so recently obtained for his descendants. He immediately invaded Moravia, and succeeded for a short time in securing that country for Frederick, now his eldest son. Albert then invaded Bohemia, but with little success, though he succeeded in obtaining possession of a few frontier towns, in which he left German garrisons on retiring from the country.

Albert's assassination by John Parricida (1308) saved Bohemia from great danger; for Albert's son Frederick, who was menaced by an insurrection in Austria, and who had not, as had his father, the support of the Empire,[1] soon came to terms with the Bohemian king. Frederick renounced all claims to Bohemia and Moravia on condition of receiving a large sum of money.

Henry's rule was now undisturbed by foreign enemies, but quiet did not long prevail in Bohemia. Henry's popularity had been founded more on his alliance with the old and national dynasty of the Přemyslides than on any personal merits, and he soon proved himself incapable of ruling the country in troublous times. Strife had arisen between the German townsmen—among whom the citizens of Prague and Kutna Hora appear to have obtained a predominant position—and the Bohemian nobility. The first cause of the quarrel seems to have been the claim of the German settlers to take part in the affairs of the country, in particular to attend the Diet of the kingdom. The Germans attempted to attain their purpose by forcibly seizing and imprisoning several Bohemian nobles, who held the highest offices of State. As a necessary consequence civil war broke out, and Henry was unable to maintain order between the contending parties. The King on the whole favoured the German townsmen; but his incapacity was now generally acknowledged, not only by the Bohemian nobility, but also by the majority of the clergy, and even the townsmen; and the necessity of choosing a new king was agreed to by all parties. The choice fell (1310) on John, Count of Luxemburg,[2] only son of the new German King Henry.

[1] On the death of Albert, Henry, Count of Luxemburg, was elected King of the Germans (1308).

[2] "A celebrated place, too, or name, that 'Luxembourg' of theirs, with its French marshals, grand Parisian edifices lending it new lustre;

An embassy was sent to the German king requesting his consent to their choice (John being then only fourteen years of age), and also to the marriage of their new sovereign with the Princess Elizabeth, second daughter of Venceslas II. After some negotiations they obtained the consent of Henry, who sent an army to Bohemia to accompany his son and the Bohemian envoys on their journey.

John obtained possession of the country after a slight resistance on the part of Henry of Carinthia, who, however, soon left Bohemia. In the following year (1311) John and Elizabeth were crowned at Prague as king and queen of Bohemia.

It was a great misfortune for the young king that his father, Henry VII of Germany (who had, as was customary with the German kings, undertaken an expedition to Rome to be crowned there as Emperor), died suddenly on his way back to Germany (1311). Many of the faults King John afterwards committed may be traced to the fact that from his earliest youth he had been under no control. We read that King John did not take his father's death much to heart,[1] and he attempted, though unsuccessfully, to secure the succession to the German throne. His extreme youth appears to have been the principal cause of his failure.

The German Electors having voted—some for Duke Frederick of Austria, others for Louis, Duke of Bavaria—one of the many contests for the crown took place which at that period caused so great a decline in the power and influence of Germany. In this struggle between the houses of Habsburg and Wittelsbach King John sided with the Bavarian prince, and his forces are said to have largely contributed to the decisive victory of Mühldorf (1322). We are also told that King John had the command of the whole army, which on that day defeated the Austrian duke.

King John's rule in Bohemia cannot, on the whole, be considered as successful. His heroic death has made him one of those kings whose names linger in the memory of the

what thinks the reader is the meaning of Luzzenburg, Luxembourg, Luxemburg? Merely Lützelburg wrongly pronounced, and that again is *nothing but Littleborough;* such is the luck of names!" (Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great*).

[1] "Cito patris morte in oblivionem tradita" (*Pez Scriptores Rerum Austriacarum I. Anonymi Leobiensis Chronicon*).

Bohemian people; but he was not popular during his lifetime. Though coming to Bohemia at so early an age, he never appears to have shown any affection for the country, nor indeed to have thoroughly mastered its language—a matter on which then as now popularity in Bohemia perhaps depends more than on anything else. The Bohemian chroniclers complain that his short residences in Bohemia were solely for the purpose of obtaining financial supplies, and that having secured this object he then immediately left the country in search of new adventures, His dominant idea seems to have been that of chivalry. The English King Edward III called him *corona militiae*. His nature was that of a knight-errant or a Don Quixote; if that type, in many ways so touching, had not through being misunderstood long since acquired comic associations.[1] It will be sufficient to give a mere outline of the various warlike expeditions of King John, which extended from Lithuania and Hungary to Italy and France. As Palacký says: "It would be necessary to write the history of all Europe if we attempted to describe all the feuds into which King John entered with chivalrous bravery, but also with frivolity. It then became a proverb, that 'nothing can be done without the help of God and of the King of Bohemia.'"

King John's reign was from its beginning disturbed by internal dissensions, mainly caused by the enmity between his wife, Queen Elizabeth, and Elizabeth, widow of Venceslas II and Rudolph I. One of the great Bohemian nobles, Henry of Lipa, had obtained unlimited influence over the widowed Queen Elizabeth, and he aspired to play a part similar to that of Zavis of Falckenstein during the reign of Venceslas II. King John having caused Henry of Lipa to be imprisoned, a great insurrection of the Bohemian nobility broke out shortly afterwards, while the king was in Germany. Recalled by his consort, King John hastily returned, and after much desultory fighting the differences with the nobles were settled by a compromise under the mediation of the German King Louis (1318). Henry of Lipa regained his liberty, and was reinstated in the offices he had held at court. He seems, indeed, soon to have

[1] We are told on good authority that King John intended to establish the Round Table of King Arthur, and that he (1319) invited all the most celebrated knights in Europe to a tournament at Prague; nobody appears to have responded to the call.

become a friend and councillor of the inconstant king. Probably through the influence of Henry of Lipa, whose connection with the "Queen of Kralové Hradec"[1] made him a deadly enemy of the reigning queen, John shortly afterwards became estranged from his consort. It was no doubt also Henry of Lipa who suggested to the King that Queen Elizabeth intended to dethrone him and place their eldest son, then called Venceslas, but afterwards known as Charles, on the throne under her own guardianship. John separated the queen from her eldest child, whom he imprisoned; and as the citizens of Prague took the part of the queen, a war such as Bohemia had never known before, a war between the king and the queen," now broke out.

Happily this contest did not last long; a temporary reconciliation between King John and his queen took place, and the young Prince Charles was restored to liberty. A few years later (1323) King John, on the occasion of one of his many visits to the French court, had his son, then only seven years old, brought to Paris to be educated at the court of Charles IV. On the occasion of his confirmation the young Bohemian prince received the name of Charles, after the French king.[2]

On the death of Waldemar, Margrave of Brandenburg, King John became involved in the war which broke out between the claimants to his succession. John claimed Upper Lusatia as a fief of the Bohemian crown, and succeeded in conquering part of that country, including Bautzen, the capital of the district.

At the beginning of the year 1327 King John returned to Bohemia. Since the battle of Mühldorf (1322), which had for a while put a stop to the war in Germany, he had spent most of his time at Luxemburg or at the French court. Restless as ever, he undertook an expedition to Poland a few months later, wishing to re-establish the former sovereignty of the Bohemian kings over that country. Marching through Silesia on his way to Poland he forced the small princes of that country to renew their former allegiance to the Bohemian crown, which had been in

[1] The widow of Venceslas II was known under that name, as she generally lived at Kralové Hradec (in German Königgrätz), the usual residence of the widows of the kings of Bohemia.

[2] King John's sister Mary was married to the French King Charles IV.

abeyance since the death of Venceslas II. King John, however, abandoned his plan of reconquering Poland, though his army had already arrived before Cracow, as he received news that the King of Hungary intended joining his forces to those of Poland should that country be attacked.

Two years later (1329) we find King John again in the north, this time on a so-called crusade against the heathen Lithuanians. The Teutonic knights often required aid in their struggle against the pagans in Northern Europe, and the German princes frequently undertook warlike expeditions to Lithuania and the neighbouring districts as a substitute for the former crusades to the Holy Land, which many previous failures had rendered distasteful. After a great deal of desultory and indecisive fighting King John returned to Bohemia through Silesia, and succeeded in obtaining by treaty that part of Upper Lusatia which, after the death of Waldemar of Brandenburg, had remained in the hands of one of the Silesian princes.

King John had spent the earlier part of the year 1329 in Lithuania; the latter part of the following year found the errant king in Italy. Enmity between King John and his predecessor on the Bohemian throne, Henry of Carinthia and the Tyrol, had long ceased; and John now wished to arrange a marriage between his second son, John Henry, and Margaret,[1] daughter of Duke Henry, and, as he had no male descendants, heir to all his lands.

John visited Duke Henry (1330) at Innsbruck, where the negotiations for the marriage were carried on, and here received a deputation from the town of Brescia in Lombardy, who requested his aid against Mastino della Scala, Lord of Verona, who was then besieging their city. The ever-adventurous king promised his protection, and the citizens of Brescia recognized him as their over-lord. Mastino della Scala, not wishing to encounter the powerful Bohemian king, abandoned the siege of Brescia, and King John made his triumphant entry into that town on the last day of the year 1330. The Bohemian domination in Italy, destined to be of very short duration, at first extended with almost

[1] Known in German history as Margaretha Maultasche. "Mouth-poke, Pocket-mouth, Heiress of the Tyrol—with a terrible mouth to her face and none of the gentlest hearts in her body" (Carlyle, *History of Frederick the Great*).

incredible rapidity. Within the first three months of the year 1331 the towns of Bergamo, Crema, Parma, Modena, Novara, Vercelli, and many others, of their own free will accepted King John as their over-lord. Even the powerful Azzo de' Visconti, Lord of Milan, acknowledged the supremacy of the King of Bohemia. King John remained in Italy till June (1331), when dangers nearer home obliged him to recross the Alps; he, however, left his son Charles as his representative in Italy. Charles, though only seventeen years of age, for a time successfully defended himself against the Italians, who had soon become tired of the supremacy of the Bohemian princes. Mastino della Scala of Verona, King Robert of Naples, the lords of Mantua and Ferrara, and Azzo de' Visconti of Milan, who had already changed sides, concluded an alliance against Prince Charles. Charles, who fixed his residence at Parma, one of the few Italian towns that remained faithful to the Bohemian princes, defeated the confederates in a very sanguinary engagement that took place at San Felice, near Parma (1332). This victory was not decisive, and Charles appealed to his father for aid. King John recrossed the Alps, but with very insufficient forces; the Bohemian dominion in Italy collapsed as quickly as it had arisen, and both King John and his son left the country before the end of the year 1333.

King John's rapid departure from Italy in 1331 had been caused by troubles north of the Alps, which were the consequences of his Italian conquests. The German king considered that King John had encroached on the rights of the Empire by these conquests; John's old enemy King Casimir of Poland, the dukes of Austria, Charles Robert, King of Hungary, and his uncle Robert, King of Naples, all joined him in opposing the ambitious King of Bohemia. King John succeeded in pacifying the King of Germany by the promise that all lands conquered by him in Italy should become the joint property of the two sovereigns. He then hurried to Poland, and by besieging his town of Posen forced King Casimir to conclude a truce. King John then proceeded to Paris with his usual rapidity, leaving Henry the younger of Lipa to meet the attack of the Austrian dukes, who, however, defeated him. King John's second disappearance from Italy has already been mentioned.

"Whilst King John was thus wandering through distant

lands the decline of Bohemia had, in consequence of the king's irrational government, reached its lowest point."[1] The king seems himself to have felt the impossibility of governing alone a country from which, in consequence of his adventurous life, he was almost always absent.

Shortly after leaving Italy King John proceeded to Luxemburg, where he had become involved in a feud with John, Duke of Brabant; but he left his son Charles at Prague, with full power to govern Bohemia and Moravia. Always jealous of his son, John had formally stipulated that Charles should only bear the title of Margrave of Moravia.

"Margrave Charles was unlike his father in many respects; he inherited neither his qualities nor his faults. John, chivalrously brave and somewhat vain, was mostly guided by his temperament, which, though vivacious and inconstant, was generally intent on noble purposes. He loved warfare above all things, both in good earnest and in sport; he sought out wars and tournaments; cared more for glory than for gain; succeeded in conquering more than he was able to retain. He attempted great deeds, but his want of thrift often drove him to petty acts. His learned and serious son, on the other hand, showed everywhere the most entire self-possession, and in all matters of business acted according to a fixed plan and with calculation; he also fought bravely, but he preferred to obtain his purpose by peaceful negotiation. Orderly in financial matters, he showed exceptional talent in the art of government, though his military capacities were not great; he obtained far more by the arts of diplomacy than he ever could have done by the force of arms. John hardly disguised the fact that he had little sympathy for the land and people of Bohemia; love for them seems, on the other hand, to have been the one passion of Charles. [2]

In a comparatively short time Charles seems to have restored order in the disturbed country, and to have at least partially improved its financial situation; though his task was rendered more difficult by his father's constant demand for money. About this time both Charles and his father became connected by marriage with the royal family of France, Charles marrying the French Princess Blanche of Valois, and King John[3] the Princess Beatrice of Bourbon.

[1] Tomek. [2] Palacký.

[3] King John's first wife, Elizabeth, had died in 1330.

The result of these family connections was an alliance between Bohemia and France, that lasted up to the end of the reign of King John.

The death of Duke Henry of Carinthia and the Tyrol (1335) was followed by new strife in Germany, and the ever-warlike King John now returned to Bohemia. The German King Louis, John's former ally, joined the Austrian dukes in an attempt to deprive King John's son, John Henry, of the Tyrol and Carinthia, to which lands he had become entitled as husband of Margaret "Mouth-poke." To be secure in the north and east King John, on the advice of his son Charles, came to a peaceful understanding with the kings of Poland and Hungary. He renounced all claims on the crown of Poland, but, on the other hand, obtained the recognition of his rights over Silesia from the two kings.

Unfortunately, an estrangement took place about this time between John and his eldest son. Again fearing to find a rival to the crown in Charles, whose popularity in Bohemia was indeed far greater than his father's, King John suddenly deprived him of all share in the government of Bohemia and Moravia, and even of the revenues he drew from these lands.

Charles acted with great nobility in the difficult position in which he found himself. Contrary to what had so often happened in similar cases, he declined to stir up civil strife in a country which was already engaged in foreign war. He left Bohemia for a time, and joined his brother John Henry in the defence of the Tyrol, which Louis, King of the Germans, had already attacked. John in the meantime entered Austria with a Bohemian army, and succeeded in separating the Austrian dukes from their ally, the King of the Germans; he concluded a treaty with them, by which Carinthia was made over to the Austrian princes, while the Tyrol fell to the share of John Henry (1336).

King John soon after (1336) undertook a second crusade to Lithuania, during which he, through illness, lost the sight of one eye—a loss that was soon followed by complete blindness. We are told that the people did not pity him, but said that his misfortune was God's punishment for the hardness with which he—after superseding his son Charles—had extorted money from the people of Bohemia. Charles had accompanied his father on this Lithuanian campaign;

but he returned to the Tyrol directly afterwards, and it was only somewhat later (1338) that a reconciliation took place. King John now again made over the government of Bohemia to Charles, and the latter was afterwards (1341), with the full approval of his father, declared heir to the throne by the nobles of Bohemia.

The same year saw the beginning of new troubles in Germany. Margaret "Mouth-poke" of the Tyrol, inflamed by a violent passion for King Louis's handsome son, Louis of Brandenburg, and with an equally violent hatred for her husband,[1] drove the latter out of the country, and married Margrave Louis. The distance of Bohemia from the Tyrol rendered it difficult for Charles to come to the aid of his brother; but both he and King John henceforth became bitter enemies of King Louis, who had abetted his son in his attempt to secure the Tyrol.

King John, therefore, probably by the advice of his son, entered into negotiations with Pope Clement VI, who had always opposed King Louis, and was now endeavouring to induce the German Electors to choose another king. Charles joined his father at Luxemburg (1344), and thence they both repaired to the papal court at Avignon. There is no doubt that the deposition of King Louis and the election of a new king were then discussed, though the result of these negotiations only became evident two years later.

In the meantime, the Pope's friendship had a very important result for the internal development of Bohemia. On Charles's request the Pope raised the Bishop of Prague —then Ernest of Pardubic—to the rank of archbishop, and declared the new archbishopric independent of the German archbishops of Maintz.[2] It was also settled that the kings of Bohemia should in future be crowned by the new Archbishop of Prague. We are also told that through the Pope's influence a more complete reconciliation between King John and his son took place; and it is noticeable that during the short space of life that still remained to the king, we read of no further discord between the two.

[1] The old chroniclers give amusing but not very edifying details about this affair.

[2] It is curious to read that Charles was obliged to declare on his oath that the language of Bohemia was a Slavonic one, entirely different from the German language; that the distance from Prague to Maintz was of about twelve day-journeys; and that the road lay through other dioceses.

On leaving Avignon, King John and his son first went to Prague to be present at the installation of the new archbishop. They then started for a new crusade against the heathen Lithuanians, which they probably undertook at the request of the Pope.

Whilst King John was occupied in the far north, the German King Louis induced the kings of Hungary and Poland, the dukes of Austria and several of the Silesian princes, to join him in an alliance against Bohemia. With almost incredible rapidity King John marched into Poland, defeated the Poles and Hungarians, and besieged Cracow.[1] King Casimir demanded a truce, which through the mediation of the Pope soon became a treaty of peace, in which Casimir's allies, with the exception of the King of the Germans, were included.

Against the latter the Bohemian princes, aided by the Pope, now struck the heaviest blow possible. At the Pope's bidding five German Electors, among whom was King John, assembled at Rhense (1346), and elected King John's son, Margrave Charles, as German king. This rendered further war in Germany inevitable; but the attention of the kings of Bohemia and Germany was now attracted by events further west.

War had for some time been carried on between King Edward III of England and Philip of Valois, King of France, with whom John of Bohemia was on the same terms of friendship as with his predecessor. On the day following Charles's election as German king (July 12, 1346), King Edward and his son the Black Prince landed on the French coast, and marching rapidly through Normandy, advanced nearly up to the gates of Paris.

King John with his usual impetuosity immediately decided to come to the aid of the King of France. Apart from his connection with the royal family, he had always felt strong sympathy for France, and specially for Paris; he was even reported to have said that he cared to live there only, as it was the most chivalrous city in the world.

Not stopping to assemble an army—though he would

[1] During the siege of Cracow, King Casimir of Poland is said to have provoked the King of Bohemia to single combat, as a means of ending the war. King John answered that he was quite willing to accept the challenge on condition of Casimir's consenting to have both his eyes put out, thus rendering their chances equal.

probably have rendered the French far greater service had he done so—he left Luxemburg (where he had gone immediately after the election of Rhense) for Paris, accompanied by his son Charles and only five hundred horsemen, mostly Bohemian nobles and knights. When they arrived in Paris, the enemy's camp-fires and the reflection of many burning villages in the sky could be seen from the towers of Notre-Dame.

King Edward marched northward shortly afterwards to join the Flemish forces that were gathering at Gravelines,[1] and the Bohemians, joining the French army, took part in King Philip's march into Picardy. When the English army essayed the passage of the Somme at the bridge of St. Rémy, near Abbeville, it was principally the Bohemian troops who prevented the attempt.[2] As is known to all readers of English history, King Edward's army crossed the Somme shortly afterwards by surprising the ford of Blanche-Taque.

The English army reached the village of Crécy on August 25, but the French and their allies only arrived there on the following day. Henry Mönch of Basel, a knight serving under the King of Bohemia, was sent forward with one or two followers to reconnoitre the position of the English army, which the French still believed to be in full retreat. He reported that this was entirely untrue, and that the English army was, on the contrary, preparing for battle. Henry Mönch of Basel, and with him his warlike king, therefore strongly advised that the attack should be deferred to the following day, as the troops were fatigued by a long march. As is known, this advice was over-ruled, and the battle immediately began. The Bohemians remembered that it was the day of St. Rufus (August 26), the anniversary of the defeat and death of Přemysl Ottokar II.

[1] The old Bohemian chronicler Dubravius, with uncritical but rather touching patriotism, accounts for the change of King Edward's plans by the arrival of the horsemen of the King of Bohemia: "Edoardus Angliae rex cognito Boiemorum et Germanorum adventu ab absidione Lutaetiae Parisiorum discedit" (Dubravius, *Historia Bohemiae*, lib. xxi). Besides the Bohemians, a few German knights from Luxemburg were under King John's command.

[2] "Vicesima secunda die Augusti fuit rex Angliae ad Pontem Remi in Ponteu versus Abbeville et volebant transire Anglici per pontem sed gentes regis Boemiae et ejus filii et D. Johannes de Bryaumont restiterunt et ibi conflictus magnus unde ex utraque parte plures ceciderunt" (Palacký, quoting from a contemporary manuscript of Limuisis, abbot of St. Martin at Tournay).

The kings of Bohemia and Germany, with their small band, remained with the rear of the army at the beginning of the battle, not probably very confident in the result of an engagement which had been brought on against their advice. When the defeat of the French seemed certain, some of the Bohemian nobles informed King John of the unfavourable turn the battle was taking, and advised him to follow the example of the French, who were already retreating. King John then spoke the memorable words: "So will it God, it shall not be that a king of Bohemia flies from the battle-field."[1]

King John then ordered two of his bravest knights, Henry Mönch of Basel and Henry of Klingenberg, to attach their horses to his, and to guide him to where the Black Prince stood. He then gave the watchword "Praha" (Prague), and the knights and nobles, following close behind their king, charged in the direction of the English army. Passing rapidly through the flying Frenchmen they penetrated, wedged close together, into the thickest of the English ranks, and had for a moment nearly reached the spot where the Black Prince stood. Soon beaten back by overwhelming numbers, King John fell from his horse mortally wounded, and fifty of the chief nobles soon lay dead round their king. Hardly any of the Bohemians survived, and the flower of the Bohemian nobility perished on the battle-field of Crécy.

The charge of the blind King of Bohemia, useless and even faulty, from a military point of view, as the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, is equally immortal: even after more than five hundred years a Bohemian cannot write of this "gallant deed of arms" without feeling his blood stirred.

Late in the evening King John was found, still alive, on the battle-field, and King Edward caused him to be carried to his own tent, where he died in the course of the night.

On hearing of his death, King Edward, we are told, was unable to refrain from tears, and he exclaimed: "The

[1] Palacký says that these last words of their blind king remained for ever in the memory of the Bohemians, and that they became a proverb in the country. Palacký also notes that no king of Bohemia ever fled from the battle-field, and that neither Přemysl Ottokar II nor Louis I survived their defeat.

crown of chivalry has fallen to-day; never was any one equal to this King of Bohemia."[1] King Edward and the Black Prince were present when the last religious rites were performed over the dead king of Bohemia, and they caused his corpse to be delivered for burial to his son Charles. King Charles had himself fought heroically by the side of his father; and after he had been severely wounded, the few remaining Bohemian knights, "fearful of losing both their kings,"[2] forced him to leave the battle-field.

CHAPTER V

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF CHARLES IV TO THE CORONATION OF KING SIGISMUND (1346–1420)

THE accession of Charles IV to the throne of Bohemia marks the beginning of a new period in the history of the country. His reign differed as widely from that of his father as did the personal character of the two princes. Whereas King John was vacillating and uncertain in his policy, his son Charles appears to have set before him clearly the nature of the problems with which he was to deal. While John was frequently absent from his country, Charles was ever ready and anxious to pursue its true interests. In the reign of the father Bohemia's influence in European affairs remained stationary, if it did not actually decline. But Charles not only raised it to a position it had never before attained, but sought out every means of improving its internal condition. It is true that the general political condition of Europe was more favourable to Charles's policy than it had been to his father's. The German princes had never allowed Bohemia fair play; this impediment to the progress of Bohemia ceased now that Charles, King of Bohemia, himself became German Emperor.

Professor Freeman has given it as his opinion that while Charles made a good King of Bohemia, he "sadly lowered" the empire both in Germany and in Italy. It would not be easy to prove in what way Charles "sadly lowered" the empire. It is at any rate certain that he was one of the best kings and truest patriots of Bohemia.

As mentioned in the last chapter, Charles left the battle-field of Crécy accompanied only by a few knights. He at

[1] Beneš de Weitmil. [2] Beneš de Weitmil.