

CHAPTER IX

FRANCE UP TO THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

WE have traced the fortunes of the German kingdom up to the middle of the thirteenth century. It is now time to turn back and follow out the development of the kingdom of France.

When, on the death of Charles the Fat, the kingdom of the West Franks was given to Count Odo of Paris, he gained little but an empty title. Although he had the support of the Church he had little real power over the nobles; in spite, however, of the attempts of his Carolingian rivals he managed to keep the crown till his death, when it reverted again to a Carolingian, Charles the Simple, chiefly noted for his treaty with the Norman Rollo, which led to the foundation of Normandy. Charles, however, died in prison, and with his death the kingdom passed again from the Carolingians. In fact, for the century following the disruption of the Empire in 888 the crown of the West Franks passed backwards and forwards between the Carolingians and the family of Odo. The Carolingians spoke German, and when they were the nominal rulers of Gaul held their court at Laon in the north-east corner. The family of Odo spoke French, and Paris was their headquarters. But whoever was the nominal ruler he had little power. The dukes and counts, originally the royal officials in the provinces, had