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The
Position of the Slavonic Languages
at the present day

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE
DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
NOVEMBER 29 1910

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BY

NEVILL FORBES, M.A., PH.D.

READER IN RUSSIAN

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NOTE

AIDS TO THE PRONUNCIATION OF SLAVONIC WORDS

- š, sz = English *sh* in e. g. shall
- č, cz = English *ch* in e. g. church
- ž = French *j* in e. g. jour
- dž = English *j* in e. g. James
- ć = English *ty* in e. g. Lutyens
- c = English *ts* in e. g. its
- w = English *v* in e. g. vain
- j = English *y* in e. g. you





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THE POSITION OF THE SLAVONIC LANGUAGES AT THE PRESENT DAY

It would be impossible for me to begin this Lecture without paying a tribute, no less earnest because it is necessarily short, to the memory of the man, who, I may say, inspired it. Nothing I might here say could express the debt I owe to my predecessor, the late Professor Morfill; his genuine and generous enthusiasm for the subject in which we were both so deeply interested encouraged me to emulation, while his brilliant wit and amazing memory left me in no doubt of the desperate nature of the attempt. Those who remember his wonderful gifts, who delighted in them, and must delight in the remembrance of them, may draw on their memories to supplement those qualities which will be found lacking, while those who did not know him will have the misfortune to realize what it is they have lost.

Professor Morfill was the first official representative of Slavonic philology in England; his attainments and publications in his special field of study attracted the admiration and gratitude of the whole Slavonic world, which often expressed its appreciation of his efforts in the concrete terms of the conferment of academic distinctions.

But besides his interest in the Slavonic languages, of the five principal of which he wrote grammars, and in the history of the Slav nations, to which he devoted several volumes, Professor Morfill was master of the languages and the literatures of Greece and Rome. His quotations from Homer were as inexhaustible as those from Puškin, while he seemed to carry the whole of English, French, and German literature in his head. He was well

acquainted with all the other European languages philologically, as well as with some of those of Asia and Africa. There was scarcely a language one could mention so remote but that he would shyly confess to having at some time or other inquired into its structure. Nevertheless, with all these languages and literatures at his command, he would always unhesitatingly asseverate his preference for those of the Slavonic peoples, which appealed to him by their vigour and wealth of sound, no less than by their freshness and originality of expression.

Once fascinated by this field of study, his plight resembled that of a bee distracted by the rival claims on her attention of many beautiful flowers ; and if asked which of the Slavonic languages he preferred, would always find it difficult to give a single and decisive answer. Professor Morfill, with unerring taste and instinct, accumulated the vastest and most valuable library of Slavonic books and of works on Slavonic subjects ever made by a private individual in this country, and fortunately for Oxford this inestimable collection is preserved intact at Queen's College. But the benefit of his bibliophile activity which resulted in the formation of a unique private library was shared by this Institution, of which he was long a prominent and energetic administrator.

He used to relate how when he first visited the Taylorian library, he found it in the possession of a single Russian volume, which was languishing in the obscurity of the shelves devoted to 'Oriental and other' languages ; upon closer examination the identity of this unique and dusty specimen of Slavonic literature was exposed—it turned out to be a translation of a novel by Paul de Kock masquerading as a Russian classic. Thanks to the indignation which this tragi-comic discovery provoked in him, Professor Morfill soon improved matters, and to-day the Taylorian possesses a very fairly comprehensive library of Slavonic literature. In case any misapprehension still exists as to where and by whom the Slavonic languages are spoken, it seems not out of

place to take this opportunity of indicating the extent of the area over which these tongues are current to-day.

✓ There are several reasons which might account for such misapprehension, but the most likely would seem to be the apparent remoteness of these countries and languages from our own, and the number of strange and complex names with which they are associated. It is as difficult for the English ear to assimilate these names as it is to differentiate between them. What makes it worse for foreigners is that each of the Slavonic languages has an orthography of its own, the peculiarities of which are reflected in its nomenclature of all the other Slavonic nationalities; and in this connexion it is at any rate comforting to know that Slavs themselves find it difficult to make clear the distinctions in the names by which, in their several languages, some of their nationalities are designated. There will be occasion later to give examples of this terminological confusion. But it is to be recalled that in other groups of cognate languages, too, each has its own orthography, its own method of transcribing the same word; for instance, the word *España* is transcribed differently in each of the Romance languages, in Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, and Rumanian.

But here geography comes to our help. It is easy to remember that Spanish, for instance, is spoken in Spain, and Italian in Italy, &c., where the political, geographical, and linguistic boundaries all more or less correspond. In Eastern Europe the conditions are different. To begin with, there are many fewer impressive natural boundaries than in the western half of the continent, such as the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and even when they do occur, they seldom correspond to the political, still more rarely to the linguistic divisions. Only three out of the seven principal Slavonic languages happen at the present day to be the state language in the respective political divisions where they are current, and to remember where the other four are spoken requires

a more intimate knowledge of the history and geography of Eastern Europe than can be gained from familiarity with a purely political map of that half of the continent.

History and geography tell us that the Slavonic languages on the whole are spoken to-day over a far greater area than they were 1000 years ago, but also that the general position and shape of that area have considerably changed. Some of the Slavonic languages have waxed, others have waned; some are moribund, others are obsolete. A language is like any other organism, it cannot remain passive; stagnation means death, it must either grow or decay, expand or recede, and the history of the Slavonic languages furnishes instructive proof of this inevitable law.

The principal difference between the position which the Slavonic languages held in the ninth century, and that which they occupy to-day, is the following: The limits reached by the Slav tribes in the ninth century at the close of the era of wholesale migrations show that the direction of their expansion up to that time had been centrifugal; they had radiated west, south, and east from a common centre, the Carpathians and the plains to the north and south of them. The positions held by them at the present day show that their expansion eastwards has continued uninterruptedly; but on the west and south they have either remained stationary, in some places protected from the retaliation of evicted tenants by mountains, in others obstructed from further progress by the sea, or they have receded before nations they had themselves displaced, now claiming to redeem what had once been their own.

But before examining the vicissitudes of the Slavonic languages, it is necessary to make a digression in order to mention a subsidiary but important group of languages whose fate has always been intimately connected with that of its Slavonic neighbours. It is customary in comparative philology, when tabulating the Indo-European family of languages, to speak of them as the Baltic group.

Now although it is not reasonable or satisfactory to call a group of languages merely by the name of the ocean in the vicinity of which the people speaking them happen to dwell, still, for want of a better, Baltic serves the purpose, and is at least elastic. The word itself is one of the few Lithuanian words that have been assimilated by other European languages; 'baltas' in Lithuanian means 'white'. Now this group is always coupled with that of the Slavonic languages as the Baltic-Slavonic division of the Indo-European family. The reason is that a closer affinity exists between these two groups than between either of them and any other of the main divisions of the Indo-European family, and so, although it is out of the question to postulate a single prehistoric Baltic-Slavonic language, still it is scientifically permissible to treat them as one main division of the Indo-European family, and therefore to include also the Baltic in any tabulation of the Slavonic languages.

It is advisable to prepose the Baltic to the Slavonic languages for more reasons than one. In the first place, they are in many ways more antique than the Slavonic languages, already themselves remarkable for their wealth of morphological and accidental survivals from an earlier epoch, compared with other Indo-European languages. Again, they cover such a relatively small and remote area, and the claims on our interest of their literatures are so modest, that they are apt to be neglected by all but specialists in Indo-European comparative philology. Yet these languages are so interesting in themselves, and so important in the light they throw on the historical development of the cognate Slavonic group, that they deserve the former place in any catalogue of this linguistic division.

The so-called Baltic group includes three languages: Prussian, Lithuanian, and Lettish. Prussian was the language spoken by the people who in the ninth century inhabited the lands between the Vistula and the Niemen rivers, bounded on the north by the sea and roughly corresponding to the limits of the present German province

of East Prussia. The Prussian language in the seventeenth century became extinct, and only meagre fragments of it have been preserved in writing ; Lithuanian and Lettish are still spoken. The natural phenomena peculiar to the country, which abounds in vast swamps and forests, as well as its remoteness from great trade-routes, have conduced to the preservation of the antique character of these languages, especially of Lithuanian, but at the same time it is largely due to this cause that the earliest records and monuments of these languages go no further back than the sixteenth century.

There is greater affinity between Lithuanian and Lettish than between either of them and Prussian, and, generally speaking, Lettish shows a later stage of development than Lithuanian ; that is to say, it is the more remote of the two from what can be postulated as the language of their common origin.

To what extent Lithuanian was spoken during those early centuries when the country was independent of all foreign influence it is now impossible to determine, but at the present day it is current in the mouths of at least 100,000 people in East Prussia, and of considerably more than two millions in Russia. It is important to remember that the political boundaries of the mediaeval state of Lithuania, which covered an immense area and included at one time all of what is now Western Russia, always extended far beyond the limits of the area where the Lithuanian language was spoken. At the present day it is spoken over an irregularly shaped piece of territory which could be roughly delimited by a line drawn through the following towns: beginning at Labiau on the Kurisches Haff the line would go eastwards to Eydtkuhnen, the well-known frontier station on the line from Berlin to St. Petersburg, through the bi-lingual signs at which, and at the corresponding station on the other side of the frontier, the unsuspecting traveller is misled into believing that German and Russian are respectively the only languages current in that region. From Eydtkuhnen the

line goes south, then east to Vilna, then curving north turns westwards and follows almost exactly the boundary between the Russian governments of Kovno and Kurland, debouching at Polangen again on to the shores of the Baltic. In other words, Lithuanian is spoken in the extreme north-eastern corner of East Prussia, in Russia throughout the government of Kovno, and in considerable portions of the governments of Suvalki and Vilna.

The territory where Lettish is spoken lies immediately to the north of that occupied by the Lithuanians; it is bounded on the west by the Baltic and on the south by the political boundary dividing the government of Kurland, the whole of which is Lettish, from that of Kovno, which is purely Lithuanian. Lettish is also the language of the southern half of the government of Livonia and of the western half of that of Vitebsk.

It must not be forgotten that the big towns in Kurland and Livonia, such as Mitau, Libau, and Riga, are largely German, and that the landholders in these two governments belong to the same nationality, while the rural population is entirely Lithuanian and Lettish.

The main difference between Lithuanians and Letts is that the Lithuanians, except those of East Prussia, are solidly Roman Catholic: and that religion and education have for centuries past filtered through into Lithuania from Poland. The Letts and the Lithuanians of East Prussia, on the other hand, are one and all Lutherans, having in their more exposed geographical position accepted the teachings recommended by their Teutonic masters. Accordingly the vocabulary of Lithuanian betrays Polish, that of Lettish, German influence. Lettish has also been influenced by the proximity of its neighbours of Finnish race, whom the Letts gradually propelled northwards into the extreme northern corner of the promontory of Kurland, where a portion of them still remains, and into Livonia proper. Lithuanian has also been much influenced by White Russian, the dialect current in those provinces which in the Middle Ages

formed the lands of the Lithuanian crown, and later with Lithuania became part of Poland. White Russian was actually chosen as the official language of Lithuania in the Middle Ages, the mother-tongue being considered too rustic a medium, and of too restricted resources to afford a suitable vocabulary for the redaction of state documents.

The best Lithuanian literature consists of traditional folk-songs and ballads, only a small proportion of which have been written down and edited. The brave efforts of native authors to develop a school of poetry inspired by the phenomena of the Lithuanian landscape and the characteristics of local meteorology have been only moderately successful, but the national songs contain many lines of profound sentiment, and are full of quaint and gentle expressions. Also they abound in allusions to a lost and only half-intelligible mythology.

In recent years gratifying signs of increasing interest in their own language and literature have been noticeable amongst the Lithuanians. Against this must be set the uninterrupted stream of emigration towards America, which has already drained the home-country to the extent of half a million people, or one-sixth of the whole nation. The Lithuanian community in America publish newspapers, books, and dictionaries with an energy that betrays the influence of their new surroundings, yet the wholesale appropriation of necessary but inadequately assimilated Americanisms, together with prolonged absence from the secular traditions of the mother-country, must at an increasing rate lower the standard of linguistic purity. In Lithuania itself, on the other hand, the commercial supremacy of German in the west and Russian in the east cannot fail to militate in course of time against the integrity of this humble but ancient and gentle tongue, even if its continued existence be not imperilled.

The name *Žmud*, applied by Poles and Russians to the Lithuanians living north of the Niemen, simply means 'Lowlanders', and to the Lithuanians of East Prussia all

their countrymen living in Russia are known by this name in its Lithuanian form Žemaičiai. In general the Lithuanians call themselves Lietūvininkai, and their country Lietuvà; the Letts they call Kūršei, a name that perpetuates the old tribal appellation Kors. The Letts call themselves Latwis, Latweetis, and they call the Lithuanians Leitis. The names sometimes applied to the country or nationality of the Letts—Letgola, Zimigola—are nothing more than distorted forms of Lithuanian words meaning 'Lithuania's End' and 'Land's End' respectively. The names given by the Russians and Poles to the Letts and Lithuanians are distinctive, that for the Letts is in Russian Latiši, and in Polish Lotysze; that for the Lithuanians Litóvci in Russian, Litwini in Polish. The name given by the Letts to the Russians is of great interest and historical importance. In Lettish all Russians are to this day known as Kreewis, and this is nothing but a perpetuation and generalization of the name of one of the original Slavonic tribes, the Kriviči, whom history discovered settled in the basin of the western Dvina. There is nothing correspondingly interesting in the Lithuanian name for Russian, which is simply Rūssas, but the names given by the Lithuanians to their Western German and their Southern Polish neighbours are curious. Lithuanians call the Germans Vökietis and Germany Vokietija, a word of obscure etymology. The Poles they call Lénkai, which also serves collectively as the designation of the country Poland, and is reminiscent of the old Russian name for the Poles 'Lyáhi'.

Passing from the Baltic to the cognate Slavonic group of languages, the question arises, in which order the latter are to be classified. It is now the established custom to arrange the Slavonic languages in three main divisions, the criteria for which are certain phonetic characteristics which need not here be closely considered. These three divisions are called, according to their respective geographical positions, the Western, Southern, and Eastern.

It is impossible now to determine to what extent the

differences of these languages one from another had already crystallized by the ninth century, that is to say, at the time when the migrations of the Slavonic tribes were complete, before the formation amongst them of separate political states, and before the time to which even the earliest extant fragments of these languages belong. It is, however, probable that many of the characteristics peculiar to each of the Slavonic languages as we know them to-day had already developed in the ninth century, because considerable expansion westwards, southwards, and eastwards of the Slavonic tribes had already taken place, and consequently distinctions of nationality had had time to appear and had acquired space to develop.

To the western group, the first to be considered, belong those of the Slavonic languages spoken by the tribes who in the middle of the ninth century were settled north of the Danube and west of the so-called Baltic nationalities; the boundary between the western and eastern group (not accurately to be determined even to-day) roughly corresponds to the watershed between the Vistula and the Dnieper. That between the western and southern group is approximately indicated by the Danube. In the course of their migration westward Slavonic tribes belonging to this western division had penetrated as far as the Elbe and even beyond, and at the moment when our authentic knowledge of their history begins they were in possession of the whole of the country from the mouth of the Vistula to that of the Eider in Holstein, bounded on the north by the Baltic, on the west by the Elbe, the Saal, and the Bohemian Forest (Böhmer Wald).

From among the many names of these Western Slavonic tribes that have been preserved, those have acquired greater prominence which correspond to the three important Western Slavonic languages of to-day. These are Lusatian-Wendish, Polish, and Čech, sometimes misnamed Bohemian.

The first of these three, taken geographically, is Lusa-

tian-Wendish, a name whose unfamiliarity is easily explained by the fact that this interesting language is to-day spoken by only 150,000 people, living in Prussia and Saxony. These people call themselves Serbjo, Serske, and their language Serbska reč, for which there is no exact English equivalent. They are the fragmentary remnants of two large Slavonic tribes, the Serby and Lužycanie, who were settled in the ninth century, the former between the Saal (Solyava) and the Elbe (Laba), the latter between the Elbe and the Oder in what is now Southern Brandenburg, Eastern Saxony, and Western Silesia. Related to them were other tribes, but as their names have become extinct it would be unnecessarily confusing to mention them here.

The name Lužycanie or Lužane, has survived in the German designation of that piece of territory Lausitz, and in the English Lusatia. The name Lužycanie, which means 'dwellers in the water-meadows', aptly indicates the nature of the country this people inhabited. In their last stronghold, the Spreewald, to-day, the only means of communication between one village and another is often by boat over the thousand ramifications of that torpid river. The name Wendish, which occurs in the English designation Lusatian-Wendish, is merely the German Windisch or Wendisch, the term by which all Germans have from time immemorial designated all Slavs, now more especially applied to the Lusatian Wends. The word is ubiquitous as a place-name wherever the Germans and Slavs have been in contact, and is even at the present day used to designate more than one Slavonic nationality. It is simplest for us to follow the German lead and call these people the Lusatian Wends, though it must not be forgotten that they call themselves and all other Slavs call them Serbs, and even the Germans sometimes call them Sorben, and their language Sorbisch. This is, of course, only a variation of the name of the well-known Southern Slav race, the Servians or Serbs, and is one of the many facts reminiscent of the essential pre-historic affinity of

the Slavonic tribes, and of the proximity to each other which they must at one time have experienced.

The language of the Lusatian Wends consists of two sharply-differentiated dialects, known, according to the position on the river Spree of the people who speak them, as Upper and Lower ; the former is spoken by about 100,000 in and around (Bautzen) Budyšin in the upper valley of the Spree in Eastern Saxony, the latter lower down the same river, in the country known as the Spreewald, by a little over 50,000 people. The marked differences between the two dialects have prompted some savants to treat Upper and Lower Lusatian-Wendish as two separate and independent languages, but the numerous points of fundamental similarity between them hardly justify such a course.

The Lusatian Wends have, with their northern fellow-Slavs, had to bear the brunt of the aggression of their western neighbours, whose advance eastwards since the time of Charlemagne has been uninterrupted. As was mentioned before, barely 150,000 of the Lusatian Wends have survived to tell the tale ; and this only thanks to the inaccessible nature of their retreats, while it must unfortunately be admitted that the incessant erosion of the surrounding German tide causes an estimated annual decrease in their numbers of a thousand.

However minute the territory of this smallest of the Slavonic nations at the present day, proof of its former extent, and of the completeness of the sometime Slavonic occupation, is to be seen in the quantity of Slavonic place-names which occur wholesale in Germany east of the Elbe and Saal. To take only some of the best-known towns in Saxony, for instance, within many miles of which there are now no longer any Slavonic villages, we find such names as Dresden, the etymology of which refers to the thickly wooded nature of the country in which it was founded ; Leipzig (Lipsk), 'the city of the lime trees' ('lipa', the sticky tree), Kamenz and Chemnitz, two variations of a very common Slavonic

place-name, meaning 'stony'. Then in the neighbourhood of Leipzig there is a stream known as Rječka, which in all Slavonic languages is the ordinary word for a rivulet. Such proofs, which can be enumerated to any number, are clearly incontestable; happily they are imperishable too, because they have become in their Germanized forms, the etymology of which is usually obvious, so familiar to the Germans themselves that the authorities would scarcely think of arbitrarily substituting for them artificial modern German names, invented *ad hoc*, as they have done lately in some of the more eastern provinces of the Empire.

Passing from Lusatian Wendish, the next of the Western Slavonic languages to be considered is Polish. Enjoying great prominence to-day, with a contemporary literature of extraordinary fertility and of great brilliance, and spoken by a larger number of people than any Slavonic language except Russian, Polish is only one of a group of dialects known in comparative philology as the Lechish group. The designation Lechish is an adaptation of the name by which the Poles were from early times called by their neighbours, but never used of themselves. In Lithuanian a Pole is still called Lenkas, and Poland Lenkai; the Russian equivalent is Lyahi. To the Lechish group belong, besides Polish, all the Slavonic languages, except Lusatian Wendish, which were at one time spoken throughout what is now Northern Germany from the Eider in Holstein to the Vistula.

The unique survivor of these once extensively spoken dialects, besides Polish, is that called Kashubish, spoken by the Kashubs, or, as some of them call themselves, Slovintsi; these now number slightly over 200,000 people inhabiting the country between Danzig and the boundary of the provinces of Western Prussia and Pomerania. This dialect was only identified and classified during the last century, and philologists have concentrated their attention on it none too soon, for emigration to America and erosion at home are causing a rapid diminution in the

numbers of this people. As usual disputes have arisen as to whether Kashubish is to be regarded as a separate language, or as a dialect of Polish, the Polish savants maintaining the latter view, while their Russian colleagues naturally seize the opportunity offered of subtracting the Kashubs from the sum total of the Polish nationality. Be that as it may, Kashubish is undoubtedly the remnant of the language spoken at one time throughout Pomerania, or, as it is called in Polish, Pomorze, which means the coast land, by the people called Pomorzanie, in Russian Pomoryane, or 'the dwellers by the sea,' from 'po' = along, and 'more' = the sea.

Another Slavonic dialect of the Lechish group has come down to us in the form of a few glossaries, though it is itself extinct since the seventeenth century; this is the dialect known as Polabish, because spoken by the Slavonic tribes settled on the lower Elbe—from 'po' = along, and 'Laba' = the Elbe.

As in the case of the place-names in the country inhabited by the Lusatian Wends, those of Northern Germany between the Eider and the Vistula furnish ample proof of the complete occupation of this country at one time by the Slavs. It has been pointed out that Pommern simply means 'by the sea', or 'super mare', and we have only to scratch such well-known names of towns as Schwerin, Strelitz, Stettin, Danzig, Stargard (literally, 'the old city') Belgard ('the white city'), Colberg, Rostock, to find the Slavonic originals underneath, while a well-known suburb of Berlin, Nowa Wies, 'the new village,' is allowed in the twentieth century to proclaim its Slavonic origin undisguised.

Turning from these moribund and fragmentary dialects, it is reassuring to find Polish, the most prominent of the Western Slav languages and numerically the second in importance of them all, leading a vigorous and militant existence. It is the language of nearly twenty million people, who form a solid ethnographical quadrangle with its southern base resting on the Carpathians. The

numerous tribal names, many of which have survived and are well known to-day, such as the Mazurowie and Kujawianie, have all been superseded by that of the principal central nationality, the Polanie, literally, the dwellers in the open fields, a name used at one time by several Slavonic tribes. The fact that in English the name Poland has come to be used to designate only Russian Poland causes it to be overlooked that the Polish provinces of Russia include little more than half of the territory over which Polish is spoken. In Germany the southern halves of the provinces of East and West Prussia, and the eastern half of Silesia are purely Polish, while of the total population of the German province of Posen, the country formerly known in Polish history as Great Poland, about 75 per cent. are Poles. In Austria the whole of Galicia west of the river San is solidly Polish, as is also the eastern half of Austrian Silesia.

The fortunes of the Polish language have been very different in each of the three empires under whose political control the Polish nation passed when it was arbitrarily trisected at the tragic culmination of its history as an independent state in the eighteenth century. They have been darkest in Prussia, where the policy of exterminating the Polish nationality has been consistently applied by an incorruptible bureaucracy. This is not the place to discuss political rights and wrongs, and the situation can be summed up by saying that the province of Posen is as far as ever from being Germanized, while the millions spent by the Prussian Colonization Commission have only served to strengthen the economic position of the people for whose eradication they were voted. Education is, however, an even more potent weapon than expropriation, and the fact that no primary or secondary schools exist in Germany where a word of Polish is spoken is inevitably having a fatal influence on the vocabulary and syntax of Polish in Prussia. The only province, however, where the German language is making real headway against Polish is that of East Prussia, where religious differences make

matters more complex. In East Prussia, namely, the majority of Poles have been Lutherans since they were invaded and converted by the Teutonic knights in the thirteenth century; to these Lutheran Poles the terms Polish and Catholic are synonymous, and so they regard German as the orthodox language and nationality. This would not be so bad, but it happens that in the midst of these Lutheran Poles of East Prussia there is an enclave of Catholic Poles inhabiting the diocese of Warmia or Ermeland, which has always been Catholic. To these Catholic Poles, surrounded as they are by their Lutheran compatriots, the Polish language and nationality again appear to contain the germs of heresy.

In Russian Poland there are no such confessional complications, and the secular political supremacy of St. Petersburg has not achieved any tangible result in the direction of denationalization. However, what would otherwise be the advantageous dearth of Russian places of education is more than discounted by the difficulty experienced in establishing Polish schools. The Polish language and nationality enjoy the greatest amount of liberty in Austria, which at the partition of Poland acquired Galicia as its share of the spoils. The comparatively small number of its Polish subjects, and the proximity of these latter to the Russian frontier enabled the Government of Vienna to treat them with apparent magnanimity, and to reap the reward of devoted loyalty consistently ever since. Warsaw is still the social centre of the nation, but Cracow is to-day the Polish Oxford and Piedmont in one.

But the intersected fragments of the nation are still united by the indissoluble link of the Polish language. Already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it produced works, which would of themselves have constituted a great literature; in the nineteenth, sprouting from the grave of political freedom, it has borne fruit a hundred-fold; dismemberment of the state and disfranchisement of the people have only intensified the vitality of the nation,

which has found expression in one of the most original and remarkable of contemporary literatures.

The third group of the western division of the Slavonic languages is that known as Čech-Slovak. This rather cumbersome designation is, at any rate, accurate and comprehensive. The term Bohemian is often used synonymously with Čech, but is inexact and ambiguous, as the country known to us as Bohemia, but to the Čechs only as Čechy—a collective plural—contains, besides the Slavs, a large German population. The term Čech-Slovak comprises two closely related Slavonic dialects, whose affinity hardly justifies their being treated as separate languages. Čech is spoken by about six and a half million people in the province of the Austrian Empire known as the kingdom of Bohemia, and in the provinces of Moravia and Austrian Silesia, Slovak by about two and a half millions in the north of Hungary. The term Slovak is the most general, accurate, and unequivocal designation for the Slavonic people who speak this dialect, but is of comparatively modern origin. The Slovaks call themselves Slovak, Slovaci; but a Slovak woman is called Slovanka; their dialect they themselves call Slovensky, and their country, Slovensko.

The Slavonic tribes, now known by the name of one of them, which gradually overshadowed and superseded the others, viz. the Čechs, have from the earliest centuries of our era occupied the quadrilateral known in geography and history as Bohemia. Covered on all four sides by natural barriers in the shape of mountains and forests, the Čechs have, on the whole, maintained their original positions, though in the course of the turbulent Middle Ages, Germans reclaimed large portions of territory to the north and south of them. From the time of the incorporation of the kingdom of Bohemia in the Habsburg dominions, the Germanization of the country, especially of the intelligent classes, made steady progress till the nineteenth century, which in the triumphant revival of the Čech nationality has witnessed one of the most success-

ful expositions of national renaissance. From early times surrounded by Germans, the Čechs would seem to have lost the anarchic inconsistency, the fatalistic insouciance, which have always been the charm and the bane of the Slavs, to have in good stead assimilated some of the irrepressible energy and methodical industry so characteristic of their Teutonic neighbours, and to have typified these qualities in the indefatigable martellato of their speech. But Economics have not monopolized their attention. The Germans say that every Čech is born holding either a purse or a fiddle, and it is true that the Čechs, besides being the most thrifty, are also the most musical of the Slavonic peoples; moreover, besides national establishments of education and distraction, considerable political privileges, have also been secured by this determined people in the face of the most strenuous opposition.

The position of the Čech language is considerably better than that of Slovak, which, for many centuries immune from the Germanizing influences at work in Austria, has now to bear the brunt of the nationalistic revival of the Magyars. After recovering from the invasion of the Avars in the sixth century, Slovak was by the ninth century spoken over the whole of what was then the principality of Moravia. But the irruption of the Magyars from Asia finally displaced the Slavonic occupants of Pannonia to the north and south of the Danube, at the same time imposing on them the political supremacy of the newcomers. After leading an unnoticed and undisturbed existence in Northern Hungary till the nineteenth century, the Slovaks have now to weather the rising storm of Magyarization, and have neither the numerical nor the economic strength of the Čechs to fortify their resistance.

Passing from the western to the southern division of Slavonic languages, between which the Danube is roughly the line of delimitation, the first to be considered in geographical order is that known as Slovenish. Strictly speaking, Slovenish is only a strongly-marked variation of Serbo-Croatian, just as Slovak is of Čech, and it is

more correct to treat all the Slav dialects that are spoken from the Alps to the Balkans as one group, and to call that the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenish group. Slovenish is the language spoken by about one and a half million Slavs, who inhabit the southern parts of the Austrian provinces of Styria and Carinthia, the whole of Carniola, or Krain (a name, common to all Slavonic languages, which merely means 'The Borderland'), and the northern part of Istria. The centre of their national activity is the town known in German as Laibach and in Slovenish as Ljubljana, the capital of Carniola, but the Slovenes form at least 20 per cent. of the population of Trieste, and take a growing interest in the direction of the affairs of that busy city. The Slovenes are the only one of the Slav peoples who have conserved as the appellation of themselves the name Slovene, by which, *par excellence*, the Slavs in early times designated all of their own race, implied their mutual intelligibility, and distinguished themselves from their ubiquitous German neighbours, whom they have always termed Nemtsi, the dumb folk. The frequency of the term Slovene in one form or another as a designation of Slavonic peoples for each other or for their race as a whole is most confusing. Thus, for instance, in Servian and Slovenish the word for Slovenish and Slavonic is identical, viz. 'Slovenski,' while it has been pointed out that the Slovaks in Northern Hungary call their own language Slovensky and their country Slovensko. In earlier times the Slovenes were known as Chorutane, and are thus mentioned in the early Russian chronicles and by the Čech chronicler Dalimil; this name Chorutane, which is now obsolete, was derived from that part of the country inhabited by the Slovenes, Carantanum, or Goratan, and survives still in the geographical term Carinthia or Kärnten. The Germans of Carinthia and Styria usually specify the Slovenes as Winden or Wenden; this has always been the generic term applied indiscriminately to all Slavs by Germans, but is now limited in its application to the Slovenes of Austria, and, as

already mentioned, to the Lusatian Wends in Saxony and Prussia.

In the sixth century the Slovenes occupied a more extensive territory than that held by them to-day ; they reached north to the Danube, west to the Tyrol, and covered South-western Hungary. But the invasion of the Avars and other Asiatic hordes, the establishment of the Eastern Mark as a bulwark against them by Charlemagne, and the consequent infiltration of German settlers and missionaries, gradually forced the Slovenes southwards.

Although fragments of this language dating from the tenth century have survived, and considerable examples of it from the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century exist, the real revival of the Slovene nationality and language belongs to the nineteenth century.

Servian or Serbo-Croatian, the other member of this group of the southern division, is in point of numbers of the people who speak it the third most important of the Slavonic languages. It is spoken throughout Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, in the Banat in South Hungary, in the southern part of Istria, and also in the Macedonian vilayets of Turkey. It is thus the speech of nearly ten million people, who are distributed in twelve provinces of four political states, Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey, and Austria-Hungary. During the period of wholesale migrations the southern Slavs penetrated southwards through Macedonia into Greece, and in the hey-day of their independence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the political boundaries of Serbia would seem to have included most of the Balkan peninsula, but generally speaking the territory occupied by the Croatians and Servians to-day is conterminous with that held by them in the ninth century ; on their southern border, in Macedonia, they have undoubtedly lost ground before the Albanians, but they have made corresponding gains to the north in Hungary, whither they immigrated in large numbers

when the power of the Ottoman Empire was at its height.

From the earliest times this race, which is essentially one as far as language is concerned, has been known by two names, the Croatians in the western half of the territory, and the Servians in the eastern half. But the difference between the Servians and the Croatians is not merely nominal, it is confessional; it is therefore in one respect fundamental and has always cut the nation in two. The history of each of these two halves of the same race has followed totally different lines, and it is owing to this duality that it has always been impossible to find one name for the language which would be acceptable to both divisions of the people who speak it. The Servians, namely, were converted by the missionaries of Byzantium, the Croatians by those of Rome. It is this difference of confession, of which the double name of the language Serbo-Croatian is symbolic, that has always militated against the cultural and political unity of the nation, and formed the corner-stone of the power, first of Turkey and now of Austria, in that part of the Balkans. It is this difference between the teachings and traditions of the eastern and western churches that divides the Slavonic world in general and the Serbo-Croatian nationality in particular.

The outward and visible sign of the difference between the two confessions, as reflected in the language, is the dissimilarity of the alphabets. The Croatians and the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Dalmatia use the Latin alphabet, amplified by diacritic signs, the Servians and the orthodox inhabitants of Bosnia, Hercegovina, Dalmatia, and Montenegro use that known as the Cyrillic, so called after the name of its inventor, the Greek missionary St. Cyril.

This Cyril and his brother Methodius were Greeks of Salonika, but have now become the patron saints of orthodox Slavonic culture in Servia, Bulgaria, and Russia. Although Salonika was always essentially Greek,

the population in its neighbourhood was, in the ninth century, already purely Slavonic, and it is possible that many of the citizens were bi-lingual from childhood.

Cyril, who had received a particularly good education in Byzantium, had taken holy orders and occupied a chair of philosophy there, and must clearly have established quite early in his career a considerable and well-merited reputation as a linguist and philologist. For a legend has it that, when in the course of the ninth century the Slavonic Prince of Moravia, who wished to free himself from the ecclesiastical and political influences of the German Bishopric of Passau, sent to the Emperor Michael II at Byzantium for missionaries and enlightenment, then the emperor chose Cyril of Salonika to carry out this task. For the purposes of his journey and to alleviate the conversion of the Slavs, Cyril is said to have composed the Slavonic alphabet, which is now, in the absence of any reason for doubting his authorship of it, called after his name. This alphabet is for the most part identical with the Greek majuscule alphabet of the ninth century, but was altered, enlarged, and amplified in order to be capable of reproducing the phonetic intricacies of the Slavonic languages which had no counterpart in Greek phonology. According to the legends, the only sources of our information about St. Cyril, he would seem to have composed this alphabet at short notice, specially for his missionary journey, and certainly there is no tradition of the existence of any Slavonic alphabet before this time. But without detracting in the least from St. Cyril's philological capabilities, it is difficult to believe that he could have accomplished such a task in so short a space of time. All the evidence is strongly in favour of his being the author of this alphabet, but the alphabet itself is so scientifically and consistently thought out, and so admirably adapted to suit the complex requirements of Slavonic phonology, that while, on the one hand, it can only have been the work of one man, its elaboration must on the other have taken years. Sound philologist

though St. Cyril was, it is improbable that he distinguished between the Slavonic dialect spoken around Salonika and that of Moravia, whither his emperor sent him, and from the interminable controversies that the origin and history of this alphabet have provoked one fact emerges clearly, namely, that the dialect, for the reproduction of which this alphabet was composed, was not that of the Čech-Slovak inhabitants of Moravia, to convert whom St. Cyril had been called, but belonged to the southern division of the Slavonic languages and was that from which modern Bulgarian is descended. It is for this reason that the Slavonic language of that ecclesiastical literature, which is the earliest form of any Slavonic language that has survived, is now by general consent called Old Bulgarian. With the growth of the Western Church and the invasion of the Asiatic Magyars all trace of the results achieved by Byzantine missionary activity in Moravia, north of the Danube, disappeared, but the conversion of more than half of the Serb race from Byzantium and their secular allegiance to the Eastern Church are symbolized in the permanent adoption and use by them of the Cyrillic alphabet.

This alphabet, which, as already explained, originally only corresponded, and was only designed to correspond, to the sounds of the Bulgarian language, but had been in use from the time of their conversion also amongst all orthodox Serbs, was in the first half of the ninth century amplified and adapted to suit the phonology of his mother-tongue by the great Servian philologist and author, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. In carrying out his scientific reformation of the Cyrillic alphabet, he had to face the embittered opposition of all classes, but especially of ecclesiastical circles, who termed the letter J, very reasonably borrowed by Vuk from the Latin alphabet, 'the Devil's Letter'; but, thanks to his efforts, Servian is the only one of the Indo-European languages besides Sanskrit to enjoy the use of an alphabet that accurately and without auxiliary diacritic signs corresponds to all the sounds of which it is composed.

Partly owing to the bizarre geographical and political conformation of their territory, the degree of national consciousness, as symbolized in the names by which the various divisions of the Serbo-Croatian race designate themselves, each other, and their language, is very unequal, and the nomenclature itself, which largely follows merely the designations of the provinces, confused. Thus the inhabitants of Bosnia call themselves Bosnians, those of Montenegro call themselves Montenegrins, while throughout Bosnia and Dalmatia the term Servian merely implies allegiance to the Eastern Church.

It is psychologically characteristic that the Croatians, and the Roman Catholics of Bosnia, unless they have been undeceived by a philological training, express their separatist tendencies by emphasizing the imaginary difference between Croatian as spoken by them, and Servian as spoken by members of the Orthodox faith. The Servians of Servia, on the other hand, reasonably and justly affirm the essential unity and identity of the Servian language as spoken from Istria to Macedonia, while the Montenegrins call their speech, with characteristic ingenuousness, 'our language.' Again, the half million Mohammedan Serbs of Bosnia who embraced Islam at the Turkish conquest in order to maintain their hold on the good things of this world are known to themselves and to others only as Mussulmans, though they speak nothing but Servian.

The duplex name Serbo-Croatian is of course an artificial and purely literary term ; it is largely used in scientific works, but is quite unknown to any section of the people to which it is applied. Generally speaking, Servian and Orthodox on the one hand, Croatian and Roman Catholic on the other, are synonymous and convertible terms—that is to say, the difference between Servians and Croatians is neither racial nor, in spite of dialectic variations, linguistic. It is confessional and psychological.

The other member of the southern division of the Slavonic languages is that known as Bulgarian. This curious tongue is the descendant of that old Bulgarian

already mentioned, which was the language spoken by the Slavs, who already by the middle of the seventh century had occupied the eastern half of the Balkan peninsula, that is to say, all Moesia, Thrace, and Macedonia, except the maritime territory which was then, as it is now, held by the Greeks. How these Slavonic tribes designated themselves, except by the generic name Slovene, is not known. The Bulgars themselves were not Slavs at all, but a wild people, who came from the neighbourhood of Kazan on the Volga, and in the second half of the seventh century, in the course of one of their several invasions of the Balkan peninsula, succeeded in overcoming, more thoroughly than usual, the Slavs settled between the Danube and the Balkan mountains. Like the bee, who pays with her life for the application of her sting, the Bulgars, after inflicting defeat on the Slavs of the Balkans, became extinct as a nationality, absorbed by the people whom they had apparently subdued, and left nothing but their name behind them for remembrance.

It has already been indicated that old Bulgarian, the speech comprehended, transmitted into writing, and thus immortalized by the Byzantine missionaries of the ninth century, is the oldest form of any Slavonic language that has survived. But speech is a fickle and elusive thing, and that spoken by the Bulgarian people soon assumed forms different from those of the language familiar to St. Cyril in the ninth century, standardized in the liturgy and translation of the Scriptures used by all Slav adherents of the Orthodox faith, and preserved in a theological literature of considerable extent. In this respect there is a great contrast between the histories of Bulgarian and Servian as we know them; for although the Cyrillic alphabet, which never exactly corresponded to Servian phonology, was in use in its original form in Servia till the nineteenth century, yet it is fortunately possible to control the changes that have from very early times occurred in Servian and to follow the historical development of that language, owing to the preservation of large quantities of political documents which the Servians used to write

in the current vernacular of the day. Again, though both peoples, Servian and Bulgarian, have been subjected to similar physical and political conditions, have suffered identical historical vicissitudes, and been exposed to the influence of the same neighbours, yet the present condition of the two languages is widely dissimilar. While Servian is in many respects the most antique of the Slavonic languages in use to-day, and has preserved a wealth of old forms and inflections, Bulgarian, saturated with Rumanian and Albanian influences, has reached an advanced stage of analysis comparable with that of our own.

The history of Bulgarian is unfortunately far less continuous than that of Servian, and though the developments and changes that it underwent can be controlled from the ninth up till the fourteenth century, that is till the Ottoman conquest, yet of the language as spoken from that time till the beginning of the nineteenth century scarcely any specimens exist. The ecclesiastical language, crystallized in the liturgy and Scriptures, has remained much as it was in the ninth century; the speech of the people, apart from changes and peculiarities due to the Rumanian and Albanian influences already mentioned, has, like Servian, adopted an immense stock of Turkish words for use in everyday life; while the language of the literary and national revival dating from the second half of the nineteenth century has borrowed its more elaborate vocabulary wholesale from Russian.

Bulgarian orthography is in a state of chaos, because the people cannot decide between the luxury of an historical and the advantage of a scientific alphabet; that of the ninth century is still in use entire and unaltered; but the language has much changed in form and sound since the time of the Byzantine philologist missionaries, and no Vuk Stefanović Karadžić has arisen, as in Servia, to impose reform on the unwilling.

Compared with the intricate geographical and political conditions under which the western and southern divisions of the Slavonic languages labour, and with the many-faceted problems with which they are beset, those of Russian,

which alone constitutes the eastern division, may be described as straightforward and *sans souci*. Russian is the most important of the Slavonic languages and is spoken by 103 million people ; it is usually and most correctly divided into two groups : Great Russian, of which White Russian is a variation, and Little Russian. It is impossible here to consider the separatist motives which have prompted many Little Russian philologists to treat their own dialect as a language independent of and on a level with Great Russian. Without in any way underrating the peculiar and original beauties of Little Russian, it is from the scientific point of view unjustifiable to regard it as anything but a strongly-marked variation of Great Russian. Whether the efforts of the Little Russians of Austrian Galicia succeed in artificially elaborating a different language is another question.

In the ninth century, when their authentic history may be said to have begun, the territory occupied by the Slavonic tribes of the eastern division was of smaller dimensions than that included in the political Russia of to-day. The names of all of these tribes are known, but they are now almost totally obsolete ; one of the few survivals is that of the Kriviči, which is to be seen in the general designation for Russians and Russia in Lettish, Kreewis. That of the Vyatiči survives in the name of the town Vyatka, that of the Volinyani in the name of the province Volinia.

But the homogeneity of all these tribes east of the watershed between the basins of the Dnieper and the Vistula is illustrated by the general application from the earliest times to themselves by themselves and by foreigners of the collective name Rus ; this is in itself merely the name by which the Scandinavian invaders were known, who in the ninth century conquered the Eastern Slavs and laid the foundations of the Empire ; but, like the Bulgarians south of the Danube, they were soon assimilated by the people that had, as the court historians used euphemistically to put it, invited them to come to rule, bequeathing the people over whom they had obtained control only

their name and their customs, together with the designations of a few articles of civilization, to whose use they had introduced their new subjects.

The territory held in the ninth century by these Slavonic tribes of the eastern division, who came collectively to be called Russians, included the whole of the basin of the Dnieper and the upper reaches of the Volga, the Vólhov, and the Western Dviná. It is noticeable that, while at no point maritime, yet this territory included the waterways which in the Middle Ages were the principal arteries of communication between the Baltic and the Black Sea, between Scandinavia and Byzantium. Situated on this valuable economic and strategic thoroughfare were Kiev, Smolensk, and Novgorod, the centres of early Russian political and commercial life. The northward and eastward current of colonization that had already accounted for the foundation of Novgorod, the 'New Town', received impetus when the mediaeval Tatar invasions in the south-east and the encroachments of Lithuania on the west displaced the political centre from Kiev to Moscow, and occasioned its concentration there. This current has continued without intermission eastward and northward, and latterly to the south, till the extent of the empire, and of the geographical limits within which the Russian language is spoken, have reached their present extent.

The expansion to the east and north has always been at the cost of Finnish tribes, which accounts for the numerous islands of Finnish nationality still existing in Great Russia, but the influence of the Finnish languages on Russian has been absolutely minimal. That also of the Tatar languages, spoken by the migratory hordes, who for so long held Russia in subjection, and still pullulate in the south-eastern part of the country, has been infinitesimal and is often grossly exaggerated; it is confined to a few names of objects introduced from Asia, and to the more numerous category of family names, the result of intermarriage with the Tatars.

The continued presence on the one hand of these Finnish and Tatar racial remnants, together with the official

predominance of the Russian language throughout the Empire on the other, complicate the appearance of any linguistic map; Great Russian is to-day the language of 65 millions in Russia and Siberia, and is spoken by over 99 per cent. of the population in the seven central governments; in the government of Moscow the proportion of Great Russians to other nationalities is 97 per cent., and in that of Petersburg 81 per cent.

White Russian is spoken by nearly seven millions in four of the western governments, which roughly include the basin of the Upper Dnieper; Little Russian by thirty-seven millions distributed over the whole of Southern and South-West Russia, with Kiev as their centre, and by four millions in Austrian Galicia, who are sometimes termed Ruthenians, from the Polish name for that part of the country, Red Russia.

It is noticeable that while the Russian nationality and language have expanded to the north and east and south, its western boundary conterminous with those of the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Letts, and the Finnish Esthonians is almost identical with that existing in the ninth century.

The differentiation of Russian into three groups, Great Russian, White Russian, and Little Russian, has occurred within historical times; and these designations themselves, of purely literary origin, and even now seldom used popularly, do not date back further than the fourteenth century, and would seem to have come into use when Western Russia formed a part of Lithuania and Poland. In the colloquial language of the people, the only name by which the Great Russians call the Little Russians is *Hohlí*, while the Little Russians call the Great Russians *Kacapi*—both names originate in the peculiarities of coiffure characteristic of the two peoples, which seem to have inspired mutual derision. *Hohlí* means 'tufts', and *Kacapi* probably means 'goat-beards'.

Like Bulgaria and Servia, Russia received Christianity from Byzantium, and like them has shared all the cultural profits and losses connoted by this fact. Amongst these

were the Old Bulgarian liturgy and the translations of the Scriptures, which were accepted simultaneously with conversion in the ninth century, and have held their own ever since. While enriching the country of its adoption with an immense vocabulary, the introduction of Old Bulgarian into Russia as the language of church and state has had a baneful effect on the history of the Russian language. For when once Old Bulgarian had secured the reputation for being the only language suitable for transmission to paper, it became an incubus of which it was almost impossible to get rid, and nothing was composed or transcribed purely in the vernacular till the end of the eighteenth century.

Together with the language of the Orthodox Church in use amongst the Slavs of the Balkan Peninsula around Byzantium, namely old Bulgarian, Russia accepted the Cyrillic alphabet in which that language was written. Like England, Russia still revels in an historical orthography. This orthography of the Russians, like our own, far from corresponds to the sounds of the language it is intended to represent, but will apparently continue, like that of the English, to be the source of consternation to others, but the cause of satisfaction to themselves.

The hour unfortunately forbids even a glance at the attractions of Russian literature ; it has been the object rather to outline the fortunes of the Slavonic languages as a whole, than to depict the merits of any one of them in particular. To any one who doubts those of Russian, the greatest of these languages, it is only possible to repeat the words of Turgenev, written twenty-eight years ago, yet as big with meaning to-day as they were then :

‘ In the days of doubt, when my thoughts are heavily laden, thinking of the fate of my country, thou art alone my help and my support, O thou my language, grandiose and strong, untrammelled and unspoilt. Were it not for thee, how should I not fall into despair, at the sight of all that is being done at home ? Yet I cannot believe, but that it is to a great people that such a language has been given.’

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