

Prussia had gone to war (1866) over the Duchies, among other questions, and Austria had been beaten by her rival. The reason which Austria and Prussia had given for attacking Denmark was that they regarded the Duke of Augustenborg as the lawful heir to the Duchies. Austria and the smaller States of the German Confederation had honestly supported the Augustenborg claim. For Bismarck, who already controlled Prussian policy, this claim was only a stalking-horse. It was reduced to a dead letter by the decision at which the Prussian law-officers arrived in 1865. The question which Bismarck submitted to them was this: Who was the rightful heir to the Duchies after the death (1863) of Frederick VII. the last Danish king of the House of Oldenburg? The two claimants were Christian IX. who had succeeded Frederick on the Danish throne, and the Duke of Augustenborg. The lawyers decided in favour of Christian IX. But, by the Treaty of Vienna, he had ceded all his rights in the Duchies to Austria and Prussia. Hence, in 1865, these two Powers practically partitioned the Duchies. After the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 they were entirely annexed by Prussia.

Thus the Holsteiners and the Germans of South Sleswick saw their dream of independence annihilated; and the Danish element in Sleswick was handed over to the tender mercies of Prussian bureaucracy and militarism. At the date of the Treaty of Vienna the Duchy of Sleswick possessed a population of about 400,000 souls, distributed as follows: some 190,000 in North Sleswick, 150,000 in South Sleswick, 60,000 in the central district. A census taken in 1855 had shown that of this population there were 190,000 who spoke German only, 150,000 who spoke Danish only, while the remainder were bilingual. But then, as now, the