

THE SATURDAY READER.

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TRANSLATED FOR THE "SATURDAY READER" FROM
THE FRENCH OF PAUL FEVAL.

BACK NUMBERS AND BOUND VOLUMES.

THE Publishers have to apologise to those of their subscribers who have ordered back numbers of the *Reader*, for not supplying them more promptly. The demand for back numbers and bound volumes, has been so unexpectedly large, that the printing and binding arrangements have been found totally inadequate. Every effort is being made to get orders executed promptly—both as regards bound volumes and back numbers—and subscribers may rest assured that no unnecessary delay will be allowed to take place.

"LIST OF NEW BOOKS."

For the information of these of our subscribers who object to having the list of books, which appear under the above heading, inserted in each number of the *Reader*, the publishers desire to say that their contract to publish it will expire in a few weeks—at the end of the present volume—when it will be discontinued altogether, and the space devoted to literary matter.

THE WAR—WHO IS TO BLAME ?

THE political earthquake of 1848, which shook the monarchy of Louis Philippe to pieces, extended also to Germany, and levelled with the dust the dynastic idols, which the treaties of 1815, and the plotting of the crafty and cold-blooded Metternich had set up for the perpetual worship of the Teutonic and other continental peoples. The democratic movement was irresistible—the King of Prussia, the Emperor of Austria, and lesser German potentates, yielded to its might. Freedom of the press was guaranteed, new constitutions were promulgated, and it seemed to the theoretical politicians of Germany that their country had entered upon a new era of unity, liberty and national prosperity. But king and kaiser and petty potentate broke faith, and the golden dreams of the German liberals melted away at the sight of armed hosts of their own countrymen, and at the sound of growling menaces which were uttered by the bear of St. Petersburg.

When the German revolution was at the flood-tide of success, the passion for national unity became universal. The duchies of Schleswig-Holstein contained a considerable portion of inhabitants of German descent; a great number, however, were Slavonians or Celts, and for two hundred years the duchies had formed a portion of the Danish dominions. The revolutions at Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, produced the utmost

excitement in the duchies, and the people, chiefly those of German descent, clamoured loudly for a union with the fatherland. This movement for annexation was warmly seconded by agents from the Prussian capital, and by the principal German patriots, who promised the duchies the support of the whole Germanic confederation in the assertion of their rights. The excitement in the two provinces was intensified by the arrival of summonses from the Vor-Parliament at Frankfort, which, treating the two duchies as already members of the confederacy, commissioned them to send deputies to the approaching General Diet.

Our friends of the SATURDAY READER will doubtless wish to see the historical bearings of this be-muddled Schleswig-Holstein question; and we shall be as brief and explicit as possible.

From an early period in European history, the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, though not an integral portion of the kingdom of Denmark, belonged, nevertheless, to the Danish crown. But the right of the crown of Denmark to those duchies was sold in the year 1326, when King Waldemar, the Danish monarch, gave to Count Gerhard de Holstein, as an hereditary fief, the duchy of Schleswig, or south *Holstein* Jutland—on the condition, however, that it should never be united with the kingdom of Denmark. In consequence of this condition, the states of Schleswig-Holstein claimed, subsequently, the right to choose their own dukes. This was granted on the 6th of March, 1540, by Christian I., King of Denmark, who acknowledged the right of the two duchies to select their own duke from any son of his family they chose. The right was not exercised till 1588, and afterwards fell into abeyance. It is unnecessary to enter into a history of the family squabbles and territorial complications which afterwards took place; suffice it to say, that, with the consent of the European powers, the King of Denmark, in 1773, became vested with the entire right to the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, which continued to form part of the Danish dominions up till 1848.

In 1848, five of the chief leaders of the agitation in the two duchies demanded of the King of Denmark a formal recognition of their independence, so that they might form part of the German confederation. The monarch replied, he looked with no disfavour on a closer connection between Holstein and the confederacy, of which its inhabitants formed a part; but in that event, it must be separated from Schleswig, which had never been a portion of the confederation. The people of Schleswig took sides with the King of Denmark, and were unanimous against being absorbed in the confederation.

On the 24th of March, Prince Frederick of Voo, a younger brother of the Duke of Angustenburg, raised the banner of revolt in Kiel, in Holstein. On the 4th of April, the first meeting of the insurgent estates was held at Rendsburg, on the river Eider; and a motion was passed for annexing both duchies to the Germanic confederation. The German powers eagerly embraced their opportunity of conquest. Prussia, from her geographical proximity, was first in the field; and, on the 6th of April, a body of her troops crossed the Holstein frontier, and joined the insurgents. The German Diet acknowledged the provisional government of the duchies, and ordered troops from Hanover, Mecklenburg, and Oldenburg, to assist the Prussians and insurgents.

The King of Denmark protested against the act of the confederacy, and war immediately followed. The contest was fearfully disproportionate. But the spirit of the sons of the old sea-kings was up; the untamed Raven of the

North scented, as in the days of yore, the battle-banquet afar off, and fearless as to his fate, answered the scream of the German eagles with a defiance prouder and more terrible than their own.

The Danish regular troops entered Schleswig on the 7th of April, completely routed the insurgent troops, 4000 in number, supported by 6000 regular soldiers of the confederation. On the same day the Danish fleet destroyed the batteries which the enemy had erected near Kiel. A few days after, the Danish troops hurled the Germans over the Eider. A howl of indignation rose throughout Germany, and 40,000 soldiers were thrown upon Denmark, who could only bring 12,000 regular troops to oppose them. The Prussian troops, owing to their numbers, had the advantage on land, though the Danes opposed them, inch by inch, with the utmost desperation. On their own element, the Danes swept all before them. The Prussian fleet was chased from the ocean, their harbours blockaded, and their foreign trade nearly destroyed. At length Sweden interfered, and Russia was also preparing to side with Denmark, when a conference was opened in London, and the Prussian forces were withdrawn from Jutland, which was avowedly beyond the limits of the Germanic confederation. But before their withdrawal, the Danish troops, in a bloody battle, had defeated the Prussians, and driven them back to Gravenstein. To revenge this defeat, the Prussian and Hanoverian troops—even while negotiations were pending—made a combined attack on the Danish forces at Duppeln. There was a desperate combat of two days; both parties retained nearly the same positions. An armistice of seven months followed, the terms of which were highly favourable to the German confederacy.

The Prussians violated the armistice by advancing troops close to Jutland, the last refuge of Denmark on the continent. On the 3rd of April, 1849, the Danes and Prussians recommenced hostilities, and the former had a slight advantage. On the 6th of July, the Danes made an onslaught on the Germans, 18,000 strong, then besieging Frederica. The besiegers were totally defeated, and lost 96 officers, 3,250 men killed and wounded, and all their siege artillery and stores; the Germans soon after retreated from nearly the whole of Jutland. A treaty soon followed, and gave satisfaction to all parties; and peace was signed on the 2nd of July, 1850, between the King of Denmark on one side, and the King of Prussia and the Germanic confederation on the other. But Prussia, smarting under the defeat of Frederica, secretly stirred up the disaffected in the duchies. Things came to a crisis on July 25th, when the battle of Idstedt was fought. The insurgent army was 32,000 strong; its commander was General Wilton, a Prussian, and half its officers of German origin. The Danes numbered 28,000. The battle was bloody—the loss on both sides being about 8,000, or about an eighth of the troops engaged. The insurgents were totally defeated, and abandoned the whole territory of Schleswig. The final pacification of the duchies was effected by the Olmütz conference. The King of Denmark made a noble use of his victory, for of those who fell into his hands, not one suffered death; the severest punishment was banishment for a temporary number of years.

It will be seen that Prussia has always been foremost in attacking the duchies, and this because she desires, by further territorial aggrandizement, to counterbalance the influence of Austria in the German diet, with the ultimate view of assuming the leadership. Both Prussia and Austria are robbers of other nations, and their mutual action in the late Danish war was