

*David Bruce*

THE  
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN QUESTION  
AND ITS PLACE IN HISTORY

BY  
THE RIGHT HON. PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER

AND

THE DANISH VIEW OF THE  
SLESVIG-HOLSTEIN QUESTION

BY  
DR. A. D. JÖRGENSEN  
*The late Historian and Keeper of the State Archives of Denmark.*

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Reprinted from THE NINETEENTH CENTURY of May and of December 1897.

With a PREFACE by K. LINDHOLM—November 1915.

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## PREFACE

JUDGING from references which have appeared recently in print, it would appear that such limited knowledge about 1864 events as exists in England and elsewhere to a great extent remains incorrect—which is not to be wondered at—seeing that it is generally based on information ‘made in Germany,’ particularly at Kiel, the quarter most inimical to Denmark; and as the true facts about this period should not remain unknown, but be fully known and appreciated by all who take an intelligent interest in the history of the present days, the Editor of the *Nineteenth Century* has been asked and courteously and obligingly permitted the reprint of the 1897 articles contained in this pamphlet.

These articles side by side speak for themselves. The one from German sources appeared in May 1897—for what reason the Germans know best—and could not remain unanswered, and therefore was replied to by a well-known Danish historian in December 1897.

Prussia and France, like other Powers, had signed agreements concerning the integrity of Denmark and the neutrality of Belgium. Yet when Prussia and Austria were going to rob Denmark of Slesvig and Holstein Napoleon the Third was willing to agree to this provided he could annex Belgium. With this instance, among many, before them, is it to be wondered at that there are not a few among the people of the small nations who are somewhat weary of the unceasing cry about the ‘scrap of paper.’

The orthodox conception hitherto was that for a fight attackers as well as defenders were indispensably required. But all now claim to be defenders ‘of their highest ideals and holiest rights.’ This includes the Germans and Austrians in spite of their established habit of hunting in couples and robbing weak peoples.

This universal ‘defending etc.’ plea appears to many neutrals more bewildering than convincing.

Bismarck, who if he did commit a skilful and brutal robbery at least did so without nauseating cant and hypocrisy, was however at one time hesitating, fearing protest and intervention from the Great Powers.

He sent a squadron of Hussars across the frontier. It was not fired on by the Danish outposts, who had orders not to commence hostilities. The matter was duly reported in newspapers. Bismarck then quietly waited results. Had there been an outcry and strong protests he might have abandoned the project or any way modified his plans. The captain of Hussars might then have been recalled, officially reprimanded and semi-officially been given a hint of speedy promotion. But the Powers did not protest and lost their chance, and Denmark the Duchies.

This manœuvre Bismarck is said to have termed ‘tickling Europe under the nose with a squadron of Hussars.’

I have been told by many Danish officers who served in this hopeless war (hopeless because the Danish Army was weak compared with the German-Austrian strength and was besides armed with muzzle-loading smooth-bore guns, while the Germans, for the first time, used breech-loading rifles) that the first question that frequently greeted the relief which in the dusk had crawled over the shell-swept snow and slush-covered ploughfields to the Danish trenches was ‘What news about

France and England?' No news came, and so after weary months of struggle the end came, and Denmark, stunned and crushed, was left amputated in a ditch to recover or die.

The Powers, who acted neither honourably nor wisely—the same thing if people only had knowledge to see it—have since had cause bitterly to regret their passivity. Some may look on what the Great Powers since have suffered in the light of retribution. As the men in the streets at the time—the liberty-loving Frenchman who hates oppression, the fair-minded Briton and the kindly Russian—did not appear to like this robbery and would, had they more fully understood it, have protested, it seems very hard and hardly just that they and their descendants should have borne the sufferings while those directly responsible—the so-called diplomats—suffered little if at all.

1864 shows what could quite well have been realised in 1914, namely, that a war in Europe, however small, is not merely somebody's but everybody's concern.

Had the Great Powers in 1863 told Germany and Austria that their planned military execution against Denmark could not take place, and the peace of Europe be broken, before a Commission—say American—had investigated the claims of both sides, then there would have been no war. And an American Commission could hardly have failed to arrive at a conclusion resembling very closely the results of the investigations of the Danish Commission in 1846, and the Prussian Crown Syndicate's twenty years later, which gave utterance to mainly the same opinion.

The titanic war raging now has called forth some of the different nations' most noble qualities. It is sincerely to be hoped that this long struggle will not also bring forth some of their worst, as this would seriously interfere with and impede the arrangements ultimately to be made for a lasting peace.

Those who after the war will be entrusted with the great task of establishing peace will, it is hoped, fully understand that they have to work for humanity as a whole, and that their task is elevated high above party and even national politics, which must fade into comparative insignificance in comparison with the claims of the whole human race.

The Germans and Austrians are part—and an important one—of humanity, and do not solely consist of a selfish, brutal, over-bearing and tactless Prussian pan-German bureaucracy, but also of many kindly, good, and misled people.

All those who will work for peace when the time comes must realise that as they sow so will they reap. If peace is not based on a foundation of truth, firm justice, unselfishness and moderation, the result will be future strife and sufferings.

1864 shows that it is easy to see injustice done and difficult to redress it. Also that while a fairly widespread and correct acquaintance in schools with the ancient history of wars between Rome and Carthage may be in place, yet would some true knowledge and appreciation of recent historical events nearer at home be not amiss.

Knowledge of injustice in the past and its consequences may help to the avoidance of injustice in the future. Hence the republication of the following articles, of which the net proceeds of sale will go to the Red Cross societies of the Allies.

November 1915.

K. LINDBOLM.

# THE SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN QUESTION AND ITS PLACE IN HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

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[The subjoined article has been submitted to and approved by the highest possible authority upon the facts, who vouches for the correctness of this version of them.—Ed. NINETEENTH CENTURY.]

THE Schleswig-Holstein question, after being for many years the bugbear of newspaper writers and newspaper readers, has now entered into a new phase. It has become an important chapter in the history of Europe, which can never be neglected by any historian, for there can be no doubt that without the initiative taken by Duke Frederick and the people of Schleswig-Holstein the great events of the second half of our century, the war between Prussia and Austria, and the subsequent war between Germany and France, would never have taken place, at all events not under the very peculiar circumstances in which they actually took place. The name of *Zündhölzchen*, lucifer match, given at the time to Schleswig-Holstein, has proved very true, though the conflagration which it caused has been far greater than could have been foreseen at the time. A well-known English statesman, of keener foresight than Lord Palmerston, said in 1878, 'If Germany were to awake, let us take care that it does not find so splendid a horse ready to ride as the Holstein grievance.'

The facts which constituted that grievance, which at one time seemed hopelessly involved, are now as clear as daylight. The most recent book on the subject, *Schleswig-Holsteins Befreiung*, by Jansen and Samwer, 1897, leaves nothing to be desired as to clearness and completeness. It is entirely founded on authentic documents, many of them now published for the first time. It furnishes us with some new and startling information, as may be seen from a mere glance at the table of contents. We find letters signed by King William of Prussia, afterwards German Emperor, by his son the Crown Prince, afterwards Emperor Frederick, by the Duke Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein, and by some of the leading statesmen of the time. Some of these documents admit, no doubt, of different interpretations, nor is it likely that the controversy so long carried on by eminent diplomatists will cease now that the whole question has entered into the more serene atmosphere of historical research. Historians continue to differ about the real causes of the War of the Spanish Succession, or of the Seven Years' War, and it is not likely that a Danish

<sup>1</sup> *Schleswig-Holsteins Befreiung*. Herausgegeben aus dem Nachlass des Professors Karl Jansen und ergänzt von Karl Samwer (Wiesbaden, 1897).

historian will ever lie down by the side of a German historian of the Schleswig-Holstein war, like the lamb by the side of the lion. The Schleswig-Holstein question is indeed one which seems expressly made for the exercise of diplomatic ingenuity, and it is but natural that it should have become a stock question in the examinations of candidates for the diplomatic service. What was supposed to be, or at all events represented to be, an insoluble tangle, is now expected to be handled and disentangled quite freely by every young aspirant to diplomatic employment, and many of them seem to acquit themselves very creditably in explaining the origin and all the bearings of the once famous Schleswig-Holstein question, and laying bare the different interests involved in it.

These conflicting interests were no doubt numerous, yet no more so than in many a lawsuit about a contested inheritance which any experienced solicitor would have to get up in a very short time. The chief parties concerned in the conflict were Denmark, the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, of which Holstein belonged to the German Confederation, the German Confederation itself, and more particularly its principal member and afterwards its only survivor, Prussia, nay as a distant claimant, even though never very serious, Russia, and as one of the signatories of the Treaty of London (May 8, 1852) England also.

This Treaty of London gives in fact the key to the whole question. It seemed a very simple and wise expedient for removing all complications which were likely to arise between Denmark and Germany, but it created far more difficulties than it removed. It was meant to remove all dangers that threatened the integrity of the kingdom of Denmark. But what was the meaning of this diplomatic phrase?

The kingdom of Denmark in its integrity comprised the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, because in 1460 Count Christian of Oldenburg, who had been raised to the throne of Denmark, was chosen by the Estates of Schleswig and Holstein to be their Duke—by which act Denmark came into direct personal union with the Duchies; these latter were never to be separated from one another. In 1660, Frederick the Third of Denmark upset, with the help of the burghers and by force, the constitution of his country. Instead of the *right of Election* continuing as heretofore, Denmark became a *Hereditary Kingdom*, and it was left to the King to form a constitution and settle the *Law of Succession*. In consequence of this the *Royal Edict* (the *Lex Regia*) of the 15th of November 1665 was published by Frederick the Third of Denmark. It secured to the descendants of that King (*not* of those of the other branches of the House of Oldenburg) the succession in Denmark and Norway. If the *male* descendants of Frederick the Third became extinct, then

the *female* descendants of this King were called upon to succeed in *Denmark and Norway*; whilst in *Schleswig-Holstein* the *rights* of succession remained to the *male* descendants of Christian the First. As all female descendants were thus excluded from the ducal throne of Schleswig-Holstein, it was evident that after the death of King Frederick the Seventh, who had no sons, the two Duchies would inevitably be lost to Denmark and fall to the nearest male agnate—that is, to the Duke Christian August of Schleswig-Holstein Augustenburg—and thus become, under a German prince, part and parcel of the German Confederation. Danish statesmen deemed it expedient to retain the Duchies for Denmark—above all to separate Schleswig from Holstein, and incorporate it into the kingdom—although the Act of Union of 1460, and documents such as the ‘Letters of Freedom’ of Kiel and Ripen, pronounced any such step to be the greatest injustice towards the Duchies and the princely House of Augustenburg. Even should these old documents be regarded in the nineteenth century as mere mediæval curiosities, still the Salic Law has hitherto been recognised in all civilised states—for instance, in England. In Hanover the Salic Law prevailed; in England it did not. What would the world have said if after the death of William the Fourth the English Parliament had declared that for the sake of preserving the integrity of the United Kingdom it was necessary that Hanover should for ever remain united with England? Such an act would have constituted a breach of the law, a defiance of the German Confederation of which Hanover, like Holstein—for Schleswig did not form a part of the German Confederation—was a member, and spoliation of the Duke of Cumberland as the legitimate successor to the throne of Hanover. Exactly the same applies to the act contemplated by the King of Denmark in 1848, and no amount of special pleading has ever been able to obscure these simple outlines of the so-called Schleswig-Holstein question. The claims of the other Oldenburg line were second only to those of the Schleswig-Holstein Augustenburg line, and Russia was hardly in earnest in urging them at a later time in the development of the actual crisis. Besides, the Oldenburg claimant put forward by Russia would never have accepted the two Duchies except as a German sovereign. Schleswig did not belong to the German Confederation.

Whatever Bismarck’s views and the views of the Prussian Government may have been in later times, at that early stage the King of Prussia, King Frederick William the Fourth, declared in the clearest words, in a letter addressed to the Duke Christian August of Schleswig-Holstein Augustenburg, that he recognised the two Duchies as independent and closely united principalities, and as the rightful inheritance of the male line. Nothing has

ever shaken that royal utterance. Unfortunately Prussia in 1848 was not prepared to step in and support the claims of the Duke Christian August and of the inhabitants of the Elbe Duchies. These defended the rights of their country by force of arms—at first supported by Prussia—but were finally subjugated by Denmark with the help of Austria and Prussia. The two Duchies were then considered, or at all events were treated, as conquered territory. The story of the tyrannical government of the half-annexed German provinces during the following years has been so often and so fully told that it need not be repeated here. It showed utter blindness on the part of the party then in power at Copenhagen, but it does not touch the vital points of the question, for neither the armed resistance of the Schleswig-Holsteiners, nor what the Danes called the felony of the Duke of Augustenburg, who had joined it, would affect the rights of the Duchies and their House. This is the point that must always be kept in view, though later events have obscured it to a certain degree, and have in the end changed what was originally a pure question of right into a question of might.

Denmark could be under no misapprehension as to the right of Germany, and therefore of the male branch of the Ducal family, having always been reserved; and it was for that very reason that its leading statesmen tried by any means at their disposal to persuade the Great Powers of Europe to come to their aid by recognising the so-called integrity of the Danish monarchy as essential to the peace of Europe. Russia, France, Sweden, and Denmark signed the First London Protocol on the 2nd of June 1850, and England was persuaded by what turned out to be false representations to accept the same on the 4th of July. Whatever right these Powers had to proclaim the principle of the integrity of the Danish monarchy, they could have no right to deprive the Ducal line of its lawful inheritance, or the German Confederation of its protectorate over Holstein. Holstein only was part of the German Confederation, and this latter could only interfere in Schleswig in such matters as touched the rights of Holstein. The recognition of the integrity of the Danish monarchy, however well that name sounded at the time, was therefore neither more nor less than an act of violence, and the secret history of it is well known by this time. Though even Prussia was induced to sign the Treaty of London, in April 1852, the German Confederation never did, and Bunsen, who was then Prussian Minister in London, though he was ordered to sign the document in the name of the King of Prussia, declared with prophetic insight that the first cannon-shot fired in Europe would tear that iniquitous document to tatters. Even the Emperor Napoleon called it a mere *œuvre impuissante*.<sup>2</sup> But in following the history of the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 697.

Schleswig-Holstein question this phase does not concern us much, for even the Great Powers cannot make an unlawful act lawful. As to England, it was induced to sign the protocol by misrepresentation—that is, by being assured that the representative of the Augustenburg line, Duke Christian August, had sold his right of succession for a sum of 337,500*l.*, the fact being, as we know now, that he had been forced to sell his landed property in Denmark, which was valued at 619,794*l.*, for about half its value; and that, though he himself had promised to remain inactive towards Denmark, he had never given such a promise, nor could he have done so, for his children or for his brother. Least of all could he have sold the rights of the German Confederation and of the Duchies. How strongly even Bismarck held that view is shown by some notes taken by Duke Frederick of a conversation with Bismarck as late as the 18th of November 1863, when the Prussian statesman, afterwards so hostile to the Augustenburg family, declared that the Duke was entirely in his right, and that he, Bismarck, would have acted exactly like him. At that time he only regretted that Prussia had ever signed the London Protocol, and he held that, having signed it, it was bound by it, and could not take any active steps against Denmark, even though Denmark had broken some of its promises.

Everybody knew that the decisive moment would come when the King of Denmark, Frederick the Seventh, should die. After the death of Frederick William the Fourth of Prussia in the beginning of 1861, and even during the last years of his reign, when his brother the Prince of Prussia governed in his name, the tone of Germany had become much more decided, and the Danish Government could hardly flatter itself that the German Confederation would quietly look on while one of its members, if only the Duchy of Holstein, was taken from it by an act of violence. In England the feeling was very strong at the time, and in Parliament a very influential voice was raised in favour of sending a few thousand red-coats into the Duchies to frighten away the army of Germany. Another element came in. The most charming and justly popular Princess of Wales was the daughter of the German prince who had been chosen by the Great Powers as King of Denmark, not so much on account of his being a Prince of Schleswig-Holstein Glücksburg, as on account of his being the husband of a German princess who, after the resignation of several relations, was in the direct line of succession to the throne of Denmark.

In any other country this sentiment of chivalry might possibly have carried the whole nation into a war with its oldest ally; in England the memory of Waterloo was not yet quite extinct, and some, at all events, of her statesmen had not allowed themselves to be blinded as to the real state of the case, the rights of the

German Confederation as the protector of every one of its members, and the rights of Holstein, and indirectly of Schleswig, as independent principalities, united to Denmark by a personal union only, which must cease with the extinction of the male line. England has been much blamed by Danish and other publicists for having left Denmark in the lurch; but it should never be forgotten that, though England in the London Treaty had recognised the integrity of Denmark as a European necessity, it had never promised any material aid to the old or to the new king, and could not be expected to rush in where the other signatories of the London Protocol dreaded to go. Hence what happened afterwards when the new King of Denmark maintained the Danish claims on Schleswig and part of Holstein was exactly what might have been foreseen in spite of the troubled state of the political atmosphere of Europe. The Germanic Confederation did not abdicate its rights or its duties in obedience to the wishes of the Great Powers, or even of some of its own members, but ordered a military execution against Denmark. When that military execution was entrusted in the end to Austria and Prussia, the result could hardly be doubtful. The brave Danish army after a valiant resistance was defeated, and Austria and Prussia then occupied the two Albingian principalities in the name of the German Confederation.

What followed afterwards, however important in its consequences, is of no interest to us in studying the question of the rights of Denmark and Germany in their contest over the principalities of Schleswig and Holstein. The German Confederation as such never doubted the rights of the Augustenburg line. Prussia, however, soon began to take a new view. It saw that there was only one remedy for the weakness of Germany as a European Power, only one way of preventing the repetition of a Treaty of London, in which Germany, in reality the strongest Power in Europe, had been openly treated as a *quantité négligeable*, namely a real unification of Germany with the exclusion of Austria, and under the hegemony of Prussia. Prussia staked her very existence on the realisation of this ideal, and naturally, as in a struggle for life or death, disregarded all obstacles that stood in her way. Bismarck, with his enormous personal influence on the King, persuaded him to disregard the rights of the Augustenburg line, because he considered the addition of a new independent principality in the north of Germany, and in possession of the harbour of Kiel, as a source of weakness and possible danger to that United Germany of the future for which he had laboured so long, and for which he was ready to sacrifice everything. Fortune was on his side, he played *Va banque!* and he won. Well might he say *Audaces fortuna juvat*, and well did he say *Inter arma silent leges*, and not only *leges*,

but also *jura*. No one was more fully convinced of the rights of the Ducal line of Augustenburg than he was. We know now from his own letter on what terms he was ready to recognise these rights, and to allow to the Duke Frederick, eldest son of Duke Christian Augustus, an independent sovereignty. But events were marching too fast for carrying out these smaller arrangements, and at a time when kingdoms like Hanover were simply annexed by force of arms, it was not likely that better terms would be granted by victorious Prussia to the small principalities of Schleswig-Holstein and their legitimate Duke.

In the book before us, which has been very carefully compiled, and against which we have but one complaint to make, namely that it contains 800 closely printed pages, the events which followed the execution as ordered by the German Confederation against Denmark, and the occupation as carried out by Prussia and Austria, are fully detailed. Austria and Prussia soon began to quarrel over the administration of the two principalities, Prussia in Schleswig, Austria in Holstein, and when Austria, against the wish of Prussia, actually summoned the Holstein estates to assemble and to settle their constitution under the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein Augustenburg, the die was cast. Prussia, however, had at the time 12,000 men in Schleswig, Austria but 5,200 in Holstein, so that when an outbreak of war between these two Powers seemed imminent, nothing remained but to withdraw the Austrian *corps d'armée* as quickly as possible, and to leave Prussia in military possession of both Duchies. How well Prussia was prepared for war was shown by the events that followed in rapid succession. In June 1866, Austria brought forward a motion in the already expiring Diet of Frankfort to issue a decree of military execution against Prussia. But on the day after this motion was accepted, on the 15th of June 1866, Prussia declared war against Hanover, Electoral Hesse, and Saxony, conquered them, and after having thus secured its safety in the rear marched boldly into Bohemia, and in seven weeks broke the whole power of Austria, while, by an agreement with Bismarck, Italy declared war at the same time against Austria.

When we consider that the battle of Sadowa, which left Prussia the sole master in Germany, had its natural sequence in the battle of Sedan, which left the French Emperor prostrate before the armies of Germany, we shall be better able to understand the deep historical importance of the long ignored and long ridiculed Schleswig-Holstein question. No one who wishes to understand the history of Germany, and afterwards of the whole of Europe from the year 1848, can dispense with a careful study of that question, which, as we hope to have shown, is by no means so intricate as it has been represented. With all respect for our diplomatists we cannot help feeling that any English

solicitor would, after a very few days, have been able to place the true aspect of that question in the clearest light before any English jury at the very time when the greatest English statesmen and the greatest English newspapers went on declaring day after day that it was a question far beyond the reach of any ordinary understanding. No lawyer would be forgiven for declaring his incompetence to form an opinion on the facts placed before him, and on the rights and grievances of the different claimants of the throne of Schleswig-Holstein after the death of Frederick the Seventh of Denmark.

It is this purely personal question which is evidently very near to the hearts of the two authors of the book, *Schleswig-Holsteins Befreiung*, and it is for that very reason that this publication will always retain its historical value. Though it is free from the spirit of mere partisanship, its authors do not wish to conceal their strong feelings of sympathy and admiration for the chief sufferer in the liberation of Schleswig-Holstein, namely the Duke Frederick, whose beautiful portrait adorns their volume.

There are historians who look upon the great events which we have witnessed in our time as the inevitable result of forces beyond the control of individuals. To them all political convulsions such as the violent collision between Prussia and Austria, and the subsequent intervening struggle between Germany and France, are like earthquakes long foreseen by seismological politicians, and impossible to be retarded, accelerated, or warded off by any personal efforts. They would scout the idea that if Lord Palmerston's heart had been less of a *cœur léger*, or if he had not felt himself hampered by the Don Pacifico affair, or if the Protocol of London had not been signed by him, the conflict between Denmark and Germany would not have reached its acute stage, and the battles of Sadowa and Sedan would never have been fought. Everything in history, as in nature, takes place, according to them, in obedience to laws which allow of no modification by the hand of man. Yet they should not forget that even an avalanche is sometimes set rolling by the flight of birds, and that a lucifer match carelessly trodden on by a sentinel may cause the explosion of a powder magazine. It may be quite true that when a great avalanche is once set in motion, overwhelming whole forests and destroying village after village, we cannot expect that one single tree or one single chalet should be able to arrest its course. But the true historian, however much he may feel inclined to see in history, as in nature, a process of evolution, cannot and ought not to forget the individuals who act or who suffer in the birth and death struggles of humanity. If he did, he would deprive history of all its human interest, of its dramatic character, and its moral lessons. Could we really under-

stand the events of the second half of our century without a study of such personal characters as Queen Victoria, the Emperor Napoleon, the German Emperor, Moltke, Bismarck, and Mr. Gladstone? In one sense every private soldier of the German army who left house, home, and family, to die at St. Privat may be said to have decided the fate of Germany and of Europe. If the German army, as drilled by Moltke, was the horse that won the race, it was Bismarck who was the jockey and knew how to ride it and to make it win.

If, then, in the Schleswig-Holstein struggle also, we want to know its authors, its martyrs, and its heroes, the name of Duke Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein ought never to be forgotten. He was born to a ducal throne in one of the most delightful and prosperous provinces of Germany. He was, if any German prince, convinced of the necessity of a real union of Germany, and of a union, as he thought, under the auspices of Prussia. He, more than any other German prince, was ready to give up any of his princely rights and privileges that might conflict with the requirements of a strong central power wielded by Prussia. Under the most trying circumstances and at a time when many a German patriot hesitated between Austria and Prussia, he never seems to have swerved in his loyalty to Prussia and in his personal devotion to King William the First, afterwards the first German Emperor, to the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess, afterwards the Emperor and Empress Frederick. There is only one voice among those who knew him best as to his noble character and the high principles by which he himself was guided through life. Sybel, the great historian, who knew him well and who seems to have long suspected that Bismarck wished to incorporate the Duchies in Prussia rather than to support their independence under their own Duke, said in the Prussian Chamber :

And who is that Duke of Augustenburg? He is the living expression of the rights and of the inseparability of the Duchies. His name is to a brave German race in the north the bearer of all that makes life worth living, the bearer of freedom and nationality. He is strong in his very weakness, because his own people desire him, so that whether an appeal were made to the estates or to universal suffrage in Schleswig-Holstein, his title would be unanimously proclaimed between Eider and Königsau. . . . So long as this state of things continues he will be invincible, for the freedom of a united and determined people is invincible. I know that the Schleswig-Holstein people reckon among their rights—and these rights the Duke has declared that he will respect—as the first and most precious right the claim of the male line to the succession in the principalities. They do not wish to become Prussian. They wish to remain German, and they will follow Prussia with their warmest and grateful sympathies so long only as Prussia itself moves forward in the road of a truly German policy.

All over Germany the Duke was trusted and loved, and we have the strongest testimony of his numerous friends as to the

straightforward, unselfish, and truly noble character shown by him throughout all his trials. The very names of his friends enable us to judge what kind of man he was. His best friends were the Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia, the unfortunate Emperor Frederick, and his eminent and high-minded wife, the late Prince Consort, the Grand Duke of Baden, and such men as Baron Roggenbach, George von Bunsen, and many others whose names are less known in this country but highly respected in their own. He had no enemies except at Copenhagen and at Berlin. Bismarck knew that the Duke had powerful friends, and that even in his weakness he was a power that had to be reckoned with. What part the young Duke formed in the old statesman's political calculations Bismarck has openly stated himself. He declared in the Prussian Chamber on the 20th of December 1866: 'I have always held to this climax, that personal union with Denmark would be better than the existing state of things; that an independent sovereign would be better than such personal union, and that union with Prussia would be better than an independent sovereign.' The Duke was not strong enough to cope with such an antagonist, but even when after the battle of Sadowa all his chances of succeeding to his rightful throne were gone, he was able to rejoice in the liberation of his Duchies from a foreign yoke. He joined the Bavarian contingent of the German army in the war against France, and assured the German Emperor in a letter of the 28th of July 1870 that in the national war against France all other questions must stand aside, and that every German had but one duty to fulfil, to defend the integrity of Germany against her enemies! No attempt was ever made by the deposed Duke and his family to disturb the peace of Germany by a new assertion of their old rights. The Duke felt that he had done his duty to his country and his family to the very utmost, and that he might retire with honour from an impossible contest.

By a kind of poetical justice, this self-denial on the part of the Schleswig-Holstein family has met with a great reward. Prince Christian, the brother of Duke Frederick, married a daughter of Queen Victoria, the kind-hearted and beloved Princess Helena, and has found a new sphere of usefulness in a country so closely akin to his native land; while his niece, the daughter of Duke Frederick, was actually chosen by the present German Emperor as his consort. So that in future the blood of Schleswig-Holstein, blended with that of Hohenzollern, will run in the veins of the Kings of Prussia and the German Emperors. Let those who like call all this mere accident; to a thoughtful historian it cannot but convey a lesson, even though he may hesitate to put it into words.

F. MAX MÜLLER.

*Villa Floridiana, Naples.*

## THE DANISH VIEW OF THE SLESVIG-HOLSTEIN QUESTION

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[The following reply to Professor Max Müller's article in the May number of this Review is published at the desire of an exalted Personage in this country, interested in the Danish side of the question, who considers that Professor Max Müller's views are incorrect and inconsistent with historic truth.

The author died before he saw the proofs, which have been submitted to and approved of by the same exalted Personage.—ED. Nineteenth Century.]

IN No. 243, May 1897, of this Review Professor Max Müller has written an article on 'The Schleswig-Holstein Question and its place in History.'

Professor Müller admits that a recent book, *Schleswig-Holsteins Befreiung*, by the late Professor Karl Jansen of Kiel and Karl Samwer, has furnished him with the main facts of his article. It seems strange that it should not have occurred to so learned and sagacious a man as Professor Müller that information derived from the University of Kiel—the headquarters of all the seditious writings against Denmark, the very university where the influence of the Augustenburg family always was paramount—ought necessarily to be examined with the utmost care and criticism. Professor Müller's German name and probable German origin do not *a priori* give a sufficient guarantee that he is able to form an unbiassed judgment of the contents of a book written by Denmark's bitterest enemies. It will be the object of the following lines to show that nearly all, and especially *the most important facts* in Denmark's favour have been—no doubt unintentionally—omitted, and that consequently Professor Müller's paper is thoroughly onesided, and cannot rank as historical evidence of events which after the lapse of so many years might quite well be investigated without any personal or political bias.

Professor Müller endeavours to show (1) that the German-Danish War was the *Zündhölzchen* (lucifer match) which was the real cause of subsequent events, viz. the Prusso-Austrian War in 1866, and the Franco-German War in 1870; (2) that the pretensions and rights to the succession in the 'Duchies' (Slesvig and Holstein) clearly devolved on the Duke of Augustenburg; that these rights were acknowledged by the German Confederation and by the King of Prussia, Frederick William the Fourth;

that only higher considerations of State induced Bismarck to thrust aside these rights of the Duke and finally, after the conquest of the Duchies, to incorporate them with Prussia. According to the Right Hon. Professor, Denmark clearly possessed no rights whatever, and consequently the dismemberment of the Danish monarchy was a just and righteous act.

As to (1) the Professor is no doubt right. Prussian interference was evidently a *ballon d'essai* of Bismarck's, intended to ascertain what he, unfettered by the other Powers, might venture to do.

The passivity of the Powers led him on further and further until he, as a condition of peace, had accomplished the surrender of both Duchies to Germany. This passivity of the Powers showed him that he need risk no interference in his endeavours to expel Austria from Germany, nor in his long-prepared war against France.

We do not believe that there lives a sensible English, Russian, or French statesman who does not now bitterly repent that their countries did not, at the time, stop the pretensions and soarings of the German eagle. It is not the dismemberment of the Danish monarchy that weighs in the scale, but the creation of a powerful German fleet—rendered possible by the conquest. Germany now rules the Baltic; Germany's colonial enterprises are dependent on a strong fleet. It is impossible that either Russia or England should be overpleased by this state of things, which might have been prevented—to a certain extent—by a little energy shown in time by Russia and England combined.

While, therefore, Professor Müller is right in pretending that the German-Danish War was at the bottom of the subsequent wars—and of Germany's unification—it does not absolutely follow that no attempt on Prussia's part to expel Austria or to attack France would or could have been made but for that war. That it gave an enormous impulse to what happened after, and greatly facilitated Prussia's enterprises, is certain.

As to (2) it requires a demonstration of some length to show how erroneous Professor Müller's opinions are, and to point out the facts which are of vital importance to the solution of the question of right—facts on which the Professor, strangely enough, hardly has touched.

It is an incredible *naïveté* of the great man of science to represent as a *new discovery*, made by himself or his referee (Professor Karl Jansen of Kiel), that the Slesvig-Holstein question—which in its time occupied the statesmen and publicists of Europe—is simple and uncomplicated as a mathematical formula.

This interpretation is not a *new* discovery ; on the contrary it is *old* ; it has been repeated over and over *ad infinitum*. Unfortunately it has had this one fault : it has never been believed in, nor acknowledged by one single statesman. The idea *that in Slesvig and Holstein the Oldenburg male line alone can reign* was propounded for the first time in 1837, precisely the same year in which Hanover was separated from England, and the man who advocated this idea was the *Duke of Augustenburg* (Christian August), the same man who pretended to be, under certain circumstances, the sole heir to these Duchies. *Before that, nobody had thought of this* ; and even a considerable time *after* nobody wished to adopt this new 'discovery,' because very few persons, or rather nobody, wished a separation from Denmark, *not even the Duke himself*. It is a known fact that this Prince endeavoured to induce the Danish King and the Danish people to change the succession of the kingdom in favour of him and his house. His pretension to the succession was simply put forward to conjure up a fear of the division of the monarchy in case his pretensions should not be adopted. For later, when the national dissension between Danes and Germans had attained a certain height, the Germans adopted this idea of a separate succession, but now with an opposite aim, viz. *to favour the separation*.

It is a curious coincidence that the Duke's startling publication (*Die Erbfolge in Schleswig-Holstein*, 'The succession in Slesvig-Holstein') appeared in the very year in which Hanover was separated from the English Crown. It puts the immense difference of the two cases in a very strong light. It is well known that the union of Hanover and England was the consequence of a single event of a purely dynastic character. It was from the beginning, and continued throughout to be, a purely personal union ; it ceased to exist the moment its condition—common agnatic succession—was no more. It is, to say the least, a hazardous contention to compare it with the connexion of the Duchies to Denmark. This, however, Professor Müller has done.

In the dispute between Germany and Denmark the denomination 'The Duchies' has continually been used and repeated. This has greatly contributed to obscure the question at issue and render a clear solution of it impossible. The two Duchies, Slesvig and Holstein, had each of them its separate history, nationality, and political relations. Denmark has always acknowledged Holstein as belonging to the German Confederation, as originally a German fief. Denmark has never disputed the right of the male line to Holstein, and when the succession was regulated in London *it was a member of the house of Oldenburg (Christian the Ninth) who was elected heir apparent*, and it

was the *Emperor of Russia* who, as chief of the Gottorp House (which formerly reigned in Holstein), now transferred his rights of succession to this agnate (Christian the Ninth).

Notwithstanding his rights, this Prince (Christian the Ninth) did not oppose the occupation of Holstein by troops of the German Confederation, when in 1863 the Confederation in Frankfurt had objected to his legitimacy, and evidently, even had circumstances allowed it later, Denmark would never have attempted an armed occupation of *this* Duchy.

Later, during the negotiations of peace in London, the King offered willingly to give over Holstein to any prince the German Confederation chose to point out.

But as to Slesvig everything is different. Professor Müller himself admits that Slesvig did not belong to the German Confederation, nor had it ever belonged to the German Empire. It was, on the contrary, from the remotest antiquity a part of the Danish realm. Its old name was 'South-Jutland,' and in its southern part the old famous 'Dannevirke' was erected in 810 as a frontier rampart against German invasions.

In course of time, however, Holsteen succeeded in conquering Slesvig from Denmark. In 1460 it had been united to Holstein as a political *corpus* under the rule of the Oldenburg dynasty, and an Act passed in 1579 had established that in Slesvig (as in Holstein) the male line alone had the right of succession. But according to all contemporary evidences, the loss was never forgotten in Denmark; it was a continual source of deepest regret to Denmark that an old Danish country which still continued to be a fief of the Danish Crown should be united to a German country, differing from it in law, language, and inherited customs. The only circumstance alleviating the loss was the fact that the Danish kings were Dukes in both Duchies (in condominium with the Dukes of Gottorp).

When, however, the establishment of sovereign monarchy and of a fixed succession (1660) had strengthened the Danish monarchy, the politics of the realm quite naturally aimed at reconquering for the Crown the old Danish country. *That this endeavour was successful* is a historical fact not to be silenced to death by Max Müller and Karl Jansen. *It succeeded after great sacrifices and efforts as a result of the war which terminated at the peace of Stockholm and Fredriksburg, 1720.* At this peace Sweden agreed that the whole of Slesvig—one half of which had been conquered from Sweden's ally, the Duke of Gottorp—for ever should be incorporated in the Danish Crown. The mediating Powers, England and France, gave a solemn guarantee to this effect. The kingdom of Prussia had already done it before. The Danish King Frederick the Fourth assumed the rule after a solemn act of allegiance by the Slesvig States,

1721. *At the same time the then Duke of Augustenburg, too, gave in his oath of allegiance.* In this oath, delivered in writing, it is expressly stated that the King of Denmark is intent upon uniting the formerly separated parts of the Duchy (Slesvig), 'und Dero Crone als ein altes, injuria temporum, abgerissenes Stück auf ewig wieder incorporiren.'<sup>1</sup> The oath was sworn to the King: 'wie auch Dero königliche Erbsuccessoren, *secundum tenorem legis regiae*': the Danish law of succession of 1665 (*lex regia*), which gave the right of succession to the female line after the extinction of the male.

Thus, undoubtedly, the Duchy of Slesvig was liberated from the political union which hitherto had existed between it and Holstein, and was restored to its ancient connexion with Denmark. In the past century everybody was agreed on this point. It would be easy to cite innumerable *German* authors whose writings bear witness to the truth of this. Every geography, from the greatest scientific works to the textbooks for schools, contain this: '*Denmark* comprising the kingdom proper thus designated and the *Duchy of Slesvig* or *South Jutland*.' Separated from these *under the German Empire*: 'Holstein,' 'Oldenburg,' 'Lauenburg,' or such parts as at any time were connected with the Danish realm as the King's *German* possessions.

Alone, the old ducal family at Gottorp, who had lost its part of Slesvig, protested until the head of this family, Paul the First, had succeeded to the throne of Russia. He came to an agreement with Denmark, in which he, among other things, for ever renounced Slesvig. His renunciation is made in favour of 'Ihro königlich Majestät zu Dänemark und Norwegen, und Dero königl. Cronerben.'<sup>2</sup> The Emperor promises not only to let the King keep this Duchy '*zu ewigen Zeiten*,'<sup>3</sup> but to prevent '*dass durch andere der selben Renunciation zuwider gehandelt und gethan werde*.'<sup>4</sup>

But all these events and acts are entirely ignored by Professor Müller and Karl Jansen, nor did the Duke of Augustenburg take any heed of them. If these authors had made any attempt to enfeeble the significance of such historical facts, it would still be possible to believe in their good faith; but total omission of them, however well known they are, looks a little like want of historical loyalty. Under such circumstances any discussion is hopeless.

Prussia has had to carry on two wars in order to conquer the

<sup>1</sup> And incorporate it for all coming time in his Crown as an old part, injuria temporum, torn away from the Crown of Denmark.

<sup>2</sup> His Majesty the King of Denmark and Norway and his royal heirs to the Crown.

<sup>3</sup> For all time.

<sup>4</sup> That through others this same renunciation should be acted against or interfered with.

land between Hamburg and the frontier of Jutland. When, in 1848, an insurrection broke out in Holstein, as in nearly all Continental States, Prussia interfered in the strife, principally in order to deviate the democratic current from Berlin, but also with the hope of fishing in troubled waters. The endeavour failed because the Emperor of Russia, who was well acquainted with the real state of the case, put a stop to the progress of Prussia. When, however, King Frederick the Seventh died (1863) things were greatly altered. In Prussia there was at the head of affairs a statesman who had done Russia invaluable services during the Polish insurrection. He succeeded in drawing Austria into action. In later years Bismarck himself, when he had become more outspoken, declared that he had never for a moment believed in the pretensions of the Duke of Augustenburg, whereas he, on the news of the Danish King's death, exclaimed: 'Dat mot wi hebben.' What followed was a pure war of conquest, to which the European Great Powers submitted because no leading statesman knew how to gather the Powers with the object of resistance.

It is an old experience that whoever has committed violence and misused his physical superiority afterwards feels a desire to prove also that he has been in the *right*. But neither the Duke nor Prussia will ever succeed in an attempt to prove that they were in the right towards Denmark.

The war in 1848 commenced by the King of Prussia's recognition of the Slesvig-Holstein contention that the Duchies formed a unity, and that the male line alone was entitled to the succession. The Duke of Augustenburg had, during the stirring revolutionary days in Berlin, prevailed upon Frederick William the Fourth to sign this recognition. That the contention was untenable and untrue had just shortly before been demonstrated in the most incontestable manner by the Royal Danish Letter Patent of the 16th of July 1846—a result of the deliberations of a Royal Committee. *About twenty years later the Prussian Crown Syndicate gave utterance to mainly the same opinions as those contained in the Letter Patent.*

It is of considerable interest to study the composition of the said Danish Committee: its members were principally Holsteiners, not to be suspected of any partial feeling towards Denmark. The members were, besides the King's private secretary, Alder, Count Heinrich Rewentlow-Criminil, the Danish Envoy to the German Confederation, Baron Pechlin, and the diplomat Bülow, who later ended by being Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office under Bismarck. This committee came to the unanimous result that the Duchy of Slesvig in consequence of political events had come to be inseparably united to the kingdom of Denmark and to

the Danish succession, but the Committee did not venture to give any definite declaration as to Holstein, more especially the old fiefal Duchy of this name.

Later on the Germans contended that the Committee had opposed the Letter Patent, which, however, correctly expressed their opinion, and that it was owing to the King's 'perfidy' that the whole State Ministry signed the letter. That is evidently perfect nonsense. *Several members of the Ministry did indeed oppose the issue of the Letter Patent, until the King at last overruled their resistance, and the Committee itself did dissuade the publication; but this was because they did not wish to give utterance to the doubt about the Holstein succession.* These men wished to retain both the Duchies for the Danish Crown and for their reciprocal union with Denmark, which was 400 years old; they feared that the King's admission that the succession in Holstein was doubtful would, when the male line was extinct, lead to ominous consequences. The King, on the contrary, and his Danish Ministers maintained that by far the most important thing was to establish the Danish right to Slesvig, whereas the relation to Holstein was second in importance only.

The Letter Patent was frigidly received, amongst others by the Emperor of Russia, but notoriously *not* in so far as it regarded Slesvig. On the contrary, the Emperor Nicolas admitted *without restriction* that he and his house were bound to maintain the possession of this Duchy for Denmark. This, too, France, England, and Prussia had guaranteed.

It is of no use that the Germans feign to ignore what afterwards happened in the years 1848-1851. Prussia supported the Holstein insurrection against Frederick the Seventh, but was obliged to abandon the pretensions insisted upon in March 1848. Prussia and Austria abandoned the claim on the unity of the Duchies, and recognised the King of Denmark's right to separate them completely in regard to administration, jurisdiction, and representation. With the approval of the German great Powers, Denmark was recognised as consisting of three reciprocally independent lands, viz. the Kingdom, Slesvig, and Holstein. The succession, common to the three parts, was regulated in this way, that the heirs, according to the *lex regia*, to Denmark and Slesvig renounced their rights in favour of the present Queen Louisa, herself one of these heirs, whereas the Emperor of Russia renounced his rights to certain parts of Holstein in favour of her consort, the present King Christian the Ninth, of the Oldenburg House. In 1852 all the great Powers adhered to this arrangement, *Prussia and Austria included*, and by the law of succession of 1853, accepted by the Danish *Rigsdag*, Prince Christian was elected heir apparent to the entire indivisible monarchy.

The Duke of Augustenburg had, by a solemn act issued in Frankfort the 30th of December 1852, recognised the King's dispositions. In this act (§ 3) he says :—

Geloben und versprechen wir für uns und unsere Familie *bei fürstlichen Worten und Ehren* nichts wodurch die Ruhe in Ihro Königl. Majestät's Reichen und Landen gestört oder gefährdet worden könnte vorzurechnen, imgleichen den von Ihro Kgl. Majestät, in Bezug auf die Ordnung der Erbfolge für alle unter Allerhöchst Dero Scepter gegenwärtig vereinten Lande, oder die eventuelle Organisation Allerhöchst Dero Monarchie, gefassten oder künftig zu fassenden Beschlüssen, *in keiner Weise entgegen-treten zu wollen.*<sup>a</sup>

This arrangement with the Duke was principally owing to the recommendation and the diplomatic efforts of Prussia. *The late so illustrious Chancellor, Prince Bismarck, was the mediator in this transaction.* By it the Duke obtained a very profitable sale of his estates, which in accordance with the ruling law had been forfeited by the *felony* committed during the insurrection.

These are trivial facts, which Professor Max Müller and Jansen may conceal from their readers, but they will not attempt to deny them if, as now, reminded of them. Was there, it may be fair to ask, anything that in the remotest way resembled these facts when Hanover was separated from England? But how, if this was not the case, can a truthful man compare these two historical events?

And what was it that happened in 1863-1864? When Frederick the Seventh died, Duke Frederick of Augustenburg made his appearance as pretender to *both* Duchies, publishing a document by which his father, the Duke (Christian Augustus), ceded to him his rights, those rights—unrecognised by any statesman—which he had, 'by his princely word and honour,' renounced for himself and his house, and promised never to use to trouble or endanger the tranquillity of Denmark! But this event was, as is well known, the starting point of the war with Denmark. King Christian abandoned Holstein, but when German troops, without any declaration of war, crossed the Eider, they encountered the Danish Army, which soon, left to itself alone and immensely inferior in number and equipment as it was, was overpowered.

In this way the two great Powers conquered the Duchies, but when afterwards the right of the Duke of Augustenburg came to be examined, the Prussian Crown syndicate came to the conclu-

<sup>a</sup> I solemnly promise, on behalf of myself and my family—*on my princely word and honour*—that I will do nothing that might trouble or endanger the tranquillity of His Royal Majesty's realm or countries. Further, that I will do nothing to oppose such decisions as His Majesty has or may arrive at regarding the succession to all presently under His Majesty's sceptre united lands, or the future organisation of His Majesty's monarchy.

sion that the King of Denmark had been *sole legitimate* ruler in Holstein as well as in Slesvig ('*Rechtsgutachten bezüglich der Herzogthümer Schleswig, Holstein und Lauenburg, erstattet auf Grund des Allerhöchsten Erlasses vom 14. December 1864 vom Cron-Syndikat.*'—Printed in Berlin, 1866).

Thus it was evident that the Danish King's cession of the Duchies to Prussia and Austria constituted a perfectly valid title of seizure to the conquerors. The Duke was pushed aside, and so was, later on, Austria after the campaign in Bohemia. On the occasion Prussia promised to restore to Denmark the northern Danish districts of Slesvig<sup>6</sup>—a promise which was never fulfilled. Prussia is thus to this day the possessor of the two Duchies.

The preceding account contains the main features of the events, to the obscuration of which Professor Max Müller has had the courage to lend his illustrious name.

As to Prince Bismarck, it must be admitted that he is more upright. Not without right he prides himself on having conquered the Duchies by small means and great ingeniousness. He has known how to take advantage of all the given circumstances: (1) an unhappy but unavoidable national dissension; (2) the Augustenburg pretension to the succession, which it was possible to put forward because during a generation its legitimacy had been continually preached to the *German* population, not only of the Danish Duchies, but over the whole of Germany, whereas Bismarck knew that an impartial juridical examination could with the greatest facility prove its utter falseness. (3) The blunder and want of diplomatic *finesse* committed by the Danish statesmen, who did not see that they were alone, without hope of help, placed in face of a heedless, brutal adversary, and who neglected, in time, to come to terms as cheaply as possible with this adversary.

Thus it came about that the catastrophe which befell the Danish monarchy in 1864 had much more serious consequences than the circumstances seemed to justify, especially considering its old legitimate right. It was not only that old legitimacy was overthrown by the total disregard of the Gottorp renunciation of Holstein in favour of King Christian the Ninth, nor that old and continually renewed treaties in favour of the Danish Crown's right to Slesvig were torn asunder, but also the *principle of nationality*—the sole principle which might with some show of right have been invoked against the arrangement of 1852—was put aside in the most shameful way.

More than one half of Slesvig is to this day inhabited by Danish people, who do not wish anything better than to return to the union with the mother country, whereas the Prussian Government endeavours, in spite of the promise given in Prague, by all

<sup>6</sup> The peace of Prague, § 5.

possible means to subjugate the Danish element, and to efface its national peculiarities. It is a slap in the face to the whole Scandinavian race, and a derision of the favourite talk in Germany of the solidarity of the German peoples.

After having shown how totally wrong Professor Müller's conception of the Slesvig-Holstein question is, it is of minor importance to point out the many errors his article contains. Before concluding, there is, however, one thing which cannot be passed over in silence.

Professor Müller calls the present King of Denmark a 'German' prince, and his consort, the Queen, a 'German' princess. Now, the King of Denmark was born a Danish subject, in the old Danish land Slesvig, which never has belonged to the German Empire. His father was a Danish subject and a Danish officer. His mother was a granddaughter of Frederick the Fifth, King of Denmark. He came to Copenhagen as a mere lad, entered the Royal Military School, and served afterwards in the Horse Guards, of which corps he was a Colonel when he was elected heir apparent. How he could ever claim the honour of being a 'German' prince is a perfect riddle. The Queen is the daughter of a Princess of Denmark, the sister of King Christian the Eighth. Her father, it is true, was, by his title, Landgrave of Hesse, a German prince, but lived nearly the whole of his long life in Denmark: he was a Danish officer even before the Queen was born. His uncle, the Landgrave Charles of Hesse, and his son Frederick were Danish subjects and officers.

According to Professor Müller's conception of nationalities, the Prince of Wales must be a 'German' prince *pur sang*, being the son of a German prince. The Princess of Wales, who is, according to the Professor, a daughter of a 'German' father and mother, must also be a German princess. It is doubtful if the English nation will relish the idea that the next heirs to the throne of Great Britain are Germans!

A. D. JÖRGENSEN

(the late Historian and Keeper of the State Archives of Denmark).



Lokalsamling

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Müller, Max

The Schleswig-Holstein Question and its  
Place in History

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