

THE DUCHIES AND THE GASTEIN CONVENTION.

In the negotiations between the sovereigns of Austria and Prussia for the definitive settlement of the succession question to the Duchies, the following points have been agreed to by both powers as the basis of the future organisation of the government of Schleswig-Holstein :—

1. Austria and Prussia, recognising the Vienna treaty of peace as the only legal basis for the settlement of the question of the sovereignty of the Duchies, both powers, therefore, form the only tribunal which, so soon as they shall have come to an understanding on the subject, shall have the authority to decide on the future political organisation of the Duchies. 2. The duty of defending the Duchies will be undertaken by Prussia, and whatever ultimate settlement of the succession question may be arrived at, the military resources of Schleswig and Holstein will be placed at her disposal.

In the sitting of the Federal diet on August 31, the representatives of Saxe-Weimar, Saxe-Coburg Gotha, and Saxe-Meiningen protested against the Gastein Convention, and brought forward a motion that the solution of the Schleswig-Holstein question should be submitted to an Austragal tribunal. The diet finally resolved to postpone its decision for eight weeks.

The report that there exists a secret convention between Prussia and Austria has been contradicted upon authority.

Several members of the Holstein Estates have met for consultation in a private house at Kiel, after the hall of the university had been closed against them by order of the government. Thirty-one deputies attended, representing the clergy, the towns, and the peasantry, but no members appeared on behalf of the nobility. Resolutions were passed to send in a memorial to the Federal Diet, containing a protest in defence of the ancient rights of the country, and against the division of the Duchies. The memorial expresses a wish for the convocation of the representatives, and declares their readiness to comply with the wishes of the national party.

Orders have been issued by the local government of Schleswig for the immediate execution of the Gastein Convention, which took effect on the 15th September.

It is reported in Paris that the sum of two millions and a half of thalers, agreed upon as the price of the cession of Lauenburg, has already been paid by Prussia.

The Indépendance Belge publishes a letter from its London correspondent, purporting to give a summary of a circular of Earl Russell, dated the 14th, to the English representatives abroad upon the Gastein Convention. It says :—

The Gastein Convention increases the regret which England expressed at the period of the signature of the preliminaries of the Peace of Vienna, and recalls to mind the treaties of 1815 and 1842. The latter has been completely disregarded by Austria and Prussia, notwithstanding the assurances given in the notes of January 31, 1864.

Earl Russell is represented as censuring the great German Powers because popular

the great German Powers because popular sentiment in Germany, the wishes of the inhabitants of the Duchies, and the opinion of the majority in the Diet have not been consulted :—

Force alone is the power which has been consulted and recognised; violence and conquest are the only bases upon which Austria and Prussia have established the convention. England deeply deplors the disregard manifested for public right, and for the legitimate claim of a people to be heard when the question is one affecting their destiny.

Sentiments identical with these have been expressed by the French minister.

The Duke of Augustenburg has, it is said, no intention of quitting Kiel, but is, on the contrary, making arrangements for

remaining there during the winter with his family.