king, and in 1137 gave Saxony to Henry the Proud, duke of Bavaria, who had married his daughter Gertrude, and whose mother Wulfhild was a daughter of Magnus Billung. The succeeding German king Conrad III. refused to allow Henry to hold two duchies, and gave Saxony to Albert the Bear, margrave of Brandenburg, who like his rival was a grandson of Magnus Billung. Albert’s attempts to obtain possession failed, and after Henry’s death in 1139 he formally renounced Saxony in favour of Henry’s son, Henry the Lion *(q.v.).* The new duke improved its internal condition, increased its political importance, and pushed its eastern frontier towards the Oder. In 1180, however, he was placed under the imperial ban and Saxony was broken up. Henry retained Brunswick and Luneburg; West­phalia, as the western portion of the duchy was called, was given to Philip, archbishop of Cologne, and a large part of the land was divided among nine bishops and a number of counts who thus became immediate vassals of the emperor. The title duke of Saxony was given to Bernard, the sixth son of Albert the Bear, together with the small territories of Lauenburg and Wittenberg, which were thus the only portions of the former duchy which now bore the name of Saxony. Bernard, whose paternal grandmother, Eilicke, was a daughter of Magnus Billung, took a prominent part in German affairs, but lost Lauenburg which was seized by Waldemar II., king of Denmark. Dying in 1212, Bernard was succeeded in Wittenberg by his younger son Albert I., who recovered Lauenburg after the defeat of Waldemar at Bornhöved in 1227. Albert died in 1260, and soon after his death his two sons divided his territories, when the elder son John took Lauenburg which was sometimes called lower Saxony, and the younger, Albert II., took Witten- berg or upper Saxony. Both retained the ducal title and claimed the electoral privilege, a claim which the Lauenburg line refused to abandon when it was awarded to the Wittenberg Une by the Golden Bull of 1356.

Saxe-Lauenburg was governed by John until his death in 1285, when it passed to his three sons John II., Albert III. and Eric I. As Albert had no sons the duchy was soon divided into two parts, until on the death of duke Eric III., a grandson of John II., in 1401, it was reunited by Eric IV., a grandson of Eric I. When Eric IV. died in 1412 he was succeeded by his son Eric V., who made strenuous but vain efforts to obtain the electoral duchy of Saxe-Wittenberg, which fell vacant on the death of the elector Albert III. in 1422. Eric died in 1436 and was followed by his brother Bernard IV., whose claim to exercise the electoral vote was quashed by the electors in 1438; and who was succeeded by his son John IV. in 1463. The next duke, John’s son Magnus I., spent much time in struggles with the archbishop of Bremen and the bishop of Ratzeburg; he also assisted the progress of the Reformation in Lauenburg. Magnus, who was formally invested with the duchy by the emperor Charles V. in 1530, was the first duke to abandon the claim to the electoral privilege. After his death in 1543 his son Francis I. reigned for the succeeding twenty-eight years, and his grandsons, Magnus II. and Francis II., until 1619. Francis, who did something to improve the administration of his duchy, was succeeded in turn by his two sons and his two grandsons; but on the death of Julius Francis, the younger of his grandsons, in 1689 the family became extinct.

Several claimants to Saxe-Lauenburg thereupon appeared, the most prominent of whom were George William, duke of Lüneburg-Celle, and John George III., elector of Saxony. George William based his claim upon a treaty of mutual succession made in 1369 between his ancestor Magnus II., duke of Brunswick, and the reigning dukes of Saxe-Lauenburg. John George had a double claim. Duke Magnus I. had promised that in case of the extinction of his family Lauenburg should pass to the family of Wettin, an arrangement which had been confirmed by the emperor Maximilian I. in 1507. Secondly, John George himself had concluded a similar treaty with Julius Francis in 1671. In 1689 the elector received the homage of the people of Lauenburg. George William, however, took Ratzeburg, and held it against the troops of a third claimant, Christian V.,

king of Denmark; and in 1702 he bought off the claim of John George, his successor being invested with the duchy in 1728. Since that date its history has been identified with that of Hanover *(q.v.).*

In Saxe-Wittenberg Albert II. was succeeded in 1298 by his son Rudolph I., who in 1314 gave his vote to Frederick, duke of Austria, in the disputed election for the German throne between that prince and Louis of Bavaria, afterwards the emperor Louis IV.; and when the latter ignored his claims on the margraviate of Brandenburg Rudolph shared in the attempt to depose him, and to elect Charles of Luxemburg, afterwards the emperor Charles IV., as German king. Rudolph was followed in 1356 by his son Rudolph IL, who had fought at the battle of Crécy; and who in turn was succeeded in 1370 by his half- brother Wenceslaus. This prince succeeded after some fighting in temporarily obtaining the duchy of Lüneburg for his house; he took part in the election of Wenceslaus as German king in 1376; and was followed in 1388 by his eldest son Rudolph III. Lavish expenditure during the progress of the council of Constance reduced Rudolph to poverty, and on the death in 1422 of his brother Albert III., who succeeded him in 1419, this branch of the Ascanian family became extinct.

A new era in the history of Saxony dates from 1423, the year when the emperor Sigismund bestowed the vacant electoral duchy of Saxe-Wittenberg upon Frederick, margrave of Meissen. Frederick was a member of the family of Wettin, which since his day has played a prominent part in the history of Europe, and he owed his new dignity to the money and other assistance which he had given to the emperor during the Hussite war. The new and more honourable title of elector of Saxony now superseded his other titles, and the name Saxony gradually spread over his other possessions, which included Meissen and Thuringia as well as Saxe-Wittenberg, and thus the earlier history of the electorate and kingdom of Saxony is the early history of the mark of Meissen, the name of which now fingers only in a solitary town on the Elbe.

Frederick’s new position as elector, combined with his personal qualities to make him one of the most powerful princes in Germany, and had the principle of primogeniture been established in his country, Saxony and not Prussia might have been the leading power to-day in the German empire. He died in 1428, just before his lands were ravaged by the Hussites in 1429 and 1430. The division of his territory between his two sons, the elector Frederick II. and William, occasioned a destructive internecine war, a kind of strife which had many precedents in the earlier history of Meissen and Thuringia. It was in 1455 during this war that the knight Kunz von Kaufungen carried into execution his daring plan of stealing the two sons of the elector Frederick, Ernest and Albert, but he was only moment­arily successful, the princes soon escaping from his hands. These two sons succeeded to their father’s possessions in 1464, and for twenty years ruled together peaceably. The land prospered rapidly during this respite from the horrors of war. Encouraged by an improved coinage, trade made great advances, and other benefits also accrued from the discovery of silver on the Schneeberg. Several of the important ecclesiastical princi­palities of North Germany were about this time held by members of the Saxon ruling house, and the external influence of the electorate corresponded to its internal prosperity. But matters were not allowed to continue thus. The childless death of their uncle William in 1482 brought Thuringia to the two princes, and Albert insisted on a division of their common possessions. The important partition of Leipzig accordingly took place in 1485, and resulted in the foundation of the two main lines of the Saxon house. The lands were never again united. Ernest, the elder brother, obtained Saxe-Wittenberg with the electoral dignity, Thuringia and the Saxon Vogtland; while Albert received Meissen, Osterland being divided between them. Something was still held in common, and the division was probably made intricate to render war difficult and dangerous.

The elector Ernest was succeeded in i486 by his son, Frederick the Wise, one of the most illustrious princes in German history.