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THE · EVOLUTION · OF · THE · GERMAN · EMPIRE

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OF · TECHNOLOGY · ★ ·········
PUBLISHED · UNDER · THE · AUSPICES
OF · THE · GERMANISTIC · SOCIETY
OF · CHICAGO · ★ ·········

Nice Box 3

Number Eight

FOREWORD

The Germanistic Society plans to issue a series of pamphlets to appear from time to time, dealing with the war in Europe and its underlying causes. The Society has solicited contributions from various writers and historians. The pamphlets are to serve the cause of truth, to correct misrepresentations, and to exemplify the spirit of objectivity and fair play.

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THE GERMANISTIC SOCIETY
OF CHICAGO
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332 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

The Evolution of the German Empire

By

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The German people are not of yesterday. Their authentic history covers a period of almost two thousand years. During this long interval of time they accomplished wonderful things. They overthrew the Roman Empire of the West, A. D. 476 and established Teutonic kingdoms throughout Western and Central Europe from the Desert of Sahara to Scotland, from the Atlantic to the Vistula River. They worked their way out of barbarism to the highest type of civilization. They evolved the Holy Roman Empire and the Reformation. They gave to the world Charlemagne and Otto the Great; Luther and Bismarck; Goethe and Schiller; Bach and Beethoven; Kant and Fichte; Leibnitz and Helmholtz. Why was such a people so slow in achieving unification? Why is the German Empire the youngest of the great nations of Europe? It shall be my purpose to show briefly what agencies hindered the Germans from forming a united empire, as well as to explain why this unification resulted in the end, after so long a delay.

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE.

Though the early Teutons were separated into many different tribes which could only with the greatest difficulty be induced to combine in a common undertaking, they were nevertheless held together loosely by the bond of a common language, religion, race, and customs. Charlemagne was the first to form a great Teutonic empire, having received the crown as Roman Emperor of the West from the Pope in 800 A. D. While this was supposed at the time to be merely a restoration of the old Roman Empire that had gone to pieces in 476 A. D., it was really a new creation which, after another century, came to be called the Holy Roman Empire and which lasted until 1806, covering a period of over a thousand years.

Louis the Pious, the son of Charlemagne, tried to keep the vast Empire together, but his sons, after a long quarrel, divided this territory

among themselves in the famous Treaty of Verdun of 843. Charles the Bald received the western portion, soon after called France; Louis the German took the countries on the east of the Rhine which came to be known as Germany; while Lothair received the crown as Emperor together with Italy and the "Middle Kingdom," the latter consisting of the narrow strip between the kingdoms of his two brothers and extending from Italy to the North Sea. This treaty marks the beginning of the three nations: France, Germany, and Italy.

After the death of Lothair strife arose concerning his lands which became the bone of contention between the French and the Germans from that day to this. Lothair's name survives in the name Lorraine (German: Lothringen). Charles the Bald held Lorraine for a few years after Lothair's death, but Louis the German obtained Alsace, Trèves, Metz, Friesland, and Lorraine in the Treaty of Mersen, 870, and still more of Lothair's lands nine years later in the Treaty of Verdun-Ribemont. Alsace-Lorraine remained under German rule for seven-hundred years, until France, taking advantage of Germany's weakness after the Thirty-years' War, between 1648 and 1681 appropriated this section. In 1871 the Germans recovered Alsace-Lorraine, maintaining that they simply took back what was rightfully theirs.

Not only the lands of Lorraine eventually passed under German control but also the imperial crown. King Otto I. of Germany conquered Italy and was crowned Emperor by the Pope at Rome, in the year 962, thus instituting the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. For the next few centuries Otto's successors regularly, after having been elected king of Germany by the nobles, made the trip across the Alps, to add to their German crown also the crown of king of Italy and the imperial crown which could be conferred only by the Pope at Rome. This union of Germany and Italy was detrimental to the interests of each country. It meant to the German King only an increase of glory rather than of power. It encouraged disorder in both countries and contributed much to their eventual disintegration. When the Emperor was in Italy his nobles in Germany would seize the occasion to rebel; when he was in Germany the Italian cities started a revolt. Had the German rulers remained at home they might have kept their nobles under control and instituted a strong central government as did the kings of England and France. By attempting to hold together a vast realm with many diverse nationalities that could not be assimilated, the emperors eventually became rulers in name only. Many of them such as the three Ottos, Frederick Barbarossa, and Frederick II. were men of extraordinary ability, but the forces that made for disunion were too strong to be overcome even by them.

The strongest of the disintegrating forces with which the German rulers had to contend was the tribal division of the German people. The Bavarian felt that he was first a Bavarian and only secondarily a German. The same was true of the other tribes. Local patriotism militated against national patriotism in the same manner as among the Greek cities, among the various Indian tribes in America, and among the American colonies. This particularism has not been entirely overcome to this day and tended to prevent the unification of Germany more than any other influence. It was intensified by the spirit of Individualism which has always charac-

terized the Germans, as well as by the separate political organization of each tribe. The kings of France and England found the task of consolidation so much easier, because their subjects were more homogeneous.

Disunion was likewise fostered in Germany by the feudal system, especially since the great fiefs came to coincide with the old tribal divisions. The German nobles had a golden opportunity of wresting privilege after privilege from the king, all the more so because they had the power to elect a new king and might condition their support of his candidacy upon his making concessions to them. The kings of France and England ruled by hereditary right and were therefore far less dependent upon the nobles. For all these reasons Germany became more and more hopelessly disintegrated, while in England and France strong centralized governments developed as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

THE RULE OF THE HAPSBURGS.

During the Interregnum (1250-1273) foreign princes without influence contested the imperial title which now seemed almost worthless. The interregnum was brought to an end by the election of Rudolph of Hapsburg who wisely refrained from mixing in Italian affairs and curbed the German nobles with an iron hand. Rudolph had been chosen king because he seemed the least formidable of all candidates, for his family at that time had only small possessions in Alsace and Switzerland. Rudolph's great energy and ability proved a surprise to the nobles who became uneasy at the growing power of the Hapsburgs and therefore preferred, after his death, to elect their rulers from the Luxemburg family. After the year 1437, however, the Hapsburgs once more came into power and remained in control from that time until the overthrow of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806.

Realizing that the imperial crown conferred but little actual power, since the German princes had now become almost independent of the emperor and regarded him merely as a sort of over-lord who was ruler in name only, the Hapsburg rulers now began to make conquests outside of the Empire in Hungary, Austria, Styria, and elsewhere, thus building up what they called their house-lands. Here they could do as they pleased for these possessions were under their immediate rule. They conquered more and more territory from Slavs, Magyars, Chechs and other nationalities, until their authority and power in the house-lands far exceeded that within the Empire. Thus they became untrue to their trust as German rulers and Germany suffered from their neglect and became more and more hopelessly split up into petty principalities, secular and ecclesiastical, the heads of which did practically what they pleased.

The tragic effects of this condition manifested themselves especially during the period of the Reformation, in the early part of the sixteenth century. This movement was the greatest of all the products of the German spirit. It shook the German nation as that nation had never been shaken before. The eyes of the world were now centered upon Germany. The monk of Wittenberg became the greatest German of all times. Under proper leadership the Germans might then have become a united nation and might have accomplished what did not take place until 1871. But, unluckily, Germany was ruled at that time by a man who did not

understand the German people, because he was more of a Spaniard than a German, and because Germany was only one of the many lands under his scepter. The Emperor Charles V. built up a great empire and became the most famous of all the Hapsburg rulers, but Germany lost an opportunity that was not to present itself again until over three-hundred years later, simply because Charles failed to see this opportunity. He ruled over Spain, the Netherlands, most of Italy, as well as over Austria and Germany. Had he been a German ruler exclusively, he would have placed himself at the head of the nation, overthrown the princes and nobles, and successfully completed the union of the German principalities into one great state.

Unfortunately, the policy which Charles V. adopted, instead of unifying Germany, split her up still further by adding to the other forces of disunion that of religious division. Some of the states became Lutheran or Calvinist, while the rest remained Catholic. During the terrible Thirty Years' War Germany became the battling ground of all Europe. The disastrous effects of this long war were not overcome for one hundred and fifty years. After the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the map of Germany looked like a crazy quilt made of hundreds of different patches. Some of these German principalities were almost microscopic in size. Yet in each one the power of the prince was practically absolute. The Empire had become a farce, although the name was kept up until 1806.

Napoleon rendered one undeniable service to Germany: he simplified her map. He rewarded his faithful vassals among the German princes by giving them every now and then additional patches of territory. The House of Hapsburg was either too powerless or too indifferent to prevent these changes. Whenever defeated by Napoleon, the Hapsburgs preferred to sacrifice German territory rather than their house-lands. The changes made in Germany by Napoleon were so numerous that the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved. In 1806 the Roman Emperor Francis II. dropped his old title and called himself Francis I., Emperor of Austria. Germany was now a conglomeration of many principalities without a real head. Austria still maintained a certain leadership over the German states, but her own empire represented such a chaotic mixture of nationalities that her influence became more and more injurious and hindered any tendency toward unification in Germany. In the very nature of the case the diverse interests of Austria made her unfit to be the champion of German interests. If the German states were ever to be united some other leader must appear. Clearly this had to be a state whose interests were purely German. There was no other so fit to play this part as Prussia.

THE RISE OF PRUSSIA.

The nucleus from which the Kingdom of Prussia developed was the Duchy of Brandenburg which, under the able rule of the princes of the House of Hohenzollern, had since the tenth century, through steady additions of territory and the husbanding of its limited resources, become more and more prominent. The duke of Brandenburg was one of the seven electors to whom since the twelfth century belonged the right of choosing the Emperor. Prussia was originally a small territory along the Baltic, conquered by the Teutonic Knights in the thirteenth century and

by them won for Christianity and Germanic culture. The introduction of the Reformation into Prussia had led to the dissolution of the order of Teutonic Knights. In 1618 Prussia came under the rule of the House of Hohenzollern. It was at that time separated from Brandenburg by a broad expanse of territory. The Great Elector Frederick William, by securing Pomerania in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, and by winning additional territory from the Swedes in 1675, rounded out his lands and made his territory continuous. Through great internal reforms and the perfection of his army, the Elector Frederick William laid the foundations of a great state and mapped out a policy which his successors followed with singular tenacity and success. In 1702 his son, Frederick I., took the title King of Prussia. When Frederick the Second, afterwards called "the Great," ascended the throne in 1740, he found himself at the head of a compact and prosperous state with a well-filled treasury and an army second to none in Europe.

Under the rule of Frederick the Great, Prussia became one of the five great powers of Europe and during the Seven Years' War, from 1756-63, was able to hold her own against the combined powers of Russia, France, Austria, and Saxony which had formed a conspiracy to dismember her. It was by her military strength alone that Prussia escaped the fate of Poland. Open on all sides to invasion and surrounded by jealous foes, she could save herself from destruction and work out her destiny only by the maintenance of a strong army.

Not only as a general but also as a statesman Frederick the Great ranks with the greatest men in history. The reforms he instituted were widely praised and imitated. He became the type of a benevolent despot. His statement, "The King is the first servant of the State," shows his devotion to the welfare of Prussia. But while he did everything with an eye to the good of the people, his system was paternal. He did not give the people a share in the government. Though he believed in liberty of thought and in religious freedom, he did not believe in democracy. There was no other state, however, in which the people were so well cared for as in Prussia.

It was Napoleon who brought upon Prussia the greatest downfall she ever experienced. When his attempts to make her his ally were unsuccessful, he determined to cripple her so that he would not need to fear her. He goaded her into war, and after his great victories at Jena, Eylau, and Friedland imposed upon her in 1807 the crushing terms of the peace of Tilsit. He took from her half her territory, forced her to pay an enormous war contribution of 150,000,000 francs, but really pressed out of the people two billions, and would not permit her to have an army of more than 40,000 men. Indeed, Napoleon would have annexed Prussia entirely, had it not been for the intervention of Czar Alexander who had been the ally of Frederick William III. and whom Napoleon was at that time anxious to please in order that he might form an alliance with him.

Prussia never forgot the bleeding which Napoleon administered to her. Certainly no conquered nation ever suffered greater injury from the iron fist of the conqueror than she did from that of Napoleon.

Yet Prussia was never so great as in the days of her deepest humiliation. Phoenixlike a regenerated Prussia emerged from the ashes of the Napoleonic conflagration.

The very greatness of Frederick the Great's system was the cause of Prussia's *débauche* after his death. Prussia was like a complicated machine that only the great engineer Frederick could operate. Benevolent despotism broke down under a mediocre king. It was necessary to call on the people to help regenerate Prussia. Momentous reforms were now instituted by Frederick William III. in the interval between 1809 and 1813, the king being advised and assisted by such men as Baron vom Stein, Hardenberg, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and others. Serfdom was abolished. In the municipalities government was put in the hands of the people. Above all, the army was now reformed and made a thoroughly democratic institution by Scharnhorst who became the father of the German military system of today. Compulsory military service made the army the nation in arms. The peasant's son now served alongside of the son of the prince. No one able to serve was exempt. Ability, knowledge, and bravery were made the only titles to advancement. All the able-bodied men were trained. While there could not be more than 40,000 men in the army at any one time, because Napoleon so ordered, each installment was drilled night and day and then dismissed to make room for new recruits. As in the days of the Great Elector, of Frederick William I., and of Frederick the Great, there was a deep conviction that Prussia's welfare depended upon her army. When the moment came to strike she was ready. A storm of patriotic enthusiasm swept through Prussia after Napoleon's defeat in Russia. The Prussia of 1813 seemed a radically different state from the Prussia of 1807. This transformation was due to the popularization of her institutions, especially of her army. This was the birth of Prussian militarism. It was the people of Prussia that backed the movement. It was Prussian militarism which in large measure brought about the overthrow of Napoleon and won the battle of Waterloo. In that great battle England furnished the general, but Prussia furnished the men.

GERMANY AND THE HOLY ALLIANCE.

The government of Prussia did not keep faith with the people after the overthrow of Napoleon by granting constitutional government, but it joined Austria and Russia as a member of the infamous Holy Alliance and thereby entered upon a policy of reaction. Metternich, the Austrian minister of foreign affairs, was the moving spirit of the Holy Alliance and as such became the evil genius of Europe for the next thirty years. Especially baneful was his influence over the princes of the German states who readily adopted his system. The darkness of the Middle Ages seemed to have settled down upon Germany after 1815. The press was placed under the strictest censorship. Even the universities which had always prized their *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit* were supervised, because the liberal ideas had taken hold especially of the student organizations or *Burschenschaften*. Every manifestation of liberalism in Germany was at once crushed. Thus the people were cheated out of the promise which had been made by the Articles of Confederation of 1815, that constitutions should be granted as soon as practicable to the various German states which had in that year formed a loose union. Karl August of Weimar, the friend and patron of Goethe and Schiller, had granted constitutional government to his people in 1816; Baden and Bavaria in 1818; Würtemberg in 1819; but Prussia would not imitate their example and

thus failed to seize the opportunity of placing herself at the head of the reform movement. Only very slowly, as a result of the revolutionary movements of 1830 and 1848, did Prussia and the other German states gradually yield to the liberal movement. In 1851 the new Prussian constitution went into effect. That state was now prepared to take up its mission of bringing about a unification of the German states under her leadership.

Austria, however, blocked the way. Even after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, in 1806, the German princes looked to Austria as their leader.

The national uprising which had resulted in the overthrow of Napoleon had everywhere kindled a new patriotism and a new interest in the history of each nation. Nowhere was this growth of the historical spirit or the interest in the past stronger than in Germany. It is not to be wondered at that the people took up the unification idea with as much enthusiasm as they made the demand for liberal government. The leader in this movement for the formation of a strong and united Germany was the famous Baron vom Stein. However, nothing came of this save the formation of a loose Confederation of the German states, known as the *Deutsche Bund*, with an organization somewhat like that of the American Federation before 1787. Each state retained its sovereignty. The Parliament meeting at Frankfurt had little authority to enforce its decrees. There were 38 members of the union. Austria was the chairman. They were separated by tariff walls. The entire creation had feet of clay.

The revolutionary movement of 1848 took hold of the German states and led to the calling of a National Assembly the members of which were elected by the people and met in the Paulskirche at Frankfurt, May 18, 1848. Archduke John of Austria was chosen imperial regent and appointed a ministry to carry on the administration. A declaration of rights and a constitution were discussed which gave the theorists a fine opportunity to waste much time discussing abstract principles. The new political structure was to have as its cornerstone the principle of the sovereignty of the people. Provision was made for the vesting of the executive in an hereditary emperor, and this office was tendered to King Frederick William IV. Though a great scholar, the Prussian king was weak and conservative. He distrusted popular movements and doubted whether the National Assembly really possessed the authority to confer power upon him. Moreover, he was averse to offending Austria, so he refused the offer and declared against the new constitution. The whole unification movement thus came to naught for the time being. Once more Austria had her way. The old diet was again instituted and the system of Metternich was re-established, though only for a moment. This much progress had, however, been made: Prussia had obtained a constitution in 1851 which is still in force, and she was from this time on regarded as the nucleus of all future hopes in the unification movement.

THE CUSTOMS UNION.

In the meantime Prussia had taken important steps in bringing about an economic union which did much to prepare the way for an ultimate political unification. In 1828 a customs union was entered into with Hessen-

Darmstadt, also in 1829 with Bavaria and Württemberg. January 1, 1834, the German Zollverein went into effect which secured free trade to all its members, so that there were no duties levied on goods passing from one state of the Union to another. The advantages of this arrangement were so apparent that state after state entered it. This gave a great impetus to the movement for political unification. Inasmuch as Prussia had taken the lead, the smaller states began more and more to look to her as their head.

ACCESSION OF WILLIAM I.

A new era in Prussia began with the regency of Prince William who took charge of affairs when his brother, Frederick William IV, became insane in 1858, and who became king in 1861 at the death of his brother. The new king was not as brilliant a scholar as his predecessor but he was a practical statesman. He had spent many years in the army. He was not a doctrinaire but combined pliability and steadfastness of character. Never attempting the impossible, never chasing after phantoms, he knew how to adapt himself to a change of conditions. Besides, he possessed a deep insight into human nature and was very quick to detect ability in others and thus select the right men to help him carry out his plans.

Especially important was, in September 1862, his selection of Bismarck as minister-president of Prussia. His choice was violently criticized at the time, for Bismarck was almost universally misjudged. Most people considered him a reactionary of the most pronounced type. Even the great historian Max Duncker called him a gambler who was staking the very existence of Prussia. Never did a man suffer greater criticism and opposition than Bismarck did throughout his career. The greatest statesman Germany ever produced could not have maintained himself for a moment had he been dependent upon the support of the people. It was only the unfaltering support of King William I. that held him in power and enabled him to carry to completion his wonderful work. The friendship between the king and Bismarck was as beautiful as that of Damon and Pythias or of Epaminondas and Pelopidas.

BISMARCK'S PROGRAM.

Bismarck's political program was laid out from the beginning of his career as a statesman, and he never faltered in his undertaking or swerved from his course. He aimed at bringing about the unification of the German states under Prussian leadership. Austria had shown for centuries that she was unable to unify Germany; in fact, it was only too evident that she had tried to keep Germany weak and to subordinate her to her other dynastic interests. Austria must therefore be forced out of German affairs in order that Prussia's way might be clear. Bismarck knew that this question could not be settled by treaties or persuasion but only by "blood and iron." He deemed the blessings to be attained to be worth the cost. Just as the American republic could not come into existence without the War of the Revolution; and just as it could not be saved from disruption without the Civil War, Bismarck realized that the opposition against the formation of a German Empire under Prussian leadership necessitated war. And for this war Prussia must be ready.

Never did a statesman have a more complicated problem to solve than did Bismarck. With wonderful clearness of vision he was able to comprehend this problem in all its phases. He knew not only what should be done but also understood how to do it. His strength of will was as great as his insight. Only a man of titanic might could become the smith who was able to weld the many states into one great empire.

PRUSSIAN MILITARISM

For the fourth time in Prussian history the necessity of military preparedness became evident, if the vital interests of the state were to be furthered. As the Great Elector knew that the *disjecta membra* of his dominions, scattered between the Rhine and the Vistula, could become a real state and thus be delivered from the misery of constant friction only by building up a strong army; as Frederick William I. and Frederick the Great realized that Prussia, surrounded on all sides by jealous and rapacious neighbors waiting, like hungry wolves, for an opportunity to fall upon their prey, could save herself only by means of her army; as Frederick William III. realized that Prussia could throw off the iron yoke of Napoleon only by regenerating her army; so now again, William I. instinctively felt that the interests of Prussia were bound up with those of all Germany and that these interests could be furthered only by a reorganization of the army. Not only Austria but all Europe would sooner or later oppose the formation of a strong German Empire, for they had for centuries profited from her weakness and made her the battle ground of Europe. It may be said in this connection in the light of present occurrences that for a fifth time, if the Germans are to be saved, it will be because of their army. The foresight of William I. and Bismarck not only pertained to the period from 1861 to 1871, but it has been justified by the occurrences of 1914. As the neighbors of Germany tried to keep her divided for ages, so today, realizing what an irresistible power has come to her through her unification, they have combined to crush her. Without her army she would have to beg for mercy. Today she is able to accept the challenge of the most formidable combination that has ever been entered into against any state. If ever military preparedness has been justified by its fruits it is in Germany. Anywhere else so-called "militarism" would have had no other purpose save that of aggression. For Germany it has constituted to this day the only possibility of existence.

Today every German realizes what his country owes to the army and is prepared to bring any sacrifice to maintain its efficiency. It is not something set against himself but something of which he is a part. When Bismarck in 1862 undertook to reorganize the Prussian army nobody but he and the king realized what a blessing this army was destined to be. Bismarck could strengthen the army only by opposing the Prussian Parliament and by making himself guilty of a breach of the constitution by raising a loan on his own initiative. The fury of the attack launched against him by his antagonists was unbounded. He was the most unpopular man in Prussia.

THE SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN AFFAIR.

Bismarck had to wait only two years to see his policy bear fruit and to receive at least a small measure of praise for his foresight. In 1864

war was declared by the Confederation of German states against Denmark for trying to absorb the two German provinces of Schleswig and Holstein to which she had no right, having been bound to them only in a personal union as Hannover had been bound to England since the days of George I. Prussia joined hands with Austria in attacking Denmark. The war was short. The Prussian army distinguished itself at Düppel and Alsen. Denmark sued for peace by relinquishing Schleswig-Holstein.

THE SEVEN WEEK'S WAR WITH AUSTRIA.

Bismarck's plan of getting Austria and Prussia to cooperate in the Schleswig-Holstein affair was a master stroke of diplomacy. His hope that it would lead to difficulties and thereby necessitate a final understanding with Austria regarding Prussia's German policy was fully realized. In the Treaty of Gastein it was agreed that the newly liberated provinces should be jointly administered by both powers, Prussia taking charge of the affairs of Schleswig, while Austria took in hand the administration of Holstein. Discord was bound to come out of this arrangement. The two systems were so different that misunderstandings were inevitable. Austria began to work against Prussia. While Austria had no desire to annex any of this territory, she did not want Prussia to have it either and therefore began to think of turning over the provinces to the Prince of Augustenburg to whom Prussia was much opposed. Prussia insisted that, inasmuch as Schleswig-Holstein was contiguous to her own territory, she must safeguard her own interests since the Prince of Augustenburg was anti-Prussian in sentiment. Both sides now prepared for war.

The Emperor Napoleon III. promised to permit Austria and Prussia to fight the matter out without the interference of France, intimating that France would expect Prussia to allow her to appropriate Belgium or some other territory on the left bank of the Rhine as a reward for his neutrality. No definite agreement, however, was made on this point and subsequently Bismarck was able to say that he had made no promise, which was true. Certainly Bismarck here outwitted Napoleon, who regarded himself as the greatest diplomat in Europe, and not only secured an open hand in the reckoning with Austria but also saved Belgium from being swallowed up by France.

At the same time Bismarck negotiated a treaty with Italy who was carrying out the unification of her territory. According to this treaty Italy was to win Venetia from Austria whilst Prussia was to attack Austria from the north. Italy was beaten but Bismarck was true to his ally and insisted that Austria cede Venetia to her.

The smaller German states all helped Austria. Prussia was therefore fighting against great odds, since the population of the states arrayed against her was three times as great as her own. So excellent, however, was the reorganized Prussian army that a brilliant campaign of only seven weeks brought the smaller German states and Austria to terms. The genius of von Moltke who was chief of the Prussian general staff proved itself in this war. The great battle of Sadowa or Königgrätz, fought on the third of July 1866, opened the way to Vienna and was soon followed by the Treaty of Prague.

The terms imposed upon Austria were very moderate. Bismarck only wished to have Austria step out of Germany and allow Prussia to have her way in carrying out her German program. He took none of her lands from her but simply made her pay the expenses of the war. She was also required to cede Venetia to Italy. Austria had every reason to be thankful for the self-restraint and generosity which Prussia had shown and after a few years had so far forgotten her animosity that she was ready to form an alliance with Germany.

THE NORTH-GERMAN CONFEDERATION

Again Bismarck's policy had triumphed. A great stride was now taken in the direction of German unification. Prussia in 1867 gathered around her all the German states north of the Main River. This union, already bound together by the economic freedom of the Zollverein, included 21 states. It was called the North German Confederation and added a population of over five millions to that of Prussia. While each state was to retain control over its state affairs, there was instituted a Bundesrat or upper house, presided over by the Chancellor of the Confederation, and a second legislative chamber, the Reichstag, the members of which were elected by the people by universal and direct suffrage. The army of the Bund was under the supreme command of the King of Prussia. This union was compact and well organized. All that was needed to have it cover all Germany was the inclusion of the South German states, which still held aloof. It was only a question of time when they might also be expected to join in the unification movement. The advantages they would have, especially along economic lines, were too evident to escape them. The consolidation of all the German states was hastened by the Franco-Prussian war.

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR.

The Emperor Napoleon III. of France had viewed with alarm the rise of a great power on the east of France. He had been outwitted at every turn by the brilliant statesmanship of Bismarck. As a last resort he hoped that the south German states would form a confederation under his protectorate. He now began to seek a pretext for war with Prussia and counted on the support of the south German states as well as upon that of Austria and Italy. He expected to strike Prussia before she was ready and believed that the newly invented Chassepot gun and the mitrailleuse would prove superior to the Prussian needle gun. Never did a ruler rush so blindly to his own doom or force a war upon a more trivial excuse.

The issue Napoleon III. was seeking was found when the Spanish people, having driven out the vicious Queen Isabella, tendered the crown of Spain to Leopold of Hohenzollern, a distant relative of King William I. of Prussia, whose brother Karl had a few years before been chosen King of Roumania. Being a Catholic and related on his mother's side to the Bonapartists, one would have thought that Leopold would prove acceptable to Napoleon III. The latter, however, believed that this was a plan to increase the prestige of Prussia by enabling her to play a part in

European affairs similar to that of the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons in a former age. He therefore instructed his ambassador Benedetti to call on King William I. at Ems and insist that he command Leopold to withdraw. The King replied that he had no authority to do this since Leopold was only his relative, not one of his subjects, and might act as he chose. When Leopold heard of the trouble his candidacy was causing, he withdrew of his own accord. Everybody thought this would end the matter. Even Napoleon had previously declared that nothing save the withdrawal of Leopold would prevent war. Now, however, he determined to push the matter still further and thereby either humiliate Prussia so that she would be disgraced before the world, especially before the south German states, or else to goad her into war. Gramont, his minister of foreign affairs, demanded of von Werther, the Prussian ambassador at Paris, that King William write a letter begging the pardon of the Emperor Napoleon, in which he would state that it had not been his intention to insult the emperor and France. Benedetti was also instructed to demand a second audience with King William and secure his promise that he fully agreed with the withdrawal of Prince Leopold and would not sanction a renewal of the candidacy of a Hohenzollern prince.

Benedetti presented this demand on the morning of July 13th when he met the King at the public promenade before the springs at Ems and received the firm but courteous reply, that the King had fully expressed himself in this matter and that any further information might be obtained from his ministry. Then came the demand for a written letter which had been sent from Paris through the Prussian ambassador. "Who ever heard of such insolence?" wrote King William to his wife. He refused Benedetti's request for a third audience. France thereupon considered this an insult and declared war on the 19th of July, 1870.

Napoleon, urged on by the war party at Paris, had committed a fatal blunder. Retribution for this unwarranted attack on the honor of another state came with the greatest rapidity.

Bismarck had followed closely the machinations at Paris. Von Moltke and von Roon, who were in charge of the Prussian army, assured him that if France desired war at any price she would find Prussia ready. Bismarck and von Moltke were discussing matters in Berlin when a dispatch arrived from Ems giving the particulars of the occurrences there. This dispatch had been written by Abeken, one of Bismarck's subordinates, at the suggestion of King William and empowered Bismarck to give the news to the press in case he saw fit to do so. The Chancellor had full authority in this matter. The original dispatch was lengthy and poorly expressed. It reads as follows:

"His Majesty writes me: 'Count Benedetti stopped me at the promenade, and demanded in a very presumptuous manner, that I authorize him to telegraph immediately, that I obligate myself for all time, never again to give my consent if the Hohenzollern resumed their candidacy. I finally rather earnestly refused since one must not or can not ever enter into such obligations. Of course I told him that I had not yet received anything and that since he had been notified by way of Paris and Madrid sooner than I, my government was again not involved.' His majesty has since then obtained a

letter from the prince. Inasmuch as His Majesty told Count Benedetti that he is expecting news from the prince, the King decided, in reference to the above demand and the report of Count Eulenburg and myself, not to receive Count Benedetti again, but to inform him through an adjutant, that His Majesty has now received from the Prince the confirmation of the news which Benedetti had already received from Paris and has nothing further to say to the ambassador. His Majesty leaves it to your excellency to decide whether or not you will inform the press of this new demand of Benedetti's and its refusal."

It will be seen from this that Bismarck alone had the power and right to put this information into the newspapers in any manner he chose. He decided to shorten the dispatch without changing its meaning, so that it was given to the papers in the following form:

"After the news concerning the withdrawal of the Prince of Hohenzollern was sent to the imperial French government by the royal Spanish government, the French ambassador demanded of His Majesty the King at Ems that he be authorized to telegraph to Paris that His Majesty the King obligate himself for the future never to consent to a renewal of the Hohenzollern candidacy. His Majesty the King thereupon refused to receive the French ambassador again and informed him through an adjutant of the service, that His Majesty had nothing further to say to the ambassador."

A storm of indignation at the insolence of France swept not only through Prussia but through all the German states, even those of south Germany, and all of them placed their armies at the disposal of the Prussian king. France had put herself in the wrong and had thereby hastened the unification of all the German states – the very thing Napoleon had been most anxious to prevent.

All of Napoleon's plans miscarried. France was wholly unprepared for war. Austria and Italy waited to see which side would win the first victories. When news came of the great German victories at Wörth, Gravelotte, Metz, and Sedan they determined to remain neutral. When the bombardment of Paris began the outcome of the war could no longer be doubtful.

PROCLAMATION OF THE NEW GERMAN EMPIRE.

January 18, 1871, while the bombardment of Paris was still in progress, an event of world importance took place at Versailles, when the princes of the various German states, headed by the King of Bavaria, offered to King William of Prussia the crown as German Emperor. The proclamation of the new German Empire marks the consummation of the struggle for unification which had been the dream of centuries and which had now been realized by the combination of many favorable circumstances among which the most important were the brilliant statesmanship of Bismarck, the enthusiasm of the German people, and the wonderful efficiency of the German army.