

reforming the military system. For this step, at least from a Prussian standpoint, there was good reason; since the kingdom, although it was based on a strong and compact nucleus, was, as a whole, made up of scattered fragments lying between great military Powers, and therefore could not hope to subsist without a formidable army. The relative weakness of Prussia had, indeed, been burnt into the souls of Prussian statesmen: and King William, on his accession, determined that as far as in him lay, that grave defect should be cured. A keen observer, a good judge of character and capacity, his experience of men and things, which was large, enabled him at once to select fit instruments. He picked out three persons, two soldiers and a statesman, and severe ordeals in after years justified his choice. He appointed General von Roon, Minister of War, and no man in modern times has shown greater qualities in the organization of an army. He placed General von Moltke at the head of the General Staff, which that able man soon converted into the best equipped and the most effective body of its kind known to history. It rapidly became, what it now is, the brain of the army, alike in quarters and in the field. Finally, after some meditation, he called Herr Otto von Bismarck from the diplomatic service, which had revealed his rare and peculiar qualities, and made this Pomeranian squire his chief political adviser and the manager of his delicate and weighty State affairs.

Thenceforth, the long-gathering strength of Prussia, the foundations of which were bedded deep in the history of its people, began to assume a form and a direction which great events revealed to astonished and incredulous Europe. The experiment undertaken by the King and his chief councillors was rendered less difficult by that effect of the Crimean War which so materially lessened the influence of Russia in Germany. The intimate and friendly relations subsisting between the two Courts remained unbroken, and to its preservation in fair weather and foul,