

The Kulturkampf

other hand, after 1866, as war between France and Prussia became more and more probable, the politicians of the Vatican, to whom the possibility of a French defeat was unthinkable, began to regard such a struggle as the cure-all for the manifold diseases from which the Ultramontane cause in Europe was languishing.¹ A French victory would undo all the mischief of the last ten years, evangelical Prussia would again be reduced to the rank of a second-rate power, and the Third Empire would be so strengthened by the victory that Napoleon would be able, perhaps, in conjunction with Austria, Prussia's ally of 1864, in this way to save the temporal power of the Pope.

It would not do, however, to leave the whole work of defence to French bayonets, and accordingly on June 29th, 1868, invitations to an Ecumenical Council were issued to meet in December, 1869. The real purpose for which the Council was summoned, namely, a declaration of Papal Infallibility, was not stated in the Bull which called the Bishops together, but nevertheless the Jesuit plans were known early in 1869 in every capital of Europe through a hint which was

¹ Bismarck, "Reflections and Reminiscences," Vol. II., p. 103.