

THE CAMPAIGN OF SEDAN

INTRODUCTION

IN July, 1870, fifty-five years after the Allied Armies, who had marched from the decisive field of Waterloo, entered Paris, a young diplomatist, Baron Wimpfen, started from the French capital for Berlin. He was the bearer of a Declaration of War from the Emperor Napoleon III. to William I., King of Prussia; and the fatal message was delivered to the French Chargé d'Affaires, M. le Sourd, and by him to the Prussian Government on the 19th of July. Thus, once again, a Napoleon, at the head of a French Empire, was destined to try his strength against the principal German Power beyond the Rhine.

Yet, under what different conditions! The Emperor was not now the Napoleon who surrounded the Austrians at Ulm, broke down the combined forces of Austria and Russia at Austerlitz, and extorted a peace which set him free to overthrow, at Jena and Auerstadt, the fine army left by Frederick the Great, and allowed to crystallize by his weak successors. Nor did the late Emperor find in his front a divided Germany, and the mere survival of a great military organization. He found a united people, and an army surpassing in completeness, as it did in armaments—the victors of Prague, Rosbach, and Leuthen. The Germany known to the Congress of Vienna had disappeared—the deformed had been transformed.