

They chose their own time, before France had brought into force her new law of three years' military training (instead of two), and before she could provide new heavy artillery to meet the siege artillery which Krupp had prepared. They chose their time, when Russia had lost her Navy and had not recovered from the disastrous war in Manchuria. They chose their time when England appeared to be in difficulties with Ireland, where a civil war appeared imminent, both sides having received their weapons from Germany itself.

They reckoned that France would again beg for mercy, knowing that her fair land must be devastated. They reckoned that Russia, being unprepared, might fear the results of a war, and would let the Serbs be conquered and the Balkan States be divided anew between Austria and Turkey. They reckoned that Italy would contribute her Army to attack France and her Navy to control the Mediterranean. They reckoned that Turkey would assail Egypt and raise a religious war on the borders of India. They reckoned that peace-loving England and her Colonial Empire had lost the capacity to defend themselves and that the Irish would revolt. They reckoned that the Americans would be content to reap the benefit to be obtained from the ruin of England's trade. And they reckoned, above all, that their magnificent war organization would triumph at every contest.

Here is where these little Bismareks reckoned wrong. France was prepared to fight for her existence. Belgium was prepared to fight for her independence. Russia was prepared to fight for her fellow-countrymen in Serbia. England was prepared to fight for the observance of solemn treaties, for the freedom of Belgium, for right against might.