

with Austria, but the Prussian invasion of Bohemia ended after seven weeks in the complete defeat of the Austrians at Sadowa, and though the Italians were beaten at Custozza the war came speedily to an end. It was settled by the Treaty of Prague that Austria was to withdraw entirely from German affairs. Prussia was to annex the states of Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and Nassau, which separated the two halves of her dominions, and to form a North German Confederation which the four southern states, Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg, and Hesse-Darmstadt, were to be permitted to join. This they each proceeded to do, by making offensive and defensive alliances with Prussia.

The rising power of Germany was now beginning to threaten the stability of the balance of power in Europe. It was particularly resented by France, who had hitherto been the predominant power on the continent. Bismarck was not at all averse to war, as he saw in it the best means of consolidating the newly-formed union of the German states. From 1867 to 1870 French irritation against Prussia steadily increased, and matters came to a head in the latter year when a prince of the house of Hohenzollern was suggested to fill the vacant Spanish throne. French counsels were singularly divided and uncertain. Gramont, the foreign minister, pressed eagerly for war, while Ollivier, the president of the cabinet, opposed it. Napoleon III himself hesitated and wavered between the two parties. At length Bismarck precipitated matters by publishing the famous telegram from Ems, stating that King William had refused to see the French ambassador, and France declared war on July 19.

The chief events of the Franco-Prussian War may be briefly related. The French forces amounted to some-