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The Seven Weeks' War: the Austro-Prussian Conflict of 1866

H. M. Hozier

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The creation of a new Europe in fire and blood

Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century was in turmoil. Ancient empires sought to hold and consolidate their power, smaller states struggled to forge themselves into new nations and old enmities fanned the fires of conflict. The Seven Weeks War of 1866, the subject of this book, was also known as the Austro-Prussian War, the German War, the Unification War, the German Civil War and the Fraternal War- and when considered as part of the process which brought about the unification of Italy, the Third Independence War. A substantial confederation of German states under the influence of the Austrian empire fought Prussia supported by its own German allies and the kingdom of Italy. The outcome was a decisive victory for Prussia and Italy that ensured future Prussian dominance over the states of Germany; Austria's power over Italy was further destabilised by territorial gains achieved by Italy in Venetia. Eight significant battles on land and sea were fought between the 24th June and the 22nd July 1866. Koniggratz, fought on the 3rd July, 1866, was probably the most decisive Prussian victory and is the battle most remembered today, although 17 days later the Austrian fleet inflicted a significant defeat upon the Italian navy at Lissa. The Austro-German alliance acquitted itself well in battle but was significantly outnumbered by its opponents and suffered almost twice as many casualties. This book is a thorough and scholarly examination of this European war which was fought while the British Empire was preoccupied with consolidation of its territories or the fighting of comparatively small colonial wars. It was one of the earliest wars of the industrial age and will interest all those fascinated by the history of the creation of modern Europe.
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