According to Bīrūnī *(Chronology,* tr. by Sachau, p. 285) certain un- decayed corpses of monks were shown in a cave as the sleepers of Ephesus in the 9th century. The seven sleepers are a favourite subject in early medieval art. The story is well told in Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* ch. xxxiii.

SEVEN WEEKS’ WAR, the name given to the war of 1866 between Prussia on the one side, and Austria, Bavaria, Hanover, Saxony and allied German states on the other. Concurrently with this war another was fought in Venetia between the Italians and the Austrian army of the South, for which see Italian Wars (1848-1870).

In 1850 Prussia, realizing from the breakdown of her mobiliza­tion for the war then impending with Austria that success was impossible, submitted to the Austrian demands, but her states­men saw from the first that the “ surrender of Olmütz,” as it was termed, rendered eventual war with Austria “ a military necessity.” Preparation was begun in earnest after the accession of King William I., who selected Bismarck as his chancellor, Moltke as his chief of staff and Roon as his minister of war, and gave them a free hand to create the political situation and prepare the military machinery necessary to exploit it. Within six years the mobilization arrangements were recast, the war against Denmark in 1864 proving an opportune test of the new system. The number of field battalions was nearly doubled, two-thirds of the artillery received breech-loading rifled guns, the infantry had for some years had the breech-loading “ needle- gun,” and steps were initiated to train an adequate number of staff officers to a uniform appreciation of strategical problems, based on Moltke’s personal interpretation of Clausewitz’s *Vom Kriege.* There was, however, a fundamental disagreement in the tactical ideas of the senior and those of the junior officers. The former, bred in the tradition of the Napoleonic battle, looked for the decision only from the employment of “ masses ”; the latter, trained with the breech-loader and without war experi­ence, expected to decide battles by infantry fire only. Both overlooked the changes brought by the introduction of the long- range rifle (muzzle- and breech-loading alike), which had rendered impossible the “case shot preparation ” which had formed the basis of Napoleon’s tactical system. The men were trained for three years in the infantry and four years in the cavalry and artillery, but the war was not popular and many went unwillingly.

In contemporary military opinion, the Austrians were greatly superior in all arms to their adversary. Their rifle,@@1 though a muzzle-loader, was in every other respect superior to the Prussian needle-gun, and their M.L. rifled guns with shrapnel shell were considered more than sufficient to make good the slight advantage then conceded to the breech-loader. The cavalry was far better trained in individual and real horsemanship and manoeuvre, and was expected to sweep the field in the splendid cavalry terrain of Moravia. All three arms trained their men for seven years, and almost all officers and non-commissioned officers had con­siderable war experience. But the Prussians having studied their allies in the war of 1864 knew the weakness of the Austrian staff and the untrustworthiness of the contingents of some of the Austrian nationalities, and felt fairly confident that against equal numbers they could hold their own.

The occasion for war was engineered entirely by Bismarck; and it is doubtful how far Moltke was in Bismarck’s confidence, though as a far-seeing general he took advantage of every opening which the latter’s diplomacy secured for him. The original scheme for the strategic deployment worked out by Moltke as part of the routine of his office contemplated a defence of the kingdom against not only the whole standing army of Austria, but against 35,000 Saxons, 95,000 unorganized Bavarians and other South Germans, and 60,000 Hanoverians, Hessians, &c., and to meet these he had two corps (VII. and VIII.) on the Rhine, the Guard and remaining six in Brandenburg and Prussia proper. Bismarck diverted three Austrian corps by an alliance with Italy, and by consenting to the neutralization of the

Federal fortresses set at liberty von Beyer’s division for field service in the west. Moltke thereupon brought the VIII. corps and half the VII. to the east and thus made himself numeri­cally equal to his enemy, but elsewhere left barely 45,000 men to oppose 150,000. The magnitude of the risk was sufficiently shown at Langensalza. The direction of the Prussian railways, not laid out primarily for strategic purposes, conditioned the first deployment of the whole army, with the result that at first the Prussians were distributed in three main groups or armies on a front of about 250 m. As there had been no money available to purchase supplies beforehand, each of these groups had to be scattered over a wide area for subsistence, and thus news as to the enemy’s points of concentration necessarily preceded any determination of the plan of campaign.

Of the lines of concentration open to the Austrians, the direction of the roads and railways favoured that of Olmütz so markedly that Moltke felt reasonably certain that it would be chosen, and the receipt of the complete *ordre de bataille* of the Austrian army of the north secured by the Prussian secret service on the nth of June set all doubts at rest.

According to this, the Austrian troops already in Bohemia, 1st corps, Count Clam-Gallas, 30,000 strong, were to receive the Saxons if the latter were forced to evacuate their own country, and to act as an advanced guard or containing wing to the main body under Feldzeugmeister von Benedek (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 8th, 10th corps) which was to concentrate at Olmütz, whence the Prussian staff on insufficient evidence concluded the Austrians intended to attack Silesia, with Breslau as their objective. On this date (June 11th) the Prussians stood in the following order: The army of the Elbe, General Herwarth von Bittenfeld, three divisions only, about Torgau; the I. army, Prince Frederick Charles (II., III.., IV. corps), about Görlitz; the II. army under the crown prince (I., V., VI.) near Breslau; the Guard and a reserve corps of Landwehr at Berlin. As the army of the Elbe was numerically inferior to Clam-Gallas and the Saxons, the reserve corps was at once despatched to reinforce it, and the Guard was sent to the crown prince. Further, in deference to political (probably dynastic) pressure, the crown prince was ordered eastwards to defend the line of the Neisse, thus increasing the already excessive length of the Prussian front. Had the Austrians attacked on both flanks forthwith, the Prussian central (I.) army could have reached neither wing in time to avert defeat, and the political consequences of the Austrian victory might have been held to justify the risks involved, for even if unsuccess­ful the Austrians and Saxons could always retreat into Bavaria and there form a backbone of solid troops for the 95,000 South Germans.

*Advance of the Elbe and I. Armies.—*This was one of the gravest crises **in** Moltke’s career. To overcome it he at length obtained authority (June 15th) to order the army of the Elbe into Saxony, and on the 18th the Prussians entered Dresden, the Saxons retiring along the Elbe into Bohemia; and on the same day the news that the Austrian main body was marching from Olmütz towards Prague arrived at headquarters. Moltke took three days to solve the new problem, then, on the 22nd, he ordered the I. and II. armies to cross the Austrian frontier and unite near Gitschin, a point conveniently situated about the convergence of the roads crossing the Bohemian mountains. As during this operation the II. army would be the most exposed, the I., to which the army of the Elbe had now been attached, was to push on its advance to the utmost. Apparently with this purpose in view, Prince Frederick Charles was instructed to break up his army corps into their constituent divisions, and move each division as a separate column on its own road, the reserve of cavalry and artillery following in rear of the centre. The con­sequences were the reverse of those anticipated. On the afternoon of the 26th the advance guards of the I. army and army of the Elbe came in contact with the Austrians at Hühnerwasser and Podol and drove the latter back after a sharp engagement, but, having no cavalry, could neither observe their subsequent proceedings nor estimate their strength. The prince, seeing the opportunity for a battle, immediately issued orders for an

@@@l The Lorenz rifle carried a .57 bullet and was sighted to 1000 yds.; the needle-gun with a much lighter bullet was sighted to 400 only.