

of refuge with outlets at once into the Baltic and the North sea. It has been aptly compared to a "fox's earth with a double entrance." The law for the immense increase of the army had not yet come into full effect, and the projected preparations for offensive warfare were not entirely completed. Every conceivable plan for the invasion of France as the most redoubtable adversary had been critically considered. There were three possible routes for this invasion: one leading directly from Germany into France was barred by a chain of great defensive fortresses, with the exception of the somewhat narrow gap of Mirécourt between Toul and Epinal. The other two passed through the neutral states of Luxemburg and Belgium. All of these were eventually to be utilized. The invasion was to take the form of a great tidal wave sweeping irresistibly across the frontier on the broadest front, and ultimately enveloping and destroying the French field army and dictating terms in the capital. Success must be gained by the utmost swiftness and ruthless energy in execution, combined with a decided numerical superiority. Owing to the great extent of the country, the incompleteness of its railway system and presumed inefficiency of its government, it was considered improbable that the mobilization of the Russian army could be effected in less than six weeks. In France, the mobilization period was two days longer than in Germany; consequently it seemed possible that the German army might overwhelm France and be in a position to turn effectively upon the Russians afterwards.

The course that would be pursued by Great Britain was a matter of vital importance to both countries. The German chancellor frankly thought it incredible that Great Britain would risk the existence of her empire for the sake of a mere "scrap of paper" as he scornfully described the treaty for the maintenance of Belgian neutrality. If Great Britain remained neutral, the superiority of the German and Austrian fleets was so great as to insure them naval supremacy. The French feared that British assistance, if given at all, would come so late as to be of small avail. The declaration of August 5 was made so promptly as to relieve them from their worst apprehensions in that respect.

#### OPERATIONS ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1914.

On August 6 the Germans brought up their heavy howitzers, and in the course of the day, to the amazement of the soldiers of other nations, drove the Belgians out of two of their strongest forts at Liège. Still the Belgian resistance was obstinate and the Germans lost precious time in their advance. Some of the forts held out for many days, and as long as this continued, it was impossible for them to utilize the railways to pass the city in great force, and supply their troops. This delay enabled the French and British armies to advance and meet them on the frontier between France and Belgium.

As a diversion in favour of the Belgians the first French army made a premature inroad into Alsace. A force based upon Belfort crossed the frontier and occupied Altkirch on August 7, and took possession of the large industrial city of Mulhausen next day. On the 9th, however, this force was attacked from two directions and