

# FRANCE

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THE pathos of incidents caused by the war is often such as to wring the heartstrings, and to double the determination that this war must be the last one ever to take place between great nations. Next to Belgium, the burden of the war has fallen most heavily upon France, and the calm resignation and uncomplaining self-sacrifice with which the people of France have met the calls upon their patriotism serve as an inspiration to those who believe that men and women can rise to heights of unselfishness which shall make war a thing of the past.

## Don't Want Militarism.

Ever since 1870 the spectre of Germany militant along the frontier of ravished Alsace-Lorraine has compelled France to a conscription which she did not wish. The French people have no longing for military aggression, and no desire to extend the boundaries of their European domains, other of course than the wish for the home-return of the lost provinces. But they recognized the threat of Germany, and knew that it was necessary for the safety of their land that each son of France should give up to his country two years to be devoted to military training, and that so long as physically able to serve he must remain subject to the call to arms. The patience with which the people accepted this obligation and this national duty is sometimes intensely pathetic.

The announcement that war had been declared found the people unspeakably sad, but unswerving in their determination to meet the crisis. There was no excitement, none of the marching and shouting which we should have expected from a nation which we have always considered as much more mercurial than we.

From the very beginning, the war was accepted as a thing as inevitable as fate, as a thing bigger than all the interests of the individual, as a thing

to which such interests must be subordinated without question. Whatever orders the authorities gave were obeyed unhesitatingly and without criticism, and the bare statement that it was "pour la patrie" justified every sacrifice. The dignity with which the mass of the people accepted their duties under the new conditions imposed by war was as remarkable as it was admirable.

In Paris there was practically no disorder, only an inexpressible unhappiness and sorrow which contrasted strangely with the accustomed gaiety of the city. On the first night of war a few men marched along the boulevards and a few stones were thrown against shops bearing German names, but nothing which could be termed rioting took place. The next day such shops bore placards giving the name of the regiment and the position in it of the owner of the shop, followed by a statement that during his absence the shop was entrusted to the people of Paris. This ended all disorder, the populace accepting the confidence placed in it, and showing itself worthy.

## Soldier's Motherless Bairns.

This confidence in the people of France was illustrated by another incident. The call came to one reservist to appear for entrainment for the front at one of the railway stations. This man had just lost his wife, and was left with two children, three years old and one year old. He had no near relatives, and had been taking care of the children himself.

At the appointed time he appeared at the station, carrying the baby and leading the other child. There was the usual crowd of persons present, and the soldier addressing them said:

"My country has called for me, and I am here. But my children, I have no one with whom to leave them. What shall I do with my children?"

A working woman among the spec-