

CHAPTER II

THE WAR BREAKS

AFTER serving four years and three months in the United States Navy, I received an honorable discharge on April 14, 1914. I held the rank of chief petty officer, first-class gunner. It is not uncommon for garbies to go easy for a while between enlistments—they like a vacation as much as anyone—and it was my intention to loaf for a few months before joining the navy again.

After the war started, of course, I had heard more or less about the German atrocities in Belgium, and while I was greatly interested, I was doubtful at first as to the truth of the reports, for I knew how news gets changed in passing from month to month, and I never was much of one to believe things until I saw them, anyway. Another thing that caused me to be interested in the war was the fact that my mother was born in Alsace. Her maiden name, Diervieux, is well known in Alsace. I had often visited my grandmother in St. Nazaire and knew the country. So with France at war, it was not strange that I should be even more interested than many other garbies.