

CHAPTER I

THE GERMAN INVASION

Germany, it will be recalled, declared war against Russia on August 1, 1914; and on the same day the French Premier returned a noncommittal reply to the German ultimatum asking whether France would remain neutral in a Russo-German conflict. Early on August 2nd German troops invaded Luxembourg, and at the same time the German Minister in Brussels proposed that Belgium "maintain an attitude of friendly neutrality toward Germany" by letting troops march through against France. This proposal being rejected, on August 4th the first German troops crossed the Belgian frontier at Gemmenich near the Dutch border. For Belgium the next few weeks were filled with exaltation and agony. There was an unparalleled upsurge of patriotic emotion. Men of all parties sprang to the support of the King. The Socialist leader, M. Vandervelde, entered the Clerical Cabinet. Amid tremendous enthusiasm, the war session of Parliament, August 3rd and 4th, voted \$40,000,000 for defense. At Liége, attacked by General von Emmich with three army corps, a gallant Belgian garrison under General Leman held back the German military machine for four days. The German soldiery were mowed down in direct assaults, and only when siege guns demolished two of the forts did they enter the city on the night of August 7th—other forts still holding out. German cavalry then swept over the neighboring country. With skirmishes at Tirlemont, Diest, and other points, the Belgian army retired to a line of defense at Louvain, where on August 19th it made a brave stand against overwhelming odds and was defeated. Next day the German forces entered Brussels without firing a shot. The Government had already been removed to the strongly fortified city of Antwerp; and in this area the main Belgian army remained posted during the remainder of August and all of September, while the German

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invasion rolled southward toward Paris. Whitlock's diary gives a stirring view of the first three weeks of the war, culminating in the occupation of Brussels.