

# Why Europe is Fighting

It is probable that there will always be a difference of opinion as to the real underlying cause of the present great conflict of the nations of Europe. Some declare that the ambition and desire for conquest of the Kaiser Wilhelm was largely responsible for the war. Others are of opinion that the war was decided upon by Germany in the hope that successful conflict with a foreign foe would end internal discontent and strengthen the power of the ruling classes. Others again declare that war was the sooner-or-later-inevitable result of the piling up of armaments by all the great powers and the mutual distrust thereby engendered. From Germany different opinions are heard, and the war is declared to have been forced upon the fatherland by the desire of France for revenge, Russia's ambition for conquest and Britain's jealousy of Germany's commercial progress.

It may be that all of these things have had their part in plunging Europe into bloodshed. Certain it is that the comparatively insignificant incidents which immediately preceded the declaration of war were not the real cause.

## The Austro-Servian Dispute

The original dispute was one between Austria-Hungary and Servia. The latter country for some years has been the headquarters of various Pan-Servian societies carrying on agitations and in-

trigues against Austria-Hungary, and on June 28 last the heir apparent to the Austrian throne, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife were assassinated by a band of Servian conspirators. Austria demanded the punishment of the assassins and the suppression of all societies engaged in propaganda against Austria-Hungary. The demands of Austria-Hungary were contained in a lengthy document threatening war if Servia did not give certain undertakings within forty-eight hours. Among the undertakings demanded were:

"4. To remove from the military service and from the administration in general, all officers and functionaries guilty of propaganda against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy whose names and deeds the Austro-Hungarian Government reserves to itself the right of communicating to the Royal Government.

"5. To accept the collaboration in Servia of representatives of the Austro-Hungarian Government in the suppression of the subversive movement directed against the territorial integrity of the monarchy."

## Efforts for Peace

On the brusque and peremptory nature of this communication becoming known, the other powers naturally became alarmed and efforts were made, notably by Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign minister, to secure an extension of the

time limit in order that the dispute might if possible be settled thru mediation. At the same time Servia appealed to Great Britain to induce Austria to moderate her demands, which were considered absolutely unacceptable. Russia lost no time in indicating that she would go to the assistance of Servia in case she were attacked, while Germany had previously been consulted by Austria-Hungary and had pledged her support to the dual monarchy. Great Britain, however, declined to concern herself with the merits of the dispute between Servia and Austria-Hungary and confined her efforts at this stage to an attempt to delay the commencement of hostilities and to arrange with the other powers to bring about the mediation of the dispute. Sir Edward Grey also advised Servia to make a conciliatory reply to Austria-Hungary and this advice was acted upon, tho Austria's demands were not conceded in their entirety.

## War Declared

Austria-Hungary apparently had not expected entire submission and refusing to accept the answer of Servia formally declared war on that country on July 28. Meanwhile Russia, Germany and France began to make preparations for war, France holding herself bound by treaty obligations to assist Russia. All the nations at this time professed a desire for peace, but with armies gathering on

the frontiers the diplomats failed to dispel the atmosphere of mutual distrust and August 1 found Russian troops invading Germany, while the Germans invaded first Luxemburg and then Belgium in the march towards Paris.

## Great Britain's Position

Until Belgium was invaded the course of Great Britain was not clear. France and Russia naturally were anxious to have the aid of Britain and especially of her navy, but Britain so far had no part in the quarrel and public opinion was strongly in favor of remaining at peace if such a course could be honorably followed. The British Government, however, had understandings, not amounting to obligations, with France, and since the French navy was in the Mediterranean as a result of those understandings, Sir Edward Grey announced that if the German navy attempted to attack the undefended shores of France Great Britain would do everything in her power to protect her neighbor. When it became known that Belgium, whose neutrality had been guaranteed by all the powers, including Germany, had been invaded by the Kaiser's hosts, Great Britain demanded their instant withdrawal. This demand Germany refused and on Tuesday, August 4, both countries declared war.

## Gallant Belgium

Belgium, offering the shortest and

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easiest route from Berlin to Paris, and enabling the invaders to avoid the immense fortifications of the Franco-German frontier, was asked by Germany to facilitate the peaceful passage of troops and was promised her independence after the war if she would thus aid the Kaiser, but the offer was indignantly refused and the passage of the invaders resisted to the utmost. Thus the line up in the greatest war of history was completed, with Germany and Austria-Hungary on one side and Russia, France, Belgium, Servia and Great Britain on the other. Fighting so far has taken place in all those countries except Great Britain, with the chief battle grounds at present in Northern France, North-Western Belgium, Eastern Germany and Northern Austria. Japan has chosen the present as an opportune time to attempt to oust Germany from her Chinese possessions and is attacking the strongly fortified colony and port of Kian-Choo. Both Great Britain and Japan have announced that the latter country will confine her activities to Asiatic waters.