

THE
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PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCE IN 1915.¹

THE great majority of Frenchmen were certainly deeply surprised when, in 1914, Austria rejected the almost total submission of Servia to its ultimatum, Germany declared war on France, violated Belgium, and invaded the whole northeastern part of our country. Despite the disquieting reports that travelers brought back from time to time, almost no one had believed in the possibility of war. Merchants had made their business arrangements as usual; young men and young women had already departed to pass their vacations on the other side of the Rhine. The army was not especially equipped for war. The soldiers entered the campaign attired in their parade uniforms, in *képis* and in red trousers, their tunics ornamented with gold lace and gleaming buttons. But none felt the sadness of the surprise as keenly as did the majority of the philosophers.

In the first place, they were almost all imbued with the great truth that a war between civilized nations was disastrous for the victors as well as for the vanquished. They knew of the economic solidarity of the European nations which had already been attained in the industrial and financial world, and they were acquainted with the community of interests that certain governments and their diplomatic agents had systematically knitted together in the political order. Hence they drew the natural conclusion that no people, even if urged on by a militaristic and ambitious aristocracy, would be foolish enough to unloose such a cataclysm—one whose results the people themselves would be

¹ Translated by J. G. Proctor.