

GERMAN ESPIONAGE

THE THEFT OF PLANS OF ESQUIMAULT FORTIFICATIONS.

Another Example of the Minute Ramifications of the German Spy System—An Official Who Used a Revolver.

Not the least interesting tale of German espionage is that woven around the theft of the plans of the fortifications at Esquimault, the Pacific naval base on the British Columbia coast. The story as narrated to a Whig reporter this morning by a British Columbia man visiting in Kingston, affords another example of the minute ramifications of the German spy system.

Alvo Von Alvonsleiben established himself in the best circles in Vancouver and Victoria, had a beautiful home, entertained handsomely, and was a member of the select clubs. He owned a big mine on Vancouver Island, and was intimate with the manager of a trust company, the dissolution of which enters to some extent in the Esquimault affair. The plans of the fortifications were supposed to have been in the sole possession of a public man very prominent in British Columbia affairs. The latter's private secretary was an intimate friend of the head of the trust company which had reached a precarious condition through its manager's financial plunging. Von Alvonsleiben, the recital, proceeds, was aware of the above facts, and approached the trust manager with an offer for Esquimault's plans to be obtained through the private secretary.

Shortly afterwards Von Alvonsleiben's brother left British Columbia for Germany, and apparently decided to investigate Gibraltar. He was arrested there as a spy, and when searched the plans of Esquimault were found upon him. He was summarily disposed of in the manner prescribed for spies, but there was a hurry-up call to the British Columbia trusted officials. The cable announcing the arrest of the lesser Von Alvonsleiben was opened in the department office by the private secretary, who pulled out a desk drawer in which he kept a revolver. To the scandal of the department, he added a tragedy.

The cablegram included a summons to the public official to proceed immediately to London, a fact which the press recorded shortly after the outbreak of war. Of course, the tangle was straightened out, but Alvo Von Alvonsleiben's big residence is now occupied only by his wife. There are rumors of a high-powered gray car making night trips from Seattle where Alvo has been interned, but this is not vouched for. However, there is the story in its barest details. It was related to the reporter as a real fact, and even as fiction, its outline is almost worthy of E. Phillips Oppenheim.