

EVEN REPORTERS QUIZZED BY OTTAWA'S SECRET SERVICE

U. S. Press Men Found They Couldn't Wire Sensational Stories—Canada Has Real Sherlock Holmes Men, Who Assume Disguises and "Pump" Suspicious Strangers.

PUBLIC BELIEVE PARLIAMENT FIRE WAS SET

Special to The Star by Gregory Clark.

Ottawa, Feb. 7.—New snows have fallen and sealed the cold ruins on Parliament Hill. The winds of Canada have grown accustomed to their new courses amid once-stately halls, and their sad voices cry senselessly in desolate chambers where once a nation's voice was heard.

But the wide country-side has not forgotten the spire that stood so majestically in the evening sky, symbol of a people's aspiration, marking from afar the meeting place of a Dominion's counsellors. The habitant in his cottage in the valley, the statesman in his mansion on the hills, looks out and sees the spire is fallen. And all the snows of the Labrador could not quench the rising flame of anger that is in habitant's and statesman's heart.

For after a quiet Sunday, a day of rest after two of extraordinary happenings, Ottawa has risen refreshed in a white-hot and purifying anger, and absolutely convinced that the Parliament fire was no mere stroke of fate, but an ingeniously-plotted German crime. And this anger is destined to spread to whatever part of Canada is not yet as deeply affected itself as Ottawa. Col. A. P. Sherwood, head of the secret service, still issues serene assurances that the fire was an accident. But Col. Sherwood's office becomes less accessible every hour. His table is piled deep in telegrams. His establishment hums with a secret and amazing activity. Tall, lean strangers of military bearing are arriving on trains, and after brief conferences at the colonel's office, leave hastily and as noiselessly as possible. Sir Sam Hughes, still pooh-poohing and tat-tutting, wears an anxious look and has ordered special troops to guard the capital, the name of which troops is not to be known. All day and all night, relief guards of the 77th Battalion, with bayonets fixed and magazines loaded, tramp through the streets. The 77th is getting about as active a service at it will ever get.

Guards are on the gates of Rideau Hall, where the Duke of Connaught lives. And in all parts of the garden, frost-nipped soldiers click the bolts of their rifles to keep the shells loose and ready.

Censors Were Busy.

Ottawa's censorship rather astonished some of the American correspondents, who pleaded in vain for stories which were thought by the authorities to be too sensational for wire transmission. One—the New York Tribune man—had four stories "killed" on Saturday. One has since appeared in a Toronto morning paper. It deals with the finding of a trunk in the Chateau Laurier. This trunk belonged to a man named Schweiber, who registered in September, 1913, before the war, and who stayed around Ottawa for several weeks. He left owing the hotel a big bill and his trunk was held. One day it was opened by accident.

The story says plans of the city of Ottawa, showing all the main buildings such as the mint and the East Block of the Parliament Buildings, where the immense gold reserve is kept, were found in the trunk. They were marked in red ink and described in German handwriting. Mr. Angus Gordon, the manager of the Chateau, handed the plans over to the secret service, the yarn relates.

This discovery was made not long ago. The man Schweiber never returned for the trunk, as apparently he had left so hurriedly, believing himself detected.

This story the chief censor "canned."

"But I'll write it when I return to New York," argued the correspondent.

"It won't go over these wires," said the censor.

But the story is now out and there's no harm in telling it here.

Yarn Absolutely Denied.

There's also no harm in printing the fact that the report of incriminating papers and plans of Government buildings having been in the trunk is absolutely denied by Mr. Angus Gordon, manager of the hotel. "The origin of this and similar stories is well known. The source is not reliable," it is said.

The facts are that three years ago Schweiber registered at the Chateau. He ran up a board bill of \$116 and left suddenly without paying it. Recently a letter was received by Mr. Gordon from the defaulting guest, who is in San Francisco. It asked that the trunk be forwarded, and enclosed a draft of \$116 in settlement of the long overdue bill. The trunk was opened and found to contain a number of personal belongings of Schweiber and letters in German. These were handed over to the au-

thorities, but are said to be letters from his family.

Those "Fer" and "Against."

The following believe the fire to have been accidental: Col. Sherwood, Sir Sam Hughes, Col. Chambers, Mr. Frank Glass, M.P., and about half a dozen more well known men. Eighty-five thousand others in Ottawa believe in the German theory, and are backed up in their belief by the aforementioned gentlemen's activities which belie their words.

Canada has often been curious to know something about the Canadian secret service, the existence of which has sometimes been doubted. This Ottawa calamity has at least cleared up that doubt. Canada has most certainly a secret service, a large and really secret one, the intelligence and power of which is now at the test. Men who have been in Ottawa for years, newspaper men and Government officials, whose bumps of curiosity are as large as their knowledge of obscure information, have not been aware of the fact that a secret service is operated from a simple little office in the Parliament Buildings.

One man said Col. Sherwood had five "detectives" doing secret work for him. Another old-timer on Parliament Hill was certain that Canada's secret service consisted of the Dominion Police, whose constables wear blue uniforms and gold braid. These Dominion policemen, who are nearly all ex-Life Guards, are as magnificent a body of men as there is in the world. But their service is certainly no secret.

Since Thursday night, however, a new force has been in evidence, a force never felt in Ottawa before. Men of all classes and kinds, travelers, dudes, coarse-cut lumber dealers, foreigners selling patent medicines, are coming and going from Ottawa without attending to any business but a brief casual call at the East Block or a little chat in the hotel rotunda with one of Col. Sherwood's men.

Reporters Were Shadowed.

For example, The Star's representative was having late dinner in the grill of the Chateau with two American press representatives when an ill-dressed little man, who was dining in a corner of the room, rose from his table and staggering in an unmistakably drunken fashion, unceremoniously joined our party.

He gave his name and said he was a lumber dealer, and ordered beer. He drank his bottle of mild beer, became much drunker, and began a fuddled conversation in regard to the fire. He blathered and gabbed about Germans, spoke confidentially of knowing a lot more about the origin of the fire, but with all the adroitness of a sober lawyer, drew us on whenever we opened our mouths. Finally he left us and went staggering away gracefully among the tables.

Now, it so happened that one of the Americans had a German name. All three of us were strangers in town. We had been nosing around busily for news and had told nobody our business.

Not half an hour later, we encountered the same man in the Central station talking to a porter, and perfectly sober. He leaped lightly aboard the sleeping car. We followed and cornered him in the smoker. He became at once the same old fozzled, fuddled man of the grill room. But he knew we were "on" and he retired early to his berth.

There is no doubt in the world but that this ingenious party was one of Canada's secret service men, either just amusing himself till his train left at our expense knowing we were newspaper men, or actually giving us the "once over," seeing us to be idle and inquisitive strangers.

And he was not in the car when it reached Smith's Falls.

Tames the Wild Birds.

Mr. Jack Miner, of Kingsville, lectured in Convocation Hall Saturday evening on "Wild Geese in Sanctuary." To a large audience of nature lovers the lecture was a revelation. On Mr. Miner's farm, thousands of wild birds are given a sanctuary, and his greatest success of all has been in inducing the great wild goose of the Arctic wastes to live in thousands on his ponds.

Gave Indian Pow-Wow.

Pte. W. Jackson, of the remount corps in France, in an interesting letter to his family at 54 Harcourt avenue, describes the Christmas Day festivities. Officers and non-coms were deaf, dumb, and blind for the day, and the soldiers evidently had a fine time. At night an Indian pow-wow was given by western members of the unit. The scenery was painted by a French artist, and the costumes made by a member of the corp. Indian dances and customs were reproduced in an excellent fashion.