

MANY WAR PLOTS IN CANADA

PROVE TO BE PRACTICAL JOKES

Dummies on a Raft Fooled Sentries on the Bridge at Montreal.

Submarine Hoax Caused a Great Amount of Anxiety at Esquimalt.

AMPLE evidence has been forthcoming from time to time to show that German agents have been active in Canada, and would have been more so were the many plans hatched across the border not discovered in time. It is doubtful, however, if Canadians could have been more scared—or better, surprised—had these many plots been carried out, than they have been over the many "plots" discovered in mad haste, and in leisure found to be inventions of the mind or, in some cases, hoaxes. Every city in Canada has had its scare, and it is the purpose of this article to give a few of the many which have come to the writer's knowledge, says H. M. B. in The Toronto Star Weekly.

Not long ago Canadian papers carried in big headlines, "Hun Makes Midnight Attack on the Victoria Bridge." Naturally Montreal was deeply excited. Someone had been seen approaching the bridge, had been challenged, and had gone away. Later the same or another figure had been seen coming over the ice. The guards had fired and the man disappeared in the darkness. At dawn what may have been footsteps leading to a hole in the ice were discovered. It is presumed the man was drowned.

These are the facts and quite a few people got excited about them. But one who knows Victoria Bridge and the provisions made to safeguard it from attack over the ice or by boat in summer time, places but little credence in the alien enemy story. It is not for me to tell how Victoria Bridge might be attacked, but it is safe to say that it won't be the way feared on that occasion. It is by no means certain a man was seen, and if there were one, he was possibly one who had dined and wined too well in the south shore, and was making his way homeward by devious steps.

The same bridge was the scene of a very cruel hoax last summer. Not far away is a well known club, among a few of whose members the brilliant idea was conceived of giving the guards a scare. They constructed a raft and upon it placed in an upright position three full dressed dummies. Just after dusk the raft was towed to midstream and cut loose. Down it drifted until when a hundred yards or so off cries of "Halt" broke from the guards. But the raft kept on. A fusillade of shots rang out that would have decimated a battalion, but still it kept coming. Nothing could be done to stop it, and when finally it passed beneath the soldiers momentarily expected to see a huge section of one of the two sole bridges over the St. Lawrence scatter in the air. By this time a motorboat had put out after the Hun spies and came up with their craft aground on St. Helen's Island.

A rigid investigation was held but so far as known the perpetrators of the hoax were not made to answer.

From Montreal the reader is asked to jump to the Pacific coast. It is not really a spy story, but, as it is, will remain one of the classics of the war as far as Canada is concerned. Here it is as told the writer by one who recently returned from the far West.

In the early weeks of the war, when a trio of German cruisers were roaming about in the Pacific, there was something more than uneasiness in the coast towns of British Columbia: Vancouver and Victoria expected to wake up some morning and find shells exploding in their midst.

A Seattle firm had just completed the building of two submarines for a South American republic, and Sir Richard McBride, then Premier of British Columbia, was commissioned to purchase these craft for the Government.

To this point the story is ancient history. But on a certain night crews from the boat-building concern brought the two submarines to a point in the Straits of Juan de Fuca, where the imaginary line dividing Canadian from American waters is supposed to lie, and here two crews of British bluejackets took possession. They headed the submarines for the fortified harbor of Esquimalt, just outside Victoria.

With German cruisers hovering about the coast, there was activity and wakefulness in the harbor of Esquimalt. Every battery was fully manned, every gun ready for action. Then one morning a tug "galloped" into the narrow harbor, and as it passed under the guns of the outermost battery its captain, standing all dishevelled on the deck, screamed to those on shore, "German torpedo-boats coming! They're not half a mile out, steaming full speed."

The guns of Esquimalt were laid for the half-mile range, and there was more excitement in that crowd of new gunners than they would have liked to admit. The officer who commanded the forts told afterwards that he did not know why he had not given the command to fire. Perhaps he was too excited, perhaps he had a presentiment. The guns were laid for the quarter-mile, and there, almost buried in the great waves, their speed stirred up, came two low, menacing craft, tearing through the water, straight for the entrance to the harbor. They were so close in that they would have been powerless to harm the forts before being blown out of the water by the shore guns.

Instead of firing, the batteries turned their guns on the two vessels, the grim muzzles moving as the ships moved, following them in.

Then all at once from the deck of one of the boats there floated a tiny white signal, a handkerchief flag of truce. Then the British ensign went up from the decks, and then the craft were seen to be two submarines steaming awash.

Some half an hour later came word from the proper authorities that the garrison might expect two British submarines to arrive that day!

Here is one told the writer by a Halifax newspaper man. It almost found its way into print some months ago and was just about to be put on a wire serving one of the big news agencies when betetr counsel prevailed.

The Halifax newspaper man had taken out a commission, and while at dinner with a brother officer was told that the wife of one of the officers of the Princess Pats had that day received a letter from him in which he detailed the discovery of spies in the Pats, and their subsequent end. The officer told the newspaperman that he had read the letter himself, so the newspaper man being no longer in the business told it to an associate. It was necessary to disguise the story somewhat, so the reporter wrote a "clothes line cable" from London. Here it is as it was turned in to the managing editor:

"London, Sept. 23.—At least three—and perhaps four—'members' of the Princess Pat's have met the spies' doom, a brick wall, a firing squad, and—oblivion. They came to their deaths by order of the British authorities. But, these members of the P.P.C.I. were Germans. The story of their daring trickery has just leaked out here, though the spies themselves have been under the sod several weeks.

"From a highly authoritative, and usually well informed, source, the correspondent gleaned these few details. When the Pat's were reorganized, after the terrible slaughter which left them with less than a tithe of their original members, there was a good deal of bustle and confusion. Whole platoons of men were brought in, and a new P.P.C.I. was slowly welded together.

"With almost uncanny knowledge of these facts, and guessing that strange faces would be quite common for a while, several Germans, speaking excellent English, mixed in with the Pats, clothed in uniforms which they had taken from the dead bodies after the fearful carnage. Their daring was for a while—how long is not known—successful. They went undetected until an officer, well-known in Halifax, began to suspect a certain 'member' of his company of signalling to the Germans. He was kept under careful surveillance, and two others, similarly employed, were located.

"Captain ——— ordered their arrest as soon as his suspicions were confirmed. They were stripped of their uniforms and questioned severely. They could not prevent an absolute unmasking, and were sent behind the lines for disposition by higher authorities. It is stated that a fourth was later discovered. All met short shrift.

"Their daring, almost beyond parallel, has amazed and astonished all who have been cognizant of the details, and has added another chapter to the amazing story of the German spy."

The story was vouched for on such good authority that the managing editor almost said "Let 'er go." Something prompted him, however, to phone the lady in question. Not only had she not received any letter giving the details narrated, but at that moment was frantically endeavoring to get in touch with her husband through the Militia Department. He had been wounded and was then in hospital. The editor taxed the reporter, who in turn got after his former associate, who then went after the original source, and the officer still protested to high heaven that he had read the very letter! But the story was not published till now.

No one has yet computed the number of gun bases "discovered" in all parts of Canada. Practically every city with a hill nearby has had such a find thrust upon it, while tennis courts and golf courses everywhere have been examined with scrupulous care.

Two of the best examples were discovered on the St. Lawrence, one on the Island of Orleans, below Quebec, the other at Chateauguay, above Montreal. In the first instance it proved to be enough of a base to have its owner interned as an alien enemy, but the other, like most of its kind, was harmless. It was a tennis court of concrete, which those in the neighborhood declared to be seven feet deep. In reality it was not that deep in inches.

The number of people who have mistaken fire balloons and ever bright stars for lights on hostile aeroplanes is countless. This is particularly true in regions near the border, but so far no hostile craft has been located by the military on the alert. They realize how quickly scared most people are, however, and only a few days ago found it necessary to give notice that a convention in New York State near the Quebec border would send up a number of balloons for scientific purposes.