

SPY-HUNTING IS NOW GREAT SPORT IN BRITAIN

Everybody Seems to Be Nervous and Almost Any Kind of a Tale Will Go.

Undercurrent of Restlessness, Although Nation Generally Calm and Sober.

Few Scenes Resembling Outbursts Which Accompanied the Battles in Africa.

London, Sept. 7.—On the whole, the British public has so far taken the war calmly and soberly. There have been no scenes resembling the hysterical outbursts that accompanied the beginning of the Boer War. One exceptional feature of this campaign has contributed largely to the absence of popular excitement—the secrecy that was preserved respecting the arrangements for the departure of the expeditionary force. There were no public farewells, as on the embarkation of the troops for the Transvaal fifteen years ago. The machinery worked, so to speak, without a sound.

The motto "business as usual" has, in the main, been loyally carried out with little disturbance, save from inevitable causes. Even where workers have been drawn off to the colors, and horses and vans have been commandeered for military purposes, the gaps have generally been quietly filled as far as circumstances would allow.

At the same time, so epoch-making an event as the present war could not occur without providing a good deal of fresh material for theses on the psychology of the crowd. It would have been nothing short of a miracle if the whole population had been as indifferent to what was happening as Archimedes at the siege of Syracuse. The nearest approach to a panic was the run on the provision stores when the country was as yet just on the brink of being drawn into the conflict. The evidence is overwhelming that the demand for food was beyond all reasonable precaution. "Country Life" mentions the case of one lady who purchased no fewer than twenty sides of bacon, being the entire stock of the chief provision merchant in the little town where she lives. The "Universe" knows of one flourishing suburb where five large provision shops were absolutely decuded of goods, and had to be closed until they could obtain further supplies. The London "Nation" says that one of the West End stores received a single private order for \$2500 worth of provisions.

August is normally the great holiday month of the year, when every seaside resort has its accommodation strained to the uttermost. This year, the hotels and boarding houses are complaining of many cancelled engagements. Paterfamilias thinks that, on the whole, he and his family will be better off at home. On the east coast, the fear of a German descent has worked upon the minds of the more nervous, whose apprehensions have been stimulated by the sight of the necessary military precautions. At Felixstowe, in Suffolk, for instance, the holiday crowd suddenly found a detachment of soldiers taking possession of the pier, converting a large lodging house into military headquarters, closing many of the approaches to the shore, and issuing a proclamation that any person found on the

promenade after dark would be liable to be shot. It is little wonder that timid visitors took the first train for home. A seaside resort whose geographical position makes it a military outpost in war time, can not reasonably complain if its attractiveness as a place of recreation temporarily suffers.

But one has a great deal of sympathy with some other towns along the coast which are losing heavily through the circulation of quite baseless rumors. Many possible visitors to Margate have been kept away by stories that the sands were being cleared of children and guarded by territorials, that half the houses and hotels along the front had been closed by the military authorities, and that guns had been heard which showed that a great naval action was being fought in the vicinity. These were all either gross exaggerations or inventions. The sound of firing was simply that of the gun-testing and artillery training at Shoeburyness, and that is almost an everyday event in time of peace. Another mischievous rumor alleged that the pier at Walton-on-the-Naze had been blown up by Germans. Although absolutely untrue, this statement is known to have deterred a large number of prospective visitors. In several instances, the town councils of seaside resorts have thought it necessary to insert in the London press advertisements which deny such injurious tales and reassure intending holiday-makers as to their freedom from any risk of molestation.

Hunting Out the Spies.

One hears some really absurd stories of the spy mania that has disturbed the pulse of many people, especially among the uneducated. The most harmless use of pencil and paper brings a man under suspicion. The other day a topical artist was drawing a sketch of the Greenwich gasometer for some quite innocent purpose. A woman, who passed, caught sight of him and exposed his deep-laid scheme to the passers-by. "He ought to be ashamed of himself, he ought; but I can see through him. He's got it all

down, and one of them "airships will come along and know where to drop its bomb." The argument was so convincing that the poor artist had to be escorted to his home by a policeman. The next day he went out to Kensington, and drew a dismal house with a tree in front of it supposing that no possible objection could be raised to that. But very much the same thing happened as at Greenwich and, when the baffled artist appealed to a policeman to say what good the drawing of the house and tree could do to the Germans, the representative of the law went so far as to admit that he could not see what good that drawing could do to any one.

The editor of the photographic column in a leading weekly advises his readers to restrict the use of their cameras to scenes that can be taken from their own back gardens. The man who attempts to snapshot anything that can be remotely connected with the movement of troops runs a serious risk of arousing suspicion—not so much from the police of course, as from bystanders whose nerves are rattled by all the gossip about spies. Even an innocent courtesy to strangers may be misconstrued. A ludicrous incident occurred last week in my own neighborhood, and is reported in the local paper. An alarming story gained currency that a young man had been poisoned through smoking a doctored cigarette given him by a foreigner. The facts were as follows: The young man was riding on the top of a 'bus and got into conversation with a stranger, who presently offered him a cigarette. He accepted it with thanks. He had smoked it only half through when he began to feel ill. By this time the stranger had left the 'bus. The young man remembered that the stranger had spoken with a foreign accent, and felt quite sure that an attempt had been made upon his life. So he went with all haste to the nearest doctor, who gave him an emetic and directed that the remainder of the cigarette should be analyzed. This was found to be quite harmless and the sufferer's symptoms were pronounced to be due to natural causes.