

ESPIONAGE AT OTTAWA

SUSPICIOUS LOOKING MEN ARE COMMON AT THE CAPITAL.

Sometimes They Represent Themselves To Be Representatives of Manufacturers Seeking To Sell War Material and Often They Are Merely Looking for Jobs—Many Went Home at Outbreak of War.

The efficiency of the German system of secret service and the perfection of their methods of espionage have long been one of the proudest of many boasts of the Fatherland, and unquestionably constitute a strong contributory factor in the plan and execution of its military operations. How it works in Canada, where its operations are carried on and the character and design of the general scheme are subjects of constant investigation by the authorities of the Dominion Government.

Ever since the war broke out—and previously, for that matter—our own secret service agents have been keeping in close touch with the situation, and to them has come fairly convincing evidence that Canada has not been at all overlooked by Germany in the allocation of those who engaged in hostile espionage or the supply of information calculated to be of more or less vital advantage to the enemy.

Cases are known where this plan of campaign has been going on for years. The German who ostensibly was in Canada to reside permanently or was here on business without the remotest apparent association with war, has in many instances since hostilities broke out, disappeared, having accomplished his purpose.

For one that has gone, however, a score remain. Every city and district in Canada to-day furnishes to them, in greater or less numbers, a hospitality which in most instances is open and unsuspecting.

Many of these have disappeared and been replaced by others, who from their appearance and the character of their supposed callings would be less likely to arouse suspicion. In any event, that they are still with us in uncomfortable numbers admits of no doubt. Not a day passes but that the Government is overwhelmed with communications calling attention to supposed acts of espionage. Allowing that many of them are unfounded and that in most of the rest there is an insufficient warrant for apprehension, the extensive existence of the system cannot be questioned, nor can the need of caution by the Canadian people be too strongly emphasized.

Concrete cases, of which there are a good number since the war began, are hard to get at because of official reticence, and the perhaps questionable view that publicity might be a deterrent or injurious factor. A number of them, however, have come to light in Ottawa and furnish instructive illustrations of the methods in vogue by the German agents.

The war had been on a week or so and the Militia Department was at its busiest preparing for the despatch of the first division, when a well-dressed man, polished in manners, approached one of the leading officers of the Department.

"Would they tell him how many rifles the Canadian militia possessed?" was the modest question. When asked his motive in making such a query, he represented himself as being connected with a British armament firm, which could readily replenish any paucity in the domestic supply, but, of course, would like to know all about our rifle equipment, the ammunition used, and amount of it and rifles on hand, and the capacity of our factories in turning out more.

This man was no stranger. He had been around Ottawa for a couple of years, ostensibly a mineralogist, with a reputation as a good fellow, and more or less prominence in certain social sets. It is needless to say that the information sought was not forthcoming, and the gentleman was, in fact, advised to make his disappearance in relatively short order.

The instance above cited is by no means isolated. Just a few days ago, a stylishly dressed young man, obviously a German, but ostensibly a former Swedish naval officer, now a "naturalized and enthusiastic Canadian," applied at a Department in Ottawa for a clerical position. The Department in question has much to do with war correspondence.

Curiously enough he was highly recommended by a Canadian of prominence. The assumption is that the good-hearted Canadian who furnished the letter of credentials was innocently enough assisting the employment of a spy designing to get at confidential information. Again the proof is lacking but the strong suspicion remains. He didn't get the job.

Care was very properly observed and a censorship of news established in regard to the movement of our troops, but there is no reason to doubt that Germany was kept advised of doings at Valcartier; of the embarkation at Quebec, and of the date of sailing of the contingent. The mines strewn off the Irish coast, according to despatches, are believed by the Admiralty to have been laid for Canadian transports. German submarines likewise laid in wait. The scheme failed, but the information as to the movement of our troops was flashed indirectly to Germany and doubtless it was done by German secret service agents in Canada.

A more pacific but nevertheless effective plan of activity, carefully being watched by the Government, concerns the maintenance of German trade with Canada and the forwarding from Canada of supplies destined for Germany. Evidence has come to light of extensive attempts to buy up Canadian produce, to ship to the United States, have it forwarded from there to Holland or some neutral country, but ultimately to reach Germany. No effort is being spared to completely block any such hostile enterprise.