Most of us remember, no matter how much we may have deprecated the destruction wrought by them, with what interest we read of the exploits of the German raiders during the first days of the war. The exploits of the Karlsruhe, and the Moewe and of the See-Adler are still clear in the minds of us all. The spirit of adventure lurks in even the most prosaic of us and the voyages of these modern sea-pirates and birds of prey did interest if at the same time they did appal us. The Karlsruhe operated for a time in the Corribean and constantly had on her heels the fast cruisers of the British Navy. As the Germans had no base of supply in the Corribean, the question of coal was an important one for her, as under the rules of neutrality she could not hope to enter the same port more than once for fuel during the period she could expect to operate in those waters. In some way the German consul was advised that the Karlsruhe would coal at Curacao, that she must take on a certain quantity of coal within so many hours and be out of the port again. She was going to take no chances to be bottled up in the lagoon-like harbor of Willemstadt where a single British cruiser lying outside could have effectively put an end to her future operations. The Karlsruhe arrived and the hours she spent at Curacao were a period of feverish activity. By double and triple wages and by all sorts of inducements, the German consul had gathered together great numbers of negroes to supplement the usual coaling crew, and the bunkers of the Karlsruhe were rapidly filled and her spotless decks disappeared under huge piles of coal wherever it was possible to stow them. She disappeared as mysteriously as she had arrived, and her smoke had hardly disappeared on the horizon before the British cruisers in her pursuit came into view.

This visit of the Karlsruhe was one of the legends recited to us on our arrival, and we little dreamed that several years afterwards we would have such stirring experiences based directly on this visit. Shortly after we had entered the war several intelligence officers of friendly governments came to see me and asked me whether I had ever heard of any rumors that the Karlsruhe prior to her departure, fearing capture by the British cruisers and possible inability to destroy her codes, had left these codes with the German Consul Fensohn. I stated that I knew nothing of such rumors and personally would place little credence in them as it was not likely that a naval vessel would leave its codes with a consular officer but would take other means of destroying them in case of capture. The intelligence officers stated that this reasoning was entirely correct but that it was just the unusual and the unreasonable
which frequently occurred, and that they were tracing down certain rumors which they had heard that Fensohn still possessed the codes, and then the matter died down and we heard nothing further.

Now Caracas is the capital of Venezuela and 100 miles of the Caribbean sea lie between Curacao and the mainland, but the gossip of Caracas was the gossip of Curacao, and vice-versa. All at once we began to hear about the activities of an American in Curacao by the name of Duhn, who was making himself extremely objectionable in American and English circles in that city. It appeared that he was a young fellow of about 20, and although he bore an American passport in good order, his English was as German as his name, and he was accused of uttering rather pro-German sentiments in the club and in the hotel in Caracas, and it was then rumored that he paid clandestine visits at night to the home of Von Prohlius, the German minister. In less than no time the name of Duhn became a by-word and the Americans and English in Venezuela and the surrounding Caribbean were ready to do him bodily harm if the occasion presented itself.

One day when I was calmly seated in my office decoding a long cablegram from Washington, I heard a disturbance in the outer office, and my Dutch clerk was apparently having an altercation with a person speaking English with a very pronounced German accent. At first I paid no attention, but as the voices were raised higher and higher I walked into the other room and found myself confronted by a rather good looking young chap of about 20 with fresh rosy cheeks, and light hair. When I asked what the trouble was in rather highly flavored English, he informed me that he was a good American citizen and that he wanted to talk with me, and that he did not care to have any aspersions cast upon the kind of English that he spoke. I told him there was no reason why he should not speak with me and asked him to come back into my office. Now a little bit of geography is necessary here. My desk was immediately next to the doorway leading into the outer office, so that when I was seated there I could not be seen from the other office. When I went into the room I seated myself and Duhn stood at the side of this desk where he could be seen from the door way. With his right hand reaching over my desk, he scribbled on a pad "Where can I see you alone, give me hell". I was somewhat astounded for the moment, but immediately gathered that he must be one of our intelligence men who wanted to see me and wished to cover his tracks. When Duhn saw that I had understood he raised his voice, became extremely abusive because he was not receiving proper treatment at the American consulate, and in a few well chosen words of his own style I told him to get out until he could behave himself somewhat better. Breathing vengeance he left the place. In the meantime however I had scribbled on the pad the number of the room in the hotel above
above the office where he could see me in half an hour.

At the designated time I went to this room which I used from time to time for this same purpose, that is of meeting some of our intelligence officers whose identity as such was naturally unknown to everyone on the island except myself. Duhn came in and convinced me very shortly by his credentials that he was a member of our intelligence service, and to my surprise I found that he was the man who had been the subject of all the gossip in Caracas. The story which he told me was rather an astonishing one. He told me that he was born of German parents in Wilmington, Delaware, but that his father had never been naturalized, that he was a member of the German intelligence service as well as of our own and that he was playing a rather dangerous double game. I had only his word that he was playing into our hands, and so naturally was somewhat reserved, merely listening to what he had to say. He had been sent to Venezuela as a result of these rumors which had come to our intelligence headquarters at Washington, to the effect that the German Consul at Curacao had the Karlsruhe codes. His specific mission was to verify whether Fensohn had the codes and in the affirmative to endeavor to secure them. He went first to Venezuela where it was well known that Von Prohlius was the center of the German information and propaganda service, and he informed me that he had already through his connection with the German intelligence service been able to gain the complete confidence of Von Prohlius, through whom he had learned that Fensohn actually had the codes and was exceedingly nervous about their remaining in his possession. According to Duhn, Von Prohlius was worried because Fensohn no longer young was breaking down under the strain of the war and because of the fact that his former neighbors at Curacao were eyeing him with suspicion and dislike as a German. Although Fensohn had strict orders not to deliver the codes to anyone except on orders from Von Prohlius, yet there was fear that he might do something foolish or indiscreet through which the codes might fall into our hands. Von Prohlius therefore welcomed the presence of Duhn and commissioned him to go to Curacao to get the codes and bring them back. All this Duhn explained to me and said he simply wanted me to know what he was doing and that he saw no way in which I could be of help to him at the time. All he wanted me to do was to treat him with the utmost contempt whenever I saw him or when he might come to the consulate, and in my remarks scattered here and there speak of him as the type of American for which we had no use whatever.

Several weeks later Duhn communicated with me to arrange for another meeting, and at this rendezvous he informed me that the stage was set, that he had had the greatest difficulty in gaining the confidence of Fensohn in spite of the letter from Von Prohlius, that Fensohn was old and suspicious and did not wish to give up
the codes, that he had in the meantime directly communicated with Von Prohlius, who had informed him that he was to obey instructions. Duhn stated that his further difficulty was to arrange for a clear get-away as it would of course be necessary for him to take a steamer from Curacao to La Guayra, but that it would be necessary for him to get out of La Guayra immediately as there were other German agents sure to be around, and they might be suspicious of his not proceeding to Caracas immediately. It so happened however that a steamer of the Compania Transatlantica de Barcelona was arriving in a few days and this steamer was going from Curacao to La Guayra where it would stay for only a few hours and then proceed to Porto Rico, American territory. Duhn said that he felt that Fensohn had still not yet trust in him entirely, and he feared that Fensohn might give him a dummy package and really keep the codes at Curacao but that he was prepared for this situation. He showed me a little flat case that he carried in his breast pocket which contained what seemed to me a few sharp knives and tweezers and wires, with which he said he could open any package, no matter how carefully sealed, to examine its contents and then reclose it. I did not ask him to give me an ocular demonstration but I had no doubt that he could do just what he said. His plan was to take this Spanish steamer and on the night trip to La Guayra open the package to determine whether it actually contained the codes. If it did he would not leave the ship at La Guayra but proceed with it to Porto Rico. If the package did not contain the codes he would deliver it to Von Prohlius and make another attempt.

On the day that the Spanish steamer sailed I had to be on board to sign the manifests just prior to her sailing and I saw Duhn going on board, from which I assume that he had the package in his luggage. I burned with curiosity to learn whether he found the package actually contained the codes and as to what happened, but heard no news whatever. I was so keenly interested that I sent a telegram in our code to the head of our intelligence service in Venezuela, who was a very good friend, and the message which I sent, even though it was in code, was so turned that it apparently had no reference to Duhn or to his mission, but I knew that Captain Wright would understand what I wanted. I got no reply to my message but Captain Wright himself turned up a few days later and told me that he had heard from Porto Rico that Duhn had arrived there on the Spanish steamer and turned over the package actually containing the Karlsruhe codes to our naval authorities there.

All this might seem very fruitless and very useless, but I was informed later that these codes which were actually communicated to all of our naval vessels in European waters as well as the British naval vessels, were to be the means by which they were able to lure a considerable number of German submarines and destroy them. It seems almost incredible to those who know
anything about secret codes, that the Karlsruhe codes should have been still effective several years after the Karlsruhe rested at the bottom of the sea. In times of war and even of peace codes are frequently changed because they can be caught and in many ways fall into the hands of the enemy. It appears, however, that although the German codes were changed often after this incident, that for a long time they had remained unchanged. Through the work of this German American, more than one unsuspecting German submarine answering the call of what it believed to be a German naval vessel, shoved its dark hull above the surface only to be rippled by the enemy fires. Not everyone was caught and it was not long before the value of the code was gone because the Germans knew that we had it, and so the war was fought even in the little island of Curacao.