

SPANISH INFLUENZA

Is This Mysterious Infection a New Kind of German Offensive?

Is this new disease which has already killed hundreds and stricken thousands of our soldiers and civilians a new German war offensive? If not, how did it happen that this epidemic appeared so suddenly and extensively in such widely scattered cities and army camps throughout the country?

Smitten as from a bolt from a clear sky thousands of Americans have been suddenly prostrated in many widely separated parts of the country, during the past ten days, by a disease which is called, apparently for want of a better name, "Spanish Influenza." Naturally, under all the circumstances, there is much speculation regarding the matter. Perhaps because there seems to be a rather natural disposition to ascribe about everything that is perfidious in the world today to Germany, some have ventured the guess that the disease may have been introduced and spread by German agents. This theory, however, is generally considered as being not only entirely groundless but really absurd, for it seems hardly conceivable that, if Germany undertook an offensive of this kind, she would choose such a mild and human sort of disease. A much more plausible explanation would seem to be the simple fact that the recent cold snap caught the country entirely unprepared for

such severe weather and, as a result of our unheated dwellings and other buildings and the inadequate clothing that was being worn, large numbers of people in different sections of the country contracted colds, which developed in many cases into pneumonia and resulted in an unusual number of deaths.

Almost always at this season of the year colds are frequent and they often result fatally; and it may well be that, but for the high tension of these strenuous war times, this epidemic would not have attracted unusual attention. In any event there seems to be no occasion for special alarm or panic about the matter, for the disease is evidently one which the American medical profession is perfectly able to handle and, moreover, effective measures are being taken, wherever it appears, to check it and destroy its power. It is important, however, at all times—and certainly no less important now—for each individual to secure prompt medical attention for all cases of so-called "cold" or "grippe." This is necessary for the conservation of the health of the community as well as the welfare of the individual.