

THE SPY NET

by ARED WHITE

CHAPTER 13

As Sergeant Walters strode smartly from the room, Captain Elton went to his wall locker, got out a deep metal tray, filled it with an acid smelling chemical and submerged Captain Farnham's innocent appearing letter in the fluid. A few minutes of this treatment and the blank surfaces of the letter began to mottle with vague, yellowish marks. A bath in a second tray, and the marks became distinct rows of figures. Filling in the spaces between the typewritten lines, the margins, the entire lower part of the paper under Farnham's signature.

With the aid of a strong glass, Elton copied these arrays of numerical on a clean sheet of paper. They were set in unequal block of figures, probably representing words, the length of the message testifying to its probable importance. Elton sat back and surveyed the first line with despair:

745138 826633674439216 7757236
1865 7228182225 7858 964341365

These figures symbolized letters. Either each figure represented a letter of the alphabet, or each two figures, according to the secret cipher that the Germans had devised. With a message of such length to work on, the hidden meaning could not escape. It was simply a matter of searching out the secret key. Words have certain characteristics. They are made up of letters. The letter e appears more frequently than any other letter in the English language. Thereafter the high frequency letters are t, o, a, n, i, r, s, b, and d in the order named. Letters that appear least often are v, x, z, j, k, y, h, g. Therefore, if the figure 1 or the figures 12 represent the letter e, they will be the figures to appear most often in a cipher message, and the less frequent figures will represent letters of the lower group.

First of all Elton turned to the German ciphers he had previously broken. He knew that if Geneva was using a newly devised cipher it might be a matter of days, even weeks, before he could unravel the key, so numerous and complicated are the combinations that can be devised. Half an hour later, his pulse leaped with joy. The cipher was intricate, but it was not a new one; a recurrence of the last cipher he had dealt with, in which each letter of the alphabet is represented, not by one figure, but by alternating figures. It responded to the following key:

789 a d k j m p s y
123 b e h k n q t w
456 c f i l o r e

Elton set to work joyously to reduce the figures to clear English. First marking them off into groups of two, since each two figures represented one letter. The first figure of each set of two, he knew, referred to a figure in the deciphering key at the left of the divided alphabet. Thus 7 or 8 or 9 meant that the hidden letter was in the first row of letters and must be a, d, k, j, m, p, s, or y. The second figure placed the column, from top to bottom, and thus instantly located the particular letter intended. The figures 72 traced direct to a as did 82 or 92; and by the same rule 12, 22, or 32 meant b; 23, 33 or 13 led to w; and so on through the alphabet.

Elton recognized with a grim smile the operative to whom the message was addressed. No. 12, Baron Erich Wolf von Strindheim, head of the Prussian secret service in Paris, the coldest and most successful spy in France, who twice had escaped French execution by miracle.

The first group of cipher figures, stripped of its camouflage, was no less interesting:

74 13 38 82 96 33 67 64 42 92 16
g e t a m e r i c a n

77 55 72 36 18 66 72 28 18 82 42 25
p l a n t o a t t a c k

78 28 96 44 34 64 13 65
s t m i l i t a r y

The message thereafter, starting off with a grandiloquent statement of purpose, read:

An urgent objective: An empire, fitted to rule the world, must make use of the weaknesses of its enemies. Get intimate details in involving important neutral and enemy statesmen, for use in weakening their opposition when our armed forces have struck the vital

blow. Similar orders go to all world capitals. Our Black Book already formidable. Victory never more certain. Will furnish you operatives soon to destroy Allied ammunition plants. Good men now available and being trained. Russians. Release No. 412 to Cairo via Versailles to stir revolt. Acknowledge, using channel: Capt. Edw. Farnham, U. S. A., through American consul at Geneva—No. 4.

Upon verifying the last letter, Elton typed, on a blank sheet of paper, a copy of Farnham's simple message. With diluted sulphuric acid, he painstakingly reproduced, in invisible cipher, the message from Geneva to von Strindheim. He sealed this carefully into the envelope in which it had come from Switzerland with the diplomatic pouch and put it in his pocket. Then he hurried downstairs, awakened the sleepy enlisted chauffeur who awaited him, and drove to the hotel of Colonel Rand across the village.

It was characteristic of Colonel Rand that he faced reality important matters tranquilly. When he had rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, and grumbled at the annoyance of being awakened at 2 a. m., he read the deciphered message through coolly.

"This is rather worth while," he commented, facing Elton with level eyes. He knitted his brows over the letter again. "So the Boches have got one of their spies planted in an American captain's uniform, eh, Farnham, Farnham," he puzzled. "Isn't that the man you want to replace at Geneva?"

"Yes sir, it looks like it," replied Elton. "But I'm hardly prepared as yet to charge that he's a German operative."

"Then how account for this invisible cipher on his personal correspondence? It looks to me like a dead open-and-shut case."

"But there's always the chance that he's a victim of Boche intrigue; that they've made him an entry in von Kuhl's Black Book." While Colonel Rand was debating this in his own mind, Elton seized the opportunity to get under way.

"I'm sorry to have broken the colonel's sleep," he said. "But I thought it important to lose no time. If the colonel will only promise to have that chap Farnham relieved immediately and sent on duty in the purchasing office at Paris until I'm through in Switzerland, it will help a great deal."

My guess, sir, is that his Corporal Vaud, to whom the letter is addressed, must be a plain Boche agent. But my request is that we merely transfer him, say, to Marcellus for duty, a dozen other M. P. non-coms to go with him so the move will not look suspicious. That will put Vaud out of the way. One other request, sir, is that Captain Snedley, of Military Intelligence, be sent to Paris as a corporal to report as a clerk to Farnham when he reaches Paris for station."

Elton paused and handed the colonel a typewritten sheet of paper.

"I've written it all down for you, sir," he explained.

"All right, Elton, I'm going to let you have your own way," Rand assented wholeheartedly. "That cipher message convinces me that you're really doing something useful on the case. But telephone me from Paris as soon as you've intercepted any more of that cipher, and keep me in touch."

"But that will be difficult, sir," said Elton, with a dry smile. "I'll be in Paris only a few minutes this time. Just long enough to turn Farnham's little letter in invisible ink back to the American hospital officer, and catch this morning's through express for Switzerland."

Nimble Fingers

Of the seven passengers jammed in the stuffy second class compartment of the Paris-Bellegarde express, Fox Elton alone seemed impervious to the suffocating heat and grimy dust as the train swept across the parched lands and vineyards of southern France toward the Swiss frontier. Elton had early classified his fellow passengers as Swiss tradesmen, on their way home from business trips to Paris, London, or Madrid, and had dismissed them from his mind.

While they exchanged bilious grievances against the heat, the

dust, and a senseless war that demoralized train service, restricted food supply, and visited other dire discomforts upon innocent neutrals, Elton sat with his eyes glued to the pages of a small pocket Testament of the kind distributed by American welfare workers overseas. Occasionally he smiled inwardly as the others speculated guardedly upon the enigma of his preoccupation.

A man from the tropics, one whispered, else he would not be so indifferent to heat and dust. A minister of the gospel, a missionary most likely, else he would not sit with his eyes in a Bible all day when there were agreeable folk to talk to.

Elton left them to their own surmises. He had better use for his time than to waste it in empty discourse with casual travelers. As for the Testament, he had the habit of reasons for wishing to familiarize himself with the phrases of the first ninety-nine pages of that book. Later, such a knowledge was to stand him in good stead, he thought; afford him his one means of communicating with the world outside of Switzerland.

Therefore, he could not know too well where readily to locate certain words and phrases in his diminutive Bible.

The slanting sun of late afternoon was beating in through the compartment window when Elton felt a vagrant wisp of cool air at his cheek. The Swiss caught the token at the same instant and were stirred into a more cheerful animation.

"Ah, the breath of the Alps, at last," said one of them. "Mont Blanc sends greetings and in an hour we shall be in Bellegarde."

The train began tolling into the uplands of the frontier region. An occasional stream trickled under the tracks; the hills and swales were dotted now by thickets of scrub oak and clusters of pine; the sun was tempered by breezes that had wandered far afield from the icy peaks of the Alps. The joy of the Swiss at these welcome signs of their own frontier was replaced shortly by fresh complaint. The war again. They must leave the train at Bellegarde, display their passports, and board a nondescript shuttling train to Annemasse, thence transfer again to the tram into Geneva. Even innocent and well-meaning neutrals must suffer gross inconvenience because of French suspicion, they grumbled. Just as though German spies could not cross the frontier at will on Lake Geneva where its southern shores skirted France for many miles.

(To be continued tomorrow)
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Arundel, piano tuner. Phone 189-L.

SEATTLE, Wash., March 27.—Inventories in lumber mills are being reduced weekly and now lower than at this time last year, the West Coast Lumbermen's association said today.

Current new business reported by 222 mills was 20.35 per cent over production and shipments were 50 per cent under. During the past 16 weeks orders for 222 mills have averaged 12.97 per cent over production the report said, due to the low levels of cuttings and shiping reductions, although late volume buying. Unfilled orders are holding at the equivalent of four weeks production at current levels.

Orders increased about 18,400,000.

MOUNTAIN STATES FIRM FACES PROBE

Investigation of Electric Company Is Ordered by State Commissioner.

(Associated Press Leased Wire)
SALEM, March 25.—Investigation into the rate and charges of the Mountain States Power company for the furnishing of electric energy, was ordered today by Charles M. Thomas, public utilities commissioner. The order is made on the motion of the commissioner based on informal investigation and past complaints, the commissioner announced.

This investigation follows the order issued last night, affecting the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph company, and is in the line of instituting investigations of all utilities about which complaints have been received in the past, the commissioner announced. No date was set for the hearing.

"An informal investigation having been made of the rates, charges, rules, regulations, methods, practices and service of Mountain States Power company for the furnishing of electric energy, gas and water service, and it appears from such investigation that sufficient grounds exist to warrant the public utilities commissioner in entering upon a formal investigation and hearing to determine whether these rates are unjust."

The order asks the company to appear before the commissioner to give testimony.

The company, whose headquarters are in Albany, operates extensively through southern Oregon and the Willamette valley.

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JEFFERSON DAVIS' OLD HOME BURNED

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The house was built in 1847 by Joe Davis, who gave it to his brother, Jefferson Davis, upon the latter's return from the Mexican war. The plantation was composed of 2,380 acres. Six hundred additional acres were annexed to the property due to a sand bar being formed.

In 1863 the Federal army in the Civil war confiscated the property and sold it at public auction and it was purchased by Joe Davis, who again presented it to Jefferson Monroe and return to Mississippi. Here the former president of the

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ASKS THAT SON BE SENT TO ROCKPILE

(Associated Press Leased Wire)
PORTLAND, March 25.—On petition of his father, Vernon Levy, 17, may spend the next year on the rock pile at Kelly butte.

Young Levy, who several months ago charged state training school officers with cruelty, was arrested in an attempted holdup Saturday night, and police say he admitted participating in several house robberies. He was released from the training school five months ago.

The youth's father told police the boy had fought hard to "go straight," and said he, himself, had worked hard for the boy's release from the school.

"This time," he said, "I will ask the authorities to sentence him to hard work at the rock pile. He is strong and the work will keep his mind occupied. I think the experience will do him good."

MANY GERMANS SUICIDE

BERLIN.—A League of Nations report shows Germany's suicide rate in two and a half times higher than elsewhere in Europe. The continent has 50,000 suicides a year with 16,000, an average of 44 a day, in this country.

We sell spray pumps and spray hose for all size orchards. Wharton Bros.—Adv.

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VERA McCLINTOCK CHOSEN AS SOLOIST

Miss Vera McClintock, daughter of Mayor and Mrs. J. E. McClintock, will be a soloist in the sacred musical program which will be given Good Friday evening at Oregon State college. The combined Glee and Madrigal clubs of the college, assisted by the college orchestra, will sing the oratorio, "The Seven Last Words of Christ," a famous composition rendered all over the world on Good Friday.

Miss McClintock has taken a prominent part in a large number of college musical events and recently played the leading feminine role in "The Two Vagabonds," an operetta presented by the department of music.

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THOUSANDS OF WOMEN HAVE TOLD THOUSANDS OF OTHER WOMEN

THAT with the Golden W. "drip" coffee maker and Golden West Coffee you always have uniform and delicious coffee. (Get them both at your own grocer. The "drip" maker is \$1.00 complete.)

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