

funny about Alexis and his crowd, they'd have been on to it like a shot."

Wimsey sighed, and rose.

"I'm going home to bed," he declared. "We must wait till we get the photographs of the paper. Life is dust and ashes. I can't prove my theories and Bunter has deserted me again. He disappeared from Wilvercombe on the same day as William Bright, leaving me a message to say that one of my favourite socks had been lost in the wash and that he had lodged a complaint with the management. Miss Vane, Harriet, if I may call you so, will you marry me and look after my socks, and, incidentally be the only woman-novelist who ever accepted a proposal of marriage in the presence of a superintendent and inspector of police?"

"Not even for the sake of the headlines."

"I thought not. Even publicity isn't what it was. See here, Superintendent, will you take a bet that Alexis didn't commit suicide and that he wasn't murdered by Bolsheviks?"

The Superintendent replied cautiously that he wasn't a sporting man.

"Crushed again!" moaned his lordship. "All the same," he added, with a flash of his old spirit, "I'll break that alibi if I die for it."

*Have His Carcass by  
Dorothy L. Sayers*

*CHAPTER XXVI  
A Lord Peter Wimsey Mystery  
THE EVIDENCE OF THE BAY MARE*

"Hail, shrine of blood!"

*The Brides' Tragedy*

WEDNESDAY, 1 July

THE photographs of the paper found on the corpse duly arrived next morning, together with the original; and Wimsey, comparing them together in the presence of Glashier and Umpely, had to confess that the experts had made a good job of it. Even the original paper was far more legible than it had been before. The chemicals that remove bloodstains and the stains of dyed leather, and the chemicals that restore the lost colour to washed-out ink had done their work well, and the colour-screens that so ingeniously aid the lens to record one colour and cut out the next had produced from the original, thus modified, a result in which only a few letters here and there were irretrievably lost. But to read is one thing; to decipher, another. They gazed sadly at the inextricable jumble of letters.

XNATNX

RBEXMG

PBBFX ALI MRMG BFFY, MGTSQ JMRRY. ZBZE  
FLOX P.M. MSIU FKX FLDYPC FKAP RPD KL  
DONA FMKPC FM NOR ANXP.

SOLEFA TGMZ DXL LKZM VXI BWHNZ MBFFY  
MG, TSQ A NVPD NMM VFYQ. CJU ROGA K.C.  
RACRRMTN S.B. IF H.P. HNZ ME? SSPXIZ DFAX  
LRAEL TIMK XATL RPX BM AEBF HS MPIKATL

TO HOKCCI HNRY. TYM VDSM SUSSX GAMKR,  
 BG AIL AXH NZMLF HVUL KNN RAGY QWMCK,  
 MNQS TOIL AXFA AN IHMZS RPT HO KFLTIM.  
 IF MTGNLU H.M. CLM KLZM AHPE ALF AKMSM,  
 ZULPR FHQ—GMZT SXS RSMKRS GNKS FVMF  
 RAGY OSS QESBH NAE UZCK CON MGBNRY  
 RMAL RSH NZM, BKTQAP MSH NZM TO ILG  
 MELMS NAGMJU KCKC.

TOKFX BOZ NMEZLI BM ZLFA AVZ MARS UP  
 QOS KMXBP SUE UML PRKBG MSK QD.

NAP DZMTB N.B. OBE XMG SREFZ DBS AM  
 IMHY GAKY R. MULBY M.S. SZIKO GKG IKL  
 GAW XNTEB BHMB XZD NRRKZH PSMKMN A.M.  
 MHIZP DK MIM, XNKSAS C KOK MNRL CFL  
 INXF HDA GAIQ.

GATM Z DLFA A QPHND MV AK MV MAG  
 C.P.R. XNATNX PD GUN MBKL I OLKA GLDAGA  
 KQB FTQO SKMX GPDH NW LX SULMY ILLE  
 MKH BEALF MRSK UFHA AKTS.

At the end of a strenuous hour or two, the following facts were established :—

1. The letter was written on a thin but tough paper which bore no resemblance to any paper found among the effects of Paul Alexis. The probability was thus increased that it was a letter received, and not written by him.
2. It was written by hand in a purplish ink, which, again, was not like that used by Alexis. The additional inference was drawn that the writer either possessed no typewriter or was afraid that his typewriter might be traced.

3. It was not written in wheel-cipher, or in any cipher which involved the regular substitution of one letter of the alphabet for another.

"At any rate," said Wimsey, cheerfully, "we have plenty of material to work on. This isn't one of those brief, snappy 'Put goods on sundial' messages which leave you wondering whether E really is or is not the most frequently-recurring letter in the English language. If you ask me, it's either one of those devilish codes founded on a book—in which case it must be one of the books in the dead man's possession, and we only have to go through them—or it's a different kind of code altogether—the kind I was thinking about last night, when we saw those marked words in the dictionary."

"What kind's that, my lord?"

"It's a good code," said Wimsey, "and pretty baffling if you don't know the key-word. It was used during the War. I used it myself, as a matter of fact, during a brief interval of detecting under a German alias. But it isn't the exclusive property of the War Office. In fact, I met it not so long ago in a detective story. It's just——"

He paused, and the policemen waited expectantly.

"I was going to say, it's just the thing an amateur English plotter might readily get hold of and cotton on to. It's not obvious, but it's accessible and very simple to work. It's the kind of thing that young Alexis could easily learn to encode and decode; it doesn't want a lot of bulky apparatus; and it uses practically the same number of letters as the original message, so that it's highly suitable for long epistles of this kind."

"How's it worked?" asked Glaisner.

"Very prettily. You choose a key-word of six letters or more, none of which recurs. Such as, for example, SQUANDER, which was on Alexis' list. Then you make a diagram of five squares each way and write the key-word in the squares like this :

S	Q	U	A	N
D	E	R		

"Then you fill up the remaining spaces with the rest of the alphabet in order, leaving out the ones you've already got."

"You can't put twenty-six letters into twenty-five spaces," objected Glaisher.

"No; so you pretend you're an ancient Roman or a mediæval monk and treat I and J as one letter. So you get this."

S	Q	U	A	N
D	E	R	B	C
F	G	H	I J	K
L	M	O	P	T
V	W	X	Y	Z

"Now, let's take a message—What shall we say? All is known, fly at once!—that classic hardy perennial. We write it down all of a piece and break it into groups of two letters, reading from left to right. It won't do to have two of the same letters coming together, so where that happens we shove in Q or Z or something which won't confuse the reader. So now our message runs AL QL IS KN OW NF LY AT ON CE."

"Suppose there was an odd letter at the end?"

"Well, then we'd add on another Q or Z or something to square it up. Now, we take our first group, AL. We see that they come at the corners of a rectangle in which the other corners are SP. So we put down SP for the first two letters of the coded message. In the same way QL becomes SM and IS becomes FA."

"Ah!" cried Glaisher, "but here's KN. They both come on the same vertical line. What happens then?"

"You take the letter next below each—TC. Next comes OW, which you can do for yourself by taking the corners of the square."

"MX?"

"MX it is. Go on."

"SK," said Glaisher, happily taking diagonals from corner to corner, "PV, NP, UT—"

"No, TU. If your first diagonal went from bottom to top, you must take it the same way again. ON= TU, NO would be UT."

"Of course, of course. TU. Hullo!"

"What's the matter?"

"CE come on the same horizontal line."

"In that case you take the next letter to the right of each."

"But there isn't a letter to the right of C."

"Then start again at the beginning of the line."

This confused the Superintendent for a moment, but he finally produced DR.

"That's right. So your coded message stands now: SP SM FA TC MX SK PV NP TU DR. To make it look prettier and not give the method away, you can break it up into any lengths you like. For instance: SPSM FAT CMXS KPV NPTUDR. Or you can embellish it with punctuation at haphazard. S.P. SMFA. TCMXS, KPVN, PTUDR. It doesn't matter. The man who gets it will ignore all that. He will simply break it up into pairs of letters again and read it with the help of the code diagram. Taking

the diagonals as before, and the next letter *above*, where they come on the same vertical line, and the next to the *left* where they come on the same horizontal."

The two policemen pored over the diagram. Then Umpeley said:

"I see, my lord. It's very ingenious. You can't guess it by way of the most frequent letter, because you get a different letter for it each time, according as it's grouped to the next letter. And you can't guess individual words, because you don't know where the words begin and end. Is it at all possible to decode it without the key-word?"

"Oh dear, yes," said Wimsey. "Any code ever coded can be decoded with pains and patience—except possibly some of the book codes. I know a man who spent years doing nothing else. The code diagram got so bitten into him that when he caught measles he came out in checks instead of spots."

"Then he could decode this," said Glaisner, eagerly.

"On his head. We'll send him a copy if you like. I don't know where he is, but I know those that do. Shall I bung it off? It would save us a lot of time."

"I wish you would, my lord."

Wimsey took a copy of the letter, pushed it into an envelope and enclosed a brief note.

"Dear Clumps,—Here's a cipher message. Probably Playfair, but old Bungo will know. Can you push it off to him and say I'd be grateful for a construe? Said to hail from Central Europe, but ten to one it's in English. How goes?"

"Yours,

"WIMBLES."

"Seen anything of Trotters lately?"

He addressed the envelope to an official at the Foreign Office, and picked up another copy of the cipher.

"I'll take this if I may. We'll try it out with some of

Alexis' selected words. It'll be a nice job for Miss Vane, and a healthy change from crosswords. Now, what's the next item?"

"Nothing very much yet, my lord. We haven't found anybody who saw Perkins pass through Darley at any time, but we've found the chemist who served him in Wilvercombe. He says Perkins was there at eleven o'clock, which gives him ample time to be at Darley by 1.15. And Perkins has had a bad relapse and can't be interrogated. And we've seen Newcombe, the farmer, who corroborates finding the mare wandering on the shore on Friday morning. He says, too, that she was in the field O.K. when his man was down there on the Wednesday, and that he is quite sure she couldn't have got through the gap in the hedge by herself. But then, naturally, nobody ever believes his own neglect is to blame for anything."

"Naturally not. I think I'll run over and see Farmer Newcombe. In the meantime, Miss Vane is going to do her damndest with the cipher—trying out all the marked words on it. Aren't you?"

"If you like."

"Noble woman! It would be fun if we got ahead of the official interpreter. I suppose the Weldons show no signs of moving."

"Not the slightest. But I haven't seen much of them since the funeral. Henry seems a bit stand-offish—can't get over the snake episode, I suppose. And his mother—"

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing. But she seems to be trying to get fresh information out of Antoine."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Antoine is being very sympathetic."

"Good luck to him. Well, cherio!"

Wimsey drove over to Darley, interviewed the farmer and asked for the loan of the bay mare and a bridle. Mr. Newcombe not only granted the loan most cordially, but



"So he might—but that doesn't make things any easier. Whoever it was did the murder, he had to get away from the Flat-Iron. And how could he have managed to change clothes with the victim? There wasn't time."

"Not after the murder, certainly."

"Then where are you? It's only making things more complicated. If you ask me, I think your notion of the mare having been ridden down there at some other time by some mischievous young fellow is a good one. There's nothing against it except that ring-bolt, and that might quite well have been put there for a quite different purpose. That washes the mare out of the thing altogether and makes it all a lot easier. Then we can say that either Alexis did away with himself or else he was murdered by some person we don't know of yet, who just walked along the coast on his two feet. It doesn't matter that those Pollocks didn't see him. He could have been hiding under the rock, like you said. The only trouble is, who was he? It wasn't Weldon, it wasn't Bright, and it wasn't Perkins. But they're not the only people in the world."

Winsey nodded.

"I'm feeling a bit depressed," he said. "I seem to have fallen down a bit over this case."

"It's a nuisance," said Umpeley, "but there! We've only been at it a fortnight, and what's a fortnight? We'll have to be patient, my lord, and wait for the translation of that letter to come through. The explanation may be all in that."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE EVIDENCE OF THE CIPHER

"I know not whether  
I see your meaning: if I do, it lies  
Upon the wordy wavelets of your voice,  
Dim as an evening shadow in a brook."

*Fragment*

FRIDAY, 3 JULY

THE letter from "Clumps" at the Foreign Office did not arrive till the Friday, and then was a disappointment. It ran:—

"DEAR WIMBLES,

"Got your screed. Old Bungo is in China, dealing with the mess-up there, so have posted enclosure off to him as per instructions. He may be up-country, but he'll probably get it in a few weeks. How's things? Saw Trotters last week at the Carlton. He has got himself into a bit of a mess with his old man, but seems to bear up. You remember the Newton-Carberry business? Well, it's settled, and Flops has departed for the Continent. What-ho!

"Yours ever,  
"CLUMPS."

"Young idiot!" said Winsey, wrathfully. He threw the letter into the waste-paper basket, put on his hat and went round to Mrs. Lefranc's. Here he found Harriet industriously at work upon the cipher. She reported, however, total failure.

"I don't think it's a scrap of good going on with these marked words," said Winsey. "And Bungo has failed us."

Let's put our great brains to the business. Now, look here. Here is a problem to start with. What is in this letter, and why wasn't it burnt with the rest?"

"Now you mention it, that is rather odd."

"Very. This letter came on the Tuesday morning. On the Wednesday, bills were settled up, and on the Wednesday night, papers were burned. On Thursday morning, Alexis set out to catch his train. Is it too much to suppose that the instructions to do all this were in the letter?"

"It looks likely."

"It does. That means that this letter probably made the appointment for the meeting at the Flat-Iron. Now why wasn't this letter burnt with the rest?"

Harriet let her mind range over the field of detective fiction, with which she was moderately well acquainted.

"In my own books," she remarked, "I usually make the villain end up by saying 'Bring this letter with you.' The idea is, from the villain's point of view, that he can then make certain that the paper is destroyed. From *my* point of view, of course, I put it in so that the villain can leave a fragment of paper clutched in the victim's stiffened hand to assist Robert Templeton."

"Just so. Now, suppose our villain didn't quite grasp the duplicity of your motives. Suppose he said to himself: 'Harriet Vane and other celebrated writers of mystery fiction always make the murderer tell the victim to bring the letter with him. That is evidently the correct thing to do.' That would account for the paper's being here."

"He'd have to be rather an amateur villain."

"Why shouldn't he be? Unless this is really the work of a trained Bolshevik agent, he probably is. I suggest that somewhere in this letter, perhaps at the end, we shall find the words 'Bring this letter with you'—and that will account for its presence."

"I see. Then why do we find it tucked away in an inner pocket and not in the victim's hand as per schedule?"

"Perhaps the victim didn't play up?"

"Then the murderer ought to have searched him and found the paper."

"He must have forgotten."

"How inefficient!"

"I can't help that. Here is the paper. And no doubt it's full of dangerous and important information. If it made an appointment, it must be because it would then almost amount to a proof that Alexis didn't commit suicide but was murdered."

"Look here, though! Suppose the letter was brought simply because it contained instructions for reaching the Flat-Iron and so on, which Alexis didn't want to forget."

"Can't be that. For one thing, he'd have had it handy, in an outer pocket—not tucked away in a case. And besides——"

"Not necessarily. He'd keep it handy till he got to the place and then he'd tuck it away safely. After all, he sat at the Flat-Iron alone for an hour or so, didn't he?"

"Yes, but I was going to say something else. If he wanted to keep on referring to the letter, he'd take—not the cipher, which would be troublesome to read, but the de-coded copy."

"Of course—but—don't you see, that solves the whole thing! He did take the copy, and the villain said: 'Have you brought the letter?' And Alexis, without thinking, handed him the copy, and the villain took that and destroyed that, forgetting that the original might be on the body too."

"You're right," said Winsley, "you're dead right. That's exactly what must have happened. Well, that's that, but it doesn't get us very much farther. Still, we've got some idea of what must have been in the letter, and that will be a great help with the de-coding. We've also got the idea that the villain may have been a bit of an amateur, and that is borne out by the letter itself."

"How?"

"Well, there are two lines here at the top, of six letters

apiece. Nobody but an amateur would present us with six isolated letters, let alone two sets of six. He'd run the whole show together. There are just about two things these words might be. One: they might be a key to the cipher—a letter-substitution key, but they're not, because I've tried them, and anyway, nobody would be quite fool enough to send key-word and cipher together on the same sheet of paper. They might, of course, be a key-word or words for the next letter, but I don't think so. Six letters is very short for the type of code I have in mind, and words of twelve letters with no repeating letter are very rare in any language."

"Wouldn't any word do, if you left out the repeated letters?"

"It would; but judging by Alexis' careful marking of his dictionary, that simple fact does not seem to have occurred to these amateurs. Well, then, if these words are not keys to a cipher, I suggest that they represent an address, or, more probably, an address and date. They're in the right place for it. I don't mean a whole address, of course—just the name of a town—say Berlin or London—and the date below it."

"That's possible."

"We can but try. Now we don't know much about the town, except that the letters are said to have come from Czechoslovakia. But we might get the date."

"How would that be written?"

"Let's see. The letters may just represent the figures of the day, month and year. That means that one of them is an arbitrary fill-up letter, because you can't have an odd number of letters, and a double figure for the number of the month is quite impossible, since the letter arrived here on June 17th. I don't quite know how long the post takes from places in Central Europe, but surely not more than three or four days at the very outside. That means it must have been posted after the 10th of June. If the letters do not stand for numbers, then I suggest that RBEXMG stands

either for somethingten June or June somethingten. Now, to represent figures our code-merchant may have taken  $1=A, 2=B, 3=C$ , and so on, or he may have taken 1 as the first letter of the code-word and so on. The first would be more sensible, because it wouldn't give the code away.<sup>1</sup> So we'll suppose that  $1=A$ , so that he originally wrote A? JUNE or JUNE A? and then coded the letters in the ordinary way, the ? standing for the unknown figure, which must be less than 5. Very good. Now, is he more likely to have written June somethingten or somethingten June?"

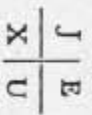
"Most English people write the day first and the month second. Business people at any rate, though old-fashioned ladies still stick to putting the month first."

"All right. We'll try somethingten June first and say that RBEXMG stands for A? JUNE. Very good. Now we'll see what we can make of that. Let's write it out in pairs. We'll leave out RB for the moment and start with EX. Now EX=JU. Now there's one point about this code that is rather helpful in decoding. Supposing two letters come next door to one another in the code-diagram, either horizontally or vertically, you'll find that the code pair and the clear pair have a letter in common. You don't get that? Well, look! Take our old key-word SQUANDER, written in the diagram like this:

S	Q	U	A	N
D	E	R		

<sup>1</sup> The hypothesis that RBEXMG represented a date written entirely in numerals proved to be untenable, and for brevity's sake, the calculations relating to this supposition are omitted.

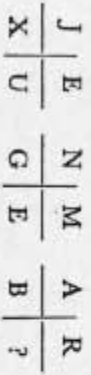
If you're coding the pair of letters DE, then, by taking the letters to the right of them (by the horizontal rule) you get DE=ER; the letter E appears both in code and clear. And the same for letters that immediately follow one another in a vertical line. Now, in our first pair EX=JU, this doesn't happen, so we may provisionally write them down in diagonal form



Taking these letters as forming the corners of a parallelogram, we can tell ourselves that JX must come on the same line in the diagram either vertically or horizontally; the same with JE, the same with EU, and the same with UX."

"But suppose JU follows the horizontal rule or the vertical rule without the two letters actually coming together?"

"It doesn't matter; it would only mean then that all four of them come on the same line, like this: ?JEU X, or XUE?J or some arrangement of that kind. So, taking all the letters we have got and writing them in diagonals we get this:



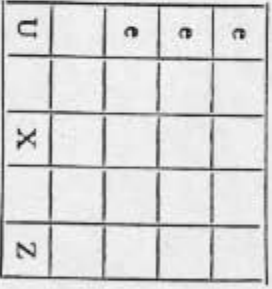
Unfortunately there are no side-by-side letters at all. It would be very helpful if there were, but we can't have everything.

"Now the first striking thing is this: that U and X have to come on the same line. That very strongly suggests that they both come in the bottom line. There are five letters that follow U in the alphabet, and only four spaces in which to put them. One of them, therefore, must be in the key-word. We'll take a risk with it and assume that it isn't Z. If it is, we'll have to start all over again, but one must make

a start somewhere. We'll risk Z. That gives us three possibilities for our last line: UVXYZ with W in the key-word, or UWXYZ with V in the key-word, or UVWXZ with Y in the key-word. But in any case, U must be in the bottom left-hand corner. Now, looking again at our diagonals, we find that E and U must come in the same line. We can't suppose that E comes immediately above U, because it would be a frightful great key-word that only left us with four spaces between E and U, so we must put E in one of the top three spaces of the left-hand column, like this:



"That's not much, but it's a beginning. Now let's tackle X. There's one square in which we know it can't be. It can't come next to U, or there would be two spaces between X and Z with only one letter to fill them; so X must come in either the third or the fourth square of the bottom line. So now we have two possible diagrams.



(1)



(2)



"Looking at our diagonal pairs again, we find that J and X come in the same line and so do J and E. That means that J can't come immediately above X, so we will again enter it on both our diagrams in the top three squares in the X line. Now we come to an interesting point. M and N have got to come in the same line. In Diagram 1 it looks fearfully tempting to put them into the two empty spaces on the right of J, leaving K and L for the key-word; but you can't do that in Diagram 2, because there's not room in the line. If Diagram 2 is the right one, then M or N or both of them must come in the key-word. M and E come in the same line, but N can't come next-door to E. That warns us against a few arrangements, but still leaves a devil of a lot of scope. Our key-word can't begin with EN, that's a certainty. But now, wait! If E is rightly placed in the third square down, then N can't come at the right-hand extremity of the same line, for that would bring it next to E by the horizontal rule; so in Diagram 1 that washes out the possibility of JMN or JLN for that line. It would give us JLM, which is impossible unless N is in the key-word, because N can't come next to E and yet must be in the same line with it and also with M."

Wimsey clawed a little at his hair and sat muttering.

"It looks as though we'd sucked our five letters rather dry," said Harriet. "How about trying the rest of the message? I've got it all ready sorted out into pairs. Hullo! Here's our old friend EXMG appearing again in the body of it."

"Is there?" Wimsey sat up. "Then, if we're right, that will be another date in June. I can't believe it's part of two words, one of which ends in J, or I, or JU or IU or IUN or JUN. If the letter was making an appointment for June 18th, why shouldn't the two letters before it be the letters for 18, that is AH? We'll try it, anyway; what are they?"

"O B."

"OB=AH. That's a fat lot of use. Well, we'll stick 'em down."

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{O} \mid \text{A} \\ \hline \text{H} \mid \text{B} \end{array}$$

O and A in the same line, O and H in the same line, and A and B we knew about before. That looks as though we might be on the right track, but it doesn't help us much, because none of the letters we've already placed comes into it."

"Just a moment," put in Harriet. "I've got a brain-wave. That town in the heading—it's supposed to be something in Central Europe. It's got six letters, and the last two are the first two reversed. How about Warsaw?"

"By jove! that's bright! We can but try it. Let's see—that gives us this." He wrote down the new pairs of diagonals.

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{W} \mid \text{X} \qquad \qquad \text{R} \mid \text{A} \\ \hline \text{N} \mid \text{A} \qquad \qquad \text{T} \mid \text{S} \end{array}$$

"W and X come in the same line," he observed, "and it's terribly tempting to imagine that W comes in the last line, next door to X. Otherwise, of course, it must be in the key-word. Just for fun, let's enter it in the last line in both our diagrams. Now, this becomes interesting. W and N are also in the same line. We can't place N in the fourth line down, because it's got to be in line with E. Nor can we put it in the third line down, because there are only six letters that come between N and U, and we should have eight spaces left to put them in. Therefore, if W is rightly placed, N has got to go in the top two lines, which means that it definitely does belong to the key-word."

Harriet filled the letters in tentatively.

e	n	i		
c	n	i		
e				
U	W	X	Y	Z

(1)

e		n	i	
e		n	i	
e			i	
U		W	X	Z

(2)

"That makes Diagram 1 look wrong," she said. "Why? What have we done? Oh, I know. E and N can't come together, so if that's the right diagram, E must come in the third line. I say! That would mean a key-word of eleven letters!"

"Not necessarily. E may be in its proper alphabetical place. But if Diagram 1 is right, then the beginning of Line 3 is the only place for it. Let's get on. S and T come in one line, and so do R and T, but RST don't follow one another, or RS would become ST, which it doesn't. I should like ST to go in the two places next before U, but we can't be sure that that is the right place for them. Well, dash it! stick 'em down—if we're wrong we must do it again, that's all. There! Now, in that case, R must be in the key-word and therefore in one of the top two spaces on the right of the diagram. That means that RS will be something-T."

"But we know RS! If AT=RS, then RS=AT."

"Good lord!" so it does! That's fine! That practically proves that our S and T are correct. And now we know that AR must come next to one another in the key-word!"

Harriet pored over the diagrams again.

"Can't we do something now with NX=AW? Yes—look! If we put A into either of the squares in Diagram 1, so as to make NX=AW, then A won't come next to R! So either we're all wrong, or we can wash out Diagram 1 altogether."

"Hurrah! Brilliant woman! I always hated Diagram 1, so we'll stash it. That leaves us with a very hopeful-looking Diagram 2."

e		N	ia	r
c		N	ia	r
e			i	
			S	T
U	V	W	X	Z

"I'm glad you think it's hopeful! How about this business of M and N coming in the same line? Can we do anything with that now?"

"Why not? Let's try. Put M immediately below the N spaces. That leaves five spaces between it and S and only three letters to fill them, because we know that N and R are in the key-word. So that M must come in one of the four spaces in the top left-hand corner. Now we do know that NE=MG. Obviously G can't come immediately between E and N anywhere, because that would give us a key-word with MNG in it, which sounds almost incredible. But that still leaves us with several possible arrangements. Is there anything else we can do?"

"We can fill in Q in the space before S. It isn't likely to be in the key-word without its U, and we know roughly what has become of R."

"Yes. All right. There it is. Do any of these pairs of letters make sense in the letter itself, by the way?"

"No. I've been trying to fit them in, but they're remarkably unhelpful. There's a group ATGM which works out as RS EN, but that might be anything. And quite near the beginning there's TS followed by QJ. TS=SQ, and you'd

expect the next group to be U-something, but it isn't. QJ must be S-something."

"So it is; that shows we're on the right track. Q is an arbitrary letter stuck in to separate the two S's. It's curious how little one can get out of the actual text at this stage. Shows what an ingenious beast of a code it is, doesn't it? Wait a jiff—the group before that is MG = NE—that gives us NESS. Perfectly possible and even probable, but it might be anything. Here it comes again! Whatever it is, it appears to be important—it's the same word, BFFVY followed by NESS, but BFFVY is simply baffling, I can see nothing for it but to go on struggling with the top left-hand corner. Let's write out all the possible positions for NE = MG."

E		G
M		N

(1)

	E	
		G
M		N

(2)

	M	
		N
E		G

(3)

"I can see one thing," said Harriet, "and that is that we have got to have a vowel of some kind between M and N, and that vowel can't be A, E, I or U, because we've placed those elsewhere. Therefore it's got to be either O or Y."

"O for preference. The number of words with MYN in them must be limited. But Y has got to be in the key-word somewhere. The end would be the likeliest place for it. Perhaps it ends in MONY. That gives us MONY in Diagram (1), and a word of nine letters. That's quite plausible. And it's got to begin with E—G. That's less pleasant. EBG, ECG—let's run through the alphabet. EHG—I think not. EIG—pronounceable, but we got I elsewhere. ELG—where's the dictionary? Nothing there. ENG is impossible,

we know where N is—same with ERG. My child, you can wash out all words ending in—MONY—they won't work on Diagram (1) or on Diagram (3), and as for Diagram (2), I refuse to believe in a fourteen-letter word until I'm absolutely forced to."

"In that case, you can wash out Diagram (2) altogether."

"Right-ho! I don't mind, though a thirteen-letter word ending in MON is not absolutely inconceivable. In that case, either our word begins with MON, or it doesn't."

"But it does! We couldn't find any words beginning E—G."

"Nor we could. Now then! We've got our E and our G fixed as well as our MON. Now we shan't be long! Fill them in! Oh! and look here! I'm sure the F must go between the E and the G—it's so obviously the place for it."

Harriet filled the diagram in with a quivering pencil.

M	O	N	ia	r
			ia	r
E	F	G	i	
		Q	S	T
U	V	W	X	Z

"That *does* look better," she admitted. "Now, let's see if it helps to get any sense out of the letter. Bother! What a lot of groups that we still haven't got! Still no sense for BFFVY. Oh! wait! Here's something! MZ TS XS RS. Now, MZ is something-U, and quite possibly RU; it's a 50-50 chance, anyway. TS is SQ and XS is S-something, which means that the Q is just a fill-in letter. Now suppose XS = SI—there's no reason why it shouldn't. Then RS might quite likely be AT—there's nothing against it. And

suppose—suppose all these supposes are right, then MZTSSRSR is RUSQSIAT. Knock out the Q and we've got RUSSIAT. *Why* couldn't that be RUSSIA?"

"Why not, indeed? Let's make it so. Write the letters down. M O N A R—oh, Harriet!"

"Don't joggle!"

"I must joggle! We've got the key-word. MONARCH. Wait a jiff. That leaves three spaces before E, and we've only got B and D to put in. Oh, no, I forgot! Y—dear old Y! MONARCHY! Three loud cheers! There you are! All done by kindness! There! There's your square complete. And jolly pretty it looks, I must say."

M	O	N	A	R
C	H	Y	B	D
E	F	G	I	J
L	P	Q	S	T
U	V	W	X	Z

"Oh, Peter! How marvellous! Let's dance or do something."

"Nonsense! Let's get on with the job. None of your frivolling now. Start away. PR BF XA LI MK MG BF FY MG TS QJ—and let's get to the bottom of this BF FY business, once and for all. I'll read out the diagonals and you write 'em down."

"Very well. T—O—H—I—' To His Serene '—can that be right?"

"It's English. Hurry up—let's get to BFFY."

"' To His Serene Highness '—Peter! what is all this about?"

Lord Peter turned pale.

"My God!" he exclaimed, melodramatically, "can it be? Have we been wrong and the preposterous Mrs. Weldon right? Shall I be reduced, at my time of life, to hunting for a Bolshevik gang? Read on!"