

23 June 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR: Editor, ASA Review

From: AFSA-14

The accompanying extract from Nicholas Breton's Court and Country, which was published in 1618, describes certain phases of cryptanalysis in a manner so quaint as to warrant reproduction in your estimable journal. He terms cryptanalysis a wily beguily! I therefore submit it to your kind consideration for such purpose.

Also, it would appear that even in those early days of cryptanalytic endeavors, the budgetary officials had difficulties similar to those in our time, for in Thomas Nashe's book published in 1599, Nashe's Lenten Stufte: The Prayse of the Red Herring (I wonder if it's the same fish that's talked about these days) there appears the following:

"O, for a Legion of mice-eyed decipherers
and calculators upon characters!"

WILLIAM F. FRIEDMAN

Encl.

[Dialogue between a courtier and a countryman]

[Courtier:] Oh Cousin, aduancement and contentment are the fruites of Court seruice, and the steps of hope to the state of honour: forthermore, for knowledge, we haue the due consideration of occurrents, the disciphering of Characters, enditing of letters, hearing of orations, deliuering of messages, congratulating of Princes, and the forme of ambassages, all which are such delights of the Spirit, as makes a shadow of that man that hath not a mind from the multitude to looke into the nature of the Spirits honour.

[Sig. B3^v]

[Countryman:] Now for your Occurrents, what are they? but newes, sometime true and sometime false, which when they come to vs are commonly more costly then comfortable, and therefore wee desire not to trouble our selues. Now for disciphering of Characters, I haue heard my father say in the old time, that they were accounted little better then coniurations, in which were written the names of Diuels that the Colledge of Hel vsed to coniure vp in the world, and belong'd onely to the study of Sorcerers, Witches, Wisards, and such wicked wretches, as not caring for the plaine word of God, goe with scratches of the Diuels clawes into hell: but how true it is God knoweth:... But what is the end of all wily beguily? seeking to deceiue other, deceiu'd himselfe most of all: Now letters of darkenes deuised by the Diuell for the followers of his designes in the courses of his deceit: honest men in the Country loue to meddle with no such matters, but so far as may be to Gods glory and the good of a State, to find out the plots, and to preuent

the mischeife of a villaine, being done in Gods holy name
and by his grace, I hold it a fine quality to discipher a Character,
and lay open a knaue: But for vs in the Country, wee loue no such
braine-labours as may bring our wits into such a wood that we know
not how to get out of it.

[Sigs. C4^v and D1.]

Nicholas Breton, Court and Country. 1618