

VF 108-11

1647 Macomb's Road  
Bronx, New York, N.Y.  
December 2, 1937

Colonel Parker Hitt  
U.S.A., Retired  
Front Royal  
Virginia

Dear Colonel Hitt:

This letter, with enclosure, comes to you from one J.F. Byrne, who, you will recall, got in touch with you relative to a cipher device, a great many years ago when you were at Governor's Island. You may also remember that you wrote me what I still cherish as a very manly and acceptable appraisal of my device. Subsequently, you asked me not to use your letter for exploitation purposes; and to this injunction I have always strictly conformed.

Although I had the blue prints of a machine prepared, and although I have never abandoned effort, I have not yet got anywhere. Of course, I had lots of other things to attend to which were more insistent and I have never had leisure until within the past six months to do what I finally have done.

I built a crude, but workable, model of my own; and on this machine I have enciphered the material of which I send you a copy. It has been printed in the most suitable type I could locate - large, boldface and unambiguous. There are ten pages totalling 248 lines; with no shift anywhere in the operation. On each of the first of these hundred lines the same sentence is repeated verbatim et literatim. This sentence is a variant of "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog"; and the words "quick", "brown", "fox", "jump", "over", "lazy", "dog", appear in each line in that order.

At line 101, on page five, I write a few words of introduction to the encipherment of "The Declaration of Independence", which begins in line 105 and continues without interruption to the top of page ten, where it ends, and is followed immediately by Lincoln's "Gettysburg Speech", which, in turn, closes in the first three words in line 248.

Copies of this document have already been submitted by me to Admiral Bowen, Engineer-in-Chief of the U.S.N., at the Navy Department; and by others to the State and War Departments - in all cases with the description as given to you, together with my flat assertion that this cipher is "materially and mathematically indecipherable by any expert or group of experts on earth".

In conversation with Major Milliken recently, he suggested you might be interested in this work of mine; and that is why I am getting in touch with you after all those years.

In your letter of appraisal to me you said, among other things: "I do feel that, given a large quantity of the product, together with plain text of a part thereof the specific combinations of your wheels could be worked out and the given messages translated".

That was a consummately flattering thing to say; because, of course, a cipher system might justly be held to be unbreakable, and yet might not be able to stand up against the strict terms of your stipulation. But it is scarcely necessary for me to emphasize the fact that "plain text of a part thereof" is by no means usually put at the disposal of those who would aim to break a "given message".

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In full face, however, of all that I have just said in the preceding paragraph, I do here and now issue this challenge to you:

If you are interested in my letter and in the enclosed cipher sample; and if you write to tell me that I can address you further in confidence, I shall promptly transmit to you a letter-by-letter, word-by-word, translation of the one line repeated a hundred times and of the Declaration of Independence and of Lincoln's Gettysburg Speech, and I defy you to establish your hypothesis that the "specific combinations" can "be worked out and the given messages translated."

With very kind regards, Sir, I am always,

Sincerely yours,

J.F. Byrne

JFB:gr