

University of Southampton National Cipher Challenge Solutions

Message 4 Plaintext:

*Dear Prof. Babbage,
I write, as a matter of some urgency to convey the most awful news. It appears that the documents you entrusted to Prof. Wheatstone have been taken. He believes the incident may be connected with the strange French interloper you discovered recently by your house.*

Prof. Wheatstone was accosted by a band of ruffians in Hanover Square while on his way to meet his brother William at their Conduit Street shop. The rogues handled him most roughly and wrested from him his case containing plans for the Turning machine and his latest designs for a concertina, though fortunately he was not injured. He noticed that their leader had a French accent and pursued the miscreants, vigorously calling for assistance. His efforts were in vain and not one of Peel's men came to his aid as he followed the vagabonds. He believes that the French ringleader has fled to Southampton and has himself taken lodgings there by the west quay in order to make further investigations.

I shall make enquiries with my friends in the Foreign Office. In the meantime it occurs to me that we should encrypt our messages more strongly. My own work on the theory of numbers suggests that a more mathematical rule for encryption would be a fine and effective replacement for the keyword cipher used in this message.

Yours, L.



Cipher:

- Keyword substitution cipher keyword “turning”

Notes:

- Indeed Charles Wheatstone had a shop at 20 Conduit Street near Hanover Square in London which he ran with his brother. Check out <http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/8341/biograf.htm>
- Peel's men is a reference to the reorganised metropolitan police force which was established by Robert Peel in 1829. Robert Peel was a leading politician of his day. There is more about him at <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/PRpeel.htm>
- Today West Quay in Southampton is a new shopping mall!



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