

# DIAMOND CIPHER

A BASEBALL ROMANCE

By W. A. PHELON

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## SYNOPSIS.

**CHAPTER I.**—Secret Service Chief Wilkins, puzzled over the theft of the Government's cipher, calls to his aid Detective Pinkwell. They think they have discovered a new cipher, when the office boy, Brockett, tells them it is "The Diamond Cipher" and starts for the ball park.

**CHAPTER II.**—Brockett, Chula Lon Kan, a diamond, Ramon Solano, a Cuban, together with some twenty other youngsters practice baseball playing until dark. One of Wilkins' stenographers is seen to pass a paper to mysterious stranger.

**CHAPTER III.**—As outcome of Brockett's cipher, the ball player and Solano are engaged by government for mysterious mission. Yastimoto, mysterious Jap, calls on Brockett.

**CHAPTER IV.**—Brockett falls into Yastimoto's trap, a fight follows. Brockett comes out on top. Messenger McKane coming to rescue.

**CHAPTER V.**—McKane was bearer of the mysterious cipher; is also a ball player.

**CHAPTER VI.**—Yastimoto, returns to headquarters and reports his failure to obtain the cipher to Baron Zollern. Miss Lawlor, the stenographer, also reports to the Baron.

**CHAPTER VII.**—Brockett and Solano have encounter with the Baron in the latter comes out second best.

**CHAPTER VIII.**—Brockett and Solano arrive in Jersey City; make appointment to meet McKane; the "Iron Man," base ball manager.

**CHAPTER IX.**—Brockett and Solano arrive in New York and run into a Chinese Tong war; rescued by a white man.

**CHAPTER X.**—The place of refuge found to be a trap; find themselves prisoners of Yastimoto; he tries to rescue, mulesch Jap out of \$10,000.

**CHAPTER XI.**—Kelly turns the money over to Brockett.

**CHAPTER XII.**—Brockett and Solano have encounter with tough gang, but are protected by Kelly's men.

**CHAPTER XIII.**—On sleeper Cleveland-bound, the Baron detected in act of rifling Brockett's berth, jumps from train.

(Continued.)

With a guttural roar of rage and chagrin, the Baron broke from the negro's hands and rushed down the car. He gained the vestibule platform before another clutch could be laid upon him and smashed a door



WITH A GUTTURAL ROAR OF RAGE THE BARON BROKE FROM THE PORTER'S HANDS.

open as if it had been a barrier of straw. Dressed as he was, pajama-draped, hatless, shoeless, he hurled himself out into the night, and the thick darkness swallowed him from view.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Detroit—home of automobiles and Ty Cobb—is a pretty place. It was vastly appreciated by the boys, both for its natural beauty and the fact that they encountered Cobb on Monroe avenue. Ty, who had met Brockett some months before in Washington, was not only affable, but anxious to go out of his way to guide the youngsters round the burg. Solano, like many others who had never made the acquaintance of the Georgia Peach, had always believed him a well-bred, inflated, disagreeable character, and was amazed to find him a splendid young fellow, gentlemanly and entertaining. After Cobb had left them the Cuban shook his head in a bewildered fashion.

"Finding out my mistake about Ty Cobb," he explained, "was some foil. Believe me, I'll not be surprised to discover, after that enlightenment, that Baron Zollern is our dearest friend and that Mr. Yastimoto would just die to make us happy!"

"They don't grow any nicer than Cobb," said Brockett. "He is pretty nearly the best ever."

Naturally, the messengers went to see Cobb perform that afternoon, after securing tickets and berths on a Chicago train. The great Georgian was at his best, giving a wonderful display of his speed and matchless hitting powers. After seeing him turn an ordinary single into three bases by nifty running, the boys left the ball yard, garrulous as monkeys, wildly delighted at the doings of Ty Cobb, but not forgetting the dangers and demands of their situation. Nobody bothered them at the game; no spies or shadows seemed to be on the trail as they walked from the park, and there appeared to be no reason for special caution. Much admiration and many unpleasant suggestions, however, had converted the youngsters into thoroughly suspicious

and watchful individuals, and every German, every passing Japanese or Chinaman, loomed large as a possible emissary of the foe.

Marching majestically amid the throng, and towering above them like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, a gigantic negro came up the street. The black man must have been seven feet high, and was gayly costumed in scarlet coat, blue trousers, and silk hat. With either hand he dealt out the advertising cards of some dentist, and kept a continual stream of past-boards flying through the crowd. The boys sidestepped to let the giant pass, but the mammoth negro checked his course for the fraction of a second, and thrust a couple of his cards into Brockett's astonished hands. Resuming his march, he paraded up the street, with a mob of small boys stringing in his wake, turned a corner and disappeared with his attendant train.

"Some advertising agent, that boy," laughed Brockett. "Wonder who hires him, anyhow?"

One of the cards bore the name of some "dental parlor." Across the other, in small but clearly written letters, were these hieroglyphs:

"H R E L T O W F N R T O H R T C  
L L P O S T O C U B E S"

"Instructions at Chicago," Brockett translated. "Say—let's catch that black man and ask him where he got this card."

They hurried to the cross-street where the negro had changed his course, but the gigantic African was nowhere visible.

When they boarded the Chicago-bound train that night, Solano's restless brain hatched a new idea. "It occurs to me, Harry," he ventured, "that anyone who is tracking us on sleeping cars will naturally prowl into the lower berth. Why not frame up a dummy, leave him in the lower, and both of us climb into the upper? Then we can take turns watching, and ought to keep pretty near to landing any inquisitive gentleman who gets his locations mixed."

The idea appealed to Brockett, and was quickly carried through. It was by no means difficult to construct a fair imitation of a sleeper in the lower berth, simply by rolling up the blankets, rumples the pillows, and arranging a few articles of clothing round the bunk. When the work was finished, and the electric light turned off, the life-like effect was wholly satisfying, and the boys could hardly restrain their laughter as they climbed like Alpine chamois into the mountainous regions above. Brockett took the first watch—and nothing happened to disturb the tranquillity of the car except a wrangle between two claimants of lower seven, each, through some mistake, holding the proper coupon.

Solano was on guard, and Brockett was peacefully dreaming, when the green curtains were slightly agitated. The Cuban stretched himself towards the upper berth, and peered downward. Nothing visible. If anyone had been trying to rummage in the lower berth, he had fled with snake-like silence and lightning speed. Solano, deciding that he had been in error, drew back, and waited until his watch without further incident.

With the first rays of sunlight, both boys were astir. Slipping down into the aisle without waiting for the porter's ladder, they looked into the lower berth. Something was jutting out from the blanket-roll that had simulated a peaceful sleeper—a black handle, from which fluttered a tiny bit of paper. Brockett seized the handle, and drew forth a vicious knife, with a strangely modeled, almost half-moon blade.

"A Filipino knife," exclaimed Solano. "Spanish writing on the paper."



THEY SAW TY COBB TURN AN ORDINARY SINGLE INTO THREE BASES BY NIFTY RUNNING.

## CHAPTER XV.

"These sleeping car adventures," complained Ramon Solano, as they disembarked at the Chicago station, "are somewhat wearing to the nerves. I suggest, after this, that we either walk or sit up in the day coach. Three strikes and out, you know. Twice we have been extremely lucky in Pullman car happenings—the third time may be bad for both of us."

"I agree with you," assented Brockett. "We can figure out ways and means of transportation, though, after we get through with our mission. I wouldn't mind going back by sea, if such a trip is possible. You have a pocket atlas, haven't you? Yes? Then we can map out a sea voyage to divert ourselves during the afternoon."

"Your cipher," said Solano, thoughtfully, "indicated you that you would receive orders in Chicago, didn't it?"

"Yes. So understood."

"How will any orders be given us? Where would we go to meet any message-bringer? How does any government agent know where to locate us?" Brockett shook his head. "All way past my understanding, Ramon. All I know is that we are supposed to receive orders here—somebody, somehow, will hand them to us before we leave Chicago. I am as certain of that as I am of—well, of setting breakfast this morning. Remember how we were given the card in Detroit? Some one will pass the newest orders to us, and do it just as quietly."

"One thing sure, my boy," remarked Solano, "we will have to wait around Chicago till such time as orders reach us. We can't proceed, helterskelter, slipshod, taking long chances, and start for Mexico this afternoon. No chance to migrate till we have the word."

"Quite correct. Still, I think the next cipher message won't be long delayed. It will be in our hands within a very few hours. While waiting, we can see the town, and incidentally keep a sharp watch for our Filipino friend."

The boys were more worried than either of them would admit. Neither had counted the vicious little Filipino, Aguilar, as an active factor in the situation. They were fairly well prepared to deal with the wily Japanese emissary, Yastimoto, or with the burly, hot-tempered German, Baron Zollern, but neither had for a minute made any calculation involving the brown fellow from Luzon. The affair in the sleeper, when the dummy arranged by Brockett had been stabbed with Aguilar's keen-bladed knife, was like a bombshell to them, and their worries were intensified by the fact that no trace of the would-be murderer could be found. Now they even resembled the little Filipino had left the train in the morning—the boys had scrutinized every outgoing passenger—and the porter and conductor asserted that no one even of a brown complexion had been aboard that train as far as they were aware. "For Gawd, guemen," protested the porter, "if any dahn-brown pussan had got into dis coach cab, Ah'd have staid him up 'fo' nothin' nighan, an' Ah'd sutin sure remember any nighan dat had de nigher to ride in a Pullman."

Was Aguilar in the employ of Yastimoto, with whom he had been closely connected back in Washington? Was he now an emissary of Baron Zollern?



HE THREW A COUPLE OF CARDS INTO BROCKETT'S HANDS.

Or was he pursuing a policy of private, personal revenge, of vengeance for the thrashing the boys had given him only a few days before?

Solano, whose Spanish relatives had told him much of the Philippines and the brown, treacherous Tagalogs, was positive that Aguilar was following his own road, fighting for his own hand, and trying only to get even. He was beating he had sustained. "A Tagal," argued Ramon, "would forget his employer, his position, everything else on earth, to follow an enemy to the bitter end. That little devil, from the moment we laid hands on him, forgot Yastimoto, Zollern and his own people's cause. All he thought of, from that time to this, was getting even. He may have been trailing us right along, on his own hook. He may have crossed our trail last night by sheer chance, and at once tried to take advantage of the opportunity. He may possibly have been with either Zollern or Yastimoto, allowing them to pay his way around the country, but he wasn't thinking for a single minute of their interests—all that he hoped and dreamed about was his personal revenge."

"I figure it just a little differently," answered Brockett. "I think that he has remained in the employ of one of the two spies—more likely Yastimoto, as two Asians would more probably stick together than one Asiatic and a German. Yastimoto, as I see it, followed us on behalf of the Jap, but when he actually got in the same car with us his vengeful spirit was too much for him, and he stabbed me as he believed—before he could hold back his hand. On calmer afterthought, he must have been utterly embarrassed and unnerved at his deed, and at the light in which he would now appear to Yastimoto. How can he ever make good to the Jap? How can he explain his failure to steal the documents he was after, and make excuses for letting his temper take him outside the path of his duty?"

"Good logic," dissented Solano, "but it doesn't fit in with what we have heard of Filipinos in general, and Tagalogs in particular. Anyhow, we will have to add Mr. Aguilar to our list of special dangers, and watch out for him a little more carefully than for either of the others. One thing sure—he'll take you for a ghost if we meet him anywhere, and we ought to gather him in without much trouble before he can recover from the shock."

Throughout the day that followed the youngsters kept sharp lookout for trouble, but were agreeably disappointed. No burly and bolsterous Germans swooped down upon them, no Filipino daggers glittered in the surging crowds, and none of the numerous little Japanese gentlemen whom they encountered during the day resembled Mr. Yastimoto except in size and color. They went ecstatic during the afternoon over Comstock's new ball park, a veritable paradise of the fans, and even enjoyed the treat of a short conversation with the Old Roman himself as he held court among the faithful "bugs." Not till late in the evening did the sights and sounds of the city pall upon them, and they began to dimly remember that they had enjoyed but little sleep on the previous night in the Pullman.

No message had been handed them

all day, and they received no sign of any character, although ears and eyes had been alert in eager expectation of a slip of paper quickly passed amid the hurrying crowds. It seemed evident, therefore, that they would have to wait over for at least another day, and rest had grown insistently imperative. They selected a downtown hotel, not one of the largest caravansaries, but a small, quiet-looking place, engaged a room and went to bed without delay. Recent experiences, however, had taught them a little caution. Reconnoitering all angles and appurtenances of their room, they soon convinced themselves that there was no chance for an intruder to enter by way of a window. They were on the fourth floor, and the only windows in the room looked down upon a sheer drop to the street below. Not even a fire-escape was within close reach; a glass door, twenty feet farther down the hall, bore the red-lettered inscriptions which told of exit to safety in case of a sudden blaze. The door of the room was locked and a chair braced against it, with its top under the knob, where it would rattle if anyone became too busy on the farther side, and the transom was tightly secured. These simple precautions taken, the boys climbed into bed; need of sleep soon impressed itself upon them, and within half an hour both were dead to the world and all its doings.

Daylight was just stealing into the room when Brockett woke, yawning, turned over and stared half-drowsily at the door. The door was still shut; the chair was still against the knob, and Brockett, smiling sleepily, was closing his eyes once more when he saw his coat, which had been draped around the back of another chair, seemingly taking wings and gaining animation. The coat rose, disengaged itself from the chair, and floated lightly through the air, navigating the upper strata of the atmosphere like a perfected biplane. It halted suddenly, turned over and stared half-drowsily at the door. The door was still shut; the chair was still against the knob, and Brockett, smiling sleepily, was closing his eyes once more when he saw his coat, which had been draped around the back of another chair, seemingly taking wings and gaining animation. 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