

AMAZING SYSTEM OF SPIES

What a Dossier is and How Its Information is Obtained.

(The London Mail.)

"Espionage? Rubbish," said my friend. "You fellows who live here in Paris have spies and spying on the brain. If a letter goes wrong you throw out dark hints of black cabinets, and you would have us believe that there is no more sanctity for private life in France here than there is in Russia. Down in your heart of hearts you know that that is nonsense, but your Briton who lives abroad is so full of the every-Englishman's-house-is-his-castle notion that he invariably gets exaggerated ideas as to intrusion on his privacy."

How much do you in England realize, I wonder, of the inwardness of the "fiches" scandal in the Chamber of Deputies not long ago, which all but overthrew M. Combes and his government? What think you of the fact that practically every officer of the French army, from the young fellow who has just left St. Cyr to the commander-in-chief himself, has each his dossier at the war office which is at the service of the Minister for Home Affairs whenever he chooses to demand a sight of it? The Minister of Justice has the dossiers of every member of the French bar, and at the prefecture and the home office are myriads of dossiers referring to civilian officials, politicians and to all classes of private folk. And now, of course, you would like to know just what a dossier is. Filled and kept safe from prying eyes, between two strips of cardboard, the ministerial offices of which I have spoken collect short notes about the lives of every kind of people, written on scraps of paper and derived from sources more or less reputable. One of these slips, or fiches, which make the dossier up, may mark the future of a citizen of the republic, and, as the scandal in the Chamber showed, the information gathered from club servants, waiters in cafes, concierges, from no matter whom nor how nor where, has many times prevented otherwise deserving officers from getting leave, promotion or the coveted exchange to other duties.

This, strange as it no doubt must sound to English ears and English notions, would be a good mark in the France of January, 1905, but if to-morrow France were to be ruled by a reactionary cabinet—and, as you know, in France conservative reaction and allegiance to the Pope go hand in hand—yesterday's good mark would mean such a bad one for the unfortunate officer in question that he would probably be tucked away in a frontier garrison, where, to use the official explanation of such courses when they are questioned in the Chamber, his "influence for evil is less to be feared." One of the great administrative jokes is the presentation to a high French official on his accession to office of the dossier concerning him. I can cite a rather amusing example of this. M. Combes, on entering office, was particularly anxious to see what information his forebear at the home office had about him. The secretary, who was despatched for the dossier, so expurgated it before he brought it in that all M. Combes found about himself was that he had been proposed twenty years before for the cross of the Legion of Honor. He knew that could not be all it had contained, insisted, and eventually was shown the other documents. They consisted of: First, information emanating from a detective employed by the prefecture of Lyons, a little provincial town where the premier practiced as a doctor, and gathered from "a person in the confidence of the doctor's outwager," second, similar information from two dismissed servants. And all these fiches represented Emile Combes as being a "cross little person of untidy habits, who hypocritically abstains from Mass, but has strong secret leanings toward the clergy and their works." The value of such information needs no criticism.

No one in France is absolutely safe from espionage, but it is carried out fairly discreetly, and few people, except such of us as make it our business to know things, know to what extent their private life is spied upon. Sometimes, though, we do get

to know it, and I can recollect an instance in my own case when I was told at our embassy by an amused secretary that I was "known to the police as an extremely violent person." The information came from two sources; my concierge, to whom, I had, I suppose, been rude with non-delivery of letters, and—this was the more serious of the two—a subaltern at the detective department of the home itself whom I had hustled a little.

But the generality of espionage and all its works has had more serious results. At the time of writing the truth about the death of M. Syveton is not definitely known. But one thing is certain. The government of France descended so low as to collect, with the help of the French Free Mason organization, the dossiers of army officers whom the late Minister of War believed to be dangerous to his position. The opposition, by counter-espionage, got wind of what was going on and bought the fiches through the intermediary of Syveton and the Masonic clerk, Bidegain. The suicide or death by foul means of the one may have been partly due to other causes. The disappearance of the other is still unexplained, but one thing is quite certain—both Syveton and Bidegain would have been now alive and might perhaps be reputable members of society but for the odious system of espionage which, even more generally now than in the empire's palmy days, has altogether undermined the moral tone of France.

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THE BIG WOMAN'S TROUBLES.

There was an enormously stout German woman sitting in the corner of a street car last night, weeping as if her heart would break. Some kindly spirit asked her what the matter was.

"I am so fat det every time I want to get off de car I have to back out de door, and de conductor man he tink I vas getting on and pushes me in. I have since 10 o'clock been riding this morning, and I'm hungry."

Her sympathetic listener explained and the poor woman got off at last.

"Until I met you, Matilda," he murmured, in a voice husky with emotion, "I believed that all women were docile, but when I look into your clear, beautiful eyes I behold there the very soul of candor and loyalty."

"George," she exclaimed, with enthusiasm, "this is the happiest moment I have known since papa took me to the New York oculist!"



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JULES VERNE AN APPRECIATION.

(London Daily Mail.)

It is forty-two years since Jules Verne published his first tale, the first of an almost unnumbered series, which have been the delight of nearly two generations of boys. This herald of a new order of books of adventure was entitled "Five Weeks in a Balloon," and appeared in English in 1870; and almost all his subsequent books found their way into our tongue. Mudge's list includes more than sixty volumes, and it is not complete.

The advent of Jules Verne was tantamount to a revolution in juvenile literature. Those were the days of pious Sunday-school literature; the book that lay adust on the nursery shelf were "Stanford and Merton" and "The Fairchild Family." As yet Dr. George Macdonald had not written "The Princess and the Goblin" and "At the Back of the North Wind." As yet Lewis Carroll had not thought of "Alice in Wonderland," published in 1865. As yet Knatchbull-Hugessen had not penned his fairy tales. It was a drab, grey, dull period upon which visions of the French writer broke, a period devoted to moral emblems and serious contemplations. Children, if they wanted lighter fare, must have recourse to Scott, to the Pickwick Papers, to Wilkie Collins, or to Captain Marryat.

Jules Verne's mission was to open up to the youthful mind the wonders of the scientific world. He perceived the great imaginative possibilities latent in science, and was the first to exploit them. His reward was a world-wide fame, for his romances have been translated into almost every civilized language, and his name is known to schoolboys of every nation. His method was to adapt to fiction some scientific fact or discovery. Theories had not the hold on him that they have on Mr. H. G. Wells. He seized the bare fact and embroidered it skilfully with an industrious and ingenious invention; and he has lived to see many of the things he adumbrated and anticipated pass into the realm of actuality.

The most successful and probably the most fascinating of his romances dealt with submarines. It was a trilogy, called "The Mysterious Island," and one grateful boy long ago passed with avidity from volume to volume. In it appeared the famous Captain Nemo, who had been the hero of "Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea," and who was inspired by a hatred of the English. Never to be forgotten is the thrill with which that passage was read describing the sinking of the English ship by the revengeful Nemo. But one forgave him; he was so superhuman, and, moreover, he was the deus ex machina of the Mysterious Island.

Submarines driven by electricity are with us now for good; and people do not take eighty days in putting a girle round the world. Yet who does not remember the phlegmatic Englishman who walked into the club in London after the wild journey under the impression that he had lost his bet, being out of his reckoning by one day? The first book of the master which appealed to one boyish mind, with terror suggestive of the last day, was a "Journey to the Centre of the Earth." It seemed the world before the deluge was realized, and the picture in Louis Figuier's book came alive in its pages. Jules Verne had the power of thrilling you by simple measures. He was direct, he was not overladen with ornament, as so many of his imitators have been. The scene in which, lost in the subterranean galleries, the adventurers communicated by tape, is hard to beat.

Again, what could make a more immediate impression on a young mind than the construction of a tremendous cannon which should fire

the daring voyagers at the moon? I can recall to this day, over how many dusty and silent years, the terrifying picture of the dead dog that clung about the travelling cylinder in space midway 'twixt earth and heaven. The drag of the earth was lost, and everything the voyagers threw out hung suspended about them. Of recent years Mr. Wells has tried his hand on the moon, and his book ranks with the best. It would be ungenerous to make comparison at this distance of time from the one. Candidly I believe Mr. Wells' book to be vastly cleverer, but Jules Verne's comes back over the years with the echo of the old delight.

It would be easy to criticize Jules Verne on the score that his scientific knowledge was indifferent, and that he lacked a tempering sense of humor. But such things have nothing in the world to do with his triumphant achievements as an imaginative writer. It is more probable that he has interested more boys in science than any other writer, and children of a larger growth need not scorn to read them. Very little passes as humorous to a child, who can see fun in Petepkin's amazing banalities in Ballantyne's "Coral Island," and "Gorilla Hunters"; and Passepartout in "Round the World in Eighty Days" suffices to youth for a comic creation.

In these days literature for children is at its flood tide. Several hundreds of boys' books are contributed by the printing presses every year. But Jules Verne retains his place of pride and priority. He was born in 1828, and he has written for more than forty years. The debt of school boys to him is immense. His public in English-speaking countries has been probably greater than in his own country. He had a natural leaning towards the English and American nations, and probably more to the latter than to the former. He has confessed that he has deliberately chosen his heroes from our countrymen, because of certain virile qualities which appealed to him. It was not an excitable Frenchman whom he despatched round the world. And one remembers, too, the tragic figure of Captain Hatteras.

Of his later books, one who is a boy no longer, and ceased to be one longer ago than he cares to think of, cannot speak with definite and full knowledge. But those I have come across (and I have always read those I came across) seemed to me to have the old familiar characteristics. Possibly there was a little falling off in the invention. The field has now been well explored. But the spirit was unflagging, the zeal undiminished.

How many books of one's boyhood could one re-read? I have tried the experiment with several, and the old magic has left them. But I am sure I could re-read the "Mysterious Island" and the "Journey to the Centre of the Earth." They were so direct, so brave, so eerie, and so challenging. And there were no wretched petticoats in them. If boys are not spoiled nowadays by the feast that is spread for them year in and year out, they will be grateful for Jules Verne. I, an old boy, am, and, to testify to the faith that is in me, I will start on a course of him to-morrow—with a younger and perhaps more critical audience for company. M. W.

THE CLOSE OF THE DAY.

Twilight, dim with dusky tresses, Lulls to rest each moaning dove, Evening breezes softly sighing Whisper tales of tender love. Heavenly voices low are chanting Slumber bringing lullabies, Dreams elysian-sweet are lifting Weary souls to Paradise. Slowly die the billow murmurs, Night falls on the dewy sod, Then the drowsy earth enraptured Feels the heart throbs of her God. —Hugh A. Walker, in Men and Women.

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THAT'S WHY. "Tommy always eats more pie when we have friends at dinner," explained Tommy's mother. "Why do you do that, Tommy?" beamed the visitor. "Cos we don't have no pie no other time," spluttered Tommy between bites.—Houston Post.

THE SHRINKAGE. Somebody told Mr. Jenks that red flannel worn next to the skin would cure rheumatism, from which he suffered. So he purchased several sets of red flannel undergarments. The clerk assured him that the firm guaranteed the goods in every particular. About two weeks later, says the New York Times, Mr. Jenks revisited the shop, sought out the proprietor and told his woeeful story. "The goods are the best in the house," declared the proprietor. "Of course," he said, in the reasonable tone used on unreasonable persons, "of course, the shirts may have shrunk or faded a little."

"Shrunk! Faded!" bellowed Mr. Jenks. "What do you think my wife said to me when I came down yesterday to breakfast with one of them on?"

The proprietor looked bored. "Well, sir," said the aggrieved Jenks, "she looked at me a minute, and then said: 'What is that little red line around your neck, John? It isn't the baby's string of coral beads, is it?'"

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THE GI

High up on the side of plateau it stood—a long, long, painted white. In front of it a wide gallery that led the length of the house which ran luxuriant creosote long, trailing vines. Westward was a sublime misty blue mountain and North and south, valley, hills made a fair picture of ment, while eastward the long sun was tempered by dappled and gigantic live-wood like sentinels on the hills ranch. The house door opened, came two elderly women, I mistakably, though forty years, Texas sun, wind and rain I ad over their head since they green shores of Ireland—two girls radiant with hope—and faces toward the new world. Nor had hope been unrealistic in southwestern Texas, the other of the family had bought hundred acres of land at whom land was cheap. stock—the source of income—greatly increased, until at the death of his ranch, v flourishing condition. The died soon after, leaving daughters to manage the ranch, some there were none. Faithfully Eileen and Mary their trust. At the time of their death were fifteen and respectively, and when John Eileen was thirty-seven, Mary thirty-five. Even then in plenty were not wanting; one and all the same answer given—what love the darling girls had to spare from vocation each other gave to the was, later, all poured forth fair head of their adopted son January night when a "north" descended on them, and the men were sitting near a st which blazed a cheery wood snock came at the door. Vis late were unusual, especially night when most Texans prefer main indoors. Eileen arose crossing the hall, opened the "Is anyone there?" she called receiving no answer she stepped on the wide gallery, trying in pierce the dark, starlit night. profound reigned, and pressing planning to feel the intense co bearing no sound, she returned house, bolting the door after Locks and bolts on a Texas are usually unknown, and conspicuous even where they but since the death of John a year ago, their isolated p had made the sisters cautious the fastening of the door. E longer they sat over the fire, which was now dying out, the clock struck ten, when arose. Lighting a lantern, she a shawl over her head, and from the house took her way barn, accompanied by a mag Irish setter, who, in the de manifested an unholy desire t Eileen by getting between he Eileen tried the barn door, and it locked, turned away sa Two Mexican boys slept in th and it was the nightly duty older sister to see that they w side the barn and the door fast before retiring herself. Thesetter had disappeared, so ling around Eileen began picki way over the stony, uneven pat led back to the house. Suddenly the dog began b furiously. "Brian," she called, "Brian, be still continued to bark raised her voice. "Brian, B Brian, come here." The tawny hide of the setter suddenly appeared alongside of her disappeared again, returning instantly, his handsome head toward the ground, every mov of his eager, quivering body sh that he had something to in Eileen understood. "Mary," she called, "Mary," as the younger sister appeared, ed in the open door like a silt the elder rapidly explained: "I found something," she "Come with me, and we will l Added by the light of the lantern some sisters followed the dog o the front of the house, an ously made out that he was a small, dark object that in the stones near the brow of th that stooped to the road below as Mary, who best over what he to be a bundle of red flannel, while Eileen held back the