A cryptogram is a puzzle in cipher, usually a sentence of varying length, in which each letter is represented by another letter, but always by the same letter throughout. Thus, the following unpronounceable conglomeration of letter groups is a cryptogram in its encoded form:

SAG OLGYSGUS UPRRGU Hu RQXDHEGXRG QL KGDGRS PXEGLUSYXEHXO CGSMG gx UHXRGLG KGRKGWG.

Puzzlers versed in letter and word frequencies, typical vowel positions, letter combinations and combining forms characteristic of English words, and related word lore, will analyze such a cryptogram and discover that it can be decoded into this message:

THE GREATEST SUCCESS IS CONFIDENCE OF PERFECT UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN SINCERE PEOPLE.

Of course, a cryptogram based on common English words is quickly decoded by expert cryptographers, and it becomes necessary for those constructing the coded messages to use peculiar words that distort normal letter frequencies and exhibit highly improbable letter combinations, in order to pose a challenge to adept solvers. Thus, when the cryptogram is decoded, it may well read:

OHIOAN, KHAKIED UHLAN, SHREWD AHMED, THWACK GHOSTLY BHANG-DRUNK HANSI DHOBI, WHILST IHI, debris, LHAMYWNCH CHUM THRU GHLOX.

It sounds interesting, but what does it mean? Careful dictionary research elicits the facts: a resident of Ohio, a Tatar lancer dressed in khaki, and a clever Turk named Ahmed, acting in concert, thrash a low-caste Hindu washerman residing in a district of British India who became intoxicated as a result of drinking a narcotic made from the Indian hemp plant and who looks like a ghost, while a New Zealand stitchbird, a South American bird.
related to the ostrich, and a lapwing, as that bird was known in 14th-century England, pass through a bed of phlox on intimate terms with each other.

This is our introduction to that strangest form of English, the "language of the crypts," a language that opens up new dimensions of thought for us. Cryptographic texts describe a fantastic world glimpsed only by the fortunate few who have delved into the secrets of the ciphers, at the same time exposing us to the English language in its ultimate glory. Come, let us browse among the wealth of ideas and words that cryptography has to offer us.

Here is another sterling specimen of that special language, plucked from the inexhaustible files of The National Puzzlers' League, as are all of the examples quoted in this article:

JOLI SPAHI, OWARI SAMURAI, ELI ALUMNI, XI CHI PSI LITERATI, TAXI VRAKHORI VLEI, SKI FADYEESVIKA ZASTRUGI.

Technically, the sentence is remarkable in that each of its 16 words ends with the improbable letter "I." Again, however, we are compelled to translate the thought being communicated into other words fully to savor it: a pleasant Algerian cavalryman, a feudal Japanese warrior from the district of Owari, some graduates of Yale University, and a group of intellectuals belonging to the Xi Chi Psi fraternity, move over the surface of a marshy area of the sort normally found only in South Africa but miraculously transferred to the city in west-central Greece formerly known as Vrakhori, subsequently going skiing on wavelike ridges of hard snow formed by the action of the wind in arctic and antarctic regions, these particular ones being located on a certain Russian island in the Arctic Ocean now known as Faddeevski Island.

Well, it's a thought—but who except someone on an LSD "trip" would dream it up? A cryptographer, obviously!

We turn to another, more difficult specimen of the cryptographic art:

FLUNKYISH OBLATI LYMPH SPLOTCHY ASCRIPT, UPWHIRL CRUMBLED ENZYM, FRESCO QUARTZIC RHYND, BESTROW HYRST.

There must be a thought hidden here, if we can but penetrate the veil of words thrown around it. Let's give it a try: servile Catholics devoted to the monastic life, and a serf attached to the soil who is stained with lymph, whirl an enzyme broken into small pieces upward, paint a picture of the iron piece crossing the hole of an upper millstone (which, in this instance, is made of quartz, not of iron) on freshly spread wall plaster before it dries, and besprinkle a wooded hill.

This thought is so far out that we can't help wondering whether we have interpreted the cryptogram correctly. If any of our readers can come up with a more plausible interpretation, we'll be glad to publish it. The punctuation shown is precisely that used in the original text.

The next example is much easier to understand, and is noteworthy for consisting entirely of 10-letter words, each of which is spelled with 10 different letters of the alphabet:

WORD WAYS
was known in 14th-century terms with each other.

of English, the "language tensions of thought for us.

Ciphered only by the fortunate "cipherers, at the same time

mate glory. Come, let us

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SCRIPT, UPWHIRL

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ich is spelled with 10

PHLEGMATIC WINTERCLAD VOLTIGEURS, OUTBRAVING MUS-

KHOGEOAN ARCHFIENDS, UNSHACKLED PROCUMBENT DESPAIRFUL

PATHFINDER.

Apparently, we are being told that sluggish French sharpshooters, dressed for

winter, excelling certain North American Indian archfiends in bravery, released

from his fetters a certain pioneer explorer whom they found in a prostrate

position and who had already despaired of his fate. Eminently reasonable . . .

or is it?

Some cryptograms are so obscure that they virtually defy interpretation. We

challenge any reader to come up with a reasonable—or any—paraphrase

of this text:

GULDSMETMOEN KNIGHTSWORT PEDLAR OVERTHREW HALF-

JOELDDIA SOCKMAN ANTE SONDRE TRONDHJEM EORL OYER

OVER OBSTREUENT VIK DECKPLANK. TRADESMAN VICTOR, ANG-

STSKRIK RESULT.

If you can figure this one out, let us know what it means. In such a case, you

merit the title of "Expert in English."

If we relax the customary rules governing cryptogram construction a little

(How?), we can even produce specimens where it is difficult to tell which is

the cryptogram and which the solution. An example, in which (1) is the

cryptogram and (2) the solution:

(1) JOY! QUIT SALE! DIVE, SOT! KEGS, SIR, PACE REPUBLICS, MINX

HUMMELS; WAIVER MOVE SUPE DIRER; RARE IS DOZE, PULE

CLOY RAYES, MICE HEELS, RUDDER COFFER CLASSES.

(2) BIG HOAX! SURE FAKE! SIX JEWS, SAD MUTE DEMOCRATS,

LAZY POLLERS, QUAKED LIKE SOME FADED DUDE, AS FIVE

MORE TRIG DUKES, LATE PEERS, DOFFED TINNED TRUSSES.

Another cryptographic extremity is the pangrammatic code, a 26-letter sen-

tence using each letter of the alphabet once. For instance:

ZINGI VEXT CWM FLY JABS KURD QOPH.

The timeless message being conveyed to us here is that an irritated fly in a

Welsh mountain hollow pokes at the image of the 19th letter of the Hebrew

alphabet, an image drawn by a member of an agricultural people inhabiting

portions of Turkey, Iran, and the Soviet Caucasus. While doing so, this

obviously fierce and gigantic fly, an insect straight out of the pages of

science fiction, is making a shrill, humming noise.

Another pangram, for which we'll let you contrive your own interpretation:

FJORD-BUCK ZAGS WHELM QVINT PYX.

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