



The Real Eagle

PROUD emblem of America's might, the noble eagle seeks the height, or something to that effect in the good old-fashioned Fourth-of-July orations. We learned from them that the bald eagle is a fierce, courageous bird of prey, that builds its nest ("eyrie" in oratornithology) on a lofty cliff in the heav'n-kissed mountains of the Greeeat West, and will defend that home, sir, with its very life.

Impartial scientific investigations of real live bald eagles deflate that account quite a bit. Not that our eagle is debunked, exactly, but we learn that a lot of things we knew about the eagle consisted of "facts that weren't so."

Results of long study of eagles, and compilation of the studies of other scientists, are presented in a new Smithsonian Institution book, written by Arthur Cleveland Bent of Taunton, Mass.

True, the bald eagle is a bird of prey. But he is also not fond of the hard work involved in preying, and lives mostly on fish cast ashore dying or dead, or taken away from a smaller fish-catching hawk,

the osprey. He can do his own fishing, but not so cleverly as the osprey, so he prefers to rob him.

When fish are scantily available, as in winter, the eagle does turn to true bird-of-prey tactics. He takes any bird or mammal that he can handle, and that runs up as big as Canada goose. Despite his size, he is an athlete in the air, often turning upside down and diving under his victim to strike from beneath.

He does not build his home on a cliff nearly as often as on top of a tall tree, even in the Rockies. And there are far more bald eagles in Florida, least cliffy of states, than anywhere else in the Union. Eagles have even been known to build their nests right at ground level.

And when a human intruder comes, says Mr. Bent, the bald eagle does not defend his nest. He just plain vacates.

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which he details a wartime business transaction on the part of a certain Messrs. Aslop and Lewis that rather looks like profiteering. At any rate, the patriots of the time were wroth enough about the affair.

Some of the letters written in invisible ink were affairs of more than ordinary danger, for they kept John Jay advised of efforts on behalf of the Colonies in London itself. His own brother was a rather notable English physician, Sir James Jay. Letters from him, and from other relatives and friends in England, were passed, open, through the British Post Office, where apparently no suspicion was aroused of possible secret writing. These were often sent to fictitious addresses, where Mr. Jay picked them up. Extreme caution had to be observed at that time, because although the French were willing to aid in the

discomfiture of their old enemy, England, the two governments were still formally at peace.

Thus, a letter from Silas Deane, then secret American agent in Paris, to John Jay, was mailed from a fictitious Thomas Johnson to an equally fictitious Thomas Smith. The visible part was, as usual, casual and innocuous. The part in secret writing went into some details about the delicate arrangements, all the more dangerous because they still had to be kept secret, for stirring up French aid for the struggling Colonies.

Plenty of Callers

Part of the secret message reads: "Let me entreat you to send me some instructions and powers in proper form, if you design I shall represent the United States in any tolerable character. I am, my dear friend, in a most critical situation and the anxiety, I daily undergo thro want of intelligence, will neigh distract me and the more so as everybody here has taken it into their heads I am plenipotentiary. In consequence of which I have a levee of officers and others every morning as numerous, if not as splendid, as a prime minister.

"Indeed I have had occasionally dukes, generals and marquesses and even bishops, and comtes and chevaliers without number, all of whom are jealous, being out of employ here or having friends they wish to advance in the cause of liberty.

"Good people in this country expect the new regulation of your government's universal toleration in religion will be one of the cornerstones of your building. This will endear you to all the good people in Europe and be one of the most noble and just steps that can be taken."

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