

Edith Gatford, Secretary-General of the Localizable Sentences and their Applications Research Association, is stood on the platform at St Pancras railway station in London, next to the train that is due to depart for Paris in sixteen minutes time.

Edith is looking down the platform.

Edith arrived eleven minutes ago, having walked up the platform by the side of the train and found the coach where she has booked seats for herself and for three members of staff, John, Edward and Caroline.

'I hope that they all get here in time.' thinks Edith, who is starting to get somewhat concerned.

Edith sees John and Edward walking towards her.

"Good morning gentlemen." says Edith.

"Good morning." each of the two men reply.

"Have you seen Caroline?" asks Edith.

"No, ... we looked out for her on the platform at Ruralham but she was not there, we wondered if she had taken the earlier train." says John.

"I caught the earlier train from Ruralham and she was not on that either. I'll try to telephone her, though she might have her mobile telephone switched off ... but it is worth a try."

Edith telephones Caroline. The telephone is answered. Edith quickly puts the telephone into loudspeaker mode.

"Hello? Please wait while I go into loudspeaker mode." says Caroline.

A pause.

"Right, hello?" says Caroline.

"Is that you Caroline, this is Edith Gatford."

"Yes, this is Caroline, hello."

"Caroline, where are you?"

"On the train."

'Oh no,' thinks Edith 'she won't be here in time. But she may have a good reason for being on the later train so ask quietly and not jump to conclusions. She could still catch us up though that might mean her having to rebook train seats and so she might have to wait until there is a seat available. Oh dear!'

"Is there a problem?" asks Edith gently.

"No. No problem. I'm on the train, all is well."

"Well, is there any reason why you are on this train please?" asks Edith, still gently.

“Because I am travelling to Paris and then onwards to”

“Yes, I know that you are travelling to Paris, that is not what I meant. Why are you on this train rather than having been on one of the trains that John, Edward and myself travelled on?” says Edith with a little impatience in her voice.

“Because I am travelling to Paris.”

‘I employ people because they are precise, but this is ridiculous.’ thinks Edith.

“Caroline, where exactly is the train that you are on at this moment please?” asks Edith somewhat forcefully.

“At St Pancras station.”

“What? Caroline, the train from Ruralham doesn’t go to St Pancras.”

“I am not on the train from Ruralham, I am on the train that is due to travel to Paris in a while.”

“Caroline, I’ve been stood on this platform for nearly fifteen minutes and I would have seen you had you got on the train to Paris. Please explain exactly what is going on!”

“Well, I arrived about twenty-five minutes ago and the empty train was running into the station and I asked a member of staff if it is the train for Paris and he said it is and I asked if it was alright to get on and he said I could, so I got on. - I thought that being on the train was the best way to make sure that I did not miss it.”

“Which train did you catch from Ruralham?” asks Edith with some suspicion in her mind.

“The one at just after six o’clock yesterday evening. One of my aunts lives a few minutes from an Underground station in one of the suburbs so I stayed at her house overnight, got up early and got here in good time.”

“Right, thank you, bye.” says Edith.

Edith looks up and sees John smiling, almost laughing.

“What?” snaps Edith.

“Well, I’m sorry, it just seems funny the way you jumped to the wrong conclusion and got suspicious when nothing was wrong.” says John.

Edith gives her old-fashioned look and then smiles. “Yes, I did didn’t I. I need to learn from this.”

Edward is trying to look as if he had not heard anything of all of this.

Edith, John and Edward get onto the train and meet up with Caroline at their pre-booked seats.

After a while the train departs for Paris.

Caroline had asked Edith if she could please have a seat facing forward and by a window if possible such that Caroline could view the landscape from the other side of the train from where she had viewed it when she travelled from Paris to London previously and Edith had arranged that.

The train arrives at the Gare du Nord in Paris.

“Well, it is around half a mile, so I think it is best, as we have luggage, to have taxis. So if you John can share with Caroline, and I will share with Edward.” says Edith.

“Right.” says John.

The taxis arrive at Gare de l’Est.

They alight from the taxis and proceed to the train that they are due to catch.

“Ah, a German train.” says Edith. “This train will take us to Mannheim where we can change trains.”

The train starts. As time passes and as the journey proceeds, Edith, John, Caroline and Edward observe some of the landscape of France, then some of the landscape of Germany.

The train arrives at Mannheim.

“Here we are,” says Edith “time to change trains.”

They alight from the train. The train departs and continues its journey.

They enquire as to from which platform the train for which they are waiting will leave and wait on the platform.

The train arrives.

“Ah, this train is hauled by a locomotive.” remarks Edward.

They get on the train.

The train departs from Mannheim.

Less than an hour later they arrive at their destination.

“Now, let us try to find two taxis to take us and our luggage to our hotel.” says Edith.