

THE STRATAGEM

the track of ships and set fire to the yacht, so as to be 'rescued' and conveyed to England, whence we could arrange with the French Government for rehabilitation.

"Such was the simple yet subtle plan of Dodu. Down to the last detail was it perfected—until one fatal day.

"The spy, stricken by yellow fever, dropped suddenly dead in the fields before the noon 'Cease work' had sounded. Instantly, without a moment's hesitation, Dodu strode across to me and said, at the risk of the lash: 'The whole plan which I have explained to you in cipher these last four months is a blind. That spy knew all. His lips are sealed in death. I have another plan, the real plan, simpler and surer. I will tell it to you to-morrow.'"

The whistle of an approaching engine interrupted this tragic episode of the adventures of Duguesclin.

"'Yes,' said Dodu (continued the narrator), 'I have a better plan. I have a *stratagem*. I will tell it you to-morrow.'"

The train which was to carry the narrator and his hearer to Mudchester came round the corner.

"That morrow," glowered Duguesclin, "that morrow never came. The same sun that slew the spy broke the great brain of Dodu; that very afternoon, a gibbering maniac, they thrust him in the padded room, never again to emerge!"

The train drew up at the platform of the little junction. He almost hissed in Bevan's face.

"It was not Dodu at all," he screamed, "it was a common criminal, an epileptic; he should never have been sent to Devil's Island at all. He had been mad for months. His messages had no sense at all: it was a cruel practical joke!"

"But how," said Bevan, getting into his carriage and looking back, "how did you escape in the end?"

"By a stratagem," replied the Irishman, and jumped into another compartment.