

the cipher, and the spy spoke no language but his own, except a little Swiss.) 'From this time I shall communicate in a cipher of the direct additive numerical order, and the key shall be his name.'

"It was only my incomparably strong constitution which enabled me to add the task of deciphering his conversation to that imposed by government. To memorize perfectly a cipher-communication of half-an-hour is no mean feat of mnemonics, especially when the deciphered message is itself couched in the obscurest symbolism. The spy must have thought his reason in danger if he succeeded in reading the hieroglyphs which were the mere pieces of the puzzle of the master-thinker. For instance, I would get this message: owhmomd-vvtxskzvgcqzllhtreirgscpxjrmsgausrg-vhbdxzldabe, which, when deciphered and the spy would gnash his teeth every time Dodu signalled a W!), only meant 'The peaches of 1761 are luminous in the gardens of Versailles.'

"Or again: 'Hunt: the imprisoned Pope: the Pompadour; the Stag and Cross.' 'The men of the fourth of September; their leader divided by the letters of the Victim of the Eighth of Thermidor.' 'Crillon was unfortunate that day, though braver than ever.'

"Such were the indications from which I sought to piece together our plan of escape.

"Perhaps rather by intuition than by reason, I gathered from some two hundred of such clues that the guards Bertrand, Rolland, and Monet had been bribed, and also promised advancement, and (above all) removal from the hated Island, should they connive at our escape. It seemed that the government had still use for its first strategist. The eclipse was due some ten weeks ahead, and needed neither bribe nor promise. The difficulty was to insure the presence of Bertrand as sentinel in our corridor, Rolland at the ring-fence, and Monet at the outposts. The chances against such a combination at the eclipse were infinitesimal, 99, 487, 306, 294, 236, 873, 489 to 1. It would have

been madness to trust to luck in so essential a matter. Dodu set to work to bribe the Governor himself. This was unfortunately impossible; for (a) no one could approach the Governor even by means of the intermediary of the bribed guards, (b) the offence for which he had been promoted to the governorship was of a nature unpardonable by any government. He was in reality more a prisoner than ourselves, (c) he was a man of immense wealth, assured career and known probity.

"I cannot now enter into his history, which you no doubt know in any case. I will only say that it was of such a character that these facts (of so curiously contradictory appearance—on the face of it) apply absolutely. However, the tone of confidence which thrilled in Dodu's message, 'Pluck grapes in Burgundy; press vats in Cognac: Ha! 'The soufflé with the nuts in it is ready for us by the Seine,' and the like, showed me that his giant brain had not only grappled with the problem, but solved it to satisfaction. The plan was perfect; on the night of the eclipse those three guards would be on duty at such and such gates; Dodu would tear his clothes into strips, bind and gag Bertrand, come and release me. Together we should spring on Rolland, take his uniform and rifle, and leave him bound and gagged. We should then dash for the shore, do the same with Monet, and then, dressed in their uniforms, take the boat of an octopus-fisher, row to the harbour, and ask in the name of the Governor for the use of his steam-yacht to chase an escaped fugitive. We should then steam into 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 sound-