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### **National Cipher Challenge 7 Part A**

Vanguard, July twenty first, Seventeen Ninety Eight.

My Lord, the Messenger has returned from Cape Passaro, and says that your letters for me are returned to Naples. What a situation am I placed in! As yet, I can learn nothing of the Enemy, and the Vanguard, dismasted in a storm last May, sails with a jury rigged foremast. I may have to shift my Flag into some other Ship. I want to send a great number of Papers to you, but, alas, a quarrel among the midshipmen has left me with a new and inexperienced cipher clerk so that I dare not.

Martin has completed his transcription of Marlowe's papers, the latest encrypted by a cunning variation on the Trithemius cipher. Christened the cursus clavis cipher by our classically minded friend, this example takes its key from Denmark's first folio. The Chinese agents carry information concerning techniques of forgery designed to wreck our treasury as surely as a mountain of sea ice might destroy a ship of the line. Martin believes that they plan to forge and distribute large quantities of His Majesty's coin in India and thereby undermine the value of our gold there. He is sure that they will approach by the invasion and conquest of Egypt and I will now sail for Alexandria in hope of intercepting them. I believe that L'Orient is carrying the agents and their engines and am certain that they must be destroyed, though Martin would prefer their capture. Vice Admiral Brueys d'Aigalliers will be equally sure that they must be protected and he will not let them fall into our hands. I believe he will stand and fight on ground of his own choosing and am anxious to oblige him in this at the earliest opportunity. I have taken the liberty to trouble your Excellency with a letter for Lady Nelson. Pray forward it for me, and believe me, with the greatest respect, your most obedient Servant,

*SIR HORATIO NELSON, K.B., REAR-ADMIRAL OF THE BLUE, ETC.*

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NOTES This was encrypted using a very simple transposition cipher. The text was laid out in a square and then read by columns instead of rows. This can be done by using the transpose command in Excel. The best clue to this was the location of the capital letters in the ciphertext., left intact by the new and inexperienced cipher clerk!