

chamber. The chief of the *gendarmes* advanced and placed his hand disrespectfully upon the shoulder of General Count Borromeo. He arrested him before the eyes of the astonished officials, and conducted him to prison. The poor officers who composed his staff were also arrested and thrown into prison, until it could be ascertained whether or not they were merely dupes.

The excitement was tremendous. Collet had attacked, in a vital spot, the most sacred institution of the empire—the army; he had plundered the public funds; he had made the authorities ridiculous. It was a case for hanging. The examination was pushed rapidly, and during twenty days continued uninterruptedly. But they did not succeed in establishing the identity of the false Borromeo.

It seized the fancy of the prefect, Hérault, the man so greedy for great decorations, to exhibit the celebrated swindler to some of his guests, as one would show a fox caught in a trap. They took Collet from his cell and carried him to the prefecture. The *gendarmes* shut him up in the office and guarded the door, because he was not to be produced until the time for dessert and champagne. Collet, left alone, looked around him and saw, hanging against the wall, a white apron, a vest and a hat,—the dress of a cook. Seized with one of those inspirations with which the genius of Cartouche abounded, he threw off his prison garb, dressed himself as a cook, took some cream in his hand, opened a door that was not guarded, and walked out unmolested.

The prefect, cruelly mystified, scoured the country with his men; but Collet concealed himself where no one would ever think of looking for him,—in the house of a mason, directly opposite the prefecture. Every morning from his little window he saw the prefect shaving himself, and watched him walking his chamber the rest of the day, for he feared arrest and punishment for permitting this unfortunate escape.

Collet, informed of all that was going on, by the papers and by his host, let the storm pass over; and, assuring himself by writing to Lorient that there was no suspicion against

the lieutenant of the 47th Regiment of the line, departed to rejoin his corps.

He went to Tulle; but the passion for swindling again took possession of him. He encountered there the head clerk of the house of Durand, at Grenoble, worked himself into his confidence, and negotiated with him a forged bill of exchange for twelve thousand francs, upon which he obtained an advance of five thousand francs. Some days later he resumed his epaulettes. But his last affair had been fatal to him; the swindled clerk succeeded in tracking him, and the lieutenant was arrested and taken to Grenoble, where he was condemned as a forger of commercial paper to five years' hard labor.

Money is all-powerful; the condemned was treated with rare kindness. He was allowed to undergo his punishment in one of the prisons of Grenoble, and there, through his money, he obtained, first, a place in the hospital, and then the easy position of assistant jailer.

The five years had nearly passed, and Collet was about to be discharged, when one day an officer came to visit a prisoner, and recognized the Inspector-General of Montpellier in the assistant jailer. This officer had been one of the staff of the Count Borromeo, and still bore in mind the comedy of which he had been a dupe and a victim. He denounced Collet, who was immediately put in irons, taken to Montpellier, and sent to the galleys at Toulon. During the examination, he succeeded in seizing some papers, which were injurious to him, and threw them into the flames before the judge or the *gendarmes* could prevent their destruction. Collet stirred up the fire with the tongs, while the judge and the *gendarmes* clung to him and endeavoured to snatch from the flames the accusing documents.

Collet finished at Toulon the unexpired term of his five years, and was then set at liberty; but they fixed as the place at which he was to be kept under surveillance the town of Passin, in the arrondissement of Belley, his native place. There Collet installed himself comfortably with a part of his family. He lived at ease upon his concealed fortune; but the obligation to present himself constantly before the authorities annoyed