

One day, as he was walking in the Garden of the Tuileries, he met there M. de Saint Germain, the officer who had formerly been his protector at the Military School at Fontainebleau. The two recognized each other, and Collet, by means of his unlimited stock of humbug, related to the officer an imaginary account of his past life. The poor and honest officer had not known of the desertion of his old friend. Collet slipped into his hand a roll of one hundred louis, and walked with him to the Department of War, and through his good offices succeeded in ingratiating himself with two division commanders, whom he seduced by good dinners, and finally obtained through them a commission as lieutenant in the 47th Regiment of the Line, then forming a part of the garrison at Brest.

For a poltroon such as Collet to return to the army, after his escapade at Naples, was a stroke of audacity which is astonishing; but one must consider the numerous facilities which, at this time, a *chevalier d'industrie* found among all classes of society and in all professions. The immensity of the French empire; an administration centralized even to excess, but too recently substituted for a long anarchy, and as yet lacking those powerful instruments which experience did not give it until later; the universal habit of obeying without asking, and blindly submitting to superior powers,—all this explains the successful audacity of Collet in assuming successively the highest religious and military offices, and never finding himself doubted or controlled by any one. The powerless organization of the civil police made it easy for a man who, without awakening the suspicions of the government, contented himself with quietly levying upon his dupes.

The deserter of 1806 was then sent, as a lieutenant, to the headquarters of the 47th Regiment of the Line. He announced himself as the rich son of a distinguished family, who sought in the army an occupation rather than a reputation. A few sumptuous dinners given to the officers of the corps, and some louis bestowed upon needy companions, soon established his reputation. But Antheleme had not for an instant any idea of forgetting his past. He resumed his epaulettes only to play a new part. He wished

to play two at the same time. He was a consummate actor, a skilful mimic, who, in a simple disguise, played a comedy of episodes. The lieutenantcy, besides, was only a source of expense, and Collet wished further to increase his hoard. To do this he had only two strings to his bow: the robe or the sword. He chose the robe.

Rome at this time sent throughout Christendom monks of the Order of Saint Augustine, charged with making collections for the benefit of the Church. Collet made for himself a commission as a worthy monk of this order, having authority to collect money to found religious establishments in France. He had secretly prepared a costume perfect in every respect; and, everything being ready, he wrote himself a letter from his family, which necessitated his absence to attend to some urgent business affairs. He obtained a leave of absence for two months, and departed to explore the Department of the North, where he made collections in many of the cities and towns. He presented himself to the prefects, exhibited to them his credentials and his authority, received the endorsement of the principal authorities, and filled his purse.

One sub-prefect alone, that of the Arrondissement of Boulogne, had his suspicions aroused, and gave orders to arrest the false Augustine; but he had foreseen the danger, and already in his carriage, in which he carried three disguises, he was now a brilliant commissary of war, resplendent with gold lace and decorations. The *gendarmes* who poked their noses into the carriage retired respectfully, frightened at their terrible blunder.

Returning to Lorient, Collet made an inventory of his plunder, and found that he had 60,000 francs more than at his departure. He related to his comrades, at a magnificent banquet which he tendered them, the incidents of his journey. His father, he said, wished him to marry a rich heiress, and it had been necessary to settle, in advance, some important pecuniary matters. They drank to the future happiness of the lieutenant, and no one suspected that he was the Augustin monk of whom everybody was now talking.