

At the end of this time he departed in disguise for the convent of Saint-Pierre, where he was received with open arms by the Superior. They interrogated the novice, and discovered his ignorance; but the good fathers readily pardoned his hatred of knowledge, that work of the devil. However, they taught him a little Latin, for form's sake, and made him take a course in sacred eloquence; that is, they stuffed his memory, which was an uncommonly good one, with ready-made sermons, which they taught him to deliver with appropriate gestures and intonations. Collet enjoyed these exercises. He was a born comedian, and as the phonologists would say, had his bump of imitation remarkably developed.

Two years passed in this manner, and he received the tonsure. The long hypocrisy at the convent began to weary the neophyte, and, besides, the moment had arrived when he would be called upon to seriously exercise the profession of religion. He counted again the money of the commander of the Hospital Saint-Jacques, made the diamond sparkle and the repeater strike; then he put back his treasure, which he had concealed from the eyes of all, and departed with some of the fathers to Pouille, determined to avail himself of the first opportunity to gain the country. The fathers had the imprudence to intrust him with making some collections; that changed his plans. He collected with such ardor that, when his accounts were rendered, he had sent one thousand crowns to join in his secret pocket the four thousand francs of the commander of the battalion.

When he returned to the convent with his hoard, it was proposed to make him a deacon; but it was necessary first to obtain a dispensation from the Holy See (on account of his having been a soldier), and an *exeat* from the bishop of his own diocese. This last formality was especially hard to comply with,—the diocese of Belley having been abolished, and united to that of Lyons. In the meanwhile they confided to him the care of preparing children for their first communion. Among his pupils was the son of a syndic. Admitted to the friendship of the father, Anthelme, a man of precaution, took from the cabinet of this magistrate

several blank passports; they might be useful. With money and a passport it would be easy to quit at any time this community, of which he had long been weary. Near the convent was a magnificent house, surrounded by flowery terraces, and shaded by grand old trees. It was the winter residence of the banker of the fathers in Naples, the celebrated Torlonia. Brother Collet had paid more than one visit to this banker. There came to him, suddenly, a brilliant idea, an inspiration *à la Gil Blas*. One morning he sought the Superior of the convent, and, with his eyes modestly cast down, told him that before his desertion he enjoyed an income of ten thousand francs. Since his desertion he had not drawn it; but nothing prevented his assigning it, if he chose. If his reverence would permit him, this little fortune, which an unworthy brother did not know what to do with, should be used entirely for the benefit of the holy community which had so kindly received him.

The Superior, touched by this proof of devotion, and rejoicing in the idea of a good income, approved the project, gave him his hand, and the next morning at daybreak Brother Anthelme was on the road to Naples. He was going to the banker's house, armed with a letter and a little box. Prudent as ever, he stopped on the way at a little inn, placed the seal of the letter over a vessel containing boiling water, softened it, and opened the letter and read it. It warmly recommended the young French convert to M. Torlonia, and authorized him to negotiate the transfer of an income of ten thousand francs, of which there were three years still unpaid. As to the box, it contained a ring in which was set a large diamond, which the Superior sent as a pattern to the jeweller, Orlando.

Collet carefully resealed the letter and modestly presented himself at the house of the banker, who received him as a son; had a fine chamber prepared for him, and unhesitatingly advanced him the sum of twenty-two thousand francs upon the transaction.

This unexpected good fortune satisfied the prudent swindler, who also received from the jeweller three rings like the pattern