

literary set that used to assemble in the drawing rooms of the Dumas. She came to see in this an outlet for her personal activities, which had not occurred to her before. She was an exceedingly clever woman, with an iron will, very few scruples, and an immense energy. She made up her mind that in spite of the fact that a few prominent Parisian hostesses looked askance at her, she was going to have a salon far more important than theirs, from which she would be able to dictate to others instead of awaiting their judgments. She had a lot of money, and knew very well that this was the most needed thing in the campaign she was about to start, and she knew also where to use her wealth to its best advantage, and how to derive from it even more than its intrinsic worth.

Unless I am mistaken it was in the house of Victor Hugo that Madame de Caillavet met Anatole France for the first time. He had just published his novel *Thais*, which had failed to obtain for him the recognition he had expected. Madame de Caillavet asked him to call on her and managed to make his visit coincide with that of one or two of the most prominent critics of the Paris press. She had a wonderful talent for drawing people out: she made France talk, and after he had left, she quietly began to sing his praises, and to insinuate to her other visitors that it would be a wonderful thing to draw public attention to this newcomer in the field of literature, who possessed such a remarkable command of the French language and of all its subtleties.

A few days later the volume, which had at first passed unnoticed by reviewers, was discussed in all the leading organs of the Parisian press, and France became famous almost overnight.

Is it surprising that he sought again the good fairy who had worked such a miracle, in order to thank her for her efforts on his behalf? Madame de Caillavet had never been pretty, which perhaps in this instance was an advantage for her, because it enabled her to disclaim any sentimentality in the friendship that started then and there between her and Anatole France. She proceeded at first very cautiously; began to give small dinners for him, as well as a few select receptions, and then she extended to him a general invitation to lunch with her, after which she would keep him talking about the books he intended to write. She cleverly suggested, when he said something she thought particularly

striking, that he should write it down immediately. Soon she fitted up a study for him on the third floor of her house on the Avenue Kléber in Paris, and induced him to work there a few hours every afternoon. This quickly became a habit with him, and he used to leave his manuscripts in this pleasant little retreat, so beautifully furnished and arranged for him by his devoted and incomparable friend. Her constant attentions towards him at last quite overcame France, and he allowed himself to be lulled by her tenderness until the day when he awoke to find that his soul was no longer his own, and that he belonged entirely to the clever and witty lady who had made him famous.

She was at times a hard master; she absolutely compelled him to work. She continually kept repeating to him that he had a great reputation to maintain, — even at the time when this reputation existed only in their own imaginations. She always knew the best way to put him forward and to draw the attention of the public to his personality as well as to his works. She opened wide the doors of her hospitable house to a select circle. Every Sunday afternoon she sat in a wide-wing chair on the right of her fireplace. From this vantage ground she surveyed the long, narrow, but large room filled with people, all of them interesting, most of them charming, hardly any of them dull or stupid. Anatole France would stand invariably, his back to the mantle-piece, while writers, journalists, and politicians crowded about him, listening to what he had to say. On Wednesday evenings there were select little dinner parties at the house on the Avenue Kléber. A few chosen intimates were invited to dine with the “Master” as France was familiarly called. It was on such evenings that France appeared to his best advantage. When completely at his ease, he was a wonderful talker; with his brilliant sarcasm he mercilessly and pitilessly flayed his rivals and opponents. It was after these dinners that he liked to read to the guests of Madame de Caillavet a few pages from whatever book he happened to be writing at the time. He read to them in a softly modulated voice, which was so harmonious in its enunciations, so low and yet so distinct, that it kept them enthralled until the last word had been uttered.

Talking about these weekly dinners reminds me of the one after which Madame Marcelle Tinayre, — whose talent was just

beginning to be recognized by the man in the street, — read aloud a little novelette she had just composed. Anatole France rather admired Madame Tinayre, and while she was reading he stood behind her chair, on the back of which one of his hands rested with a kind of lingering tenderness. Madame de Caillavet never said a word, but her eyes filling with tears took on an expression I shall never forget. One could almost see what was going on in her soul, and sense the repressed jealousy against which she was struggling.

These were days of glory for Anatole France. He was the hero of the hour. She had thrown about him the mantle of greatness, and no sovereign was ever more adulated and flattered. Though it is now an open secret that it was she who wrote some of the most beautiful passages in his most famous books, no hint of the real authorship ever escaped her. Neither by word nor by deed did she ever detract from the fame that was his.

When her friend offered himself as a candidate for the French Academy, Madame de Caillavet displayed wonderful activity. She canvassed his candidature with such energy that, as a member of that learned Assembly said at the time, “she makes us all feel asses if we attempt to say that there are other great writers in France than her friend.” The fact of the matter was that thanks to the influence which her salon exercised, Madame de Caillavet succeeded so perfectly in preparing the election of Anatole France that when at last the day of the ballot arrived, he found hardly any adversaries, and was almost unanimously invited to take a seat under the famous cupola that had seen so many remarkable men beneath it.

When the famous Dreyfus affair stirred the political passions of Paris as they had never been stirred before, Madame de Caillavet realized at once that here was an opportunity for her friend to come into the limelight of additional prominence and prestige. Although she had a rival in the person of Madame Menard Dorian, — the Egeria of Clemenceau, — also an incomparable hostess, with a salon that was considered even more important than the one in which Anatole France occupied the first place, the resourceful Madame de Caillavet contrived that his should be the voice most listened to in the midst of this political crisis that had assumed international importance. Then it

was that several of the most prominent radicals rallied to Anatole France. And at this time, it was hinted that some day he might even become the President of the French Republic, — which, according to some people who knew her well, was Madame de Caillavet's supreme ambition for him.

Every spring Madame de Caillavet took a trip to Italy, Greece, or Sicily, accompanied by her husband and by Anatole France, to whom as she once said, she liked "to show the world." And in autumn he always went with her to her estate near Bordeaux. Their two lives were one; they shared everything, pain as well as pleasure, just as if there had not existed a certain person called Monsieur Arman de Caillavet.

This sort of thing lasted years and years, and no one imagined it could ever change. The spiritual marriage of the mistress of the little house on the Avenue Kléber and of the most admired, if not the most famous French writer of modern times, was one of those accomplished facts which society accepts and refuses to discuss any further. Anatole France had become a celebrity, and as everybody knew that he could only be reached through Madame de Caillavet, this was more than sufficient to make her one of the most important personalities of *Tout Paris*.

And then . . . and then, the end came suddenly, unexpectedly, and brutally.

Anatole France was invited to lecture in Argentina, and for once his friend did not find it possible to accompany him. On the same steamer sailed a young and pretty actress, Mademoiselle Marie —. The aged writer fell in love with her, and asked her to marry him. When they returned to Europe, Madame de Caillavet had been entirely forgotten. France no longer appeared at her house. Indeed, he avoided her as much as he could. As a result the people who had flocked to her receptions ceased to come, and it was at his own home in the Villa Saïd that France began to assemble the court of admirers with whom he had been surrounded on the Avenue Kléber. Madame de Caillavet could not bear it. Not only her heart, but also her spirit was broken by what she considered, not altogether without reason, the ingratitude of the man for whom she had done so much and struggled so whole-heartedly. A neglected cold did the rest. She died after an illness which had lasted only three days. With the death of

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Madame Arman de Caillavet, there passed one of the most famous Parisian salons of the last thirty years.

Anatole France did not marry Mademoiselle —. She had already been attacked by the cancerous disease to which she succumbed a few months after the death of Madame de Caillavet. The illustrious writer declared himself inconsolable. He left Paris and settled on a country estate he had bought in the neighbourhood of Tours, and . . . very shortly afterwards he married his housekeeper!

THE SEARCH

MARY DIXON THAYER

*Always, in you, I seek for more
Than I can ever find —
Always, I think a little door
Will open in my mind
To let the loveliness of you
Blow through.*

*I wait and wait. I never know
When I shall feel the queer,
Delicious sense of you, — the low,
Sweet message "She is near."
Of many things I cannot talk;
I walk*

*Along the path you sometimes tread,
And there, reverently,
Stand still and wait, and bow my head.
Once, unexpectedly,
I heard, — as you went quickly by, —
A sigh. . . .*