HOMES AND HOME LIFE IN THE WORKS OF COLETTE

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PREFACE

For most readers Colette does not give the impression of being a woman given to domesticity. This thesis has been written to present that side of Colette, for it is in the area of the home and of nature that she has produced her most outstanding work. Too many times Colette has been read only superficially and for the sensationalism to be found in her writings. That she had a high regard for family life and thoroughly approved of it can be noted in La Maison de Claudine, in Gigi and "L'Enfant malade" of Gigi and in many other stories. Her bitterness about divorce suggests her disapproval of the separation of a family even though she herself had been twice divorced. Mothers were given a place of honor and were respected even in her most sensual stories. Never did Colette suggest anything other than the deepest feeling for children. They were all well cared for and had parents or grandparents who were devoted to them. That many of her characters spent time gardening suggested a form of domesticity. Colette's love of nature was to be found in everything she wrote. Because of her love for animals Colette herself was never without a pet. Since she felt animals brought out the best in man Colette furnished most of her characters with pets. These pets give a pervading sense of domesticity to her stories. When one recovers

from the initial shock of the amorality to be found in her writings it is not difficult to piece together the fact that Colette was innately bourgeois in her feeling toward the family.

LIFE AND WORKS OF COLETTE

Sidonie Gabrielle Colette, the youngest of four, was born in 1873, in Saint-Sauveur-en-Puisaye in Burgundy to Jules-Joseph Colette, an eccentric, debonair army captain of the Zouaves and Mme Landoy Robineau who had been a dashing parisian widow with two children. Colette's mother was affectionately called Sido. She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant quadroon with a zest for living, an uninhibited nature, and purple finger nails, which indicated his ancestry. Because of his early death Sido had been reared by her two brothers in Belgium. Jules-Joseph, who had lost a leg in the Italian war in the time of Napoleon III, was forced into retirement from the army and became a tax collector. He was not an astute business man, and the financial status of the family became more meager with each passing year. After his defeat in politics for the office of deputy, he moved his family in with Sido's son who was a doctor in Chatillon-Coligny in Burgundy.

Because of Sido's interest in nature, Colette's childhood was a happy one. She spent much time out-of-doors communing with nature and studying the habits of insects. This inquiring interest never left Colette. During this period of her life the garden, woods, village, and family

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were her entire world and it was one that was always filled with wonder for her.[1]

The library in Colette's home furnished a great fund of reading material. Colette was often found perusing books beyond her years. She was impatient with fairy stories and wanted to read the same books she had noticed Sido or Jules-Joseph reading. The school in Saint-Sauveur gave Colette her only formal education. She passed her examinations before the family moved to Chatillon-Coligny.

From her mother Colette received her domestic instincts, her love of everything that lived and grew, her spirit of independence, and her warm charity. She had seen her mother open her home to stray dogs, tramps, and pregnant servant girls. Not even the lowliest bug could be destroyed in Sido's presence.[2]

Shortly after they moved to her brother's home, Henry Gauthier-Villars called on her father. He noticed Colette and, two years later, came back to marry her. He immediately carried her off to Paris where he was engaged in

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[1]Milton Stansbury, French Novelists of Today (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), p. 102.

[2]Colette, "Ma Mère et les Bêtes" in La Maison de Claudine (Ferenczi, éditeur, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922), p. 55. After each book by Colette has been indicated in the footnotes it will be referred to by name and page in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

promoting the publications of several unknown writers. He himself had had a few articles published but could not write too well. He plunged Colette into a completely different environment from any she had known. His world was Bohemian, the sophisticated world of the theater and letters, and they spent much time out of the home entertaining or being entertained.

Upon glancing through a journal Colette had kept during her school years, Villars felt Colette had a talent which could be developed. Also he was in straightened circumstances and hoped to get some additional income. He suggested using the more sophisticated portions for the Claudine series, and the first two books were published under the name of Willy.[3] Because nothing had been left to the imagination on the subject of love in its various forms, the Claudine series sold well. The next two Claudine books were published as having been written by Willy and Colette.

Villars was a hard task-master, for he had Colette write four books in four years. He left Colette for longer and longer periods while he was changing mistresses. Finally Colette decided to leave him. However, because of the laws of France at that time, he obtained the divorce and left her penniless.

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[3]Irene Cornwell, Contemporary French Fiction (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), p. 3.

Colette had always had a desire to work in the music halls, so with her new-found freedom became a mime. The next three years were spent in semi-squalor but furnished a background for several of her later writings. During this period she scribbled in leisure moments and earned a small supplementary income.

In 1912, Colette married Henri de Jouvenal who was sub-editor of Le Matin. The same year her beloved mother, Sido, had died. Soon, however, Colette de Jouvenal, Colette's only child, was born and she came to take Sido's place. She was given one of Colette's nick-names, that of Bel-Gazou.

During the First World War, Colette organized a hospital at Saint-Malo and managed to get to Verdun to see Jouvenal. After the war he became interested in politics, insisted that Colette conform to his way of thinking and living, then he too started straying from home. Once again Colette was faced with a grave decision. Her style had improved, she had gained a reputation as a woman of letters, and now was able to dispense with Jouvenal without changing her way of life. They parted amicably and once more Colette had regained her freedom but lost love.

Colette now had entered her most productive period. While her books were being published she also was writing articles for newspapers and magazines. And at the same time

she was reviewing plays. Since she had been an actress, author, and director, her reviews were well rounded.

In the Midi in 1925 she met Maurice Goudeket, seventeen years her junior, who was later to become her third husband. With him she found the peace for which she had so long been searching. He watched over her and managed her affairs from that point on.

Colette and Maurice had a cottage in the south of France to which she would escape to write until she became so famous and the cottage so well known that she could no longer have her much desired privacy. They moved back to Paris to their former lodgings on rue Beaujolais which faced the Palais-Royal. There she was content to remain.

In 1935, she was elected to the Académie Royale Belge de Langue and de Littérature Françaises. The year 1945 brought Colette her most distinguished honor when she was elected to the Académie Goncourt. The Académie Goncourt never before had included women in its membership and had to make a special place for Colette.[4]

During the second World War Colette and her husband fled to her daughter's home in the south of France. However,

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[4]Margaret Crosland, Colette: a Provincial in Paris (New York and London: British Book Center, 1954), p. 240.

a few weeks later, they returned to Paris for Colette could not stand to be away and not know what was happening. Soon after their return, Maurice was taken to a prison camp. Colette did not kiss him goodbye or cry, but she spent her time waiting for his return, looking out the window, and doing a little embroidery. Her arthritis was getting worse and she seldom left her room or divan bed.

After the war had ended she suffered more and more from arthritis and traveled about the country by plane trying to effect cures. Pauline, her maid, remained faithful to Colette for forty years and, even after Pauline's marriage in 1946, remained in her service trying to ease the pain which was consuming Colette. Now Colette began to worry because Maurice was so much younger than she and, because of this fact, he spent more time in her presence reading to her and talking with her than in the beginning of their marriage.

It had always been difficult for Colette to write, and she suffered from it because she was conscientious and resolved to write nothing below her own high standard. She always used blue paper on which to write for she felt it was less tiring for her eyes. Colette was seldom without her notebook in which she took copious notes. Her art was inspired solely by sensation, was profound and subtle, and

for the generation that exalted the instincts, Colette was one of the two or three most original writers of France.[5]

Colette was more than pleased when she attained the rosette of the Légion d'Honneur and the Ministre de l'Education Nationale bestowed upon her the insignia of Grand Officier. The city of Paris presented her with its gold medal, and Colette felt that at long last she had attained her goal. It was a very different attitude on the part of the multitude from her early days just after her divorce from Villars, when she had so few friends.

Her life was definitely Bohemian and always she seemed to be struggling toward a sense of complete freedom just as were many of her heroines. She was romantic but yet a realist with all their scruples. Still she did not control her romanticism for it was instinctive.[6] Because of her early training under Sido she acquired a vast knowledge of plant and animal life which was a dominating factor in all her works. Colette should be considered one of the finest writers of animal stories of modern times.[7] Her characters

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[5]Irene Cornwell, Contemporary French Fiction (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), p. 9.

[6]Daniel Mornet, Histoire de la Littérature et de la Pensée françaises contemporaine (Paris: Bibliothèque Larousse), p. 176.

[7]Cornwell, op. cit., p. 6.

were elemental human beings, and she wrote of the senses rather than of ideas. Her women, while not at all happy, were much stronger than her men. In Sept Dialogues de Bêtes she referred to cats as representing women and a pet of man, while the dog was the favorite pet of the woman. Yet one phrase of Colette quite often quoted is: "Je pense a épouser un jour un énorme chat."[8]

The fresh purity to be found in Colette's country life, her domestic tastes, and her pity for all suffering is completely at variance with her unabashed, total amorality. She painted the world as she saw it in all its sordidness yet with the underlying innate goodness of man.

It is difficult to reconcile Colette's gentleness, dignity, zest, self-discipline, simplicity, and hatred of pose to the outside world which knew her as formidable and intimidating. Colette's deep, grumbling voice, her penetrating sapphire eyes, blond, frizzy hair, and long nose belied her childlike simplicity and love of nature. She was definitely a product of the French soil, and her frugality stemmed from seeing her father mismanage his finances.

The war took its toll too on Colette. Never a demonstrative person, still she sorely missed Goudeket and her

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[8]Cited by Helmut Hatzfeld, Trends and Styles in Twentieth Century French Literature (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1957), p. 53.

friends during the years of the German occupation. Even Anna Moreno, her dearest friend from her first year in Paris,[9] was working with the Underground and could not come to see Colette. Only a few years remained to her after the war, and those were spent on her divan bed overlooking her beloved garden in the Palais-Royal or in a wheel chair. Colette never was idle, though she was racked with pain continuously. She worked with her rock collection, embroidered, and wrote occasionally. After one excruciating week in August, 1954, Colette died. She had left behind her pain but, most important, she had left for posterity words which will be perused for many generations to come.

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[9] Le Figaro littéraire, samedi, 25 juillet, p. 1.

CHAPTER II

HOUSING

Colette did not write in detail when she mentioned housing. Evidently she felt that her readers were already familiar with the various styles of architecture and that she need not elucidate on such a well-known subject. However, there are three distinct types of housing to be found in her writings, that of the apartment house, the family home in the village or the villa for the more affluent, and the *pension*.

The apartment house was referred to most frequently because of the location of many of Colette's stories. When a family was financially able to do so, it had an apartment house constructed, then sold or rented the other apartments.[10] A few families were in a position to have the entire apartment built for the use of their family alone. When this happened the apartment was planned to fit the needs of that particular household.[11] Most of the apartments were old and had been standing for generations though a few of them

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[10] Willy et Colette, *Claudine s'en va* (Albin Michel, éditeur, Paris: Le Livre de Poche, Brodard et Taupin, 1957), p. 150.

[11] Colette, *La Chatte* (Ferenczi, éditeur, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933), p. 91.

had been remodeled with such thin walls that conversations could be heard from one apartment to the next.[12] The home Alain was building for his wife was the only reference to a new edifice. While the buildings were old for the most part, they were well kept. Each apartment had its own balcony which could be large or small depending upon the size of the apartment. A profusion of flowers could be found on these balconies which lent color to the drab-looking façades. The houses were always of several stories in height. This seemed to be the usual style of building. Even in the country homes no reference was found to a one-story dwelling.

The apartment houses were built flush with the sidewalk, and every window had shutters which were closed at dusk. Any unused ground was to be found in the back of the building, but usually all available space was used for the building itself. Many of the apartments had narrow façades,[13] and they all must have seemed narrow because of their great height. One apartment house had a parapet around the ninth floor (La Chatte, p. 74). Elevators were to be found in the better buildings, for they were referred to in several

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[12]Colette, La Vagabonde (Albin Michel, éditeur, Paris: Le Livre de Poche, Brodard et Taupin, 1958), p. 12.

[13]Colette, "La Dame du Photographe" in Gigi (Ferenczi, éditeur, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1945), p. 115.

instances. Parisians must have taken a great deal of care choosing their apartments for never was moving from one apartment to another mentioned.

The second type of housing was the family home in a small village (La Maison de Claudine, p. 6) and the villa belonging to Mme Peloux (La Chatte), both of which had been built long before the twentieth century. Colette never forgot her old home and gave a more complete description of it than of any other building. Colette's home was large, covered with a high attic and a steep roof. Inside the courtyard were to be found the stables and coach house near the chicken-houses, wash-house, and dairy-room. The principal façade was on the street, separated from it only by blackened double steps. It was definitely a bourgeois home in an old village. In this same category Colette ably describes the old villa of Mme Peloux which had been modernized. The long hall had been filled with windows, partitions had been removed, and rounded pillars installed. The stables had been converted to garages, halls, a billiard room, a vestibule, and a dining room (Chéri, p. 20). The family home of Sido was a warm Belgian house which had the kitchen in the cellar which always smelled of gas. None of the village homes had any of the modern conveniences which is not at all surprising considering the fact that they had been built long before the time of electricity and plumbing. Colette recounts in La

Maison de Claudine that cheese was made in the long cold halls of a village home ("Le Sauvage" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 12).

Very little was related of the pension which actually is characteristic not only of the city but of the village for any person without a family. The pension took in roomers and, for the most part, served meals which were included in the price of the room ("Ybanez est mort" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 110). It was comparable to the boarding-house here in the United States. Colette depicts the pension in La Vagabonde, in conjunction with her travels as a mime (La Vagabonde, p. 220). She did not care for the ones she was forced to use during the time her company was touring France, but the pension was the only housing available to an itinerant.

It is surprising that none of the housing depicted by Colette was small. Every house or building mentioned was of at least three stories in height, and the apartment buildings were usually from six to nine stories high. Even in the villages the houses were built with several floors rather than spreading over large areas. Windows were given a prominent place by Colette probably because the older buildings had so few. Only the homes of the more affluent were characterized as having stained glass, which was very expensive.

Colette has written of every kind of room, but the one most often referred to was the bathroom.[14] This is not at all surprising since bathrooms in France still are not numerous. Colette gives a bathroom the air of being a large and important room and it probably was quite large according to our standards since it might have been a bedroom converted to a bath. The cabinet de toilette also was mentioned. It might be either a toilet or a dressing-room to be found just off the bedroom, and quite near the bath if the apartment boasted of a bath. Bedrooms were pictured in every book of Colettes, and she gave a feeling of spaciousness about them except for the bedroom of the newly married couple in "La Noce" (La Maison de Claudine, p. 75). Next in order of importance were the salons. They were the largest rooms to be found in the home or apartment and, as in everything else, the size depended upon the family income. The rooms mentioned were all square. The dining-room and kitchen were brought into most of the stories but in such a vague way that there was nothing definite from which to form a picture. A few of the homes were fortunate enough to have a library but in all homes Colette never failed to mention the presence of books in some room of the domicile.

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[14] Colette, Chéri (Calmann-Levy, éditeurs, Paris; Le Livre de Poche, Brodard et Taupin, 1958), p. 135.

Colette must have been quite fond of yellow or some shade of it, for she used it in salons, dining-rooms, bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens. In a salon, yellow took the form of gold in "La Noce" (La Maison de Claudine, p. 12); in the bedrooms it was just yellow (Gigi, p. 34) and in a library it changed to dirty yellow (Claudine s'en va, p. 62) and in "Ma Mère et les Livres" (La Maison de Claudine, p. 35); and in the bath there was more yellow (Chéri, p. 135). White was used in conjunction with various colors, particularly with blue, green, black, and rose. Twice in La Maison de Claudine, Colette depicted bedrooms with a white or grey background covered with blue cornflowers ("L'Enlèvement," p. 26, and "Ma Soeur aux longs cheveux," p. 73). Rose was another color for the walls of a home. She used black in the bathroom (Chéri, p. 90), bedroom,[15] and hall to represent a disturbed personality. Only a few pieces of furniture were described in each room leaving the color of the walls and the rest of the furniture to the reader's imagination. It is possible they were so non-descript that there was no way to describe them. Of a modern apartment Colette said, "l'on a tant sacrifié au concierge, à l'escalier, aux premier et second salons--boiseries assez fines, bonne copie

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[15] Willey et Colette, Claudine en ménage (Mercure de France, éditeur, Paris: Le Livre de Poche, Brodard et Taupin, 1958), p. 101.

du Louis XV enfant de Van Loo--que les pièces privées prennent jour et air où elles peuvent" (Claudine en ménage, p. 101).

With furnishings of a room Colette never bothered to go into detail since the furniture in a home was of minor interest when compared to her character portrayal. However, of the furnishings she did bring into her writings she preferred that of any era before the twentieth century. Only once did she depict a room with modern furnishings (Claudine en ménage, p. 101). Colette did not like modern furniture, as she preferred that with which she had become familiar. Straw chairs and deep armchairs were to be found in every home. Beds were described as being large and because so much of the action took place in the bedroom it was only natural that they should be given a prominent place. In Claudine en ménage, Claudine could not be happy without her childhood bed and it had to be moved into her husband's apartment (p. 65). Goose-down pillows were used on the beds in "La Noce" in La Maison de Claudine (p. 70). The bedspreads were crocheted ("La dame du photographe" in Gigi, p. 123), colored, and very pretty. In one instance the bedspread was of ermine (Chéri, p. 43). Desks and secretaries of rose-wood ("Ma soeur aux longs cheveux" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 75) and thuya wood (Claudine à Paris, p. 25) were to be found in salons, bedrooms, anti-chambers and halls. In homes large enough to boast of a library a desk was always

present. The only room described in Claudine à l'école was the library. Period furniture of Louis XV was used in salons and in some bedrooms. In referring to this type of furniture Colette commended the owner's taste. She definitely did not like the baroque style (Claudine en ménage, p. 195). Pianos were to be found in the larger homes and were placed in the salon when there was no music room. Colette, who could play very little, loved music and felt no home was complete without a piano. Windows were always curtained and were given a prominent place except in hallways and bathrooms. Curtains were usually white trimmed in a color. This was probably the reason Colette made special mention of the cretonne curtains to be found in Swiss hotels.[16] Shutters were closed at night and opened each morning (Claudine à Paris, p. 250), almost as a daily ritual. Rugs came in for their proper place, and no house was without them. They were multicolored, red, green, rose, and mauve. In the homes of the wealthy the rugs were of tapestry or very thick (Chéri, p. 41). In the bourgeois home they must have been quite ordinary since only the color of the rug was given. Dining-rooms were formally furnished as were the salons, but when the family dined on the terrace a smaller table was

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[16] Le Figaro littéraire, samedi, 25 juillet, 1959, p. 5.

rolled out upon it (La Chatte, p. 135). Electric lights and electric refrigerators, which are always called frigidaires, were mentioned in Colette's later books (La Chatte, p. 140) but, for the most part, very few homes were furnished with electric refrigerators. Lamp shades were pictured as giving a rose light. This could be from rose-colored shades ("La dame du photographe," in Gigi, p. 126) or simply from the fact that the light itself gave off a rosy glow ("L'Enfant malade" in Gigi, p. 65). One of the most amusing descriptions of furnishings was to be found in Gigi. Aunt Alicia, who had a beautifully furnished home, changed the sheets every ten days even when it was not necessary (Gigi, pp. 29-30). A rocking chair was mentioned casually and only in Chéri (p. 21). Most homes had end-tables which were fragile and covered with bric-a-brac[17] or displayed a piece of statuary. Paintings were to be found on the walls of any room except the bath. Colette's homes all had a "lived-in" quality about them and she meant it to be that way for in "La dame du photographe" she describes the room of Mme Armand as "la pièce, extraordinaire à force de banalité, respirait la fausse gaieté des chambres d'hôtel" (Gigi, p. 126). Flowers were so important to Colette that she

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[17]Colette, Sept Dialogues de Bêtes (Paris: Mercure de France), p. 68.

considered them a part of the furnishings as evidenced in two places in "Flore et Pomone" (Gigi, pp. 151 and 180). Colette must have been intrigued with mirrors or liked to have them in her home. She wrote of them as long and attached to the wall (Chéri, p. 6). In La Maison de Claudine wardrobes were to be found in many rooms since they took the place of a closet ("La Mère et le Fruit défendu," p. 134). Colette, with few words, gave a complete description of a house whose inhabitants had gone on vacation. Before they left, the chairs were put under white drapes, the rugs were rolled up, the lamps were swathed and over all was to be found the pervading odor of camphor (Sept Dialogues de Bêtes, p. 55).

Because Colette was primarily interested in nature and love she gave little attention to anything outside those two spheres. She was a painter of settings but only those settings to be found out-of-doors or of a psychological intent. She painted physical pleasure without flinching but portrayed a room or a house in a general, off-hand way. There was only one room completely described and that was the bedroom in "La Noce" of La Maison de Claudine. Rooms to be found elsewhere in her writings seem to contain but a few pieces of furniture, and most of them are only casually mentioned as being in the room. An arm-chair can be pictured

in any way the reader chooses, for when Colette said there was an armchair in the room she seemed to feel the reader could imagine what kind of armchair. Colette did not really care about furnishing an apartment as evidenced in her own home, which contained various pieces of furniture picked up at random. Too, she must have felt that since homes as well as furnishing were handed down from generation to generation, it was only in the upper-class homes that the furnishings would merit a full description. Of these, the more luxurious homes, she wrote very little.

Colette definitely belonged to the world of the middle bourgeoisie and it was of this world and that of the theater or demi-monde that she chose to write.

CHAPTER III

HOUSEHOLD HELP

Colette, having had her own faithful Pauline for over forty years,[18] spoke only with kindness of the household help. Domestics had then a definite place in the French home where they were given every consideration. In return they looked upon the families they served as being one of their own possessions. Servants were careful of the welfare of each member of the family, watching over them as if they were children. Those who had long been in service were often consulted on family matters. The domestics in France enjoyed a trusted place in the household and did everything they could to merit such trust.

No apartment or hotel was without its *concierge* whom Colette has mentioned in each book read except in the *Sept Dialogues de Bêtes*, *Claudine à l'école* and the letters to Anna Moreno. The *concierge* was either a man or a woman. In *Claudine à Paris* the *concierge* was a woman whom Claudine did not like. Claudine thought she was dirty and that she was mean to her dog. Each morning this servant from Brittany

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[18] Maurice Goudeket, *Close to Colette* (Translated by Enid McLeod. New York: Farrar, Straus, Cudahy, 1957), p. 207.

would, "Battre injustement son malheureux tonton en bas."[19] Again in Gigi (p. 12) and the "Dame du photographe" in Gigi (p. 113) the concierge is referred to as being a woman. Even in the poorest quarters a concierge could be found.

In the better apartment houses the concierge was depicted as a man. In Chéri (p. 128) the concierge had a uniform, for Colette told of his having an impressive-looking cap. Uniforms were not mentioned at any other time. In Claudine s'en va, Colette spoke of "le concierge sans livrée, en manches de chemise" (p. 149). However, the concierge quickly donned a green tunic with tarnished buttons (Claudine s'en va, p. 150), which would be comparable to the smocks worn by grocery clerks and in no way could be construed as a uniform. Callers at an apartment soon became familiar with the concierge and called him by name (Chéri, p. 106). He was always there to watch one enter or depart. The only way to escape his vigilant eye, particularly if it were late and one did not want to be seen, was to leave by the window (La Vagabonde, p. 123). To the city dweller the concierge was an important person. He guarded the inhabitants and their possessions well, took care of the building, the mail and deliveries, and greeted the callers. No

[19] Willy et Colette, Claudine à Paris (Albin Michel, éditeur, Paris; Le Livre de Poche, Brodard et Taupin, 1958), p. 28.

Parisian apartment house would be complete without its concierge.

The femme de ménage had an even more important place in the circle of the French family than the concierge. She was cook, cleaner, washerwoman, personal maid, and nursemaid. In the more affluent homes several servants were to be found. The domestic, more often than not, gave a lifetime of service, leaving only to get married. Even then she often stayed on in service. In La Chatte, Alain Amparat makes a point of telling his wife that his mother had never changed her personnel (p. 80).

While Colette did not describe in detail a concierge, she gave a very complete description of Mélie, who was a typical femme de ménage and was in the service of Claudine in Claudine à Paris and Claudine en ménage. Mélie was blond, lazy, and faded though she had once been pretty. She did the cooking, carried water, cleaned, and took care of the garden. Mélie cherished both the faults and the virtues of Claudine. Mélie had taken care of Claudine for many years but vowed she would not go to Paris. However, when Claudine and her father moved to Paris, Mélie went with them. She nursed Claudine through a siege of typhoid fever. With Mélie, Claudine could talk over any of her problems, for Mélie was always discreet. When Claudine got homesick, Mélie would talk to her of her former home at Montigny.

Though Mélie did all the work, she would never hurry. She opened the curtains at eight o'clock in the morning (Claudine à Paris, p. 205). She also brought hot chocolate to Claudine (Claudine à Paris, p. 228). When Claudine was married it was Mélie who wrote the news to Montigny. She also wrote to Claudine on her honeymoon. Though Mélie moved back to Montigny with Claudine's father, she never forgot Claudine nor ceased writing to her. Other femmes de ménage follow the same pattern. Since the femmes de ménage usually did the shopping it was necessary to check household accounts regularly (Claudine s'en va, p. 9). This was for the most part a pleasant task. The lives of the femmes de ménage and the family were so intertwined they became completely dependent upon each other. When a femme de ménage married, her employers were not only invited to the wedding but sometimes their children would have a part in it. In only one instance was Colette critical of a femme de ménage and that was of Mme Buque. She was described as not knowing how to cook and as being so unused to electricity that Alain looked upon her with scorn (La Chatte, p. 48).

When a femme de ménage became a nursemaid her world completely revolved around the child ("Le Curé sur le mur," La Maison de Claudine, p. 32 and "L'Enfant malade," in Gigi, pp. 74 and 77) who was intrusted to her care. No task was

too great, nothing was too hard, no hours too long when something for the well-being of the child was concerned.

Several domestics were mentioned, but no definite description was given of them, either as to character or as to physical qualities. In this category were found the valet (La Chatte, p. 165) and the gardener ("Flore et Pomone," in Gigi, p. 137). Emile in La Chatte had the most prominent place among the domestics for he seemed to be in charge of the other servants. A few families had chauffeurs, but since cars were not numerous during the early part of Colette's life, when she was most prolific with her writing, the chauffeurs were mentioned only casually.

Colette has dealt very kindly with household help no doubt because of her childhood experiences in watching her mother take care of her own servants and, also, of any others who sought her help. Then too, Pauline, Colette's own femme de ménage, had remained in Colette's service even after Pauline herself had married. Colette, of course, was writing of another generation and one wonders if the same situation could be found in this post-war generation. Colette took such faithful service for granted, but at the same time deeply appreciated the thoughtful care given her. The status of the concierge would not, however, have changed in this present-day world.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAMILY

Colette wrote much about her mother, a little about her father; many plots revolved around the husband and wife; but children, except in the autobiographical tales, and other relatives had no place of importance, even though they were mentioned occasionally.

Though Colette wrote so often of her mother Sido, in the first four Claudine books not once was a mother mentioned. In these four stories, her first attempt at writing, she speaks only of her father, aunt, husband, and cousin. Her father in the Claudine series was described as being vague, interested in his study of snails, and as paying little attention to his daughter, Claudine.[20] He was described as having a big red beard tinged with white (Claudine à l'école, p. 190) and was a kindly man. When he took Claudine to Paris he shut himself into a room so he could study undisturbed and left Claudine to her own devices. Claudine's father had a sister Wilhelmine living in Paris and he only went to visit her because Claudine wanted to go. When called to dinner he would forget to come to the table

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[20] Willy et Colette, Claudine à l'école (Albin Michel, éditeur, Paris: Le Livre de Poche, Brodard et Taupin, 1958), p. 10.

(Claudine à Paris, p. 107). If upon entering a room he happened to notice Claudine he would absent-mindedly pat her on the head (Claudine à Paris, p. 107). However, nothing described his absent-mindedness as well as an episode which told of his being so busy classifying his snails that he forgot Claudine's wedding (Claudine en ménage, p. 9). When Claudine had left home he then realized how much he missed her and that without knowing it they had loved each other (Claudine en ménage, p. 66). After her father moved back to Montigny he wrote to Claudine to tell her what he was doing and when Claudine came to see him he was happy to see her (Claudine en ménage, p. 221).

Of other fathers Colette wrote very little. In Claudine à Paris Renaud was the father of Marcel, Claudine's second cousin, but since his wife took Marcel home to her mother and then died shortly afterwards, the grandmother had reared Marcel. Renaud did not approve of Marcel's friends, and Marcel did not like his father so they saw very little of each other. The father of Annie, Claudine's friend, had not influenced her life in any way for she knew him only when he was old and blind (Claudine s'en va, p. 164). The only time that Alain Amparat's father was mentioned was to tell that he was a dealer in silks. In La Maison de Claudine, Sido's father was described as being ugly with negroid features but attractive to women ("La Fille de Mon Père" in

La Maison de Claudine, p. 62). He was a manufacturer of chocolate and vanilla. Fathers did not have a very prominent place in Colette's stories. They were relegated to the background if they had to become a part of the plot and were represented as being rather weak.

In La Maison de Claudine Colette characterized her mother as being gentle, a good homemaker, and hoping for children ("Le Sauvage" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 13). She was superstitious and enjoyed conversation ("La Fille de mon père" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 63). When the children finally arrived and were old enough to play out of doors she could not bear to have them out of her sight ("Où sont les enfants?" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 7). Sido put out the lights and took the candles from the room so the children could not read too late, and she was scandalized when the doctor told her Juliette had typhoid fever ("Ma Soeur aux longs cheveux" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 77). Sido was careful even of the way they dressed and would not let the girls dress beyond their years ("La petite Bouilloux" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 92). In "Flore et Pomone" in Gigi (p. 171) Colette told of her mother letting the chickens eat from her hands. It distressed Sido to eat an egg because it might have become a chicken, and she would not eat lentils because they resembled bugs. She also fretted because she

could not be a vegetarian ("Flore et Pomone" in Gigi, pp. 171-72).

In La Chatte, the mother of Alain was depicted as one who loved her child but yet was wise in her treatment of him. When Alain went to her for guidance about his marital difficulties she told him he was being childish and sent him home. She told him there would be adjustments to be made in every marriage (pp. 105-06). When Alain did definitely leave his wife Camille, his mother told him she did not want to hear about his domestic troubles (p. 159). This wanting her son to make his own decisions was an entirely different attitude from the one portrayed by Max's mother who cried bitterly when he told her he was being married (La Vagabonde, p. 214).

Chéri was dominated by his mother even though she denied him nothing. Mme Peloux insisted that he marry a girl she had chosen (Chéri, p. 53). In Gigi the mother paid little attention to her daughter for she was working and left the care of the child to the grandmother (Gigi, p. 9).

Mother love was best defined in L'Enfant malade when the mother tenderly nursed Jean during the time he was ill with poliomyelitis. She thought she was the only one who could not be deceived about his suffering (Gigi, p. 66). She stayed constantly by his side, leaving only for a few

minutes at a time. When Jean started to recover she was exceedingly happy (Gigi, p. 93).

Colette was so gentle in the treatment of the mothers of whom she wrote that they were probably a composite of her own feelings for her daughter, Bel-Gazou, and her mother, Sido. Most of the mothers of whom Colette wrote have been kind and thoughtful of their children even though they were quite firm with their discipline.

As we know, Colette was not fortunate in the choice of her first two husbands and probably because of this she was not at all sympathetic in her treatment of husbands in her stories. For the most part, she depicts the husband as a weak character given to having affairs with other women. Most of the husbands were dominated by their wives even though they might not have been aware of this.

Just as in Colette's own life when she worried about being so much older than Maurice Goudeket, Renaud in Claudine en ménage was much older than Claudine and worried about getting old (p. 62). Claudine called him a paternal lover (p. 54) and in him she found a friend and ally but not a master (p. 62). He was proud of the younger Claudine and wanted to show her to his friends (p. 70). Renaud was so weak he let Claudine run both their lives. In La Chatte, Alain could not control his wife and ran home to his mother. Chéri left his wife to seek other pleasures (Chéri, p. 83).

He did not consult his wife Edmée about the home they were building, he ordered her about unfeelingly (p. 91), and seemed not to have a heart (p. 94). After disappearing for three months he returned home as if he had left only that morning (p. 143). Again in "La dame du photographe" the husband, Gros-Yeux, was not a strong character ("La dame du photographe" in Gigi, p. 102).

La Maison de Claudine delineated the only worthwhile husbands, probably because they were patterned after her father and grandfather. Le Sauvage, as Sido called her first husband, was kind to her in his brusque way and smiled at her wifely work but nevertheless he was master of his house ("Le Sauvage" in La Maison de Claudine, pp. 13-14). Colette portrayed Sido's husband as a very impatient man. He had wanted to talk to Sido one day and learned she had gone to the butcher's. Sido was gone only fifteen minutes but her husband was furious when she returned and demanded an explanation as to why she had been gone so long ("Amours" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 17).

Colette seemed to use husbands only in places where she deemed it necessary to the plot and for the most part they were lacking in desirable qualities.

The wives of whom Colette chose to write, while not always models of virtue, had strength of character. The wife had no part in Claudine à l'école nor in Claudine à

Paris but in Claudine en ménage the novel was written by the wife, Claudine. She pictured herself as being stronger than her husband even though he was many years older. He not only condoned her affair with Rézi but even rented an apartment for them. In Claudine s'en va, the husband Alain Malabar was so domineering that his wife rebelled and left him. Léon in Claudine s'en va was downtrodden (pp. 12-13) and tried to commit suicide when he learned of his wife Marthe's affair with Maugis (p. 159). Camille in La Chatte (p. 130) rebelled against her husband's love for his cat by trying to kill Saha (p. 130). Camille later begged Alain's forgiveness which she did not receive. Renée in La Vagabonde (pp. 31-33) could speak of Taillandy, her former husband, only with bitterness. She felt she had been a good wife, but he had betrayed her. In Chéri (p. 91), Edmée was a patient, loving, forgiving wife and was very docile. Colette occasionally recounted bits of humor and one of the best illustrations of this occurred in Gigi (p. 33), when the grandmother told Gigi that to be a good wife and keep her husband interested in her she must often create a scene and throw plates at a wall and then make much of reconciliations. Mme Armand of "La Dame du photographe" in Gigi (p. 127) tried to commit suicide because she felt she was not worthy of her husband. Colette usually treated the wife as if she were the injured party whenever there was trouble between a husband and wife. Her

wives were usually of the long-suffering type who were made to endure every kind of mental torture through the actions of their husbands. Colette's own experience had undoubtedly colored her viewpoint. Of course, during her generation, wives were placed in the care of their husbands and had no form of redress. Even with all the wife had to suffer at the hands of her husband, Colette still managed to convey the idea that wives were the stronger of the two.

Colette has written little of children other than in relationship to the mother and father. In the French home the child enjoyed a place of security and love but with the underlying feeling of discipline. In the Claudine books the father paid little attention to his daughter but there was a mutual feeling of love (Claudine en ménage, p. 66). In La Chatte (p. 159) Alain was allowed to return home, but his mother would not condone his leaving his wife Camille. Mme Peloux was a doting mother to her son, Chéri, who was very spoiled, but he still followed his mother's bidding (Chéri, p. 53). In "L'Enfant malade" in Gigi the mother giving such tender care to Jean made it the most touching of all the stories. There Colette let her readers see just how deep was the love for a child. In La Maison de Claudine is related an amusing anecdote of Sido's watchfulness over her children. When Colette's father was out campaigning he took Colette, who was nine years old, along to help.

Along the way he let Colette sample his wine from time to time and when he returned that evening it was with an inebriated Colette. Sido was so furious she would not let Colette go again. Her father always thought that was why he lost the election (Propogande, p. 45). Colette in her letters to Anna Moreno told of seeing mothers staying with children in a Parisian park during an alert in World War II,[21] showing that their desire for safety was overcome by wanting their children to have a semblance of the security to be found in play. She also bemoaned the fact that her own daughter Bel-Gazou would come to Paris to see her, then spend her time with the young people of her own age. In only one story did she write of an ungrateful child. La Maison de Claudine contained the story of Juliette, Claudine's sister, who had married and lived just a few blocks from her family. She no longer spoke to her mother Sido and Juliette did not even call her mother when her baby was born ("Maternité," p. 83).

Of other relatives to be found upon reading Colette the grandmother had the most respected place. In several stories the grandmother reared the grandchild. This was true in Claudine à Paris (p. 42), when Wilhelmine took

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[21]Le Figaro littéraire, Paris: Samedi, 1959, p. 5.

Marcel into her home and in Claudine s'en va (p. 165), when Annie was recalling her childhood days in the home of her grandmother. Again in Gigi it was the grandmother, Mme Alvarez, who reared Gigi (p. 23). Brothers and sisters were mentioned only in the stories of La Maison de Claudine. There in "L'Enlèvement," the marriage of Claudine's half-sister gave her a new room (p. 26). In "Epitaphes," Claudine recounted helping her brother construct a play cemetery in their garden (p. 58) and in "Ma Soeur aux longs cheveux" Claudine described her sister as having very long hair and always reading (p. 73). Though Juliette in "Maternité" would not visit her parents she did speak to her brothers and sisters when she met them (p. 80). The only other relatives mentioned were tante Coeur, cousin Marcel, and uncle Renaud and these were to be found only in Claudine à Paris and Claudine en ménage. Tante Coeur was the sister of Colette's father and was very kind about entertaining for them when they first arrived in Paris (Claudine à Paris, pp. 38; 78, 181). Her uncle Renaud, who was only an uncle by marriage, Claudine adored and later married (Claudine en ménage, p. 9). Marcel, a cousin approximately her own age, called on her often up to her marriage. Colette seemed to keep her work comparatively free from complicated family relationship, thus it was never necessary to remember who

was related to whom. There was no need to supplement her main characters with large families.

Before an engagement was announced in France it was necessary, in most instances, to spend a great deal of time working out the fiançailles of the couple. A dowry had to be given by the girl's family and this usually consisted of whatever sum of money the family could afford. Even as late as 1924, Colette wrote to Anna Moreno that a daughter of one of their friends had had to return to her family home because her father had not paid the rent on the newlyweds' apartment.[22] In Claudine à Paris, Claudine had fifty thousand francs for a dowry (p. 244). Annie in Claudine s'en va had received three hundred thousand francs for her dowry plus fifty thousand francs from her grandmother. Again the dowry was mentioned in La Chatte but no definite amount was given (p. 10). Since the families in Chéri were more affluent than in many of the stories the fiançailles were discussed for many days before an agreement could be reached (pp. 59-60). Only one wedding was related in detail and that was to be found in La Maison de Claudine. Adrienne Septmane, a femme de chambre of Sido had a large wedding ("La Noce," p. 68). There was much singing, dancing, drinking, and

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[22] Le Figaro littéraire, op. cit., p. 12.

eating at this wedding ("La Noce," p. 68). Claudine served as a flower girl and thought it was wonderful. The mother of the bride cried even though it was a happy occasion. It is interesting to note that all marriages in France must take place before a mayor, then most of the vows are again repeated before a priest (Claudine en ménage, p. 7).

Prior to 1945 a woman in France could not get a divorce without her husband's consent. It was that year in which women were given the right to vote and even after that divorce was not approved. Colette wrote of divorce with bitterness. Life for her was very difficult after her divorce from Villars because of having been left with no money and few friends. This same tinge of bitterness is found in her writings whenever divorce is mentioned. It is especially apparent in La Vagabonde (pp. 34-35), when she told of Taillandy leaving Renée. Taillandy had betrayed his wife Renée with a series of affairs with other women until she could no longer stand the humiliation. He took credit for the books they had had published, thus leaving her with no income. When they were divorced he made it appear that she had been at fault (p. 32), and even her own friends had forsaken her. In Claudine s'en va, Claudine told Annie that if there were a divorce the blame would fall on the wife (p. 179). Annie would regain her freedom but lose her

friends. In La Chatte, Alain wanted to divorce Camille but had not the courage for it would cause a scandal (p. 169). When Chéri left his wife for a time, his mother's friends commented that his divorce would be a much gayer affair than his wedding (Chéri, p. 136). However, he did not leave Edmée probably because of parental influence. While divorce was discussed in many of Colette's stories it was only in La Vagabonde that a divorce was actually procured.

CHAPTER V

LEISURE TIME

Since the French seldom entertained in their home anyone outside the family other than at teas, Colette recounted the various forms of entertainment outside the home. Each woman reserved one day during the week when she was to be "at home" (Claudine À Paris, p. 60). On that day she received those of her friends who chose to call. Making calls formed a very large part of the social life of the women of France during Colette's time. This being true, hours were spent dressing, much attention was given to styling (Claudine À Paris, p. 80) and in general it was a time when the latest gossip was aired. The small talk to be heard at a tea was evidently enjoyed by the men for they too attended when time permitted. Colette did not fully describe the contents of a tea table, for food was certainly not a fetish of hers, but a casual mention of tea, cakes, and fruit was made (Claudine À Paris, p. 194 and Claudine s'en va, p. 41). Men, at least in the literary circles, also had "a day" (Claudine en ménage, p. 85). Though this was attended by both men and women, it seemed to be more masculine in its nature since strawberries, ham sandwiches, caviar, pâté de foie gras and various liqueurs were served (Claudine en ménage, p. 86). Occasionally an informal call would be made, but

this was true only among the most intimate of friends (Claudine en ménage, p. 103).

Colette has cited so many instances of attendance at the theater it must have been a favorite form of entertainment. Even in the village a traveling company of actors was received with great acclaim ("Mode de Paris" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 85) when they presented Supplice d'une Femme, La Tour de Nesle, Hernani, Le Gendre de M. Poirier, et Deux Timides. As soon as Claudine met Renaud he asked her to go to the theater to see the Damnation de Faust. A few days later he took her to see Blanchette of Brieux at the Antoine theater (Claudine à Paris, p. 193). Even in cold weather Renaud insisted on going to the theater (Claudine en ménage, p. 97). Matinées, concerts, theaters, and dinners were scheduled regularly. When Claudine asked Renaud why it was such a necessary part of their routine he told her he liked to go to see the people for it was a meeting place of the habitués. In Claudine s'en va the opera took the place of the theater for those who loved music. In La Chatte the theater was not mentioned nor was much said of it in La Vagabonde. Although Renée was a mime she had no free time to visit the theater. In Chéri it was taken for granted that everyone went to the theater, and it was mentioned very casually.

Of greater significance than the theater was the café. It was a common meeting place for the theater crowd either before or after a play or concert. It was in the café that the merits of the performance could be debated, it was in the café that ideas could be tested, it was in the café that influential contacts could be made. Thus the café itself could be considered the hub around which life outside the home revolved. The cafés which catered to the theater crowds were located nearby for the convenience of those who wanted to prolong their evening. To the general public the café was a center for meeting friends and renewing acquaintances. Many hours were whiled away at the café and no one seemed ever to be in a hurry. Colette's characters went to the café as often as possible when there was nothing of importance to be attended to elsewhere.

Every French family took walks, usually on Sunday. It was a ritual for them to dress in their Sunday best and walk slowly down the street to the park, woods, or seashore, depending upon the locale. Parisians strolled through the Luxembourg Gardens (Claudine à Paris, p. 29) or went to the gardens of the Louvre (Claudine à Paris, p. 96). Monceau park was another favorite spot. Because much of Colette's writing was done before the advent of the automobile and even after that cars were not numerous, it was perfectly natural for people to walk. They enjoyed these outings as

a family unit and looked forward to them with a great deal of pleasure.

While teas were discussed in leisure time outside the home, for the hostess it meant even more hours spent in the home making preparations for her guests. The house had to be immaculate, her dress must be chosen with care, and her refreshments should furnish the topic of conversation for at least a few minutes. It was the custom for the hostess to honor some guest by asking her to pour (Claudine À Paris, p. 60). Small talk (Claudine À Paris, p. 80) was considered the polite form of entertainment at a tea unless it was a small intimate gathering when at such a time a poker game could be enjoyed or knitting for those women who did not choose to play cards (Chéri, p. 148).

Recreation in the home took various forms but the most prominent one was reading (Claudine À l'école, p. 10). In every story Colette made some reference to reading. Since she was an avid reader this was not at all surprising. For Colette's women embroidering was mentioned often. In La Maison de Claudine she brought out the fact that every French girl should know how to sew and embroider before she was nine ("La Couseuse" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 171). Within the family dominoes ("L'Enlèvement" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 27) and card-playing were favorite pastimes. In La Chatte, Colette related the reaction of Camille and

Alain to a family poker game (La Chatte, p. 7). Mme Peloux had small poker games occasionally. In one of Colette's letters to Anna Moreno she told of playing belote with her husband Maurice.[23] But the most amazing mention of a card game was trente-et-un played in a hotel by Mlle Sergent and some of her pupils while they were waiting to take their final examinations (Claudine à l'école, p. 16).

There is one outstanding feature to be found in Colette's narrations of leisure time. Her characters were never at a loss as to how to entertain themselves and they did not need to be entertained except when they attended the theater. She furnished her characters with enough ingenuity to take care of their leisure time with no outside help.

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[23]Le Figaro littéraire, op. cit., p. 12.

delivered three kittens Mélie, as usual, drowned two of the kittens (Claudine à Paris, p. 197). It was surprising to note that Colette wrote very casually about drowning all but one of a litter of kittens. As kind-hearted as she was and caring for animals as she did, it was not in character. She threatened the maid who hit a dog (Claudine à Paris, p. 21) and yet she apparently had no feeling at all about the two kittens who were to be drowned. Colette also related the fact that Moune, a blue Persian, was left with only one kitten while the entire litter of the neighbor's cat had been drowned ("Les deux chattes" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 154). Drowning must have been the accepted way of reducing the cat population of France.

Colette wrote of cats as if they belonged to the human race. She recounted the delivery of Fanchette's kittens in the same manner as one would describe an obstetrical case. Colette also characterized cats as becoming ill when their masters or mistresses left them for any length of time. This was true of Fanchette when Claudine went on her extended honeymoon. Upon Claudine's return, she learned that Fanchette had missed her almost as much as had her father (Claudine en ménage, p. 60). Fanchette had howled for days after Claudine's departure. Fanchette was happy to see Claudine upon her return and even though she could

not live in Claudine's new home she did get to see her occasionally. Then Fanchette was taken back to Montigny with Claudine's father and Mélie and not even being in the country could console her for the loss of her mistress. When Claudine left Renaud and returned to Montigny Fanchette was so happy to see her that she became as Claudine's shadow (Claudine en ménage, p. 218). In Claudine s'en va, Fanchette was happily with her mistress once more. Claudine had not only invented a comb to remove Fanchette's fleas (Claudine s'en va, p. 29), but she also had written poetry for her which she read to Fanchette. Claudine had bought a straw chair, which cost two sous, for Fanchette, just as for a person, and not an iron one because "Fanchette a le derrière frileux" (Claudine s'en va, p. 105). Because Fanchette was white, Claudine kept her immaculate and even worried about her getting her feet dirty (Claudine s'en va, p. 121). After Fanchette produced three more kittens, making a total of nine in one year (Claudine s'en va, p. 175) Colette had finished her first four Claudine books and with them went Fanchette since new names were chosen for cats in the later books.

In Chéri, Colette's outstanding character was Saha, the cat belonging to Alain Amparat. He had had Saha since childhood and thought she was the most unusual cat in existence. No other cat could be so intelligent and lovable, and he spent hours playing with her and talking to her.

Upon his marriage he moved to his own apartment and because his wife Camille was not particularly fond of cats, he left Saha with his mother. When he returned to his old home and saw how much weight Saha had lost he almost became ill himself. He fondled her, caressed her, fed her, then called for a basket and transported her to his new apartment. Because he loved Saha so dearly and spent so much time with her, his wife became more jealous of Saha daily. At last in desperation Camille tried to kill Saha by pushing her over the ledge of the parapet nine stories above the ground. Saha survived, but Alain recognized the fact that he must soon choose between his wife and Saha. Saha would not stay in the same room with Camille, and Camille was not only jealous of Saha but was also afraid of her. Alain told Camille that the cat was not her rival (La Chatte, p. 55 and p. 150). But he felt that Saha was too fine and too dear to be relegated to the kitchen with Mme Buque, and he could no longer trust Camille with her again. There was only one course left open to Alain since Saha was his most cherished possession. He took Mme Buque's market-basket, installed Saha, and went back to his family home.

Colette mentioned cats in many of her other stories but did not have another plot revolve around a cat. In La Maison de Claudine, Colette teased the cat with her hair ("Ma Soeur aux longs cheveux" in La Maison de Claudine,

p. 72). She told of the antics of a kitten which made her mother laugh even though she was in mourning ("Le Rire" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 127), and of a kitten which had to be picked from a roof which was so high the kitten had become dizzy ("Ma Mère et le Fruit Défendu" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 136). Colette must have felt that the amours of a cat were quite important because they were mentioned often and in La Maison de Claudine she wrote that January was the month for des amours félines ("Chats" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 157). She characterized a cat as being a loving, faithful, entertaining creature with its warm, soft fur and pleasing manners. Many of the adjectives Colette used in conjunction with cats were equally applicable to the feminine sex. All the cats Colette delineated were female, except Kiki-la-Doucette; thus she must have felt that of all the animals they most resembled women. In the Sept Dialogues de Bêtes Kiki-la-Doucette loved the man while Toby-Chien preferred the woman (Sept Dialogues de Bêtes, pp. 38 and 39). There was only one discrepancy to this line of reasoning since Colette had once said that she dreamed one day of espousing an enormous cat.[24]

Colette spent much time writing of dogs and, though they did not have such a prominent role in her stories, they

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[24] Cf. p. 8.

were mentioned more frequently. Her favorite dog was the terrier and this breed she used in most of her writings.

When she wrote of the little black bull-terrier belonging to Annie in Claudine s'en va she related that Annie's husband, Alain Malabar, was so jealous of the dog he made it sleep in the stables. As soon as Alain went to South America, Annie brought the dog Toby into the house and let it sleep on her bed (Claudine s'en va, p. 60). She took him on vacation with her and, when she decided to leave her husband, she was happy that she had the dog to console her.

In La Vagabonde Renée had a small Belgian terrier, by the name of Fossette, for a pet. She waited for Renée each night and was ready to defend her mistress should the need arise. Fossette was so small and had such short fur she did not like to get up on cold mornings (La Vagabonde, p. 12), but she loved to go for a walk in the woods. When Renée went on tour with her company of actors she left Fossette in the care of her maid Blandine and her friend Max.

Toutouque in La Maison de Claudine was as large as a four-months-old pig. She had yellow fur tinged with black and resembled a mastiff more than a bulldog. She barked little and was gentle as a lamb until the day she saw Bianca. Bianca was a blond terrier who was nervous and subject to canine tantrums and who was frequently heard howling more loudly than the bell of the Angelus ("La Toutouque" in La Maison de

Claudine, p. 97). This Toutouque could not stand, so one day she attacked Bianca and left her dying in the street. It was a great shock to Claudine, who was only ten, to discover such brute force in the gentlest of creatures ("La Toutouque" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 97).

Colette gave her cats and dogs such human qualities that she often recounted their love affairs, their marriages, and their propagation. One such incident concerned the marriage of Pati-Pati, a chihuahua who soon produced two little Pati-Patis ("La Merveille" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 142), then she did not want to be bothered taking care of them ("La Merveille" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 143). All Claudine's friends remarked about what a marvelous dog Pati-Pati was but Claudine realized she lacked an essential quality that her friends did not know about, for Pati-Pati did not like her own children.

The most amusing of the stories Colette wrote concerning Sido and her animals recounted the episode of Sido taking her black and white mongrel dog to church. The curé was scandalized and told Sido he did not say mass for dogs. When the curé wanted her to leave Domino at the door of the church Sido was greatly annoyed and insisted that he could not learn anything if he were left on the outside ("Ma mère et le curé" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 118). After all, Domino stood and sat at the same time as the faithful. He

certainly did bark during the elevation. She wished he had not, but she herself had taught him to bark as soon as he heard a bell. The next day she took Domino back to church and the curé became so upset that in his confusion he said amen before the end of his sermon.

The most unusual pet Colette ever owned was Bâ-Tou, a snow leopard from Tchad in Africa. She had been sent as a gift and even though she was twenty months old, Colette called her a cat. Colette thought she made an even better pet than a cat or a dog for "le chien gâté calcule et ment, le chat dissimule et simule. Bâ Tou ne cachait rien" ("Bâ-Tou" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 145). Bâ-Tou slept in a basket, close to her bed. She was dainty in her eating habits and delicately picked the morsels of food from her paws ("Bâ-Tou" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 146). Bâ-Tou loved water and would splash in the tub with her paws until wet and happy, then she would start to purr. She played with her wooden ball and would go to Colette the instant she heard her name. Though lovingly playful she one day grasped Colette's arm too tightly. Colette chastised her and she leaped upon Colette who promptly seized Bâ-Tou's collar and threw her against the wall. Bâ-Tou could have seriously injured Colette but instead she miaowed quite loudly, lay down and started licking her nose ("Bâ-Tou" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 146). The tradespeople, the concierge, and

even Colette's friends were terrified when they met Bâ-Tou. It would not be easy to be casual about a leopard even though it was put on leash when Colette took her for a walk. It was with regret that Colette finally decided that Bâ-Tou must be sent to the zoological gardens and both Bâ-Tou and Colette cried when Bâ-Tou was taken away. Colette was always sad when it became necessary to give up a cherished pet, but she was most distressed about Bâ-Tou because she could not stand the thought of an animal losing its freedom and spending the rest of its life in a cage ("Bâ-Tou" in La Maison de Claudine, p. 147). Just as Colette herself was always striving to be free, so did she try to bestow this same sense of freedom upon her animals.

Sept Dialogues de Bêtes gave an entirely different aspect of animal life for in this book Colette wrote of the cat, Kiki-la-Doucette, and the dog, Toby-Chien, as if they were human beings (Sept Dialogues de Bêtes, p. 24). They were subject to the same failings as humans and had the same thoughts and reactions as man. They complained of their health and of the weather. Here again Colette suggested the femininity of the cat in that the cat preferred man (Sept Dialogues de Bêtes, p. 38). Toby-Chien admitted that while he liked both his master and his mistress he preferred his mistress. Colette suggested too the masculinity of the dog

by having Kiki-la-Doucette tell Toby-Chien that he had the tastes of a man because he thought only of his stomach and conducted his conquests in a barbaric manner. Kiki-la-Doucette was rather sly in his treatment of Toby-Chien, for in "Elle est Malade" he goaded Toby-Chien into howling for which he was punished (Sept Dialogues de Bêtes, pp. 119 and 120).

Colette had mastered the art of portraying pets with all the attributes of man and yet at the same time she let them keep their animal qualities. In only one story did she refer to a dog as being anything other than a pet and that was in Claudine à l'école when she wrote of Claire's dog, Lisette, who watched the sheep (Claudine à l'école, p. 191). Chéri, Gigi, and "La Dame du photographe" in Gigi were a distinct deviation in that no mention was made of any animal. Colette embodied in most of her writings the fact that human life was certain to be enriched by the influence of animals.[25]

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[25]Hatzfeld, op. cit., p. 53.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Colette was undoubtedly the foremost woman writer of her generation, and the finest modern writer of animals. Her writing was instinctive and of the senses rather than of ideas. Though most of her works were sensual she had a deep feeling of domesticity which ran like a thread through each story. Family relationships were not complicated but were set forth as a natural consequence of civilization. Since she felt that human life was certain to be enriched by the influence of animals most of her characters were depicted as being very much attached to their pets. Animals were treated as humans and in one instance the dog and the cat were the main characters. To Colette impulsive physical gesture revealed an emotion more clearly than any number of words such as her father absentmindedly patting Claudine on the head. That one gesture alone revealed his great love for his daughter. Colette was chaste in her thinking yet at the same time completely amoral when writing of love affairs or strange sexual relationships. She combined the naïve candor of the country child with sophisticated licentiousness. Probably due to Villars' Bohemian existence she was started on her career by using some of his puns and anecdotes with which he hoped to startle the public. And they certainly

did. Colette, left to her own devices, much preferred writing of her mother, of animals, and of nature. It was in this category that Colette did her best work. Her sentences were simple and direct and in love she left nothing to the imagination.

It is difficult to reconcile the fresh purity of her descriptions of country life, her domestic tastes, her pity for all suffering with her uninhibited descriptions of sensual pleasures of man. Housing was given a place in her writings but it never interfered with a plot nor detracted from her characterizations. She spoke with kindness of the household help and gave them a place of importance in several of her books. Most of the leisure time of which she wrote pertained to the family since walks, card playing, theater attendance, and reading were participated in as a family unit. Dinners in the home were for members of the family only. Pets, while living with the family, were usually attached to one particular member. In social morals she recognized superstition, laziness, and hypocrisy, and wrote of these in a very vivid way. Nevertheless, for all her sense of sophistication, she remained strictly a middle-class French housewife who never ceased striving for a sense of freedom.

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Letters from Colette to Anna Moreno from 1941 through 1944.

APPENDIX

Claudine à l'école

Claudine was born in Montigny-en-Fresnois. Her father was studying snails, and her mother was dead.

At school she had four friends: big Anais, cold and vicious; the Jauberts, two sisters with sheep eyes; and Marie Belhomme who resembled a frightened little rabbit. These five friends had formed a pléiade and ordered the other children about.

A new teacher, Mlle Sergent, was sent to the school while a new school was being built beside the old one. Also, a new teacher for the younger children arrived, the pretty Aimée Lanthenay. M. Rabastens, musician from Marseille, and M. Duplessis, who resembled Richelieu, comprised the remainder of the faculty. Claudine loved Mlle Aimée as much as she hated Mlle Sergent.

APPENDIX

Both Mlle Sergent and M. Duplessis wanted Aimée. She became engaged to M. Duplessis but lived with Mlle Sergent. When Dr. Dutertre, cantonal delegate and a pediatrician, visited the school, Aimée went off with him for two hours. M. Duplessis became mad with jealousy. He quit his post and left the school.

Aimée's little sister Luce loved Claudine, but Claudine was not interested in Luce. However, she used Luce for information about Aimée and Mlle Sergent and, as the children watched the two teachers, they became more and more naughty and unmanageable. Claudine even told Mlle Sergent what she knew of their sexual relationship.

When examination time approached, six candidates were taken to another village for the tests along with children from the surrounding schools. Marie Belhomme failed.

July first, M. Dupuy, minister of agriculture, came to open formally the new school, and a grand celebration took place after the speeches. That night a dance was held and Mlle Sergent became so jealous of Aimée that she accused her in a loud voice of being immoral and it caused a great scandal for the school.

Claudine said goodbye to the class, Mlle Sergent, little Luce, and the wicked Anais, for she was going to leave them to go into the world.

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Claudine à Paris

Claudine's father took her to Paris after school was over so he could further his research on snails. They took an apartment two steps from the Sorbonne where Claudine promptly came down with a fever and was ill for three months. Mêlie, the maid who had come with them, was her only source of entertainment. She heard occasionally from some schoolmates, but Luce wrote quite often.

As soon as Claudine recovered she and her father went to the Paris home of his sister Wilhelmine. There Claudine met Marcel, the son of Ida, Wilhelmine's daughter who had died. Marcel was being cared for by his grandmother Wilhelmine. Claudine called this aunt, tante Coeur.

Marcel was having an affair with a boy he had met at school and he had Claudine tell him all about Aimée and Mlle Sergent. Claudine did not particularly like Marcel but she was drawn to him because of the life he had led and the things he told her.

Uncle Renaud, Marcel's father, took Claudine to the theater and dinners after the theater, thus she had a taste of Parisian night life and she soon fell in love with him.

One day while walking, Claudine saw Luce, who had run away to Paris and thrown herself on the mercy of her mother's brother. He had agreed to endow her with worldly goods so Luce became his mistress. Claudine and Luce went to the uncle's house, and Luce told Claudine all that had happened at the school since Claudine's departure. Luce again made overtures toward Claudine so Claudine returned to her home just a few blocks away.

M. Maria, the secretary of Claudine's father, asked for her hand in marriage but Claudine refused.

Renaud then took Claudine out for an evening, but she drank too much and told Renaud she was in love with him. He called on her the next afternoon and told her he had only Marcel's money. She wanted to be his mistress but he refused, saying, "Non, ma femme ou rien." Then he asked her father's permission to marry which was granted along with the dowry from Claudine's grandmother.

Claudine en ménage

Renaud, a journalist, took his wife Claudine on an extended honeymoon, for she had done little traveling. Upon their return to Paris they spent most of their time entertaining or being entertained by his friends from des gens du monde, the world of the theater and newspapers. Claudine loved Renaud very much but he became afraid because she was so much younger than he.

Claudine took Renaud back to her old home to see her school. Renaud was amused by a new pupil, Pomme, and to Claudine the past was reflected in the rooms and corridors and by Mlle Sergent, who was still there. A large girl, by the name of Hélène, was attracted to Claudine and as Claudine kissed her, it reminded her of Luce. Claudine felt now that she was "plus simple, plus brutale, plus sombre, plus passionée que Renaud et il était plus femme qu'elle." (p. 57)

In Paris Renaud made her choose between two apartments. Then she moved in her lit à rideaux de perse (p. 65) from her father's home. This new world of Renaud's introduced Claudine to Rézi who attached herself to Claudine. Rézi's husband was not happy about the situation, but Renaud made it possible for them to have an apartment where they could meet. Claudine felt she needed both Renaud and Rézi but she did not want them together. One day she borrowed the key to Marcel's apartment and took Rézi there. When someone knocked on the door they left hurriedly.

Claudine became quite ill and as she was convalescing Renaud spent less and less time with her, while he insisted that she not leave the house. Claudine on her first day out went to her apartment for Rézi and found Rézi and her husband, Renaud, having an affair. Claudine left the apartment and went directly to Montigny. She later sent for her trunks in which she found a note from Renaud which begged forgiveness and asked that she return to Paris. After four days Claudine wrote Renaud, assuring him of her love and asking him to come after her.

Claudine s'en va (Journal D'Annie)

Annie Lajarisse had loved Alain Malabar since she was thirteen but he had dominated her since she was eleven. When Alain was twenty-four, they were married. Soon after the marriage he went to South America and left Annie in the care of his sister, Marthe, and her husband, Léon Payet.

Annie liked Claudine and Renaud and wanted to visit there often but Marthe told her not to do so since Alain would not like it. Alain even made her keep her black bulldog in the stables.

Marthe decided to take a holiday at Arriège so Annie had to go along. While there Annie learned that Alain had had a mistress, Mme Chessenet, a few years before their marriage and that he had not quit visiting her. After the first shock from this news she decided she was free from her master.

When Claudine and Renaud arrived at Arriège, Annie was very happy to have someone to talk to about Alain. He had put off his return and she wanted to divorce him. Claudine suggested she think about the divorce for a long time since it was never a solution to anything. Claudine was drawn to Annie but left Arriège before she became involved.

Soon a group of friends went to Bayreuth for the music of Wagner's Parsifal. Here Annie found Marthe with Maugis after Marthe had been telling everyone Maugis was following Annie. Maugis had been giving Marthe money, for Léon was a poor poet. Léon learned about Marthe and took poison. He did not die, and Marthe convinced him she would reform.

Annie went back to Paris, then on to the country. There she received a letter from Alain telling of his return. She hurried back to Paris to wait for him but was afraid to see him. Claudine called and again advised her not to leave but Annie wanted her freedom more than she wanted Alain so she took the express train to Carlsbad after Claudine left. She was determined to resign herself to all that was to come.

Sept Dialogues de Bêtes

The poet, Francis Jammes, who wrote the preface, thought both Toby-Chien and Kiki-la-Doucette were natural in their attitudes and thoughts. He also said that Colette was a true poet with her sentimentalism, her order, and her purity (p. 11). Since she was a gentlewoman she presented her brindle-bull and her cat with as much assurance as Diane her greyhound or Bacchante her tiger (p. 14). Mme Colette was a vivid creature who dared to be natural. He praised her as a woman and as a poet, calling her "une dame

qui chante avec la voix d'un pur ruisseau français la triste tendresse qui fait battre si vite le coeur des bêtes."[1]

The Sept Dialogues de Bêtes contains the following characters: Kiki-la-Doucette, chat des chartreux; Toby-Chien, bull bringé; Lui et Elle, Seigneurs de moindre importance. These seven stories are told separately.

"Sentimentalités." Kiki-la-Doucette preferred Lui, while Toby-Chien preferred Elle, even though he liked them both better than other dogs. Both animals disliked their baths, and Kiki-la-Doucette complained of his health, but even more complained of the medicine Elle gave him when he needed it.

"Le Voyage." Colette ably described the antics of Toby-Chien and Kiki-la-Doucette as they were being prepared for their voyage and their trials and tribulations en route. Toby-Chien was put on a leash while Kiki-la-Doucette was carried in a covered basket.

"Le dîner est en retard." Kiki-la-Doucette told Toby-Chien that a dog had ignoble tastes for they were that of a man. A dog liked dirty things and acted like the deux pieds. Toby-Chien said he liked to chew on chicken bones and Kiki-la-Doucette was disgusted for she liked to catch live birds and eat them. Both animals were unhappy because Lui and Elle were late and so was their dinner. Toby-Chien chased Kiki-la-Doucette and in their play they broke a lamp. They looked so sad that Elle forgave them.

"Elle est Malade." Elle had a vague illness from falling from a horse so Lui told Toby-Chien and Kiki-la-Doucette to be quiet. Toby-Chien was so upset about Elle he could not eat with pleasure. Kiki-la-Doucette thought Elle should have been smarter than to ride a horse but Toby-Chien defended Elle by saying he liked horses better than cats; and, in fact, he liked horses next to man. Kiki-la-Doucette told him this proved that dogs were the last of the romantics. The cat told Toby-Chien about fevers and frightened him. Then Kiki-la-Doucette started telling Toby-Chien about the neighbor's dog being with a great dane. Toby-Chien was so upset he howled and was punished while Kiki-la-Doucette was set free.

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[1]Colette, Sept Dialogues de Bêtes (Paris: Mercure de France, 1954), preface, p. 17.

"Le Premier Feu." The animals discussed the merits of fire and decided that, though it was beautiful and warm, they were afraid of it. Kiki-la-Doucette thought he liked winter best because his fur was prettier then. Toby-Chien preferred spring because of the walks he could take and the freshness of the flowers and trees.

"L'Orage." The heat before the storm bothered Toby-Chien and gave Kiki-la-Doucette a migraine headache. Elle was suffering too, and she told them to disappear just as the thunder sounded. Elle had to run to close the windows. The animals were afraid and one ran under the book-case while the other ran under a chair. The rain made Toby-Chien nervous. After the rain the air was fresh and good. Suddenly it was spring and a rainbow appeared in the sky.

"Une Visite." Elle took Toby-Chien to a store and upon his return he described his trip to the cat. Kiki-la-Doucette, during their absence, had taken a nap near Lui. The door bell rang and a small English terrier had come to call. Toby-Chien was enamored of her even though she kept bragging about herself. She had never seen a cat nor been to the country where there were rocks. Toby-Chien was making love to her and had almost convinced her she should love him when she noticed Kiki-la-Doucette looking on with a supercilious air. She ran to her mistress and called for help.

La Vagabonde

Renée Nerée who had been divorced from her husband Taillandy, a portraitist, was now earning her living as a mime. Brague helped her make her debut in pantomime and watched over her. She lived in a house for women only with her dog. In speaking of her divorce she felt isolated because of the loss of her friends; and, while she did not regret Taillandy, it was hard to get used to being isolated. Throughout the entire novel she wondered if her freedom was worth the loss of the enslavement of love. She noticed a young man in the audience for several nights and finally met Maxime Dufferein-Chautel who soon became her slave. After her sad experience with Taillandy, Renée was very careful not to get too fond of Maxime. They were the same age but she felt he was quite young. He became as her shadow, who, as she said, "s'arrange pour vivre dans mon ombre, pour mettre ses pas dans l'empreinte des miens, avec une obstination de chien..."(p. 69). Brague got Renée a contract to go on

tour and Max pleaded with her to stay with him. She promised to return at the end of two months so that they could go away together. During the tour she poured out her heart to him in her letters, in which she was trying to bring herself to give up her freedom and accept his love. Maxime was taking care of Fossette, her terrier. Just before she was to return, he sent a note saying, "Ma Renée, est-ce que vous ne m'aimez plus?" (p. 240). Renée went to the station, but could not bring herself to return to Maxime and Paris, so she wrote him a letter telling him that she would go to America with Brague and the troupe. She remained "vagabonde and libre" (p. 248).

Chéri

Chéri was the spoiled young darling of Léa who was in her forties. His mother Mme Peloux, a friend of Léa's, called him home to meet Edmée, Marie-Laure's daughter, and insisted that it was time for him to marry. He was happy with Léa but agreed to his mother's plan. During the time his mother and Marie-Laure were working on the dowry he continued to spend most of his time with Léa, whom he called Nounoune.

One month after Chéri's wedding Léa left Paris for a trip to Italy and sent a note to Mme Peloux to say au revoir and to give her regards to Chéri when he returned from his honeymoon.

Upon Chéri's return to Paris he was not happy. His house which was being built was not finished so Chéri and Edmée were to live with Mme Peloux. Chéri was more than unhappy when he learned of Léa's departure, and Mme Peloux suggested to him that she had gone away with a young man.

Chéri grew more and more morose with the passage of time and even moving into his new house did not alleviate the situation. Edmée knew he was unhappy and she was upset at his staying away for days at a time. Chéri was making the rounds of the night clubs and walking by Léa's hotel every day hoping to see her.

Just after Léa's return Mme Peloux called on her to tell her of Chéri's happiness. Léa was surprised that Chéri was the one who had told Mme Peloux of her return, for as yet he had not called on her. Then she consoled herself by thinking, "C'est bien fait pour moi, on ne garde pas un

amant sept ans à mon âge" (p. 154). Two days later Chéri called on Léa and aired his jealousy about her new lover whom she had never really had. They resumed their affair, and Chéri and Léa were both happy once more, while Edmée seemed to be resigned to her lonely life.

La Maison de Claudine

La Maison de Claudine is a collection of short stories describing Claudine's life as a child.

"Où sont les enfants?" described Colette's home and told of her mother worrying whenever her children were out of sight.

"Le Sauvage" was the first husband of Sido. Claudine told much about Sido's home. The first and last gift of le Sauvage to Sido was a piece of cerise-colored cashmere and a chipped mortar of marble.

"Amour." What to have for dinner? Claudine's mother went to the butcher shop of Léonore and several other stores. Father was angry and jealous because she was gone a few moments. Claudine laughed at their quarrels.

"La Petite." Minet-Chéri told of Sundays spent day-dreaming. Thursdays were for play with dolls and playmates. "Qu'est-ce-qu'on sera" was a favorite game. Chéri was the only child with imagination and she wanted to be a sailor and command the seas.

"L'Enlèvement." When Claudine's half-sister was married, Claudine, at nine, moved to the first floor in her sister's room. Claudine's mother then could not sleep because Claudine was so far from her room. Her mother carried her back to her old room and Claudine called, "Je suis enlevée."

"Le Curé sur le mur." Bel-Gazou wanted to be a curé. She heard the word presbytère and called everything that. Later she learned it meant a curé's home, hence she even called her terrace a presbytère and she pretended to be a curé sur le mur.

"Ma Mère et les Livres." Minet-Chéri wanted to read her mother's books instead of fairy tales, which she did.

"Propagande." Colette's father dreamed of politics. She described her father as too trusting and enfantin. He took her with him to campaign. Colette came home drunk, and her mother would not let her go again.

"Papa and Madame Bruneau." Mme Bruneau complimented Papa on his beautiful voice which made her sad because her husband had never let her know love. Papa, in front of Mama, offered to teach her about love for "quarante sous et un paquet de tabac." Her embarrassment was so great she finally moved.

"Ma Mère et les Bêtes." Colette told of animals in her home as a child and on her return from Paris. Chickens, swallows, cats, dog, cows, flies, spiders, catapillars, and butterflies were a few of the animals and insects she described.

"Epitaphes." When Colette was seven and her brother thirteen, they put play tombs in the garden and used epitaphs from the cemetery nearby. Her mother stopped this. Colette could not understand the eulogies.

"La Fille de mon père." One day Sido's father brought home a baby girl when Sido was eight and told the family nothing about the baby's parents. Sido sometimes said that Colette, often called Minet-Chéri, resembled the baby even to the chronic lying. Sido's father was an ugly quadroon with purple fingernails, but all the women liked him.

"La Noce." Henriette Boisson was a pregnant, unmarried servant, whom Sido took in. She could do little. Adrienne Septmance, another servant, had Colette for the maid of honor at her wedding. Colette described the food and loved the wedding. She described the bride's room, then she wanted to go home to Mama.

"Ma Soeur aux longs cheveux." Juliette had long black hair with reddish lights which reached the floor. Her mother had to comb it. Juliette got typhoid fever and in her delirium said she liked only blondes. She called for Catulle Mendès, an author whose photograph she had seen. Colette described the rooms in the house.

"Maternité." Juliette broke with her family, and her mother suffered when she was not called to help with the birth of her grandchild (p. 83), and spoke of "la force de la fille ingrate qui si loin d'elle enfantait."

"Mode de Paris." M. Marcel d'Avricourt had the leading role of La Tour de Nesle and on Sunday went to Mass. He embroidered. They gave other plays, then the troupe left for Paris.

"La Petite Bouilloux." She won a prize and was a beautiful child. After her first Communion she drank one-half a litre of wine. She left school at thirteen, dressed too old, and laughed too loud and too much. Two Parisians danced with her one night and turned her head. She refused several hometown proposals and waited for someone grander to come. This made her quiet, and she was still waiting for her prince.

"La Toutouque." La Toutouque was yellow and looked more like a mastiff than a bulldog. He was very smart. Toutouque was gentle but fought a setter, Bianca, and killed her.

"Le Manteau de Spahi." "Le bournous noir lamé d'or," a military cap, and a necklace composed of a medallion, and two earrings, were souvenirs of Colette's father. Le manteau rouge which the father had brought home from the African campaign was packed with a cigar cut in four pieces and smoke from a pipe, but moths ate it.

"L'Ami." Maurice, a friend of Colette's brother, came to visit for two months. Colette at thirteen fell in love with him. He was already engaged.

"Ybanez est mort." Goussard, Voussard, or Gaumeau, a man of indefinite name, had lived in the village for years but was not accepted. He considered the death of his friend, Ybanez, who had been killed by the king's soldiers, as unjust as many of those in the times of the Cardinal Richelieu.

"Ma Mère et le Curé." Colette had a catechism lesson at eleven but her mother did not like the way they put questions. Her mother went to see the curé and brought back a slip of geranium. She even took her dog to church. Her mother thought the prayers were too long to learn. If the sermon were longer than ten minutes her mother coughed and moved to distract the curé.

"Ma Mère et la Morale." At thirteen Colette did not know much about the world. Mme St-Alban came to tell her mother of disastrous things which would soon happen (p. 121). She told the story of the Bonnarjauds, whose second daughter

had to marry. Sido told Colette: "Ton malheur commence au moment où tu acceptes d'être la femme d'un malhonnête homme" (p. 124).

"Le Rire." Sido did not want to wear mourning after the funeral of her husband for she thought people should not show sadness. Later she laughed at the antics of the cat.

"Ma Mère et le Fruit défendu." When Sido was seventy-one she moved a large armoire, built fires, carried water and sawed logs, much to everyone's chagrin.

"La Merveille." Pati-Pati tried to sing La Brabançonne, the Belgium national anthem, and barked like a big dog. Colette described the flowers in the park and the actions of the dogs. Pati-Pati had two puppies but would not take care of them. Colette's friends thought Pati-Pati was marvelous, but Colette knew she lacked one thing. She did not like other animals.

"Bâ-Tou." Bâ-Tou was a snow leopard from the Tchad which Claudine thought was better than a cat. Later Bâ-Tou had to be put in a zoo. Claudine said: "Le chien gâté calcule et ment, le chat dissimule et simule. Bâ-Tou ne cachait rien" (p. 145).

"Bellaude." Bellaude was a dog who escaped her leash to be found with five other dogs, two days later. She was brought home with a dog the size of a calf following her.

"Les deux Chats." Moune was a blue Persian cat. Moumou was the kitten of Moune. The cat next door, Noire du Voisin, cried for her own kittens, then wanted Moumou (p. 154). Because her own kittens had been drowned, "elle pleurait à la maniere terrible de toutes les mères privées de leur fruit." Moune protected Moumou for a few days but after Moumou escaped and went to Noire du Voisin, Moune disowned her, lost her milk, and became melancholy.

"Chats." There were five kittens and three were named La Noire, Chatte-grise, and Jeune-Bleue. January was the month for cats to mate but only La Noire was interested (p. 159).

"Le Veilleur." The children gave a play, Le Revenant de la Commanderie, in the attic. The boys told Bel-Gazou the attic was haunted by night. Bel-Gazou could not sleep so Colette and the boys hid in the attic and watched. The ghost was a huge white rat.

"Printemps passé." Sido tried to point out the wonders of nature to Bel-Gazou. Mélie, a dog, upset Colette and thus she saw Marie-la-Rose, a servant, and Milien, a day worker, embracing.

"La Couseuse." Colette could sew when she was eight. Her friends were aghast that Bel-Gazou could not sew at the age of nine and said it was better than reading (p. 171). Bel-Gazou was silent when she was sewing and Colette did not like it. Bel-Gazou asked questions about life but was not interested in details. Colette thought it just as well to wait for Bel-Gazou's next questions.

"La Noisette creuse." Colette, as a child, found a hollow hazelnut on the sand and thought it sang and came from a faraway country.

La Chatte

Alain Amparat and Camille, who had been childhood friends, were married and spent some time away from Paris on a honeymoon. During his absence Alain's cat Saha would not eat and upon their return Alain was conscience-stricken about Saha.

Soon after they were settled in their apartment Alain brought the cat, Saha, to live with them. Camille was very jealous of the cat because of the attentions Alain lavished upon her. Saha followed Camille around staring at her and, pushed to the limit of her endurance, Camille tried to pick her up to get rid of her. Saha scratched Camille and from that point on they were afraid of each other. Alain noticed Saha's attitude and the scratches on Camille but, because he loved Camille, did nothing about the situation.

One evening as he returned from work he found a battered Saha awaiting him at the front door and realized that Camille had pushed the cat from their sixth-floor window. When he confronted Camille she at first denied, then admitted she was trying to get rid of her adversary, the cat.

Alain took Saha and moved back to his house with his mother and the old servant Emile. He had regressed to early childhood with their doting care but soon missed being with Camille.

Camille came to see Alain and told him she had finally realized it was not possible to regain his love by destroying Saha and that she was sorry. She would take a trip so they could both think the situation over. Her last glimpse of Alain's home was of Saha watching her departure.

Gigi

"Gigi."[1] Gilberte Alvar, who was almost sixteen, lived with her grandmother Mme Alvarez. Her mother, Andrée Alvar, had a small part, temporarily, with l'Opéra-Comique and had been abandoned by Gigi's father. Gigi was quite young for her age and for years had been friendly with Gaston Lachaille, a wealthy man of thirty-three who frequently called on Mme Alvarez. After his mistress, Liane d'Exelman, committed suicide Mme Alvarez and aunt Alicia de Saint-Efflam decided Gigi should try to become Gaston's next mistress. Tante Alicia had Gigi for lunch and talked to her of manners, dress, and the ways of a coquette. The next time Gaston called on Mme Alvarez he was amazed and intrigued with the change in Gigi and realized she was no longer a child. Grandmother and aunt Alicia were ready for Gigi to become Gaston's mistress but Gigi was in love with him and refused. He left angrily but returned in a few days and asked for her hand in marriage.

"L'Enfant Malade." Colette deftly described the feelings of the child, Jean, who had had poliomylitis and was recovering. During the time his fever was high he lived in another world, with Madame Maman, his mother, and the maid, Mandore, always at his side. In his delirium he called for his dog, Rikki, and his books. He thought he saw a beautiful angel. His mother was very grateful that he did not have tuberculosis, but she had not realized the dangers of polio. When the crisis had passed, the first recognition that he was recovering happened when he felt needle-like pains in his legs. As he slowly recovered, Jean found he must return to the dull world of the living.

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[1] Gigi is not only the title of the book but also the name of the first of the four short stories.

"La Dame du photographe." When Colette went to Mlle Devoidy's to have her pearls restrung she met Mme Armand, a photographer. Colette did not realize that she was the dame du photographe, then. Mlle Devoidy told Colette that Mme Armand used to go for a walk each evening and the neighbors all wondered why. Since her husband worked often at night they all suspected she was meeting someone. One evening Mme Armand's husband, Gros-Yeux, appeared at Mlle Devoidy's door to inquire if she had seen his wife. Since no one had seen her they broke into the apartment to find her lying on the bed with a suicide note on the table. She had not removed her house-shoes because of a deformity of her foot. The doctor was sent for, and her life was saved. She had tried to commit suicide because of her petite vie. She had married a brave, wonderful man but they had not had a child. Then she met a young man who was attracted to her and, even though he had only held her hand, she could not stop thinking about him. One evening when she was alone and sad she started to cry and decided it was the end. However, now no matter what would happen she would never try again to leave this world.

"Flore et Pomone." Colette has described in detail flowers to be found in every type of garden along with a few vegetables. She made them appear as living, breathing entities with such loving care that one realized how much of her early training can be credited to Sido who gave Colette the background for such careful research. For the men who had braved every danger to collect specimens from all corners of the earth Colette had only the greatest admiration. Colette recalled the family's Sunday walks when they admired the gardens they would pass. She told of her garden at home as compared to the formal gardens of the châteaux. Many French people have only a small space for gardens, thus "les Français, vivent par économie" (p. 150). Colette described a jardin d'En haut, a jardin d'En bas, the gardens of Claude Monet, of Blasco Ibáñez, of Rome, of the Palais-Royal and those of memories as well as those in her imagination. Vegetables and fruit trees were not forgotten, for she made one taste the difference between the oranges of France, Tunisia, Brazil, and Spain. Colette, herself, felt the fig to be second to the orange but peaches, pears, and cherries had their place. Colette suggested that warm fruit served with a glass of cold water brought out the best flavor of the fruit (p. 162).