

COLETTE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649551521

Colette by Jeanne Schultz

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JEANNE SCHULTZ

COLETTE

COLETTE

BY

JEANNE SCHULTZ

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

EDITH V. FLANDERS

NEW YORK: 46 EAST 14TH STREET

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY

BOSTON: 100 PURCHASE STREET

115



COPYRIGHT, 1898,

By THOMAS V. CROWELL & CO.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

COLETTE.

I.

MARCH 1, 18-

FROM dying of despair and ennui preserve me, O Lord! and do not forget me in this snow which piles every day a little higher around me!

I have formulated this ejaculatory prayer so many times without ever receiving any response that, at last, fairly wearied, I write it. Written things have more weight, it seems to me; and besides, it takes more time to write them. And I am in the habit of speaking aloud instead of quietly thinking; for, to pronounce a word loudly and make it resound against the great wainscoting of my room occupies me longer, and for this reason I begin to write to-day. But alas! what shall I find for to-morrow? . . .

My writing-materials are not elegant, not even sufficient indeed, and there is not the smallest secret drawer in which to conceal my note-book! The ink was dry in the bottle that I found; all my pens are lost, and I have never had a sheet of paper here. Why should I have any, since I write to no one?

It is impossible to go down to the village. There

are six feet of snow in the roads, to say nothing of the drifts and holes where the wind has heaped up the snowflakes to such heights that a coach might be engulfed from the axle-tree up to the tilt. . . . I have indeed read in many books how prisoners prick a vein in order to write with their blood upon a pocket-handkerchief; but I no longer believe it, for the linen absorbs it all, and it is not legible. I know, for I have tried it!

With a little water, however, my ink is restored; I have borrowed two feathers from the tail of a goose, which has very patiently allowed them to be taken, poor creature; and, after overturning the contents of the chests and cupboards, I have found this great parchment note-book, yellow as saffron, and thick as a board, of which, fortunately, only one side of the pages has been used. The other side remains for me; and then I also have the advantage of reading as I go on, what has been written already. These writings are the quarrels and law-suits of a M. Jean Nicolas with a lady of *Haut-Pignon*, about some warrens, the rabbits of which were destroying the clover, and about boundary changes injurious to his fields. . . .

Mon Dieu! give me a neighbor like Jean Nicolas, a quarreller and a fault-finder; and boundaries that afford scope for disputes to occupy my solitude!

Are there many people, I wonder, who exactly understand the signification of that word, "solitude," and who think sometimes of all that it means? "Solli-

tude," explains the dictionary, "solitude, the state of a person who is alone." And above, for the word "alone," it adds very judiciously in order to complete its meaning: "Alone, one who is without company, who is not with others."

And that is all,—no comment,—no explanation,—no distinction,—nothing to indicate that it expresses one of the most detestable torments of existence; nothing suggestive of degrees, nothing to show that there is solitude, and solitude, and that the most cruel is not that of the Carthusian monks in their cells of five feet square, in whose silence and gloom they have chosen to live; not even that of the Trappists in the little garden where they dig their graves from one year's end to another while exchanging encouraging words; but mine, that of Colette d'Erlange, who has not chosen her life, and who is almost desirous of no longer enduring it! . . .

Alone at eighteen years of age, with a brain full of ideas, and not a possibility of making them known to a single living ear; alone to laugh, alone to weep, and alone to fall into a passion;—it is enough to make one lose one's mind. . . .

During the summer, and even the autumn indeed, it was supportable: the trees and the flowers say and know much more than many people suppose. Lying in the woods upon a bed of moss I heard a hundred voices that talked with me every day, and the little insects that ran over my cheeks made me laugh all

by myself. Or again, I mounted (as long as she had any strength) the old Françoise, the mare which turns the wheel of the well, and my great dog took me upon his back to finish the ride when she could do no more, my good "Un," with his beautiful shaggy, black hair, in which, at this moment, my feet bury themselves up to the ankles while he watches me write. Then, in the evening, I had the stars. I confided in all those that can be seen in our corner of the world, and when I was relating to them my weariness, more than one made a pitying sign which replied to me from above like the glance of a friendly eye.

But this wind which has blown for six weeks, this snow which prevents my going out, and this voice of my aunt which sounds like the north-east wind, and which bites a little stronger every day, all this nearly drives me to despair.

There is no imagination that could resist this; I am at the end of the tales which I relate to myself, and I am afraid that there is no longer anything left in my brain, and that, when the time comes to knock at its door and demand aid from it in some extraordinary adventure, I shall find only a great cavity! For I shall have my adventure some day and I could even say that I know it already.

My hero is tall, somber, with black hair, heavy eyebrows, and severe eyes. His complexion is dark, his speech is imperious, and there is in his glance a

singular light, oriental in its sweetness, but oriental also in a severity cold as the blue steel of cimeters or like the memory of some terrible past ; for my hero, in order to come to me, will be obliged to traverse some strange roads, perhaps.

His mustache will be silky, a simple black line slightly bristling ; — and all this will lighten for me alone, with a gentle and unexpected smile.

Will he come to me in the midst of the fields, in the gayety of the morning, or in the peace of evening ? Naturally, or in some extraordinary way ? I do not know ; but I know assuredly that he will come.

It seemed to me more likely, and certainly more agreeable, that I should meet him during the days of May or June ; and in those months I never passed near a hedge without observing it closely lest my hero should be concealed behind it ; but I still hope for him, and each morning, while raising my curtain, I look carefully for the imprints of two feet in the snow under my window.

When I find that no one has come, I excuse him to myself. The weather is so severe ! The paths are in such a bad condition ! I intend that he shall come to me with his four limbs intact ; so I praise him for not risking a sprain in order to present himself to me a day sooner, and resign myself, sighing, to await a to-morrow that has not yet come.

Then, if my faith in the future becomes too greatly shaken, I go and hunt out one of those great volumes