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Arman de Caillavet

Choosing a Career

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Choosing a Career : a Play
in One Act : by G. A. de
Caillavet : Translated by
Barrett H. Clark

Samuel French : Publisher
28-30 West Thirty-eighth Street : New York

PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS



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THE WORLD'S BEST PLAYS
BY CELEBRATED EUROPEAN AUTHORS

BARRETT H. CLARK

GENERAL EDITOR

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G. A. de CAILLAVET

To mention Caillavet independently of his collaborator, Robert de Flers, is most unusual: "Flers and Caillavet" is a dramatist. For some fifteen years these men have written plays in which the art and personalities of the two are so welded together that it is impossible to distinguish which part was written by which. "*L'Amour veille*" ("Love Watches"), "*Le Bois sacré*" ("Decorating Clementine"), "*Primerose*," and "*La Belle aventure*" ("The Beautiful Adventure") are among the comedies of these writers which are already known to the American stage, yet practically all their plays have been performed successfully in every important city on the Continent. The incomparable wit, humor, charm and sprightliness of the Flers-Caillavet union have made it justly celebrated.

Gaston-Armand de Caillavet began his dramatic career as director of a *revue* in a little theater on the second story of the Eiffel Tower. Here he produced short plays and here learned his first lessons for, as he once confessed, he had to come in the elevator with part of his audience and hear their remarks—which were at times irritatingly true.

"*La Choix d'une carrière*," which is here for the first time presented to English readers, was one of these early efforts, though it was produced at another theater. It is pure farce, full of animal

spirits, frankly written for the sake of the amusement found in the situations and the bright lines.

When playing this little piece amateurs should bear in mind that even farce must not be overacted. The situation and the personages will "get over," without undue emphasis.

The text does not include very definite description of furniture, "props," or disposition of the stage. All the furniture that is needed is a table or dresser, to be placed in the upper left- or right-hand corner of the room; a chair somewhere near the center, and a piano. There are entrances center and right. The valises should contain the few articles enumerated in the text; also a small hand-mirror.

CHOOSING A CAREER

PERSONS REPRESENTED:

LA CHEVRETTE
DUBOIS
A WAITER
COLETTE

SCENE:—*A small parlor at a sea-side resort in
France.*

TIME:—*The present.*

CHOOSING A CAREER

SCENE:—*A simple room in a hotel. For furnishing and disposition of the stage see the prefatory note. A WAITER ushers in COLETTE and DUBOIS, who are in traveling clothes, and carry valises.*

WAITER. This way, Madame.

DUBOIS. (*Sitting down*) Whew! What a trip! I'm exhausted!

WAITER. This room is Madame's, the other is there. (*He opens the door to the right*)

COLETTE. Is that my room? Why, there's not even a bed?

WAITER. We shall have one put in at once. The bathers at Anastasie-les-Bains are particularly numerous at this season, and we are doubling up on the rooms. This, for instance, is usually a sitting-room.

COLETTE. (*Peering about toward the right*) And this?

WAITER. A clothes-closet.

DUBOIS. Charming! One has to open the door in order to change one's cuffs! *Cheer!*

WAITER. These were our last vacant rooms. Madame will be very comfortable here. Monsieur, on the other hand, may be a trifle crowded, but he has a superb view.

DUBOIS. There's no window!

WAITER. A small one, Monsieur, and by standing on a chair—

COLETTE. Listen to me: You must give us better accommodations, and as soon as possible. This room is like a pill-box!

WAITER. The fresh-air is superb. However, we shall do all in our power, Madame. Your trunks will be brought up at once. (*He goes out*)

COLETTE. (*Taking off her veil, and opening her valise*) Now——

DUBOIS. You see, dear? What he says confirms the doctor's remarks. I know the air here will prove most beneficial. Aren't you happy?

COLETTE. Deliriously.

DUBOIS. Ah! You're never satisfied! This seems very pleasant. And, if I'm the one who comes here for the cure, it was really *you* who decided me to take the step.

COLETTE. (*Between her teeth*) Pooh!

DUBOIS. (*Starting to leave*) Well, I'll leave you to fix up, and run around to the spring and have my glass. I shan't begin my massages until to-morrow. It seems there's a wonderful masseur here, inventor of the Concentric and Eccentric Massage. Dr. Langlois wrote him to call on me the moment I arrived. They say he's rather peculiar, but that he knows his business thoroughly.— See you later! (*He goes out. COLETTE arranges her hair in front of the glass, powders her face, etc.*)

(*Enter LA CHEVRETTE. He falls into the chair in which DUBOIS has been sitting.*)

LA CHEVRETTE. Whew, what a trip! I'm exhausted!

COLETTE. (*Not turning round*) You've said that once before.

LA CHEVRETTE. No. I haven't—you're mistaken.

COLETTE. (*Suddenly facing him*) What! Oh, the man in the train?! You here, Monsieur——!

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Rising—amiably*) Madame, allow me to introduce myself.

COLETTE. I shall allow you to leave the room instantly.

LA CHEVRETTE. You wouldn't think of sending me away without knowing who I am?

COLETTE. (*Coldly*) Monsieur, this is my room! Will you please go?

LA CHEVRETTE. (*In despair*) Ah, Madame, I am desperate! (*Seats himself once more*)

COLETTE. (*Outraged*) Monsieur!

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Quickly*) Yesterday evening, Madame, I was accompanying a childhood friend of mine to the Lyons Station; I came straight from the table, you see. (*He opens his overcoat and shows evening clothes*) I was standing in the large court-yard. Happy, content with my lot, I paced back and forth—

COLETTE. Please!

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Authoritatively*) Hush! A free heart palpitated within this thoracic box. (*He strikes his chest*)—Love!—Ah, then I knew nothing of its imperial subjection—only its occasional and vagarious manifestations.—I stood gazing at the starry vault of heaven. Before me,—indifferent rhythmic martinets!—two police-officers passed. I was happy—

COLETTE. (*Starts to ring*) I—

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Stopping her by a wave of the hand*) You appeared! You stepped out of a tiny omnibus—burst from it like water from a fountain. I looked at you—then—ah!

COLETTE. (*Trying to stop him*) This is outrageous!

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Undaunted*) I followed in hot haste, and bought my ticket. The fellow who was with you—

COLETTE. Is my husband.

LA CHEVRETTE. Your husband—indeed. A

vulgar type—no appearance, no life—hardly a man!

COLETTE. This is too much!

LA CHEVRETTE. It was only a snap judgment, of course! When he asked for “Two firsts to Anastasie-les-Bains,” I said, “Same for me!” I took the two tickets, followed you to your compartment; you took notice of me—

COLETTE. I?!

LA CHEVRETTE. You recognized me just now! We rode side by side; we passed Melun, stopped at Montargis, scorched by Cosne and Nevers—on we sped, through salty Bourgogne, through the fertile Bourbonnais. We supped together at Gien, and lunched at Neussargues—and—oh marvelous and happy portent!—the guard punched our tickets at the same time, as we were crossing the Roanne! Together we stepped out at Anastasie-les-Bains.—If during that night of platonic intoxication I did not give words to the volcanic forces surging within me, it is because, Madame, I am cursed with the most ridiculous timidity—*(He drinks a glass of water)*

COLETTE. *(Who cannot restrain her laughter)* Is that all you have to say?—very well; I am willing, Monsieur, to forgive you for this absurd rigmarole. I have to spend three mortal weeks in this impossible hole, and you have helped me pass five minutes of the time very pleasantly. That is all, now, isn't it? *(She bows)*

LA CHEVRETTE. But, Madame—I love you!

COLETTE. *(Dryly)* Monsieur—!

LA CHEVRETTE. I love you, I—

COLETTE. That is enough, Monsieur. I am married.—I don't even know you.

LA CHEVRETTE. I beg your pardon—I'm so nervous: my name is Henri la Chevrette. I am an explorer—

COLETTE. My compliments!

LA CHEVRETTE. But, Madame, you would not

dream of showing the door to a man who has spent two years in the sands of the Sahara!

COLETTE. (*Shrugging her shoulders*) The Sahara? Really?

LA CHEVRETTE. When I returned I was welcomed by the whole city of Paris!

COLETTE. (*Laughing*) Well, I suggest that you introduce yourself to my husband.

LA CHEVRETTE. Delighted!

COLETTE. I warn you, he is fearfully jealous.

LA CHEVRETTE. But so am I! Then you allow me to breathe the same atmosphere as you? Ah, the realization of my dream!—Madame, if I could but tell you how I loved you! But my blessed timidity, you know——

COLETTE. I have already noticed it!

LA CHEVRETTE. Before you I am mute—dumbfounded——

COLETTE. (*Acide*) He's crazy!

LA CHEVRETTE. While I cannot pretend to be a poet, I am an artist at times—I can dream——

COLETTE. Listen to me, Monsieur—Monsieur—?

LA CHEVRETTE. La Chevette.

COLETTE. Monsieur La Chevette, this joke has gone quite far enough. I realize that at a watering-place one can be a little lax in these matters; I have no objection, either, to seeing you from time to time, but let me repeat: I have a husband, and I am devoted to him.

LA CHEVRETTE. Poor woman!

COLETTE. You are very tiresome! (*Noise outside*)

LA CHEVRETTE. What's that?

COLETTE. My husband.

LA CHEVRETTE. Your husband? I'll be running. Is this your room?—Well, get Gustave out the way.

COLETTE. Gustave?

LA CHEVRETTE. Your husband.

COLETTE. His name is Adolphe.

LA CHEVRETTE. *We shall call him Gustave!*

COLETTE. *You are out of your mind!*

LA CHEVRETTE. *Get rid of Gustavus Adolphus. —I shall return in eight minutes! (He disappears, left)*

COLETTE. *(Furiously)* Eight minutes! Ha! Whom does he take me for!—Monsieur! *(She goes to the door, while DUBOIS enters)*

DUBOIS. *(Joyfully)* I had two glasses.

COLETTE. This is too much!

DUBOIS. No? Two glasses—! I feel wonderfully restored—this cure will do miracles for me—

COLETTE. In eight minutes!

DUBOIS. Eight minutes? That's an exaggeration.

COLETTE. Didn't you see him?

DUBOIS. Whom?

COLETTE. The audacity!

DUBOIS. I?

COLETTE. You don't understand—How outrageous!—In eight minutes, I tell you! Here! Don't you see? *(Struck with an idea)* That's it! *(Gathering together her valise and wraps)* You take this room, I'll take the other—

DUBOIS. But—?!

COLETTE. *(Carrying her things with her toward the door)* Never mind, I can take them myself. —See you later! *(She goes into the next room, closing the door after her)*

DUBOIS. What's the trouble? Ah, Colette!—*(Looking at his watch)* That masseur ought to be here now—four o'clock! *(He unpacks his valise, arranging the various toilet articles on the table)*

(Enter LA CHEVRETTE, precipitately.)

LA CHEVRETTE. Here I am!

DUBOIS. Ah, it's you? I'm so glad to see you! *(Bowling)* Monsieur—

LA CHEVRETTE. Ah!—I—Monsieur—Hm!—Whew!

DUBOIS. I was expecting you.

LA CHEVRETTE. What?—Ah, I—*(A long pause, after which LA CHEVRETTE, not knowing what to do, begins to laugh)*

DUBOIS. *(Aside)* He's a jovial soul! *(To LA CHEVRETTE)* To tell you the truth, I hardly expected to see you before to-morrow.

LA CHEVRETTE. Ha! Ha! *(Aside)* He thinks I'm someone else! Whom, I wonder?

DUBOIS. Did you get Langlois' letter?

LA CHEVRETTE. Langlois' letter?

DUBOIS. Naturally—since you are here!

LA CHEVRETTE. Naturally—here I am!

DUBOIS. You see, I've never had the honor of meeting you before.

LA CHEVRETTE. No, never met me!—Of course.

DUBOIS. Of course—what?

LA CHEVRETTE. It's too complicated to explain—an involved family matter.

DUBOIS. I've never seen you before, but I should have recognized you at once, from Langlois' description.

LA CHEVRETTE. Of course—dear old Langlois! *(Aside)* Who the deuce—?

DUBOIS. In that case there's no need of going into details—

LA CHEVRETTE. Of course, but still—do it, please!

DUBOIS. No, no, I place myself entirely in your charge. A man who is so thoroughly competent as yourself—I leave it all to you! You understand—?

LA CHEVRETTE. Certainly—why, only yesterday I was thinking of you—

DUBOIS. Really?

LA CHEVRETTE. Yes, I kept repeating to myself: He is coming to-morrow, he is coming to-morrow

—(*He coughs*) Hm—let me see, how do you spell your name?

DUBOIS. (*Surprised*) Why—D-U-B-O-I-S—
Dubois.

LA CHEVRETTE. Indeed—and now (*He is about to go*)

DUBOIS. No, no, I'd like some information. How, for instance, are you going to begin?

LA CHEVRETTE. Well, I—well, I intended to—no, I hardly think I shall tell you, but I know you will be satisfied.

DUBOIS. I'm sure of it. You are so jovial, I see!

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Rising*) I am. And now—

DUBOIS. (*Retaining him*) You *are* in a hurry. Let us chat a little—Do you like your work?

LA CHEVRETTE. My w—? Hm—you know—

DUBOIS. I have an idea—It's just four o'clock now. We have time. Why not—?

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Aside*) Now I shall find out!

DUBOIS. I can see how I shall like your work.

LA CHEVRETT. Of course—I'll wait. (*He sits down again*)

DUBOIS. No, no—now. I mean. Come! (*He points inadvertently toward the piano*)

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Aside*) The piano! Ah! (*He goes toward the piano*) You like it?

DUBOIS. I adore music.

LA CHEVRETTE. Here's a military funeral-march. (*He sits at the piano and plays a few bass-notes*)

DUBOIS. But—

LA CHEVRETTE. There's nothing remarkable in that. Do you like Wagner? Have you studied counterpoint? Adagio?

DUBOIS. No!

LA CHEVRETTE. Pizzicato? Presto? Metronome? No? No? In that case, Monsieur, it

is useless for you to pursue your studies with me.
(*He leaves the piano*)

DUBOIS. Well, what—? What has music to do with me?

LA CHEVRETTE. Oh? Why not say so at once, then?

DUBOIS. The idea! You *are* a curious fellow!— Now, let's not waste any more time. (*He begins to unbutton his waistcoat*) See—here—between my shoulders—makes it look as if my waistcoat were too narrow for me. Here, would you like to see? (*He turns his back to LA CHEVRETTE*)

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Aside*) He thinks I'm a tailor!

DUBOIS. Well?

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Brusquely*) Button it up, now. (DUBOIS *does so*) Here. (*He takes his pen-knife from his pocket and opens the blade*) Between the shoulders—yes. (*He pretends to mark DUBOIS' back as if with a piece of tailor's chalk*) And here the cuff is too long. (*He cuts off the lower part of the coat-sleeve*)

DUBOIS. Here, what are you doing?

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Busily engaged, as he attacks the other sleeve helping DUBOIS off with his coat*) One moment! You must have these sleeves cut right. Now— (*He cuts off the other cuff*)

DUBOIS. (*Alarmed*) What the deuce! He is eccentric! I'm so glad Langlois told me beforehand!

LA CHEVRETTE. So Langlois told you—? Have you noticed—? Langlois foresees everything. Now, if you'll let me see your other clothes—?

DUBOIS. Indeed! Why you behave like a tailor!

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Astonished*) Ah! What bad luck!

DUBOIS. I told you about my shoulders because I thought you'd like to know.

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Aside*) If I could only get out of this alive! (*He tries again to make for the door, but DUBOIS grasps his arm*)

DUBOIS. Never mind. (*He leads LA CHEVRETTE back to the chair, where he himself sits down. LA CHEVRETTE stands at his side*) Now, a matter of graver importance: during the past year I have been subject to severe headaches, I'm losing my hair, and my blood is very thin. I ought to have a friction treatment every day.

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Very much annoyed—aside*) Friction—ha! So I'm a barber? What luck! (*He seizes a clothes' brush and violently rubs DUBOIS' head*)

DUBOIS. Ow! What are you doing now?

LA CHEVRETTE. My system! Your hair will grow again in six weeks' time! All over you!

DUBOIS. Thank you, I don't care for that!

LA CHEVRETTE. You'll see! (*Hands DUBOIS a hand-glass*) There!

DUBOIS. (*Looking at himself*) Fearful!

LA CHEVRETTE. How easy it is, Monsieur, to criticize!

DUBOIS. Nonsense! Listen to me; you do too many things; if you want to succeed, you had better confine yourself to your profession, and not try to act the barber—

LA CHEVRETTE. Then I'm not a barber?!

DUBOIS. Ha! Ha!

LA CHEVRETTE. Not a barber! Then what am I?

DUBOIS. No, indeed! I can feel what you are by the strength of your arm. What hands for a boxer!

LA CHEVRETTE. (*Aside*) Boxer!—Good! (*To DUBOIS*) On guard!

DUBOIS. (*Going up to LA CHEVRETTE*) I'm sure this will benefit me—go straight ahead!

LA CHEVRETTE. Time! (*LA CHEVRETTE admin-*

isters one thrust after another, while DUBOIS, thunderstruck, falls about the room) Right! Left! Uppercut! Direct!—

DUBOIS. Here, here! You're killing me! Stop! Stop! I've never seen anything like this.

LA CHEVRETTE. It's my system.

DUBOIS. Well, I don't like your system; let me tell you that! You're as bad as a boxer—

LA CHEVRETTE. What! As bad—? (*He stops short*)

DUBOIS. Yes.

LA CHEVRETTE. Then I'm not one?

DUBOIS. And to think that Langlois spoke of your great touch, your lightness!

LA CHEVRETTE. Curse Langlois! Listen to me: exactly *what* did Langlois say? I must know.

DUBOIS. He said, "You will notice at once how skilful he is." You are simply ridiculous!

LA CHEVRETTE. Now, Gustave—

DUBOIS. Gustave? Whom are you speaking to? And let me tell you, you—!

COLETTE. (*Appearing in her door at the right*) What is all this noise?

LA CHEVRETTE. Ah! Now!

DUBOIS. I was told you were eccentric, but I couldn't have believed all this possible!

COLETTE. (*To DUBOIS*) What's the trouble? Who is that man?

DUBOIS. The masseur.

COLETTE. He?!

LA CHEVRETTE. He's crazy! (*Aside*) At last!

DUBOIS. Don't come near me, for the love of Heaven! The way decent people are treated here, huh!

LA CHEVRETTE. But, Monsieur—!

DUBOIS. Keep away! I want nothing more to do with you!

COLETTE. Now, now, dear. You were told that he had his little peculiarities—

DUBOIS. Peculiarities!

COLETTE. Get ready now; I feel sure he will prove most satisfactory.

LA CHEVRETTE. (*In despair—to COLETTE*) I, Madame? I a masseur?

COLETTE. (*Oratorically*) And you said you cared for me, Monsieur!

LA CHEVRETTE. That's not the question!

COLETTE. Ah!

LA CHEVRETTE. Anything else, Madame, and I shall be glad to do it.

COLETTE. To work, or never lay eyes on me again!

LA CHEVRETTE. But I'm not a masseur, Madame.

DUBOIS. You're not a masseur?

COLETTE. What, are you not——?

DUBOIS. Well, if you're not a masseur, what are you doing here?

COLETTE. Yes—what indeed?

DUBOIS. Who are you, then? Why did you force your way in here? (*He is about to ring for a servant*)

COLETTE. (*Intercepting him*) No, no! (*To LA CHEVRETTE*) Confess! (*To DUBOIS*) It's another of his jokes. Remember what Doctor Langlois said.

LA CHEVRETTE. Langlois! Ha!

COLETTE. Now, will you attend to my husband?

DUBOIS. I refuse to allow him!

COLETTE. How childish, dear!—Sit down now.

DUBOIS. (*Defiantly*) Well, just to be agreeable to you!

COLETTE. Begin with the right leg. (*She forces LA CHEVRETTE to kneel*)

LA CHEVRETTE. (*To COLETTE*) Let me tell you one thing, Madame: never again shall I follow any one from the Lyons Station!

DUBOIS. Careful, there!

COLETTE. (*To LA CHERVETTE*) How amusing!

DUBOIS. (*Languorously*) Ah! (*As LA CHERVETTE starts to work*)

COLETTE. It is nice, isn't it? (*To LA CHERVETTE*) Now, the other!

DUBOIS. (*To LA CHERVETTE*) Splendid, old man!—Have dinner with us, will you?

LA CHERVETTE. Dinner?

DUBOIS. Insist, Colette!

COLETTE. If you like, dear.

LA CHERVETTE. (*Rising, still holding DUBOIS' left foot in his hand*) Madame, too good of you!

DUBOIS. Wonderful effect! Marvellous! I feel twenty years younger already!—I think—I'm sure you'll pardon us?—I think we'll dine alone this evening.—And don't forget to come to-morrow!

LA CHERVETTE. (*Preparing to go*) Hm!?

DUBOIS. And, if you would be so obliging, please turn on the electricity when you go?

LA CHERVETTE. There is no electricity!

DUBOIS. Never mind, then!

LA CHERVETTE. Good-night. (*He goes*)

CURTAIN

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BARRETT H. CLARK

General Editor



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