

The French Review

From the Editor's Desk

Sometimes fate smiles and an unexpected surprise descends upon us. About two years ago Professor Guy Teissier of the Fondation Jean et Jean-Pierre Giraudoux sent me an e-mail telling me that he had met Professor Angèle Kingué in Tours, where she was directing the Bucknell University semester-abroad program. He had asked her where in the United States he might send an article about six unpublished letters of Jean Giraudoux to an American friend. Angèle, who is well known to readers of the *French Review* for her articles on sub-Saharan African literature and her novel *Pour que ton ombre murmure encore* (about the death of her father) and for her papers and readings at the annual meetings of the AATF, suggested that he send his manuscript (co-authored by Mauricette Berne, also of the Fondation) and the six letters to the *French Review*. After the initial e-mail contact I telephoned Monsieur Teissier and discussed the idea in more detail. After a few emendations I accepted his piece and now present it to you (after a masterful cleaning of the photos and the letters, which were written on onion-skin paper, by Ronnie Moore of WESType Publishing Services) for both enlightenment and enjoyment, not to mention certain elements that are worthy of the best *roman policier*.

Jean Giraudoux first met his friend, whose maiden name was California Meade, during the spring of 1908 while returning to France from a year at Harvard University on the "Cretic" of the White Star Line. California Meade had married Augusto Adams, a rich business man, seven years earlier at the age of seventeen. Giraudoux befriended the Adams, and subsequently Mrs. Adams sent him three postcards in English (she spoke fluent French). They are reproduced here. Although we do not know when the two next met (in the six letters we have published for the first time he refers to her variously as "Callie," "Mélisande," and "Amitié-Amour"), we do know that their friendship on board inspired Giraudoux in his writing. As you read Teissier and Berne's account you will discover just how.

The first of the six unpublished letters from Giraudoux to "Callie" reproduced here was probably written at the beginning of 1909 or 1910 on stationery with a Franco-American business letterhead for the "Syndicat d'études Formed to Organize the Franco-Latin American Syndicate," a company Giraudoux worked for during his business career. Addressing Mrs. Adams as "Amitié-Amour" he wishes her a Happy New Year and many other things including to remain beautiful, happy, to give successful cocktail parties, not to love anyone, but to love all who love her as much as he does, and to need him. He asks when he will see her (again?) in Paris, where she was then living, and signs off as Péléas. Read the second letter to see what happened next.

Giraudoux was wounded twice during World War I (1914 and 1915), and after the second time he sent four more letters to Callie, all from the hospital in Hyères where he was recuperating. Although I would like very much to tell you about them, that would ruin the many surprises, twists, and intrigues that await you as you read them for yourselves. Perhaps we will never know the whole story of California Meade/Mrs. Adams/ Madame de la Morinière, and Jean Giraudoux, but what we will always know is that love makes us dream and imagine, and that this is the stuff of life.

Christopher P. Pinet