

# **THE MYSTERY OF MISS MOTTE**

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The mystery of Miss Motte by Caroline Atwater Mason & Albert R. Thayer

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**CAROLINE ATWATER MASON & ALBERT R. THAYER**

# **THE MYSTERY OF MISS MOTTE**





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By  
CAROLINE ATWATER MASON

*Author of "A Lily of France," "The Spell of Italy," etc.*

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN COLOUR BY  
ALBERT R. THAYER



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## THE MYSTERY OF MISS MOTTE

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### I

“**F**INALLY, Beloved, you need not that I write unto you further concerning this grace of self-denial—”

“Self-denial.”

The word was echoed with the colourless rising inflection of the amanuensis; the dictator on the other hand infused into each syllable of his own sentence a sympathetic emphasis. The dictation of his pastoral epistle by the Reverend Warner Tiffany proceeded for some moments unbroken; then suddenly the hand holding his manu-

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scripts dropped, and Miss Motte waited in vain for a sentence.

“What do you think of this epistle any way, Miss Motte?” the clergyman asked with a whimsical smile.

“I have not thought anything about it, Dr. Tiffany.”

Plainly Miss Motte, though greatly surprised by the question, was a young woman of self-possession. The room in which they sat at work was an official and semi-public study in the parish house of Calvary Church. The white light of the snowy March morning came in baldly through tall, unshaded windows,—a good light for clerical work, but a poor light for illusions or the softening of defects. Dr. Tiffany’s assistant did not require this form of consideration. The texture of her fine brown skin, her well-kept hair, the charming freshness of her white blouse, asked no odds of the morning



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light. As for Dr. Tiffany, the light served to bring out to admiration the impressive modelling of his features and the sensitive, cynical lines about his brow and lips. The clergyman's figure was imposing, his attitude careless yet full of a negligent and massive grace. He was beyond forty, but the hand which held his manuscript was the hand of a young man still.

A middle-aged woman came to the open doorway and stopped for a word of greeting. She wore a semi-official costume of dark blue and spoke with an air of businesslike decision.

“I am going to call on the Mackies, Dr. Tiffany. Would I better go down to the Point when I am in that neighbourhood and look after Katy Duffy a little? I hear that wretched father is drinking again.”

“How many times has that man signed the pledge in my presence,” re-

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marked Dr. Tiffany, "and how many times has he hastened to break it with a promptness which would have made him a success in any other field of activity. At the close of a campaign, Miss Hill, Duffy is not always a Chesterfield. On the whole I advise your not going to the Point."

"Very well."

Miss Hill disappeared down the long corridor.

"You will have to look out for the Duffys, Miss Motte. Miss Hill is not the one. Please remember."

Dr. Tiffany's tone was direct now, peremptory even. Miss Motte assented quickly and turned back to her dictation.

"That Yokohama letter must go out in time to catch the Saturday steamer without fail. Have you written it?"

"Not yet, Dr. Tiffany." There was

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one serious glance as of mute appeal from Miss Motte's eyes, then submissive silence.

“ ‘ Not yet, ’ because I keep you here wasting your time on the platitudes of my precious pastoral when you wish to be doing a thousand real things. Tell me I haven't read your rebellious brain aright, if you dare! ”

Leaning back in his armchair, Dr. Tiffany gazed seriously, and yet half satirically at his assistant. Something in his look, something indefinable about him altogether this morning seemed to threaten the hitherto strictly cool neutrality of their business-like, official relation and disturbed the girl. Her colour deepened.

“ I do not understand how you can speak like that of a thing which means so much to all the people, ” she said, with some inner trembling at her own boldness.