

## MME. GATTI-CASAZZA MAKES DIPLOMAT OF FRANCES ALDA

Being the Wife of an Opera Director Has Taught Prima Donna How to Be Nice to the Newspapers and Still Keep Them at Arms' Length—Two New Rôles Added to Her Répertoire in Summer Abroad—Concert Plans—Is Present-Day Operatic Study as Thorough as It Once Was?

DIPLOMACY is one of Frances Alda's specialties. It was not always so (she is frank in this admission), but during the past five years she has cultivated it sedulously and, to all intents, with success. Now a diplomat, as a person of a necessarily superior order of mentality, must inevitably command the respect (at least) of any one reasonably constituted as regards intellect. Ofttimes he further stimulates boundless admiration. Doubtless Mme. Alda's talents in this line provoke both of these sentiments in full measure among all those with whom she comes into contact except—except, perhaps, those newspaper people deputed to interview her. To such she is always gracious, benign, condescending but—ever on her guard. Conscious of the strange and fearful semblance that certain seemingly innocuous statements have a habit of assuming when disposed black on white she takes no chances. No revolutionary or otherwise sensational asseverations emanate from her, however much she may be plied with questions. Those necessitating replies the consequences of which might be dubious she parries with the dexterity of a skilled swordsman.

All of which may not be calculated to win the utmost good will of the average run of interviewers, nor, on the other hand, to secure for the soprano herself that manner of ostentatious publicity upon which some artists batten and thrive. But in such a case less superficial glory insures proof against all manner of unpleasantness.

"Five years ago I spoke my mind freely to the newspapers," remarked the singer recently to a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA. "To-day I have passed that stage. I know what happens when one expresses views without restraint. I know how statements are distorted or else misinterpreted. I remember how on one occasion I made some innocent remark about American singers in general, and was quoted as having spoken more or less offensively against one particularly prominent American artist. So experience has taught me to be wary and five years of practice have effectually made me so. I know that sensational statements are regarded as good advertising. But I could never endure any sort of advertising that was not absolutely dignified. I should owe myself that consideration as the wife of the greatest director of the greatest opera house in the world—if I had no further incentive."

And yet if Mme. Alda underwent no electrifying experiences and formulated no startlingly novel theories of this nature or of that she succeeded none the less in passing a tolerably pleasant Summer. In fact she accomplished things even more important to the cause of humanity at large than the loss of those twenty pounds of flesh upon which the newspapers recently dilated delightedly. Naturally this valiant deed was not a thing to be despised. "Has one ever heard of a stout person," inquired the singer, "who did not cherish ambitions to reduce? No. I am frankly pleased about it all. Don't I look thinner? Now it does not necessarily follow that because I swam every day for a few weeks this exercise was the only certain cause of my good fortune. The only definite thing I know is that I *did* grow thin."

### A Summer of Study

"I was in Marienbad, in Rothenburg, in Munich, Nürnberg, Bayreuth, Rappolo, Venice, Paris. I spent much of the time working—and working hard. With my accompanist, Mr. La Forge, I worked up five new recital programs for use on my concert tour which begins in a few days and extends across the length and breadth of the country. Besides, I added the rôles of *Eva* in 'Meistersinger' and *Madeleine* in Victor Herbert's new opera to my répertoire. I love the Wagner rôle, which will be the first part I shall have sung in German. Yet it is not my first Wagnerian character as I have already sung *Elsa*—but in French. I am intent on singing it in German eventually. The Victor Herbert opera is a delight. The libretto is adorable, and the title rôle a rare op-

portunity for a good singing actress. "I am not like other singers who can leave the study of new rôles to the five or six weeks immediately preceding the performance. How can one give one's attention to the subtle details of a part when one has constantly to be thinking of the



Frances Alda (Mme. Gatti-Casazza), Who Returned Early from Europe to Make a Concert Tour Before the Opera Season Opens

lines and the music? I was working on *Madeleine* last May. I make it my duty to learn my new rôles not weeks but months before the works are scheduled for production. That gives one time for a carefully wrought characterization from the outset, one devoid of roughnesses and crudities.

"I am not anticipating fatigue on my concert tour, in the first place because I am not giving the program unassisted (I shall have Mr. La Forge and Mr. Casini, the 'cellist) and I shall sing not more than about fourteen songs on each program. This is less arduous than the usual twenty-two or twenty-five. Then the trip has been so arranged that there will be no long jumps, while in such places as San Francisco and Los Angeles we stay a full week.

"I was not so fond of concert work when I began it three years ago as I am now. My incentive to such an undertaking came originally in the form of an urgent request from a manager who had heard me sing at a private entertainment. But then I had no répertoire of my own account. I knew no classic German *lieder*. Now I do, and with three years of solid training behind me I have come to love the work. I did some singing in Europe this Summer—not in opera nor in public recital, but at several drawing-room affairs.

"In Munich I went to the opera once to hear 'Figaro.' I was surprised at the inferiority of the performance and its sheer mediocrity was all the more pronounced when I contrasted it with that superb presentation that it enjoyed at the Metropolitan some years ago when Mahler conducted and Sembrich and Eames sang,

And then in Paris I heard 'Julien,' which I liked."

### The Diplomat Again

"Do you think it will succeed here?" the singer was asked. "Consider its half-hearted reception by the Paris critics—how do you account for that?"

Mme. Alda's diplomatic tendencies came to the rescue.

"One cannot easily account for these critical differences of opinion," she said. "And as far as its success here I feel fairly confident. But we must wait and see."

"And 'Rosenkavalier?' What are likely to be its fortunes at the hands of the American public?"

"I have never heard the opera," replied Mme. Alda pithily and with an emphasis that invited no further speculation as to possibilities.

Whereupon, after a momentary silence, the soprano suddenly took a different

nation in the world have profited me in a case of that kind? But I do grow angry when my maid is slow and does not fasten my dress quickly enough. And I do grow angry at these New York telephone operators."

The singer had occasion to be right wrathful a few days after her arrival from Europe. A friend had rung her up to inquire if he might not send her a box of candies. She assented.

"What kind of sweets do you prefer?" she was asked.

"Huyler's are the best," replied a feminine voice from Central before Mme. Alda had time to express her preference.

Half a dozen canceled "Cyrano" performances could not have stimulated the artist's anger to more picturesque effect! H. F. P.

## WIDOW OF MARC A. BLUMENBERG SUES

Brings an Action Against the Executors of Her Husband's Will and Claims That She Is in "Dire Necessity"

On Saturday last Mrs. Ruth Blumenberg (widow of the late Marc A. Blumenberg), of Paris, who is now at the Waldorf-Astoria, appealed to the Supreme Court in New York City to order the executors under her husband's will to pay to her something in advance in order to relieve her "dire necessity."

Mr. Blumenberg died in Paris on the 27th of March, and in his will left the widow a legacy of \$1,000 a month. In her application to the court Mrs. Blumenberg says that she has several times requested the administrators to pay her something from this income, but that they have refused. She asks the court to direct the administrators, who are Louis Blumenberg, her brother-in-law, Ernest F. Eilert and Alvin L. Schmoeger, to advance to her a substantial amount from the estate.

She declares in her appeal that for years previous to his death her husband received a large annual income from his properties.

The executors and trustees have until October 7, when the application will be argued, to file any answer they may desire to make to Mrs. Blumenberg's petition.

It has been reported that the late Mr. Blumenberg did not leave anything like the large estate with which he has been credited, and that it will be impossible to pay out from his estate the various legacies which he left in his will. This is reported to be the reason why the executors have not met the demands of his widow for payments under the annuity which she was to receive.

It is stated, furthermore, that the Blumenberg estate, as well as the corporations in which the late Mr. Blumenberg was interested, have been affected through the heavy legal expense that they have been put to in defending the various civil and criminal suits which have been brought and which are now in the courts.

### Mrs. Blumenberg's Statement

When asked by a representative of MUSICAL AMERICA, Wednesday, concerning her application to the Surrogates' Court at New York for an advance to herself of funds from her late husband's estate, Mrs. Ruth Blumenberg, widow of Marc A. Blumenberg, said:

"I merely wish to make the administrators of Mr. Blumenberg's estate live up to the terms of his will, which was published after his death. So far I have not taken any active part personally, or by agent, in the management of the paper or properties, but I may be obliged to do so to protect my interests. We haven't got that far yet, and as the matter stands now it is a civil case of equity at court, which will come up there to be settled. I do not say that my brother-in-law and the other administrators are seeking to dispossess me, but I do say they have not paid over to me the amounts provided expressly by the terms of the will. All I want is my rights in the matter, and I think the court will protect those."

## Carreño to Be Soloist at First New York Philharmonic Concert

At the opening concert of the New York Philharmonic Society in Carnegie Hall on Thursday evening, October 30, the "Symphonie Fantastique" of Hector Berlioz will be given and Teresa Carreño, the celebrated pianist, will be the assisting artist.

### Votive Lamp at Verdi's Grave

MILAN, Sept. 25.—A votive lamp purchased by public subscription was placed to-day at the grave of Giuseppe Verdi, the composer. On it is an inscription in Italian meaning "Always burning."

### The Singer's Temper

A quick temper is widely supposed to be one of an opera singer's most distinctive attributes. And when last season Mme. Alda was called back to New York from Texas in order to sing in a performance of "Cyrano," which was canceled just before she reached this city, many a person shuddered instinctively and shook his head at the thought of what towering proportions the wrath of the artist must have assumed. But according to her own very frank confession Mme. Alda was not in the least perturbed.

"I never grow angry over big things," she observed. "Why should I? What's to be gained by it? What could all the indig-