

# COUNTESS CASSINI'S NEXT APPEAL TO SOCIETY



Countess Marguerite Cassini

## She Hopes to Break Down Social Barriers Through Success on the Operatic Stage

OUT of Paris the other day came a story that interested the civilized world. It concerned a young and pretty woman.

"Something of a commotion," the news dispatches stated, "was caused in the fashionable singing school conducted by Jean de Reszke because of the expulsion of one of his most promising pupils without explanation.

"It was learned that the expelled pupil was discovered to be the author of a series of anonymous letters addressed to M. de Reszke and attacking the character of Countess Marguerite Cassini, niece and adopted daughter of the former Russian Ambassador at Washington.

"Ever since Count Cassini left America the countess has lived in Paris, studying under Jean de Reszke with a view to appearing in opera. She has made excellent progress and is almost ready to make her debut.

"It is said that jealousy of her success was the only motive of the anonymous communications in which she was attacked. The countess was greatly distressed over the incident, as the writer of the letters was a supposed friend."

### GIRL IS CENTRAL FIGURE.

Back of the simple statement made above is an interesting story that has had its various chapters written in widely separate parts of the earth—and always with a dashing young girl as its central figure.

It hasn't been so many years since the Countess Cassini, niece and adopted daughter of the Russian Ambassador, was regarded as the algebraic x of diplomatic circles. No one knew what she would do next.

When the ambassador was transferred to Madrid, the daring, unconventional young countess passed out of the annals of Washington life. It was generally supposed that she had gone to the Spanish court with her uncle and foster father.

Many who thought so had their first enlightenment through the news dispatches telling of the flurry in Jean de Reszke's Paris school. It was not generally known that the countess was preparing for a career upon the operatic stage.

Why? was the question that sprang to hundreds of lips in social and diplomatic circles. Why should a young woman of such distinguished position and wealth wish to pass through the grinding stages of preparation for opera, unless with another object than that of the honors attained by the successful prima donna?

No one imagines—not even herself, perhaps—that the Countess Cassini will become a new Melba, Tetrazzini, or Mary Garden.

But, is it whispered in Paris, one may possess sufficient talent, lifted into high operatic possibilities by artistic training, to attain a commanding position on the stage; society may fall at her feet—and this, it is whispered again, is the secret motive that animates the young woman's operatic studies.

She wishes to conquer the society that has been rather coldly disposed to her throughout her career in diplomatic circles; her newest attack upon its strongholds is to be made from the operatic stage.

Few women have been so generally discussed—certainly

few have been so mercilessly pilloried by her own sex on the tongue of gossip—as the Countess Cassini.

Gossip got busy with her when, at the age of fifteen years, she was the head of her uncle's household in Peking—he was then representing his country at the court of the Flowery Kingdom. Her beauty and accomplishments, in addition to the romance of being so young a hostess, should have made her a leader, even at that age—and she was precocious—in social diplomatic circles.

It happened, however, that the wives of other diplomats at Peking had ideas of their own. They may or may not at their gossiping teas have set in motion certain remarks and opinions regarding the household of the Russian ambassador; at any rate, the Cassini maiden found an exceedingly frosty reception wherever she appeared.

All this might have been obliterated, of course, if the Russian ambassador, a widower of several years' standing, had seen fit to take to himself another wife, an older



One of Her Favorite Photographs

woman to be the head of his household. That he was so thoroughly wrapped up in the young girl of advanced and voluptuous charms whom he called his niece did not strike the other women of the diplomatic service favorably.

Try as he would, Count Cassini could not remove the frosty barriers erected against his protegee. Diplomatic society in the Chinese capital was in an unfavorable frame

of mind. So Count Cassini asked to be transferred, and was given the post at Paris.

To the French capital the ambassador and the young girl went gladly. They believed that Parisian society would deal more graciously with the dashing young woman; they opened wide the doors of the embassy, and

with lavish hospitality entertained at some of the most brilliant functions of the year.

But the rumors that had gained credence in Peking had preceded the fair Russian to the French capital, and she was treated coldly, not being accepted as "a lady of the diplomatic corps." Her position as "niece" in the ambassador's household did not seem to make the impression she and Count Cassini desired.

It was largely because of this second disappointment that Count Cassini again sought a transfer, and this time was sent to represent his government at Washington.

Both the count and the young woman hoped that in the breezy capital of the new world's greatest nation they would enter upon a new and commanding social career, with no searchlights turned on the disappointments and "burnings of the past.

"At this time," said a writer in describing the latest addition to Washington's diplomatic circles, "Marguerite Cassini is a little above medium height and exquisitely formed. Her eyes are large and soulful, by far the most expressive and characteristic feature of her face. An abundance of glistening curls crown her Greek-molded head and fall in short ringlets about her brow and throat.

### AN ACCOMPLISHED ATHLETE.

"Her skin is wonderfully white and smooth for one with such dark eyes and hair, the only bit of brilliant coloring about her face being her full lips, which are deep crimson.

"She is an accomplished athlete, being an active member of several sporting clubs; she is an enthusiastic horse-woman and driver, handling the ribbons with as much ease as she takes a fence on the back of a hunter. She has won several championship cups on the golf links, is fond of wheel riding, and likes sports of all kinds."

When the young woman arrived in Washington, however, she found that her social aspirations were not fore-ordained to a flowery bed of ease. There were more than rose leaves crumpling the couch; there were thorns of an unmistakable character.

The wives of several European diplomats, headed by the Baroness von Hengelmuller, wife of the ambassador representing Austria-Hungary, refused to acknowledge Cassini as the ambassador's wife, and for quite a time there was a pretty tempest in the diplomatic teapot at Washington.

Perhaps most newspaper readers remember the stir that the young Russian woman caused during President McKinley's administration by her determination to assert her position. The Czar had conferred upon her the hereditary title of countess, and endowed her with special honors which, as the head of the ambassador's household, would give her at all public functions the rank and precedence of an ambassador's wife.

This was unusual and contrary to the usages of the courts of Europe, it was said; at any rate, the diplomatic corps in Washington declined to abide by it. A meeting of the ambassadors was called for the purpose of settling the matter.

It was gone about in this way: Lord Pauncefote, dean of the corps, issued invitations for a dinner party, with Count Cassini and the countess among the guests. The countess was assigned to a table place among the other young women present—a place to which no official significance could be made to attach.

Another dinner was given the following week by M.

Cambon at the French Embassy, at which the Pauncefote precedent was followed; then came a similar affair at the home of the German Ambassador. That, it seemed, settled the matter so far as the diplomatic corps was concerned.

### BALKED IN AMBITIOUS PLAN.

The young countess, not a little nettled, announced her intention of seeking recognition by President McKinley. She declared that at the state dinners to be given at the White House she proposed to rank next to Lady Pauncefote, and it was asserted that she forced the Russian Ambassador to go to the front and make a personal plea at the White House for her.

When the time drew near for issuing the invitations a curious condition of affairs presented itself. Lady Pauncefote, wife of the dean, was in court mourning and could not attend the White House dinner; the German Ambassador had no wife; the wife of the French Ambassador was in Europe, and the wife of the Italian Ambassador was also out of the city.

So Countess Cassini gave it out that she intended to walk into the dining-room on the arm of the President and ahead of every other woman on the diplomatic corps then in Washington. This stirred up things greatly, and the grave diplomats from various countries hurried to the White House to discuss the situation with the President.

Mr. McKinley settled the controversy by declaring that during his administration no unmarried woman would, on occasions of state, take precedence of the matrons. The Countess Cassini attended the dinner and ate her humble pie with a pretty grace that won her considerable admiration.

But, while not finding favor among the women of the diplomatic corps, the countess managed to cut a considerable figure in Washington society.

Her fads, perhaps, were partly responsible for this. One of these fads was the number and beauty of her dogs. Another was her preference for red-brown hair. Her fondness for adventure and her daring in all kinds of sport also made her many friends.

It was Countess Cassini who introduced the costume dinner to the young set in Washington. All her entertainments were gay! In fact, it was stated that a great deal of gossip was aroused by a too pronounced type of gaiety in her social functions.

Withal, she was successful in some of her most ambitious plans. During the war with Japan she organized and carried out a bazaar for the benefit of the Russian Red Cross Society, an affair that netted nearly \$30,000.

But the young woman's campaign for social recognition could not be successful without the favor of the women of the diplomatic corps. This was withheld in Washington, as it had been in Peking and Paris.

When Count Cassini was transferred from Washington to Madrid the young woman did not accompany him. There were certain matters about which the Madrid court is reputed to be the strictest in Europe.

Instead she went to Paris and began studying for the operatic stage. Should she prove a great success she may yet have the world of society at her feet and score a sweet triumph over those who have turned the cold shoulder upon her in the past.

### BEWARE OF THE "KISSING HABIT."

Medical authorities have come to the conclusion that a disease which has long puzzled them is due to the prevalence of the "kissing habit." The fact was mentioned by Dr. W. Rushton in a lecture delivered under the auspices of the British Health Society. The jaw is at first affected by the disease—known to scientists as "Eporrhoea alveolaris"—a loosening of the teeth follows, and finally, although they may be perfectly sound, they fall out one by one. A victim is not, it appears, likely to recognize the malady in its insidious stage, and outwardly there is no sign to betray its presence.

## CURL PAPERS USED BY WOMEN MANY GENERATIONS AGO AND THEIR RESULTS

THE marcel wave, doubtless, had its origin in the Garden of Eden.

For the eternal woman is eternally interested in the eternal subject of the coiffure. The curl-paper in the shape of twigs and other archaic devices, no doubt, was used by the debutante ape of the simian jungles. And on the stones unearthed in the ruins of ancient Babylon, Phoenicia, and on the immortal tombs of Egypt archeologists have noted the inevitable vanity of woman—in dressing her hair.

Customs might change, the standards of beauty rise and fall, but woman has always sought to embellish her tresses. To-day she spends an hour or two at the fashionable hairdresser's; after her baths the women of Athens and Pompeii spent hours arranging the wonderful dress with which they surmounted their heads. And so it has always been.

Simplicity and grace marked the headdress of the women of ancient Greece. You have seen pictures of Helen of Troy and the "sweet-mouthed queen of Lesbos"—or you have observed the severely beautiful Juno and the classic Venus of Milo. Then, as now, woman's pride was her hair.

When the unknown and long-dead model stood before the unknown and long-dead sculptor whose statue now is duplicated in one-third of the homes of the land, the women arranged their hair with a simple and charming effect.

It was parted in the middle, and arranged in a series of curls—a sort of emphasized marcel wave. As she sat before her polished mirror, with what care the young women of ancient Hellas must have primped and arranged their hair! With what delicate little curls they embellished the forehead! And with what careful attention they arranged the knot in the back so it looked like a bunch of curls!

In ancient Ionia a woman would draw her hair back and simply tie the mass together, letting the strands dangle down her back. But in the days when Sappho sang

her songs, perfection of the hair-curling process had been evolved.

Often women wore a flit about the forehead, or perhaps a sort of turban covered the head—a mere wrapping of beautiful cloth drawn tightly over the tresses. It maintained the shape admirably.

Among the most bizarre effects was that devised by the women of Pompeii. It was pyramidal, colossal, amazing. Hours were spent in dressing the hair, and when it was fixed, with waxes and oils, it was not taken down for days. This arrangement made the women look considerably taller than they really were, and imparted a rather severe dignity of mien.

Rising from the head of the fair mistress of the Pompeian villa would be a series of layers of hair, growing smaller and smaller, and converging to a point—one of the most bizarre effects ever achieved. Quite different was the coiffure of the ladies of the time of Nero. The Lady Poppaea had quite a number of styles from which to select.

A popular headdress among the ladies of the Roman court was a pompadour effect above the forehead, and an innumerable number of plaits in the back. Possibly the pompadour effect was achieved by curling the hair in front of the head, and plaiting thin strands in the back and tying them in a knot.

Another popular headdress was to part the hair in the middle and curl it at the sides, gathering the curls in the back and letting them fall loose over the shoulders. In the thirteenth century women wore the hair in one plait in the back. This was wrapped about the head and over the forehead. In Amsterdam, had you lived about that time, you could have seen one of the most amazing headdresses of the ages.

A covering was worn over the front part of the head. This was made of a rich fabric and decorated with jewels. In the back of the head a mass of hair bulged balloon-like, stiffened with waxes and oils.

In France the results of curl papers assumed many

shapes. Among the most attractive and picturesque was the headdress of the days of Mme. de Grignon. Then the curl paper was much in evidence. A lady's head simply rippled with curls—small curls, dainty curls, a perfect cascade of curls.

Then, too, a lady's hair might be gathered at the sides of the head, just above the ears, and arranged in a bunch of curls to dangle on both sides of the face.

The tresses were curled in the back, little curls nestled about the neck, and at the apex of the head was a tuft of feathers. Pompadours about this time became magnified; they swelled to amazing proportions. Hats were tilted piquantly on the side of the lady's head—it was impossible to wear them on top.

Ladies of high position devised many original schemes of pompadours; the dome of golden or powdered tresses was often woven with flowers. The styles were bizarre but pretty.

But fashions change, and within a few hundred years the ladies had taken down the great pompadours and wore the hair with almost Grecian simplicity. In the early part of the nineteenth century most fashionable women wore the hair parted in the middle. The curl paper was used for the tresses, and the hair was so curled that it fluffed from the side of the head beneath the pressure of a coronet.

Of course, it is a question as to what age deserves the credit for the most artistic headdress. One cannot but admire the softness and unaffected grace of the Grecian coiffure. But when one compares the fashions—from Greece to Louis XVIII—one cannot doubt the women of to-day take the palm. This is the age of the curl paper, modernized, evolved to a science.



Popular in Amsterdam 500 Years Ago



This was seen about 1670



A Marie Antoinette Coiffure



Style of 1830



The Original Grecian Twist