

MRS. BELMONT AT WAR OVER A SONG

Break With Marie Dressler Sequel to Benefit of Suffragists' Opera.

NEW YORK, March 4.—Diplomatic relations between Mrs. Oliver H. P. Belmont and Miss Marie Dressler, late star of "Melinda and Her Sisters," the comic opera of which Mrs. Belmont admits the authorship, have been abruptly severed. The break between the erstwhile associates in art came when munitions of war were hastily moved to the front and the rattle of feminine musketry began.

Now Mrs. Belmont has set her lawyer on Marie, and Miss Dressler has spurned the gift with which the society leader recompensed the burlesque artist's services "for charity." But crowning insult of all—Miss Dressler has bestowed upon Mrs. Belmont a second name, the derisive title of Alva "Economic" Belmont. And all for a song—the "Ballet Russe," in which Miss Dressler gave a screaming satire on the Faun. It was the hit of the piece, and is the center and circumference of the quarrel.

Claims the Song.
Miss Dressler claims the song as her property. Mrs. Belmont insists it is a part of "Melinda" and belongs to her. Miss Dressler holds the score, and Mrs. Belmont's lawyers hourly over the telephone demand its return.

The story of the song dates back six weeks before the performance on February 19 at the Waldorf-Astoria, when society watched its prettiest debutantes in a setting of distinguished professionals act as superior chorus ladies. The opera, written by Mrs. Belmont, and composed by Eliza Maxwell, netted \$2,000 for the Congressional Union.

Birth of Disputed Air.
The Russian ballet song was introduced when Miss Maxwell discovered a similarity between Miss Dressler's chief song and one now being used by another well-known performer. Miss Dressler in her own drawing room worked up with Miss Maxwell the idea of a satire on "The Faun," and, sitting down to the piano, suggested the refrain. Miss Maxwell wrote the score and Miss Dressler then and there laid claim to the song—a claim in which, she said, Miss Maxwell thoroughly concurred. It was agreed that it should not be published with the opera.

After the opera Miss Dressler, without waiting for the supper party which the company enjoyed, gathered up her song and took it home. The next day she received from Mrs. Belmont, who was not then aware of the song's disappearance, a flattering letter of thanks and a jeweled parasol handle.

Happy—For a While.
Miss Dressler was happy over the letter and the gift. Her awakening came nine days later. Under date of February 23, Mrs. Belmont's secretary sent Miss Dressler a letter notifying her that the bill for the full orchestra scores had been received, and in verifying them, the "Ballet Russe" had turned up missing. Some one had heard Miss Dressler say she had the song, and Mrs. Belmont would appreciate its return by the bearer.

Miss Dressler, smarting under the imputation that she was withholding something not lawfully hers, put on her hat, and with her recently acquired gift in one hand and the score in the other went to the Belmont headquarters, 15 East Forty-first street. As she entered she caught sight of Mrs. Belmont above. When she sent her card to the suffrage leader, however, word was brought back that she was not in.

Twenty minutes after Miss Dressler reached home a letter was received from Mrs. Belmont admitting she had been in "for work and not for visitors." She went on:

Belong to the Opera.
"Miss Maxwell and myself copyrighted the whole of 'Melinda and Her Sisters' in Washington and Albany, and she has no right to give away any of the music, or the orchestration, or the scores. They belong to the opera 'Melinda and Her Sisters,' and I think if you will consult your lawyer you will find I am right."

"I don't fancy being called a thief," said Miss Dressler. "The song is mine. If Mrs. Belmont felt herself too poor to pay for the orchestration I was ready to pay for it myself. The 'Ballet Russe' was not printed in a score of 'Melinda,' and will not be. I, however, went to Mrs. Belmont's house and put that \$200 parasol handle into the hand of her Turk at the door and asked him kindly to deliver it to Mrs. Alva 'Economic' Belmont with my compliments. I spent nearly \$50 out of my own pocket on that opera, but I'm a good loser. I'm waiting for the next move."

Moratorium for Soldiers To Be Asked in England
LONDON, March 5.—The government will soon introduce a bill establishing a moratorium for soldiers, Reynolds Weekly declared today.

Men in service will be freed from re-sponsibility for paying life insurance until the end of the war.

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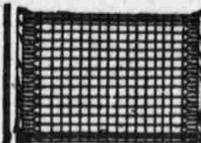
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