

# Society Woman a Movie Director

## Mme. Dulac, Famous French Cinema Producer, Acknowledges Her Debt to Americans, Whose Realistic Methods, She Says, Are Changing Dramatic Arts

By PRINCESS KEYZER.

"HOW I came to take up cinema work!" repeated Madame Germaine Dulac, the society woman who has gained a brilliant reputation in the development of this branch of dramatic art. "Do you really want to interview me? How amusing!"

And Madame Dulac, the only woman in Europe who devotes herself to this interesting and lucra-

ating and arranging my own home. I chose carpets, curtains, flowers in harmony with the scheme, and managed, as I was told later, to bring an atmosphere of refinement—if I may be permitted to say so—into the decorations that had hitherto been missing in French productions.

"Les Soeurs Ennemies," as this film was called, made a sensation in this manner. It was a great success with the public who love to see

how the wealthy of this world live, and are often influenced in their own surroundings, more than they at once realize—a fact due to the educational power of the cinema.

"It's in this manner of dealing with everyday occurrences, with the small things, that constitute life, that the Americans have opened our eyes to the value of their methods.

"We in France, like in Italy, were too engrossed with aesthetic possibilities, with the posing of a beautiful figure against a pillar in the moonlight, and it was this romantic element that was killing us—cinematographically.

"To-day we know that life as it is, with all its brutality, its vulgarity, is the most interesting spectacle existing. And we have profited by the study of the American productions, as you must allow," she said with a smile of evident satisfaction.

"Why, only this morning my latest film is being carried across the Channel in an aero-



Mme Germaine Dulac



Produced under the personal direction of Mme. Dulac.

tive pursuit, settled herself comfortably before her desk, a long, blue-covered table reaching across the room, her back to the light (so very womanly!), and with her elbows on the table and her long, white hands clasped before her, looked searchingly at me.

A woman who boldly throws over the routine of a fashionable Parisienne's life, who discards the morning canter in the Bois, the thrilling hours spent at the lecture of a literary favorite, the afternoon visits, the lazy moments in a becoming tea gown that all women enjoy, to give herself over to serious commercial work with all the responsibilities it entails, is a curious study in these days of frivolity.

She started talking, and scarcely left off to give herself breathing time. She appeared in feverish excitement; it was all so new, and she loved to tell about it, especially to Americans, because it is to them she owes so much—in fact, that the French Cine (as she calls it) owes the rapid strides it is making in the markets of the world.

"I began this work with two of my friends, intelligent women who longed to free themselves from the monotony of a purely social life. Each putting up 5,000 francs, we started with our small capital to make a cinematographic show. Madame Erlanger wrote the scenario, I arranged it for production.

"I worked without thinking of the effect I might be making or the new ideas I was bringing to the film, and I threw myself into the selection and placing of the furniture in the house in which the scenes took place, as if I were dec-



Scene from "Le Malencontra," one of the Dulac successes.

plane. It must be on British soil at this very moment."

"But I am running on," she said. "You want to know about my first experience in a big undertaking of course you do. You must forgive me if I was in spirit across the Channel.

"It was not amusing. Not only was I without any experience, but my chief interpreter was as ignorant as I was. She was no other than Suzanne Despres, the well-known actress—who is now, by the way, reviving her famous part of Nora in the famous Ibsen piece, 'Doll's House.' Suzanne was making her first appearance as a film artist; and, knowing as little about it as I did, we helped each other.

"At the present moment all the technicalities of Cine work are child's play to me. But I had to gain experience all 'round before daring to walk alone, as I have been doing for some time.

"You see, I sought another artistic mode of expression beyond literature and the drama; I consider the cinema as Progress; it is in the act of changing the Arts. It gives a rapidity of judgment that, for me, takes away all pleasure in the spoken theatre. Everything is so precise, so quick, I know directly I see the stage what is going to happen.

"My biggest ventures that have proved successful are: 'Ames de Fous,' 'La Cigarette,' 'Geo le Mysterieux,' 'Venus Victrix.'

"More capital than the first 15,000 francs?"

"Of course! My husband saw to that. When he returned from the war he recognized what I had achieved and organized a company with the required funds to further the undertaking. It is now he who manages the commercial part, leaving the artistic side to me."

Mme. Germaine Dulac, as she is now before me in her Paquin gown and her large osprey hat, is another person in her working costume. A woollen cap drawn over her head, the somewhat masculine and businesslike cut of the loose jacket change the society woman into the clever director, who is acknowledged by all in the profession to be a master.

At first the fact of a woman entering the ranks made the older members smile; but now competition is keen, and the lady director is quietly and surely pushing the men into the background. Delicate handling is so important in work of this description, and is not delicacy a point in a woman's favor?

In the whole world there are but two women who have taken up Cinema Directorship: Mme. Dulac in France, Mrs. Weber in America, each understanding that the cinema in all its details, from the making of the scenario to the final touches of the production, must all be the work of one brain. It is as much a question of unity in this art as in the painting of a picture.

Quite recently in the neighborhood of Vincennes, Mme. Dulac, with one of her staff, was superintending a scene where a boy is arrested for stealing a loaf of bread. The boy was crying and the operator working, when a woman came along and stopped to inquire what was happening.

"The boy is being arrested for stealing," said the man.

"Who is having him arrested?" exclaimed the woman.

Pointing to Mme. Dulac, he answered:

"This lady."

And the woman, tearfully entreating her to spare him, could not be made to understand that she had been assisting at a preparation for a moving picture.

Europeans have not been used to so much realism in cinematographic art, and it is to this progress they are indebted to the American producers.