

Mme. Duse Here As Recluse; Even Sleuth Tactics Fail To Break Actress' Privacy

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Unlike most women of temperament and genius, Eleonora Duse, Italian tragedienne who arrived in New Orleans Sunday noon for a week's holiday before her appearance at Jerusalem Temple, resolutely refuses to be interviewed.

Not knowing that the New York press had respected her wish for uninterrupted privacy and had not set a single reporter on her trail, we blundered over to Hotel Roosevelt, where Madame Duse is registered, learned the number of her suite, and without waiting to telephone to find out whether admittance would be obtained went to the sixth floor and knocked on her door.

The most shocked face of a most French maid immediately peered from the next door. In broken English, French and Italian, she tried to make us understand that madame was sleeping and was not to be disturbed, was never to be disturbed. If we hadn't with blind faith hoped eventually to understand her and make ourselves understood, and continued the argument, we would have missed a very pleasant hour.

Fortunately our conversation disturbed Miss Katherine Onslow, a personal friend of Madame Duse, who is accompanying her on her last American tour.

Friend Seeks Information

"If I didn't want to find out something about this very mysterious city of yours, I wouldn't talk to you," she told us frankly. "Whatever stories the papers get are given out by Mr. Gest or the Messrs. Selwyn or whoever it is that arranges the tour.

"But I must find out whether there is a park or a drive of some kind so that I can take Madame Duse motoring. She hates traffic of every kind and has to take tremendous care of herself—she is 64, you know, and a cold would be fatal to her tour—but if your City park is not too far away, we will go out there. We must see these cypress trees and the dripping moss you speak of.

"Madame Duse seldom leaves her room, as a matter of fact. I go out to walk and explore and then return to tell her about these American cities. No, I am not her secretary, but a friend of hers and it's because of my love and admiration for her that I wouldn't let her make this last tour alone. Nothing else would have dragged me from my relatives and friends, and most of all, the elections. When I was admitted to this country, however, and they wanted to

know who I was and what I was doing here, whether I was an anarchist or a bigamist, I had to stop their questions so put myself down as Madame Duse's secretary.

Tour of Royal Street

"But tell me, I wandered down Royal street yesterday afternoon, and is this all there is to your city. We heard it was a quaint old French city, but do all the people live that way? Are there no rich people in town who have fine homes as in other American cities?"

Miss Onslow was assured that if she walked along some other streets, she would find homes and gardens in abundance. She was entranced at the idea of Lake Pontchartrain and the French market.

"I shall visit all these places, but Madame Duse will hardly leave her room. She lives very much alone and to herself, spending all her time in her room reading—she is an extremely well read woman—and writing.

"No, indeed, not memoirs nor articles about herself. She is exceptionally reticent and no doubt part of her force lies in her reserve. She studies, she reads, she lives within herself. She has seen few people since she came to America this time."

According to Miss Onslow, this is the first time her friend has been in America for 20 years.

"Of course she did no acting during the war, but she hasn't even appeared in London since 1906 until this last trip. Then she received a tremendous ovation."

Since her arrival in New York in October, Madame Duse has appeared in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington and Chicago. With her is a company of 12. All of her supporting cast are Italians. Her repertoire consist[s] of two of Ibsen's plays, "Ghosts" and "The Lady of the Sea," which are given in Italian, and several Italian plays. It is not yet decided which will be given a week from Tuesday night.

Plays to Huge Houses

"Just between you and me, I think that it rather unfair to Madame Duse's talent to make her appear before such tremendous houses. Of course you have to take into consideration the tremendous, theatre-going public of this country. But Madame Duse played in Chicago in the Auditorium, a hall which is twice as big as the Metropolitan Opera house in New York. It shows how tremendous is her personal magnetism to sway a house like that. From the top gallery you could not see her face, not even with opera glasses, and yet the audience went wild.

Madame was very much amused by the criticism, or rather appreciation of her work which appeared in some American papers. Mr. Ashton Stevens, for instance, said that Madame Duse in "Ghosts" made his spine jell. And since she doesn't speak or read any English, I had a very difficult time translating it for her. She says she is inspired by America—she loves the country. It thrilled her to play before these audiences, which were so huge and so appreciative.

"Yes, Madame Duse was married. Her husband is dead. She has a daughter who is married in England and lives at Cambridge. Madame herself lives in retirement in a villa just outside of Venice. Even if you have not seen her, you have read, of course, how beautiful her eyes

are, how expressive her hands. Her hair is quite grey now. Even on the stage, she makes no attempt to hide her age, but appears without makeup of any kind. It's the tremendous inner force, her genius on which she depends."

From New Orleans, Madame Duse and her company will go to Los Angeles and San Francisco.