

THE FRENCH AMBASSA- DOR'S DIARY

American publishers are competing for the rights to "The Astonishment of Being," the diary of Herve Alphand, the French ambassador to Washington during the Kennedy years. Supposedly the bids have reached the \$100,000 mark.

Ordinarily an ambassador's diary is no great literary achievement and not particularly commercial, but "The Astonishment of Being" is selling well in France--largely, one suspects, because it deals in part with John F. Kennedy's love of "pleasure and women," which, according to Alphand, made the President constantly accessible to scandal.

For example, there is this titillating entry on Aug. 2, 1962, in the am-

bassador's diary: "His [Kennedy's] desires are difficult to satisfy without causing fears of scandal and its use by political adversaries. This will come perhaps one day, for he does not take sufficient precautions in this puritan country."

Alphand, who served in this not-so-puritan-as-he-thinks country from 1956 to 1965, was deeply fond of President and Mrs. Kennedy, but he was also deeply perceptive of the Washington scene. With his beautiful and stylish wife, who now works in partnership with dress-designer Pierre Cardin, he staged some of the most memorable social affairs during his Washington stay. Moreover, he seems to have known much of what was going on--both in and out of the boudoirs along embassy row.

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