



OAK DRIVE AT "ARDEN," MME. MODJESKA'S CALIFORNIA HOME

## MODJESKA'S MEMOIRS

### THE RECORD OF A ROMANTIC CAREER

#### III—FAILURE OF THE POLISH COLONY IN CALIFORNIA, AND RETURN TO THE STAGE

BY HELENA MODJESKA

##### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF NEW YORK

**T**HE following extracts from a letter to Stanislaus Witkiewicz give some idea of my first impressions on land.

July 13, 1876—*New York*

DEAR MR. STANISLAUS:

It is Sunday, to-day, and so quiet! The whole city seems plunged into a deep slumber.

We shall stay here a few weeks on account of the Centennial Exhibition, then we intend to start for California on the steamer *Colon*, across Panama, and we probably shall settle in California. There are yet many miles before us, and much anxiety as to our future prospects.

New York is a monstrous, untidy bazaar.

The buildings are large, but without style. Brick or chocolate houses (the latter called here brown stone), with green window-shades, look simply awful. The whole city is as ugly as can be. But what make the streets look still more unattractive, are the soles of men's boots in the windows. Imagine that men have here the singular custom of sitting in rocking-chairs, and putting their feet on the window-sills. You can see and admire the size of their shoes in the hotel lobbies, the barber-shops, the clubs, and even in some private residences. Wherever you turn, these soles stare at you.

A few days ago we went to Central Park, with the desire to take a walk and breathe some cooler, fresher air; but, oh! what a disappointment! Most of the trees are too young yet to give any shade, and the roads

and paths are asphalted. The asphalt melts under the scorching sun, and poisons the air. We returned as soon as we found a conveyance. There is, however, one thing that I like quite well. In the evening we go to watch the ferries. There are large boats on the two rivers that encircle New York and carry passengers to and from the different suburban towns. When all these boats are lit inside, they make a pretty sight, and as there are many, many of those moving, small palaces, the whole river looks as though it were on fire.

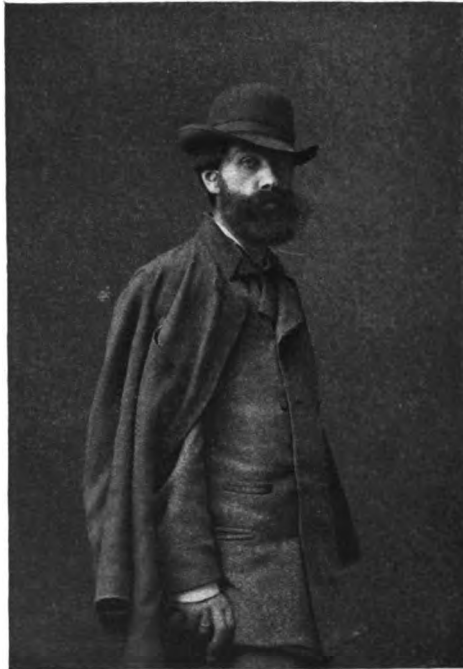
#### THE CENTENNIAL

OF course we went to Philadelphia several times to see the World's Fair, and Rudolphe was happy, for he takes great interest in all sorts of engines, which are most magnificently represented there. Aside from gigantic cucumbers and pears from California, I did not notice anything superior to what I had seen before in Paris, Vienna, or Warsaw. But we walked around, admiring the order and cleanliness which were noticeable in every part of the exposition grounds. We tried to do as others did; we even tasted peanuts and pop-corn, wondering why people ate those tasteless dainties. Paprocki predicts that in a few years our palates will so change under the influence of American air and food, that he will have the satisfaction of seeing me carry peanuts in my pockets and pop-corn in a *bonbonnière*.

We visited the Art Department. How poor that art looks here! The first thing we saw was a portrait of Rapacki in "Hamlet," by Miller; you may imagine how amused I was. There were some good paintings sent by France, and their section was, to my mind, the best represented.

<sup>1</sup> The nom de guerre of Sienkiewicz in his young days. <sup>2</sup> Mrs. Agnes Booth, later Mrs. Shoffel, sister-in-law of Edwin.

We are awaiting to-day the president of the Polish dramatic society in New York, Dr. Zolnowski. We had a long chat about the theater when we first met him. It seems that I may be able to play in English, but first we must go to California, according to our original plan. "Litwos"<sup>1</sup> is there in a place called Anaheim Landing, on the seashore, writing more of his "Charcoal Sketches." We are all crazy to go. Perhaps I may pick up enough English to play there, and when I get more mastery over the new language, I may come here; for, however unattractive New York seems to me, it is the metropolis of America, and it will give me pleasure to conquer it. Ah, these are only vague projects; yet when I think of the possibility of their realization, and of making a name for myself here and in England, and also a great deal of money, I yearn to return afterward to the old country and to do some good to my people; for I have not done anything yet, save acting. Pray for my success, for, indeed, I wish it not only for myself, but also for others.



STANISLAUS WITKIEWICZ

#### SOME THEATERS OF 1876

DURING our stay in New York we went to different theaters. At some of them farces were played, or melodramas, but at Booth's Theater we saw "Sardanapalus," with Mr. Bangs and Mrs. Booth<sup>2</sup> in the chief parts. The production was magnificent, and Mr. Bangs imposing and very impressive in his character. Mrs. Booth, however, did not seem to like the heroine. Her part and herself were so far apart that they never met for an instant. I saw Mrs. Booth several years later in a small comedy entitled "Old Love-Letters," in which she was perfect.

We also saw Mr. and Mrs. Florence at Wallack's Theater in "The Mighty Dollar." His "P. I. G." and Mrs. Florence's "Libby dear," sounded a long time in our ears. As for the rest, we could not remember much, for we were too deficient in English to follow the dialogue. As far as I could judge by the facial expression and gestures, I thought Mr. Florence an exceptionally good comedian and his wife naturally amusing.

## ARRIVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO

WE started for California on the steamer *Colon* in good spirits, for the weather was glorious. Our Polish friends from New York came on board with flowers and good wishes. We took leave cheerfully, hoping to meet soon again.

It was quite dark when we drew near to San Francisco, and we were much disappointed not to have seen the famous Golden Gate. We were, however, rewarded by a pleasant surprise awaiting us at our entrance to California. Several Polish gentlemen, residents of San Francisco, had heard of our arrival, and had come to greet us. At the head of the group was Captain Korwin Piotrowski, the prototype of Sienkiewicz's *Zagloba*, and with him were Captain Bielawski, Dr. Pawlicki, General Kryzanowski, Ho-



JOHN McCULLOUGH

rain, Bednawski, and Captain Lessen. I mention all these gentlemen because they were more or less connected with my debut on the American stage. Now, after thirty-two years, there remains only one survivor of these seven men, our dear Dr. Pawlicki.

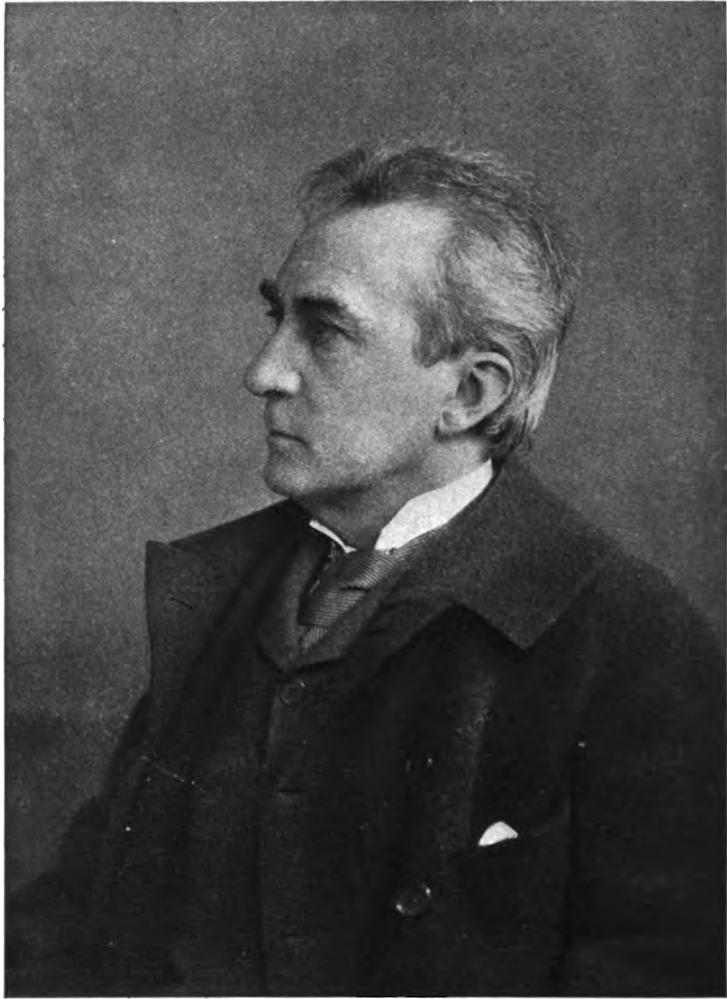
## BOOTH AT THE CALIFORNIA THEATER

THE very next day after our arrival in San Francisco, I learned that a celebrated American actor, called Edwin Booth, was in the city giving a series of performances. We went to the California Theater to see his *Shylock*, and a few days later we saw him in *Marc Antony*. This is what I wrote about him to one of my friends in Poland:

His first entrance denoted a great actor. He was magnificent in his simplicity, complete and artistic all through. His *Shylock* was a revelation to me. The scene with Tubal was the most perfect piece of acting. He was a genuine Jew, spiteful and mean, and yet so human that I could not but sympathize with the bloodthirsty wretch, feel for his wrongs, and deplore the injustice of the righteous people. In *Marc Antony* he was eloquent, eager, passionate, and full of youthful vigor, and, with all that, so subtle. His whole countenance expressed the task of the tribune, his voice was well modulated, growing from soft and easy tones into



HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ IN 1876



From a negative owned by J. L. Hgenfritz

*Edwin Booth*

a stormy outburst, and all the time his facial expression was wonderful, with such marvelous changes and flashes of the eyes as I had never seen in any actor on the stage.

My Polish friends in San Francisco were anxious to see me on the stage, and General Kryzanowski thought that I might play *Ophelia* in Polish to Booth's *Hamlet*. I found that project rather extravagant and not very desirable, but the general and the others insisted so much that I finally yielded to their persuasions. He introduced me to Mr. McCullough, then manager of the California Theater,

and the plan was discussed seriously. It was then laid before Mr. Booth, who, however, feeling too tired for extra rehearsals, and probably not having confidence in the abilities of a foreign actress of whom he had never heard, declined the offer. I thought him a very wise man, and felt really glad that this polyglot performance did not take place. Other projects were forming in my brain.

#### ARCADIA WITH A DIFFERENCE

ON our arrival at Anaheim, a small town in southern California, inhabited mostly

by German colonists and Spaniards, all our party came to the station to welcome us. Sienkiewicz, who had just returned from Anaheim Landing, also came.

We found the rented house rather small—two bedrooms, a dining-room, a so-called parlor, with a square piano and a sofa. The commonplace of it all was painfully discouraging, and the front yard, with its cypresses, shaggy grass, and flowers scattered at random, looked like a poorly kept graveyard. The only redeeming point was the view of the mountains of the Sierra Madre to the north, and of the Santa Ana range in the east.

About a hundred feet from the house stood a barn, part of which was changed into a sort of camping-room, ornamented with rugs, mattings, guns, harnesses, etc. This improvised and picturesque abode was occupied by Sienkiewicz and Paprocki.

My housekeeping days began. At seven next morning, attired in one of my pretty aprons which I had brought from Europe, I went to the kitchen. Breakfast was rather a complicated affair. Everybody wanted something different. Tea, coffee, milk, chocolate, and wine-soup had to be served every morning, besides other things. Our simple life did not include privations of that sort. The other daily meals, however, did not require any special effort. Quantity was often more appreciated than quality, especially after a day spent in the fields.

The first time our gentlemen started on the cultivation of the orange orchard, they looked eager, full of energy and enthusiasm, anticipating great joy from the touch with Mother Earth. In the evening they came back tired, but hopeful. My boy went to the piano to play one of Chopin's waltzes,—he wanted to see if his fingers did not get stiff from the hoe,—and after supper Sienkiewicz, in spite of fatigue, read us one of his "Charcoal Sketches." It was a beautiful evening, and even the commonplace furniture and a smoking lamp did not interfere this time with our enjoyment.

Next morning some of the party were late for breakfast; the third day some one complained of a lame back, and a week later there were only two who insisted still on working, my husband and my son.

There was no system among our ideal-

ists; they worked or not, they discussed a great deal, they sometimes even quarreled, and then made up and hugged each other; in one word, they lived under a nervous tension which could not last long. For recreation they used to ride on horseback, in which exercise my husband, my boy, and I often joined them.

#### A VISIT TO "ARDEN"

ONE day we made an excursion to the Santiago Cañon in the Santa Ana mountains, where some new friends of ours lived. On an acre or so of level ground stood a tiny shanty, the dwelling-house; a few steps farther was an arbor covered with vines and climbing-roses. Inside of the arbor a rustic sofa, table, and chairs—an outdoor dining-room and a living-room in one. Next, a kitchen, consisting of an iron stove under the shelter of widely spread oak branches, with pantry shelves in the cavity of the same tree. Some rose-bushes, a few flowers, a small palm, and an olive-tree were the only improvements on nature. This primitive, miniature household was the center of a crescent formed by a sloping mesa, thickly covered with bushes of wild lilac, wild honeysuckle, etc., and oaks. In front the grounds were closed by a swift creek, and a precipitous mountain called the Flores Peak. All around, like a living, dark-green frame, oaks and oaks, some of stupendous dimensions. In the distance, more mossy rocks and mountains. The whole picture looked like fantastic stage-scenery, and, looking at it, my imagination carried me far, far beyond the hills, back to the footlights again.

A few years later we bought this place, and I called it "Arden," because in the "Forest of Arden," in "As You Like It," everything that Shakspeare speaks of was on the spot. Oak-trees, running brooks, palms, snakes, and even lions—of course California lions, really pumas.

#### THE ORIGINAL ZAGLOBA

ON our return to Anaheim we found a letter from Captain Piotrowski announcing his intention of visiting us. We made suitable preparations for our guest—removed the sofa from the parlor and replaced it by a bed, while my son joined the

party in the barn. The most important question was the menu. The captain was a gourmet, and as he was very tall and very stout, his huge body required a vast amount of food to satisfy his almost colossal appetite.

The captain arrived next morning, and with his entrance gloom changed into merriment. Every one at once became witty and entertaining. Piotrowski was a curious type. He seemed suited rather to the sixteenth or seventeenth century than to our modern era. His humor reminded me sometimes of *Sir Toby Belch* or *Falstaff*. Even his language was unusual. It was quaint, much more correct and crisp than our diluted and distorted gabble of the twentieth century.

Before dinner my husband asked our guest what wine he liked best. "I only drink milk," he answered, with a twinkle in his eye, "but I like to prepare it a little." Then, making himself at once at home, he opened the kitchen door and, seeing Anusia, the maid, exclaimed, "Hallo, pretty maiden!" Then turning to us, he said, with a wink: "Where did you pick up this dainty?" When we told him that we brought her with us from Poland, he laughed. "Oh, if she is a Pole, I must give her a Polish greeting." With these words he entered the kitchen, and almost at the same time we heard a shriek, a slap, and Anusia was running away into the yard, while the captain was standing at the kitchen door holding his sides and laughing. "Come back, little shrew, and give me some milk," he called, "or I'll perish. Don't you see how thin and wan I am? I shall die, and you will have to weep on my grave."

But poor Anusia was too frightened to return. My son brought the milk, and the captain retired with it to another room. When he returned, he poured out the white liquid into glasses, and passed them around. Scarcely had my husband lifted the glass to his lips when he put it down, holding his throat and coughing. "What is this frightful stuff?" he asked. "Is it one of your jokes?"

Upon that, Piotrowski raised his eyes to the ceiling and said: "O God, thou hearest and dost not thunder! If my wet nurse, whose name was Krasicka, had fed me with such milk, I should not have been weaned even until to-day!" This de-

lightful compound proved to be made of one part milk and three parts brandy. His physician had prescribed a month of milk cure, and that was the way in which he followed his instructions.

Born of a noble Polish family, the captain came to America in the early forties. His prolonged stay in different parts of this country, together with his faithfulness to old Polish traditions, made of him a strange combination of old-fashioned culture and modern American notions of politics.

Notwithstanding his age, the old gentleman had a young heart, and liked to dwell on the remembrances of his love-affairs, none of which ended happily. "For, you see," he said, "I am still a widower."

The captain's visit to our farm did not pass without incident: the very first night the bed broke under his colossal frame. We did not hear the noise because, having sat up very late, we slept very soundly, but the captain told us his tale of woe in the morning.

"When the cardboard bed fell to pieces under me, I thought I might find shelter and a bale of hay in the barn, with the boys. I took my pillow and blankets, and went into the yard; but I lost my way in the dark, and entered the stable instead. The horses, probably frightened at my bundle of bedding, began to kick and neigh; one bronco tore himself off and rushed out into the open, passing so close to me that we nearly smashed each other against the wall, and when at last I reached the barn and opened the door, I saw by the dim light of a candle our young men sitting on their couches with guns pointed at me, and shouting, 'Stop, or you are dead!' They said it in good English, too. 'You Tatars, you barbarians,' I screamed, 'you bloodthirsty heathens, put down your guns!' They obeyed quickly, and came to me. 'We took you for a burglar or a horse-thief,' said Sienkiewicz, laughing, and directly they built a bed of hay for me, for I refused to lie down on any of their filigree couches. I slept well, I thank you, but feel a little tired. Anusia, you Paradise apple, bring me some milk, and don't fear. I shall not kiss you this time, there are too many people in the room. I will catch you when no one is by."

Anusia brought the milk, dropped a courtesy, and said, "You never will catch me, Captain, for I can run quicker than you."

"Do you see this saucy damsel?" he shouted merrily. "The chicken has scarcely cut through the shell of its egg, and already it opens its beak from ear to ear." The girl left the room scarlet with indignation, which increased the captain's hilarity.

One afternoon we all took a stroll to the vineyard for grapes. After having filled our baskets, we noticed that the captain was not with us. On our return, we heard his voice shouting, "Go and call some one to help me out of this!" Sienkiewicz ran to his rescue. The others followed, and I also started on a run home. Seeing Anusia in the yard, I asked her what had happened.

"Oh, nothing," she replied, grinning; "the captain took a bath, that is all."

"A bath? Where?"

But Anusia did not answer, for the baby began to cry. "I must see to the baby, Madame," and she left me; but I saw that she knew more about it than she would say. At the same time I perceived the poor captain, led by our young men, with his clothes soaking wet, his face purple, walking with difficulty, groaning, and limping. "He fell into the irrigation ditch," some one whispered. "Quick, some hot brandy!" They put him in his bed. I went to inquire how he felt, and he told us the whole adventure in his quaint, untranslatable language.

"I was very thirsty when we came to the vineyard, and not wishing to disturb the company, I left, unnoticed, in search of a glass of water or—h-m—never mind what. I thought I might get to the cottage by a shorter road, and took a straight bee-line. When I was at a short distance, I saw Anusia in the yard hanging up the linen, and I called jokingly to her, 'Now, my little bird, I will catch you and kiss you!' To my astonishment, the girl did not run away, but called back: 'Come, come, Captain, kiss me!' The imp knew of the ditch separating us, but I had only my foolish fun in the head, and the girl looked quite pretty. Besides, I could not see the ditch, as it was all overgrown with weeds. I clapped my hands and started on a run, when suddenly, O Maria! Jo-

seph! shall I ever forget the sensation? I sank plump into the cold water up to my hips. I tried to get out of the ditch, but this confounded soil of Anaheim is genuine quicksand; the more vigorous were my efforts, the deeper I sank. I called to that little demon of a girl to help me or to call some one, but that incarnation of imbecility only laughed more and more, while I was sinking lower and lower. When the water reached to my armpits, I gave up the struggle. 'Perish will I, and my fleas with me!' I thought, and then I asked the Holy Virgin if she was not ashamed to let me die this miserable death. The cruelty of my fate brought tears to my eyes, and I hung my head upon my breast, when suddenly hearing this angel's voice,"—pointing to Sienkiewicz,—"I raised my eyes, and my hopes revived, for he was extending his hands to lift me up, which, however, considering my weight and his slender form, was almost impossible. Then you all came, and saved me from that ignominious death. And now, my good Samaritans, don't you think I am entitled to a drink of my milk? That water sucked all the juice out of me, and nature calls for compensation."

Such was the man who may have given to Sienkiewicz the suggestion of *Zagloba* in his historical trilogy, "With Fire and Sword," "The Deluge," and "Pan Michael." Having known personally the captain, and having read the works of my great countryman, I could not help feeling the sincerest admiration for the genius and the fertile invention of the writer, who, taking a few features of that character, filled them in, extended them, adapted them to most numerous and various situations, with a sense of artistic proportions, and thus created a type the equal of which might be looked for only in Shakspeare or Cervantes.

#### FAILURE OF THE COLONY

LATE in November we came to the conclusion that our farming was not a success. My husband had already spent \$15,000, yet he was ready to sacrifice the last penny of his small remaining capital to keep up the colony. I could not allow that, and disclosed my plan of going to San Francisco in order to study English, and try to get on the stage. This project was re-

ceived with acclamation, for they all believed that I would succeed, and, besides, all of them wanted a change.

#### RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO

IN the first days of January, 1877, I went with my husband to San Francisco. At the station we met Captain Piotrowski and several of our Polish friends, among them good old Captain Bielawski, who came with his wife to offer us the hospitality of his house until we should find some suitable lodgings.

I was not the only guest. Johnny, a boy of nineteen, the son of some friends, had been invited to stay in the house till the end of his studies. I actually took my first lessons in English from him. At every meal I asked the names of different objects, and he always gave me the required information patiently, and with good humor. I determined to learn some American songs, and I began with "The Suwanee River" and some of the trashy but amusing songs of the day. Johnny corrected my English pronunciation, and I made a hit.

#### LEARNING ENGLISH

I ADVERTISED for an English teacher for some time without success. At last I found a girl who was a genuine godsend to me. One day, despondent and almost giving up hope of learning English properly, I was leaning out of the window when I saw a graceful, girlish figure coming out of our door. As she passed, she raised her head, looked straight into my face, and smiled. I asked the landlady who that pretty person was who had visited the house in the morning.

"Oh, that was our dear Jo," answered Mrs. H. "Her first name is Joanna or Josephine, her other name Tuholsky. I think her father came from Poland, and, by the way, she is very anxious to meet you." We arranged a meeting for the very next day.

The moment she entered the room I knew that I had found a friend. We chatted merrily in three languages, French, German, and English, for, though she was born in Poland, she was only four years old when her parents brought her to America, and consequently she did not speak a word of Polish. She showed me

so much sympathy that I did not hesitate to tell her of my great difficulty in finding a good English teacher, and asked whether she knew of some one. What was my amazement and joy when she told me that she was willing to teach me.

I was a little afraid that my amateur teacher might be irregular in her lessons, but I wronged her. She came every morning at the same hour, and when my husband returned to Anaheim, she stayed from eight in the morning until the evening. Very often she even remained during the evenings, and we took walks, or went to the theaters together, and all that time she compelled me to speak English by not answering my German or French questions until I translated them into English. My boy was also a diligent pupil, and we both began to learn English with an energy verging on frenzy. He made such rapid progress that in March he wrote a farce in English, which was performed at Governor Salomon's house by the latter's sons and himself. We had met the governor during our first stay in San Francisco, and he took a great interest in my prospective debut.

My American friends were very encouraging, and called me a wonder as soon as I managed to say a few simple things correctly and succeeded in getting the right sound of "th." I got many other sounds besides, and it was all due to my dear Jo and her constant watching over my pronunciation. At the very first lesson I insisted upon reading "Adrienne Lecouvreur." We took every day a page or two. Then I memorized the whole part, and recited it over and over before my patient teacher, who corrected every error. In the same manner I learned also "Juliet" and "Cleopatra." I also memorized every day about a hundred new words, and wrote pages of exercises. Jo not only watched over my accent; she also inspired me with hope and predicted success.

While I studied "Juliet" I became more hopeful. I believe that the mere repeating of the part in Shakspeare's beautiful language made me happy and hopeful. I could not well analyze my feelings, but I was aware that neither fear nor apprehension tortured me any more, and that my mind was gradually returning to its normal disposition.



## A LETTER HOME

COGHLAN'S *IAGO*

ABOUT this time, as my hopes were reinforced by the successful studies, I wrote my old friend Madame Leo the following letter:

San Francisco, March 15, 1877.

DEAR MADAME STEPHANIE:

. . . You must not think that we left the farm because I was tired of Nature, which I still love and admire ardently. She is the only rival of Art in my mind. . . . When I wrote to you about the charms of nature, I did not go into raptures over our cheese and butter, I did not glorify the noble occupations of a cook; I simply made "bonne mine à mauvais jeu," and laughed at myself to prevent others from laughing at me. At present I do not perform any domestic duty, but I am hard at work studying. That was my secret plan at the very beginning of our venture. Country life was simply to restore my health and strength, which it did so effectively that people give me twenty-four or twenty-six years of age, not more. Some people in Poland know of my intention of appearing on the English-speaking stage, and I hear they already predict my failure. If I returned now, without even one small leaf of laurels gathered here or in England, they certainly would look upon me as on a bird with broken wings, and treat me accordingly. They would condole with me, and patronize me. Horror! Can you imagine anything more awful than that? No, dear friend, I must try to rise. If I fail, you will never see me any more; but if I succeed, nothing will prevent me from flying back to Warsaw, and then I will stop at the green square, climb up the two flights, open the door, and cry: "Good morning, my friends. How do you do?" . . . Something whispers to me that my staying away for some time will not hurt my standing with the critics and the public of Warsaw. They began to get tired of me. Had I remained, they soon would have called me old, and *passée*, but when I return, and return with new success, they will receive me with open arms. Everybody will find me younger and more attractive, because I shall bring with me fame from abroad to exalt my position. Somebody said, "Une duchesse a toujours dixhuit ans pour un bourgeois." I left Poland as the leading lady of the Warsaw theater, I shall return as an acknowledged star of foreign stages.

I WENT several times to the theater during that time. I saw and admired Mrs. Drew in "The School for Scandal," and Mr. Sothern as *Lord Dundreary*; also Charles Coghlan and Adelaide Neilson. I thought Coghlan a most exquisite actor. His parts in "The Lady of Lyons" and "Money" were played with a finish rarely seen on any but the French stage, while his *Iago* in "Othello" was surely the best I ever have seen, before or since. To begin with, he looked what *Othello* calls him, the "honest *Iago*": in his bluff, soldierly appearance there was no trace of the stage villain, no cringing poses, nothing that might betray him to *Othello*, whom Shakspeare does certainly not make out an idiot, and who would not have been deceived by a man with a Judas-like appearance. His honest countenance makes his villainy the worse. In Coghlan's personation the coarse, vulgar nature, combined with the cunning of an Italian peasant, was made visible to the audience by his cynical smile behind *Othello's* back, the twinkle of his eye, and by numerous other subtle touches of his inner base nature, always concealed before the Moor. The general outward appearance gave the impression of a strong, brutal soldier, who would drink and sing and treat the villainous plot against his master more as a cruel joke than as a crime. With all the inborn envy and hatred of a low nature toward his superior, he chuckled over his tricks, and it was not done with grimness, but rather with the enjoyment of a callous temperament over the tortures of a man whom, in spite of *Othello's* distinction, he despised for his race and color, and considered as belonging to a lower grade of mankind. The dagger is—or at least was—such a common occurrence in Italy, that its use does not necessarily suggest refined villainy, but rather brutality and rage.

ADELAIDE NEILSON

ADELAIDE NEILSON was beautiful and perfect in "The Hunchback." She was emotional and sincere, and her beauty was radiant. I always remember the incomparable pathos of her voice in her appeal to her lover: "I call you Clifford, and you call me Madam!" There was such a

true ring in this short sentence that it thrilled me through and through. I did not like the play, but I was fascinated by Neilson's acting. The effect of the balcony scene in her *Juliet* was spoiled to some degree by a coarse interruption of the gallery boys, who sent her loud kisses, which seemed to annoy her greatly. But I think the boys could not help themselves when they saw that beautiful vision, flooded with moonlight, brought nearer to their view by the elevation of the balcony. On account of these interruptions, I could not judge well of her acting in that scene, but her impulse of throwing flowers at *Romeo* at the end was spontaneous, and brought the house down.

I have only one criticism to make of this performance. I did not like, in the first act, her kissing her hand on the same spot where *Romeo* kissed it before, because this particular stage business was unnecessarily borrowed from a modern French play, where it was in its proper place. I would not have mentioned this slight deviation from the true poetic spirit with which her part was impregnated, were it not that I saw later some younger actresses imitating from hearsay just this action, while they entirely failed to follow Neilson's footsteps in her great qualities, her intensity, and her identification with the characters personified. She did not seem to act her parts, but to live them on the stage. She was really a born actress, and there are but few of whom one might say this.

Every time I went to the theater I sniffed the air like a battle-horse before a skirmish. For consolation I recurred to my studies, and spent delightful moments in reciting my parts aloud, while Ralph was playing on the piano the delightful nocturnes of Chopin. The music helped me wonderfully to bring out the poetic value of Shakspeare's lines. I would not have it on the stage, because I always disliked the melodramatic effect of incidental music, but I liked to study certain passages to the harmonious sounds of my favorite tunes.

#### DIFFICULTY IN SECURING AN ENGAGEMENT

IN June I thought it time to take steps toward securing my *début* at the California Theater, which was the only one then

having a good supporting stock company. Then it was that I passed the most trying moments of my stage life. After seeing Mr. Barton Hill, the stage-manager and the representative of Mr. John McCullough (the lessee and head of the concern), I received the answer that there was no opening for me, all the dates having been filled until the following winter. My Polish friends, on hearing the news, became at once discouraged. Some advised me to return to Warsaw, some tried to induce me to go to New York or London, and I could see plainly that scarcely one believed in my success on the English-speaking stage.

Jo, however, was not discouraged, and asked Mr. Hill to let me rehearse before him an act of *Adrienne*, *Juliet*, or *Cleopatra*. He promised to do so, but when we came to his office at the appointed time, he was very polite, called me repeatedly "Madame la Comtesse," but absolutely refused to give me a rehearsal, as the stage was occupied every morning and afternoon. From what he said further, in the form of good advice to give up my "fancy," I understood that he had doubts as to my being an actress at all, and supposing he had before him only an amateur stage-struck society woman, he tried to get out of this difficult situation as smoothly as possible. Unfortunately, I had not one scrap of paper to convince him of his mistake, as I never kept a scrap-book, only seldom read criticisms, and never thought of preserving what was written about me. It was only many years afterward, when I first thought of writing my recollections, that I began to gather the more interesting articles written about me, and then I had old notices copied from newspaper files. At that moment I had nothing at hand to present to Mr. Hill as a proof of my standing in my profession.

I considered my situation a desperate one, and, when, after leaving the managerial office, I proposed to Jo to take a ferry-boat to Oakland or Alameda, she refused to comply with my request, knowing the temptation for me of the blue waves of the bay, and said, laughing: "No, no, my dear lady, we shall not go for a bath until you know how to swim." Her cheerful face and her words dispelled somewhat my morbid fancy; I returned home, and Jo began to make new plans of campaign.

She suggested that I see Governor Salomon and ask him to intervene with Mr. Hill. I did so, and he promised to take up my cause.

I knew my parts, and was almost sure of success. Jo and I went once more to the theater, but this time we were humiliated by word that Mr. Hill was too busy to see any one. "I never experienced anything of that kind yet," I said to Jo. "What a shame! I feel like a beggar to whom alms was refused!" I really felt the ground slip from under my feet. It would be difficult to describe the bitterness of my comparisons between the abject situation I was thrown into and the past, full of honors and love, left behind me. I forgot the persecution, the enmities, the petty cavilings of my life in Warsaw; I recalled only the dear public, our numerous friends, our artistic circle, and yearned, oh, so ardently, to be again with them! Were it not for my strong determination, I should have returned home at once.

#### A HEARING. AT LAST

GOVERNOR SALOMON soon afterward secured another appointment for me with Mr. Hill. When we knocked at the door of the theatrical office, we were asked to be seated, and Mr. Hill complimented "Madame la Comtesse" upon her looks, and nearly killed her with politeness, and told her about Mr. McCullough's return to 'Frisco, where he was to play *Othello* and *Hamlet*, and about the great actress, Miss Rose Eytinge, coming to play in a grand production of *Cleopatra*. Then we learned that new, gorgeous scenery was going to be painted for the Queen of Egypt, and that soon the "Midgets" would also be here, and so forth, and so forth.

I never uttered a word, but Jo, after listening a while, fired out her first blank question: "And when will you give Madame Modjeska a hearing, as you promised Governor Salomon?" This time Mr. Hill looked at me attentively and, after a pause, said, "Let me see, will next Tuesday do?"

"Yes, it will do. Good-by."

"Au revoir, Madame la Comtesse."

#### A CAUTIOUS MANAGER CONVINCED

NEXT Tuesday we returned. Mr. Hill was in despair because the stage was occupied by a scenery rehearsal, but he sug-

gested the lecture-hall in the same building, which had a platform about fifteen feet wide. It was a rather trying proposition to rehearse in this bare hall with dusty windows and dusty platform, without any furniture except a shaky table and a rickety chair, but I was ready for any emergency, and took off my hat and gloves. While I was looking for a clean place where I might put them, Mr. Hill, who seated himself in the first row of stalls, opposite the platform, called out, "Madame la Comtesse, I must warn you that I shall be candid and sincere in my criticism." "Yes, of course," I answered, "I expect you to be sincere and severe; but, please, do not interrupt me until I am through." Mr. Hill bowed, and the rehearsal began.

All these proceedings, my repeated visits to the office, the repeated refusals, my friend's pleadings, had produced the most stirring feelings in my soul. I was glad that all this had happened far from my country, and that my husband was not the witness of it all. My revolt against these petty annoyances, my anxiety for triumph and for the rebuke of the skeptical attitude of my judge, were so great, that I was burning with the desire to crush the Philistine.

Poor, dear Mr. Hill, who was only doing his duty as a cautious manager, did not suspect those antagonistic feelings, which put me on my mettle from the start, and made me deliver my very first speeches with so much intensity and realism that I myself was startled at my new intonations. I was sure of victory from the very beginning of the rehearsal. I had chosen the last act of "Adrienne," and Jo gave me the cues. Gradually I forgot all except my part, in which I lost myself entirely. During the casket-scene, however, I saw vaguely Mr. Hill's handkerchief, the whiteness of it, and the motion of the hand attracted my attention for a second, and when, after the final death-scene, I was sitting tired and still panting with emotion, Mr. Hill came to me with tears in his eyes. He shook hands with me, and I asked directly if he thought he could give me one evening for my debut at the California Theater. "One evening!" he exclaimed. "You shall have the whole week, and more, if possible!" Then he complimented me upon my acting.

A few days later, John McCullough returned to San Francisco, and a note came from Mr. Hill that, if convenient to me, he would like me to rehearse the same act before Mr. McCullough. This time the surroundings were more favorable, for I rehearsed on the stage, and before several judges, instead of one, for some other persons were present in the auditorium. Among them was Mr. Richard Hinton, the chief editor of the "Evening Post," who, by the way, smoothed considerably my way to success, and has remained my faithful friend.

#### NAME AMERICANIZED

AFTER the rehearsal, Mr. John McCullough came to speak to me. He was visibly touched, and said many flattering things to me, and at once set the date of my *début* for August 13. Before leaving, he asked me how I spelled my name. I wrote it in full, just as it is spelled in Polish, "Helena Modrzejewska," and handed it to him.

He looked at it, smiled, and, rubbing his head, said: "Who on earth could read that, I wonder? I fear you will be compelled to change your name, Madam."

I told him I did not like to do so, but I might, by the omission of a few letters, make out a name which would sound pretty much like my own, and yet not frighten people away, and I wrote down, "Modjeska."

He smiled again, saying it might remind one of "Madagascar." I soon perceived the point, and changed the "g" into a "j." He spelled aloud, "Modjeska. Now," he said, "it is quite easy to read, and sounds pretty, I think."

We parted good friends, and I began to make preparations for the performance of "Adrienne Lecouvreur."

#### AMERICAN DÉBUT A SUCCESS

MR. MCCULLOUGH was then playing his classic repertoire, and I went with Jo to his performances. I had already seen him, during Booth's engagement, in "Julius Cæsar," and had admired greatly his truly Roman appearance and his fine delivery of Brutus's lines. This time I witnessed his personations in *Othello* and *Virgilius*, and was very much impressed by his acting in the latter part.

A few days before the great day I was advised by my friends to move to the Palace Hotel, and there I received from my husband the sorrowful message that on account of an accident, a bad fall, he was unable to come for my first performance.

Well, there is little more to say about my American *début*. I played, and succeeded, and sent a despatch to my husband consisting of one word, "Victory." A curious feature of this, my first performance in English, was that I was not in the least nervous. The happiness of being again before the footlights killed the stage-fright, and I walked serenely on, never forgot a line, nor became confused when I did not get the right cue, which, I am sorry to say, happened several times that evening. Even when my veil caught fire from the footlights, I had enough presence of mind to put it out immediately. Tom Keene was a manly *Maurice de Saxe*. The charming Miss Wilton played the *Princess*, and Harry Edwards was *Michonnet*, and a very excellent one. After the play, the Polish colony, which had turned out in full and had applauded furiously, as well as Governor Salomon, and some other new friends, came to my dressing-room, elated with the result, and with hearty congratulations.

Gentlemen of the press, among them Messrs. Hinton, H. St. Maur, and Jessup, came also, and we had as much of a chat as my defective knowledge of conversational English would allow. I remember that I finished my sentences, when short of some word, with gesticulation, which must have been expressive, as I received right answers from my very much amused guests. The critics wrote next day fine notices about my *Adrienne*, while Sienkiewicz, who had come for this occasion to San Francisco, sent a long letter to his Warsaw paper.

Next morning at eight o'clock a card was brought to me. This early visitor was Harry Sargent, a theatrical agent. I sent him word to return in the afternoon. Several other agents called soon after him, but I selected the one who rose the earliest. He proposed to me a starring tour in the East, beginning in New York. I accepted, and he went immediately to work to obtain dates for me in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. The very next day he informed me that the earliest open time

he could get in New York was from the middle of December until the end of January, 1878, and we agreed that I should go east late in November.

In the meantime Mr. McCullough asked me to play another week, with change of plays. He said there was a rush at the box-office to see the new Polish actress, and though next week belonged by right to Miss Rose Eytinge, the

but if he thought that the public would stand my rendering of this scene in Polish, I might be ready to play the rest of the part in English.

The second week proved a financial success, which was doubly welcome both as an omen of the future, and as a relief for our material difficulties. I began to breathe freely. During those two weeks I lived in a whirlwind of excitement. People



E. A. SOTHERN, APRIL 5, 1878

latter kindly consented to postpone her engagement for a week. Her scenery was not quite ready, and so she preferred to wait, though she might easily have filled that week with other plays of her repertoire. I called on her and thanked her heartily for this concession. Mr. McCullough wanted me to play *Juliet* also, alternating with *Adrienne*, and he also asked me if I could play *Ophelia* to his *Hamlet* during one night of that following week, which he selected for his benefit. I told him that I did not think I could learn the mad scene in English, so as to be quite easy in it, at such short notice,

would flock to my dressing-room every evening, with tears in their eyes, shaking my hands, embracing me, and saying the most lovely things. I alone had dry eyes, and alone could not weep, though tears would have relieved the tension of my nerves. It was only when one of my friends took me to an orphan asylum that the flood-gates opened, and I had a good cry.

Soon after, my husband came to town, healed from his bruises, and we had some delightful parties with our Polish friends, and also were invited to receptions in the "upper ten" circles, which stood there



From a photograph by Sarony in the collection of Robert Coster

ADELAIDE NEILSON AS *JULIET*

for the "four hundred" of New York. Evidently, *Adrienne* and *Juliet* had made me fashionable.

A "WILD WEST" TOUR

THERE was at that time in San Francisco an Irish comedian by the name of James Ward. He proposed to arrange and manage for me a short tour in the small towns of California and Nevada. He could also be my leading man, he said. I thought that it would be excellent practise. My husband and Jo agreed with me that nothing could be better in order to get my parts "trippingly on the tongue" than re-

peating them for a few weeks, to less imposing audiences, before my New York engagement.

A young newspaper-man and well-known humorist, Mr. Sam Davis, also advised me to "rough it" for a while. He jokingly referred to my Irish comedian and leading man, warning me that I must watch him or else he might make funny faces during my death-scenes. Mr. Davis promised to go to Virginia City, where I was to begin my "Wild West" tour, to see me through my first trial, not knowing what effect my European manners and foreign accent would produce upon the



Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

MME. MODJESKA AS *CAMILLE*

miners. "I know them, you see," he said, "because Nevada has been my home for some time. If you could begin your plays with your death-scenes, you would make a hit at once, because they are thoroughly soft-hearted, although rough, but I do not know how your talky scenes will affect them."

My husband returned to Anaheim. The farm he had bought so easily was very difficult to sell. He hoped to get rid of it, though with loss, but as long as his duties toward the colony were not fulfilled, he had to stay with them. "I

brought them here; I have to send them back home," he argued.

"*CAMILLE*" IN VIRGINIA CITY AND  
SAN FRANCISCO

As an addition to my repertoire, I studied "*Camille*," which I had refused to play in Poland on account of its doubtful influence upon young people. I was told that it was quite popular in America,—my friends' advice overcame my scruples,—and so I chose it for my opening night in Virginia City.

Contrary to the apprehensions of Mr.



Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

MME. MODJESKA AS *ADRIENNE LECOUIREUR*, JANUARY, 1881

Davis, the performance went through without disturbance, and though my comedy *Armand* was always out of the picture, and several times I had to bite my lips at the expression of his face and his funny gestures, yet the public did not take notice of these details. They sincerely applauded the heroine, and shed copious tears over her fate. During the supper-scene of the first act, I took a look at the audience, expecting to see a very rough crowd, but I was most pleasantly surprised at the manly appearance and excellent behavior of the miners who, together with cow-boys, con-

stituted the vast majority of that picturesque and interesting assembly.

Besides "Camille," I played "Romeo and Juliet" and "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*" on the tour. Mr. Ward gave up the parts of *Romeo* and *Maurice de Saxe* to Mr. Meader, a safe and experienced actor, who was the son of that very well-known actress, Mrs. Clara Fisher Meader. The latter had been a star in her childhood, and had played with Macready. She had the most extensive Shakspearean repertoire ever known, because it included both the female and the male leading parts. In



later times she was a member of my company, and it was a pleasure for me to watch her acting and her matchless delivery of the lines.

I did not make a great hit in these smaller towns in Nevada or in California, my fame having evidently traveled at a very slow pace.

On returning to San Francisco, I learned from Mr. Barton Hill that two weeks were left in October for *Camille*, alternating with *Juliet* and *Adrienne*. This was a godsend for me, and I accepted with enthusiasm. *Camille* was a hit, and my two weeks proved a success.

(To be continued)

## A NEW DEPARTURE IN PHOTOGRAPHY

BY ROBERT WILLIAMS WOOD

Professor of Experimental Physics in the Johns Hopkins University

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR ILLUSTRATING HIS EXPERIMENTS WITH INVISIBLE LIGHT

THE majority of those to whom I have shown the photographs which illustrate this article have exclaimed: "But these are not pictures of things as they are. They are merely curious effects obtained by special apparatus."

This is a mistake, and I wish to emphasize at the outset that they give us quite as truthful representations of "things as they

are" as do ordinary photographs, or the human eye, for that matter.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to possess normal eyes are apt to feel instinctively that we see things as they are. This is a mistake. The appearance of the world at large is merely the result of the circumstance that the human eye perceives only a comparatively



PROFESSOR WOOD'S SUMMER HOME AT EAST HAMPTON, LONG ISLAND

Photographed in full sunlight by the invisible infra-red rays.