

'MODJESKA.

What a Woman of Pluck and Perseverance
Can Accomplish.

In the history of the American stage no foreign artist who has ever appeared on it came so quietly and with so little preliminary notice—in fact, none whatever—as Madame Helena Modjeska. In July, 1876, she came from Poland, her native land, in company with her husband and several Polish families, determined to seek a quiet home on the Pacific Slope. For this purpose they purchased a ranch in a secluded canyon in Southern California, about a hundred miles from Los Angeles, and there proceeded to cultivate the soil and form a Polish Colony. Success did not attend this undertaking, and the light of the Polish stage determined to try what could be done in her profession on the American, and commenced at once to study English with the aid of a private tutor. In six months she thought herself proficient enough for a first attempt, and just a year from the time of her first landing in this country she made her first application for an engagement. To Barton Hill and the late John McCullough she applied, at the California Theatre, San Francisco, which they jointly managed. Hill was at first adverse to giving the Polish actress an engagement on account of her peculiar accent and slight figure, but genial John, looking deeper than the superficialities of accent and form, saw the soul of an actress, and a dramatic soul, in the woman who stood before them in the manager's office and recited the "Two Pigeons," and gave them the dying-scene from "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and he insisted on giving her a trial. At the first rehearsal they both discovered at once that the applicant was an experienced actress, not a titled amateur as they had at first supposed, for of her fifteen years continental experience, commencing when she was a girl of seventeen, Modjeska had told them scarcely anything. The first performance ("Adrienne Lecouvreur") was a triumph, and the actress was installed at once as a favorite on the Pacific Slope. Since that August day in 1877, her successes here and in England are too familiar to the theatre-going public to need repeating. Since then she has been met in the usual way on her return from European tours, with flags and friends; public receptions have been tendered, banquets have been given, and fortune has waited upon her; but the manner of her coming was as quiet and as unostentatious as here related, and the position she now holds on the English-speaking stage, second to none, is due to her own efforts and talent, for without any heralding she came, was seen and heard, and conquered.