

Henryk Sienkiewicz¹ to Julian Horain²

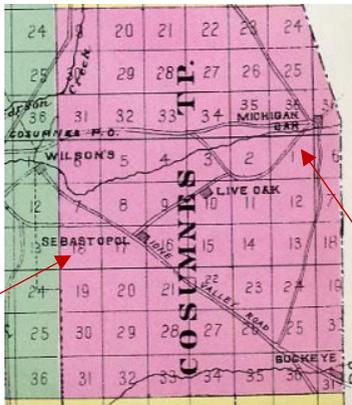
Exiles, Adventurers, Artists: Letters from Polish California, 1836-1901

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Haywood:³ April 23, 1877

Yesterday I didn't have the time to write extensively enough; today I'll make up for it. So to begin with, regarding my play,⁴ I request that you make no mention [of it] e.g., to the "*Le Petit Journal*"⁵ or anything similar. Pani⁶ Helena⁷ was so good as to promise she'd render my petrified trash into English. Which is to say I don't wish it to be known earlier than necessary that it was written by a foreigner. Don't say much about this to the Poles either. Write your thoughts to me on this, and those of Pani Helena, who on matters concerning dramatic poetry is, of course, an oracle.

Today is Monday. I didn't pick up the newspapers you wrote about, which the captain⁸ was supposed to send. All of the letters that came to Sebastopol⁹ after my departure were sent to me by Pan Franciszek,¹⁰ and I picked up all of them. Today I'm frightfully bored, since I've finished my work and I have nothing to read. I have brooded over various literary plans, which are still in a foggy state; none of them having come together in any definite form.



¹ Polish journalist and author; awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1905; see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/henryk-sienkiewicz>.

² Julian Florian Horain, Polish journalist; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Horain.pdf>.

³ A California town known variously as "Hayward's," "Heywood," "Haywood," "Haywards" (since 1876), and "Hayward" (since 1911).

⁴ *American drama (Dramat amerykański)* described by Sienkiewicz as a "critical-satirical-sentimental" play; written for Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska); the featured character, "Helena Steven," is modelled after Modjeska. Modjeska translated the play into English. The play was never published.

⁵ A daily founded in 1863 by the banker and publicist Moïse Polydore Millaud, which in the 20th century became the organ of the French Socialist Party. It ceased publishing in 1944.

⁶ Pani is a Polish term of respect, roughly equivalent to Ma'am.

⁷ Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska); see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/helena-modrzejewska-modjeska>.

⁸ Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski; born in Poland; lived in Sebastopol in Sacramento County and in San Francisco; co-founder of the Polish Society of California; served as Commissioner of Immigration; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Piotrowski%20in%20City%20Directories.pdf>.

⁹ The former mining town of Sebastopol, Cosumnes Township, in Sacramento County; the town no longer exists.

¹⁰ Captain of the Sandomierz Lancers, Franciszek Wojciechowski, aka Francis Michel or Captain Francis; a Polander who lived in Sebastopol; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Franciszek%20Michal.pdf>.

They wrote something about me in “*The Library*,”¹¹ à propos of what? Send me that issue,¹² if you can live without it. In return, I’m sending you a clipping from *The War[saw] Courier* [*Kurier Warszawski*], where there’s a reference to you and to me – in a review of Sygurd’s¹³ lecture. They censure you – of course they lift me up heavenwards, while yet conceding that Mickiewicz,¹⁴ Krasiński,¹⁵ Słowacki,¹⁶ [and]



Dr. Karol Benni arrived in New York in August 1876 and made his way to California. Newspapers note his presence in San Francisco in September of 1876. He was acquainted with a Polish resident of Mariposa, California, Aleksander Putrament, who appears in Sienkiewicz’s fiction

Kraszewski¹⁷ had some measure of talent. All joking aside, they praise you and Sygurd¹⁸ and Benni¹⁹ and me – it’s evident which way the winds are blowing in Warsaw these days. Anyhow, I couldn’t care less – amen!

¹¹ In *The Warsaw Library* [*Biblioteka Warszawa*], March 1877 (vol. I, pp. 496-497), in the Literary News Section, the following reference to Sienkiewicz appeared:

“From the first appearance in *The Polish Gazette* [*Gazeta Polska*] of a young writer using the pseudonym of Litwos, enthusiasts of our native literature have cast their attentive gaze on a fresh and powerful talent of stylistic and linguistic excellence, whose work is picturesque and occasionally stirring. The hopes placed in him for the continuing advancement of the literary craft have not been disappointed, as the aforementioned *Gazette* continues to print the engaging *Travel Letters of Litwos*, among which the author’s *American Essays* present us with his excursions through the primeval forests of that land, portrayals of untamed nature, his own impressions and the adventures he experienced. These *Letters* establish Litwos among the first rank of living prose writers.”

¹² Literally, “number.”

¹³ Sygurd Wyśniowski. In Monday’s *Warsaw Courier*, from the 14th (26th) of February, 1877 (Number 45, pp. 1-2) [the discrepancy in dates probably arises from the Julian calendar system used by Tsarist Russia], there appeared an anonymous review of the lecture by Sygurd Wyśniowski, “Colonization in the Second Hemisphere,” which begins in the following manner:

“In recent times America has become the subject of especially particular interest to Warsaw – Horain, Sienkiewicz, and most recently, Dr. Benni have dedicated their pens to jotting down observations, remarks and descriptions of a country and people belonging to the other half of the world, stirring up awe and curiosity among us, creating an uncommon study of its social mechanisms.

“The four mentioned [sur]names are for us the most credible form by which we might safely accept any news about America, not suspecting them of sham or fakery, as unfortunately we ought with many lucubrations attributed to travelers.

“Whatever they give to us – we accept as the genuine article, furnished with the trans-Atlantic seal, gathered through their own experience ‘on location,’ guaranteed by talent and intelligence.

“It’s little wonder then that Horain’s correspondence is read with such interest, that we snatch the letters of Litwos from one another’s hands, that the [public] readings of Dr. Benni and yesterday’s lecture by Sygurd Wyśniowski have filled the auditorium of [our] city hall with listeners, whose greater half consisted precisely of that half of the human species which has hitherto been the very most unlikely to arouse suspicions of harboring the weakness of any attentiveness or interest towards intellectual pursuits.”

¹⁴ Adam Mickiewicz, Polish poet, dramatist, essayist, publicist, translator, professor of Slavic literature, and political activist.

¹⁵ Zygmunt Krasiński, one of Poland’s three bards, along with Mickiewicz and Słowacki.

¹⁶ Juliusz Słowacki, Polish Romantic poet.

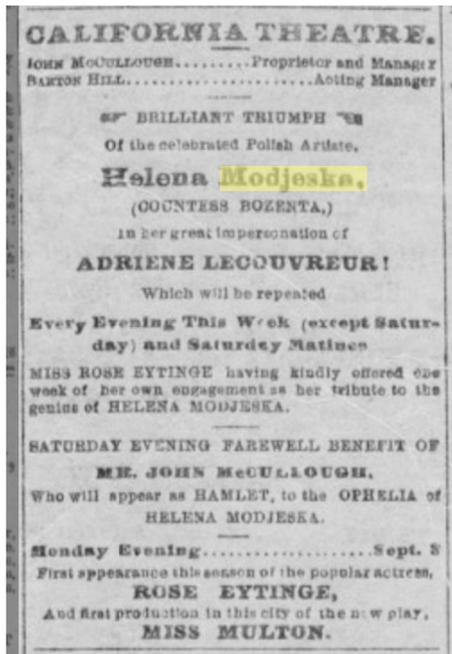
¹⁷ Józef Kraszewski, Polish writer, publisher, historian, journalist, scholar, painter and author. See: <http://cosmopolitanreview.com/the-korwin-letters/>.

¹⁸ Sygurd Wiśniowski, Polish writer, reporter, translator, novelist, columnist, traveler.

¹⁹ Dr. Karol Abraham Henryk Benni (1843-1916); Polish physician, social and economic activist; visited California in 1876; acquainted with Aleksander Putrament (<http://www.polishclubsf.org/Putrament.pdf>); the latter was a real-life character who appears in Sienkiewicz’s fiction.

It's too bad that business with Dyniewicz²⁰ was put aside or unraveled.²¹ I haven't got much in the way of work just now; the subject was agreeable – and I would have done it every bit as well as Chociszewski.²² A hundred dollars is still 100 dollars; before long I'll have to mail off to Warsaw for money again. Send me all [issues] of *Wędrowiec*²³ beginning with Number 4. I started reading the Wiśniowski story there, and it caught my interest. Write often, even every day; it's so close²⁴ that you can mail it after dinner: *bon appétit*²⁵ (or better yet, before dinner). Kiss Pani Helena's hands. Thanks again for the few words added to your letter, and I know how to value them as a true act of kindness. I also got that little note of hers, which was delayed and included with your letter. For all of this I thank you with my hands joined as in prayer.

How are her studies there going? How about the theater negotiations?²⁶ Who has she been seeing? When is she going to appear, and in what roles?²⁷ All of these are for me the most important issues and questions in the world. Tomorrow I shall start to write again – but this time it'll be something



²⁰ Władysław Dyniewicz, Chicago editor of *Gazeta Polska* [Polish Gazette].

²¹ Sienkiewicz contemplated writing an article for the *Polish Gazette* in Chicago, edited by Dyniewicz, for which he was to be paid \$100.

²² Józef Roman Chociszewski (1837-1914), a writer of the common folk; a social activist in Silesia, Greater Poland (Wielkopolska), and Pomerania; an editor of *Nadwiślanin* [≅ "One who lives along the Vistula River" – which is to Poland what the Volga is to Russia, the Ganges to India, the Mississippi to the USA] and *Przyjaciel Ludu Łecki* ["Friend of the Folk of Łecki"]; an author and publisher of popular books for the common people.

²³ *Wędrowiec* (rambler, wanderer, wayfarer, tramp), an illustrated weekly published in Warsaw by J. Unger (1863-1878) and Fr. Granowski (1898-1902), whose editors were, *inter alia*, F. Sulimierski in the years 1870-1883 and A. Gruszecki in the years 1884-1888 and in whose columns [the literary movement of] naturalism found expression. A. Dygasiński, A. Sygietyński and St. Witkiewicz worked on its editorial staff; the periodical was on a very high level. In 1877, *Children of Oceania's Queen* (*Dzieci królowej Oceanii*), a novel by Sygurd Wiśniowski, appeared in *The Rambler* (number of issues: 1-37).

²⁴ Presumably the post office.

²⁵ *Smacznego apetytu* in Polish. English has no similar expression; the French salutation, *bon appétit*, is commonly used as a salutation prior to eating.

²⁶ Modjeska was striving to get an acting engagement at San Francisco's California Theater.

²⁷ Modrzejewska (Modjeska) took English lessons from Joanna Tucholska (aka Johanna [Jo] Tucholsky; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Tucholsky.pdf>, and <http://www.polishclubsf.org/TucholskyDead.pdf>), born in Pomerania. From their first lesson, the two women read an English translation of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, a play by Eugene Scribe and Ernest Legouve (1849). On August 20, 1877, Modrzejewska appeared in the title role at San Francisco's California Theater, overcoming the resistance of the theater's acting manager, Barton Hill, who could scarcely believe her talent. The tremendous success that she achieved was decisive for her career, in America and worldwide. A brilliant article by Henryk Sienkiewicz informed readers of the *Polish Gazette* about Modrzejewska's success.

for Warsaw. With every dispatch²⁸ I feel certain that my literary fame is going to diminish, and with each new expression of praise I ask myself, who's going to be fooled? But you won't believe this modesty. When I finish what I've started, I'll call on you. Your letters, Pani Helena's note, and her postscript have made me tranquil. Regarding her I am at peace, regarding her success and everything. It's a bit lonesome here – so is the weather, ceaselessly. Shhhhh! In the evenings, someone in the photographer's tent plays on a flute – and my thoughts fly to St. Francisco [sic] – nothing else is to be heard.

A hug to you. I kiss Our Lady's hands with reverence and adoration.

Henryk

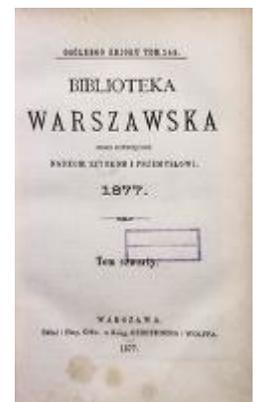
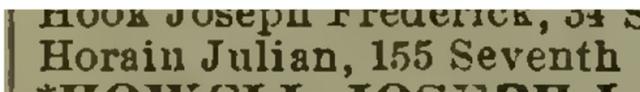
I'd like these newspapers please: “Ears of Grain [Kłosa],”²⁹ “This Week [Tygodnik],”³⁰ [and] “The Rambler [Wędrowiec],” in a word:

For dollars and grain,
For all that we can gain,
We ask³¹

(From a uniquely Cracovian Christmas tradition,³² with decorations)

Henryk

Envelope: M[onsieur] Jules de Horain Esq. via Berdyczów.³³ San Francisco, Cal., 7th Street 155.
Postmark: Haywood, Apr. 23, Cal.



²⁸ Sienkiewicz sent regular “dispatches” to Poland describing his travels in America. He wrote *Listy z podróży* (Letters from a Journey) and *Listy Litwosa z Podróży* (Litwos' Letters from a Journey), which were published in the *Polish Gazette* in 1876–78 and republished as a book in 1880. Other articles by him also appeared in *Przegląd Tygodniowy* (*The Weekly Review*) and *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki* (*The Learned and Literary Guide*).

²⁹ *Kłosa*, a Warsaw weekly dedicated to literature, science and art, edited by a committee which, until 1875, was directed by K. Wł. Wóycicki, and later by Adam Pług. Collaborators included such outstanding writers as T. T. Jeż, J. I. Kraszewski, E. Orzeszkowa, A. Sygietyński, along with painters and illustrators like Fr. Kostrzewski, K. Pillati, and others.

³⁰ *Tygodnik Illustrowany* (*This Week Illustrated*).

³¹ This ditty by Sienkiewicz repeats his desire for money and newspapers.

³² Sienkiewicz is playfully suggesting methods to secure extra income. *Szopki* are Polish Christmas creches from Kraków; performers in nativity-based plays (*Jasełki*), popular in 19th century Poland, displayed and sold their handmade *szopki* used for this street theater to earn extra income. *Szopki* were often carried door-to-door by Christmas carolers [*kolednicy*]).

³³ Jocular; “this letter is coming to you via the town of Berdyczów” – meaning it will either get lost or take months to arrive; the town was incorporated into the Russian partition of Poland; now part of Ukraine.

SOURCE:

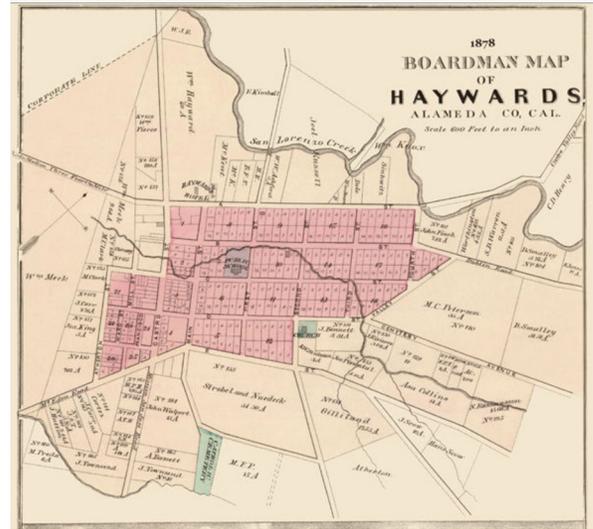
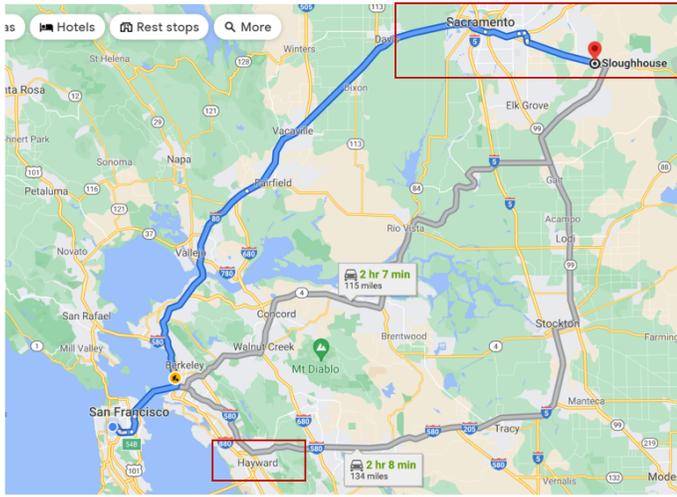
Letter #18. Henryk Sienkiewicz. *Listy*, Tom 1, Cześć 2. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1977. Online: <http://www.henryk-sienkiewicz.pl/index.php?d=dzial&id=listy>.

NOTE: The editors of this English translation have revised and augmented some of the original footnotes by Maria Bokszczanin. Some footnotes are our own.

Translated from Polish to English by **Bob Lamming**, with **Elżbieta Kieszczyńska** (Clifton, New Jersey) and edited by **Maureen Mroczek Morris** (San Francisco) with **Roman Włodek** (Kraków) and **Lynn Ludlow** (San Francisco). English summary translation kindly proffered by **Anna Samborska** (San Francisco). Translation commissioned by Maureen Mroczek Morris.

EFFORTS MADE BY THE CHINESE TO PREVENT THE EXECUTION OF THE CUBIC AIR LAW.—From the Weekly Bulletin of to-day we take the following important item: "The police made a raid Tuesday night upon the old California Hotel, corner of Dupont and Commercial streets, now used as a Chinese lodging house. Dr. Benni of Warsaw, Poland, accompanied the posse of police, and was surprised to see the small space into which the heathen crowd themselves to save sleeping room. This place was raided by the police about three months ago. Since then the Chinese have erected strong barricades at the door, consisting of upright timbers about 8 inches square placed behind the doors in such a manner that only one person at a time can enter. The officers made their descent through a skylight, and succeeded in capturing 48 persons. Eight men were found in a room containing 840 cubic feet of air; 4 in a room of 1,218 feet; 7 in a room of 1,380 feet; 8 in a room of 1,380 feet; 4 in a room of 585 feet; 5 in a room of 1,440 feet; 8 in a room of 1,587 feet, and 4 in a room of 1,380 feet."

Tocsin 28 September 1876 (San Francisco)



Sebastopol was located near today's Sloughhouse