

THE ROMANTIC LIFE STORY

MODJESKA

ADOPTED DAUGHTER OF CALIFORNIA

DURING Mrs. Patrick Campbell's last visit to the coast Mme. Modjeska went to see her performance and called upon her behind the scenes. Mrs. Campbell could not restrain an exclamation at the youth of the great artist.

"Oh, what do you do, madame," she said, "to preserve yourself so wonderfully?" Madame smiled her enigmatical little smile and said nothing.

"I could not tell Mrs. Campbell," she explained afterward, "that I preserve myself crocheting shawls for my neighbors and dressing dolls for the Bronson institute."

True—crocheting, dressing dolls for charity, mending, embroidering robes for the parish priest—these things are "rest," or what she calls so. "Rest," as the American woman understands the term, is foreign to her. She never relaxes, never retires to her darkened room, in dressing gown and slippers, with hair down, to "collect herself," or "calm herself," or "quiet her nerves." Nothing like that. "Rest" for Mme. Modjeska is—as she herself explains it—"a change in work."

"When I am tired doing one thing I turn to something else."

But she does not become tired quickly and there is always something else at hand. Never idle, never aimless, never without work ahead; it is to this practice of constantly keeping the mind occupied and interested that Mme. Modjeska perhaps owes some of her wonderful youth. She seems today a young woman, with great wells of vivacity and charm still untapped. At any rate, she is a difficult proposition for "beauty doctors" and "rest cure."

But, besides her rest, madame has her work—a difficult work—a great work—the writing of her memoirs; a life so varied, so crowded with incident, so glowing with great endeavor and great achievement, so blazoned with honor and distinction, and underneath all so sweetly simple and true—the story of a life like this to be gathered together in a volume.

Helena Modjeska was born in Cracow 65 years ago—Cracow, the heart of Poland. And today, after 30 years of life in America, an artistic success here so pronounced that Americans are apt to consider her career as their own, and with great love for America, her foster country, Madame Modjeska is at heart ardently and intensely a Pole.

When Paderewski played in Los Angeles Madame Modjeska went in from her home in Orange county to spend several days with her countryman. Polish flowed freely and the subject was mostly Poland and Poland's wrongs. Madame has not been home since her exile and Paderewski had much news.

"Oh, the injustice! the injustice!" exclaimed madame, "the great wrongs of which all the world knows, and the daily miserable, petty impositions of which the world knows nothing, but which take the heart out of the people! And the indifference of the government! Paderewski told me that when he spoke to the Russian officers of the robbery and outlawry that are going free in Warsaw all the satisfaction he got was a shrug and 'Well, if we interfere life might get too easy for you Poles!'" Madame laughed. "Too easy for us!"

During Modjeska's girlhood love for her own poor Poland and admiration for bravery and heroism were her strongest emotions. She yearned to be herself, heroic. And so it is that in her art she can portray the great heroines of history and imagination. She feels as they felt and her audience shares her inspiration.

One day a serious accident happened at Bohnia, a small provincial town where madame was then living. Several families were left without support. It was decided to give an amateur performance for their benefit. It was a modest little performance, given in a small hall. Here Modjeska made her first appearance.

Talent Instantly Recognized

It happened that in the audience was the manager of a theater in Warsaw. He came behind the scenes and asked to meet her. He told her she had talent and should go on. Encouraged by this, and with all the round success that their amateur performances had won, the five people who comprised the company decided to go on the road, with Modjeska as their star. They set forth in a large wagon to play in the small towns and villages. From this beginning Madame Modjeska soon became a provincial actress of great popularity, and finally obtained an engagement in a stock theater in Cracow. Here was an excellent company and an excellent stage manager.

The leading woman was Antoinette Hofmann (the aunt of Josef Hofmann). She was talented and beautiful and took her honors for granted.

Modjeska was talented and beautiful and ambitious. She worked hard, and was soon rivaling the leading woman in popular favor. She became recognized as an artist. Her fame spread beyond the borders of her own country, into Germany and France. L'Art, then edited by Arsene Houssaye, printed her picture as a frontispiece, with a sonnet to her art. And finally she received an invitation to the great theater at Warsaw, to appear there in three star performances.

It is the custom in Poland that when artists make a debut under a new management they appear in the leads of three plays of their own choosing. The imperial theater of Warsaw is under the management of the government, and is the greatest theater in Poland.

Before starting for Warsaw to make her debut Modjeska married Charles Bozenta Chlapowski, a member of one of the great Polish families, a litterateur and the editor of the leading paper in Cracow.

Madame's first appearance in Warsaw was a great trial and a great triumph. The established artists of the theater resented her intrusion in their midst. The press shared their jealousy; the whole atmosphere was against her, but the theater was crowded. Artists came and students came and society came—society, curious to see the actress, who as the Countess Chlapowska was one of them. She chose as her premiere "Adrienne Lecouvreur." Warsaw still remembered Rachel in the part. The test was difficult and decisive. After the performance the audience would not leave the theater, but remained to clap and wave handkerchiefs and shout "bravos!"

The next morning's papers devoted

artists who came to Warsaw were her guests—Liszt, the Rubinstains, the De Reszkes, Sienkiewicz, and many others; not only the artists who had "arrived," but the young and unknown, who got from Mme. Modjeska and her husband great help and encouragement in their careers.

Through overwork and nervous worry, madame became seriously ill. The ignorant Russian censors caused her great annoyance. She seemed unable in the environment of petty jealousy and envy to recover her strength and spirits. She longed for rest. Like poor immigrants, worn by the drudgery and oppression of their own country, the eyes of this great woman and her husband turned to America. Other artists, to whom this life of oppression and repression had become intolerable, joined with them. It was decided to form a small artistic colony in America.

The California Colony Sienkiewicz, who was young and unknown, not yet having written "Quo

This Article Is Written by a Member of the Great Actress' Household at "Arden," Near Los Angeles



PRESSES DOLLS FOR THE BRONSON INSTITUTE.



WRITES HER MEMOIRS.



Madame HELENA MODJESKA Today

benefit, where she gave the mad scene in Polish. In 1888 she made a tour of America with Edwin Booth in the never to be forgotten "Booth-Modjeska" combination. Before this, in 1880, she had gone to London and won another triumph before another audience. She became very much the rage in London and while before her debut she was so foreign to the people that Punch, commenting upon the billboards announcing simply "Modjeska," wanted to know if it was something good to eat. After her success there her name became the popular one for all manner of goods desiring advertisement. Her genius won recognition from Edward, then the prince, and he occupied a box at every first performance of a new play.

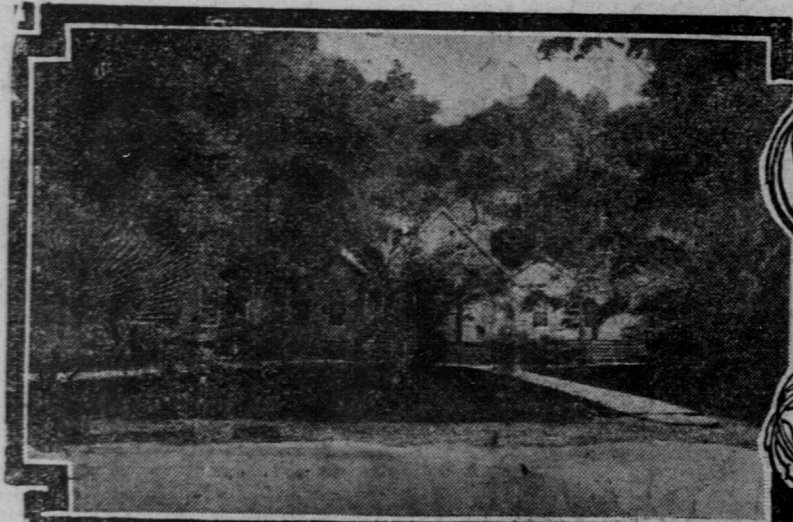
The Los Angeles Home

But America is Modjeska's foster country. Here in California she has practically made her home since the first venture of that Utopian colony. In the hills in the south there is a beautiful ranch, known as Arden, famous for its roses, its trees, its fountains and for the charming house, one of the first of the bungalow style to be introduced in America, and designed for her by the late Stanford White. Here, until within a year, madame made her home. Now she has come nearer to civilization and has a beautiful country home out of Los Angeles. Here she entertains almost all the artists that appear in the south. Ethel Barrymore spends much of her time with her when playing in Los Angeles, as Mme. Modjeska is her godmother. Madame tells an interesting story of how Ethel and Lionel Barrymore happened to be baptized in the Catholic church. One day Georgie Drew was going along a crowded street in New York with her two children and suddenly discovered that they had both disappeared. She retraced her steps anxiously, but could not find them. She telephoned to the police and a thorough search was started, but nothing could be found of the two children. They had mysteriously disappeared. Finally, several hours later, when the mother with an officer was going once more along the street where she had missed them she saw, sitting on the steps of the great cathedral there, hand in hand and gazing with wide eyes into the dusk, the two little missing Barrymores.

They had darted from her side into the church and, fascinated by the splendor and the coloring within, had contentedly remained there to play. The mother, thinking this was, perhaps, some little sign, had her children received into the church, with Mrs. Modjeska and Count Chlapowski as their godparents.

Two years ago Mme. Modjeska retired from the stage. Each day she writes all morning and often all day. In the evening she believes in diversion—music, reading aloud, or cards. She is an expert bridge player, and although she enjoys the game she seldom plays in the afternoon. "The day," she says, "can offer more profitable employment, but in the evening, when the day's work is done, one needs some relaxation of the sort." Some one said that bridge is not much of a relaxation as it is played now, but it always is for madame, except when she played with Paderewski. "He plays such an excellent game, such a remarkable game, that I become nervous when I play opposite him, because I know he sees all my mistakes."

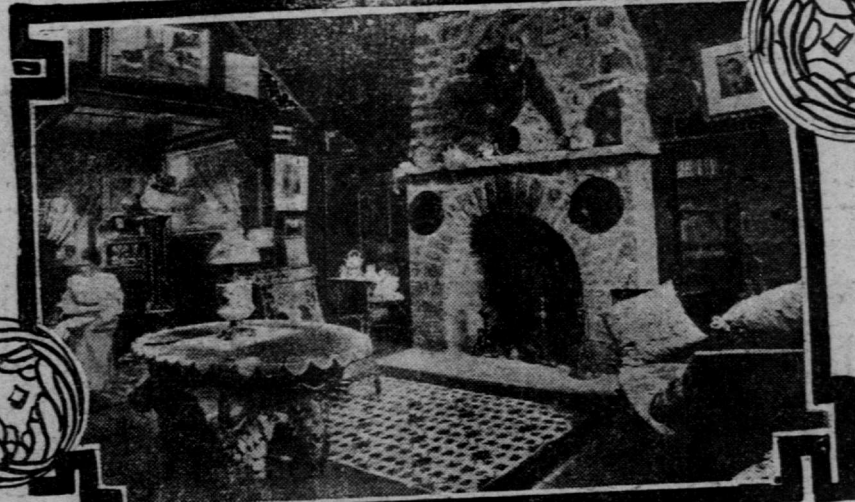
And so the acclamations of enthusiastic crowds, the clapping of hands and waving of handkerchiefs, the bravos, the encores, the calls and calls before the curtain—all are over. In the full of orange groves, under the serene sky of California, Mme. Modjeska quietly and beautifully lives the days; always busy, always gay, always charming.



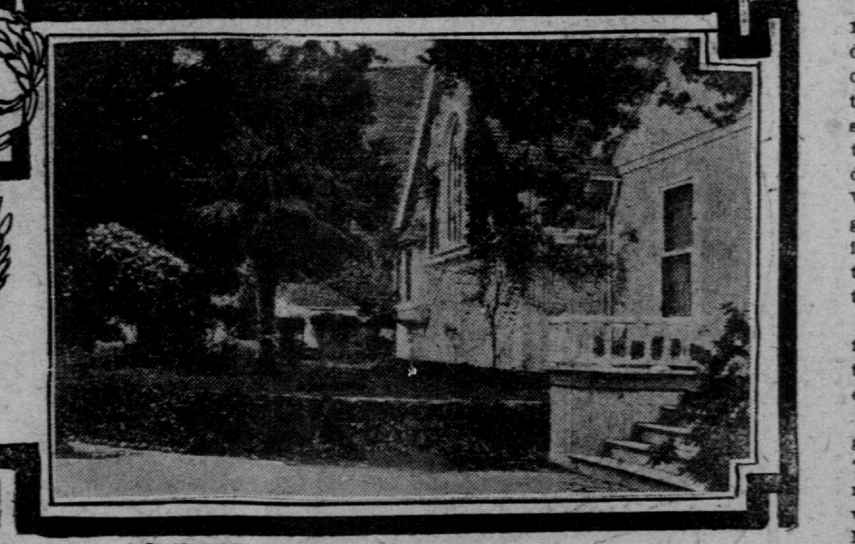
MADAME MODJESKA'S HOME IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.



MADAME MODJESKA at the FOUNTAIN near her HOME near SANTA ANA.



LIBRARY AT MADAME MODJESKA'S HOME.



ANOTHER VIEW OF "ARDEN"

cellent cigarettes. But after a while life began to pall. Washing linen in the creek wasn't so very much fun, after all. Perhaps if the maid were more capable, things would have been easier. Madame tells that the first morning, when her husband asked the maid if the breakfast eggs were hard, she said, "Of course they were—they were hard when she put them in." She did not even know that the inside of an egg is not always hard as the shell.

Sienkiewicz became tired of the primitive life. He could not understand Americans, so he returned to Poland.

The ranch, under artistic management, produced nothing, and although the sun still shone and the birds still sang, the excellent coffee and cigarettes were getting low. Madame decided to take action. Her plan was nothing less than to learn English and to appear on the American stage.

To any one at all acquainted with the Polish language the immensity of her task at once presents itself. Furthermore, although her art was continually known, her name was unknown to America. Undaunted, and with that keen determination which was one of her most striking qualities, she came to San Francisco. She obtained apartments in a private house. Downstairs she heard, several times, a woman speaking English in very clear and musical tones. Madame was attracted by her voice. She found that

its owner was a girl of about 16, an almost daily visitor at the house; so madame engaged the girl to teach her English. She made a very fortunate choice. This girl, Miss Johanna Tucholsky, spoke a singularly clear and pure English. She became very much interested in her task and very much in love with the "foreign countess."

Modjeska did not, at first, attempt to learn English to understand it. Her aim was to pronounce it. She took the parts of the plays in which she wished to appear and learned to pronounce, word by word, their English version. She would work all day and, after her young teacher left, far into the night, alone. In three months she had accomplished her task. Meanwhile she had the difficulty of securing an engagement. Who was going to listen seriously to a woman who proposed to play great parts in a language in which she could not express herself in simple conversation? Finally her young teacher obtained a hearing for her from Barton Hill. He was unwilling at first even to consider giving his time, but finally was persuaded, thinking it would perhaps be interesting, if not amusing. He did not consider the try-out worthy of a theater, so used a small hall near his office.

Tried Out in San Francisco

Modjeska came with the girl, and with no preliminary—she could say so little in English—they went to the farther end of the little hall.

Barton Hill lounged drowsily near the door. Madame had chosen the last act of "Adrienne." Her teacher read all the opposite parts from the book, stumbling along toward the last between sobs that madame's art produced in her. Hill was crying, too. When it was over he rushed forward to greet the artist, and on madame's asking if he thought she could have the theater for a night, he insisted on her taking it for one or two weeks.

She began work at once. After the first rehearsal John McCullough said to her: "Madame, you are the greatest artist I have ever seen."

So Madame Modjeska obtained an engagement. Here it was that the name "Modjeska" was coined. Madame's name in Polish, and the name under which she was known in Europe was Madame Modrzejewska. From that, for American use, Barton Hill evolved "Modjeska."

After a wonderfully successful debut in San Francisco, an engagement which lasted two weeks and was decisive in madame's American career, a short tour through California and Nevada was decided upon in order that she might perfect herself in her roles in the new language. When in Nevada madame visited the famous Comstock mine. She was the guest on this occasion of Sam Davis. When they were in the superintendent's office, before starting down into the mine, a very handsome man came in, dressed elegantly but in a picturesque and original miner's outfit. He stood around as though waiting for something, but Davis made no effort to introduce him. When they started down into the mine he went with them and took charge of the party, taking them to everything of interest and explaining all with great knowledge to Mme. Modjeska. When they were again in the superintendent's office and were preparing to leave madame slipped a dollar to this man whose courtesy had been so marked. He blushed, stammered, shot one indignant glance at Davis, but shook his head before the money in madame's palm. "It was James K. Fair, the millionaire mine owner. When Davis told the story afterward he said it was the only dollar he had ever known Fair to refuse."

After this madame went to New York, and there definitely established herself as an American actress. But before this, soon after her first appearance in San Francisco, she played "Ophelia" for John McCullough at his