

MODJESKA'S MEMOIRS

THE RECORD OF A ROMANTIC CAREER

V—SUCCESS IN LONDON

BY HELENA MODJESKA

AN INTRODUCTION TO LONDON SOCIETY

IN January, 1880, my husband went to London to see the theatrical managers about an opening for me. He could do little in the matter, for the managers refused to go into transactions before seeing my work, but he made several valuable acquaintances.

The first person who called on us when, a month later, we reached London, was Mr. Hamilton Aïdé, whom my husband had met on his previous visit. Every one in the eighties knew Mr. Aïdé, and I do not need to describe that ever-youthful man, a friend and patron of artists, an artist himself, and a dilettante in letters. He at once arranged a reception for us in his handsome rooms, and asked me if I should like to recite before his guests, who were mostly literary men and women, artists, and society people. I told him that I had never recited in English, and informed him of my theory about recitations in a foreign language.

"Do you recite in Polish?" he asked.

"Of course I do," was my reply, and I promised to recite my favorite poem, "Hagar in the Desert," by Ujejski.

When we entered the reception-room, I experienced for the first time in my life that most unpleasant sensation of being observed as an interesting object of curiosity. Against all rules of good breeding and politeness, they looked me over from head to foot with their lorgnettes, and their supercilious smile was wholly irritating. After a short musical program I was asked to recite, and, to my surprise I saw the same ladies who had looked me over drop their lorgnettes in their laps and wipe their eyes. "What made them

cry?" I asked myself, since they did not understand a word of my recitation. Was it because, moved by the inflections of my own voice, I really felt the intensity of that ancient tragedy?

A RECEPTION AT LORD TENNYSON'S

AMONG Mr. Aïdé's guests we met Lionel Tennyson and his exquisite wife, and a few days later we received an invitation to an evening reception at Alfred Tennyson's house.

My heart was beating fast when I entered the presence of the great man, and I could say but little when he greeted me with a cordial, strong grasp of his hand. I was looking for the hostess; he guessed my thought, and led me to the other end of the room, where a delicate-looking, sweet woman lay on her back on a narrow couch. There was something so appealing and touching in her frail person that when she extended her hand to me, I instinctively knelt down beside her couch, as I would at the bedside of some dear, sick friend. I saw her smooth cheeks blush faintly, and I rose instantly, remembering that anything demonstrative was regarded as out of place among English people. I said faintly, "Pardon me," and accepted Mr. Lionel's chair, which he had placed for me near his mother's couch.

There were many distinguished persons in the room: Frederick Locker, Dean Stanley, John Everett Millais, the great artist, who invited us to his studio; and several others belonging to the aristocratic or diplomatic world. Hallam Tennyson, the elder son, was also present. He helped his father in receiving the guests, and seemed altogether to be his right hand.

The illustrious poet greeted all who came in with pleasant or jocular remarks. He asked me a few questions about Poland. As I could not speak calmly about my country, I preferred not to speak at all, and only told Mr. Tennyson I had read his "Poland," and thanked him for the memorable words:

. . . Us, O Just and Good,
Forgive, who smiled when she was torn in
three,

which I recited, trembling all over. Seeing how stirred I was, he suddenly changed the subject.

His tall figure dominated every other man in the room; his high forehead, and the noble, proud, and detached expression of his eyes made me think of some legendary god who descended to earth, lived and moved among mankind, but whose spirit remained in his ancestral home.

ENGAGEMENT AT THE COURT THEATRE

HERE follow many extracts of letters written by me to my mother and friends. They give my impressions more vividly than more formal writing would now do.

"Yesterday, standing at the foot of Nelson's statue, I looked up and imagined I saw on the lips of the great Englishman an ironical smile, as much as to say, What do you want here, little fly? And, indeed, I seem to myself nothing but a fly—a poor fly with wilted wings. If I survive, it will be simply providential. I hope to play here in a few weeks or months, who can tell? Oh, if I could sleep at least three months, study in dream, act in dream, and wake up when all is over, somewhere in the Tatra Mountains or in the chestnut alleys of Cracow!"

"I am engaged for twelve performances by Wilson Barrett, the manager of the Court Theatre. We chose 'Diane de Lys' for the début. The company is fairly well organized, and the production will be magnificent, as far as the small stage will allow."

"My first appearance will take place early in May. In the meantime I spend six or seven hours a day in studying English. I want to be worthy of myself and of the appreciation of the great Albion; I

want to touch these people's hearts and see tears in their eyes."

"You would laugh to see my advertisements—nothing but Modjeska in letters three feet long. We often stand near by to listen to the remarks of the passers-by. Some of them, having read the name, ask each other: 'What is it? Is it alive?' Others remark to their friends that it surely must be some new tooth-powder, or some sanitary cereal, or a medicine for rheumatism."

"My name is less known here than that of the ruler of the smallest of the Fiji Islands; still, I have the audacity to brave the audience by giving them samples of my native art—and my individuality. Will any one care? I tremble at the prospect of my failure; yet, the stronger my fear, the stronger is my desire to reach the goal. And mind, I have no doubt concerning my value, only a dread of not feeling at home on the English stage. Had I been an English woman, all would have been so easy!"

A SUCCESSFUL DÉBUT IN LONDON

My London début took place earlier than I expected. At that time Mr. Barrett had a successful play running at the Court Theatre,—*"The Banker's Daughter,"*¹ if I am not mistaken,—and he did not think it would be prudent to take it off the bills until he was quite sure of my success. Therefore he proposed to me to play six matinée performances first. I had no choice, and we decided to open on Monday, May 1, in *"La dame aux camélias,"* under the title of *"Heartsease."*

"*'Morituri te salutant.'* With this quotation I had begun my letter last Friday, the fourteenth; but when I reread it, I found it was too morbidly sad, and I burned it up.

"To-day I can write without laments, for I have conquered. Do I feel happier now? I cannot tell. Life is strange, after all. Yesterday the public received me with more than approbation. After the last act many of them waved their handkerchiefs to me. The Prince and Princess of Wales [the present King and Queen] also applauded warmly; and I—I thought of you all, and regretted that Warsaw is so far, and that it is impossible to drive from Hoza Street to London.

¹ The title of Bronson Howard's play as given in New York; in London it was called *"The Old Love and the New."*

"My success surpassed all my expectations; every one here seems to think it quite extraordinary, and my manager has already numerous projects concerning my future. Perhaps I shall be obliged to keep

other Shakspearean plays. It is a great temptation."

THE PRINCE OF WALES

"I WAS very nervous before the first performance of 'Heartsease,' but when I was on the stage I was happy, and the play went on smoothly. I kept the reins of my part tight and remained correct. There was a great deal of weeping in the audience during the third and the last act. My eyes also were moist, but I kept full control over my voice.

"During the first performance of 'Heartsease,' the Prince of Wales came to my dressing-room with Count Jaraczewski, whom the Prince called by the pet name of 'Sherry Whisky,' though, as became royalty, he was trained to pronounce the most difficult foreign names with ease and right inflection on the proper syllable. The Prince was grandly simple and cordial, very complimentary, and yet reserved."



Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

MME. MODJESKA AS *MARIA STUART*

playing on the same part till the end of July.

"I also have letters from Russia. They want me to play there with a Polish company; but I don't think I shall have time to do so, because I must be back in London next autumn and remain here probably until Christmas. They speak of 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Cymbeline,' and

the most friendly disposition toward me, and I was living in a blessed atmosphere of art, peace, and good fellowship, never dreaming that those feelings might one day change their aspect.

IRVING'S *SHYLOCK*

NEXT day, after the performance, a box for the Lyceum Theatre was sent to us.



MISS ELLEN TERRY IN "THE BELLE'S STRATAGEM"

From the collection of Mr. Edward T. Mason.

Though I felt tired, I could not resist Mr. Irving's kindness, and we saw him in *Shylock*. In one of the letters to my Polish friends I wrote:

" . . . The news of my success had already spread, and at the entrance to the theater we met a gentleman in a most correct evening dress, with an exquisite bouquet of white flowers, which he offered me, with a hearty welcome, in Mr. Irving's name.

"When I saw this artist first in 'Vanderdecken,' his peculiarities suited his part. He was unusual, fantastic, and I liked him from the beginning to the end of the play. In the part of *Shylock*, how-

ever, it was different: the extravagant way of accentuation, the artificial gestures and gait, his breathless voice, and altogether the lack of simplicity, made me wonder for a while why the English public admired this eccentric man. During the second act I began to be used to his ways, and in the *Tubal* scene a shiver ran through me when, after the outburst of hatred and anger, the stern Jew, apparently without any human feeling in his heart, buried his face in his hands and sobbed. When he looked up, his superb, dark eyes were shining with ill-omened light, and a wonderful change transfigured his features. The painted lines of his face,

the wretched delivery, the stiff countenance, the unpleasant, hollow voice—all those deficiencies disappeared, and I saw only the Jew *Shylock*; not a modern one, but *Shylock* of the sixteenth century, the vision of the past, strange, but powerful and fascinating. Such is Irving.

"Those who judge him superficially, and cannot overlook his peculiarities, do not like him; but those who once are touched by his mental and occult powers, must admire him without restriction.

"His exit in the court-scene is very fine—no exaggeration, no contortions. He leaves the stage with one prolonged look at his enemies—a look of despair, hatred, disdain, what you will. Disdain, I believe, is predominant.

"The Jew at that moment looks more like an outraged lord than a money-lender, but the effect is most artistic."

"HEARTSEASE" THE FASHION

I HAD stipulated with Mr. Wilson Barrett to play three weeks in matinées, but at the end of the second week he said to me that, owing to my success, he was willing to put "Heartsease" on for the evening performances. He hoped it might run until the first of July or longer.

The play was a genuine success. The management was obliged to fill the pit with seats, and the ten-shilling tickets were sold for a guinea. Heartsease became a fashionable flower. The critics were very kind to me, especially the most important ones, as Labouchere, Joseph Knight, Sala, and Clement Scott.

ONE CAMILLE COMMENDED BY ANOTHER

LONDON, during the spring season, has always been an international point of meeting for celebrities. One evening the great French critic, Francisque Sarcey, who happened to be in London at the time, came to my performance and wrote a flattering criticism about me. It was he who induced Sarah Bernhardt to see me, and the wonderful creature appeared in the box at the end of the second act. She was dressed in a cascade of black jet, and her small cameo-like head, with its mass of golden hair, attracted every one's attention.

A bouquet of white camellias from her was brought to my dressing-room, and during the fourth act my husband went to thank her in my name. He told me afterward that as soon as she saw me in my ball-dress, very much décolleté and without sleeves, according to the fashion of 1880, she exclaimed, "Mais votre femme est aussi maigre que moi!"

Sarah was, indeed, very thin at the time, and many amusing stories about her slender figure circulated among people. Some of them were told by herself.

After the play she came to my dressing-room, and said she cried during the last act. This was most flattering. We spoke of the play. She remarked with her usual grace that I made the third act interesting and dramatic. She never before liked that act, she said; it seemed to her tame. She also liked my letter-writing scene. Her talk was vivacious and interesting. She seemed to be filled with art to her fingertips, and her visit dwelt on my mind as that of one of the gods.

VISITORS AT THE THEATER

AMONG the French celebrities who visited London was Gustave Doré, a famous artist, yet simple and warm-hearted, loving his home, and speaking about his mother with adoration. "She comes first," he said, "and then my art." She was ill at that time, and he shortened his London visit to hasten to her bedside.

Bastien-Lepage also came to see me after the performance. I was fascinated by his waggish mood. He touched all the objects on my dressing-table, making amusing remarks, then suddenly stopped, looked straight in my face with his sharp, observing eyes, and smiled critically, I thought. I asked him if it was my "make-up," or, rather, the absence of it, that amused him. He immediately took a blue-and-brown pencil from the table, and put a few lines about my eyes, nostrils, and cheeks.

The change was wonderful. "Now you are ready for the coffin," he said, and laughed. "But never mind; your acting was quite convincing without that," he added seriously.

One evening Mr. Wilson Barrett came in between acts and said that there was a crazy man in front. He asked me not to be frightened if I saw any commotion or

heard loud talking, for it was most probable that the man would have to be removed from the theater.

"He shows signs of great displeasure when the curtain goes up; and only when you come on, he listens quietly, and applauds vigorously after each act, throwing satisfied glances at the audience; but as soon as the orchestra begins to play, he grows red with anger, springs up in his chair, and runs out of the hall swearing in German. I heard him say *verflucht!* and *verdamm!* He remained till the beginning of the next act, walking up and down in the street. He repeats this performance after each act, and grows more uncontrollable every time."

Next day the mystery was disclosed when Hans von Bülow's card was brought up to our room. His first words were congratulations and most hearty greetings; but immediately afterward there was an explosion:

"Why do you allow that *Esel* of a leader to murder Chopin between the acts? I know he does it to flatter your patriotic feelings, but the *Schafskopf* has not the faintest idea of rhythm or harmony. It is a sacrilege, a *Katzenmusik*. My ears are sore from it even now. I was very angry last night, and were it not for you, I should have left the theater after the first notes of that stupid orchestra."

"Heartsease" ran until the first of July.

CONGRATULATIONS FROM LONGFELLOW

ABOUT this time I received the following letter from Longfellow:

Cambridge, July 6, 1880.

DEAR MME. MODJESKA:

I am delighted to receive your letter; to know that you are well, and to have again your address, so that a kind greeting from me may reach you.

My last was directed to the American Agency, Strand, London, so that it might meet you on your arrival; but I fear it never found you. It was in answer to yours from Leopold; and told you how heartily I rejoiced in your triumph at Krakow, during the fête in honor of Kraszewski.

Now I can add my congratulations on your equally triumphal entry into London. How pleasant it is to be able to say, "I told

you so!" And did I not tell you so? Am I not worthy to be counted among the Minor Prophets? I cannot tell you how greatly rejoiced I am at this new success, this new wreath of laurel.

But one thing in your letter saddens me. It is where you say that you have postponed your return to America till next year. As birds in Norway fly swiftest when the days are shortest, so swifter and swifter fly the years as we grow old, and life grows shorter. But when you *do* return it shall be a holiday in this house.

I am very glad that you have seen Mrs. Mackintosh, and Lord Houghton, and that they have been kind to you. How could they be otherwise?

Equally so will be Lord Rosebury, when he comes to town. He has come to town; he has been kind to you.

Thanks for your kind thoughts of me, Dear Mme. Modjeska; count me always among your best friends; always among your devoted admirers.

My daughters join me in kind remembrance, and with best regards to your husband, I am,

Ever yours,

Henry W. Longfellow.

When I read this kind message I cried for joy and gratitude.

MARIA STUART

A CONTRACT for a year with Mr. Barrett was signed by me, and after a very short and prosperous provincial tour we returned to London, where I played *Maria Stuart* for the opening of the winter season. The critic of the "Times" did not approve of me this time, neither did he of Schiller's play—on account of its religious views. But Joseph Knight gave me a splendid notice, calling my performance "an event in the history of the stage." Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Sala, and Clement Scott were also exceedingly kind.

The Prince of Wales came several times to the play. He was in sympathy with *Maria Stuart*, and he found the quarrel between the two queens "rather refreshing."

THE "IRRESISTIBLE" ELLEN TERRY

ELLEN TERRY, who had returned from a provincial tour and was playing with



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FORBES-ROBERTSON AS *ROMEO*

Henry Irving in some short piece, came to see the last act of "*Maria Stuart*," and called at my dressing-room after the performance. She was accompanied by Charles Coghlan, who was then without an engagement.

It seems that, hearing about a foreign actress playing *Maria Stuart*, she took me for Mme. Janauschek, who had played it once or twice in London, and came with a preconceived idea that I was a stout woman. Her first movement when she entered my room, and was introduced by Coghlan, was to feel my arm and say, "I was told that you were stout, but I see you are not." Then she stepped back and looked at me again. "But perhaps you are. I cannot see your form under this voluminous garment."

Whoever has met Ellen Terry knows that she is irresistible, and I liked her

from the first. We had a long chat, and parted friends.

During my London engagement I saw her in several parts, but I admired her most in "*Much Ado About Nothing*" and in the last act of "*The Merchant of Venice*." Her stage appearance was strikingly beautiful. The ease, the abundance of gestures, and even the nervous restlessness which never leaves her, fitted the part, and her spirit, the sparkling repartee, the mischievous, though good-natured, fun, were captivating. I never saw a better performance; her *Beatrice* was perfectly fascinating.

THE OTHER SIDE OF SUCCESS

IN December, "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*" followed "*Maria Stuart*." This is what I wrote about the performance in a letter to Poland:

“ . . . The criticisms are unanimous this time, and those who like me are proud of me. I am neither proud nor happy, I am only tired. Last night I cried after the performance; I thought of you all

tery, and not desire anything more of myself! If I could enjoy the present moments sincerely, foolishly; gather the flowers I find on my path of life! But there is a saying that there are creatures



From a photograph, copyright, 1889, by Napoleon Sarony

BENOÎT-CONSTANT COQUELIN AS *MASCARILLE*, IN
MOLIÈRE'S "LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES"

. . . Please excuse this shaky writing; the last act of *Adrienne* exhausts me."

Another letter:

"Yes, I live and move; my heart aches, but my strength grows, for I want it for a still higher flight. . . .

"Ah, if I could be satisfied and contented in the midst of applause and flat-

in whose hands flowers wither at a touch. I belong to those. Every pleasure ceases to be a real pleasure the moment I begin to taste it. There is nothing of interest to me save my work, and I am sure that even at the last moment of my life I shall cry not like Goethe, 'More light!' but 'Work! work! more work!'

"This will seem to you like a touch of

the contagious influence of 'Enfant du Siècle.' But you must not misunderstand me. I am contented with my 'intime' life, to which I do not refer here. But I have two lives, and one is so different from the other that the transition oftentimes is puzzling, if not painful."

A "FOREIGNER" IN SHAKSPERE

MR. BARRETT asked me one day if I should like to play "Romeo and Juliet." I went to Mrs. Sterling and asked her if she would correct my English. She consented, and for four weeks I worked with her. She gave me a great deal of encouragement. I needed it.

"Romeo and Juliet" was put on at the Court Theatre, and called forth many notices, some good and some adverse, as might have been expected by a foreigner "tackling" Shakspeare; but Mr. Sala wrote a most judicious account of my *Juliet*, pointing out my balcony-scene. Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Joseph Knight, and Mr. Clement Scott also dealt most kindly with me, and all spoke of my improved English.

Forbes-Robertson was an admirable *Romeo*, full of passion, poetry, and in the last scenes restrained pathos. Mr. Wilson Barrett had engaged him to play *Maurice de Saxe* in "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and retained him for *Romeo*. It was a very good choice, for there was no actor at that time in London who could even approach him in the part of that typical lover, for which he was admirably suited. Mr. Ryder was an excellent *Friar*, and Mr. Barrett a successful *Mercutio*.

Shortly after my first performance of the play, "Romeo and Juliet" was announced at the Lyceum Theatre, with Henry Irving as *Romeo* and Ellen Terry as *Juliet*.

DISTINGUISHED HOSTS AND GUESTS

AT the beginning of the winter season of 1880 we had moved to Sloane Street. When we were well established, we resumed the afternoon receptions left off in New York. We made many friends, and also had opportunities of meeting the local celebrities.

I have rather a confused recollection of our social life in London. I recall the sweet face of Mrs. Jeune [Lady Jeune,

now Lady St. Helier]. At her five o'clocks we met Mr. Justin McCarthy, the well-known historian, author, and home-ruler; the famous statesman, Mr. Chamberlain; and Sir Charles Dilke, whose striking intellect and extensive knowledge in matters of art and political conditions were easy to recognize. I remember playing at Mrs. Jeune's house, for one of her charities, a one-act piece in French, with Mr. Pierre Berton, the well-known French actor and author.

I can see even now Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Bright, with whom we used to go to Parliament to hear Mr. Gladstone speak, and I remember clearly the impression the Grand Old Man's beautiful language, convincing logic, and distinctness of utterance made on me. Mr. Jacob Bright was a brother of the great John Bright. While not so well known as his distinguished brother, he was much pleasanter personally, a man of high culture, for many years a member of Parliament, and a great advocate of women's suffrage.

We met a great many distinguished people at the house of Lady Henniker. Among them the celebrated General Wolseley, who asked me, in jest, I suppose, if I should like the English army to come over and fight for Poland against Russia. I told him that we were more afraid of our friends than of our enemies, to whom we had become more or less used, and I reminded him of the way in which the great Napoleon had played the hopes of the Poles, only to frustrate them in the end.

We assisted at several gorgeous social receptions, but they have left on me only a confused impression. But one figure stands out clearly, that of Mr. Gilbert, the playwright, leaning against the light background of the room, and looking picturesque, though he did not wish to.

A very hospitable house was that of Mrs. Tennant, where I had an opportunity of hearing M. Coquelin recite. His delivery of verses I regarded always as of unequaled perfection, and every time I heard him I brought home the most delightful impression.

AN INTERESTING PARTY FOR THE PRINCE OF WALES

THE most interesting party I assisted at was one given by Mr. Hamilton Aïdè in

honor of the Prince of Wales, for which Mr. Aidé had written a short play, in which I took part. Miss Genevieve Ward, who made such a hit in "Forget Me Not," also took part in the entertainment, after which supper was served. I was seated next to the Prince, and had as vis-à-vis the most beautiful Lily Langtry. This gave me an opportunity to have a good look at her perfect neck and shoulders. I had met Mrs. Langtry several times before, and remember how, one evening, after "Romeo and Juliet," she came to my dressing-room and put on her head the wreath of small white roses that I wore in the tomb scene; she also tried on the skull-cap that I introduced in *Juliet*, and looked so bewitching in both that I asked her if she never had a tendency for the stage. She smiled and said, "Yes; it would be nice to be an actress." The charming Mrs. Cornwallis West, then Lady Randolph Churchill, with her miniature beauty, sat near by. Between Genevieve Ward and me was a Russian nobleman whose name I forget. The supper was animated. My husband, who at the end of the play had slipped away to smoke a cigarette, came in when everybody was seated. The Prince perceived him and said to me, "There is M. Chlapowski." He pronounced the name perfectly, with a Polish inflection on the second syllable and with the hard "l" so difficult to foreigners. I was amazed at the Prince's memory of faces and names, for he had met my husband only once before.

Seeing him now approaching our table, the Prince bowed, slightly waving his hand to him. My husband, who is very near-sighted, thought that some one of his friends was greeting him, and sent back to the Prince a most familiar wave of the hand. When he came nearer and recognized the Prince, he apologized, and both had a good laugh over the mistake.

The Prince spoke to me about the drama. He said that dramatic art was not yet in its full development in England. I suggested the founding of an endowed national theater, such as all other countries in Europe possess. His answer was discouraging. "Do you think there is enough love for art in the Anglo-Saxon race to



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MRS LILY LANGTRY

make the theater a state affair?" There was no answer to that.

AMERICANS IN LONDON

FROM time to time we met Americans. At Mr. Smalley's we met Julian Hawthorne. Mr. Nadal, of the American legation, whom we had known before in New York, introduced to me the poet Lowell, who was then the American minister. Our sincere admiration for Lowell's poems soon made us good friends, so much so

that when on one occasion I introduced him to my son, then nineteen years old, he called me outright "a humbug." Could one expect a more friendly or more familiar compliment?

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder, on their return from their Continental tour, stayed a short time in London. It was a joy to meet them. Charles de Kay also arrived, and we went together to see Mr. Irving's production of "The Corsican Brothers." I love a good melodrama, though I do not like to play in one, and Mr. Irving was so captivating that we went to see the play at least five times.

IN FAMOUS STUDIOS

I RECOLLECT Mr. and Mrs. Millais, both tall and finely built. Though youth had fled, the traces of beauty were still apparent in their features. In Millais's studio I admired greatly, among other pictures, Lord Beaconsfield's portrait. I also remember the charming moments at Sir Frederick Leighton's sumptuous studio and his beautiful decorative works.

Of all artistic houses, Alma-Tadema's was the most attractive. We found both the great artist and his golden-haired wife most congenial and hospitable. The house was an attraction in itself, with its onyx windows, the wonderful pictures, the gilded and exquisitely painted piano, the small fountain among the tropical plants, the odd furniture, the rare vases, and all sorts of valuable bric-à-brac, and everything scrupulously clean. The predominant shade in the house was gold. I heard Tadema say that London atmosphere was so dull that he had to create an artificial sunshine in his house by putting in it as much gold as he could. Indeed, even on a dark winter day the onyx window flooded the living-room with a soft yellow light, making everything look bright and warm. The love for color, especially warm color, so characteristic of his exquisite pictures, could be noticed everywhere.

As befits a son of Holland, his predilection for cleanliness is not only a remarkable feature of the house, but also a distinctive trait of his works. There is no suggestion of sad grayish, smutty tints in his clear landscapes, his blue skies, his white marbles (oh, how gloriously white!). And this cleanliness extends equally to

his moral nature. One cannot imagine him painting anything repelling or suggestive.

One of the first living artists, Alma-Tadema was one of the most charming of hosts. His house was open to all foreign artists of note who came to London, not only painters, but sculptors, musicians, and occasionally actors. It was my good fortune to meet this great artist and his wife at the very beginning of my London engagement, and the happy hours spent in their hospitable home belong to my pleasant memories of London.

One morning we visited Burne-Jones's simple rooms, flooded with light. I was deeply impressed, and a feeling of veneration filled my heart when I stood before the pictures, known by me till then in reproductions only. His art satisfied the most exalted desires of my soul and imagination.

Whistler's pictures were on exhibition then, and we went to see them. They struck me as being exquisitely odd and most interesting. We met the artist. His appearance was also very striking. With the celebrated white lock in his black, waving hair and with animated, nervous features, he looked almost mischievous. He often came to our house, and we listened with delight to his remarks about schools and styles of painting. His views on the subject proved his deep knowledge and most striking originality.

Mr. Watts, with his refined face and silver beard, still lives in my mind. We spent delightful afternoons in his studio admiring his pictures and talking art. It was there that we met the poet Matthew Arnold and Mrs. Humphry Ward, who was then a young girl. With her aureole of golden hair, she stood against the picture of a multicolored angel in such an angle that the wings seemed to belong to her. Mr. Arnold introduced her to me as his "niece who thinks she can write." There was, however, pride in his eyes when he uttered this joke.

BROWNING, BRET HARTE, AND OTHERS

I SPENT many charming hours in Mr. Boughton's house, and his esthetic wife and niece come to my memory with all their refreshing grace.

Mr. and Mrs. Labouchere we saw fre-

quently. Mr. Labouchere's brilliant mind, his wit, and his intimate knowledge of English society and its foibles, were most interesting. He always said the right thing at the right moment and to the right person. It was not diplomacy, but inborn tact. We met "Miss Braddon" [Mrs. Maxwell] at his house.

One of the eventful moments in London was my meeting Robert Browning. Before the introduction, I took him for a retired French officer. He certainly looked French. I never should have suspected in him the author of "Andrea del Sarto" and "Fra Lippo Lippi." He spoke rapidly in French and English on all possible subjects with the same ease and knowledge. I do not believe I have ever met a man so versatile as he, so great, and yet so simple; such a poet, and yet so human.

Next I remember Bret Harte. When he was introduced to us we greeted him as an old friend, for we knew him through his novels and poems. I believe that he was more appreciated on the continent than in either America or England. When we spoke of his great fame in Europe, he said, smiling: "You could not say that about England. They do not appreciate me—they do not even know me." We protested against this judgment, and he replied with a story:

"Some time ago I was to deliver a lecture in one of the English towns, and had to be introduced to the audience by some local authority. The man had a long speech in which he praised my great qualities, my fame throughout the world, and my exceptional merits. He never mentioned my name, but wound up his words as follows: 'And now let me introduce to you Mr.—er Mr.—' Then suddenly turning to me he asked in a furious whisper, 'What the deuce is your name?' This proved to me how well I was known in England."

MME. SEMBRICH AND THE DE RESZKES

IN the month of May, 1881, when the grand opera opened, some of our Polish celebrities, together with other famous singers, arrived, among them Kochanska (Mme. Sembrich), Edouard de Reszke, and Mierzwinski, the great tenor of the day.

Jean de Reszke did not sing at that

time, but came to London with his brother. A peculiar thing in Jean de Reszke's career was that he began as a baritone. Once during a performance he drank a glass of ice-water and lost his voice. It was, as he thought, a paralysis of the vocal chords. A short time afterward, however, he recovered from the shock, and his voice was stronger and better than ever; but it had changed to a tenor, or, rather, it was decided by one of the great singing teachers that his voice was never a baritone, but a heroic tenor.

A great future lay before him, and yet, in spite of many offers, he hesitated to accept an engagement, so afraid was he of a repetition of the dreadful experience. When I met him in London in 1881 he was still in this uncertain state of mind. His voice was then in the best condition, and we encouraged him most urgently to accept an engagement; but it took him several years to overcome his dread, and then at last we read his name on the bills.

GRAND OPERA AT HOME

How can I ever forget the delightful Sunday evenings at our house on Sloane Street, and later on Finchley Road, where those two glorious brothers sang many a time. We had a concert regularly every Sunday, for the De Reszkes said that since "Pani Helena" cannot go to the opera, being occupied every evening herself, she must have her own opera performance at home.

Mme. Sembrich and her husband were also our guests. I had already met this great artist in Warsaw, when she came from Dresden to bewitch her countrymen with her wonderful skill and voice.

The charming soprano and beautiful woman, Marie Roze, and her husband, Colonel Mapleson, frequently joined our Sunday parties, and we had the great joy of greeting Josephine de Reszke when she came from the Paris grand opera to London for a short engagement.

We also had instrumental music at our improvised concerts: Joseph Wieniawski and Lovenberg, pianists; Reisenauer, Ondricek, Natchez, violinists; and Hollman, the exquisite cellist, who always brought with him his "wife," as he called his instrument.

The inducement lay in the congenial

atmosphere of our receptions. Indeed, our Sunday evenings could have been envied by many rich people, in whose houses our Polish artists declined to sing, even for high remuneration.

Almost every Sunday the De Reszkes, their friend, young Komierowski, a good amateur baritone, and Mierzwinski, came to dinner. The rest of the evening was spent in singing, sometimes until three o'clock in the morning.

We thought that the neighbors might object to the music at such hours; and, indeed, one evening a policeman knocked at our door. We were sure the object of his visit was to stop the music, and great was our relief, therefore, when he told us he came only to find out who sang the last air. We named Jean de Reszke, and asked him the reason of his inquiry.

"A man in the next house wanted to know," he said. "Go on; good night."

It seems that while these wonderful concerts were going on, every window was opened, and many people stood in the street listening.

Forbes-Robertson, as my leading man, came also.

The artists were full of life, and enjoyed every minute with a childlike eagerness.

I remember that one evening in 1882, when we lived on Finchley Road, I saw them put their heads together and whisper for a while. Then one of them announced the sextet of "Lucia di Lammermoor." The two De Reszke brothers, Mierzwinski, Marie Roze, Komierowski, and some one I do not recall were to sing. Lovenberg, with great talent and a great love of mischief, sat at the piano.

We had heard only a few bars of the sextet when suddenly Lovenberg changed the tune to the "Merry War" waltz, which the singers took up, and after a while changed it again to the sextet, and so on and on until the end. The effect was most tantalizing.

I had with me two nieces, who came from the convent for their vacation, and also my son Ralph, who had arrived from Paris. The whole house rang with merry laughter and young voices. There was no end to practical jokes, and when our artists came on Sunday, we could not tell which was the youngest. The whole place was turned upside down.

CLOSE OF THE SECOND LONDON SEASON

AFTER "Romeo and Juliet," we played "Juana," by W. G. Wills. It was a tragedy in verse, and was not a success. Later the lease of the Court Theatre expired, and we were moved to the Princess's Theatre, where the atmosphere was not so congenial. With the change of the house we changed the audience, which in that part of the city was quite different, and more accustomed to melodramas than to modern plays.

The stage of the Princess's was very much higher than the one at the Court Theatre, and a little wider. In order to make the Court Theatre scenery fit, a frame, narrow on the sides and very deep above, was put in front of the stage, and the result was a fatal one, for the gallery audience could not see what was passing on the stage unless the actors were close to the footlights. All the action performed up-stage was interrupted by the loud murmur of the angry gallery gods. It was very annoying, especially to me, who always avoided the glare of the footlights, and liked to move freely in all directions. I felt uncomfortable, and longed for the close of the season.

At the end of the season I played in a benefit, to the success of which several prominent stars kindly contributed. Among them, Sarah Bernhardt played "Le Passant," Henry Irving recited, and Ellen Terry played *Ophelia's* scene.

In giving a benefit, I followed my country's custom, and learned too late that in England such a thing was accepted only in case of retirement from the stage.

I made an engagement with Mr. Bancroft, the manager of the Haymarket Theatre, for the coming spring season to play "Odette," by Sardou, translated and somehow localized by Clement Scott. All the characters of the play were turned into English people, with the exception of *Odette* and the wicked companion of her downfall in the fourth act.

INTRODUCING IBSEN TO POLAND

A FEW weeks later I went to Poland, where I was greeted with enthusiasm. I proved quite competent now, after having passed the examination of two London seasons. I was young again, and resumed *Juliet*, *Ophelia*, and *Aniela*, an ingénue

part in Fredro's comedy. "Odette" was just translated, and I included it in my repertoire, to get better acquainted with the part before my London engagement.

I also created a great excitement among my friends and the critics by producing Ibsen's "A Doll's House." When I told these friends that I had to get under the table and bark, and in the last act leave my husband and children, they thought I was crazy to play such a part. But at the play they applauded and said it was quaint and the barking fitted the picture, while my leaving the unforgiving husband not so bad, after all. The critics were puzzled. Some condemned the play, others lifted it to the skies. The result was a long run.

Very sad news reached me and marred my happy Warsaw engagement: the great poet and best of my friends, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, was dead.

THE TRIALS OF A SUCCESSFUL RUN

In the spring of 1882 we returned to London. While I was rehearsing "Odette," I went to see Mrs. Kendal's beautiful performance of "Coralie's Son," a French play by Delpit. I had seen her some time before in "Black-Eyed Susan," when she was simple and touching and made me shed copious tears.

We went to the Gaiety Theatre one evening. Mme. Chaumont played "Divorçons," and was quite irresistible.

Great pains were taken by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft in the rehearsals of "Odette." I remember Clement Scott sitting in the first balcony, giving advice, criticizing, or approving. I liked these rehearsals, as I always liked the working out of the part even better than the performance. The play was a great success, and was kept on the bills so long that I was sincerely tired of repeating the same lines and going through the same emotions.

After a run of two months, I used to groan every evening when I came to my dressing-room, and then dear Mrs. Bancroft would send her maid to ask if I was ill. "Oh, no, no! I am quite well. Please give Mrs. Bancroft my thanks, and tell her it is only 'Odette'!"

We played "Odette" nearly three months.

Such numerous repetitions of the same text caused the phonographic plates of my brain to be rubbed off in places, and I began to forget words of my lines. That was serious. To prevent accidents, I had to read my part every evening before going on. When Mrs. Bancroft asked me if I would prolong my engagement until the middle of July, I declined politely.

WITH TENNYSON IN SURREY

MR. TENNYSON continued to be very kind to us, and we were often invited to meet him at luncheon at his residence. I remember one day, after seeing the gorgeous performance of "The Cup," we talked about it, and Mr. Tennyson praised Mr. Irving for the pains he took in giving a most elaborate production to the play.

Some time later, after the end of my engagement, we were invited to visit him at his summer home in Surrey. We arrived in the evening. I shall never forget his figure in the dim light of his study. Mrs. Tennyson, who was still ailing, retired early, and we were led to the master's *sanctum sanctorum*. The room seemed to be filled with wonderful visions of his brain, and I felt hypnotized by the very atmosphere of it. There was a fire in the large fireplace. He sat in its light, and asked permission to smoke his after-dinner pipe.

After talking for a while on different topics, he asked me if I had ever read his "Rizpah." I acknowledged my ignorance. "Would you like to hear it?" It was a wonderful moment in my life. I listened with my face flooded with tears.

When I cooled off from my impression, he asked me if I would read a dialogue of his together with Fanny Kemble. I had never met the lady, but I was afraid of reading, with my accent against her perfect English. When I communicated my fear to Mr. Tennyson, he smiled and assured me that I could do so safely. I then agreed to the reading, which, however, for some reason or other never took place.

Next day I remember walking in the garden by his side; in the afternoon we took our leave and returned to London, my soul filled with memories of lofty moments spent in the great man's home.

(To be continued)