

have been overwrought, he cruelly drives away the mother and child. Marie-Ange goes submissively, since it is her idol's will. She embarks at once in the midst of a furious storm. She has scarcely gone before Napoleon relents and hastens to save her from the peril which threatens her; but he is too late. Upon the beach he finds the sailors' wives kneeling, praying for their husbands. He kneels beside them and also prays. He flings his sword into the sea, in the hope of quieting the angry waves. When at last the ocean is once more calm, he determines to confide his fortunes to it, and again sets sail for France.

The success of "L'Imperatrice" appears to be largely due to the number of affecting historical pictures which it presents. The acting of Madame Réjane as the heroine is said to be full of grace and sensibility, and M. de Max is said to personate Napoleon with much poetic enthusiasm. Despite all criticism, the glamor of Napoleon is perennial. He is the one incarnation of the Superman known to the Modern World. Say what we may, we come back again and again to Mrs. Browning's summing up, and repeat her swinging words:

" . . . his knee unbent,
His head unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw! but since he
had
The genius to be loved, why, let him have
The justice to be honored in his grave."



HOW MODJESKA LOOKED AT THE TIME OF HER FIRST APPEARANCE

It is difficult to recognize in this frail slip of a girl the celebrated tragedienne, Modjeska. "Our Lady," as she was called by her compatriots, had already at that time achieved histrionic distinction in Poland.

HOW MADAME MODJESKA'S CAREER WAS SAVED BY ZAGLOBA



WHEN the great Polish tragedienne, Madame Helene Modjeska, who has so lately made her exit from the stage of life, first came to America, she had already won histrionic distinction in Poland and the Poles hailed her advent with high anticipations. Years ago, we of this country came to regard her as one of the world's most illustrious actresses and to claim her for our own. Yet we learn from a Polish writer that she came very near being lost forever to the American stage, and that it was only the intervention of one Captain Piotrowski, said to be the original of the most famous of Sienkiewicz's characters, the redoubtable old pot-house broiler Captain Zagloba, that her career in this country was saved. The story is told by a Polish

American, Zbigniew Brodowski, who was at one time American consul at Breslau. He saw Modjeska's first performance in San Francisco four decades ago, and tells about it in his memoirs, written in Polish.

The coming of Madame Modjeska (or Modrzejewska to use the Polish spelling) caused a feeling of great joy among the Poles of San Francisco, each of whom had the highest admiration for "our lady," as the actress was called by them. With her came to San Francisco a small Polish colony that had lived on an orange farm near Los Angeles, including Sienkiewicz, the distinguished novelist, who, as is well known, spent nine years of his life in this country; and including also Piotrowski. Sienkiewicz was at that time a man of thirty, with melancholy features, but

with keen eyes so lighted by intelligence that he attracted notice immediately. He was at that time writing under the pseudonym of "Litwos." Madame Modjeska, so the tale runs in Brodowski's memoirs, passed half a year in studying the English tongue in order that she might use it on the American stage. When she announced that she was ready for appearance, a busting began in the Polish colony. The director of the Grand Opera House, then the most important theater in San Francisco, consented to a trial.

"All of us went to this trial sure of ourselves and prepared to stone everyone that should doubt the genius of 'our lady.' She went upon the stage and commenced to speak. But a few minutes had passed when the director called out: 'She's no good!' That idiot did not comprehend Modrzejewska's heavenly accent, with which millions were charmed later on, and in his narrow-mindedness he regarded it as hopeless!

"At such a decision by the director, 'our lady' rushed behind the scenes in tears. 'Gentlemen, to what have you exposed me!' were the sole words that fell from her lips amid her sobs. We stood as if petrified, as if sentenced to be beheaded. Only Captain Piotrowski muttered under his nose: 'Ah, the good-for-nothing!' General Krzyzanowski was the first to recover from the disagreeable impression, and he exclaimed in a jocular tone: 'But he's an ass, my good woman! It's not for that ninny to judge such an artist!'

"In spite of this, Modrzejewska was thoroly disheartened by this humiliation, as she designated it. Of a new trial, preparations for which had already been made by Salomon, she would not even hear. Thus, through the ignorance of this hapless director, we had almost lost the glory with which the Polish name began to resound throughout the whole world immediately after the first appearance of Mrs. Modrzejewska. It would have been entirely lost had it not been for old Captain Piotrowski, who was full of artifices like a true Ulysses. 'Well, my ladyship,' said he to Modrzejewska, 'if one such dummy has been able to terrify you, you surely cannot be a Polish woman!' With these words, Piotrowski touched the most sensitive side of 'our lady.' To be a Pole in the full sense and beauty of that term had always been her ambition, and of that she had given proofs throughout her life by her illimitable love for her country, and by her truly royal generosity in behalf of public causes and in wiping away the tear of poverty. She extended her hand to Captain Piotrowski and said: 'Do with me then what you want, my friends.'

The manager of the California Theater at that time was John McCullough, an old man of seventy years, and an actor famous in his

day. He consented to another trial of Modjeska, but required that she perform a part in the Polish tongue. Again a small handful of her countrymen went to the trial, this time with oppressed hearts. She selected the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet," and as she came out on the stage, "every inch a queen," there flowed from her lips "an inexpressibly beautiful stream of words" in the Polish tongue.

"To hear Polish words there, on the shores of the Pacific, from the American stage, made the moment so affecting for us, that the eyes of all of us pearly with tears. General Krzyzanowski feigned that something had fallen into his eye. Captain Piotrowski began to hawk so indecorously that Sienkiewicz, who sat beside him, whispered some remark into his ear. Suddenly McCullough, with his silver hair falling down his shoulders, ran up from behind the scenes and, bending his knee before Madame Helena with youthful suppleness, cried: 'Madam, you are the greatest artist I have seen, and I foretell unprecedented triumphs for you on our stage!' He did not allow her to leave the theater until she had made a provisional contract for a certain number of appearances."

Two or three weeks later came the first public appearance. On the bill was Adrienne Lecouvreur. That evening was one of positive triumph. On the following day the entire first page of the local dailies was filled with praise of her genius. "I know not how others felt," says Brodowski, "but to me it seemed when the word 'Modjeska' continually resounded in my ear almost as if the talk were about me myself, and I undoubtedly carried my head a few inches higher in those days. With each appearance, the fame of our artist increased, and when she appeared in Polish in San Francisco, in the rôle of Ophelia, the Polish Jews arranged a royal ovation for her, covering the entire stage with flowers."

But the East with its new laurels lured "our lady" from her Californian friends. Her brilliant success never eclipsed her gratitude to her compatriots and to California, the scene of her early triumphs; and it was there that she died. Before her departure, she presented Captain Piotrowski with her carefully chosen library consisting of more than four hundred volumes, with the stipulation that after his death it was to pass into the possession of "The Society of Poles in America." The doughty Captain, however, conveyed the library to the society at once, "that nobody should lie in wait for his death."