

# MODJESKA'S MEMOIRS

## THE RECORD OF A ROMANTIC CAREER

### IV—SUCCESS, AND FRIENDSHIPS IN NEW YORK AND BOSTON

BY HELENA MODJESKA

EARLY YEARS OF SUCCESS IN AMERICA—  
A NEW YORK POSTER

**D**URING the month of December, 1877, as I was driving on Broadway I perceived a monstrous, absurd bill representing me in the costume of *Juliet*, with two plaits of hair, one in front and one behind, an opened parasol in one hand, my gracefully lifted skirt in the other, in the act of mounting the steps that led to a temple-like building. Beneath that incongruous picture was the following inscription: "The famous Polish actress, Helena Modjeska, Countess Bozenta."<sup>1</sup>

"Oh, what barbarians!" I thought. "It was not enough to put up that horrid, cheap picture; they must also make a show of the 'Countess' to attract the mob, always curious about titled persons."

I deplored the cheapness of such advertising, and spoke of it to Mr. Henry J. Sargent, who finally withdrew the horrid posters, replacing them with others containing only my stage name in huge type.

<sup>1</sup> Chlapowski, the family name of my husband, being too difficult for English-speaking people to pronounce, he used only his middle name, Bozenta, and was so known to the general public in America.

"Why such big letters?" I asked him.

"Because people are too busy here to stop and read a small bill," he answered. "Unless they can see your name across the street, they will pay no attention to it."

I had no choice but to submit.



From a photograph owned by Mr. Edward T. Mason  
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MARY ANDERSON AS *PARTHENIA*

AN IMPRESSION OF  
MARY ANDERSON

**W**HEN I arrived in New York, Mary Anderson was playing her repertoire at the Fifth Avenue, where I was to follow. I saw her as *Parthenia* in "Ingo-mar" and in "Fazio," and was amazed to see such tragic power in so young a person. Her beauty also struck me as being unusual, because it was not only beauty of face, but the harmonious perfection of the whole body. Very tall, and with long, beautiful arms, she

made, without effort or study, gestures which were the natural motions of her classic figure, and, in consequence, could not help being graceful. Her voice was deep and mellow, and I admired her without reserve and predicted for her a glori-



From a portrait in crayon by John N. Marble

WILLIAM WINTER

ous future. She was most picturesque in "Ingomar," and in the part of the jealous wife in "Fazio" full of tragic power and expression.

#### A POET AND CRITIC

THE Fifth Avenue Theater was then under the management of Mr. Stephen Fiske, and his wife, a bright, intelligent lady, was in the box with me at Mary Anderson's performance. She pointed out the foremost critic of New York, Mr. William Winter. When I looked at him, he made me think of the romantic period of America; I connected him with some of Nathaniel Hawthorne's types, with Edgar Poe, while at the same time he reminded me of a portrait of Hamilton that I had recently seen. No one had told me that the critic was also a poet, but to me he looked like one, and I was glad to find out that my first impression was right. He was introduced to me that evening, but I felt that I did not make a favorable impression. I was unable to express myself in English except with a few ready-made sentences, and must have appeared awkward and, what is worse, commonplace, I fear. I felt at once that he could not help

being very reserved in his first criticism of me.

#### REHEARSALS UNDER THE "STAR SYSTEM"

THE memorable moments I spent before my opening night in New York were the rehearsals. Dion Boucicault, at the request of his protégé, Mr. Sargent, had consented to direct the rehearsals of "Adrienne." It was an act of kindness and a great concession on his part, and I owe him a debt of gratitude for it, never repaid. He corrected here and there the text of the translation, which he said was bad, and introduced some changes in the scenic effects, making clear the two intricate situations and passages, so as to make them better understood by American audiences not acquainted with the manner of Scribe and Legouvé. He also selected the cast. It was a study to watch Mr. Boucicault at the rehearsals. In my country I had been used to actors creating their own parts without the help of the stage-manager: whatever stage business was introduced, was done by the common understanding of those in the scene, and during rehearsals was sanctioned or rejected by the artistic director.



From a photograph by Sarony. Owned by Mr. Edward T. Mason

CLARA MORRIS

Here, on the contrary, most of the parts were conceived by Mr. Boucicault, who actually taught some of the actors how to speak their lines. All the stage business was given to them, thus reducing their brain-work to the mere memorizing of their parts. When I rehearsed my first scenes, one of the actors asked me, "What do you wish me to do now?"

"What you please," I answered, rather astonished.

I heard Mr. Boucicault laugh. Taking me aside, he said: "They are not used to such independence. Stars usually direct the actors about stage business."

I told him as well as I could in my broken English that it was difficult for me to identify myself with my part and at the same time to instruct others. He replied that he understood I was not yet used to the star system, which consists in making the company behave so as to bring into relief all the points of the star. I was on the point of replying that I did not think much of this system, having most of the time played with good actors, and often with excellent ones, and that the applause they received only helped the emulation, and resulted in a better ensemble; but suddenly I remembered how in San Francisco the company, being allowed to do as they pleased, sometimes failed to give me the right cues, and how I was not permitted to have the fireplace in the right place, which would have obliged me to change all my positions and stage business in the last act, and only the vigorous remonstrances of "Jo" finally had gained my demands.

#### DION BOUCICAULT

WHEN I compared the strict order of our rehearsals at the Fifth Avenue Theater with the laxity of those in the San Francisco theater, I acknowledged Mr. Boucicault's superior judgment, and kept my peace. He took vast pains, teaching most of the people not only how to say their



From a photograph by Mora, New York

*Madame Modjeska  
with her husband Dion Boucicault*

DION BOUCICAULT AS COVY IN "THE SHAUGHRAUN"

lines, but what to do, how to bow, how to enter or leave a room, even how to hold a snuff-box, and how to brush the snuff from their ruffled frill with a graceful gesture. The low bows and courtesies were the hardest to teach. As I watched Mr. Boucicault, I sincerely admired him for his authority and skill in managing each person, and for his imagination in the scenic arrangements. When I tried to express my gratitude for the pains he was taking in directing the play, he only said he was glad to do so, because I was a stranger, and he knew from experience that even the foremost actors in Europe do not trouble themselves about the stage-management. His remarks taught me a lesson by which I meant to profit in the future.

During the winter it was my good fortune to see Mr. Boucicault in the title-



From a photograph by Cooper. Owned by Mr. Edward T. Mason

**HELENA MODJESKA**

part of his own play, "The Shaughraun," and I did not know which to admire most, the wonderful originality, wit, and clever construction of the author, the perfect production of the stage-manager, or the finish and truth of his exquisite acting. He looked eighteen on the stage, and was simply irresistible.

#### NEW YORK DÉBUT

SOME time in December, I played "Adrienne" in New York for the first time, and I do not remember anything of that evening except that I was so absorbed in my part that I carried in my hand a shoe-horn instead of a fan, and never noticed it until I wished to fan myself, and also that, after the end, Mr. Sargent handed me a telegram from my husband with his good wishes, which, according to the managerial rules, he had kept the whole day in his pocket lest its contents might disturb my acting. When, after the last act, I returned to my dressing-room, I was met by a number of lovely people, who came to compliment the new star, and next morning my parlor at the Clarendon Hotel was made gay with flowers. The criticisms in the press were flattering, though naturally reserved. Mr. Winter gave me a very fine notice. Some of the writers spoke of my age: "*Adrienne* the mother of a young man!" Ralph was then sixteen. One of them, in his anxiety to appear well informed, even added five years to my age. This was neither truthful nor gallant, and ruffled very much the temper of my impressario, Mr. Sargent, who, fearing that this disclosure of my antiquity might keep the public away from the Fifth Avenue Theater, devised a scheme of passing me off for my son's sister, which afforded a great deal of amusement to Ralph.

It was only a few days after my first performance that I realized how well my company was selected. Mr. Burroughs was a well-padded *Maurice*, and made a much better appearance than I had anticipated. Mr. Couldock was great as *Michonnet*, Mr. Whiffin light and charming in the *Abbé*, and the *Princesse de Bouillon* was excellent in every detail. The other members of the company were careful in their costuming and perfect in their lines.

However, we did not crowd the Fifth Avenue Theater with "Adrienne," partly

because the French title of the play was not attractive to the New York audiences of 1878, and partly because the approach of the Christmas holidays kept people busy shopping. For a change I played the balcony scene of "Romeo and Juliet" as an addition to "Adrienne." I was somewhat reluctant to appear in Shakspeare before the critical public of the metropolis, but I was kindly dealt with by critics and audiences. The "Tribune" and the New York "Evening Post" were specially good to me.

#### A NEW "CAMILLE"

"ADRIENNE" remained on the bills altogether three weeks. Then, in January, 1878, I changed to "Camille." This made a decided hit, and established my success. There had been many *Camilles* in America before me, and I heard a great deal about the wonderful performances of Matilda Heron and Clara Morris; but the managers seemed to like my entirely different conception of the character and the changes I introduced. Being sure, in advance, of success, I threw myself into the part with all my heart and soul, and this time the press was unanimous in my praise, without any reserve. Of course some critics preferred to see on the stage a common fallen woman such as one may meet in the streets after dark, but I had read Arsène Houssaye's story of "Marie Duplessis," who was the model of "la Dame aux camélias," and who, it seems, looked so refined and cultivated and spoke of art with such good judgment that Franz Liszt, meeting her in the foyer of the theater, took her for a princess. Dumas *filis* makes her resemble the duke's daughter, thus indicating the delicate style of her personality. I liked this picture, and I followed Houssaye's description, making my heroine more refined than the usual type. It pleased my imagination to present *Camille* as reserved, gentle, intense in her love, and most sensitive; in one word, an exception to her kind. This conception found favor with the public, and *Camille's* sensitiveness proved contagious, for everybody wept over the poor girl. In the third act of the first performance, even the prompter threw away the prompt-book and retired to a dark corner behind the scenes, where he indulged in a good cry. Miss Jeannette Gilder came to my dress-

ing-room with her face flooded with tears, and we fell into each other's arms, laughing heartily, she over her previous crying-fit, and I because a laugh was such a great relief after the emotions of the third act. Richard Watson Gilder, the poet, and his wife also came to shake hands with me, and I was happy. These dear and distinguished people were the first friends I found in New York, and both my husband and I spent many pleasant hours with them in the "Studio," and also on Eighteenth Street, where Mr. Gilder's mother lived with her three daughters and her youngest son, Joseph.

#### A CASE FOR THE S. P. C. A.

AN amusing incident during that first evening nearly ruined my scene with *Armand's* father. In order to make a strong contrast between *Camille's* former luxurious surroundings and the quiet country life to which she had retired, and to emphasize the sudden conversion of that rather gay person into an angelic creature, full of love of simplicity, nature, and so forth,—the stage-manager hung up a cage with a live canary as a realistic touch of restful, rustic existence. The pretty bird, dazzled at the start by the light, behaved quietly through the first scenes of the act, but by the time *Mr. Duval* was introduced, it felt quite at home, and finally started on a long, elaborate song so shrill and loud that I, fearing that this vocal exhibition might interfere with the play, took down the cage and put it out of the stage window. I saw some one standing there, and naturally thought that the cage would be taken from me and carried back to the property-room; but the person, for some unknown reason, stepped back, and the cage fell on the ground with a loud

thump. Next morning I received a large envelop containing a letter from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in which I was accused of having deliberately murdered an innocent bird, for which crime I must, according to the statutes, be fined, etc. I had to prove that the poor bird was not injured before I was left in peace. As I was then becoming popular, the papers wrote a great deal about the incident.

#### "CAMILLE" AND CROWDED HOUSES

A FEW days after the first performance of "*Camille*" my manager told me that there was not a seat left for the remainder of the week, and there was a demand for the next week. Indeed, the houses were so crowded that the orchestra was taken from its place, and the latter filled with chairs for the public. Many persons had to be accommodated with seats behind the scenes. The success was complete, and Mr. Fiske urged me to stay in New York two or three months more; but Mr. Sargent, having already planned my tour, re-



THE CLARENDON HOTEL AT EIGHTEENTH STREET AND FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

The Clarendon, the last of the large hostelries which formerly made Union Square and its vicinity a favorite hotel section, was being demolished to make room for a business structure as this article was being put in type. It had housed many famous persons midway in the nineteenth century, including William Makepeace Thackeray and the Grand Duke Alexis.

fused to accept the proposition.

It was about that time that Sienkiewicz passed through New York on his way to Europe, and came to take leave of me. He looked so happy that I sincerely congratulated him on his return from his voluntary exile in the land where "the orange grows," back to the land of snow-storms and sleigh-rides.

I do not remember the order of the different cities I visited on this first tour; it will be sufficient to mention a few. I played one week in Philadelphia, in Mrs. Drew's theater, with her stock company, and the next thing that comes to my memory is the trip by boat to Boston. Mr. George W. Childs, whom I had met in

Philadelphia, and who, with his well-known kindness, had shown me great courtesies, wrote in my behalf to Mr. George Bancroft, and Mrs. Gilder had also sent several letters to her Boston friends, the most important one being to Mr. Henry W. Longfellow.

#### A FIRST NIGHT IN BOSTON

I OPENED my two weeks' engagement at the Boston Museum with "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and played with the stock company, celebrated for its excellence, with Mr. Warren, Miss Clarke, and other fine artists in the personnel.

Apparently on my first nights I was always doomed to meet with some mishap or accident. There was a wooden bar running along the back drop, joining the two sides of the door, which I had not seen at the rehearsal because the stage had not then been fully set. So it happened that when I was leaving *Michonnet* in the fourth act, with his hands full of the money that was to deliver *Maurice* from his debtors, I was in such haste to get to my dressing-room to change my costume that I started on a run, and holding my head up to express defiance and pride, I tripped over that unfortunate bar and fell headlong through the door. An audible and distressing laugh struck my ear most unpleasantly, but when I returned a few minutes later the audience applauded my entrance. I bowed, covering my face up to my eyes with my fan, my whole attitude expressing how much I was ashamed at my awkwardness. This seemed to establish a bond of sympathy, and the rest of the performance went on undisturbed.

#### THE BEGINNING OF A DELIGHTFUL FRIENDSHIP

ONE of the most important events of my stay was my meeting with Henry W. Longfellow. Mrs. Gilder wrote that the great man would call on me at my hotel. Although I was forewarned of his visit, I was quite overcome with emotion when his card was brought to my room. One look of his kind, deep-set eyes, and a warm hand-shake soon restored my mental equipoise, and put me at my ease. The presence of this true, great poet, this man endowed with the finest qualities a man can possess, was a spiritual feast for me.

#### AT LONGFELLOW'S HOME

HE spoke to me of Boston and its celebrities, and acquainted me with the names of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, James T. Fields, Celia Thaxter, and others, chaffed me about going up Bunker Hill Monument, and asked me how I compared the California weather with the beautiful climate of Massachusetts. He went on speaking in the manner of a perfect man of the world, and simply charmed me. Then my son came in, and we were both invited to luncheon at the poet's house in Cambridge. Longfellow's great charm was just that perfect simplicity, so rare in celebrated men. There was not a shade of the patronizing air so frequently assumed by people of superior standing, not a particle of the pomposity I had more than once observed among much less known writers. A celebrity without conceit is a rare thing to behold; he did not seem to care much for compliments. When I attempted to speak about his poems, he interrupted me, and, pointing to a handsome arm-chair standing in his study, drew my attention to it by remarking jokingly that the children liked his verses, because he had received that present from a school on the—here he paused, and added with a laugh, "'centennial' anniversary of my literary activity." Then, as if regretting that he had spoken lightly of the gift, he grew suddenly serious, and stroking the back of the chair with his hand, he said almost tenderly, "I prize it highly."

I made another attempt, and said I should gladly study some passages from his poems and recite them to him, and I mentioned "Hiawatha," but he stopped me with the words: "You do not want to waste your time in memorizing those things, and don't you speak of 'Hiawatha,' or I will call you Mudjikewis, which, by the way, sounds somewhat like your name."

After luncheon, Ralph played one of Chopin's nocturnes, and our host recited Campbell's poem about Poland, and made me cry. Needless to say that I left his house quite fascinated.

#### BOSTON'S ENTHUSIASM

MY husband arrived in Boston during the second week of my engagement, happy and

looking better than when I left him. From his letters I already knew that he had sold the farm and sent the Sypniewski family back to Poland.

While in Boston we received many invitations from prominent people, but I was prevented from taking part in social entertainments because, owing to the success of "Camille," I was induced by Mr. Sargent to play three extra matinées, which made ten performances in six days. The seats were sold at auction. After the Saturday matinée, when I was returning with my husband to the hotel, people crowded the street so that the carriage could scarcely move. Strangers mounted the steps to shake hands and shower all kinds of compliments and blessings. Girls with moistened eyes threw flowers into my lap, and a young mother lifted her child to be kissed by me. The enthusiasm of the Boston public on that occasion reminded me of my performance in Warsaw on the eve of my departure. I was as much dumfounded as gratified by such tokens of approval and appreciation in a city supposed to be cold-blooded, and renowned for the critical spirit of its culture.

#### NOTABLES IN WASHINGTON

My impressions of my first visit to Washington were equally delightful, only there the success was rather more of a social character. We met many prominent men in public life, among whom I prized most the acquaintance of Carl Schurz, General Sherman, Governor Boutwell, Eugene Hale, then a promising young Congressman, and Senator Roscoe Conkling. I deplored my insufficient knowledge of English, which made me shy and diffident in conversation, but I listened attentively to all that these distinguished men said.

The one I knew best in later years was Mr. Conkling. It was to him I owed the privilege of making the acquaintance of General Grant, after his terms as President. The New York Senator several times honored me with his calls at the Clarendon Hotel, where we used to stay in New York, and I also met him occasionally at the hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. John Bigelow. His exquisite manners might have served for a model to the most refined European men of the world, and women were fascinated by his mere pres-

ence in the room. When this unusually tall and handsome man entered, he became at once the center of attraction.

#### BALTIMORE AND LOUISVILLE

WE went to Baltimore, where we saw again Dion Boucicault, and where, at a jolly terrapin supper, we met Mr. Sothern (the father), one of the most congenial gentlemen I ever encountered. He had a charming way of talking to people he saw for the first time as though he had known them for years, and when he left the room with a warm hand-shake and that peculiar, quizzical, but kind expression in his eyes, every person present felt sure that he had won a friend for life.

The next city which comes to my memory is Louisville, and there I first met Mr. Henry Watterson. Our first meeting was the beginning of a friendship which still lasts. We spent many a happy hour in Mr. Watterson's hospitable and truly Southern house, with its charming chate-laine, Mrs. Watterson.

#### EUGENE FIELD'S ORIGINAL PARTIES

CHICAGO in the first months of 1878 was not yet one of the great cities of the world as it is to-day. There everything appeared brighter. We had a profusion of good scenery, an excellent supporting company, and a house packed brimful with nice-looking people.

In St. Louis or Chicago I first saw Mr. Eugene Field, another of the dear friends I gained in America. I admired him for his genuine poetic talent, his originality, and almost childlike simplicity, as much as for his great heart. His was indeed a many-sided and rich nature, most domestic in his family, a delightful host by his own fireside, and yet a perfect Bohemian in artistic circles. The author of exquisitely dainty poems, and a brilliant and witty humorist, he was equally lovable in all these various characters. He was full of original ideas, which often gave a quaint touch to his receptions. Later, when he lived in Chicago, I remember a dinner, which he called a "reversed one," beginning with black coffee and ice-cream and ending with soup and oysters. After the first course he delivered a most amusing toast. We were laughing so much that tears stood in our



eyes. He looked compassionately around the table and, saying, "I see that you are sad and depressed; let us have some fun!" went to a mechanical piano and gave us a few bars of a funeral march. After each dish he returned to the instrument and treated us to some doleful tune. On a later occasion he sent us a formal invitation to a party at his house, "to meet a friend from abroad." But as the evening went on, the foreigner did not make his appearance. When we were on the point of leaving, we heard a strange sound at the window. "At last," exclaimed our host, and as he opened the window, we saw there the head of a donkey, and a most frightful braying filled the room. Eugene Field caressingly stroked the long, soft ears until the soothing effect of his hands stopped the musical display, and the introduction took place. "This is my belated friend. He is, indeed, a great donkey," remarked our host, seriously. After taking leave, I overheard some of the guests saying: "That was indeed a bitter satire, but I should like to know who was really that friend from abroad, personified by the donkey." Thus are commentaries written, looking for some deep-hidden meaning in a simple joke.

#### A BRIEF VISIT HOME

IN the summer of 1878 we crossed to England and spent a few days in London. There for the first time I saw Henry Irving as *Vanderdecken* in the play of that name founded on the legend of the Flying Dutchman. The performance was of a sort entirely new to me, but certainly picturesque and full of beauty. It brought back the enchanting fairy-stories which had delighted my childhood. Irving himself appeared to me weird and unreal, like the story itself, and this lack of realism, together with the actor's artistic appearance, appealed to me strongly. When he stepped from behind the sail, the illusion was perfect, and he truly gave one the impression of a supernatural being.

From London we went to Poland to see our family and our friends. Every one seemed overjoyed at our return, as well as at my success in America. My good mother looked at me with an expression of pride and assurance, saying, "Well, it is as it should be." Dear, conceited mother! I had to kiss her good-by again and leave

for Paris, where we were going to see the exposition, and also to get new gowns for *Camille*, *Froufrou*, and *Juliet*. We also spent a great deal of time in the studio of Carolus Duran, where I was posing for a life-sized portrait. It was amusing to see how very Spanish he tried to look. He had a guitar in his studio, and played on it, humming some Spanish songs, with a very French accent, every time we took a few moments rest.

#### DURAN AND "CE GARÇON," SARGENT

ONE morning a tall, attractive young man came in and was introduced by M. Duran as "Mr. John Sargent from America." The young artist had brought with him a small canvas, and while Carolus Duran was painting the chinchilla of my dress, he painted Duran's head. In an hour or so he made a sketch which looked to me like a finished portrait in its wonderful likeness. When he left the room, Carolus Duran said, "Il a du talent, ce garçon-là." It was a sort of offhand praise; at least we thought so. We wished very much to meet again "ce garçon-là," but he did not return to the studio while we were there.

#### "THE WONDERFUL SARAH"

"HERNANI," the tragedy of Victor Hugo, was then being played at the Théâtre Français for several weeks, and I saw the wonderful Sarah for the first time in the part of *Doña Sol*. I was carried away by her passionate and desperate scene in the last act, and quite understood the enthusiasm of the public for the rare artist. She conquered me, as she did many others, and I have still a most vivid admiration for her continued and successful work.

#### NEW YORK AGAIN

HAVING made with Mr. Sargent a contract for another season, this time a long one of thirty weeks or more, we had to return to America.

On our return trip we met on the steamer Miss Molly Elliot Seawell, the well-known author. She was then a very young girl with a refined mind and delightful Southern manners. This started an exceedingly pleasant acquaintanceship, which we cultivated for years both by correspondence and by several visits to her home in Washington.

I was happy to be back in New York again, the city of constant improvements, always yearning for a perfection so difficult to obtain on a long, narrow strip of land. Even after two years, New York seemed different to me from the city we landed in on our first arrival from Europe. Many handsome new buildings had been erected, and Central Park was greener and more varied. We were glad to see the improvements, but above all glad to see the dear friends we had left there. At the Gilders' we met, among others, Clara Louise Kellogg, John La Farge, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Walt Whitman. I shall not easily forget the impression Whitman made on me. His whole appearance was unusual. The expressive, rather large-featured face would have fitted *King Lear* to perfection. His hair and beard were white, and his deep eyes were both eager and sad. I read in them wisdom and concentration, but also a great deal of pessimism in the twinkle of the lids. He was sparing of speech, but when he spoke it was deep and concise. When, on taking leave, he put on his large-brimmed hat, he looked like one of those traditional, picturesque squatters of old times.

#### "FROUFROU" AT THE FIFTH AVENUE

I OPENED the season of 1878-79 in New York at the Fifth Avenue Theater, with *Froufrou*. Because of the rapid speeches, the title-part of *Froufrou* was more difficult for me to learn than any I had played before. In the third act especially, my scene with *Louise* called for so much speed that my tongue, not being quite used to the foreign language, in addition to my nervousness, made such havoc of my words on the first night that I could scarcely understand myself, not to speak of the audience. To my great amazement, a young critic, Mr. Albert Steinberg, of "The New York Herald," said quite seriously, in his notice, that my rapid speeches were like Wagner's music to him, the less he understood the better he liked them. He added further that this rushing cataract of sounds was most impressive. I laughed while reading this, but blushed also, and went directly to work over my speeches, repeating them first slowly, and then more and more rapidly, until I succeeded in making them more distinct. I was told that my

second performance was an improvement. One who has never played in a foreign language has no idea how hard it is to render all the necessary lights and shades when one is hampered by the lack of familiarity both with the foreign words and the pronunciation. No lessons, no exercise, can take the place of the language with which we have been born. Actors, however, have an advantage in illustrating their words by action and facial expression. Were it not for that, every attempt to play in a foreign tongue would be fruitless. That was the reason I never liked to give English recitations on a platform, because I had nothing to help out the deficiencies of my pronunciation.

#### TWO WAYS OF SAYING "SISTER"

THIS time I had my own company. Frank Clement, from England, was my leading man, and Louise Muldener, leading lady. That excellent actress was a German and spoke English with a slight accent. I heard Mr. Stephen Fiske, the manager of the theater, say that it was a mistake to engage her, because a star with a foreign accent might be excused, but two in the cast, one speaking with a Polish, and the other with a German accent, would only supply food for criticism. Many jokes were made on the subject. Some one wrote: "No wonder these ladies quarreled and that Madame Modjeska was teeming with rage in the third act, when she, in her sweet accent, addressed Miss Muldener as 'seester' and was called in return, 'Oh! oh! schvisterrr!' Who could stand the insult?" There was a great deal of exaggeration in that, because Miss Muldener's accent was not unpleasant.

I played *Juliet* during this season. "Scribner's Monthly"<sup>1</sup> published a long article about me, written by Charles de Kay, inserting several of my photographs and my portrait by Carolus Duran. The article helped to spread my reputation a great deal, for then this magazine seldom gave space to theatrical matters.

#### LOTTA

DURING my engagement in Philadelphia, I was advised by my friends to add "Peg Woffington" to my repertoire. It was not a good choice, for I could neither catch the Irish brogue nor dance the jig

<sup>1</sup> NOW THE CENTURY.

in the last scene. Lotta, who came to see me in the part, had a good laugh over my dance, and invited me to an extra *matinée* to show me how she danced the jig. As soon as that tiny, nervous creature entered, I knew that I had before me a woman of great talent and originality. The style of her plays was not, of course, elevated. The one we saw was a popular, amusing comedy, not even well written, with commonplace characters; but her individuality covered all the sins of construction. She infused life into the part she played, and her realism was simply wonderful. She was an ideal type of the mining-camps, and very pretty, too.

#### THE FIRST THEATRICAL PRIVATE CAR

BEFORE I went on tour, I asked Mr. Sargent to show me the route. There were several one-night towns on the list, and I anxiously inquired if I should be obliged to catch trains early in the morning. He answered that sometimes it was quite inevitable. I declared that I could not possibly consent to it because I must have at least eight hours of uninterrupted sleep or I could not act at all. Usually I could not go to sleep immediately after the play, being too excited. When we had no guests, I would play the piano or read before going to bed; then I would sleep soundly until nine in the morning. I was simply unable to rest in the daytime. I advised Mr. Sargent to cut out the one-night towns. He looked rather amused, and said he could hardly do so, having much higher percentage in those towns than in the large ones. I stood firm in my decision, and Mr. Sargent went away discontented. Next morning, however, he came in smiling, and said he had found a way to give me as many hours of sleep as I desired by renting a private car. Thus it happened that I had the first theatrical private car on the road. All the "stars" soon followed the example, and now it has become a necessity to travel in this manner.

When I returned from England, after my London *début* in 1882, I used the private cars every season. Their introduction had some bad results. It tempted managers to book their stars in too many one-night stands, often causing unsatisfactory productions of the plays. The haste

of putting up the scenery and the constant wear and tear on it, soon makes it look shabby; or, if the stage is too small, local scenery is used instead, and this is usually ugly and unsuited to the plays. It is not inspiring to play "Mary Stuart" in a kitchen instead of a royal prison, or "Hamlet" in a room decorated with Cupids, or "Julius Cæsar" in some badly painted Gothic hall; yet these things happen often, though car-loads of fine scenery are waiting outside. I have heard people say, "What does it matter how the play goes in such a small town as this?" It is a great mistake. Men and women of culture can be found everywhere, even in the smallest corners of the country.

#### OLD FRIENDS AND NEW IN BOSTON

IN April, 1879, I made my second visit to Boston, with three plays, "Adrienne Lecouvreur," "Camille," and "Romeo and Juliet." I discarded "Peg Woffington," but "East Lynne" was added to the repertoire. I hated that play, and called it "Beast Lynne"; the managers insisted upon my playing it on Saturday nights.

It was at my performance of "Romeo and Juliet" that I met Mrs. Annie Fields. She invited Longfellow and some members of his family to see me in "Juliet," and the great poet answered as follows:

*Cambridge, April 18, 1879.*

DEAR MRS. FIELDS:

We shall be delighted to see Modjeska in Juliet and will come four-strong, or on all fours, as you kindly suggest.

I suppose the "lovely creature," as a certain young artist would say, has not yet arrived.

If you happen to know at what hotel she will stay, be kind enough to inform me by a postal card.

Yours faithfully,  
*Henry W. Longfellow.*

This letter was sent to me by Mrs. Fields as a Christmas present in 1906.

I have been told that after the performance of "Romeo and Juliet," Mr. Longfellow went to several newspaper offices to see what was written about me, and in case there were any antagonistic remarks to try to moderate them. He knew the spirit of some of the critics, opposed to a

foreigner playing Shakspeare, and wished to ward off the blows. It was one of the kindest things ever done, and I never ceased to be thankful to the great poet and best of men for taking trouble to shield me against unkind remarks.

The critics were all fair, with the exception of one, who could not forgive my "foreign appearance" or my accent. To criticize my accent was quite justifiable, but I wondered what my foreign appearance had to do with the matter. Was *Juliet* an American? Or must all Shakspeare's heroines look Anglo-Saxon, though they belong to different nationalities? Well, never mind that; my chief object was to act *Juliet* to the best of my ability, and I did so. It seems that the part was a success, for I kept it in my repertoire until the year 1888, just one year after the birth of my first grandchild.

Next day after the play we found the Fields's cards and an invitation to luncheon. There we met the host, Mr. James T. Fields, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Celia Thaxter, and Edwin Booth, who came with his young and energetic-looking little wife.

Mr. Longfellow said many kind things to me about *Juliet*, and urged me to appear in London, where, he said, I was sure to succeed. His words made my heart swell with most delightful hopes. Play in London, and play Shakspeare! The ambition of my whole life would then be satisfied. I tried not to think of it, for it made me too happy.

Both my husband and I admired greatly Mr. Fields's library and various objects of art, as well as the view of the river from the back window, but most of all we admired Mrs. Fields's beautiful, Dante Rossetti face, her intellect, and her distinction of manner. I had a chat with Edwin Booth, whom I had always been anxious to meet since I first saw him on the stage. Though my knowledge of English was not yet sufficient for sustaining a long conversation, it was easy to talk to that great actor and lovely man, who met me halfway.

#### A POEM BY CELIA THAXTER

MY attitude toward the poets, however, was mostly that of a listener. This I could do to perfection, and with expres-

sion, too. I was a success in that capacity, it seems, for my listening to Chopin's music inspired Celia Thaxter with the following poem:

Deft hands called Chopin's music from the  
keys.  
Silent she sat, her slender figure's poise  
Flower-like and fine and full of lofty ease;  
She heard her Poland's most consummate  
voice  
From power to pathos falter, sink and  
change;  
The music of her land, the wondrous  
high,  
Utmost expression of its genius strange,—  
Incarnate sadness breathed in melody.  
Silent and thrilled she sat, her lovely face  
Flushing and paling like a delicate rose  
Shaken by summer winds from its repose  
Softly this way and that, with tender grace,  
Now touched by sun, now into shadow  
turned,—  
While bright with kindred fire her deep  
eyes burned!

#### A LETTER FROM LONGFELLOW

WE paid another visit to Longfellow's house in Cambridge. I forgot my fan in the poet's house, and he sent it back to me with the following note:

Cambridge, April 25, 1879.

DEAR MADAM MODJESKA:

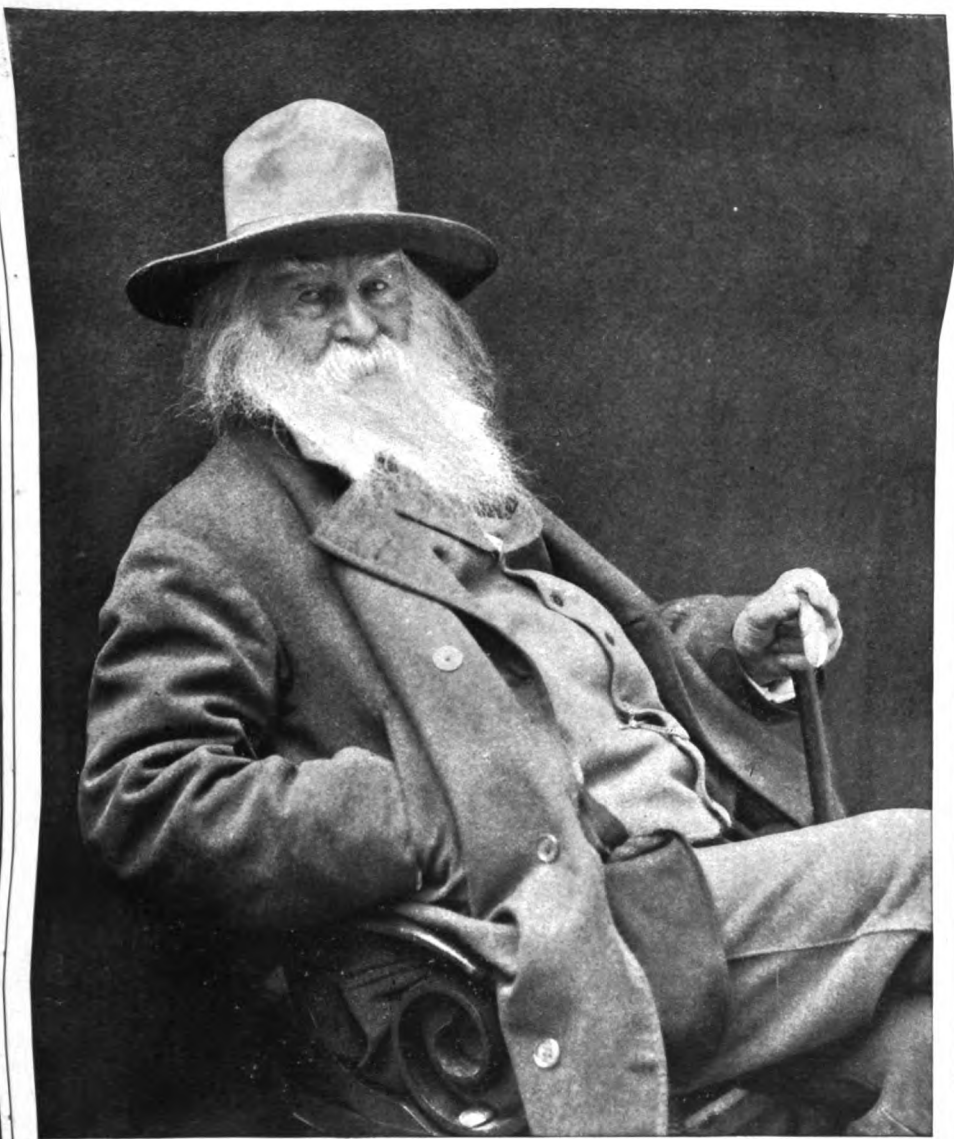
The English poet, Gay, once wrote a poem in three books on "The Fan," beginning:

"I sing that graceful toy,  
whose waving play  
With gentle gales relieves  
the sultry day."

And Holmes, the American poet, has a charming piece on "The First Fan," in which he says:

"Before this new Pandora's gifts,  
In slavery woman's tyrant kept her,  
But now he kneels her glove to lift,  
The Fan is mightier than the Scepter."

Now, if I had a particle of the nimble fancy of these poets, I should not let your fan go back without a song. But as I have not, it returns to your hand unsung, though not unhonored.



From a photograph by George C. Cox

WALT WHITMAN

Thanking you for your to us delightful visit, yesterday; congratulating you on your artistic success; imploring you not to kill yourself with overwork; wishing you a prosperous voyage across the Atlantic, and a safe and speedy return to us; with all these present participles, I am,

Dear Madam Modjeska,

Yours faithfully,

*Henry W. Longfellow.*

BOSTON TO NEW ORLEANS

MY engagement in Boston was an uninterrupted chain of intellectual pleasure and artistic enjoyment. It would be difficult to find more congenial and inspiring circles in the whole world than those of Boston in 1879.

I closed my season there with "East Lynne." I remember that the Globe

Theater was so packed with people that there was no standing room, and, the orchestra being sold out, the musicians were obliged to play on the stage. I had a curious sensation of walking on people's heads, the footlights being so close to the upturned faces. There was no art in that performance, though I was called repeatedly before the curtain. I was glad when it was over. Not everything that "pays" is necessarily artistic.

On the way South we met with an accident near Alabama; our train ran off the track. No one was killed, but we were shaken a good deal, and our car was tipped considerably to one side. It was not pleasant to see that we were just within a yard of the brink of a precipice.

New Orleans was a joy. The two weeks we spent there were filled with many impressions. Every day we visited curious places, the quaint old houses and churches; we also took drives on the celebrated shell-road and went into ecstasies over the vegetation. The camellia-trees, growing everywhere, were marvels. We even got up at five o'clock in the morning to go to the famous French market, bought some Indian trifles, and took a cup of bad coffee.

#### THE LITTLE PIG, "MODJESKA"

WE spent several pleasant weeks in the South, and met many descendants of the aristocratic families of Virginia. They were all most charming and delightful in their hospitality.

One day we were invited to a reception on a man-of-war in Norfolk by Miss Molly Elliot Seawell, who, being a granddaughter of an admiral, enjoyed a great popularity in the navy. We were shown all over the ship, and the pet of the crew was presented to us—a very clean, pretty,

pink-and-white pig with a ribbon about its neck. Miss Seawell informed me that the animal was so clever and performed so many stunts that they called it "Modjeska." I was very proud of my namesake, especially when it danced a hornpipe that reminded me of my unfortunate jig in "Peg Woffington," and made me acknowledge the pig's superiority.

CLARA MORRIS

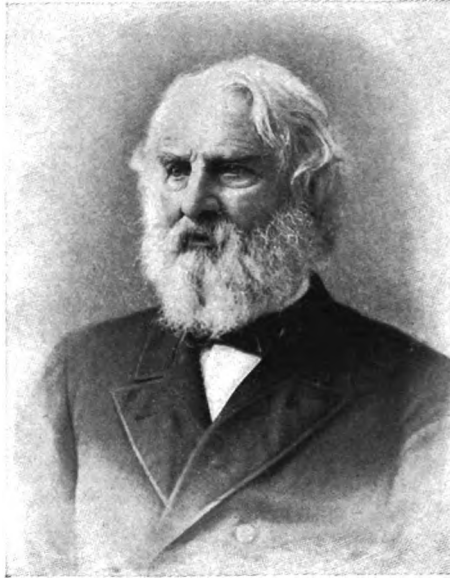
AFTER the regular, very successful season in the States, we returned to New York, where I played two weeks at the Grand Opera House, a popular house of those days.

My season being over, I visited the theaters. I saw Clara Morris, and was amazed by the in-born talent of that actress, by her expression of passion, and her gift of tears. I do not remember the title of the play; the plot did not interest me at all. I saw only her, and was fascinated. Art with its laws had no power over her, for her art was her own, apart from any rules and routine. A born

actress, genuine, admirable, spontaneous, and powerful in her tragic moments, tender and gentle in the touching scenes, and always true to nature, I leave her deficiencies to the critics. We all have our deficiencies, have we not? But it is the fate of those who rise above others to be criticized severely, while some lesser talents are glorified above their merits.

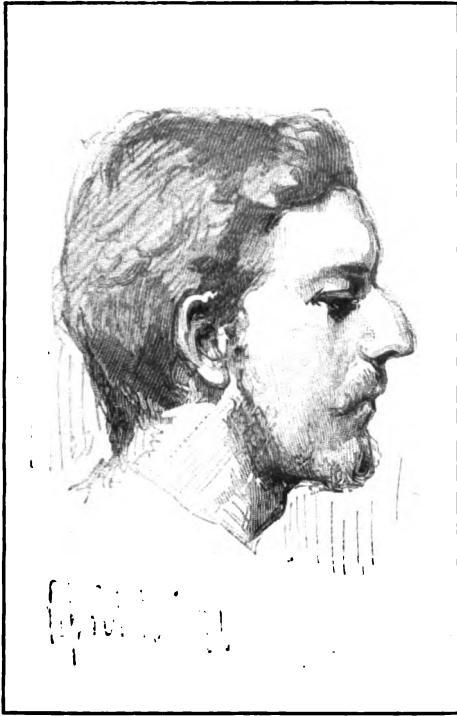
#### JEFFERSON IN "LEND ME FIVE SHILLINGS"

JOSEPH JEFFERSON was a rare treat. I saw him only in "Lend Me Five Shillings" at some benefit. The subtilty, the finish of detail, were most admirable. He was simple, natural, and his roguish, irre-



From a photograph, copyright, 1882, by J. H. Lamson

*Henry W. Longfellow*



Drawn from life by Carroll Beckwith, April 16, 1876

JOHN SINGER SARGENT

His smile immediately conquered the audience, and brought them into sympathy. I had no need to see him in a larger part to judge how great an artist he was.

#### A JUBILEE IN CRACOW

EARLY in the spring of 1879, I received an invitation from a committee in Cracow to take part in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the literary activity of the foremost Polish novelist, Kraszewski. The celebration was to last a week or more, and was to be combined with the opening of the recently restored "Sukiennice" (Drapers' Hall), first built in the fourteenth century, and later fallen into decay. The restoration was undertaken by the city of Cracow and was accomplished under the supervision of our great national artist, Jan Matejko. I was only too glad to participate in this national festival.

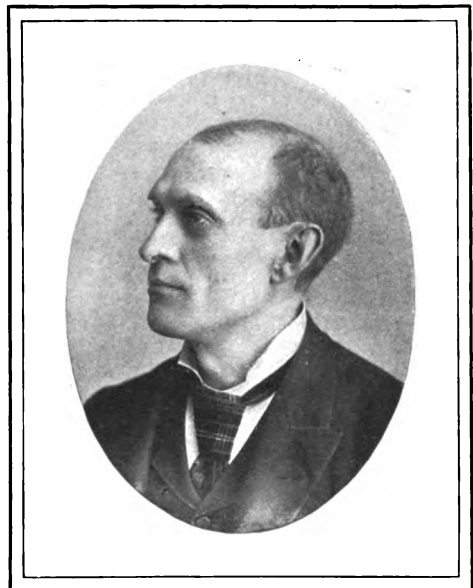
#### A FORTUNATE DREAM

EARLY in October we went to Cracow. When we arrived in town I learned that

I was announced for the next evening in the part of *Adrienne*. This was an unwelcome surprise, because, not having played the part in Polish since the spring of 1876, I was not sure of my lines. My husband asked me if I remembered my part. "Not at all," I replied, quite distressed. And, indeed, when I tried to recollect the Polish words, only the English text came to my mind. I sent to the stage-manager for the manuscript, but it was too late; the theater was closed.

There was nothing left but to plan a way of getting out of the performance. But how? To change the bill would be regarded as a slighting of the occasion. It would surely place me in an unfavorable light, for no one would believe I ever could forget a part I had played so often. The only remedy left was to make a mental translation of the English words and depend upon chance. This was against my principles. I went to bed with my mind full of disastrous forebodings; the fatigue, however, soon closed my eyes, and I slept soundly. When I woke in the morning, the first thing that came to my mind were the Polish lines of my part. In my great joy, I called my husband, and began to recite it aloud to him.

"How did you do it?" he asked.



From a photograph by Max Platz

EUGENE FIELD

"I do not know; I must have read it in my sleep, for I dreamed I saw the manuscript on my dressing-table."

At the rehearsal I never stopped for a word; I knew my part to the smallest detail.

There were many demonstrations at the occasion of the jubilee, for artists, poets, writers, men of political standing, in one word, the prominent citizens of all parts of Poland were prompted by the same desire to pay homage to Kraszewski.

#### POLES' PRIDE IN THEIR COUNTRY WOMAN

IN my memoranda of the times I find a note referring to the jubilee:

The Jubilee was a great success. Everybody who is somebody in the three parts of Poland came to Cracow to take part in it and to shake hands with Kraszewski. I feel so happy in this reunion of our people. . . . Oh, what is the use of saying that we have ceased to be a nation when everything cries against that sentence! Are the great works of art and literature to be counted as

non-existent! Can any political combination kill the spirit! No! A thousand times no! It lives, and lives! And the more it is persecuted, the stronger it will become.

Following the jubilee performances, I played a regular engagement of several weeks in Cracow, which was followed by three series of appearances in other Polish cities, Lwow (Lemberg), Posen, and Warsaw.

It was very natural that my countrymen should be elated over my success in America. They imagined that I had helped to spread the fame of Polish art abroad. The result of this feeling on their part was a continued succession of ovations upon which I need not dwell. It will be sufficient to say that they appealed not so much to my ambition as to my heart. It was hard to part from those who showed me such love, but I thought that my favorable reception on the foreign stage in America ought to be crowned by success in the mother-country of the Anglo-Saxons, England.

(To be continued)



From a photograph, copyright, 1891, by Falk, Sydney, N. S. W.

SARAH BERNHARDT AS PAULINE BLANCHARD