

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MAX FACTOR

Founder Of Hollywood's Big "Temple Of Glamour" Tells How It Happened

IN this exclusive series, specially written for "Record," the world's leading exponent of make-up for stage, screen, and society tells how, beginning as a poor boy in Russia, he worked his way up to controller of a great business. He gives us many intimate glimpses of Hollywood celebrities stripped of the glamour with which his own paint and powder have helped to endow them.

AS I sit here at my desk in the vast modern building which bears my name—a building described by many writers as Hollywood's "Temple of Glamour"—thinking of the screen celebrities who come to consult me daily, and the millions of women all over the world whom I have helped to beautify, I can hardly believe that I am the same Max Factor who was born of a poor Russian family sixty-one years ago and who started work at the age of seven, selling oranges in a little theatre in Lodz.

It occurs to me, with some surprise, that the story I have lived is as full of colour, comedy and drama as many I have seen on the screen. At any rate, it seems worth telling, and I hope I shall be able to make it worth reading.

August 5, 1877, was a momentous day for me, if not for my parents. Joseph Factor, my father, was a designer of cloth patterns in the mills, and my mother, Cecilia Toredowsky Factor, was a designer and weaver of handicraft tapestries. As they were not very well off, I do not imagine that the birth of a fifth child was much of an occasion for rejoicing. There were already three boys and one girl older than myself; as it turned out, there were six more to follow.

It was not surprising that I was sent to work at an early age.

Lodz, now an important industrial city in the re-created nation of Poland, was then just a part of the immense territories ruled over by Alexander the Second, Tsar of all the Russias. But it boasted several theatres, and, as there happened to be a slump in the cloth mills, it was to one of these, the Tsarina Theatre, that I was sent to sell nuts, sweets and fruit to the audiences. The money I earned was meagre, but my parents were glad of any extra pennies.

It was particularly fortunate for me that circumstances compelled me to embark on a theatrical career, for had I ever started work in the mills, like my brothers and sisters, I am almost sure my entire life would have been spent there.

The year 1886 was a bad one for oranges, and many of my wares were frostbitten and unpalatable. My customers, in their frank Russian manner, showed their displeasure by hurling the offending fruit at the unoffending boy who had sold it to them, and I spent most of my time dodging oranges.

Then came the first upward step in my career. Mixing with the supernumeraries of the theatre I

learnt that there was soon to be a vacancy on the apprentice staff of the wigshop. I went straight to the master wigmaker and persuaded him to take me on.

Thus, at the age of eleven, I was signed as an apprentice, and legally bound to serve four years. I was to live in the quarters over the shop, along with seven other apprentices. The master was to provide us with food, one suit and one pair of shoes each year. We had no wages, but were permitted to accept tips—a privilege which proved very hollow, because the few customers who seemed even remotely affluent were invariably served by the master himself.

Slavery

IN the Russia of the '80's the duties of the wigmaker covered a great deal more than his title would indicate. Besides making wigs, we were prepared to supply and apply make-up, trim or dye hair, wax moustaches, pull teeth, perform minor surgical operations, and even to leech an ailing customer.

Leeching was one of our most profitable activities. This little worm, which rapidly and ravenously sucks blood from any living thing to which it is introduced, was the cure-all of the provincial districts of Europe during most of the nineteenth century. The letting of blood was supposed to be a remedy for almost any ailment imaginable, and it was a standing joke among the apprentices that "the master would probably prescribe a leech for leprosy."

The life of an apprentice was an exceptionally busy one. We arose at six in the morning, spent 20 minutes at breakfast, and then went immediately to the workrooms, where our tasks for the day were assigned to us. On weekdays and Sundays we generally managed to finish the day's work at anywhere from seven to ten o'clock in the evening.

On Saturday nights, however, we were very seldom able to retire before midnight or one o'clock, owing to the extra business that came from the socialites, both male and female, who wished to appear at primed perfection on Sunday. It was one mad rush of creating feminine coiffures, trimming men's hair, and shaping, dressing, and waxing the ornate beard and moustache patterns which were so much the delight of the Russian dandies of the day.

But the work I most relished was that of making-up the actors. I suppose I had developed a fondness for things theatrical during my years as a peanut boy at the Tsarina, and, besides, this make-up work itself appealed to me because it provided some outlet for the imaginative and creative urge which I was just beginning to feel.

I somehow regarded making-up an actor in the same serious light most people would the painting of a portrait on canvas, and consequently studied and became unusually adept at this then-primitive art. Preference resulted in my becoming so skilful that I soon excelled even the senior apprentices, and was assigned to all the make-up jobs for illustrious actors in important theatres.

In this present era of highly-

refined and perfected make-up, it makes me shudder to think of the compounds which we so nonchalantly applied to the actors' faces 50 years ago. Greasepaint sticks, mainly manufactured by a famous German cosmetic firm of that day, were available in only two shades—white and a theoretical "flesh."

Kalsomine Powder

IF a dramatic production required any unusual colour effects, the make-up artist had to compound them himself. And "the sky was the limit" when it came to selecting materials.

I have seen green kalsomine powder, originally meant to tint a plaster wall, mixed with suet and nonchalantly applied to an unconcerned Russian character-actor as eyeshadow. Pulverised brick-dust, mixed with grease, was a standard formula with which to supply a player with a swarthy complexion. Quite often the youthful bloom on the cheeks of an ingenue was made of the crimson juice from common beets, mixed with beeswax. More than one actor to whom I applied make-up had slightly-perfumed stove polish smeared on his face for a black-face characterisation.

Even if such an actor had known that he was stove-polished or kalsomined, he probably would not have objected very strenuously. Actors were an amiable and unpretentious lot in those days; they seemed to expect only the worst in life, and were seldom disappointed.

Then, when I was 15 years old, came the great day when I was no longer an apprentice but a Master Wigmaker. I was asked to stay on in the same shop as a salaried associate, but I had other ideas. My skill at applying theatrical make-up had been heard of in other shops of Europe, and the great and famous Anton of Berlin offered me a place on his staff.

Anton commanded the largest theatrical make-up trade in the world at that time. He even exported wigs, beards and greasepaints as far away as America and Australia. At his establishment I learnt that ingredients other than brick-dust and stove-blackening could be used to make up actors' faces. Indeed, Anton's cosmetics, limited as they were in number, were made with the aid of all the scientific knowledge applicable to them at that time. It was here that I gained my first real knowledge of the chemistry which was necessary for the creation of perfumes, powders, facial creams, as well as theatrical greasepaints.

Call To Arms

FORTIFIED with all this knowledge—which I youthfully considered sufficient to make me the Wigmaking Master Mind of Russia—I resigned at the end of a year and returned to my native land to work in the Moscow shop of Korpo, one of the most famous wigmakers in Russia.

I soon discovered at Korpo's that the time was not quite ripe for me to set myself up as a Master Mind; Wigmaker Korpo knew a few advanced tricks of our trade himself.



★ BEAUTIFUL ANN SOTHERN is a classic example of the skill in make-up developed by Max Factor. The first chapter of his life-story, appearing on this page, tells how he . . .

And I had never even heard of most of them. His greasepaint contained no more brick-dust than had Anton's in Berlin. I relaxed from my juvenile cocksureness and returned to learning more of the fascinating intricacies of the business.

Then came the call to arms. The fact that I was an ambitious young wigmaker, apparently on the road to success, did not particularly interest the Russian War Office. Army service was compulsory for all able-bodied citizens in those days. Refusal to enlist meant court martial and an almost sure sentence to the prison camps of Siberia. I did not look into this matter of punishment too far. I joined the army in 1895.

Having been trained in rudimentary surgery and dentistry, I was assigned to the 142nd Medical Corps as a hospital interne. I served all my army term in the Red Cross hospital in Moscow. Here most of my time was devoted to assisting the dentists, and that is how I acquired the ambition which led me to America, as I shall tell shortly.

When my army enlistment ended in 1899, I took my savings and opened a wigmaking shop of my own at Razan, a suburb of Moscow. Having thus established myself as a solid and responsible business man, I was finally able to persuade Elizabeth Rose, a famous creator of costumes for the Moscovski School of Designing, whom I had been courting for three years, to marry me.

Prosperous

MY shop prospered from the very beginning. On my staff were seven master wigmakers and 15 apprentices. Applying the chemical laboratory techniques which I had learned at Anton's and Korpo's, together with some improvements which I had discovered for myself, and developing some skill in the making of perfumes, I built up a useful sideline. But a new ambition was gnawing at me. I wanted to be a dentist!

My one determination was to go to a recognised dental college and finally emerge with the ornate parchment which would assure the world that I was no longer a wigmaker who pulled teeth as a subsidiary endeavour, but a genuine, certified dentist.

My ego demanded that I become a great and outstanding dentist, not merely an ordinary one, and when I discovered that the American schools of dentistry were far more advanced than those in my own country, I made up my mind that they were the only ones for me. Even though it meant that we must uproot ourselves from our native land and establish ourselves in a new one, my wife encouraged me in this ambition, not only for my own sake, but for the sake of the three children who had come to us.

We carefully saved our money. In four years we considered that we had enough. After selling the shop, we had 64,000 roubles, a sufficiency even when translated into American dollars, to support us during the six years of study necessary for me before I could graduate from an American school of dentistry.

Putting our old profession and our old country behind us, we embarked on the adventure which was to be a more splendid one than we had ever imagined, even in our wildest dreams. We were on our way to a Hollywood which did not yet exist.

CHAPTER II

MRS. MAX FACTOR and I, together with our three children, Freda, Cecilia, and Davis, arrive in New York as immigrants from Russia.

UNABLE to speak a word of English, we had a most embarrassingly difficult time trying to make ourselves understood. It was in April, 1904. Because I spoke Russian, Polish and German fluently I had imagined that I could learn one more language with very little difficulty. But I had not taken

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