

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Last Chapter in Actress Life**

The last chapter in the life of Lizzie Bingham is written today. Mrs. Bingham was once a resident of Monterey and was an adored actress in California's First Theater, playing the part of Martha Washington, in "The Lion Son of '76." It was the first theatrical performance ever given in California and took place in Jack Swan's saloon. Members of the cast were mostly disbanded volunteers of Stevenson's New York regiment.

After traveling through the Mother Lode for many weeks playing to the miners, Lizzie and her husband settled down temporarily in Marysville.

It was an evil hour for her happiness. Her husband met with Gen. Taylor, who was then raising recruits for his Nicaragua expedition. His seductive influence won over to this mad scheme this most handsome orderly who noble wife, though heartbroken at the idea of leaving her children, determined to accompany him.

He arrived in Central America just in time to be shut up in the besieged fortress in Granada, which was threatened on all sides by upward of 15,000 soldiers of the combined republics of Costa Rica, Honduras Guatemala and El Salvador, an army determined to capture, at any cost of life, the little force of 200 Americans—"Filibusters"—under Gen. Henningsen.

The siege lasted for weeks, and Lizzie's husband, who had charge of one of the guns, finally broke down from exhaustion and was consigned to his cot. Again her early experiences made Lizzie invaluable as a nurse, varying her sad duties by occasionally taking her place at her husband's gun.

Nature finally gave way, and the decimated force, accorded for their courage the honors of war, asked but one favor: that Lizzie and her husband be treated with the most merciful attention. The pledge was kept, for they were tenderly removed to the St. Vincent Hospital. There the Sisters were requested to indulge their patients with every alleviating luxury that money could command. But this come too late. Lizzie Bingham hovered for days between life and death.

"One delightful morning she was carried out on the broad plaza of the hospital that overlooked Lake Nicaragua. She tossed madly about on her narrow couch, and in her delirium called for her children by

their names. Thus rising up she would, with unearthly look, astonish the simple-hearted nuns by reciting eloquent and appropriate passages from the many tragedies she knew so well by heart, passages that described her feelings and situations.

Thus she unquietly passed until the close of day, and it was not until the setting sun cast its last rays upon the twin mountains that set their lengthening shadows over the lake, that her troubled spirit was at rest.

Thus is her passing described by the author of "The Career of a Remarkable Woman," who added, "but what happened to her twin daughters, Rose and Lilly," we have not been able to learn. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bingham are mentioned in many volumes which have been written on the early California theater and those who acted in it, but we find no reference to the future of the children.