

From Chorus Girl ^{up} the Ladder to Broadway Star — and Down Again

Pauline Hall, Who Held New York Fascinated for 800 Nights in "Erminie," and Dropped Down, Down, Down to a Tiny Little Part on Broadway

THE greatest dramatic success in the history of the New York stage was the famous "800-night" run of the light opera "Erminie" at the Casino thirty years ago. Pauline Hall was the prima donna and played the title role of Erminie. She was the dramatic sensation of the day; she had climbed to the very top of the ladder of fame—from chorus girl to the most popular opera star of the hour.

And Pauline Hall was still playing a part in a Broadway show—unknown and trivial—when she died the other day. The great prima donna of "Erminie" had climbed down the ladder of fame. On this page to-day the woman who held the centre of the New York stage for three years tells of chorus girls and prima donnas she has seen come and go—into poverty, obscurity, disaster. This article was prepared a few days before Pauline Hall died.



By Pauline Hall.

(In an Interview Just Before She Died)

PRETTY girl in our company showed me a new hat yesterday. She had paid \$250 for it. I said:

"Oh, my dear, I wish you had put \$235 of that in the bank. You are so young and pretty that you don't need those bird of paradise feathers. When we are old we need the birds of paradise. A little black velvet hat with a buckle would have set off your sweet face as well. I wish I could make you understand that time brings change. To fortify yourself against that change you need a liberal bank account. Begin it now."

I might have given her a chapter from my own life if I could have made her stop laughing and listen. I could have told her that when "Erminie" ran for eight hundred performances at the Casino I was the toast of the town. Yet two years ago fate cast me for a small part in a comic opera in which another woman was the prima donna. The opera was "Kitty Darlin'." It lasted for one week at the Casino. I couldn't bring myself to play a trivial part in the house that had been the scene of my triumphs. So I resigned before we reached New York.

I am not complaining. Thank heaven I am thrifty. But I am glad to have even a small part in a successful play, and to play for a long time in New York. I want to be near my home and my daughter. But my present part is undeniably small. It is what actors call one "side." That is, it fills a page. No one who has played the leading part enjoys the transition to a lesser one. But that is what time does. That is the reason I preached the little sermon on thrift to the girl who bought the \$250 hat.

Click! I draw back the shutter in the camera of thirty years and I see what? Marie Rose, the grand opera prima donna of other days, dying a beggar. She was run over by an automobile while begging in the streets. She who had worn robes of lace and jewels of regal splendor was clothed in dirt and rags. Her home was a downtown basement. It was found that she had some money. Thirty-five thousand dollars were credited to her in a bank. But the fear of being without money made her a miser.

Poor Marie Rose! Her later life was a tarnished remnant of what had been a glittering career. The voice that had thrilled thousands in the Academy of Music when great operas were given there was lifted in the quaver of age and mendacity. She was of another generation. None survived to tell the reason for her downfall. But we have the sordid, unforgettable facts. No use to shrink from them. We must look them in the face, in the eyes.

Click! Open the shutter again and we see Mamie Arlington. Twenty years or so ago her beauty was a household word.

She was, indeed, the toast of the town. But that which sooner or later comes to all players came to her. Her popularity

waned. True, hers was the fault that it came so early. Dissipation marked her. One day she leaned over the dumbwaiter, lost her balance and went crashing down. Her beautiful form was found crushed, her lovely face bruised almost beyond recognition.

Click! The shutter opens, revealing Sadie Martinot. Sadie Martinot, of the fair hair and the brilliant smile. No smile was so eloquent as Sadie's. Sadie Martinot, of the piquant poise of the head and of such toilettes as every woman in her company envied. Sadie, who by ancestry was French enough to look chic in the tatters of a beggar maid.

She sang Nanon in the opera of that name before I was the Nanon de l'Enclos. It was at the Casino. She was the most fascinating woman I ever knew. The years rolled round. We seldom met. Occasionally she revealed herself. One saw her in gorgeous gowns at smart restaurants. She had a beautiful house on West End avenue. Then one saw her no more for years. Sometimes she showed a taste for seclusion. There were rumors that she was growing poor. Someone said the beautiful woman who had been the toast of multimillionaires was living in a furnished room and cooking her own meals. But I had not seen nor heard of her for years when I read that she was a patient in the psychopathic ward of Bellevue.

I went to Bellevue at once. I said to the physician at the head of the psychopathic ward: "Doctor, there isn't anything the matter with her." He said, "Oh, yes, there is." But Miss Martinot talked so reasonably that I was sure the expert was mistaken. I went to the office of the Actors' Fund and told of her plight. The Fund arranged to have her taken to Amityville. In a short while I went to Amityville and induced the authorities to let her go home with me. She was living quietly with me in Yonkers for two weeks. Then she burst into a frightful state and accused me of having conspired with her husband and the Fund to put her in an asylum.

I heard no more from her until late this Summer. The superintendent of a hospital in Washington wrote me that she had been found wandering about the streets of that city and that her mind was unbalanced. He said she was in the charity ward. He said she wrote me because he had found my name in her address book. I wrote him that he could get all the information desired from the Actors' Fund.

Click! The shutter closes upon Sadie Martinot and opens upon Elita Proctor Otis. She is the daughter of a Cleveland banker, granddaughter of a banker of Boston, niece of the Mayor of Cleveland. Charles A. Otis, who was at one time a partner of Mark Hanna. She is a grandniece of Senator Redfield Proctor, of Vermont, and a lineal descendant of the English poet, Adelaide Proctor. John Stetson, the manager, said there was a fortune in her laugh. A few will remember her debut in "The Crust of Society." She was a star and a celebrated character actress. But things went wrong. They kept on going wrong. Two years ago a subscription was taken up for her in the profession. She has become an agent for a typewriting machine.

Close the shutter and open it. We see



Pauline Hall While Playing the Title Role of Erminie in its 800 Nights' Run at the Casino



Pauline Hall, the Former Star, in Her Little Part in Current Play. Miss Hall is the Standing Figure with a Hat On.



Florence Schenck, the Virginia Beauty, Who Died a Pauper.

Corona Riccardo. Don't you remember what a dream of dark beauty she was in the barge in "Ben Hur"? And how the town acclaimed her in the title role of Maria of the Lowlands? But time's wheel whirled round and round. Corona vanished from Broadway. Persons who knew her occasionally asked each other about her when they met. Then they forgot. They remembered only when the dispatches from Kansas City told of a white

Frankie Bailey in the Heyday of Her Popularity at Weber & Fields

squaw dying in a cheap furnished room in that city. Her Indian husband mourned over her.

Pearl Eytling captivated the town when she revealed her beauty in the bath in "The Clemenceau Case." She died poor and forgotten.

Click! That exquisite beauty is Florence Schenck. She ran away from her home in Norfolk with Charles Wilson, who managed race horses of a Vanderbilt. She was the most conspicuous figure in the show girl groups in several musical comedies. But care life undermined her health. She disappeared and was found living in a rear room of an Eighth avenue saloon. She was hungry and penniless. The high arched feet that had worn silk gauze stockings and velvet slippers were stockingless. She wore a pair of men's shoes she had found in the gutter. She died in agony on the train while her parents who had discarded her were taking her back to the home from which she had fled.

I last heard of Frankie Bailey, whose beautiful figure made her the toast of the town while she was in Weber and Fields Music Hall, as a saleswoman in a cigar store, afflicted with rheumatism and living in a basement.

Mabel Bouton died on Blackwell's Island. I have heard that Marie Jansen, who had the most beautiful dark eyes in the world, sunk from prima donna to visiting seamstress.

Why these changes in fortune? Who knows?

Sometimes the cause is extravagance, as with my little friend who paid \$250 for a hat.

Sometimes it is the grip of drink and drugs, as with unhappy Florence Schenck. Sometimes, I doubt not at all, it is luck.

If I were to sum it up I should say it is lack to holding power. They do not hold to their advantages. They lose their hold upon themselves.

In the play where I now have the small part of Cissy Gray, the author introduces me as a "has been" in these words: "That's Cissy Gray. There was a time when she was the toast of this town. She had a carriage and pair—that was in the day before the autos—and her coachman and footman had a house in town and a place in the country. And when she went to London she almost married a Duke. When she lost her looks she lost her friends—at least, her gentlemen friends. And then—good-night bank account."

To sum up further. Those to whom time brings the cruel and hopeless changes are those who have been spendthrifts. Spendthrifts of their time, of their money, of themselves.