

WIDOW OF OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, DESTITUTE, FACES NEW LIFE STRUGGLE WITH GRIM SMILE

"Bench in Central Park" Is Address of Woman Once Favored of Fortune

"IF YOU ain't got no money, you needn't come around!" It's an old, old song, but perennially true. It isn't a ccm from any opera—it's just a plain tin-pan alley ballad, but it is ringing today in the ears of Mrs. Oscar Hammerstein.

This woman, whose eccentric husband made and lost millions, who carried the beauty of music to thousands upon thousands of English-speaking people, today is destitute.

Accustomed to luxury, to the ease and comfort of affluence, Mrs. Hammerstein today must go to work!

"Forward my letters," she says with a droolery that is pathetic, "to some bench in Central Park." She can raminate there, and she has the necessary detachment to appreciate the irony in her bitter transformation.

"Can you imagine the wife of Oscar Hammerstein trying to sleep on a bench in Central Park, with a suitcase for a pillow, and today, her faithful dog, to stand watch?"

It is a dramatic contrast, certainly, and a tragic one.

"Somehow, it seems as if my nerve has left me." And the tears roll down her cheeks. "The world and its people have grown chilly since I've gone broke. Only Teddy sticks by me. He understands."

This attractive and cultured woman—Emma Swift Hammerstein—was friend and confidant of her amazing husband during the best strenuous ten years of his life during his last two, when luck appeared to be going against him and he grew feeble, she loyally warded off his crowding creditors and strengthened him against his increasing physical weakness.

Poverty Is Her Reward For Years of Loyalty

Today her reward is miserable poverty. A few nights ago she was found weeping in a Fifth avenue hotel. She was sunk in the depths of despair. Unable to pay her bill, she had been ordered out of her room. A porter and a hotel detective stood over her while she packed a few bits of clothing, a few wretched trinkets in a suitcase. They were all she was permitted to carry with her from the room.

Her trunks were held by the hotel. One contained all the love letters her husband had written her during the years of their happiness.

"It breaks my heart to leave them. What love letters that dear man could write! He wrote just as sweet ones after marriage as before."

A friend—a stranger—happening by, gave the once petted and pampered wife of the impresario a few dollars, took her and her handsome colie to dinner and then obtained for her a night's lodging.

She may have slept, but it is more likely she wept the long night through, alone with her memories.

Broken and depressed, but outwardly smiling, Mr. Hammerstein's last appearance in Times square before his death is still remembered. With his wife at his side, the woman who is now in such desperate extremities, he drove in an open limousine behind a single horse through the Rinko district. He wore his famous hat, but had a merrily bowled, waved their hands and cheered as he swept around the district through the scenes of his former life.

The wife smiled, but behind it the imprudent nature of her husband's life for he already was being criticized. At the time it was nothing, but later it was then "come back," "Hammerstein was one of a comparative few in New York who repeatedly came back during his life, and looked upon his life as a series of failures, and was apparently floundering in the walls of fate. But his world had gone, and the most talented of spirits had lost the ideal energy that formerly sustained him.

Kept Wife Away From His Artistic Vagaries

Mr. Hammerstein had a very peculiar and few understood his eccentricities. Although he gambled with millions in his operations and theatrical ventures, and for long the latter supported the former, his own private life was marked by utter simplicity. He cared nothing for money for its own sake, but only for what it would do in furthering his ambitious projects.

But his wife, for whom persons who were never friends are now attempting to arrange a theatrical benefit or concert to tide over her pressing requirements, had all of the comforts and pleasures he denied to himself.

Mr. Hammerstein once said to a friend:

"You know, I suppose I am a curious sort of man. I live only for tomorrow. I don't drink and I never played a game of cards in my life. When I find I have no money in my pocket I go to the box office and draw three dollars and its lasts me so long that it really makes me feel ashamed of myself. But I have made and lost a lot of money. I couldn't possibly tell you how many fortunes I have amassed and spent again on ventures in the last thirty-five years."

He took care of his wife well while he was alive, but he had made inadequate provision for her after his death.

What he left to her, the Manhattan Opera House, where she had an apartment in which to live until last winter, when she was evicted, was so involved and so subject to the attacks of the children by his former wife, that it almost immediately became a proscenium liability. She is still fighting in the courts for her equity in an estate of more than a million dollars.

While laying claim to a million and fighting her stepson, Arthur Hammerstein, and other children of her late husband, she is penniless, homeless and reduced to the point of absolute hunger.

Mrs. Hammerstein had "charismatic" gifts in her handbag when found weeping at her hotel. Attention had been drawn to her plight by an advertisement for work which appeared in a newspaper.

"I MUST have work of any sort at once," Mrs. Oscar Hammerstein, widow of the impresario, Telephone Exchange 7222.

Queer Twists of Fate Shown at Cafe Table

When she was taken to dinner at a restaurant in East Sixtieth street an adjoining table there happened to be John Hougland, the baking powder king; Mrs. Katharine de Rohan and Mrs. Elizabeth D. Warner, Hougland, who as a married man had reason to remember Arthur Hammerstein, who, according to the divorce courts and the charges of Hougland, had annexed the latter's wife, had once met Mrs. Oscar Hammerstein. He came over to greet her. Later he invited the entire party to supper.

After this little twist of fate Mrs. Katharine de Rohan began comparing notes with Mrs. Hammerstein. The latter told Mrs. de Rohan that she had just been evicted from the Hotel Northland.

"That's funny," said Mrs. de Rohan, "they said that they had been obliged to get out of a west from their room to get out of town. What was your room number?"

Mrs. Hammerstein told her. It was the room in which Mrs. de Rohan had been assigned.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Mrs. Hammerstein said, "it will be a great help—I'll take you back to the hotel and you can see if your own room is more comfortable with me."

There are in one of my trunks in the hotel room."

The widow of the impresario talked freely of her imprisonment. She said she had found the world chilly to her because she had been evicted.

Went Back to New York Looking for Work

"I spent my few remaining dollars for a ticket back to New York. I had thought to find a quiet place to lay my weary head in peace for a little space, but it wasn't to be. Back I came to the big city where they turn the cold

shoulder on even old friends of the fair and prosperous days, if they even suspect you are down and out.

"I had nothing but my baggage and a little change. With my baggage I knew

where my forwarding address would be, and I wrote on a form slip that it would be Central Park until further notice. I meant just that. I have often sat for hours in beautiful Central Park and it wouldn't really have been so terrible out there on a bench. I don't suppose it wasn't the physical part of it I dreaded, but the mental suffering that goes with such an experience."

Mrs. Hammerstein explained that the Manhattan Opera House and the Republic Theatre had been willing to be helped by her husband, who had made her his sole beneficiary, but that Mr. Hammerstein's daughters by an earlier marriage had the opera house, after a court contest, and that Arthur Hammerstein, a son by the same marriage, got the theatre. She exclaimed:

"Surely, there must be justice in the courts, but I am relying now on that justice, but it has been long in coming."

After Mrs. Hammerstein was forced

into bankruptcy in 1921 the Manhattan Opera House was sold to satisfy a judgment of \$124,667 obtained by Mrs. Stella H. Keating and Mrs. Rose Teatevin, daughters of the impresario by his first wife, who claimed this amount to be due them under the terms of a separation agreement entered into between their father and their mother years ago.

Pet Collie Her Chum in Darkest Misfortune

After the sale Mrs. Hammerstein was forced to give up the suite of three rooms she had occupied as a residence in the building, and she went to live at the hotel.

"Even my nerve seems to be gone now," she said, as tears stole down her cheeks. "I shall not part with my dog, though, even if I have to scrub floors for a living. Teddy has been one real friend. He understands everything and he is always sympathetic and he never complains, whether we are prosperous or poor."

Mrs. Hammerstein throughout her narrative never blamed her husband or uttered a reproach against him.

"When my husband died he left his affairs in a sad jumble. The property was large, but was heavily encumbered, and there was absolutely no cash to meet emergency expenses. Almost my first act after my husband's death three years ago was to pawn my diamond earrings to obtain money with which to get our car out of storage and sell it so I might pay the rent on our home."

"Mr. Hammerstein's children know this. They know I worked hard to carry out his plans for the Manhattan Opera House, and Arthur himself told me repeatedly that I had unquestionably prolonged his father's life many years through the jealous care with which I had nursed him."

Mrs. Hammerstein began her management of the Manhattan Opera House with brave fanfare. She joined forces with Fortune Gallo, now running the San Carlo Opera Company in New York at the Century, to produce grand opera at prices within reach of the modest purse. Later she bought Gallo's inter-



The late Oscar Hammerstein (in circle) and his widow

ests in the holding company known as a position. I selected a paper that would take such advertisements over the telephone without advance payment, because I didn't have enough money to pay for the ad. Well, just as I was about to be ejected from the hotel, a real nice reporter, who didn't have much money with him, came to see me, and he gave me a dollar.

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Ousted From Hotel, She Asks Work to Support Herself and Pet Dog

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Famous Loving Cups Went Under Hammer

When the Manhattan Opera House closed its season of 1906-07, which marked the zenith of Oscar Hammerstein's career as an impresario in New York, the stars of his company presented to him a large and beautiful sil-



Prince Oleg Radomar (at left), cousin of the King of Italy, who was reported engaged to Mrs. Hammerstein. After the first brief announcement of the engagement no further public mention has been made of the reported romance. (Above) Mrs. Hammerstein and her faithful colie before a painting of the late impresario

Had to Leave Love Letters as Security for Bill

"The hotel let me have a small suitcase with a few of my toilet articles and the things for my Scotch colie. Men watched me while I packed my bag, but I had to leave the rest of my effects. I have only these clothes on my back and one change of underwear. I took the bill away with me, and I'll pay it when I can."

Is Fighting in Courts Just as Husband Did

Mrs. Hammerstein asserts that this action virtually confiscated her property and a part of her present fight is to have the court's decision reversed.

When evicted at the end of last January from her opera house home, Mrs. Hammerstein was at least philosophical. She did not believe the situation would endure long. But courts are sometimes slow to act and the machinery of the law grinds slow. At the time, her own lawyers said there was slight chance of a successful appeal.

At the same time Mrs. Hammerstein suffered another reverse. Ousted from her opera house, she had a friend visit her country home in Fairview avenue, Atlantic Highlands, N. J., to inspect for her. He found it had been looted. She had stored in the place, then in the hands of a receiver, furniture, paintings and other effects of her husband, which had been insured at one time for \$75,000. But the insurance had lapsed.

The friend telephoned her the day she was evicted from the Manhattan Opera House that the house had been almost entirely cleaned out. There had found a stock of liquor there and consumed on the spot what they did not remove. They had carted away everything else in moving vans.

After Mr. Hammerstein's death many of the furnishings and works of art he had owned and which Mrs. Ham-

mer loving cup inscribed with their names. Their again, at the close of the following season the members of his company joined in giving him a cup of even greater size, with sculptural elements designed by Mr. Scotti.

Both of these cups, which meant more than wealth to Hammerstein, were sold while the widow wept. One bore the inscription:

"Presented to Mr. Oscar Hammerstein in affectionate appreciation by the principal artists of the Manhattan Opera Company, April 20, 1907."

The inscription on the second cup read:

"To our beloved impresario, Oscar Hammerstein, a token of sincere appreciation of his splendid services in the cause of art and his constant sympathetic interest in his artists, March 25, 1908."

There was also sold the concert grand piano used in his home by Mr. Hammerstein for composing music, as well as a collection of his personal jewelry, including a gold watch presented to him back in 1880 by attaches of the Harlem Opera House.

Mrs. Hammerstein has much to remember, and much she would like to forget. All she seeks now is a little sympathy and understanding and help, she says, so she can make her own way without being beholden to any one.

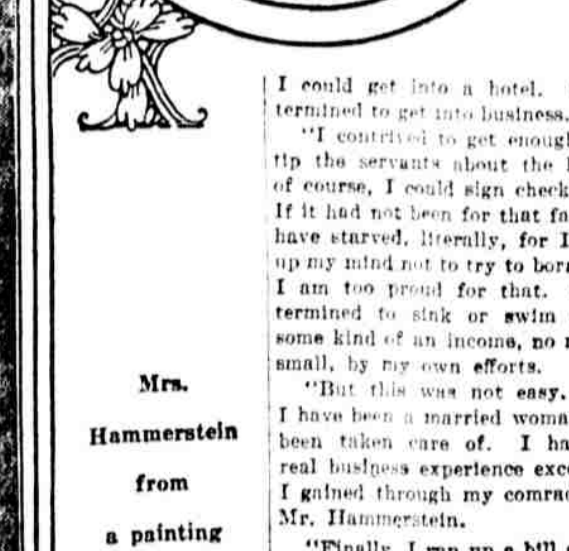
She believes—though she was not an artist herself and the public owes her nothing—that the world at least should help her to a living, if nothing more.

She was, after all, the wife of the eccentric man who had brought musical joy to the hearts of millions.

She was his loyal helpmate and partner.

In a fashion she worked as vigorously as her husband did for the good of the public.

But the public, in its customary fashion, forgets so soon and so well



Mrs. Hammerstein from a painting

But Mrs. Hammerstein could not endure the thought:

"I would rather sleep in Central Park on a bench, as I intended, than do that. My husband let me for a year."

shoulder on even old friends of the fair and prosperous days, if they even suspect you are down and out.

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where my forwarding address would be, and I wrote on a form slip that it would be Central Park until further notice. I meant just that. I have often sat for hours in beautiful Central Park and it wouldn't really have been so terrible out there on a bench. I don't suppose it wasn't the physical part of it I dreaded, but the mental suffering that goes with such an experience."

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