MY GAL SAL

1905

Paul Dresser, born in Terre Haute, Indiana, was the older brother of the great American novelist, Theodore Dreiser. He changed the spelling of his name when he went to New York, where he became an actor, playwright, publisher and producer of plays and musical shows. Dresser gave “My Gal Sal” an unhappy ending, a not unusual feature of many of the favorite songs of the 1890s and 1900s. To us, almost a century later, these sentiments seem overly contrived and much too obvious; perhaps this is why the second verse of “My Gal Sal” is almost unknown today.

From 1895 to 1900 Dresser was at the top of his profession, successful in every way, known and loved from one end of Broadway to the other. His songs were innocent and sincere, touching the hearts of all who heard them. His “On The Banks Of The Wabash, Far Away,” the state song of Indiana, is one of the best American songs. Success and fame were short-lived, however, as his gift for composing waned. Just before he died . . . his business a failure, his money gone, deserted by his friends . . . he composed what may be his greatest song, “My Gal Sal.” Its bittersweet lyric may be a reflection of his own life story. He didn’t live to enjoy its success.

By PAUL DRESSER
(1857-1906)

VERSE:

Everything is over and I'm feeling sad,

I lost the best pal that I ever had;

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"Tis but a fortnight since she was here,
Seems like she's gone though for twenty year.
Oh, how I miss her, my old pal,
Oh, how I'd kiss her, my gal Sal;
Face not so handsome, but eyes, don't you know,
That shone just as
Bright as they did years ago, They called her frivolous Sal, a peculiar sort of a gal; With a heart that was mellow, an all 'round good fellow was my old pal. Your troubles, sorrows and
Additional verse:
Brought her little dainties just afore she died,
Promised she would meet me, on the other side;
Told her how I loved her; she said, "I know, Jim,"
Just do your best, leave the rest to Him.
Gently I pressed her to my breast,
Soon she would take her last long rest,
She looked at me and murmured "Pal,"
And softly I whispered, "Goodbye, Sal."