

"Off-Stage" With Caruso on a Week's Tour

An Intimate Picture of the Famous Tenor's Life on the Road During His Recent Concert Tournée—His Good Nature Is Omnipresent, but Not to Be Imposed Upon—The Infinite Precautions Taken by His Retinue to Insure His Comfort—One Person Who Did Not Enjoy His Caricatures

A TRIP with Caruso for a week! There are music lovers who would trade their last sheet of music for the privilege; operagoers who would forego the pleasures of the Metropolitan for weeks; hero-worshippers who would give years of their lives for the experience; society women who would buy this propinquity for thousands of dollars, if they could.

Mr. Caruso was met on a Monday morning at the dirty station at Cincinnati. It was seven o'clock. Mr. Caruso walked down the station platform with his favorite meerschaum holder in his mouth, puffing away at his cigarette. His cane was in its characteristic place, diagonally across his back, held there by his two hands clasping it at the top and bottom.

He looked as immaculate as he does when he drops into the Knickerbocker after the opera. His spats were on his highly polished patent leathers. His green fedora was perched on his head at a slight angle.

"Hm," he grunted a pleasant hello to the newspaper men who greeted him. "Hm, Cincinnati, what news from my son at the front?"

The Tenor Lionized

And then Cincinnati started going through its Caruso days. Wherever Caruso walked, or rode, he became the center of attraction. To be with him was like being with the sun—he obliterated everything else.

The first amusing experience occurred when his rooms were shown to him at the Hotel Gibson. Four of the largest rooms had been reserved, and these had been arranged as a drawing room, bedroom, dining room and servants' room. Mr. Caruso's first idea when he saw the rooms was that his managers had spent too much money on their own account in providing them for him.

"It is too magnificent. Let us give back one room," he said to his manager, F. C. Coppicus. "I do not need a separate dining room."

The retainer of four establishments running simultaneously, the owner of a sixteen-room suite at the Knickerbocker Hotel, was unbalanced with four rooms at a Cincinnati hotel.

Avaunt—Ye Newlyweds!

That evening, when he went to bed, he heard strains of dance music coming from the same floor. An orchestra was playing. The room next to Mr. Caruso's had been assigned to a wedding party. Of course, Mr. Caruso could not sleep with all this disturbance going on. He called the manager of the hotel and told him about it. The manager let the wedding throng know, and they consented graciously to move nine flights down, with party and everything else. Next day the newly married couple received an autographed photograph from him. "Thank you for my not sleepless night," he had written on it.

Caruso does not eat his breakfast in his room. He likes the crowds and tables, the lobbies and the human interest. The waiter who served him at the breakfast table the next morning had served him at the Hotel Royal in Paris. He was proud of the honor and Caruso showed that he appreciated the pride.

Caruso Goes Shopping

Then there was a shopping tour with Caruso in Cincinnati. Striding down the street, linked arm in arm with Mrs. Coppicus, Caruso reached a large retail establishment. Caruso expressed a desire for a particular brand of toilet water,



Enrico Caruso Photographed Outside the Auditorium in Toledo

but inquiry at the counter proved that they had only very small bottles of the perfume. Caruso was not a bit perturbed. "Give me a gallon altogether," he said. They wrapped up the bottles and the tenor walked away.

He stepped up to the lace counter, took off his coat and green fedora, laid them down side by side on a counter, and "made himself at home." Meanwhile all traffic had been blocked in the shop and all business halted.

A man stepped up to Mr. Caruso, as he saw him standing there hatless and coatless. "Can you tell me the direction to the glove counter?"

He discovered the mistake he had made. But Caruso laughed. "I will be a floorwalker here when I can no longer sing," he said.

Before he had left the lace counter some Russian lace had struck his eye. "Give me the piece," he said. It happened to be twenty yards, but he took the whole lot. His companion thought he had bought the lace for fun. But Caruso had had a distinct purpose in buying long Russian lace. "I will wear Russian blouses in Buenos Ayres this summer. It will be trimming for them," he said.

On the way back to the hotel a tall looking Westerner with slouch hat and pipe, stopped Caruso with a "You're Mr. Caruso, ain't you?" The tenor acknowledged his identity. "Well, sir, I spent ten dollars for your show to-night." The tenor smiled in acknowledgment again.

Shades of Verdi!

"And I want you to sing this list of encores." And the Westerner dove into his pocket and handed a twelve-inch list of encores to Mr. Caruso. Among the encores were such songs as "Silver Threads Among the Gold," "I Hear You Calling Me," "Mother Machree" and "Loch Lomond." With a low bow Caruso acknowledged the receipt of the request, thanked the westerner for it and walked on.

Caruso had been bothered in his sleep at night in Cincinnati by a banging elevator door. He said very little about it, but when he came to Toledo, where a royal suite had been prepared for him, his companions were made aware of it by the following incident.

Two rooms had been prepared for him as bedroom and salon. The bedroom faced on a quiet street but was nearest the elevator. The salon faced a noisy alley, but was further away from the lift. Mr. Caruso noticed that the lift was nearer his bedroom as soon as he came in.

"Change rooms," he said.

He was assured that the rooms had

A Wedding Party Moved Nine Flights Away to Allow the Noted Singer to Sleep—Twelve-Inch List of Request Numbers Handed to Him by Art Admirer in Cincinnati Street—His Rebuke to a Collector of Press Clippings—The Ultra-Inquisitive Reporter Snubbed

been arranged with a view to his comfort, that it would be inadvisable for him to sleep in a room which faced on a noisy alley.

"It does not matter. I want to change. In the alleyway there is a moving noise. The wagons move away. But with the elevator it is always noise; the elevator always comes back." The rooms were changed as he had requested. Next morning he said he had passed a quiet, restful night. He had gained his point, anyway.

The Cartoonist Will Out

At the hotel in Toledo the waiters got to know Caruso so well in his two days' stay that no matter who waited upon him, a pencil and writing paper would be brought to him after the entree had been served. And between bites Caruso would draw caricatures.

No subject within reach of his eyes was out of the reach of his pencils. The first evening he glanced toward the door and the little girl who checks coats and hats became the object of his satire.

Nobody could have mistaken the caricature of her face with its sharply pointed nose and drooping mouth. It was true, but none too flattering. The original was brought to the young woman. "The horrid thing," she said. "I think he's awfully mean."

When Caruso heard that the hat-check girl was displeased, he got up from the table, walked out to the young woman and humbly apologized, giving her an autographed photo of himself.

That same evening, after the concert, while sitting at the dinner table, a waiter slid behind him and opened one of the large windows that faced out on the street. The dining room was crowded with hundreds who had come from the concert to catch a glimpse of the tenor.

At the first touch of the draught, without the least compunction, Caruso slid (the way a boy would down a greased plank or flagpole) under the table and disappeared. It was not until after he had received assurances that the window was closed and dangers of draughts were removed that he reappeared, smiling out again upon the surprised audience.

Caruso Rebuffs Clipping Fiend

In Toledo there is a man known throughout America for his collection of press clippings of famous actors, actresses and singers. When enough clippings have been collected to fill one of the large books, the individual is classified as a star, and gold lettering is put on the outside cover, so that he who comes in may read.

Three young women toil ceaselessly cutting out the clippings and making fame. Caruso had four books in this library. At the hotel his manager received a request to have Mr. Caruso sign his name in the first book. Such requests are not unusual when a great tenor goes on tour. In Cincinnati a young woman had asked for his cigarette stub. The book was sent to the hotel, with its carefully placed clippings. It was filled from the beginning to the end with wild romances of the tenor's first years in America. There were pages devoted to exploits long forgotten in the *vie d'amour* of the singer, pages devoted to exploits in a zoological garden, long-erased from all memory; pages devoted to black-hand stories, to intrigues. It was as if Pandora had opened her box and the hidden things had begun to swarm.

Naturally, there was reticence about bringing all these things to Caruso's attention again. But the book was left in his room with requests to the two valets to forward the request for a signature to Mr. Caruso.

Next morning the book was left at the door, and on opening the first page, Caruso's own bold, round hand had written.

"When a gentleman subscribes his name to a book, it usually means that he subscribes to all the matter contained therein. Were I to do this in this case, I would be subscribing to a lot of silly nonsense. Being a gentleman, I naturally acceded to a request of an unknown man who asked me to put my signature in this book, and sign myself herewith, Enrico Caruso."

Caruso met his old padre in Toledo. He was an Italian priest, who had come to America because Caruso had invited him some years ago. Their affection was remarkable. During Caruso's stay in Toledo the padre hardly left his side.

The concert in Toledo took place in the Terminal Auditorium. This was a railroad station and the tracks had been covered over and made into a serviceable hall.

A Wash-basin or No Aria!

When the hall was reached at seven o'clock the evening of the concert, no wash-basin had been placed in what was supposed to be Caruso's dressing room. This requisite was absolutely essential. Caruso would not have sung without one. A "Mills Hotel" was sought, but they would not relinquish a wash-bowl. "All our rooms are rented to-night," said the proprietor. In desperation a room for the night was rented and the wash-bowl was brought to the hall. The concert began at the scheduled time.

Mr. Caruso, after the first number, came back visibly pleased with the thunderous ovation he had received. He was walking up and down his improvised room, with gusts of air coming in through the cracks in the walls. "You'll catch cold, Mr. Caruso, without a hat," was ventured.

"I want to catch cold," said the million-dollar voice quietly. He was left alone.

A little while later it was remarked that his emerald studs and cuff buttons were very beautiful. "Like Diamond Jim Brady's," was suggested mildly.

"Better than Diamond Jim's," was the response. "Much better," and the tenor turned to stroke them just before going out to sing his glorious "Una furtiva lagrima."

Caruso was called for at the Pittsburgh station at half-past eleven. A bright young reporter had been assigned to cover the arrival of the great tenor. He was anxious for a story and expressed his desire for one.

At last the train arrived. It must have been twelve-thirty. Everybody was tired. Mr. Caruso ambled out, interview-less as far as thoughts or inclinations were concerned. But the bright young reporter had been sent out on an assignment—what cared he whether a tenor did or did not want to be interviewed? So he ambled up to Caruso with, "How do you like Pittsburgh? What do you think of the war situation? Why didn't you join the Italian army? When will you be conscripted?"

Caruso never ignores anybody, least of all newspaper men, but he was absolutely oblivious to the persistent young man's presence. His response to the s.o.s. appeal was a request for a mail box, where he wanted to mail a letter to his son.

And so his retinue of eighteen-odd ambled behind him looking for a mail box, and after Caruso had deposited his letter, he turned around, said good-bye to his interlocutor and was driven to his hotel.

Although Pittsburgh had been entirely sold out weeks before the performance, something ought to be in the papers to "let 'em know he was here." So the young reporter was corralled and sixteen satchels, comprising Mr. Caruso's only baggage, just then being counted and watched over by his own valets, were pointed out to him.

"They are all pillows. He carries them with him always and uses them to sleep on."

The young reporter was very grateful. "I have a story now," he said.

More Trouble

The hotel rooms were large and airy and the ventilation was good. But when Caruso entered and gave the characteristic grunt, the meaning of which could be detected at fifty yards, there must be something the matter. The bed was only a three-quarter bed. That was the trouble. Angelo, the valet, said so, and he always knew. Mr. Caruso wanted a double bed or he would not sing.

"Was that all?"

Not all. There was only one mattress. Mr. Caruso wanted three mattresses.

"It can be done. But is that all?"

"Yes, excepting that he needed eighteen pillows for the three mattresses."

"Eighteen?"

"Yes, eighteen pillows. Eighteen pillows