

**IMPRESSIONS OF CARUSO
AND HIS ART AS PORTRAYED
AT THE METROPOLITAN
OPERA HOUSE**

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Impressions of Caruso and His Art as Portrayed at the Metropolitan Opera House by Mary H. Flint

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MARY H. FLINT

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as portrayed at the
METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE

By

MARY H. FLINT



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Foreword



ENRICO CARUSO was born in Naples in 1873. Naturally he sang when a boy, for all Italian boys sing, but he had grown almost to manhood before he thought of a professional career. Then ambition seized him and he began to study seriously. When a little over twenty years of age he made his debut in an unimportant role in a provincial theatre, and subsequent appearances were at first of the same character. One of his first engagements outside of Italy was in Fiume, and later he sang in Russia, Monte Carlo, Portugal, South America and London, reaching the goal of all Italian singers—La Scala in Milan—in 1900. Always the beautiful voice attracted attention, but the development of his dramatic talent was slow.

Caruso was about thirty years old when he came to the Metropolitan. He was not heralded as a world wonder, for while the velvet voice and the marvellous phrasing immediately aroused admiration, he was still handicapped histrionically. Perhaps it was because his years of hard work began to tell, perhaps

it was the atmosphere of America that stimulated him, for here his progress as an actor was rapid, and while the voice grew richer and fuller and smoother, the tenor came to be a great artist, a wonderful interpreter of his roles, and the idol of the American public.

His fame was now world wide and South America and Europe vied for his services during the months he was not engaged here. Heretofore, the rank of the world's greatest singer had always been held by a woman; no man had ever approached Caruso's unique position. He is now not only the greatest singer and operatic artist of his time, but it is quite probable that he will go down into history as the greatest singer and operatic artist of all times.

Italy may claim him as the land of his birth but he belongs to America, for it is here, on our soil, under our skies, amidst our surroundings, that he has developed into what he is to-day.

Des Grieux in "Manon" and "Manon Lescaut"



It was the Sage of Concord who wrote "All mankind love a lover"—but Emerson, that pure and gentle soul, could not have intended to apply that aphorism to the heroes of the operatic stage; for while they are almost always enamored of the opposite sex, they are frequently lovers who could never command the love of all mankind.

These roles are usually written for tenors, and the public looks eagerly to see which of them are apportioned to Enrico Caruso. Everybody wants to hear him sing, and everybody likes to see the many different ways in which he plays the lover. Perhaps in his whole repertory, there is no stage lover more popular than DES GRIEUX and yet it would be hard to find a more contemptible character than the DES GRIEUX of Abbé Prévost. He is a compound of the most sickly sentimentality and the lowest forms of vice, and he is boldly announced by his author as being only seventeen! Neither Massenet nor Puccini has at-

tempted to depict the profligate of Abbé Prévost, nor does Caruso attempt it either, any more than he does to appear seventeen.

The tale of the Abbé is used as a foundation for a passionate love-story of a weak, headstrong boy and a frail, pretty woman, and while the *DES GRIEUX* of Puccini is rather more manly than that of Massenet, neither of them deserves to be called an impersonation of an important or distinct character. One goes to either opera to hear Caruso sing his impassioned music, and those who are interested in his acting find his love-making as innocent as that of Booth Tarkington's Willie, and his grief over the death of Manon as real as if he were the most model of husbands.



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CARUSO AS "DES GRIEUX"