

A Nod from Lady Luck

ENRICO CARUSO wasn't always a famous tenor. It took him years to save enough money to study under a really good teacher, the famous Vergine, and that same teacher almost hipped his career at its beginning. According to the popular style of the day, Vergine taught Caruso to hold back his strong natural tones, to sing with restraint. Caruso became a third-rate tenor with a cheap opera company, and in the years that followed he progressed very slowly! Finally, one night, seconds before curtain-time, the leading tenor was taken ill and the manager, unable to locate another substitute, signaled Caruso to sing the lead. Stepping into the spotlight for the first time, Caruso found himself free of all restraint. Forgetting his years of training, he sang naturally, breaking every rule he'd learned from Vergine! When he had finished his aria, there wasn't a sound. Not so much as a whisper of applause from the audience! Infuriated, the manager dismissed Caruso on the spot, and he was running toward his hotel in abject misery (later he said that he contemplated suicide) when a friend caught up with him, begged him to come back. The audience was silent not because his singing was bad, Caruso's friend told him. But because they had been held spellbound by it! Returning to the stage, Enrico Caruso received the first ovation of a career that was to be filled with ovations, a career that was almost denied by a voice teacher who tried to restrain the greatest tenor voice the world ever knew!—*From Radio Digest.*