

SEEING AIDA

SERGEANT WRITES ABOUT RECENT TRIP TO METROPOLITAN.

"Main 9,000, please; extension five nine. Arthur, Jack speaking. There is a popular concert at the Metropolitan tonight—Aida, with Martinelli and star cast."

"That suits me. I'll meet you at 6 o'clock at the Times Square sub-station, uptown side." That evening found us at Broadway and Thirty-ninth street, outside the Metropolitan Opera House; and we found a line of waiting people extending around the four blocks surrounding the opera house. A spectator approached us with a handful of tickets and offered us two "at \$1.75 a throw; front row, family circle." Arthur looked at me, and we both looked at the long line—we bought two tickets from this philanthropic ticket vender. Arthur consulted his Ingersoll—8:15. Automobiles arrive and pull up to the curb in front of the Broadway entrance to the Metropolitan. Men and women, in formal evening dress, step out from these cars, and as the women pass by us, the air was saturated with dreamy essences.

So close to the roof were our seats that I could touch it with my hand. I looked from my lofty perch down on a sea of heads filling the main floor. The orchestra seemed the size of pigmies. In the first balcony were seated the elite. Box One, I noticed by the program, was occupied by Mrs. Vanderbilt and party; Box Two, Mr. Gould and family. I was surprised to

see how closely they resembled, except for a certain nonchalance, ordinary human beings.

The house lights went out, and the trench across the stage lighted up with a blue glare. Palocco emerged from underneath the stage, and, with the aid of his wand drew from his orchestra music of the kind I had never before heard. Nothing startling occurred in the first act. Indeed, I hadn't the slightest idea of what was going on, for the singers shouted in Italian. With the opening of the second act, the plot (as far as I knew, it might have been a conspiracy) progressed. Arthur had read the libretto of the play and posted me as to what was impending. I looked on now with a new interest.

The asbestos ascended slowly for the second act, and warriors trooped in amid the blare of trumpets. Following them, the multitudes came crowding in, taking the opposite side of the stage from where the soldiers were in formation. They had no sooner come to a standstill, when a bugle was heard faintly as if from the innermost recesses of the opera house. The assembled multitudes and legions looked expectantly out of the open gate way. A chariot, drawn by four spotless white horses was rolled in, its occupant, head high, standing firmly inside. Arthur leaned over and whispered something about a returning victorious general, but what he whispered was drowned in the sudden deluge of applause, shouting and stamping—a deafening musical roar, which was

the tribute of the assemblage to the returning hero.

The king and queen are seated on the throne. To the left are the soldiers, armed with spears; opposite them is the populace in holiday attire and spirit; in the center are the shackled captives, hostages from the countries the victor subjugated in the far east. The victor himself is kneeling at the foot of the throne, and presents in a most respectful manner the fruits of his victories to his king. What an impressive spectacle! The potentate offers the hand of his daughter to this new popular idol. The general refuses her hand, and the assemblage gasps. Beckoning one of his captives, Aida, to his side, the hero makes known the object of his love. The king is enraged and condemns the two lovers to die by suffocation in the dungeon in the depths of the palace. Agents of the king approach the hero in the dungeon, with a view of having him cast off his captive sweetheart, but he is resolute and will not yield.

The air is shut off, and Aida is losing her strength. Her faithful lover supports her tenderly, but she is fading fast. She becomes limp in his arms, and he lets her slip gently to the floor, suffocated. He sings softly to her as she lies there—a sweet, dolorous swan song; he clutches his throat, reel, and falls lifeless. To the end he was a man, with ideals and principles; and one who valued more than his life these incomparable treasures.

—By Sergeant J. Rosenberg.

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