Manhattan sketch
A glimpse at the Metropolitan opera house

By Elgin E. Groseclose

The Metropolitan Opera House is the most democratic gathering place in New York. This may be said with due deference to those rendezvous of the hoi-polloi, such as the Cotton Club, the Villa Vallerie, or Little Russia, where for a paltry five or six dollars one may purchase the right to order a dinner (cover charge is humorously called) and squeeze in behind a two-by-two table next to Irene Bordoni, Harry Thaw, Jimmie Walker or any number of other local celebrities.

In the first place you don't have to wear a stiff bosom shirt to gain admission to the opera. In fact, it may be doubted if any shirt at all is necessary—a tightly buttoned overcoat accompanied by a proper air of dignity will serve just as well and look entirely natural in some of the drafty upper circles.

In the second place, a mere dollar will speak the pass word to admit you to a place where you may satisfy your democratic instincts by gazing down with a supercilious eye upon the bald heads of some of the uncrowned royalty of these United States. You may for two dollars also use the crowded buffet on the Grand Tier floor during the entr' acte, rub shoulders with some of these royalty, and if you have a playful disposition, or are particularly class conscious, even tread on their toes.

There may be lingering doubts on the part of some regarding the above conclusions. A quarter of an hour before the curtain the Family Circle is crowded, ten minutes before and the lower tiers are comfortably filled, five minutes and there is a sprinkling in the orchestra; boxes are still empty. Democracy possesses the upper galleries, and filters downward slowly. But the moment the performance starts this pleasant and fraternal atmosphere infects the whole auditorium. If music, as Doctor Dowd suggests, is the religion of the present age, the Metropolitan is its Mecca within the confines of which all persons become devotees and all devotees become brothers. When the finale of an aria crashes to its close leaving you suspended in the clouds of enchantment and the dowager with the lorgnette in the adjoining seat leans over and whispers "Eстатич", you have the feeling of having reached at last the fraternal city dreamed of by the philosophers.

That spell begins as the conductor enters. The boxes and the orchestra mysteriously and immediately fill. Absolute silence reigns. The violins draw forth the first threads of music; the wood winds, the brasses and the percussion instruments join; the curtain rises; and the glorious fabric of the opera begins to spread itself, the auditorium becomes possessed of a single and universal soul.

What may well prove one of the major successes of the present Metropolitan Opera season is the revival of Verdi's Luisa Miller, an opera which has not been heard in this city in nearly half a century.

The first performance was inauspiciously offered the Saturday afternoon before Christmas, but the house was nevertheless filled and the opera, remounted with new scenery by the incomparable Joseph Urban, with Rosa Ponselle in the title role, and supported by Giacomo Lauri-Volpi, and Pavel Ludikar, was received with enthusiastic acclaim. Aside from the fact that it marked the return of the popular Rosa Ponselle after a long illness and absence, aside also from the enthusiasm engendered by the emotional Italian singing of Giacomo Lauri-Volpi, the significance of the revival after such a period of somnolence is the evidence it offers of a new interest in Verdi.

It has been somewhat the fashion to scorn Italian opera. Over the prosenium of the Metropolitan where the names of illustrious composers are engraved, the names of Verdi and Wagner are uppermost—and side by side. But the star of Wagner has held the ascendancy, save for the war years when German opera was banned, and to the sophisticated the continued playing of Verdi has been made a concession to his popularity than to his intrinsic merit.

Luisa Miller, itself is a lurid melodrama, based on Schiller's Kabale und Liebe, and one of the composer's earlier works—of the group of operas typified by Ernani. But is is written in a stronger and more emotional vein, fuller of power and melody, intensely dramatic. In the words of one critic it is "Verdi with his mighty genius for melody and drama; Verdi furiously in earnest; Verdi riding the whirlwind and storm of a fiercely clamoring orchestra, and producing many pages prophetic of a later day in opera and of Verdi's own later work."

The revivals accorded the opera in Germany of late years, where it has been subjected to some modification in libretto and numerous experiments in staging, has been hailed by some as a fad and as a reaction against Wagner, but the impetus given by the revival at the Metropolitan suggests to others that the star of Verdi is again mounting and that a just if belated recognition is to be accorded the true nature and value of the Italian genius.

Passing of Red Eagle
An Osage goes to his Happy Hunting ground

By John Joseph Mathews

For ninety years Red Eagle had lived among his people. For that many years of constant changes, contacts and shifting scenes, he remained an Indian; thinking Indian thoughts and dreaming his own dreams. In his later years he seemed to be waiting for something. He lived quietly on his ranch, preferring his horse to a car until he reached his eightieth year. He had oil royalties, but desired to live in simplicity. He had seen many things, and had taken part in wars in the southern part of the state; he talked of these wars with members of the tribe. He saw brick buildings rise up among the jack-oaks, and his Nation spanned with roads; some of them sinuous black ribbons winding over sandstone ridges and limestone prairie. He watched with passivity, shiny oil derricks spring up like phantasmal fungi, from valleys, wooded hills and prairie. Yet, with him remained the spirit of his fathers. To the end he remained an Indian. Frenzied wealth seeking and confused material progress did not disturb the soul of Red Eagle.

There is something poignant about the death of the old warrior. He was the typical Osage. His handsome features; his tall, straight body, and his mien of dignity. His eyes which seemed to look beyond into eternity, and yet twinkle with understanding of mundane things.

He was the symbol of the older order. His passing seems to symbolize the end (Turn to page 176, please)