

DIANA'S THIRTY-YEAR REIGN SOON TO END

Goddess of Madison Square Garden, Criticized at First, Won New York's Heart

STARTING out into space with unwavering bronze eyes, with her bronze Greek face immobile and her bronze bow perpetually bent to unlock its shaft, Diana has stood poised atop the tower of Madison Square Garden for more than thirty years. If, lately, she has been bewildered by tidings that with the coming of next Spring the building upon which she stands is to be torn from under her feet, and that then her guardianship will end—goddess-like, she gives no sign.

Perhaps, during the thirty years of her immobile life, Diana has sometimes wondered why she came to be where she was. Whether or not Diana has ever discovered it, the fact of the matter is that she had a predecessor and a rival. To that predecessor the Diana we know owes her existence, and to tell why necessitates going back to the very beginning.

In 1890 a brilliant architect named Stanford White had the satisfaction of seeing a dream of his made into the reality of brick, stucco and stone. This reality was called Madison Square Garden. Covering a city block, done in buff brick and cream terra-cotta, with an arcade and a 340-foot tower, the new building made considerable stir.

Critics argued the affair over almost brick by brick. The tower, at that time the tallest thing between the Pulitzer Dome, next to Brooklyn Bridge, and Thirtieth Street, came in for a goodly share of the debate. It was known to resemble the famous Giralda Tower of Seville, so called on account of the turning figure of Faith on its crest. Some persons dismissed the new creation as a "copy." More intelligent criticism showed that although the effect of the Giralda had been followed in a general way, the Madison Square tower was far from being merely a copy; it was even more than an adaptation.

Diana the First

Criticism did not stop with the tower; it went upward and raged about the bronze figure of a Diana that stood poised on the very top of the shaft. Done by Saint-Gaudens, this Diana measured 18 feet in height. Bronze folds of drapery flung themselves out in loops behind her, and the foot upon which she was poised was fixed firmly into a metal ball which revolved on bearings. As the crowds below stared upward the bronze huntress wheeled from time to time and aimed her ready shaft into the wind. Diana was a superb weathervane.

In general, Diana the First was eyed with some astonishment and no little distrust. People were used to fairly well-draped female figures, and whereas beauty was unquestionably beauty, and all that sort of thing, this bronze hussy's draperies were few, and those few stood out behind her. Furthermore, she was apt to fall, the critics argued.

But it was not the outraged modesty of some nor the danger of any fall that made Stanford White decide to take Diana the First down. He felt that she was too large, out of proportion. Accordingly, down came Diana.

She was sent out to Chicago and set upon the Agricultural Building of the World's Fair, amid much side comment from the Chicago press, such as:

"Diana, being too large for New York, properly comes to Chicago!"

Also, apropos of her new place: "But why Diana on the Agricultural Building? Put more draperies on her and turn her into Ceres!" And so on.

Meanwhile, in his studio at 148 West Thirty-sixth Street, the sculptor Saint-Gaudens was modeling another Diana—the Diana that we know.

Although this Diana was to be smaller than the first, just how much smaller remained a question.

No chances were taken the second time: it was decided to make sure the new proportions were right by giving them an actual trial before the figure was cast in bronze.

Accordingly, a plaster cast was made to size from the new model, which was thirteen feet high. Both architect and sculptor decided it would be better not to have this trial exhibit too public a one. So the plaster cast was raised one day at dawn while most of the city slept. It stayed up only long enough for those directly concerned to decide that it had the proper proportions.

Then it was taken down, and the bronze was made from it by W. H. Mullins at Salem, Ohio.

So Diana came into being.

New Diana Caused Furore

When finally she was poised on the peak vacated by her predecessor the new Diana caused much consternation. The reason was that while the first Diana had but few draperies, the new slim huntress wore nothing but a shimmering coating of gold foil. Many were the debates over the naked beauty of Diana; over tea-cups, in churches, at prize

speaking contests argument raged; and the press gleefully took sides and entered the lists. But protest availed nothing: Diana was up, and she has stayed there ever since.

Under Diana's beautiful feet men have carried on their traffic after the ways of men, and many things have happened in Madison Square Garden since it was first built—things gay, memorable, tragic.

The Garden was opened on June 16, 1890, by a concert of Edward Strauss and his orchestra, with 17,000 persons in attendance. The Democratic Convention of 1924 was

by no means the first political meeting held there; the place has always been a favorite forum for orators. There, in 1852, Grover Cleveland accepted the nomination for the Presidency, and in 1853 William Jennings Bryan made one of his notable campaign speeches. There, too, Mr. Bryan was acclaimed by admirers on his return from a trip around the world. There Prophet Dowle of Zion City met his Waterloo in an ill-starred attempt to convert New York. The place has seen thousands thrilled by speakers like Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and other public men.

In 1892 Adelina Patti made her appearance in the Garden with a grand chorus of 1,000. A huge stage was built at one end of the auditorium for the singers. When the performance was over the place broke into an uproar, and policemen had to rescue the frightened Mme. Patti from the enthusiastic demonstrations of the audience.

Under Diana's feet horses of famous pedigree have snorted and stamped, been awarded ribbons and earned the applause of New York's critical Four Hundred, who were taking part in one of the city's greatest social events—the Horse Show. Flowers have been massed there gorgeously in elaborate shows, too. Babies have cooed and cried and wrinkled their small noses there in baby shows. Nearly everything worth showing has been shown at some time or other in Madison Square Garden.

Then from the beginning there has been the circus. Children and grown-ups alike have stared breathlessly while slender figures in tights made perilous flights from bar to bar, or swung by their toes from glittering trapezes. Children and grown-ups have shrieked with laughter at the drolleries of famous clowns; have watched with anxious eyes while trainers went into cages of surly lions, and shouted with excitement at the Roman chariot races.

Buffalo Bill in the Arena

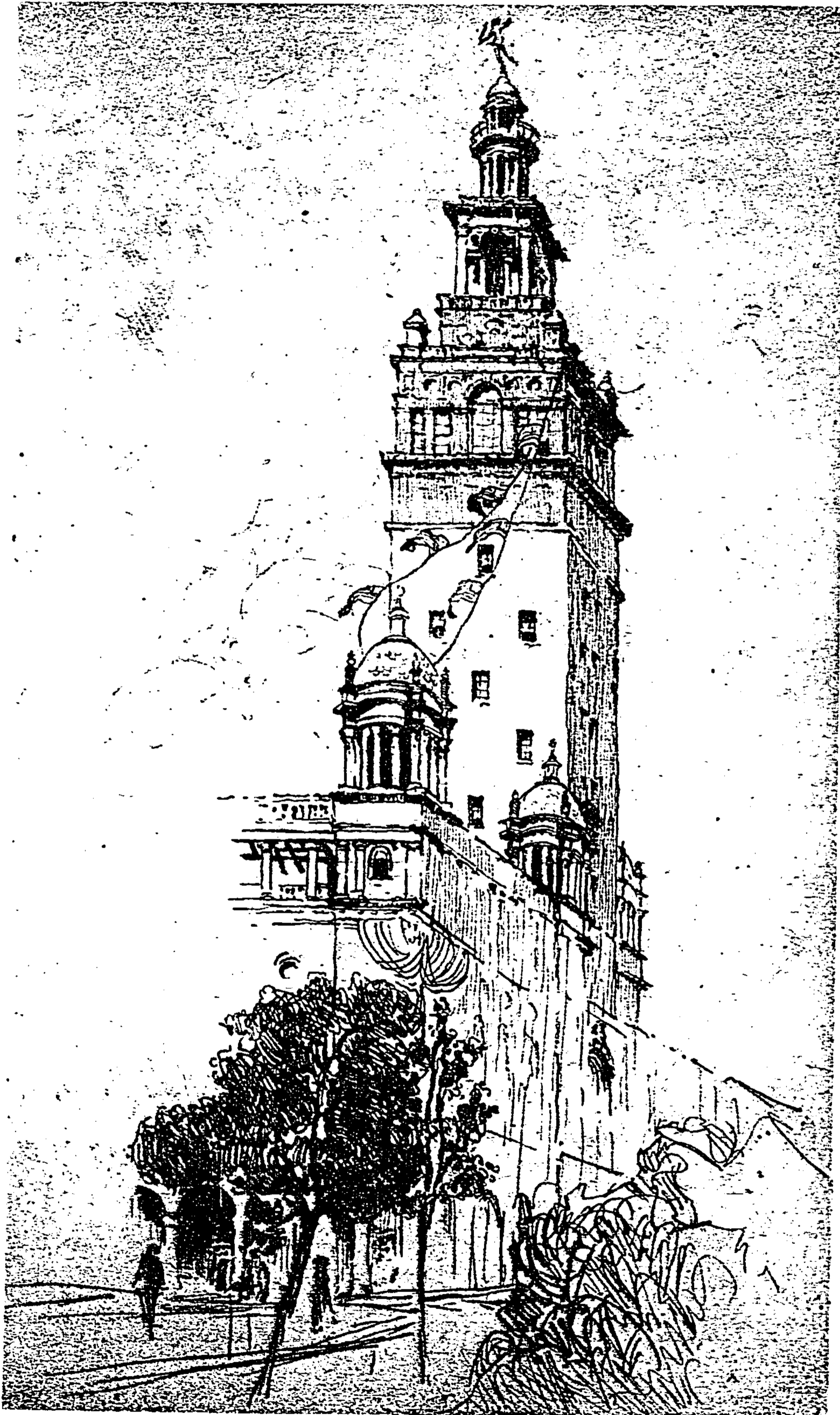
And of entertainments in the arena, who will not remember the great Wild West Show led by Buffalo Bill himself, with his hawk-like face, and one hand poised on his hip above the butt of a six-shooter?

Bucking broncos, mastering or being mastered by hardy sons of the West; the clockwork drill of the Zouaves in their red uniforms, the great attack by real Indians in war paint, and the fighting of lurid prairie fires—the Garden has seen them all. Of late the Rodeo has held sway in these Western matters, but soon that show, too, will have to perform in some other place—with Diana no longer overhead.

Men whose names have become by-words among followers of sport—great men with whom Diana, Goddess of the Chase, must have felt some bond—have battled and raced and wrestled in the Madison Square arena. A certain famous bout between Kid McCoy and James J. Corbett is still remembered. John L. Sullivan made his first bow to New York "fight fans" in the Garden, nor was it his last appearance there. Jeffries, Jack Johnson, Joe Gans, Bennie Leonard—the list is endless.

Not all events in the Garden have been entertaining. Tragedy has lurked there, and occasionally thrust out a hideous head. Trapeze performers have fallen, animal trainers have lost their power for one fatal moment, accidents have happened in sporting events. Grimmiest of all was the murder in the building itself of the very man who created it—Stanford White, who was shot by Harry K. Thaw in 1906.

So men have trafficked below Diana, and have gone their ways to Fame or Oblivion. There have been music and tears, the fragrance of flowers and the smell of blood, the thunder of applause and the sudden gasp of dismay, the riotousness of life and the cold silence of death. Now all that is nearly done.



Diana Atop Madison Square Garden.
Etched by Mildred Coughlin.

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