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The Lights Go Out
The Last Day and Night of the
Panama-Pacific International Exposition
at San Francisco, California

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The Panama-Pacific Exposition, which in its conception and successful accomplishment gave striking evidence of the practical genius and artistic taste of America; which in its interesting and unusual exhibits afforded impressive illustration of the development of the arts of peace; and which in its motive and object was eloquent of the new spirit which is to unite East and West and make all the world partners in the common enterprise of progress and humanity. Woodrow Wilson

An Account
of the Closing Exercises
of the
Panama-Pacific International Exposition
San Francisco

December Fourth
1915

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*The Last Day and Night
of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition
at San Francisco
California*

TO those that have rejoiced in the Exposition some account of its final hour is due. Its end was beautiful, for nature itself was at its kindest.

It had rained heavily all the day before, but the morning of December 4th broke as fair as any day in midsummer, and by eleven o'clock the sun was burning in a cloudless California sky. Men carried their overcoats on their arms.

Within the shadow of the Tower of Jewels and on one of the lower terraces of the Court of the Universe a stand had been erected on which sat the Directors of the Exposition, Commissioners of foreign governments and domestic states, and representatives of the Army and Navy, of the State of California, and of the city of San Francisco. A marine guard of honor formed two lines down the broad stairs. To right and left buglers were stationed. From the Arches of the Rising and of the Setting Sun, the colossal Nations of the East and Nations of the West looked down upon a multitude that could not have numbered less than 150,000

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people—not a sad audience, but a satisfied and a gratified one, for the work to which the city had set its hand had been completed.

The Philippine Constabulary band played. President Moore stepped forward and introduced the business of the day. "Our task is done," he said. "The end of six years earnest endeavor has come. We shall begin these ceremonies with the reading by Mr. Arthur Arlett, member of the California State Commission, of George Sterling's poem, written for this occasion."

Mr. Arlett read:

The Builders

*The year grows old, but Progress has no age:
Her flags go forward to increasing light;
Behind her lies the night;
It is a ceaseless war her soldiers wage,
And on her great and ever-widening sky,
"Onward!" is still the truceless battle-cry.*

*The Future is our kingdom, and altho
Our hands unbuild the city they have built,
Yet here no blood is spilt
Nor swords uplifted for a nation's woe.
And tho the columns and the temples pass,
Let none regret; let no man cry "Alas!"*

*We do but cross a threshold into day.
Beauty we leave behind,
A deeper beauty on our path to find
And higher glories to illumine the way.
The door we close behind us is the Past:
Our sons shall find a fairer door at last.
A world reborn awaits us. Years to come
Shall know its grace and good,
When wars shall end in endless brotherhood,
And birds shall build in cannon long since dumb.
Men shall have peace, tho then no man may know
Who built this sunset city long ago.
Wherefore, be glad! Sublimar walls shall rise,
Which these do but foretell.
Be glad indeed! for we have builded well,
And set a star upon our western skies
Whose fire shall greaten on a land made free,
Till all that land be bright from sea to sea!*

On the stroke of noon the President of the Exposition read the toast of President Wilson, having explained that it would be given the world around at that moment: three o'clock at New York, three forty-three at Buenos Aires, eight o'clock in the evening at Paris, nine o'clock at Stockholm, five o'clock Sunday morning at Tokio, six o'clock in

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Melbourne. "I call your attention to it that you may see that the work that has been done by the devoted Foreign and State Commissioners has produced a bond the like of which, we believe, has not existed before." The toast was:

"The Panama-Pacific International Exposition:

"Which in its conception and successful accomplishment gave striking evidence of the practical genius and artistic taste of America;

"Which in its unusual and interesting exhibits afforded impressive illustration of the development of the arts of peace; and

"Which in its motive and object was eloquent of the new spirit which is to unite East and West and make all the world partners in the common enterprises of progress and humanity.

"Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States."

Then came a bit of allegory, composed by Lawrence W. Harris of the foundation committee of the Exposition.

A Boy Scout was summoned to carry the Exposition's message to the school children of the world. President Moore put a silk ribbon with a decoration about his neck, and he departed between the ranks of sailors. A Journalist was summoned, decorated and sent forth. "To Journalism," said the President, "has been assigned the great task of carrying the meaning of the Exposition to all men. Go, good friend,

there is work for you to do." To a Toiler, with his sledge, the Exposition's President said: "Tell the toilers of the world, our brethren, that they have contributed nobly to man's betterment and the world's advancement." The Cowboy, the Surveyor, the Soldier and the Sailor were commissioned to carry the message into the unsettled places of the earth, to all far shores and throughout the seven seas.

Finally three Exposition Guards were summoned. The chairman of the association of foreign commissioners decorated one, the head of the association of the commissioners of domestic states decorated another, and the President of the Exposition took from about his own neck the ribbon of Exposition colors he wore and put it about the neck of the third. With it went the message to the President of the United States, which the Guards were charged to dispatch; the message reading:

"San Francisco, California, December 4, 1915.

"HONORABLE WOODROW WILSON,

President of the United States,

White House, Washington, D. C.

"Your inspiring sentiment has at the appointed time just been read. The enthusiasm it received is expressive of our hope that real world service has been performed here.

"Our task is finished. We realize that time, and time alone, must determine the exact place in the scale of human usefulness

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that history will accord us. The contributions of Nations, States, organizations and individuals have been offered with earnestness and the enthusiastic hope that results beneficial to the world's progress and advancement will follow.

"Your endorsement of our efforts is most gratifying.

"Please accept assurance of affectionate and patriotic regard.

"CHARLES C. MOORE,

President Panama-Pacific International Exposition."

The Guards marched away, the sailors fired a salute from their rifles, the big guns on the battleships boomed forth. From the top of the Tower of Jewels an American flag, a wreath and an Exposition banner descended a long, slanting cable to a point over the heads of the crowd, where doves were released, to circle uncertainly awhile and then join the flocks that have given animation to the Court of the Universe throughout the Exposition period.

During the afternoon, ceremonial calls and farewells were exchanged between the Foreign and State Commissioners and the Directors of the Exposition. The people were pouring through the gates like army corps, 459,022 of them in all, swelling the total for the period to 18,876,438. It was a larger attendance than on the greatest day at St. Louis and contributed to a larger total of paid admissions.

Accompanied by buglers, an escort of Exposition Guards

and soldiers, and a "town crier" in colonial costume, the President of the Exposition and the Director of the Division of Exhibits went the round of the palaces (with the exception of the Palace of Fine Arts which was to remain open four months longer), to say to the various exhibitors and department chiefs, "Well done, and good-bye," and to command the latter formally to close their doors at six o'clock. The ceremony took place in each instance on a little platform at a main entrance, and was accompanied by the lowering of the palace flag.

Night came on, and the world's wonder of lights; the Exposition lights that would never shine again—a red glow on Kelham's towers, rose flame in the porches of the Machinery Palace, dim reflections in the Lagoon of the Palace of Fine Arts and the broad basin in the Court of the Four Seasons, the splendor of the giant monstrosities in the Court of Abundance, the silver phosphorescence of the Adventurous Bowman on his column and the Lord of the Isthmian Way on his rack-o'-bones horse, the tremulous, frosty shimmer of the hundred thousand jewels of the great spire; and over all, the long bands, like lambent metal, of bronze and crimson and green and blue, from the forty-eight searchlights on the Yacht Harbor Mole, bands that barred the heavens so far that they deceived the eye and in the southeast appeared to converge beyond the hills of the city.

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There were fireworks on the Marina, with bursting globes of gold reflected in the waters of the Yacht Harbor and the Bay. But long before midnight the crowds left the scene and poured from the Esplanade into the Court of the Universe for the last act of the drama.

And nature still was kind. The night was balmy, with hardly a stir of breeze. Again the people packed the Court. The end was near.

For years most of them had worked and waited and hoped for the Exposition. For 288 days it had been doing its work, celebrating the greatest material achievement of man, teaching men science and industry and commerce, and how to enrich their lives with art; answering from the rostra of assembly halls and from every palace aisle, as well as human contrivance could answer, the prayer of the dying Goethe for "More light!" And it was nearly over. The minutes marched with iron tread. They could not be stayed. A choir sang the Hallelujah Chorus, but the concourse was very still, expecting the hour of fate—the termination of an epoch in the history of every soul there present, of an era in the evolution of human affairs. Here and there one heard a half-stifled sob, forced by the anticipated craving for the return of what could never be again. Simply and clearly the President of the Exposition began to speak:

"The end of a perfect day. The beginning of an endless

memory. We know now more than ever how through all the trying months God's blessing has been ours.

"We have assembled here, we builders of the Exposition, for the last rites before official closing. Through it all, good friends, keep a smile on your faces, though there be tears in your hearts.

"It is not a time for words. We have been on trial before the tribunal of the world, and what could be said here could not make up for omissions, nor could it add to our accomplishments.

"We are here to perform the final act of putting out the lights that we hope have burned brightly, to good purpose. Those lights must now be dimmed.

"Whatever place is given us by Time's deliberate but fair decision, at all events we have the consciousness of knowing that we, the forces, elements and factors involved in this work, have striven earnestly and conscientiously to meet a great responsibility. We hope, we pray, that we have succeeded. Time, in its fulness, must respond.

"The wizard of sentiment and verse, our own George Sterling, has prepared some lines for tonight. Hear the stirring words. He sings:

*"The hour has struck. The mighty work is done.
Praise God for all the bloodless victories won.
And from these courts of beauty's pure increase
Go forth in joy and brotherhood and peace.*

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"The time approaches. If the reverential prayer of a layman is permissible, let me quote those inspired words, ages old: 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, now and evermore.'

"Friends, the Exposition is finished. The lights are going out."

Not abruptly, but slowly and gently, the lamps grew dark, the beams of the searchlights faded, and arches and courts and colonnades and towers and sculptured forms of men and women and angels and great beasts receded into the friendly night, lighted now by the glimmer of the winter stars, Orion and Sirius, Aldebaran and the Hyades. And through the starlight, "Taps" dropped in liquid notes from bugles high on the Tower of Jewels.

The lights came on again, but nevermore the lights of the living Exposition. For that, they spelled "Finis" across the lower gallery of the Tower. Six hundred steel mortars planted along the Marina discharged as many bombs into the air in the most spectacular salvo of fireworks ever seen, and then was heard the welcome whir of "Art" Smith's engine as his aeroplane glided upward into the velvet sky, to turn over and over in trailing wreaths of fire. For this performance and the performer the Exposition crowds had learned to feel a great affection, so that the reappearance of

their friend, with his gambols of the upper air, served in some degree to mitigate what might have been a too poignant sorrow.

No one was hurried away. It was the wish of the President that all who felt so disposed should linger as long as the mood lasted. There was no vandalism, no destruction of property. It was after four o'clock in the morning of the 5th before the last weary visitor was willing to say good-bye, and to admit in his heart that the lights of the Exposition had gone out forever.



Here ends "The Lights Go Out—The Last Day and Night of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco, California"; accompanied by a facsimile of the Toast of Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, in his handwriting; and with verses by George Sterling. Published by the Exposition, the account being written by Frank Morton Todd its official historian; issued from the press of the Blair-Murdock Company at San Francisco, California, under the direction of John Henry Nash, in December, Nineteen Hundred and Fifteen, anno Domini the Exposition year.