

A California Pilgrimage

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A Souvenir

of the

United Universalist Conventions

California, 1915

1915

The Murray Press

Boston

CHAPTER VI

SAN DIEGO AND ITS EXPOSITION GEM

To touch the details of the "After Convention Program," as the period of pleasure was called, would require that this series of sketches be extended, if not beyond the ability of the writer, certainly beyond the patience of the reader, and therefore, assuming that every hour was filled with interesting incident which was not filled with rest, a very few of the greater features are to be touched upon.

The visit to the San Diego Exposition was an after-thought. When the program of our days was completed it was found that we could have a day at the Little Exposition, and from all reports such a day was not to be missed without exceeding loss on our part. Furthermore, the management of the Exposition, eager for our attendance, set apart Tuesday, July 13, as "Universalist Day." Of necessity we must be there, and we were.

There is this to be said about any party on a tour, that if it is well managed and no one changes his mind and wants something different, there will never be any trouble. But mostly we like to change our minds and make new plans, and then it is hard for us to understand why it is that engagements at hotels and in sleepers can not be broken in America as easily as scraps of paper are in Europe. Thos. Cook & Son proved themselves most satisfactory managers, and in a wide canvass of

our members since the return we have had but votes of commendation. The management even went beyond the fixed requirements of the tour, and so far as was possible adapted the arrangements to the desires of their guests. This San Diego trip was not included at first, but when a vote by mail was taken indicating that about two hundred wanted to go, hotel reservations were shifted to sleeper reservations, and we were enabled to surrender our beautiful rooms at the Maryland on Monday night and take the midnight special to San Diego, where we arrived in the early morning.

The Universalist pastor of the Unitarian Church in San Diego, the Rev. H. B. Bard, had been working all the week with our people to get them to go, and he arranged that the morning was to be spent on a tour at Point Loma, the home of the theosophical cult of which Madam Katharine Tingley is the high priestess, not only to see the fine buildings and grounds of this society, but more, to take a voyage out into the Pacific on a sight-seeing automobile! For Point Loma is a long arm of land projecting out into the ocean and forming one boundary of the wonderful San Diego harbor, one of the finest in the world. From the hotel the route was through the business section of the city and then the outskirts, where we saw the strange, to us from the East, but frequently beautiful homes of those who abide in this semi-tropical land. It is about eight miles around the head of the bay, and as we swung across towards our goal, the highland of Point Loma, we got moving pictures of the city and the harbor, over which several aeroplanes were flitting, and across the straight line of our vision over the water, we could see the moving target, drawn by a motor boat, upon which the guns

from the fort were practising, the projectiles throwing up fountains of spray as they plunged into the waves.

Good roads wind in and out among the small hills on the Point, and we alternately were looking down upon



PICKING ORANGES

the Pacific Ocean on our right and the bay and harbor and city on our left, until, beside the old Spanish lighthouse of unnumbered years, we alighted to wander to the brink of the cliffs and look away upon one of the fairest scenes in all America. There are few cities more

fortunate or more beautiful for situation than San Diego as viewed from the extreme of Point Loma. Right beneath us is the narrow entrance to the harbor, which is completed by another long point, this time of sand, extending from farther down the coast out to almost meet the one on which we were standing, and back of this is the great harbor, perfectly protected and large enough to float all the navies of the world—certainly what will be left of them when the submarines finish their work! Beyond the city are the plains, once a desert, now luxuriant with fruit and grain harvests, and yet farther on, clothed in the thinnest veil of mist, the San Bernardino mountains. To the right there is the Pacific in all its majesty of greatness, for there is nothing to interrupt the view until it reaches the end of our world, where sea and sky blend in an indefinable line. Sometimes it is said that there are islands to be seen far away, but for us there was nothing to break the flight of the imagination, or to mar the picture of vastness which we were to carry back to the Atlantic coast.

We drove back through the beautiful grounds of the Society, and were privileged to be guided by members, young men students, to, though not into, the buildings, and into the upper seats of the gem of the collection, the Greek Theater, where we questioned the young man about the history and purpose of the society, and got very direct but hardly illuminating answers. Perhaps it is the mystic atmosphere of the place which took possession of us and stole away our senses, but two things impressed themselves upon me:

First, that the whole thing was abnormal, and second, that the abnormal, under skillful management, is about the best paying article on the market! Fourteen years

ago Madam Tingley, a disciple of Blavatsky in theosophy, took up this point of land, then but a waste of rock and sand and sage brush, and gathered about her a group of people, many of them of superior intelligence, many of them with money, and she has transformed the desert into a garden, and set in it buildings of striking architecture and decorated within—judging from the one we were permitted to look into, though a rope kept our profane feet from the tessellated pavement—with an adaptation of Egyptian figures and mystic symbols. There is a school for training young children, where it is assumed that the last person to be entrusted with a child is its own mother, and a college for those of larger growth, where the teaching is all voluntary, and yet it costs a thousand dollars to secure admittance. Now of course this is all very superficial and probably unfair, but the point is that any strange, and especially freakish, thing if clothed in mystery, and possessed of a leader with the distinct note of authority, can command the money to accomplish marvels. We are glad to have the marvels to look upon, and we enjoy the good roads, and the beautiful flowers, but some of us are so constituted that we can not enjoy that degree of self-surrender to another and retain our self-respect, which is of more value than many temples.

The shores of Point Loma on the Pacific side are inexhaustibly picturesque, composed of a soft rock which the tireless sea through the ages has carved into weird forms which lift their heads like gnomes above the waves, and scooped out recesses and caves which tempt the observer's imagination to people them with old Spanish pirates. But instead the American business man has taken possession, and outside of the grounds of the Theo-



CALIFORNIA STATE BUILDING AT THE SAN DIEGO EXPOSITION

sophical Society, the baseball king, A. G. Spaulding of Chicago, is developing a great tract into a future playground for the nation. And what Mr. Spaulding is doing for that small section, Mr. Spreckels is doing for the whole city of San Diego, until it seems, on a superficial view, that here is being created a heaven for those who have nothing to do, and have money enough to indulge themselves in idleness and receptivity! There is another view of San Diego, which is the real view, and the Board of Trade will be glad to tell you all about it, in which we see the development of the ideal of the little farm well tilled, and the little home of large content. San Diego quite made us captive by its charms of climate and scenery and products and people, and if Brother Bard will just listen for the call of the Lord to some other promising field, we prophesy there will be a procession of candidates hitting the trail for the jewel city of America!

But the Exposition is the thing! And right at the start, I want to say that the difference between the San Diego Exposition and the others is just the difference between a strawberry and a watermelon! Both are good, but while there is more of the watermelon,—it is not a strawberry. People have been wondering why San Diego had an Exposition at the same time that San Francisco made its appeal to the world, and the answer is that San Diego did not; she had hers before San Francisco, and she will have it after, and, incidentally, all along the way. The San Diego Exposition is different from every exposition which has ever been since the world began—it never had a debt! It opened on time with everything in place and all paid for. It is worth a trip of three thousand miles to see such a phenomenon.

But there are other differences which are of even greater merit which come as a continual surprise from the time we enter the gate. The buildings are a distinct departure from anything ever before conceived. The dominating ideal was to reproduce the elements of the old Spanish architecture with refined lines and with adaptation to the practical needs in showing, not simply the products of the world as other Expositions have, but more particularly the process by which they are produced. There is a radical difference between showing a pyramid of tea boxes and giving away sample sips, and showing a tea plantation growing and the steps along the way of gathering, curing, packing, distributing and serving at the tea table. And so with other things; "process" has been the key word of San Diego, and as the marvelous buildings are mostly built to endure, and to serve as a perpetual World's Fair, one is led to study both the exhibition places and exhibitions from a new point of view, and to find a novel and enduring satisfaction.

San Diego had a great park, great in area, but a desert waste, and then came the vision of its unfolding possibilities, and to-day there is a miracle of transformation, when a great mesa, which is Spanish for a high plateau with abrupt sides, has become the site of an idealized Spanish city, with nothing lacking to make it complete. Whether we came to it up from the valleys now clothed with every species of vegetation, or over the Puente Cabrillo across the canyon, we find ourselves gradually enfolded into the mystic charm of a Spanish atmosphere, and passing the gate and standing at the head of El Prado, the main street of the Exposition, with minds and hearts prepared, we look down the long

avenue with the expectation of a child at the opening of the Arabian Nights.

Would it were possible to give some illuminating description of these buildings, but they defy the typewriter and court the photographer. And there is such a different spirit about the whole scene; none of the confusion and rush and roar of the bigger shows, but just the right, sleepy, leisurely, meditative air which takes the spirit captive.

After our return from the drive of the morning, we had scattered for luncheon before going to the Exposition grounds, and so it happened that a little group of four Universalists entered the gate, and, in duty bound, bought a copy of the daily program. We glanced over the features of the morning and then came to the hour of one-thirty, and read, "Arrival of Special Party of Universalists!" We looked at our watches, and it was exactly one-thirty, and behold, we were it! We had arrived on time; we lifted our heads a bit higher and formed a procession of four, and, no longer walking, we marched down the Prado!

What we saw would take a large volume to tell, but ere long the most conspicuous exhibit was the official blue badge of the Universalist delegates, who were arriving in ever increasing numbers, so that, in the end, Universalist Day became conspicuous, and an officer of the Balboa Guards, as the guardians of the public peace are called, approached me with the request from his chief of an official badge to file with the records of the Exposition, which request was gladly granted, though the demand for official badges had nearly exhausted the supply.

Going down El Prado to the Plaza de California,