

THE WORLD'S FAIR FINANCES.

CHICAGO, August 22.—I walked under the statue of Victory into the administration building of the World's Fair today to see the director general. This building contains the offices of the men who are managing the great show. It is covered by a great gold dome and a mortgage. The dome is very big and very costly. The mortgage, by which I mean the indebtedness of the fair, is also big and it represents millions. The dome covers nearly half an acre and it shines out under the sun above the great city of Chicago. The mortgage covers all the seven hundred odd acres of shows here and it can be seen blazing over Chicago all the way from New York to San Francisco. The dome will be wiped out at the end of the fair, when the administration building will be sold to the highest bidder. Whether the mortgage will be wiped out or not remains to be seen. The director general thinks it will. It was to ask as to this that I called.

A CHAT WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL DAVIS.

Walking over the marble floor of the rotunda past the pretty girl in the center who peddles out for \$1 each silver souvenir Columbian half dollars though in reality they contain less than fifteen cents worth of metal, I reached one of the half dozen steel elevators which carry you to the upper floors. At the second stop I was landed and a moment later, through the introduction of Major M. P. Handy, was in the big parlors of the director general. A tall, robust, gray-haired, gray-bearded man, with an eagle eye and a brunette complexion was presented as the manager of the world's fair, Director General Davis, and he, in response to my question, said:

"The World's Fair is doing better every day. It will pay all its debts, and we will come out even. We are cutting down expenses in every way, and the saving from the music under Thomas is to be followed by other radical reductions. Professor Thomas and his orchestra cost us just now \$1,800 a day, and the people who heard him had to pay a dollar a piece to go to his concerts. It took me several months to get rid of him. Think of it! Eighteen hundred dollars a day! Why it costs only \$1,200 a day to run the great buildings of the exposition. We are reducing right along. Our next cut will be as to the gates, which cost us \$1,800 a day, and we will cut also in other quarters."

"What does it now cost to run the exposition?" said I.

"It cost just about \$18,000 a day now, but an average in the past has been far above that. When we were building we spent \$40,000 and more a day for weeks, and money had to flow like water. We have labored under great disadvantages. All the work has been done under the eight hour law, and that law has increased the expenditures of the fair over a million dollars. The trades unions have regulated our prices, and we paid double wages for the work we had to have done on Sunday in order to get ready in time. Some of our contracts were made for the entire period of the fair, when they should have been made for a short time, and the expenses of the whole

has been materially increased through the haste we had to make."

POLICE AND DETECTIVE FORCE.

"Where does this \$18,000 a day that it requires to run the exposition go?" I asked.

"It is spent in all sorts of ways," was the reply. "A large amount has to be paid out for guards, police and detectives. We have about two hundred detectives, and sixteen hundred guards. The number of guards has been criticized as being too large, but we need them to provide against fire. The statue 'Fire Controlled' above this building is typical of our work. We have here one of the most inflammable cities of the world, and one of the most dangerous as regards loss of life. Suppose a fire should break out in the manufacturers' building, machinery hall or the electricity building and should gain headway. Think of the electric wires charged with hundreds upon hundreds of volts of electricity that might fly about as wild wires. If we were not prepared for them they would deal death at every touch. Why some of those wires are charged up to one thousand voltage. One of them broke the other day and fell into a pond covering nearly an acre of ground. A man was standing in the water in this pond a good distance from the wire. He is now laid up with a sore leg coming from that electric shock he got at that time. I have it now arranged so these wires can all be deadened at once. If it were not so and a fire should break out the result would be more terrible than any conflagration of history. We have already had fifty fires, but they have been put out so promptly that the people have never heard of them. As it is our fatalities have been very few. We have had in round numbers seven million people on these grounds. We have built these great buildings with the men clinching the bolts on some of these great iron structures as they were put together, hanging onto the beams while they were moving, and all told only fifty men have been killed, and not more than 700 wounded. In other words, including visitors, only one man in every ten thousand, so far connected with the fair, has met with an accident. The only building burned has been the storage building and for this we were not responsible."

"You must also remember that these great buildings are not like ordinary structures. They are fragile, and, solid as they look, you could kick a hole into them at almost any point."

THE FUTURE OF THE FAIR BUILDINGS.

"What is to become of these buildings?" I asked. "Will there be a fair next year?"

"No," replied Director General Davis. "A fair next year with these buildings is an impossibility. They would not last the winter through. The glass roofs are so constructed that they would be broken by the ice, and the buildings would fall to pieces. I know there is some talk of an exposition next year, but it is out of the question."

"How about the extending of the exposition on into November?"

"I can't say whether it will be extended or not. I think it might be a good thing for us if we could have ten days, two weeks or even more in November, and it would help us out. Whether Congress will be asked for

this, and whether it will be granted, I cannot now say, but it is very probable that some such movement will be undertaken."

HOW HARD TIMES HAVE AFFECTED THE FAIR.

"Has the panic hurt the fair?" I asked.

"Yes," replied General Davis, "it has reduced our attendance at least 25,000 a day and our receipts proportionally far more. The rich men of the country are not coming to the fair. Capitalists, bankers, merchants and the men who usually spend a great deal of money at such places as this are staying at home to watch their business. The financial condition is such that they are afraid to go away. The banks are against us. Senator Manderson was here a day or so ago. He told me that one of the chief enemies the fair had was the banks. Said he, 'The banks don't want the people to go to the fair. They are hard up all over the country, and it hurts them to have their money taken off to Chicago by their depositors. They have been doing all they can with the railroads to keep their rate of fare up, and they discourage the World's Fair in every way.' I believe this to be true." Director General Davis went on "A good deal of money comes here from every point in the United States and at times this loss is being seriously felt."

CHICAGO AND THE FAIR.

"Has the fair helped Chicago?" "Yes," replied Mr. Davis. "It has practically saved the Chicago banks. There has been less trouble here than at any other point in the country. The merchants are doing a big business, and some of the larger firms are having more custom than they can attend to. I don't think the hotels are making much, as yet, and there is by no means the extortion practiced that has been charged. The probability is that September and October will see bigger crowds than ever, and the richer people will probably come at that time. Now many of them are at the sea shore, and we could see the falling off of this class as soon as the hot weather began. It is this class that patronized the best hotels and that spends the money which comes into us largely through the concessions."

THE CONCESSIONS PAY THE EXPENSES.

"Does the fair management make much from the concessions?" I asked.

"Yes," replied General Davis, "our receipts from the concessions we have granted to the different shows in the Midway Plaisance and to others doing business in the grounds now more than pay the running expenses of the fair. We get a percentage of the gross receipts of all the shows and a percentage of the receipts from nearly everything sold. These percentages range all the way from twenty per cent to seventy per cent and every girl who chews gum in the grounds gives seventy per cent of the amount she pays for the gum to the World's Fair. In other words the Tutti Frutti Chewing Gum Company pays us seventy per cent of its receipts. Of the shows in Midway I think the Cairo street pays best, though we get a good round sum from all. The big Ferris wheel has paid us nothing, as yet. It was not to give percentage until it had received enough