

# **THE EXIBITION LAY**

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The exhibition lay by Various

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GAIM War had laid his sword aside,  
and hushed his cannon's roar,  
And on his recollections slept,  
for thirty years and more :—  
And save that strife, and fierce revolt  
had here and there outburned,  
And kings had from their kingdoms fled,  
while thrones were overturned,—  
And save that rulers oft had read  
their simple lesson wrong,  
The voice of Peace in many lands  
spoke cheerfully and strong :—

To speak till come that other war,  
that last tremendous fight,  
When Mind in arms shall teach the world  
that Might is not the Right.

And out of peace great works had grown,  
and glorious enterprise,  
And Science daring matchless deeds  
put on a fairer guise :  
The steamship and the railway-train,  
the swift electric wire,  
To narrow space, and shorten time,  
and bring the nations nigher—  
Came forth from her unwearied toil,  
her insight keen and vast ;  
And secrets of philosophy  
to household uses past.  
Free Thought had paced with steady stride,  
and reached a clearer view

Of social claim, and native worth,  
and mutual service due.  
And Trade had shook his fetters off  
in consciousness of strength,  
And sent a thrill of busy life  
through England's breadth and length :  
And Knowledge stooping from her height,  
o'erleaped her ancient bound,  
And fast the steam-fed printing-press  
diffused her tidings round.

Then rose a quick and fruitful thought  
within a thoughtful mind—  
What if all industries of earth  
were in one place combined ?  
The time was ripe, and still the thought  
to fuller purpose grew,  
Its greatness over every mind  
a sense of wonder threw.  
The noblest in the realm approved,  
and royal favour lent,



And England echoed back her will  
by voice of parliament.  
Send out the challenge, make it known,  
our shores to all are free ;  
Let labour come from every land,  
with ships from every sea.  
Who rarest handicraft can show,  
and who the simplest things ;  
Who homely wares for husbandmen,  
who costly works for kings.

Now all ye cunning architects,  
devise a mighty plan :  
A spacious edifice contrive,  
with roof of widest span.  
Since men began to build, the world  
hath seen no greater scheme,  
Too high it were for Fancy's flight,  
too vast for poet's dream.  
We need a temple wide and long  
as any stately street,

With ways and walks of ample scope  
 where all the world may meet.  
 Invention laboured at the task,  
 and with her brooding wit  
 Devised a scheme of rare design,  
 unique, imposing, fit.

Hyde Park the site : straightway is marked  
 the structure's spacious bound ;  
 And troops of labourers prepare  
 the broad expanse of ground.  
 And a noise and stir are heard afar  
 of hammer, saw, and plane,  
 Of whirring wheel, and rolling car,  
 and slowly clanking crane.  
 And hour by hour the work goes on,  
 increasing day by day ;  
 A work that tasks all energies,  
 nor brooks an hour's delay.

And soon the nimble artisans  
piece after piece uprear,  
And soon the building's airy lines  
in lengthening sweep appear.  
And glass in endless pannels forms  
a bright, translucent wall ;  
The roof, a sky of glass, upborne  
on iron columns tall.  
Above, the lofty gallery,  
below, the roomy aisle,  
And in one length the nave extends  
for nearly half a mile.  
A crystal arch that midway springs,  
the vista intersects,  
And with its wide expanding curve  
the east and west connects ;  
And north and south its radiate arms  
seem a gigantic fan ;  
And ancient elms it covers in  
beneath its soaring span.