

XL.

CENTRAL PARK.

ITS ORIGIN. — THE COMMISSION. — ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PEOPLE. — THE
ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN. — THE PRIDE OF NEW YORK.

ITS ORIGIN.

It is not a little curious that the unsurpassed location of the Central Park owes its origin to a quarrel among politicians. It is difficult to conceive of a finer location. Its extent, central site, natural features, outlets, drives, and attractions are exceeded by no similar enclosure in the world. In 1850, the legislature of New York entertained a bill for the purchase of a piece of unimproved land, known as Jones's Wood, for a public park. The party who introduced the bill was a senator from New York. An alderman of the city was his bitter opponent. After the bill had passed locating the park at Jones's Wood, the alderman called upon Mr. Kennedy, now General Superintendent of Police, at his store, to get him to unite in defeating the purchase. Mr. Kennedy had thought nothing of the bill. A map was brought and the site examined. The points made by the alderman were, that the senator who introduced the bill was interested, and would be largely profited by the sale. The plot was on the extreme eastern side

of the city; it was small, scarcely a dozen blocks; a thick population bounded it on the south, Harlem shut it in on the north, the East River formed another boundary, and enlargement was impossible; besides, the price was enormous.

While examining the maps, Mr. Kennedy pointed out the present site of the park. It was then one of the most abandoned and filthy spots of the city. It was covered with shanties, and filled with the most degraded of our population. The valleys reeked with corruption and every possible abomination. It was viler than a hog-pen, and the habitation of pestilence. As a place for building it was nearly worthless, as the grading of it was out of the question. As a site for a public park, its inequalities of hill and dale, its rocky promontories, and its variety of surface, made it every way desirable. The great point of the alderman was to defeat his political opponent and the bill for the purchase of Jones's Wood. The eminent fitness of the new spot was conceded at once. The omnipotent press joined in the new movement. The proposed name of Central Park was received with acclamation. The purchase of Jones's Wood was annulled. The bill for the opening of Central Park passed. In 1856, the purchase was complete, and the work commenced.

THE COMMISSION.

At first the Central Park was a corporation matter. The city officials were so corrupt, that the friends of the measure refused to put it into the hands of the Common Council. The Aldermen, in city matters, were omnipotent. They were county officers as well as city.

If they sent a bill to the Council, and that body refused to concur, the Aldermen could meet as a Board of Supervisors, and pass the bill that the Council had rejected or the Mayor vetoed. The Legislature put the affairs of the Park into the hands of a Commission, made up of distinguished men, representing the great parties of the city.

On receiving their appointment, the Commissioners called a meeting of the distinguished citizens of New York to consult on the laying out of the Park. Washington Irving took the chair. The models of Europe would not do for New York. This Park was not for royalty, for the nobility, nor the wealthy; but for the people, of all classes and ranks. Drives, public and quiet; roads for equestrians and for pedestrians; plots for games and parades, for music and public receptions, must be secured. The main features that the Park now wears were adopted at that meeting.

ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PEOPLE.

The Park is two and a half miles long, a half mile wide, and comprises eight hundred and forty-three acres. The main drive, from Fifty-ninth Street along the Fifth Avenue, is seventy feet wide, with a footpath fifteen feet wide, and, with its Macadamized road-bed, is one of the finest in the world. Along its pathway, where three hundred miserable shanties were straggling, filled with squalid women, and ragged, and untamed children, with its hollows and ravines full of stagnant water and filthiness, with barren rocks, offensive and unsightly, now green velvet lawns greet the eye, choice flowers bloom, museums of taste and galleries of art stand,

zoölogical gardens instruct and please, conservatories arise, and the grounds are studded with statuary and works of art, the gift of liberal friends. The old Arsenal, in the Park, is a gallery of art, free to the public. The widow of Crawford, the artist, presented to the Park the plaster casts from her husband's studio. Among the collection is the model of the famous statue of Washington, at Richmond, with the colossal statues of Jefferson, Henry, Lee, Marshall, and other favorite sons of Virginia. The intelligent mechanical skill of this day is taking down the unsightly aqueduct which disfigures a portion of the Park, and is substituting underground mains, which are to take the place for miles of unsightly masonry.

The whole influence of the Park has been to educate and elevate the public taste, and to inspire a love for the beautiful. The "transverse roads" that traverse the Park are a curiosity and an educator. Teams are driven across the Park, funerals, with their long line of carriages, thousands of cattle for the market, and teams that no man can count; yet all this is hidden from the eye of the visitors. These transverse roads are canals walled in by solid masonry. They pass under the bridges of the Park, and, by an ingenious contrivance, are hidden from the eye by trees, grass, flowers, and groves. It is seldom that the grass is trodden upon or the flowers plucked. The police are everywhere to arrest fast driving, and all who commit breaches of the rules. Before the Park was opened horse flesh was at a discount, and was the derision of Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Fabulous sums have been paid for fine horses since the opening of the Park. While driving

is limited to six miles an hour within the enclosure, a fine boulevard has been opened by the Commissioners, where men may try the mettle of their teams if they will. A private trotting course on the road allows steeds to be trained. The road for fast horses is a continuation of the Park to High Bridge. It is broad, level, and well Macadamized. It is the sight of sights on a pleasant afternoon. Here the notable men of New York can be seen in their glory. There is scarcely a horse noted for show, elegance, or speed that cannot here be seen on an afternoon. Fast old men, and fast young men, leaders of the bulls and bears on exchange, stock speculators, millionaires, railroad kings, bankers, book-men, and merchants, the bloods of the city, and all who can command a two-forty horse, appear on the drive. All is exhilaration; the road is full of dust; teams crowd the thoroughfare; horses tear up and down, to the horror of nervous and timid people; fast teams race with each other, and frequently interlock and smash up, while the tearing teams hold on their course, carrying terror and dismay along the whole road. Danger as well as excitement attends the drive. Some of the fastest teams are driven by men between sixty and seventy, who have all the enthusiasm of youth, and shout out their "Hi! hi's!" and other exclamations, so common to fast teams at their utmost speed. Some of the horses driven on this road cost from five to fifty thousand dollars, and could not be purchased at any price.

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CENTRAL PARK, SATURDAY AFTERNOON

THE ZOÖLOGICAL GARDEN.

Near the skating pond, which is the great attraction in the winter, a square has been laid out for a Zoölogical Garden. It is separated from the Park by the Eighth Avenue, but it is to be connected by a tunnel under the railroad. It has natural caves, which are to be dens for lions, bears, and wild beasts. It has natural lakes and ponds, and when completed will be one of the great attractions of the Park. The collections of wild beasts, birds, and rare and curious animals are already very large. Donations to this department are numerous. This will be one of the richest collections in the country.

THE PRIDE OF NEW YORK.

New Yorkers boast of their Park, and have good reason so to do. It is indeed beautiful for situation, and the Commissioners have built themselves a monument in the tasteful and attractive manner in which they have performed their work. On a bare, unsightly, and disgusting spot, they have created an area of beauty, charming as the Garden of the Lord. Where not a tree or shrub was found, they have bidden a forest spring up, and have planted three hundred and twenty thousand eight hundred and forty-six shrubs and trees. The original cost of the Park was four million eight hundred and fifteen thousand six hundred and seventy-one dollars. The total cost, with the purchase and construction up to the last report, was nearly nine millions of dollars. The cost of construction and maintenance the past year was over five hundred thousand dollars.

The Park contains over seven miles of carriage road, six miles of bridle paths, and twenty miles of walks. On Saturday afternoon it is a sight to behold. It is the people's day, and the people's Park. Tens of thousands, composed of the various nationalities of the city, assemble. Dodworth's band, from a gaudy Oriental pagoda, furnish the music. Immense awnings are stretched on all sides, under which the crowds sit in great comfort. The grass, close shaven by a machine, is open to the gambols of children. The crowd is composed of the millionaire and the hod-carrier; ragged newsboys and the Fifth Avenue exquisite; ladies in the latest style, and female emigrants just arrived; madame flashing with jewels, and the scrubbing-woman who cleans paint and washes linen; vehicles of wondrous construction, and carriages that might have come out of the ark; the splendid turnouts, with servants in livery, and an old box-wagon, driven by a Jerseyman or a farmer from Long Island.

The rules of the Park are very strict, and are rigidly enforced. Within hearing of the band no carriage can move while a piece of music is being played. About three o'clock, the crowd in carriages, on horseback, and on foot, pour into the great pathway that leads to the music stand, and from thence diverge into the different portions of the Park, filling the grottos, the rambles, plains, and hills, sailing on the lakes, feeding the swans, lolling in the summer-houses, and making a panorama of beauty, to see which is well worth making a visit to New York.

XLI.

SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE
METROPOLITAN POLICE.

THE efficiency of the New York police is largely indebted to the School of Instruction. This department is under the charge of Mr. Leonard, who, for twenty-three years, has been a member of the police. He is eminently qualified for the task committed to him. He is tall, with a fine frame, a genial, intelligent face, a gentlemanly bearing, and is one of the most efficient and accomplished officers in New York. He is every inch a gentleman, and has been an inspector of the force since the rank was created.

When a man is appointed on the force, he is immediately assigned to duty. But for the period of thirty days he has to appear at the School of Instruction daily. A book of laws is put into his hands, and he must make himself familiar with its contents. He is then examined in every thing pertaining to his duties. He must be civil, decorous, use no insulting word; must not drink, nor visit places where liquor is sold; must not smoke nor read on duty, nor withdraw a complaint; must keep a memorandum-book; must accept no money from a citizen; must not assist an officer to prosecute a civil case; must take off his

clothes at night, put on under-clothes, and keep his room ventilated; arrest vagrants; and, while enjoying his own political and religious opinions, be a delegate to no political convention; salute his superiors; try all the doors; must not be found off his post; must not talk to citizens; not visit his own house while on duty; report all nuisances thrown into the street; arrest men who attempt to steal, or commit assault, or carry slung shot; arrest all who are fighting, brawling, or threatening, or violate decency; arrest an omnibus driver for loitering, or a carman who has no number on his cart, or a hackman who is extortionate, or drivers of vans or wagons who go over six miles an hour. Such are some of the lessons learned in the school. Over one thousand nine hundred men have been instructed in this school within three years. When the men go out to their duties, they know exactly what they have to do, and know that the Commissioners will sustain them in the prompt, bold, and faithful performance of it.

XLII.

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

INTERESTING FACTS, GIVEN TO THE WRITER BY REV. S. P. HALLIDAY, SUPERINTENDENT OF FIVE POINTS HOUSE OF INDUSTRY.—HOMES OF THE LOWLY.—A NIGHT TRAMP.—BAREFOOTED BEGGAR.—A STREET BOY.—A SAD SCENE.—GENTEEL SUFFERING.

HOMES OF THE LOWLY.

THE extreme value of land in the city makes tenement-houses a necessity. Usually they occupy a lot twenty-five by one hundred feet, six stories high, with apartments for four families on each floor. These houses resemble barracks more than dwellings for families. One standing on a lot fifty by two hundred and fifty feet has apartments for one hundred and twenty-six families. Nearly all the apartments are so situated that the sun can never touch the windows. In a cloudy day it is impossible to have sunlight enough to read or see. A narrow room and bedroom comprise an apartment. Families keep boarders in these narrow quarters. Two or three families live in one apartment frequently. Not one of the one hundred and twenty-six rooms can be properly ventilated. The vaults and water-closets are disgusting and shameful. They are accessible not only to the five or six hundred occupants of the building, but to all who choose to go in