



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

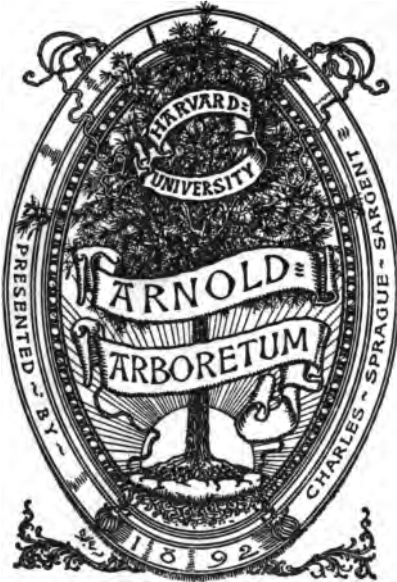
We also ask that you:

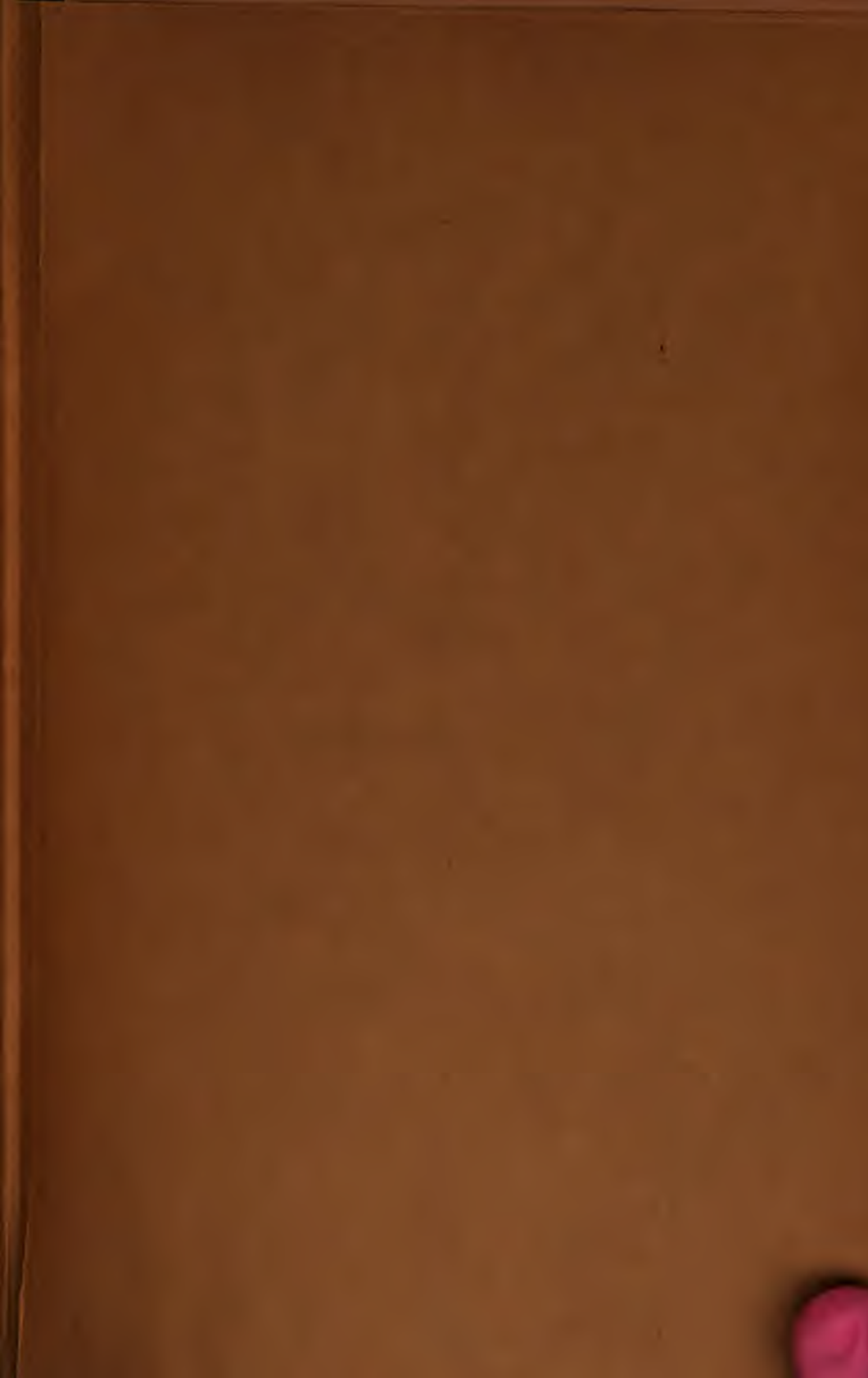
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

JP,





THE

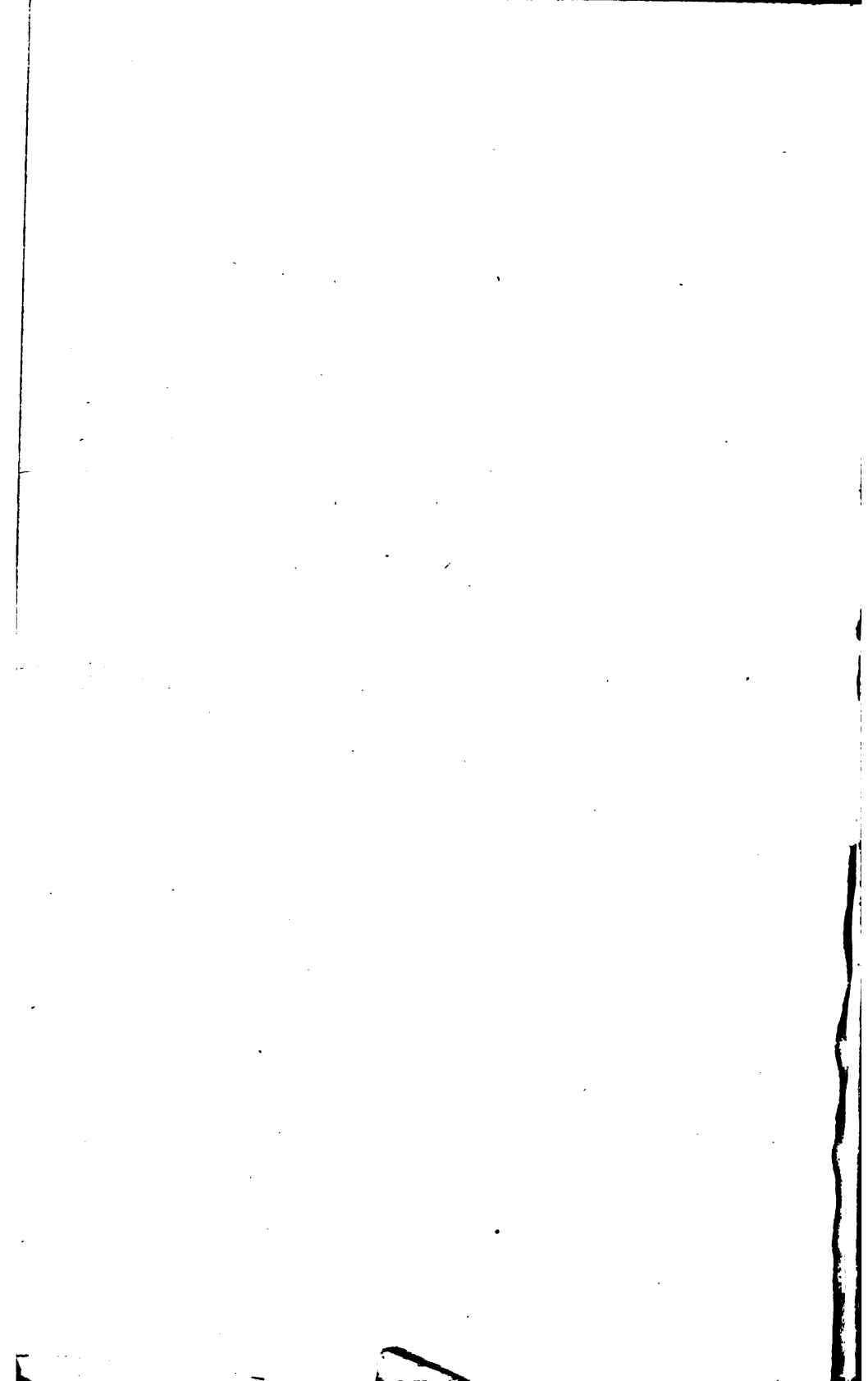
SPOILS OF THE PARK.

*WITH A FEW LEAVES FROM THE
DEEP-LADEN NOTE-BOOKS OF "A WHOLLY UNPRACTICAL MAN."*

They that have done this deed are practical;
What private griefs they have I know not
That made them do it; they are wise and practical,
And will with reasons answer you.

By FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED,
ONE OF THE DESIGNERS OF THE PARK; SEVERAL YEARS ITS SUPERINTENDENT; AND
SOMETIME PRESIDENT AND TREASURER OF THE DEPARTMENT.

FEBRUARY, 1882.



THE
SPOILS OF THE PARK.

*WITH A FEW LEAVES FROM THE
DEEP-LADEN NOTE-BOOKS OF "A WHOLLY UNPRACTICAL MAN."*

They that have done this deed are practical ;
What private griefs they have I know not
That made them do it ; they are wise and practical,
And will with reasons answer you.

By FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED,
ONE OF THE DESIGNERS OF THE PARK; SEVERAL YEARS ITS SUPERINTENDENT; AND
SOMETIME PRESIDENT AND TREASURER OF THE DEPARTMENT.

FEBRUARY, 1882.

Recd. Aug. 1912
27084

f

08575

04/29/2001

11/19/2002

7566859

THE demand for a change in the management of the parks has taken a more distinct form, even since I left the last of this pamphlet in the printers' hands. If I had been seeking office, it would have been a most foolish thing to write it: yet it may be best to refer to the fact that the frequent appearance of my name, either as a candidate or otherwise, in the debates of the Park Board, has in every case been against my repeatedly expressed wishes; that, whenever privately consulted, I have advised the immediate employment of men who could give the assurances of *efficiency with reference to the proper ends* of park management, which are only to be found in professional standing and in arrangements for this purpose, which left my own employment out of the question. I was more immediately moved to write by the opinion of a shrewd observer that Mr. Vaux's employment was the last thing that a *majority* of the Board had ever intended, and by seeing Mr. Wales blamed for "wrangling" I had in view, at starting, only to point out good-naturedly that Mr. Wales's view of his Board's course was not that of a too contentious, so much as that of a too lenient man. Having taken up the case from this point of view, I found a more thorough treatment of it necessary. Though it is the first time I have written critically of the business of the Department, except officially and with official sanction, it must be well known to my friends that the views expressed are of very old standing. In their more important points they are not even original with me, and are as far as possible from having been developed for the occasion. Though often urged to write on the subject, I have done so now without conference with any one, and, except in closing, without reference to any plans of legislation.

F. L. O.

DETROIT, MICH., Feb. 23, 1882.

I.

"This disorganized body has been masquerading before the public, a headless trunk, without policy, without order, without well-defined purpose."

THE words of my text were of late given to the WORLD by one of the members of the body they depict, sometime, withal, its president, worthy Master Salem Wales, — a man-of-peace, across whose shapely bows my yet more peaceful shallop could never hold her course but with the falling topsail of deferential salutation. Occasion cometh now in this wise : —

Having been kept much from home, seeing the Board and its works only through the eyes of the Press, and thus taking, if a less perspicuous, yet a more distant and therefore more comprehensive, view of its proceedings than Mr. Wales can have done, I fancy that I recognize a general drift in them of which he seems unconscious. I am the more moved to show the difference between his perspective point and mine, because I have observed, that, whereas till lately the meetings of the Board have been regarded by the Press as a sort of brawling farce, and as such, for amusement's sake, liberally reported, now for some little time back, through a growing weariness of them as it is made to appear, an entire performance often gets no other notice than a single contemptuous paragraph. Thus I see a gaining tendency to look upon the Commissioners as an incapable and harmless set of witlings, with whose doings no sensible man can be expected to much concern himself. Such an impression is clearly unjust to Mr. Wales himself, else why should he be able to do so little with them as he tells us that he is? Yet the brief characterization of the Board which I have quoted,

and with which much else that he has written tallies, tends to confirm the impression that it is pursuing a heedless, aimless, and essentially a harmless course.

Comparing his accounts with those of the newspapers, and judging both in the light of my experience in affairs of the Department, I am strongly drawn to think that there is more of tragedy than of farce in what is going on; and were the integrity, frankness, and manly straight-forwardness of all his colleagues at all less assured than it is, I should be disposed to think, that so far from being without policy, order, or purpose, the Board's proceedings had been all along nicely directed by the most wary gauging of the city's patience and credulity, and with a most craftily-formed and long-ripening purpose, — a purpose, I should add, that would seem to me in direct conflict with that which the Commissioners are sworn to pursue.

Without ambition to appear as an advocate of such a view, I think it may subserve the city's interests, if, rather as a witness than an advocate, I state how it is that I can be at all tempted toward conclusions so different from those of the better-informed Mr. Wales. In the end, having on my way there shown my right to do so, I expect to testify as an expert witness. For the sake of compactness I shall confine my purpose to a review of some aspects of the Board's business with Central Park. As introductory to this, I wish to bring a few considerations to mind, upon which so much will hang of what is to follow, that I beg those in haste to get to the point, that they will not, because of the apparent self-evident character of my persuasions, leap them over. Their lack of self-evidence to many minds has cost the city millions of dollars.

1. After an investment of some fifteen millions in the Park, now in the twenty-fourth year of its growth, what is the proper business of the Commissioners with it? It is my experience that the answer given by men, in their conduct toward and in their comments upon the business as actually conducted, varies greatly with special points of view: that, for example, of a man who visits the Park on foot only, differing from that of one who sees it habitually from a carriage; and this again from the view of riders; and this yet again from that taken by those who

would, but cannot, see it from "the silent steed." There are various real-estate points of view. There is a view from behind a trotter; there is the view of an employment broker; and there is the remote view of statesmen, to whom the paltry interest of the mere local community of New York, in its vacant lots called "parks," is of consequence only as it may at a pinch be turned efficiently to account in affairs of great national and international concern.

Some more or less distorted reflections of these and of a hundred other special views may often be detected in the newspaper reports of the Commissioners' familiar discords. Putting them all aside as inadequate, and regarding the business as a trusteeship, my experience further is, that, asking what is the essence of the trust, not many business-men are to be found in Wall Street, nor yet in Water, who have ready upon it a business-like opinion. It is simpler to determine what it is not; and, by knocking off a few answers that may be suggested, we may converge toward a satisfactory conclusion.

For example: the Commissioners have elected, if I have reckoned aright, five several principal architects, one after another, to their business-staff; not one and four coadjutors, but five masters, each to a separate duty, dismissing none to make room for another. It is true that two are not appointed directly for building-duties (one being chief-of-staff, and another chief executive officer), and also that the last election was made with conditions that rendered its acceptance impossible; but as it was intended to supersede none of the previous building-strength at the Commissioners' command, sufficient, as it already was, for taking in hand all at once four great cathedrals, it strengthens the occasion for asking, At this stage, is building the distinctive and essential business of the commission? And no man can, upon reflection, fail to see that it is not.

The very "reason for being" of the Park is the importance to the city's prosperity of offering to its population, as it enlarges and becomes more cramped for room, opportunity of pleasurable and soothing relief from building, without going too far from its future centre. What else than this purpose justifies the reservation from commercial enterprise of more than a hundred

blocks of good building-land right in the line of the greatest demand? Building can be brought within the business of the Park proper only as it will aid escape from buildings. Where building for other purposes begins, there the Park ends. The reservoirs and the museum are not a part of the Park proper: they are deductions from it. The sub-ways are not deductions, because their effect, on the whole, is to enlarge, not lessen, the opportunities of escape from buildings. Were they placed above the general surface, and made intentionally conspicuous; had they been built—as for a time it was difficult to convince people, even intelligent critics, that they were not—as decorative objects, it would have been in contravention, not in furtherance, of the essential business of the Park. Of late years they have, in the summer, almost disappeared from general view; and, by their action in facilitating passage clear of the drives and rides, much less apparent construction serves the general public purpose of the Park. If through ignorance and mismanagement their present seclusion is destroyed (as the Commissioners have promised that it shall be, as far as their means go), it must tend not to further, but to obstruct, the proper course of the Commissioners' business. It must be concluded, then, that the Commissioners' trust is essentially the reverse of that which the affluence of architectural force at its headquarters might be thought to imply.

If the essence of the Commissioners' business is not to be found in building, neither is it in engineering, nor in inn-keeping, nor in the decorative art of gardening, nor in a display of nurserymen's samples, nor in forestry. All these callings may have their place; but it is at best a subordinate and incidental or auxiliary place, as calendar-printing in insurance business, as astronomy and pastry-cooking in steamship business.

2. A man may be strong for any other business commonly pursued in the city, yet unfamiliar with and inapt to acquire a sound understanding of the ends, to grasp the principles and to seize the critical points of management in the business of the Park.

3. By changes made for the purpose in the laws every few years, and by the rotation of new men into office as often as

practicable, the composition of the Commission is never long the same. Its members, receiving no pay for the study they give the park business, abandon no other to take it up, and rarely make any change in their habits on account of it. Most of them deal with it, as reports of their proceedings exemplify, more in the habit of mind with which prosperous gentlemen take up their diversions, as of whist or euchre, yachting, or trotting horses, than in that with which they earn their living.

It is as unbusiness-like for the city to assume them masters of the business, in an executive or an expert sense, or to allow them to assume themselves so, as for the stock owners of a great railway to allow a constantly changing board of directors to take upon themselves the duties of its Chief Engineer.

4. The view which has been thus suggested of what the Commissioners' trust is not, and of what the business-like method of dealing with it for a board constituted as theirs is cannot be, is set forth more at length and more forcibly in a communication addressed to their predecessors in office four years ago, to which are attached such names as MORGAN, BROWN, BELMONT, STEWART, WARD, CISCO, COOPER, HAVEMEYER, POTTER, PHELPS, DODGE, MORTON, JAY, JESSUP, SISTARE, HAMILTON, SCHUYLER, LIVINGSTON, ROOSEVELT, SHERMAN, MARSHALL, GRISWOLD, JOHNSTONE, BABCOCK, GUYON, ROBBINS, LAIDLAW, WALLACH, JAFFRAY, COLGATE, THURBER, CLAFLIN, HARPER, APPLETON, CARTER, SCRIBNER, PUTNAM, WESTERMANN, HOLT, CRAVEN, and of leading merchants, artists, physicians, and barristers, each master in his own business, ranging with these on the roll of the city's worthies to the number of more than ninescore.

If Mr. Wales's name is not among them, it is probably from motives of delicacy, in view of his former connection with the Commission which the paper in question calls to account; but if otherwise, as Mr. Wales has of late been a commissioner of a public hospital as well as a commissioner of parks, he might ask himself whether, if his colleagues of the hospital trust had undertaken to manage it without aid of doctors, or with that only of doctors of divinity, he would have thought it implied but a weakness of purpose? Is it not such weakness that fills our prisons?

II.

For years there was an office of the Board which at different times had different sorts of duty given it, and was designated by different titles, as the fancies of succeeding commissioners varied. It was once officially described as "the Chief Executive office by or through which all orders for the work should be executed and all employees supervised and governed;" at another and the latest period it could give no one an order—could govern nothing, only advise. But through all, one duty it held constantly, and that was to keep the Park under professional landscape-gardening supervision, with a view to the furtherance of consistency of purpose in the business of the Commissioners with it; to which end the occupant of the office had a seat with the Board, and was free to take part in its debates, though without a vote. When slighted as to this responsibility, the occupant offered his resignation, and the office was temporarily suspended.

In 1859, when it was working upon Central Park near upon four thousand men, and the records of the time say with extraordinary efficiency, the Board numbered eleven members. On the ground that it was too large for efficient *executive* management, it was gradually reduced. In January, 1879, when it was working less than two hundred men, and the records say inefficiently, it numbered four members. In this month, unexpectedly to those interested in the Park otherwise than as a field of statesmanship, an element in the real-estate business, or some other specialty, the Commissioners concluded to extinguish such little (advisory) life as had till then been suffered to remain in the office. Since the day they did so, there has been no office under the Commission looking to landscape considerations; and

the only man in its employment competent to advise or direct in matters of landscape-gardening has been degraded to an almost menial position, and this by methods and with manners implying a perfectly definite purpose to prevent him from exercising professional discretion, and to bring his art into contempt.

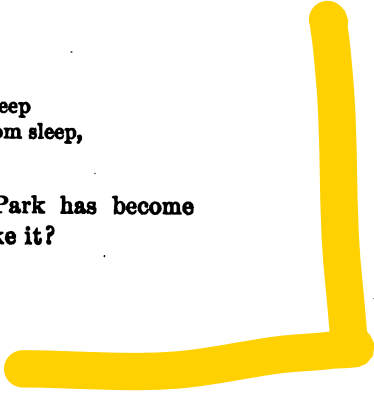
Reference is here more particularly made to occurrences imperfectly brought to public attention by reporters of the press two years ago or more; but Commissioner Wales has lately shown, to his honor expostulatingly, that the same policy is still pursued by the same methods, and with the same manners; the unfortunate representative of landscape art having been changed, and the tools of the ignoble work being new, and expressly adapted to it.

No plea will here be made that Landscape-Gardening is an art having due place side by side with the fair sisters, Poetry, Architecture, Music, Acting, Painting, and Sculpture. For nearly two centuries our greatest and our most popular teachers—as Sir Walter Scott, for example—have given it that rank; and I know not one man of accepted authority who has made bold to differ with them. Who are they that do so now? Is there an artist in any field who is with them? Is there a friend of art whose friendship is not the cloak of a hopeless snob? I am assured not one. Standing, then, for the youngest and modestest of the serene sisterhood, I know that not only every artist under every name of art, but every gentleman and every gentlewoman of New York, stands with me in challenging the Board to reconcile its course in casting out the profession of landscape art from the Park with faithfulness to its most sacred trust.

Where shall one be found more sacred?—a trust for all who, from our time onward, from generation to generation, are to be debarred, except as they shall find it in the Park, from what one of old aptly styled “the greatest refreshment of man;” from what our own Lowell calls “the wine and the oil for the smarts of the mind;” what our Emerson says “yet soothes and sympathizes in all our toils and weariness;” and again our Longfellow,—

"If thou art worn and hard beset
With sorrows that thou wouldst forget;
If thou wouldst read a lesson that will keep
Thy heart from fainting, and thy soul from sleep,
Go" —

Where shall the poor man go when the Park has become
what persistence in such management will make it?



III.

For a few days after the determination of the Commissioners to leave the office of landscape out of their business was publicly reported, there was much interest to know their motives ; and, in the absence of a satisfactory explanation, disapproval of their course was generally expressed. I had been holding the position in question, with the title, under the last shift, of Landscape Architect Advisory ; and a friend had the kindness to make for me a collection of more than seventy cuttings from the journals of the time, bearing on the matter, which are now before me. Looking them over, I find, that, however differing in terms, they bear uniform testimony on a few points, which at this distance I would wish to have recalled : as, first, that to that time the people of New York had, notwithstanding some grumblings, on the whole, been proud of the Park, and especially proud of its landscape promise ; second, that the business-view set forth in the previous chapter in regard to the landscape office had been generally accepted ; third, that there was a general, though not generally a very definite, perception of danger involved in its abolition.

So strong was the feeling for the moment, that a Park Defence Association was organized, and at least one older organization joined with it in urging the common conviction upon the Commissioners. It may be thought strange that it should have led to no debate or remark in the Board ; but is it stranger than that, against constant outcry for fifty years, New York streets should have continued till now to be the dirtiest to be found in all the large towns of Christendom ?

One of the Commissioners is reported to have said, in the midst of the stir, "It will soon blow over." He appears to

have been right; but, if I mistake not, a little silent breeze is even now perceptible, and if, after the revelations of the last four years, it once more gets up, it may not prove so easy to ride it gayly out.

May I refer to one thing more that appears all through these leaves?—such kind feeling toward me personally, as I have no words to acknowledge, but to which I can hardly avoid the poor response of drifting, as I write, into more personal narration than might otherwise befit my purpose.

IV.

I HAVE shown what the highest authorities in the commercial business of the city hold to be the essence of the Commissioners' business with the Park, and what is essential to their success in it. But it must be known that a strong party has always stood opposed to this view, and from the start has been incessantly laboring, and never without some measure of success, to compel a disregard for it. The counter view is commonly termed by those urging it the *practical* view; and, if this seems strange, it must be considered that a given course is called practical or otherwise, according to the object had in view at the moment by the speaker. To relieve the charity of friends of the support of a half-blind and half-witted man by employing him at the public expense as an inspector of cement may not be practical with reference to the permanent firmness of a wall, while it is perfectly so with reference to the triumph of sound doctrine at an election. It will be important, in what follows, to keep in mind this relativeness of meaning in the word.

First and last, there have been some pretty dark rams in the Park Commission; but on the whole it has been the worthiest and best intentioned body having any important responsibility under the city administration in our time, and it has, till lately, had rightly more of public respect and confidence than any other, its distinction in this respect being not always pleasing to some other constituents of the government. Yet with all the advantage their high standing might seem to give them, the Commissioners have rarely been able, when agreed among themselves, to move at all straight-forwardly upon the course, which, left to themselves, they would have marked out. Commissioner Wales has more than once, of late, referred to what

he calls the "embarrassments" of the department, and has been careful to state, that, so far from these being new, he had in former years, when the public confidence in the Commissioners was much greater than at present, matched his strength with them till the breaking-point was reached, when he was compelled to resign, and go abroad to recruit his vigor in preparation for the renewed struggle in which he is now engaged.

He will excuse me for thinking that he has left the nature of these embarrassments in some obscurity, and for wishing to throw a little light upon it. I am going further on to mention circumstances connected with the dissociation of landscape-gardening from the business of the Park, which, if I had been in New York when the Commissioners' action for the purpose was taken, and had been disposed to make them public, would have added to the distrust and apprehension so generally expressed. They will even now cause surprise, even tax the credulity of many; and partly to lay a foundation for them, partly to give a clew to their significance, partly to reveal what Mr. Wales probably means by the embarrassments of the Board, I will, in this chapter, relate a few incidents of my earlier experience. My object being to throw light on methods and manners, for which we, citizens of New York, are every man responsible, and not to assail parties or persons, I shall aim to avoid names and dates.

My first narration will be of a commonplace character, and be given only to supply a starting-point.

1. The mayor once wanted to nominate me for the office of Street Commissioner. After some persuasion, perfectly aware that I was taking part in a play, though the mayor solemnly assured me otherwise, I assented, with the distinct understanding, that, if the office came to me, it should be free from political obligations; that I should be allowed to choose my own assistants, and, keeping within the law, my own method of administration. "Which," said the mayor, "is just what I want. It is because I felt sure that you would insist on that, that I sent for you." I smiled. The mayor preserved his gravity, and I took my leave. Within half an hour I received a call from a gentleman whom I had held in much esteem, to whom I

had had reason to be grateful; who had once been a member of Congress,—a man of wealth and social position, but at the time holding no public office, and not conspicuous in politics. He congratulated me warmly, hoping that at last New York would be able to enjoy the luxury of clean streets. Conversation turned upon the character of the Board of Aldermen. The gentleman thought there need be no difficulty in getting their confirmation, but suggested that it might be better for me to let him give a few confidential assurances to some who did not know me as well as he did, as to my more important appointments. He soon afterwards left, regretting plaintively to have found me so “unpractical” in my ideas. It was his opinion that half a loaf of reform was better than no bread. It was mine, that a man could not rightly undertake to clean the streets of New York with his hands tied confidentially.¹

Soon another, also not holding an office, but president of a ward club, and as such having a certain familiarity with practical politics, called to advise me that — wanted an understanding that I would give him fifteen per cent of my patronage. Not having it, he feared that — would throw his weight against me. I need not go on. When one of the mayor’s friends in the city-hall understood that I seriously meant to be my own master, or defeated, he exclaimed, “Why, the man must be a fool!”

2. At one time, in a temporary emergency, I had the honor to be called to the quarter-deck, having been appointed a commissioner, and elected by the board of the period to be its president. In the few months that I held the position, I had some wonderful experiences, of which, for the present purpose, I will relate, because of their bearing on what follows, but five. That unpractical men may realize the wonder of them, it must be remembered that I was riding on the very crest of the glorious reform wave.

(1) A “delegation” from a great political organization called on me by appointment. After introductions and hand-shakings, a circle was formed, and a gentleman stepped before

¹ The word “unpractical” is not found in common dictionaries, but is so useful in our mandarin dialect, that I shall make bold for this occasion to adopt it.

me, and said, "We know how much pressed you must be, Mr. President, and we don't want to be obtrusive, sir, nor exacting; but at your convenience our association would like to have you determine what share of your patronage we can expect, and make suitable arrangements for our using it. We will take the liberty to suggest, sir, that there could be no more convenient way than that you should send us our due quota of tickets, if you please, sir, in this form, *leaving us to fill in the name.*" Here a pack of printed tickets was produced, from which I took one at random. It was a blank appointment, and bore the signature of Mr. Tweed. "That," continued the spokesman, "was the way we arranged it last year, and we don't think there can be any thing better."

(2) Four gentlemen called by appointment on "important business." Three were official servants of the city: the fourth stated that he came from and was authorized to represent a statesman of national importance. Their business was to present a request, or rather a demand, so nearly naked that it would have been decenter if there had been no pretence of clothing it, for the removal of some of the minor officers of the Park, in order to make places for new men, whose names they were ready to give me. They said nothing to recommend their candidates, except that they were reformers. The fact that the men whose removal they called for had been long enough employed to understand their duties, and to have proved their faithfulness and unpracticalness, was a sufficient reason that they should go. They had had their "suck." After a little conversation, which I made as pleasant as I could, I said smiling, "But excuse me, gentlemen, if I ask if you consider this to be reform?" There was no responsive smile (rather the contrary), and the representative of statesmanship said sharply, "What's the use of being a reformer, if it isn't?" And seriously, to these efficient public servants, this was the high-water mark of reform.

(3) Calling at this period upon another department head, and finding his lobby packed as mine was, when, after half an hour's waiting, I was admitted to a private interview,—of which the head took advantage to eat a cold lunch that had

been waiting for him, — I said, “Is it possible that you are as hard beset by these gentlemen as I am?” — “Oh! more so, I think.” — “Then, when do you get time for the proper business of your office?” — “Only before and after office-hours, when they think I am gone.”

(4) Among those calling on me was one official of the city, who came regularly once a week, and, having been admitted, remained sometimes two hours, saying plainly that he did not mean to go until I had given him at least one appointment. At length I remonstrated with him somewhat severely. “Well, Mr. President,” he replied, “you must excuse me. You know this is my business now, and I must attend to it. If I didn’t, where should I be? But I’ll let you off for to-day, and go round to ——’s office, and see what I can do with him.”

(5) Twice it occurred to me, after passing through a large public office with many deputies and clerks, that the Chief remarked to me, “Among them all, there is but one man who is here by my own free choice, or in whose faithfulness I have confidence.”

3. It has occurred five times in succession that I have been at the headquarters of the Department of Parks on the first visit of a new commissioner, and when, after a few passages of introductory courtesy, he has, as his first official movement in the business of the parks, asked to be furnished with a list showing the places at its disposal, the value of each, and the vacancies at the time existing. I believe that each of these gentlemen had been certified to the reporters to be entirely free from political obligations, and to owe his appointment solely to his eminent qualifications for the particular post of a park commissioner; but it will not be surprising, that, in view of my experience, I doubted the accuracy of the certificate.

4. A commissioner once said in my presence, “I don’t get any salary for being here; it would be a pretty business if I couldn’t oblige a friend now and then:” this being his reason for urging a most unfit appointment.

5. Writing of unfit appointments, nothing could be more ludicrous, if the anxiety they gave me had left room for a humorous view of them, than many most strenuously urged.

A young man was pressed for my nomination as a topographical draughtsman. I asked to see some of his work, and, after explanations, was answered, "I don't know that he ever made any maps or drawings on paper." — "How could you think he was qualified as a draughtsman?" To which the reluctant reply was this: "The fact is, he was a little wild a few years ago, and ran away to sea on a whaler, and when he came back he brought a whale's tooth, on which he had made a picture of his ship as natural as life. Now I think that a boy who could do that, you could do most any thing with in the drawing way." The very man who said this, and, incredible as it will be thought, said it seriously, was nominated by the mayor for a park commissioner. Can the reader say, that, if the favorite remedy for the moment, and that advocated by Mr. Wales, for all the evils of the present park mismanagement, shall be adopted, this same good business-man may not next year be chosen to exemplify the efficiency of a single-headed administration?

6. I once expressed to a gentleman surprise at the accuracy of certain information of which I found him possessed. "Oh! that's nothing," he said. "There is not a workingman living in my district, or who comes into it, or goes out of it, that I have not got him down on my books, with the name and ages of his wife and all his children, what house they are in, what rooms they occupy, what his work is, who employs him, who is to look after his vote, and so on. I have it all tabulated, and posted up. I have to make a business of it, you know. If a man means to succeed in politics, he must. It is not a business you can play with."

7. Another illustration of practical business-methods was given by a president of the Department as follows:—

"I want you to know," he said, after opening the door, looking out, closing and locking it, "of some things going on here. Yesterday a man applied for a certain position, bringing a letter dated at Albany the day before, in which the writer stated that he understood that the late holder of the position had been discharged. I told the applicant that he was mistaken; but he insisted that he was not, and I could hardly get

rid of him. Here is a report coming this morning from the Park, making charges against the man in question, and advising his discharge. Information of a prospective opportunity of an appointment had gone to Albany and back, before it came to me here. You see how closely they watch us. But here is another example of it. I signed to-day an appointment which I had not determined to make five minutes before. I sent the appointee directly up to the Park, starting myself, at the same moment, for the city-hall. When I reached there, reference was made to the appointment by the first man who spoke to me, showing that not a moment had been lost in reporting it. But who made the report, and how, so quickly? I confess I hardly dare inquire. But there is something yet more inscrutable. I suspected the lock of my private drawer to have been tampered with. Last night I placed a bit of paper where it would be dislodged if the drawer was opened, and another in my memorandum-book of vacancies, applications and intended appointments. This morning I found both displaced."

8. There was an intrigue to remove a valuable officer by destroying his character, in order to make an opening for the advancement of a subordinate strongly backed with "influence." I asked and obtained a committee of the Board to try the case. The subordinate made oath to a statement which was proved to be false; and for the perjury he was dismissed. Shortly afterwards he met me on the Park, offered me his hand, and, with much flourish, thanked me for having brought about his removal, as it had compelled his friends to make proper exertions, and he now held a position much more to his taste than any on the Park could have been.

9. At a dignified public ceremony on the Park, I saw, while listening to the oration of the day, a roughly-dressed man approach the point where the Commissioners were arrayed, all in proper black, and facing a great crowd. As the man neared their position from the rear, he reached out a walking-stick; and punched one of them. The commissioner turned; and the man threw his head back, as if to say, "Come here, I want a word with you." The commissioner fell out, and there was a whispered conversation. "Now, what does that mean?" I

asked. "Don't you know? Why, that is one of our new foremen; and he and the commissioner are both members of the same district committee. He is laying in with him to make a place for some fellow whose help they need in the primaries."

10. I suspended a man because of evidence of gross disobedience of a standing rule. He told a very improbable story; and I gave him a fortnight to produce corroborative evidence of it. Instead of doing so, he set a number of his "friends" after me. His special patron was a man in office, and proprietor of a weekly newspaper. A copy of it was sent me, with a marked article containing absurd and scurrilous abuse of me, and of the Commission for employing me. As this official had shortly before called at my house, and been profuse in compliments and professions of regard, I went to see him. Referring to the article, I said, "It would have given you but the slightest trouble to ascertain that you had been imposed upon in the statements to which you have given currency." He smiled, and asked, "Would you like to see an article I intend to publish to-morrow?" handing a galley-proof to me. I read it, and said, "I have marked and numbered with my pencil seven statements in this article, which, I give you my word, can be ascertained, by any one coming to the Park, to be quite untrue." The next day a copy of the paper was sent me containing the article without the change of a word. The suspended man at last confessed, hoping to be pardoned, but was dismissed. The paper continued to be sent me every week for perhaps a year, and I was told that every number had some attack on the Park. At another period another paper pursued a similar course. One day the editor, finding the president of the Department on a railway-train going to Albany, gayly saluted him in terms of friendship. "I am surprised, sir," said the president, "that, after what you have been saying of our Board in your paper, you can offer me your hand." — "Oh!" replied the editor, "but that was business."

11. During all my park work it was a common thing to receive newspapers, addressed by unknown hands, containing matter designed to injure me; sometimes, also, anonymous threats and filthy caricatures. The object I take to have been

to impress me with the insecurity of my position, and the folly of the unpractical view of its duties.

12. A foreman of laborers, discharged from the Park against strong political influence, was, at the next election, a candidate for the Legislature.

13. At one time, shortly after the police of the Park had a second time been put under my superintendence, I undertook an improvement of it. Asking the officer in charge to account for his own failure to secure the conviction and removal of some whom he described as "regular dead-beats," who had "never performed one honest tour of duty since they were taken on," he answered, "Why, damn 'em, they are every man laying wires to go to the Legislature, and they carry too many guns for me."

14. As my first step, I wrote an order to the surgeon, directing a medical survey of the force. The surgeon called on me, and said, "I am under your orders, sir, and if you insist I shall act on them to the letter; but perhaps you do not realize, as I do, what the consequences will be to me." — "What will they be?" — "Only that I shall have to eat my bread without butter for a while." — "I understand; but I must do my duty, and you must do yours." He did, reporting a quarter part of the entire force physically incapacitated for any active duty, and indicating that it had been used as an asylum for aggravated cases of hernia, varicose veins, rheumatism, partial blindness, and other infirmities compelling sedentary occupations. The surgeon was supported by the highest authorities of his profession, and had established on the Park an excellent character, professionally and otherwise. He had gained the affection and confidence of the force, but, in obeying orders without consulting its friends, had proved himself an unpractical man, and, as he had anticipated, was soon afterwards dismissed by order of the Board.

15. I asked an officer before me on a grave charge what he had to say. With a laugh, and a wink to his comrades, he answered, "You want to know what I have to say? Well, that's what I have to say," handing me a crumpled note which read, "If there is any thing against officer —, please remem-

ber that he is my man, and charge it to account of Yours Truly,
 — — —." He was dismissed.

16. I set a watch upon the night-watch ; and five men, receiving three dollars a night for patrol-duty on beats of which two were a mile and a half apart, were found together, in the middle of their watch in a necessary building, which they had entered with false keys. They had made a fire, taken off their boots, and, using their rolled-up coats for pillows, were fast asleep ; and this had doubtless been long their habit. With the sanction of the Board I changed the system, much reducing its cost, and employed mechanical detectors on the principle of those used for the night-watch of great mills. They were broken from their fastenings, and carried away. I devised a stronger and simpler apparatus. In several instances, within a week it was broken, as if by sledges, great force being necessary.

17. The eldest of the watchmen had been originally employed for several years in the Park as a land-surveyor. He had received a good education, and, after his discharge as a surveyor, had suffered grievous domestic afflictions, and been left very poor. He was a religious man, had been active in church charities ; and it was in part upon a letter from his pastor setting forth his trustworthiness that I had obtained his appointment as watchman. He had refused to join the others in their conspiracy, and was looked upon as a spy — wrongly, for he had given me no information. He was waylaid at night, murderously struck down, and left for dead. It was several weeks before he was able to leave his bed, and when he did so he was scarred for life.

18. Several other measures were adopted, all with the knowledge and sanction of the Board, and believed at the time, by the excellent gentlemen composing it, to be perfectly business-like. But they were all very unpractical in the view taken by many of the force and their friends, who consequently united in measures designed to convince the Commissioners of their mistake, and for self-protection against my cruelty. A fund was raised, and a "literary gentleman" regularly employed to write me down. At this time I received confidential warnings indirectly from high quarters outside the Commission, that I would

not be allowed to succeed in what I was attempting, and had better drop it. I did not drop it, but worked on with all my might; and presently the literary gentleman got also to his work, first in some of the Sunday papers. At length, by one of those accidents that seem liable to occur in any great newspaper establishment, he managed to get a powerful article prominently displayed in a leading daily, in which, after referring to the reputation of the force with the public, gained by its alleged uniform activity, efficiency, civility; its high state of discipline and *esprit du corps*, it was represented, that, through some unaccountable freak of the Board, it had recently been placed under the orders of a silly, heartless, upstart, sophomorical theorist, through whose boyish experiments it was being driven into complete and rebellious demoralization. One of the Commissioners told me that he was asked a day or two afterwards, "Who is this young chap that you have put in charge of the police? How could you have been stuck with such an unpractical fellow?" Now it happened that I was one of the few men then in America who had made it a business to be well informed on the subject of police organization and management. I had made some examination of the French system; had when in London known Sir Richard Mayne, the organizer of the Metropolitan force, upon the model of which our New York Metropolitan force is formed; had been favored by him with a long personal discourse on the principles of its management, and been given the best opportunities for seeing them in operation, both in the park service and in all other departments. I had made a similar study of the Irish constabulary. I had originally organized, instructed, and disciplined, and under infinite difficulties secured the reputation of this same Central Park force. Finally, by a singular coincidence, I had nearly twenty years before, when my defamer was himself a school-boy, been an occasional editorial writer for the journal which he thus turned upon my work, and had contributed to it much of the matter, which, collected in a volume, had been later twice reprinted in London, and in translations in Paris and Leipsic.

I was asked by the president of the Department to make a

public reply, and was allowed by the editor to do so in the same columns. I must gratefully add that the editor afterwards made all reparation in his power consistently with the ordinary rules of newspaper business. Nevertheless, the article served its purpose, was largely circulated among practical men, and I had reason to believe that even some of my friends thought there must be something in its ridiculous falsifications. The end was, that I was relieved of responsibility for the police of the Park. My duty was mainly assumed by a committee a majority of whom were new to the business; and the only two men who, besides the surgeon, had been conspicuously resolute in carrying out my orders, and sincere and faithful in efforts to enforce them, were dismissed — neither honorably nor dishonorably discharged, but simply notified that their services were no longer required. I am sure that the commissioners whose votes frustrated my efforts had been thoroughly convinced by the advice of friends that they were acting for the best interests of the city; that my intentions were good but impractical; and that in every thing they were doing God's service. The president to the last sustained me. Because he did so, and asked it as a personal favor and act of friendship, I consented, after having resigned my office, to resume service under the Commission upon a modified arrangement, vindicating my professional standing and securing me against another similar experience.

19. Within two years the rules which the Board had been persuaded to adopt to prevent unsuitable men from being recruited, and to secure advancement by proved merit, had become a dead-letter; and the force was left to drift into the condition in which one of the Commissioners lately stated in a Board meeting that he had found it, and which led to a beautifully drawn resolution that hereafter no man who could not read and write should be taken for it. How soon to become in its turn a dead-letter, who can say? Some time after my defeat, a gentleman told me that he had walked, in a fine day, through the interior of the Park from end to end without seeing an officer. There was no lack of them on the fashionable drives; but in the most secluded and sylvan districts prosti-

tutes were seeking their prey without hindrance, and it was no place for a decent poor woman to bring her children. I myself, since I left the Park, have seen an officer within a hundred yards of a carriage when it stopped, and when the coachman bent down an overhanging lilac-bush loaded with bloom, from which the occupants broke large branches, afterwards driving off without interruption or reproof. The officer, doubtless, thought it an unpractical thing to have lilac-bushes in the Park, as the present Commissioners think any thing like sylvan seclusion unsanitary.

At another time I met seven small boys coming from the Park, all carrying baskets. They were showing one another the contents of these as I came upon them; and I found that they were each filled with beautiful rock-moss, which they were going to sell for the decoration of hanging-baskets. The Park has always been very deficient in this lovely accompaniment of rocks, and it is difficult to secure it. I asked the boys if the police allowed them to strip it off. "No," said one: "we waits till their heads is turned." "No," said another: "they don't care; they just minds the carriages, they does." Nor are these incidents by any means the most alarming that I might report.

Do the owners of houses building near the Park fancy that its vicinity will be a more agreeable place of residence because of this practical style of management? I have seen a newspaper report that already last summer great numbers of tramps and gypsies regularly lodged in the Park. When the police was under unpractical direction, I have repeatedly walked through its entire length after midnight, finding every officer in his place, and not one straggling visitor. Hyde Park is closed at night-fall, as are all other city parks in Europe; but one surface road is kept open across Hyde Park, and the superintendent of the Metropolitan Police told me that a man's chances of being garroted or robbed were, because of the facilities for concealment to be found in the Park, greater in passing at night along this road than anywhere else in London.

If these incidents give little idea of the number, weight, and constancy of the embarrassments with which the Park Board has to struggle, they may have made plainer the nature of them, and the soil on which they grow.

But I must add a few more, that may, in some degree, remove misapprehensions as to the responsibility for various matters which are occasionally referred to in the interest of practical park management, as if they were the result of the ignorance or perversity of which the Commissioners intended to rid the Park in abolishing the landscape office.

For several years before that event, the management of the parks had, as before stated, not been under my direction. I had only to advise about it. But even before this, there was, for some time, a standing order in force, forbidding me to have a single tree felled without a specific order, to be obtained by a majority vote of the Board. Before this order was passed, men seen cutting trees under my directions have been interrupted and indignantly rebuked by individual commissioners, and even by the "friends" of commissioners, having no more right to do so than they would for like action on a man-of-war. I have had men beg me, from fear of dismissal, to excuse them from cutting trees, and, to relieve them, have taken the axe from them, and felled the trees myself. I have been denounced to commissioners by their friends as "a Vandal" and a "public robber," because nurse-trees were cut from the plantations of the Park under my directions. It may have been noticed, that, notwithstanding much talk of the necessity of thinning plantations, Mr. Wales, in a triumphant way, announced lately that not a single live tree had been cut this winter. Why not? Nothing had been cut but bushes, the removal of which, one by one, would pass with little notice from the vigilant friends of the Commissioners. Who is there, with any authority on the Park, competent to judge what trees should and what should not be cut, with a view to the purpose for which the Park has been formed?

Rocky passages of the Park, which had been furnished under my direction with a natural growth of characteristic rocky hill-side perennials, have been more than once "cleaned up," and

so thoroughly that the leaf-mould, with which the crevices of the ledge had been carefully filled for the sustenance of the plants, was swept out with house-brooms in the interest of that good taste which delights in a house painted white with green blinds, whitewashed cherry-trees, plaster statuettes on stumps; and patty-cakes of bedding-plants set between rocks scraped of their dirty old lichens and mosses, — and all in the heart of an Appalachian glen. Whereupon Mr. Robinson, in that invaluable addition to the literature of landscape art, *ALPINE FLOWERS*, writes (I quote from a copy kindly sent me by my good friend the author, 2d London edition, p. 8), —

“ In the Central Park of New York are scores of noble and picturesque breaks of rock, which have not been adorned with a single Alpine plant or rock-bush.” He might have said, from which not only all such adornments, but even all the natural growth of rock-bushes, vines, perennials, and mosses, has again and again been cleaned away as exhibiting a low, depraved, and unpractical taste. The work is going on, I am assured, at this moment; and when it is finished, and August comes round again, and all the yellow turf and the dead, half-covered outcrops of smooth-faced, gray and brown ledge are fully exposed to view, God help the poor man who can find no better place of escape from the town!

20. The landscape office had been twice dispensed with for a time before its last abolition in 1879. During one of these intervals a much boasted improvement in the plan of the Park had been put through with the energy and efficiency characteristic of a bull earning his passage through a China shop. Later, something was found defective in the drainage of the adjoining region. After a tedious and costly exploration, it was ascertained that a large main drain had been cut through at a critical point, and that the tile had been so broken and deranged as to make a complete dam, after which the excavation had been filled up, and built over. This led me to look at the drainage-maps, several sheets of which proved to have been lost. I begged to have a survey made for their renewal; and a man was employed for it who had been previously engaged in the work. While he was still occupied with the duty, what

passes for economy in practical park management came and dismissed him. I doubt if complete drainage-maps will be found in the Department to-day. I will undertake to satisfy a fair jury of respectable sanitarians, that, if there is reason to believe that a single case of malarial disease has originated in the Park in twenty years, it has been due to conditions which have been established or maintained against the advice of the landscape office. The reverse has been asserted or implied in scores of publications, for which no commissioner, as such, has ever been responsible.

21. The more "practical" Commissioners have often given me advice received by them from friends having no official responsibility for the parks, and which betrayed exceptional ignorance, even for city-bred men, on matters which had been my life-study; which ran also directly counter to the practice of every respectable member of my profession; the folly of which I have often seen exposed in our agricultural journals, and the agricultural columns of our newspapers, but which they regarded, and expected me to regard, as of controlling weight. Some such advice I have, since I left the Park, seen carried out in practice.

22. The president once notified me that a friend of his was to come before the Board as spokesman for a "delegation" of citizens, to advocate the introduction of a running-course on the Park. He would ask me to explain some of the objections to the project, but hoped that I would do so in a way as little likely to provoke the gentleman as possible, as he had great weight in politics, and it would be in his power to much embarrass the Department. I followed these instructions as I best could; but it was impossible for me not to refer to the landscape considerations. At the first mention of the word the gentleman exclaimed, and by no means "aside," "Oh, damn the landscape!" then, rising, he addressed the president to this effect: "We came here, sir, as practical men, to discuss with your Board a simple, practical, common-sense question. We don't know any thing about your landscape, and we don't know what landscape has to do with the matter before us."

23. It will have been asked by many, as they have been

reading, Why did you not appeal to public opinion? Why did not the Commissioners, who were superior to the courses through which your professional judgment was overruled, if they could not otherwise overcome these embarrassments, lay them frankly before us, and see what we could do? Might not a corresponding question be asked in regard to what everybody knows is going on at this moment, and has been for years going on, of the highest officer of the nation?

If the reference seems presumptuous in one respect, let me show that it hardly can be so in another; I mean in respect to the absorption of time and energy of public servants, through the pressure of "practical advice." As superintendent of the Park, I once received in six days more than seven thousand letters of advice as to appointments, nearly all from men in office, and the greater part in legislative offices upon which the Commissioners have been much dependent for the means of accomplishing any thing they might wish to do, — either written by them directly, or by Commissioners at their request. I have heard a candidate for a magisterial office in the city addressing from my doorsteps a crowd of such advice-bearers, telling them that I was bound to give them employment, and suggesting plainly, that, if I was slow about it, a rope round my neck might serve to lessen my reluctance to take good counsel. I have had a dozen men force their way into my house before I had risen from bed on a Sunday morning, and some break into my drawing-room in their eagerness to deliver letters of advice. I have seen a president of the Park Board surrounded by a mob of similar bearers of advice, in Union Square, carried hither and thither by them, perfectly helpless; have seen policemen make their way in to him with clubs, drag him out, force him into a passing carriage, and lash the horses to a gallop, to secure his temporary relief from "embarrassments," the nature of which I trust that I have now sufficiently illustrated.

I do not remember ever to have seen the office of the Board without a poster, reading, "No laborers wanted;" and I do not believe that there has in twenty years been a time when nine-tenths of the intellectual force and nervous energy of the Board has not been given to recruiting duty.

V.

DURING all of the summer before the Commissioners agreed to "damn landscape," I was aware that the practical view was getting the upper hand of them. It would take too much space to tell how I became conscious of it. There were symptoms such as this: that, while observing great ceremony of politeness with me, there were three of them whom I was never able to get to meet me on the Park (nor on any park). In the case of two, I was careful not to let a month go by without separately asking the favor of an appointment for the purpose, and in reply was always assured of a desire and intention to make it soon. Twice an appointment was actually made; and each time the commissioner failed to keep it, afterwards courteously apologizing. Thus and otherwise, there was no doubt left in my mind, that, with respect to my part of the business of the parks, these amiable gentlemen cared only how not to do it. If there had been, occurrences which have followed the abolition of my office would have removed it.

But it was not simply from observation of mere symptoms that I knew that the embarrassments affecting them were of an unusual character. I myself received from without the Board several warnings, both direct and indirect. By indirect, I mean threats made in such a manner as to leave me in no doubt that it was intended to guard against a public accountability for them. By direct, I mean not only friendly, confidential hints, but such as were given me, for example, in my own house, by a man who brought a line of introduction from a high public officer. After he had called three times (on each occasion while I was at dinner), I informed the introducer that his bearing had been such, that, if he called again, I should ask the

protection of the police. I knew that my movements were being furtively dogged, and I presumed that they were so with a view to obtaining pretexts upon which to urge my removal.

Let it be understood what this meant to me,—the frustration of purposes to which I had for years given all my heart, to which I had devoted my life; the degradation of works in which my pride was centred; the breaking of promises to the future which had been to me as churchly vows. However I was able to carry myself by day, it will not be thought surprising that I should have had sleepless nights, or that at last I could not keep myself from over-wearing irritation and worry. The resulting depression, acting with an extraordinary prostration from the great heat of the summer, and the recurrence of an old malarial trouble, brought me, late in the season, to a condition comparable to that often produced by a sun-stroke, perhaps of the same nature. It has taken me four years to recover the strength which I then lost within a week. In view of this loss, I was advised by three well-known physicians to seek at once a change of air, scene, and mental occupation. I knew that any prolonged absence from New York would give an opportunity to the plotters against my work that might be fatal to it; and while I hesitated an incident occurred which made my retirement for a time impossible. A newspaper was sent to my house with a marked passage stating that disgraceful charges were pending against me. The president of the Department knew nothing of them at the time; but within two days he informed me that the report was authentic.

The charter, so called, of the city, provides, that, when any one in its service stands accused of official misdoings, there shall be a form of trial open to him before his dismissal. I determined to take no notice of the charges until I had the opportunity, thus supposed to be secured to me, of looking my accusers in the face. But it never came. On the strength of the charges,—deliberate and circumstantial lies, invented, as I imagine, by spies to cover their ill success from their employers,—my name had been struck from the pay-roll. A month afterwards I found it restored; and the instalment of salary,

which had been due when the charges were made, and payment of which had been stopped on account of them, was silently sent me. Thus, though no word of retraction or explanation, of vindication or apology, followed, I was left to infer that the attempt to cast me out as a culprit had been abandoned.

Of many incidents emphasizing the character of this occurrence, I will make room for but one. I have shown that the charges were given to the press before they were officially known to the Board or to me. I have to add that this which I now make more than four years afterwards is the first public mention, to my knowledge, of their falsity or abandonment.

It is not to be supposed that I was gaining ground upon my nervous disorder during this month. At its end winter was setting in, and the principal work on the parks had stopped for the season. As soon as I was released from arrest, so to speak, I presented the medical certificate I had been holding back, showing my need of temporary relief from duty; and upon its leave of absence, with suspension of salary, was given me till spring. It was while this act was fresh and operating, and I was yet on the sea, that my office was abolished.

The general mistrust of the press, that the determination to do away with it had had other motives than those officially recorded, led to some "interviewing" of the Commissioners, under the torture of which one of them admitted that I had been suspected of having had "a pretty fat thing" in supplying the parks with trees. It happens that I had been anxious to obtain a few comparatively rare and costly trees for the Park. But I knew that the Commissioners were averse to authorizing purchases which might be taken as illustrations of extravagance. Moreover, the Park was in great need of another elephant; it actually did not possess a single rhinoceros; the gilding on the weathercocks was much tarnished; and the bronze nymph at Mount St. Vincent was almost as black as before she had, by the order of an older commissioner, been cleaned up, and painted white. Therefore I had, with the aid of friends, procured the trees I specially wanted without expense to the city. The value of the gift was, I believe, less than two hundred dollars; but that any such thing could be

done from interest in the scenery of the Park had not probably occurred to the sufferer, and a confused recollection of something inexplicable about it led him, when squeezed, as I little doubt, to blunder upon the expression caught by the reporter. Still, in view of my absence from the country, to have been betrayed into such an innuendo is not characteristic of a lofty soul; and this may explain why it was also said that the Commissioners had had enough of "high tone."

But not too much importance should be given to these hasty expressions. I do not doubt that the Commissioners were quite sincere in stating that they abrogated the landscape office because they found it "of no practical use." That they really had the completest confidence in my integrity, esteem for my professional ability, and held me to have deserved well of my fellow-citizens in all official duty, they were forward to testify by placing a series of resolutions to that effect on their minutes, and also by giving me an appointment that the public has been often advised, through the published proceedings of the present Board, remains uncanceled; that, namely, of Consulting Landscape-Architect (without salary). Considering the form of this appointment,¹ it is significant, that, while I have been holding it, the Board has permitted designs prepared under its orders in my office, long discussed, laid before the public, and, after most mature deliberation, adopted by unanimous vote, to be, in some cases, strangely mutilated by men not of my profession, and of no public standing in any profession; in others, to be superseded by wholly new and radically different designs. The main object of the changes in these cases had been before most carefully considered with the aid of comparative drawings, models, and other demonstrations, and the Board satisfied that objections of a conclusive character applied to them. In the reconsideration, partly or wholly by new commissioners, no thought of these objections appears to have been had. I have been allowed no opportunity to point them out, or to defend, in any

¹ "Whereas Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, long identified with the Central Park and its improvements, and enjoying the confidence of the community and the respect of this Department since its organization, should be placed in a position where this Department can avail itself of his large experience and intimate knowledge of the designs and objects of the work on the different parks," etc.

manner, the work for which I had been made publicly responsible; and they are now to be established by slow, provoking, and expensive public experience. Why was I appointed? and how is it that I still hold the office of Consulting Landscape-Architect to the Board? In the four years since it was made, there has been no communication between the Board and me.

In Victor Hugo's story, the practical M. Nortier says, —

“In politics we do not kill a man: we only remove an embarrassment; that is all.”

VI.

WHEN Mr. Vaux and I first put our heads together in study of the design for the Central Park, we agreed to treat nothing as of essential consequence, except with reference to results which might be looked for, at nearest, forty years ahead. And with an outlook at least that far along, all our work and our advice has since been given. In this has consisted a large part of its unpracticality.

If a park be got up mainly with the use of money borrowed in long loans; if the ground upon which it is formed be mortgaged as security for the ultimate payment of the loans; if the conduct of the business be placed in the hands of men who accept the trust without salary, as a consolation for the loss of a paid commissionership in a business of a very different character, or a place on a party committee, or a nomination for alderman, and who are far too knowing to accept advice except from practical men and of an instantly practical character:— if the business of these men be conducted with a view, first, to aid the cause of honest government at the next election; second, to suit the convenience of political contractors with notes coming due next month; and, lastly, to secure immediate satisfaction from one election to another of the public, it would not be surprising if even this *immediate* public satisfaction was not all they could wish.

It would be going further than is necessary to my purpose, to say that just this has occurred; but it may be well to ask if facts do not suggest methods of business which correspond nearly with what might be expected if it had. Let us see.

The Park Board, stimulated by the stings of the press and the public, and by the formal remonstrances of the leading busi-

ness men of the city, has now had full four years in which to prove how well its business can be managed under the practical view, by practical men, and free from the embarrassment of professional advice and professional superintendence; and with what result?

Unless every newspaper that I have been in the way of seeing has been bearing false witness, and every thing that comes to me verbally is deceptive, no branch of the city government has ever failed so completely and humiliatingly to earn public respect and confidence. As supplying the only available pleasure-roads, the Park is yet, perhaps, with an increasing driving and riding population, increasingly resorted to in the fashionable driving and riding season; that is to say, by that part of the population who least need to have opportunities of rural recreation brought nearer to them. But spite of all that should have been gained after twenty years, by four years' growing together of trees planted with the design of securing broad, quiet, massing effects, the Park is reported to have been steadily losing attraction, and, relatively to the entire population of the city, to be made less use of, and less valuable use of, than before.

Notwithstanding the obvious fact that the motive of the management has been favorable to what may be termed the uniformly smug and smart suburban door-yard style, in distinction from a more varied treatment admitting here and there of at least a subdued picturesqueness, the verdict appears to be, that the Park has even taken on a slovenly and neglected aspect. This is not by any means the worst of the story; but, for the present, stopping here, if an explanation is needed, may it not be given in the one word "IGNORANCE"?—not ignorance of practical politics; of the stock, cotton, or iron markets; of Greek, physics, or botany; of horticulture, floriculture, or garden decoration, but ignorance—complete, blind ignorance—of the principles, even of the motives and objects, of an art to which many men of great wisdom and venerated character have thought it right to give as long and arduous study as is often given to any other form of art, or to any learned profession,—an art to which it is no more reasonable to suppose that a man can

turn at middle life, and in a few months be prepared to assume the responsibility of a great public work, than that he can, in like manner, qualify himself to take command of an army, to serve as corporation counsel, superintending physician of Bellevue Hospital; as a sculptor, chemist, or lapidary.

VII.

WHAT has just been declared impossible many have been led to believe to be just what Mr. Vaux and I attempted, and with the result of leading the city, by our unfitness for the duties we accepted, into disasters such as the present commissioners have been seeking to mitigate. I have little doubt that many commissioners before the present, have, one after another, given a certain degree, at least, of credence, to statements made with this object, and I know that not a few estimable citizens must have done so. It is a matter of some moment to the city; it is of considerable interest to my profession; and I believe it to be due to the cause not alone of my art, but of all art, that the true state of the case should be known. The delusion so common and so melancholy, that because a boy has, or thinks he has, a natural gift for sketching, or modelling, or mimicry, he may hope to mount to distinction as a painter, sculptor, or actor, without far greater labor than is required for learning a trade, has its full counterpart in respect to landscape-gardening. I cannot say with what pity I have seen young men advertising themselves as landscape-engineers, etc., on the strength of having chanced to be employed as assistant surveyors for a few months in the ruder preparatory processes of park-making. Nay, I have seen even greater effrontery than that.

Mr. Vaux had, years before he took up the work of the Park, been the chosen co-operator of the greatest master in America of landscape-gardening, and had been associated with him in the most important and best public work that had been done in the country. He was personally familiar with the most useful of European parks through having shared from childhood in

their popular use. He had made, in company with other artists, long sketching-tours on foot, both in the old country and in the new; had more than ordinary amateur skill in landscape-painting, and had had thorough professional training in architecture.

I myself began my study of the art of parks in childhood. I had read, before I was fifteen, the great works upon the art, — works greater than any of the last half-century, — and had been under the instruction of older and more observant students of scenery, under the most favorable circumstances for a sound education. And there had been no year of the twenty that followed before I entered the service of the Park Board, that I had not pursued the study with ardor, affection, and industry.

I had twice travelled in Europe with that object in view; had more than a hundred times visited the parks of London and Paris, and once or oftener those of Dublin, Liverpool, Brussels, The Hague, Berlin, Vienna, Florence, Rome, and other old cities. I had travelled five thousand miles on foot or in the saddle, and more than that by other private or public conveyance, in study of the natural scenery of this continent. I had been three years the pupil of a topographical engineer, and had studied in what were then the best schools, and under the best masters in the country, of agricultural science and practice. I had planted with my own hands five thousand trees, and, on my own farm and in my own groves, had practised for ten years every essential horticultural operation of a park. I had made the management of labor in rural works a special study, and had written upon it acceptably to the public. I had been for several years the honorary secretary of two organizations, and a member of four, formed for the discussion of rural themes and the advancement of rural arts. I had by invitation written for the leading journal of landscape-gardening, and had been in correspondence with and honored by the friendship of leading men in its science on both sides of the Atlantic.

And essentially what I have thus said of myself had been known to the Commissioners, if not otherwise, then through those who introduced me to them, among whom were Mr. Irving, Mr. Bryant, Professor Gray, Mr. Greely, Mr. Raymond

Mr. Godwin, General Hamilton, Peter Cooper, Russell Sturgis, Charles H. Marshall, Edmund Blunt, Cornelius Grinnell, and David Dudley Field.

It is notoriously too easy to get the use of names, one following another: therefore I add, that most of these well-known men had been either my hosts or my guests; all had met me socially, and testified of my training not without some personal knowledge.

Since then, the work of Mr. Vaux and myself speaks for itself; and judgment upon it has been given, not by New York alone, which in natural landscape art, at least, might easily for a time be misled, but by the highest authority living. On what more worthy works rests the authority of those who tell the people of New York that we were quacks and knaves, and that our designs require such recasting of competent park-makers as it is now with all possible energy receiving?

If I seem tending to their level in thus speaking for myself, let it be considered that I have yet something more to say, and that I wish it to have all the weight that my rightful good name should entitle it to; let it be considered, also, that I have twenty times seen the assertion in print, made by some of the practical hounds, to whom this is my first reply in twenty years, that Mr. Vaux and I were brought upon the Park unknown, ignorant, incompetent pretenders, to serve a knavish scheme of base politicians; and that I happen to know that inquiries have been lately making in the vain hope to find ground of support for reiteration of the stupid fabrication.

And yet, in what has been spread abroad of this sort, there is just that yarn of truth that is usually to be found in the work of practised falsifiers. It is true that I had not set up to be a landscape-gardener before I came upon the Park. I had not thought myself one, and had been surprised and delighted when I was asked if I would accept even a journeyman's position in the intended work. Why? Simply because I held the art in such reverence, that, to that time, it had never occurred to me that I might rightly take upon myself the responsibilities of a principal in its public practice. My study of it had been wholly a study of love, without a thought of its bringing me

pecuniary reward or repute: in many matters of detail, therefore, it was defective (it is still very defective); and it is perfectly true, for this reason, if no other, that the task which was ultimately given me in the Central Park would have been an impossible one, had I not been so fortunate as to enjoy, for a time, the ardent and most loyal aid of men better qualified in some important respects than myself. But I am more inclined to question now than I was when I accepted my first unsought and most unexpected appointment, whether, if I had been more elaborately fitted than I happened to be, I should have been more strenuously or more intelligently bent on serving, with all such skill as I could command, the highest ends of the art, or better fitted to escape beguilements from them through the pedantries or the meretricious puerilities which hang on all its skirts. Let me illustrate my meaning.

During the last twenty years Europe has been swept by a mania for sacrificing natural scenery to coarse manufactures of brilliant and gaudy decoration under the name of specimen gardening; bedding, carpet, embroidery, and ribbon gardening, or other terms suitable to the house-furnishing and millinery trades. It was a far madder contagion than the tulip-mania, or the *morus-multicaulis* fever of our youth.

It ran into all park management, the only limit often being that fixed by annual appropriations. Long ago, for example, it seized Hyde Park, and put completely out of countenance the single charm of broad homely sylvan and pastoral simplicity which the fogs and smoke of London, and its weary miles of iron hurdles, had left to it. Why? I asked the old superintendent. "Well, you know the fashion must have its run, and it just tickles the nursery-maids." I take some credit for my schooling, then, that so far as Central Park has been under my guardianship, it has been perfectly quarantined; not a dollar having been spent, nor a rood of good turf spoiled, for garishness, under my superintendence, nor at any time, except against my protest.

Thirty years ago, before the Park was dreamed of, as a farmer, and with no more idea that I should ever be a professional

landscape-designer than that I should command a fleet, I had printed these thoroughly unpractical words : —

“ What artist so noble as he, who, with far-reaching conception of beauty and designing-power, sketches the outlines, writes the colors, and directs the shadows, of a picture so great that Nature shall be employed upon it for generations, before the work he has arranged for her shall realize his intentions ! ”

VIII.

IN the last chapter I observed that a loss of popular favor through slovenliness and neglect was not the worst misfortune that had befallen the Park. If it had been, I should have been still constrained to hold my peace. Neglect for considerable periods may do no serious permanent harm. Hence, while in the service of the Commission, I yielded much in that way to the practical policy. Neglect, if it continues not too long, may even have its advantages. The landscape-architect André, formerly in charge of the suburban plantations of Paris, was walking with me through the Buttes-Chaumont Park, of which he was the designer, when I said of a certain passage of it, "That, to my mind, is the best piece of artificial planting, of its age, I have ever seen." He smiled, and said, "Shall I confess that it is the result of neglect? I had planted this place most elaborately, with a view to some striking immediate effects which I had conceived, and others, to be ultimately obtained by thinnings. I had just worked out my plan, when the war came; and for two years I did not again see the ground. It was occupied as a camp; horses were pastured in it; it was cut up by artillery; fires were made in it. As a park, it was everywhere subjected to the most complete neglect. When, at length, I came back to it, expecting to begin my work over again at all points, Nature had had one summer in which, as well as she could, to repair damages; and I declare to you, that, on arriving at just this point, I threw up my hands with delight, for, spite of some yet unhealed wounds, I saw at once that in general aspect there was a better work than I had been able to imagine. That which was weak and unsuitable in my planting had, by natural selection, disappeared; and in the

struggle for existence nearly all that remained had taken a wild character, such as in an art we may aim at, but can hardly hope to attain." (But see how the true artist at once bowed himself before his tutor, and recognized and seized the opportunity.)

Hence, were ignorant neglect and feeble-minded slovenliness the worst qualities of the Board's management, I should yet have had nothing to say. The reason I must now speak is, that the Park is at last, avowedly, boastfully, and with much brag of energy, managed in distinct contemptuous repudiation of the leading motives with which it was laid out. This means, not, as Mr. Wales says, with no well-defined purpose, but with a purpose defined with perfect distinctness to undo, as far as practicable, what at least six million dollars of the city's debt have been heretofore spent to do. And of these six, two millions may be safely reckoned to be represented in structural works, which are to be found under the present policy simply obstructive to what is designed; so obstructive, that the results of this policy can at best be but botch-work. Hereafter it will always be open to say of these results, I mean, that they would have been vastly better but for the obstructions which the original purpose had placed in the way of those responsible for them.¹

The end will be that the park to be substituted for the original Central Park, without change of name, will be one better adapted to practical management; in which, for example, every operation can be directed and performed by men who have been unable to earn living wages in sewer and pavement work, in railroad and house-building work; who have broken down from incompetency in the hat-making and in the painting and glazing lines; and the services of whose sons and grandsons in carrying

¹ It is to be hoped that this will be denied. I should be glad to submit the grounds of the assertion to a jury of experts; to any number, for example, of the following gentlemen, to whom the principles of landscape-gardening must have been a serious study: Adolph Strauch, Cincinnati; Henry Winthrop Sargent of Woodenethe; H. W. S. Cleveland, Chicago; H. H. Hunnewell of Wellesley; H. Hammond Hall, Sacramento, Cal.; William McMillan, Buffalo; Col. F. L. Lee, Albany; Professor Robinson, Harvard Arboretum; E. W. Bowditch, Boston; John Sturgis, Brookline, Mass.; F. J. Scott, Toledo; Professor C. E. Norton, Harvard College. There are others whom I should include, as Mr. Weidenmann, but that I happen to be informed of their views. Several of these named are personally unknown to me, and with none have I had any conversation on the subject.

torch-lights, and stocking the primaries, must in some way be suitably acknowledged. The whole story is not told in this explanation; but, if it is considered how a constant gravitation in a general direction finally operates through many thousand channels of influence, it will be found to tell a good part of it.

I will later testify that the pretended landscape-gardening cloak under which this proclivity is disguised is a poor, tawdry piece of motley; but for the present let it be supposed that it is what it is claimed to be, — a much better-considered, wiser, and completer design than the old one; that it represents a higher culture and a nobler art, and as such is entitled to all possible respect. Then, I want to ask, was this respect paid to it, and did it mark a high sense of the Commissioners' responsibilities, and was it studiously deferential to the intelligence of the people of New York, that it should have been adopted, and work energetically begun upon it in the manner that it has been? With, so far as can be judged from the newspaper reports, absolutely no debate in the Board upon it, even apparently upon informal orders or verbal permits of Commissioners acting individually; with no public discussion, no opportunity for asking explanations, none for hearing remonstrances; without the publication of a single drawing, map, or plan, to aid an understanding of the great undertaking? (I will soon show more fully the contrasting methods in which the first Park Commissioners proceeded, but may mention here, that, in the first four years in which their design was developing, they issued over thirty maps and drawings, several thousand of which were distributed gratuitously, and that in some cases electrotype copies of them were supplied for newspaper publication.)

How many of those who read this paper will not, for the first time, know from it that an entirely new motive of design has been lately adopted, and vigorous work in pursuing it entered upon?

It is due to the enterprise of a single newspaper reporter, moved, it would appear, rather by a sense of the ludicrous than the grave aspect of the matter, that the completest exposition of the new policy has come before the public at all. Were it a question of the refurnishing and decorating of their board-room,

the Commissioners could not have observed less formality, given less evidence of deliberation, forecast, and study, or used fewer of the commonest business precautions against foolhardy blundering, than they have in all this proceeding.

IX.

THE points of identity between such of the purposes and motives of the present attempt to reform the Park as have been drawn out by the reporters, and those of that which was made at the cost of a million or more in 1871, are so many and so marked, that what is deficient in our information may be fairly taken to be supplied from what is of record as to what was then in view. The difference is only in the present lack of boldness, and a disposition to generalize rather than come to definite particulars. With this additional light upon it, the character of the scheme can be made comprehensible; and it is plain, that, if there had been knowledge and skill enough at the Commissioners' command, it would have been asserted for it that a new school of landscape-gardening had arisen, adapted especially to urban parks; that it had for them great advantages; and Mr. Robinson might have been quoted, and the experience of thousands of New York visitors to Paris cited, in confirmation of this statement. It would have had the value, too, for purposes of deception, of being true; and it is apparent that a dull sense of this truth has been mixed with another dull sense of the ideal of cockney villa-gardens in determining what should be said to reconcile the public to the destruction of the original Central Park. Let us see what the new school, thus clumsily serving as a decoy, really is.

It is in fact that of which M. Barillet-Deschamps is by repute the father, and M. André the most judicious and successful practitioner. It had its origin in the revision of the small interior public grounds of Paris, undertaken by Napoleon the Third; became very popular, largely because of the striking and spectacular effects rapidly obtained by profuse use of certain novel,

exotic, and sickly forms of vegetation ; and was allowed to have a certain degree of influence, always unfortunate, in the detailed management of much more important works. Meaning no disrespect to it, holding it in admiration in its proper place, I should say that it bears a relation to natural landscape-gardening, like that which the Swiss peasants of Mrs. Leo Hunter's costume lawn-party bear to the healthy cow-girls of Alpine pastures. As a fashion, it has had its run in Europe ; and of those who have taken and carried it on as a fashion, and the results they have obtained, it is M. André himself who gives his opinion thus : " They did not see that this new art was in great part conventional." Then, after describing the misapplication of it upon works of larger scale, and in connection with genuine rural conditions, he continues, " Under the false pretext that lawns, trees, waters, and flowers are always pleasant, they have substituted for the old geometrical garden a still more artificial style. The former, at least, avowed its aim to show the hand of man, and master nature. The latter borrows the elements of nature, and, under pretence of imitating it, makes it play a ridiculous — I was going to say an effeminate — part." " It is not this — we say it emphatically — it is not this that constitutes landscape art. If art seeks means of action in nature, it is in order to turn them to account in a simple and noble way." (*L'Art des Jardins*, chap. V.)

The best that can be claimed for the new design of the Central Park is, that it is in part an attempt to reclothe its rocky frame with second-hand garments of the fashion thus truthfully characterized by the master to whose ability the fashion itself is a tribute of ignorant reverence.

Further, I will not attempt to characterize it, certainly not to criticise it ; but I will ask any who have been induced to suppose there is a real landscape purpose in it to reflect in what respect such conception as they have been led to form of it differs in its ideals of landscape from such as might be appropriately adopted on a site like that of Union Square, and then to ask themselves whether the ends and motives suitable to the area and topography of the one city property are probably at all such as should be had in view in business with the other ;

whether, with no intrinsically different purpose, it is justifiable — pardonable — to close from all ordinary use, from all commercial occupation, for all the future of the city, a hundred and fifty ordinary blocks, with the avenues and streets between them, in one continuous body, and that at the point where it will cause the most inconvenience, — the very centre of the city that is to be? Could a theory of the use and value of the Park be propounded better adapted to open it continually to schemes of subdivision, intrigues of “real-estate sharps,” and to all manner of official corruption?

Can Commissioner Wales be right in basing his opposition to it on the ground that this means only indecision of purpose? Is not what he calls “no definite purpose” as distinctly a default of trust as a purposeless leaving-open the vaults and the outer doors of a bank? What is “no definite purpose” under such circumstances? What would be thought of a jury that would acquit the cashier or night-porter responsible for it?

I will further ask those who may suppose that the plan of the Park needs such general revision as is now promised, in the interest of what is called “utility,” if they suppose that the only utility which can be held to excuse the attempt to form a park of such dimensions, on such ground, in such a situation, has heretofore been wholly disregarded in its design?

Yet another question for these gentlemen to put to themselves. If a direct cut is to be offered between every two points where a manifest utility is to be served by permitting it, fifteen millions more may easily be spent to accomplish the result, and in the end the Park will have been obliterated. A dozen projects have already been urged for opening additional roads through the Park, and more than that for entrances and walks through parts of it. There is not one of them, which, if the process of cutting up the Park could stop with it, would not, for the time being, tell to the advantage of somebody's real estate. But how will it be in the end, if the bars are once taken down?

Are there any who suppose that those are sincere who seek to create an impression that considerations of public utility and convenience in this respect had no weight in the old design of

the Park? If so, I would ask them simply to recall the fact that that design had for its starting-point the necessity of provisions for carrying the ordinary traffic of the city across it in such a manner as not to interfere with its recreative use; that it was the only one of more than thirty plans submitted by different persons and associations in which this necessity had been so much as thought of; and that the chief opposition to the accepted design rested on the assertion that such provision was unnecessary, and, in the manner proposed to be used, absurdly impracticable. It has now been in use twenty years precisely as proposed; and not one of the objections said to have been made to it by "eminent engineers" has been heard of in all that time.

Are those who used this forecast likely to have been otherwise indifferent to motives of utility?

A very different objection to this arrangement will soon appear, if the aims lately announced in behalf of the Park Board are sustained, and if the work now said to be in energetic progress shall be long pursued. By a most careful disposition of plantations and underwood the sub-roads have been so obscured (as have with equal care most of the more finished architectural structures originally so disconcertingly conspicuous), that they make no impression upon those passing through it. I have known visitors to make the tour of the Park several times without being aware of their existence. How will it be when "a free circulation of air and light" beneath every bush and brooding conifer has been secured; when the way of the lawn-mower has at all points been made plain, and the face of nature shall everywhere have become as natty as a new silk hat?

X.

BUT one poor apology can be contrived for the course the Commissioners have been following. That apology they have not as yet put forward, — those responsible for recent barbarities have not yet begun to think of apologizing, — but attempts to supply a base for it have been often seen; and some of the younger generation may have been led to suppose them to have substance. They are of precisely the same character, and they have the same origin, and the same motives and purposes, with those I have already cleared up in respect to Mr. Vaux and myself; and to assist the truth, a slight repetition of what I believe to be the facts may be necessary.

In 1857, twenty-five years ago, eleven citizens of New York were asked to take upon themselves, as a Board of Commissioners for the purpose, the extraordinary and gravely difficult duty of preparing for the transformation of a broken, rocky, sterile, and intractable body of land, more than a mile square in extent, into a public ground, to stand in the heart of a great commercial city. The project was without precedent, and remains without parallel. There were political motives in the determination of the arrangement, and governing the choice of the Commissioners selected. Among them, most prominent, was the desire of the leaders of the Republican party to reconcile the Democratic party, largely in majority in the city, to a relinquishment of the spoils of office in the proposed work. For this purpose they provided that no one of the Commissioners should, under any pretext, be entitled to pecuniary compensation for his services. They selected for Commissioners several men unknown in politics, but of high standing in liberal,

benevolent, and unpartisan patriotic movements ; others, who, if known in politics, were unknown as office-seekers, or, as the term is commonly used, as politicians. In a Board of eleven the Republicans were supposed to have a majority of one ; but the first President elected was a Democrat ; and seldom if ever (I remember not one case) from the first, in any important matter, did a division occur on party lines. When, near the first city election after the organization, an attempt was made to obtain a party advantage on the work, under orders given by one of the Commissioners, I as superintendent at once arrested it, suspended the foreman, who had acted upon the order, and was sustained in doing so by the vote of every other Republican in the Board.

It was obvious that such a ground as has been described, of very broken topography ; rocky, sterile and intractable, in the situation contemplated ; to be enclosed by a compact busy city, would, under any possible treatment, entail many and great public inconveniences, and that it could only be kept in suitable order at constant great expense. Whatever its treatment, it was to be anticipated that the land would in time come to have enormous value for purposes other than those to be at first had in view, and that crafty attempts would be made to obtain advantages from it for various selfish ends. It was plain that varied and competing purposes and interests, tastes and dispositions, would be concerned in its management ; and that there would always be those, who, however it might be managed, would believe that it should have been very differently treated, and that certain elements of value should have been more amply or less lavishly provided.

From considerations such as these, it followed that the foremost, paramount, and sternest duty of the Commissioners was to be cautious in determining the ends and motives with reference to which the ground should be laid out and treated ; to act only upon the most thorough study, and under the most carefully digested advice attainable.

That this duty was recognized, accepted, and deliberately and laboriously met, is a matter of plain, circumstantial, and irrefutable record. This record will also show that different theo-

ries of what the circumstances would call for, different opinions, ideals, tastes, and dispositions, were given patient consideration; that views widely different from those finally adopted were ably and warmly represented in the Commission itself; and that the problem had prolonged, earnest, and elaborate discussion.

It is to be added, in view of the very different way in which the undertaking to reverse, as far as practicable, the results of this deliberation, has come to the knowledge of the public, that no body of men charged with a like public trust has ever taken more pains to invite and give opportunity for general public discussion of what it was debating, and review of what it determined; and that discussion and review were prolonged and earnest. There were great differences of opinion; but, in the judgment of those responsible, public opinion steadily moved to a more and more intelligent acceptance of the conclusions adopted in the earlier management, as wisely foresighted.

The Commissioners entered upon their duty under a cloud of jealousy and distrust, and every device of what in city politics passes for statesmanship was employed to keep them there. There were desperate men using desperate means for the purpose; there were misled honest and worthy men who labored to the same end. Nevertheless, as public discussion proceeded, the Commission steadily advanced into the sunshine of public confidence, gained the good will of the more respectable of all parties; and from that day to this no man or party has appealed fairly to public opinion against their conclusions with any degree of success.

There have been strong alliances and combinations to do so. A most energetic attempt was made, as I have before said, in 1871; but it met with decided popular reprobation, and those responsible for it retreated in very bad order, two of them going abroad to escape criminal prosecution.

Essentially, the work now being energetically pushed in the Central Park is a revival of that then defeated: it has the same avowed objects; it has the same obscured ends; it is supported by the same sophistries; it calls for a like popular rebuke.

XI.

Is the honest and business-like management of the city's park business to be always "embarrassed," as it has hitherto always been, and must a dead stop and reversion of its true course be come to every ten years, in the future as in the past? If not, how is it to be avoided?

His Honor the mayor has given the more important part of the answer in his message to the aldermen on the occasion of the assassination of President Garfield.

Beyond that, possibly the time may come when the management of the parks may be overlooked, and their business audited by a body of men, among whom there shall be representatives of those to whom the wholesome charm of simple natural scenery has been, as with most of the members of the National Academy of Design, for example, a matter of business-like study, and to whom the permanent reconciliation of a certain practicable degree of such charm, with the necessary conveniences of rest and movement of a vast multitude of people of all classes of the population of a great city, would not be felt a contemptible matter, even in comparison with the immediate practical requirements, from day to day, of republican government.

I cannot see, though it is so apparent to some true friends of the Park, what is to be gained of permanent value by saying to any one man, "Go work your sweet will there, till we find that we have had enough of you;" taking no security, making no official provision for watching, against that man's personal hobbies and freaks, ambitions and weaknesses. The concentration of executive functions in one man's hands is of too obvious advantage to ever need debate; but beyond and above this, in my judgment, it would be far better to return to something like

the original arrangement, in which all questions of general administration, or of sub-legislation for the Park, and especially all determinations affecting its general design, ends, and aims, should be subject to review, discussion, and at least to veto, by an unpaid board of citizens, so large, and of such established reputation because of interest otherwise evinced in affairs allied to those of the proper business of the Park, that there could be some rational confidence that they would exercise conservative control. The labor of such a board need not be great, — a quarterly meeting would probably be sufficient for the auditing of accounts, the passing upon projects, and a review of operations upon previously prepared official reports. An annual report to the mayor would present the entire business satisfactorily to the public.

POSTSCRIPT.

This pamphlet had been so far written, and in part printed, before I knew that a practical proposition had been prepared — the first of the present session, and introduced in the form of a bill before the Legislature had organized — to amend the city charter in such a way as to provide for the abolition of the Park Board, and the substitution for it of a Superintendent, responsible directly to the mayor. Assuming, as I must, from the favor with which it is instantly received by friends of the Park, that there are no private, or party, or local interests moving the proposition; that there is no understanding as to who the superintendent is to be, whom he is to appoint, and what work he is to prosecute, — I can only recur to what I was just saying. If the man shall be qualified by the special study and training required for his duty, and shall have given proofs of it, and shall take up his duty with an earnest and serious purpose, he cannot but desire the moral weight which would be gained by such an arrangement as I have above been suggesting.

Considerations against the plan as I have seen it set forth are these: —

The results to which good management of the Park will be

directed are not to be brought about quickly, by strokes, but gradually, by courses extending through several years. Good courses, consequently, require time for their vindication. A man cannot reasonably hope to be allowed to steadily pursue any courses looking solely to good results in the Park. He will be constantly pressed with advice from men who are neither competent nor disposed to give sound advice with reference to results of such limited scope, — men who will be not at all accountable for his failure to reach vindicating results; men who will never be known to the public to have had any thing to do with the matter; men who, nevertheless, will make a business, if he fails to be ruled by their advice, of obstructing his way upon any desirable course, and who, by one shameful means or another, will so accumulate embarrassments for him, that he will be fortunate if he succeeds in escaping a mortifying and apparently disgraceful failure.

Again: with whatever confidence we may look to the present mayor's intentions and shrewdness, it is not to be forgotten that no arrangement for the guardianship of the park property could be more tempting to a sly, smooth, and double-faced schemer, than that proposed; and that such an one, unscrupulous in making bargains for the purpose, ready to resort to falsehood and all manner of vile intrigues, would have unlimited advantages in contending with an honest man.

To come to a point, no well-matured scheme for the government of Central Park will fail to recognize that it is an essentially different form of city property, — on the one hand, from ordinary urban squares and places; on the other, from the great suburban parks of other cities, — nor will it fail to embody features nearly equivalent to the following: —

First, A definition of the trust, giving some fixed idea of what may and what may not be legally aimed at in its management.

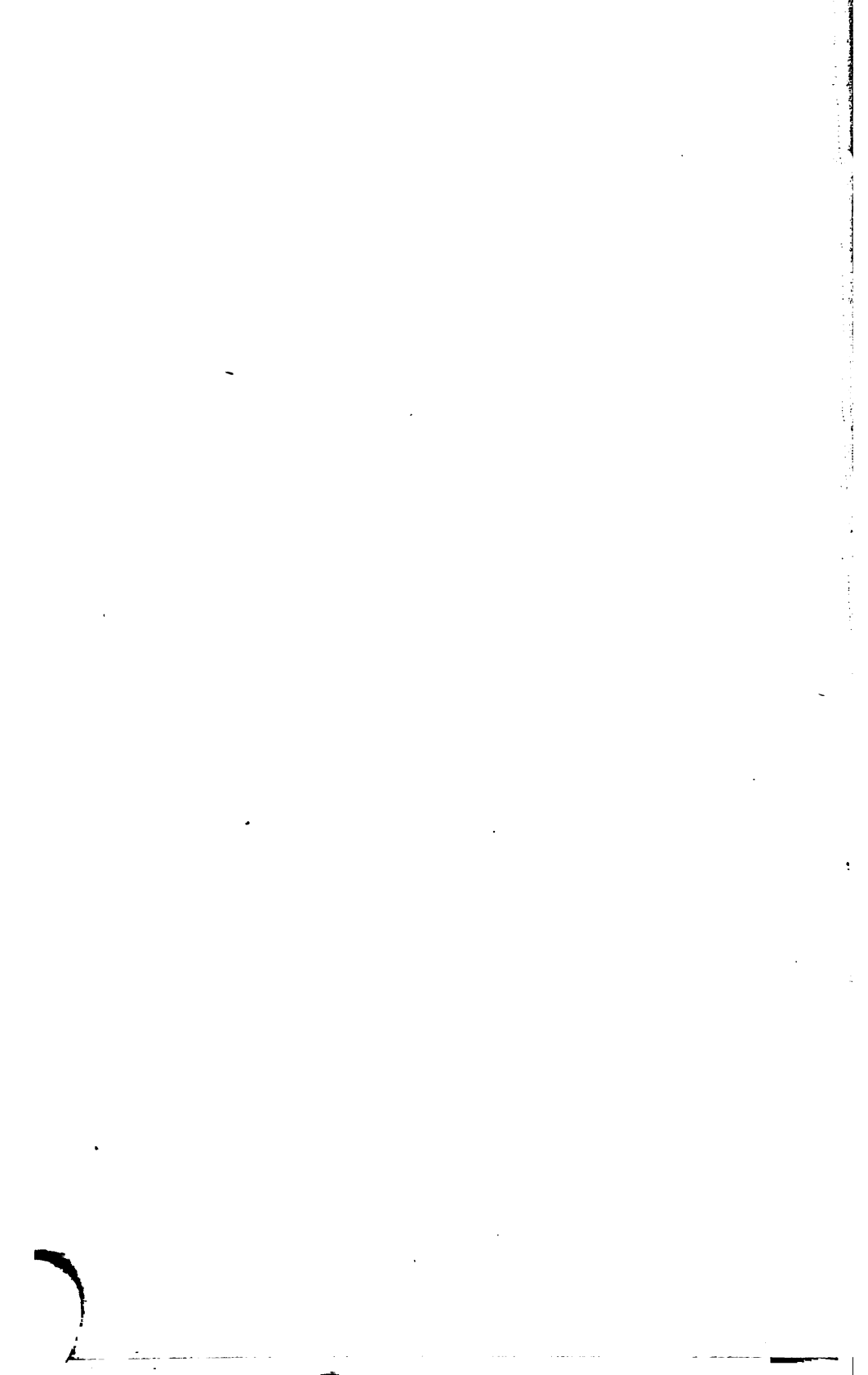
Second, Provision for a board of directors with the ordinary duties of a commercial board of directors, in which board there

will be, by some *ex-officio* appointment, representatives of the art of landscape-painting, of standing previously fixed by their fellow-artists.

Third, Provision for an executive office, with the executive duties of which the directors will be restrained from interfering.

Fourth, Provision for a professional adviser, qualified by study and practice in the art of landscape-gardening, with such prescribed duties and rights as will make him responsible for an intelligent and consistent pursuit of the main landscape-design of the Park ; this office to be combined, or not, as may be found best by the directors, with the executive office.

Fifth, All such provision as legislators will think practicable for restraining, with reference to the park-service, that form of tyranny known as advice or influence, and that form of bribery known as patronage.









3 2044 103

