

PUBLIC PARKS.

Next to public baths, public parks may justly be deemed the most important material blessings to the people of a large city. Their sanitary influences have been the theme of laudatory comment on the part of men eminently fitted to instruct their fellow beings, but this feature is not the only one which commends them to popular favor. They produce very charming moral effects, especially upon the young, who insensibly acquire a love for nature and are imperceptibly weaned from the frivolities and allurements of a purely metropolitan existence. In addition, public parks have imparted somewhat of celebrity to the communities which have been wise enough to make provision for them on a scale proportioned to the wealth, population, and prospective growth of the place. Hyde Park, although containing but 400 acres, enjoys a celebrity little inferior to but inseparable from that of London. The Champs Elysées, the Place de Concorde and the Bois de Boulogne of Paris, are of a world wide celebrity, intimately connected with that of the gay capital itself. Boston Common has ever been one of the attractions boasted by the Athens of America, while the Central Park of New York is justly considered a prominent source of pride, pleasure, health and profit to the people of that great metropolis. It was a wise policy—instigated by the press of San Francisco—which culminated in providing for spacious and attractive public parks for the Queen of the Pacific at an early day, when the value of land is comparatively small, and the city in its youth. The reputation of these valuable belongings must necessarily add to that of the metropolis, as indicating refinement, intelligence, and public spirit, while imparting health, innocent recreation, good moral influences, and augmenting the value of property. The Legislature of 1870 passed an act providing for public parks in San Francisco, and this movement was speedily followed by the appointment of commissioners to carry out the object. The city was authorized to issue bonds to the extent of \$225,000, bearing interest at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum, the interest to be paid semi-annually, and the principal at the expiration of fifty years; but no bonds to be issued at less than par. Thus far but \$75,000 of these bonds have been taken, and work has necessarily been delayed to a considerable extent, although the progress made is exceedingly satisfactory. Up to January 8th, 1872, a little over \$42,000 had been expended, leaving on hand a cash balance of more than \$33,000. The Golden Gate Park, as this grand enclosure has been felicitously named, contains 1,013 acres, eligibly located between the ocean beach and the northwestern suburbs of the city, and possessing all the requisites of hills, vales, lakes and arable lands to render it a delightful resort as well as a picturesque ornament. It will be intersected by a fine macadamized avenue, affording a drive of four and a half miles in length. It is nearly one mile wide, has two miles of secluded roadways, mainly for equestrians, seven miles of broad, open walks, three and a half miles of narrower and more retired rambling pathways, besides three handsome lakelets, a dressed lawn of 30 acres, a flower garden and conservatory of 15 acres, a base ball and cricket ground of 20 acres, a botanical garden of 12 acres; together with extensive grounds of a park-like description, play-grounds for children, and thickly wooded tracts intersected with a maze of walks and shaded avenues. Much progress has already been made in setting out trees and shrubbery. Over ten thousand trees of different varieties have been contracted for and will soon be adding their charms to this noble place of public resort. Among some in the nursery are fine specimens of the Monterey Cypress, Lawson Cypress, Ordinary Monterey Pine, Seaside Pine, fifteen varieties of the Eucalyptus, (Australian Gum) Cork Bark Elms, Black Walnut, Lombardy Poplar, Locusts, White Mulberry, and Maples. Great judgment and good taste have been exercised in selecting the trees for this Park—one half being deciduous, and the other for ornamental purposes. It is proposed to complete the following during the present year: The dressed ground or lawn, flower garden, conservatory, manor house, croquet or children's play grounds, plateau, or carriage concourse, botanical garden, lakes, meadow, parade, cricket or base ball ground, strawberry hill, bridges, fountains, traffic road and walks. A bill is now pending before the Legislature of the State, for the issuance of seven per cent. bonds to the amount of five hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This sum will afford the Commissioners ample funds for the prosecution and completion of this most necessary public improvement. The Board of Commissioners is now constituted as follows: Eugene L. Sullivan, Gen. B. F. Alexander, and C. T. MacDermott. In addition to the Golden Gate, there will be the Buena Vista Park, containing 36 acres, and the Mountain Lake Park, of 20 acres, each of which will be laid out so as to render it an object of attraction. It is not a vain boast to assert that at no distant day San Francisco will possess superb public parks equal to those of the largest and most ambitious American cities, with the single exception of New York; and, as has already been remarked, only second in importance to a system of well conducted public baths.

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