

a being blessed equally with modesty and worth, might be unduly elated by an adulative affection so extreme. But the cat, possessing always the calm dignity of a lofty nature, uniformly can be counted upon to rise superior to every provocation of a weak self-complacency; there being, indeed, in the whole range of animated nature — above, at least, the order of the mollusca — no creature less susceptible to the flattery of man.

What these much-to-be-felicitated cats assuredly are learning, however, is a friendly faith in humanity; and what Madame Ronner assuredly is teaching — both in her tender dealings with them, and by her sympathetic painting of them — is the doctrine which dropped out of fashion when Arcady was lost: that all creatures animate should cherish toward each other a perfect love.

VII.

AT the root of every creed that ever was — unless it may be those of some barbarous peoples whose hazy bodings cannot be called creeds at all — lies the hope that man's fallen nature may be so raised again, and that the severing lines between the lives of all the creatures dwelling on this earth together may

be so blotted out, that universal friendliness shall come back to us and with it the vanished warmth and radiance of the Golden Age. To the realization of this ideal are devoted the best energies of humanity; not always directly; not always even quite consciously — yet always surely: since all that makes for tenderness and kindness in the world marks an appreciable advance toward the compassing of this happy end.

Few of us can hope to accomplish in the good work even the thousandth part of what has been accomplished by Madame Ronner — whose artistic genius and whose love for her gentle theme has enabled her, while so faithfully reproducing the little cat bodies, to bring very close to human fellowship the little cat souls. But it is a happy fact that even the least of us — drawing closer, as did the blessed Saint Francis of Assisi, to our brethren the beasts and the fishes and the birds — may in some measure forestall the millennium in our own lives. And also is it true, that in so doing we may at the same time hasten by a fractional part the revival universal of the gracious epocha when man and the so-called lower orders of animals once more shall be on terms of cordial fellowship; when, most joyous of all the joyous sights of that reunion, Homo and Felis shall stand friendly together, hand clasping paw.

Thomas A. Janvier.

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED.



IN answer to a question asked not long ago, Mr. Olmsted said: "The most interesting general fact of my life seems to me to be that it was not as a gardener, a florist, a botanist, or one in any way specially interested in plants and flowers, or specially susceptible to their beauty, that I was drawn to my work. The root of all my work has been an early respect for and enjoyment of scenery, and extraordinary opportunities for cultivating susceptibility to its power. I mean not so much grand or sensational scenery as scenery of a more domestic order—scenery which is to be looked upon contemplatively, and is productive of musing moods." It will be well to keep these words in mind in following the thread of a life which has been so rich in the ability to create landscape beauty and so useful in the devotion of this ability to the service of our people.

Frederick Law Olmsted was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on April 27, 1822. He came of the best possible stock — of an English

middle-class family, first settled at Plymouth, which had been among those to cross the wilderness and establish a new colony by the Connecticut River. There were deacons, of course, and other quiet home-keeping citizens in all its generations; but an adventurous strain was not lacking in the Olmsted blood. Our artist's greatuncles were seamen, one dying on a British prison-ship, another living through strange privateering experiences, and another, a very successful shipmaster in the China trade, ending his life as a rich and cultivated citizen of Hartford. His grandfather was likewise a shipmaster, but a less successful one. His father, after receiving little more than a common-school education, was in early life a "dry-goods" merchant in Hartford. A shy and reserved man, we are told, and not a scholar, he was yet a great reader, and a man of distinctively rural tastes, having a small farm near the town, in which he took constant interest, riding and driving a great deal, and often taking his little boy with him on a pillow on his saddle-bow.

Mr. Olmsted's mother — Charlotte Hull, a relative of Commodore Hull — had died when

he was three years old; but his father soon married again, and a woman with tastes similar to his own. Their chief recreations were long summer journeys to the sea-shore or through the inland country. When the boy was six years old he was taken to Niagara, and another year to the Wadsworth homestead in the beautiful, park-like Genesee Valley. After his eighth year he lived in the country in clergymen's families; but his vacations coincided with his parent's summer journeys. In a two-horse wagon the whole family would drive slowly through various parts of New England, stopping to lunch in some pretty spot, sleeping at convenient rural inns—living with Nature, contemplating, absorbing, and appreciating her as people seldom can in these rushing railroad days. Often appropriate books, drawn from the Hartford library, would be read aloud at the noon resting-hour—Dwight's or Silliman's travels, for example. Thus (and Mr. Olmsted himself cannot now lay too much explanatory stress upon the fact) from his very earliest youth the future landscape-gardener was brought up amid rural influences, and all unconsciously was imbibing a love for natural beauty from people who did not speak of it by such a term—who, indeed, rarely spoke of it at all, but felt it, and indulged it as simply and constantly as their desire to breathe.

And the boy's own impulses led to a deepening of the impressions thus received. He was instinctively, persistently a rambler, spending all the time he could in long, solitary walks, when he forgot why he carried rod or gun, and was never tempted into any scientific study, but gave himself up to the silent influence of wood and field, hillside, brook, and cloud. Zimmerman "On Solitude," he says, was the first book which led him to any conscious thinking about natural beauty, although, when he read Gilpin and Price in later years, they vaguely came back to him as chance acquaintances of his childhood.

When he was about fourteen a severe case of ivy-poisoning injured his eyesight. The physician forbade him to attend school or to read, and here was a fine excuse for the still wider indulgence of his rambling, contemplating propensities. While still forbidden to use his eyes much, he was sent as a pupil to a clergyman who had formerly been a civil engineer, and with him remained two years, at Andover and in Collinsville, Connecticut. He now studied a very little engineering, amused himself much with a sort of "play-practice" in laying out imaginary towns, but spent most of his time, as before, in wandering afield, strengthening his love for natural beauty, unconsciously storing his memory with countless impressions of characteristic New England

scenes. He boated, of course, on the Connecticut, and he now believes that this river-meadow scenery influenced his mature taste more forcibly than anything else. The family practice of summer journeyings was still kept up, and now the lad gradually learned to notice (still half unconsciously) why towns are founded in certain spots, how villages develop, and other facts pregnant with the seeds of future usefulness.

The idea of an engineer's life for him was soon abandoned. Placed at sixteen in a large importing-house in New York, he could not compel himself to commercial life for more than two years. Then the adventurous drop in his blood asserted itself; like his forefathers he went to sea, and a year was spent before the mast in great hardship and repeated illnesses. He came home with his health impaired, but bringing memories of many hours when he had indulged his dreaming, contemplative spirit, and of scant, exciting glimpses of tropical scenery caught in Chinese ports.

A farmer's life was then decided upon; and after two years' training on the lands of others, two winters' partial experience of college life as a special student in the scientific classes at Yale, and a year spent on a farm of his own near New Haven, he purchased a larger farm on the southern side of Staten Island; and this for a number of years was his home. Interested and capable as a farmer, and active in all local public enterprises, his life was further enlarged by the frequent visits of his younger brother, John, then a medical student in New York, and of his brother's friends. Chief among these was Charles Loring Brace, already a budding philanthropist. The friendship of Andrew J. Downing, the well-known landscape-gardener, was also gained at this time, and, while visiting him at his home in Newburg, Mr. Olmsted made the acquaintance of a young English architect, Mr. Calvert Vaux, who was then Downing's partner, and afterward was long and closely associated with himself.

In 1851 the two brothers and Mr. Brace made a pedestrian tour through England, and a short Continental trip. The record of this summer we have in Mr. Olmsted's "Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England." No more instructive or charming book on rural England has been written, and it throws valuable light upon the writer's personality, proving the genuineness of his love for Nature and simple forms of life, and the keenness of his perceptive faculties. Here and there is a passage of double interest in the light of later facts: a description of the new Birkenhead parks, for instance, which shows that such things were appraised from an intelligent point of view, not carelessly enjoyed as they are by most non-

professional tourists; and again, this little preface to the account of Eaton Park:

What artist so noble, has often been my thought, as he who, with far-reaching conception of beauty and with designing power, sketches the outline, 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?

After this journey, life on the farm was resumed and the book was written. A year or two later came the Fillmore election, with its fierce slavery discussions. Mr. Brace was something of an abolitionist; Mr. Olmsted was not, and he felt that the condition of things in the slaveholding States had never been painted impartially. From their conversations resulted Mr. Olmsted's decision to spend the winter traveling through the South, and to report his observations in the pages of "The New-York Times." The following year his brother married Miss Mary Perkins, whose grandfather, a prominent New York physician, was a neighbor on Staten Island and a close friend; and some time later Mr. John Olmsted's failing health brought him and his family to live at the farm; and then, in the belief that change of air and outdoor life would profit the invalid, the brothers determined to spend the winter on horseback, starting from Texas and making their way to California. Indian outbreaks changed their plans, however, and a southward course through Texas was taken, with an excursion over the Mexican border. When Mississippi was reached again in the spring, the younger brother returned to the farm, while Mr. Olmsted, desiring to make a book of his "Times" letters, and believing that he should first know the slave States better, took to his saddle once more, and, accompanied only by a plucky dog, made his way slowly northward to Richmond, Virginia.

Three books resulted from these journeys¹—two written by Mr. Olmsted's own hand, the one on Texas put into shape by his brother from his notes. Their picture of the rural communities of the South just before the war has great historical value; but their incidental autobiographical value should not be overlooked. They show that, despite the day-dreaming of his boyhood, Mr. Olmsted was an eminently practical person; and no one needs to be practical more than the landscape-gardener. They prove great breadth and strength of human sympathy, and this trait must afterward have inspired him to work enthusiastically and lovingly upon his pleasure-grounds

for the poor of our great cities. They are marked by a simplicity, a lack of self-consciousness, which, although the Philistine may not think so, almost always characterizes a true artist. Even more than the "Walks and Talks" they reveal a power of perception keen and catholic enough to excite the envy of a professional reporter; and this faculty is, of course, a needful part of an artist's equipment.

Except from the strictly agricultural standpoint, very little is said about natural scenes in these three books. Yet one hardly needs to hear Mr. Olmsted talk about his Southern journeys to feel that, like his boyish wanderings, like his saunters among English parks and meadows, they helped his artistic development. Camping out of doors daily for many months, always at noontime and in Texas at night as well, he not only made intimate acquaintance with many new phases of natural beauty, but gained practical experience with regard to sites, soils, exposures, prospects—with regard to problems which must always be studied when human habitations are to be founded, or pleasure-grounds or estates laid out.

After his return to the North, Mr. Olmsted gave up his farm to his brother, connected himself as editor with "Putnam's Magazine," and gradually engaged in an allied publishing business. Obligated by this business to go to London, he remained there for half a year, after taking a leisurely little journey through Italy with his sisters, seeing and learning, once more, much that was of future use to him. Difficulties in the New York publishing-house then called him home; and in the year 1856, through no fault of his own, he found himself out of occupation. It was a chance meeting at a little watering-place near New Haven, whither he had gone for quiet with a pile of proof-sheets, that then brought about his connection with the newly begun Central Park, and led eventually to a landscape-gardener's career.

A member of the Board of Park Commissioners happened to be Mr. Olmsted's neighbor at table, and told him that they were looking for a superintendent to take practical direction of the work then being done in accordance with a plan prepared by Captain (afterward General) Vielé, who, as engineer, was in chief control of the park. When asked what kind of man was needed, the commissioner replied, "A man like you—one with your agricultural knowledge and your other experience"—referring to Mr. Olmsted's long-cultivated love for nature and to that acquaintance with European parks which was then very rare among Americans. Assured that he spoke in earnest, Mr. Olmsted returned that night to New York, obtained the

¹ "A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States," "A Journey Through Texas," and "A Journey Through the Back Country."

requisite letters of introduction, and, after some disagreeable experiences, was appointed superintendent.

If these experiences, and others of a like character which persisted and, indeed, grew worse during the whole of Mr. Olmsted's connection with the Central Park, could be recounted, they would make a picturesque bit of biography, and a very instructive one to students of our New York methods of conducting municipal affairs. But I can only explain that while as an artist he was not seriously troubled, and managed to carry out his designs in his own way, practically his path was always filled with rocks and thorns, and at times was almost blocked. In doing public work of any sort no man was ever more grievously hampered by political jealousies, great and small, and the pulling of overhead and underground political wires. In his dealings with certain high-placed officials, as in his management of his humblest workmen, there was never a moment when his hands were unfettered, his mind at leisure for its artistic tasks, his spirit untried by a myriad illegitimate vexations. Nevertheless, by hard personal work, beginning at dawn, after a journey on horseback from his home in Grand street, the new superintendent very quickly made his energy, honesty, and capability felt.

After a few months, work in accordance with General Vielé's plan was stopped, and Mr. Olmsted was given absolute control of the laborers, who, in accordance with his advice, were employed in such preparatory tasks as breaking up stone for roads, and building a low wall around the park borders. Then it was decided to abandon the old plan and to advertise for new ones. At first Mr. Olmsted had no idea of entering the competition; but he was asked by Mr. Vaux to collaborate with him in the preparation of a plan; and being urged by some of the commissioners, and personally ascertaining that his former chief would not resent such action, he accepted the proposal.

The main ideas for the scheme then worked out by the two young men were Mr. Olmsted's, including the one which probably did more than anything else to determine its success—the idea of conducting traffic across the park by means of sunken transverse roads. But Mr. Vaux's part in the task was equally essential. His architectural training fitted him not only to do the actual work of draftsmanship, and to design all structural features, but also to veto, correct, modify, or elaborate the expedients and features proposed by his companion. Together they had all the knowledge and ability required; but alone, Mr. Olmsted is always anxious to explain, he could at that time have done nothing to good purpose. Working al-

most altogether at night, but reviewing their result on the ground by day, the collaborators barely got their drawings done in time. Thirty-two other sets were presented; all were publicly exhibited and excited much interest; and—of course in the face of some opposition—the plan of Messrs. Olmsted and Vaux was accepted, and they were put in control of its execution, Mr. Olmsted with the title of architect-in-chief and Mr. Vaux as his associate.

The trials and veritable persecutions, more than the normal labors, which then followed, so worked upon Mr. Olmsted in body and mind that in the spring of 1859 he was prostrated by typhoid fever, and, recovering, was ordered to go abroad. He spent the summer chiefly in England, making a very useful tour, completed by a visit to Paris, where Alphand, who was then altering the Bois de Boulogne and creating the new boulevards, showed his young American *confrère* much professional kindness.

On his return to America, Mr. Olmsted married his brother's widow, who, with her three children, had been under his care since his brother's death at Nice eighteen months before; and the new household was soon established in a brick house near the old Convent of the Sacred Heart within the park, while Mr. Vaux lived close at hand in the priest's former dwelling.

Persistently recasting and retouching their design, consolidating their corps of young engineers and gardeners, managing the thousands of workmen who were often rendered insubordinate by the consciousness of political "pulls," and fighting the politicians themselves, the two artists led a life that was no easier than before. It was a perpetual struggle to obtain the money legally at their disposal, while their steps were incessantly dogged by men in search of employment—men often wholly unfit for service, but armed with insistent letters from one "boss" or another. The extent of this latter annoyance may be read in the fact that it was only in moonlight hours that they could walk about the park, to consider what had just been done, and to decide what should next be undertaken. Moreover, a runaway horse, a heavy fall, and a badly broken thigh soon put Mr. Olmsted on his back again. For months he directed the park work from his bed; then he was carried about to superintend it on a litter; for a long time afterward he walked on crutches, and ever since he has been slightly lame.

Yet, in spite of everything, his force of workmen, numbering at last nearly four thousand, practically completed in about four years the great work of making a park of some 800 acres on a singularly unfavorable site. To accomplish this meant not only high artistic

power, but indefatigable energy and much organizing, executive ability. In every energetic man there is a fine leaven of combativeness, and the unrighteous obstacles perpetually piled in Mr. Olmsted's path aroused this spirit to righteous intensity. While fighting his own artistic battle he felt that he was fighting, too, the battle for better municipal conditions; and any one who knew him at the time will testify that he threw himself into his park work much as our young soldiers, just then, were throwing themselves into martial combats. Doubtless it was a general recognition of this power of absorbed devotion, as well as of his executive ability, which led Dr. Bellows, the president of the newly formed Sanitary Commission, to ask him to become its secretary—that is, its practical manager. Aware that there was little more work which could then be done on the park, and glad to escape from a life open to the persecutions of local politicians into the service of a nation in distress, Mr. Olmsted accepted the offer, and removed to Washington. He was still on crutches at the time. His work during the next two years was very laborious, the servants coming to set the breakfast-table often finding him still at his night-long tasks; and his health again broke down beneath the strain. But the results of these two years form a bright feature in the history of the war which our people will not forget. I think it may be told that, while his salary had been fixed at \$4000, he felt that for doing patriotic service he should accept as little pay as possible, and drew only some \$2000 a year.

After severing his connection with the Sanitary Commission, Mr. Olmsted was for two years in California, trying to bring order out of disorder in the affairs of the great Frémont estate at Mariposa, but spending much time in the Yosemite Valley, in an official capacity, and doing much to make the nation understand the national value of this wonderful region. Then he returned to New York,—making an adventurous journey with his family by way of the Nicaragua route,—and formed a partnership with Mr. Vaux; and since that time, during a period of more than twenty-five years, he has steadily devoted himself to the practice of his art.

In 1879 he made another journey to Europe, and, returning in poor health, settled himself at Cambridge, Massachusetts, for a summer of outdoor recreation. The Boston Park Commission had been organized six or eight years before, and had then tentatively consulted Mr. Olmsted. Now it appealed to him again, and he was soon engaged to undertake the redemption of those half-submerged lands in the Back Bay district which he has transformed into a pleasure-ground of uniquely interesting character. This engagement made his residence near Bos-

ton desirable; and the presence at Brookline of Richardson, the architect, who had been his neighbor on Staten Island, led him thither. He found Brookline, he says, "the most civilized community in America" as regarded the management of municipal affairs; and there he permanently established his home and his office.

The works to which Mr. Olmsted has set his hand during the past twenty-five years have been very many; and they have been very varied, not only because of diversities in purpose, but because natural conditions, determining artistic conceptions and expedients, differ widely between Massachusetts and California, Montreal and North Carolina, and between seashore, mountain, and lowland sites. Since 1875 an office record of his chief undertakings has been kept. It mentions thirty-seven public pleasure-grounds; twelve suburban districts which have been laid out in preparation for the building of villas; the grounds of eleven public buildings and hospitals, thirteen colleges, four large schools, four railroad stations, and twelve considerable private estates; and also the names of some two hundred clients, to whom, in addition, Mr. Olmsted has given actual service or advice.

Some of the undertakings mentioned in this list have, of course, been much more important than others; some were fully carried out under Mr. Olmsted's direction, while in others his plans were not faithfully executed, and in most of them he has not worked alone. At first, as we know, Mr. Vaux was his partner; since 1875 his son, Mr. John C. Olmsted, has held this place; it is now held also by Mr. Charles Eliot, son of the president of Harvard University, and was held by Mr. Henry Sargent Codman for some time previous to his untimely death in 1892. But these three young men studied their profession in Mr. Olmsted's office, and were trained upon work which he had designed; and whatever deductions we can possibly make from the sum total of his own work, there remains a remarkable amount as the achievement of twenty-five years, and by a man whose health has not been robust.

It is difficult to name the most interesting among Mr. Olmsted's creations. From the artistic point of view, the largest do not deserve this distinction merely because of their size, or the most beautiful merely because of their beauty. A comparatively small piece of work, less perfect in its beauty than some others, may best prove a landscape-gardener's power, as having been wrought amid unusually hampering conditions—as being a blossom of art plucked from the nettle difficulty. Prospect Park, Brooklyn, for instance, may easily be thought more beautiful than Central Park; but to an eye which remembers what its site origi-

nally was, Central Park will always seem Mr. Olmsted's greatest achievement of the kind.

Again, Beacon Parkway in Boston (more often called the Back Bay Fens), to which I have already referred, may be less immediately impressive than certain pleasure-grounds of a normal sort; but it fills us with peculiar admiration when we realize the cause of its singularity—the need that wide sunken marshy tracts, alternately overflowed and left partly bare by tideswaters, should be so redeemed and beautified that they might appropriately be bridged by streets and surrounded with rows of city dwellings. Riverside Drive in New York, and the adjacent Morningside Park, are other instances of peculiar problems very successfully treated—instances which would be still more impressive had Mr. Olmsted's plans been faithfully carried out. Again, I may name the Arnold Arboretum, where the aim was to accommodate a scientific collection of trees and yet make a beautiful public pleasure-ground; and if I were as familiar with Mr. Olmsted's Western as with his Eastern work, I might add other examples of equal individuality.

But of one great Western example I hardly need to speak. Every American knows how beautiful are the Chicago World's Fair Grounds, how wholly the chance to make them beautiful has sprung from Mr. Olmsted's preliminary treatment, and how singularly novel, how boldly imaginative, as well as practical and skilful, this treatment has been. Every one who honors a great and conscientious, a public-spirited and widely useful, artist must be glad that Mr. Olmsted had this conspicuous opportunity to win his fellow-countrymen's praise; and every one who loves the art he practises must rejoice that, in thus distinguishing himself, he has lifted landscape-gardening to a higher place than it ever held before in the interest and respect of our public.

But in doing this he has merely carried on a great educational work which began with the creation of Central Park.

Thirty-five years ago there were no large public pleasure-grounds in America. No city possessed more than a few small squares, with, perhaps, a tract of common-land inherited from primitive days of public pasturage, carpet-beating, and musket practice. These seldom had anything of the beauty which Downing had conferred upon Lafayette Square in Washington; collectively they were quite inadequate to the needs of the day, much more inadequate to the evident needs of the future; and there was nothing in the suburbs to supplement them except the cemetery, while the way in which this was frequented by pleasure-seekers showed that something else was indeed required.

Even in Europe large pleasure-grounds,

public in the modern sense, were comparative novelties. They had been among the good results of that limiting of kingly prerogatives and that breaking down of aristocratic barriers with which our century opened, and which were repeated, more quietly but more effectually, in the revolutionary days of 1848. When city walls were destroyed, their sites were utilized for extensive boulevards and promenades, while royal and princely parks, gardens, hunting-preserves, and forests were thrown open to the people. Forty years ago some of these were still nearly in their old condition; others had been remodelled into greater efficiency, and new areas were being specially fitted for the public's use.

But when a few wise citizens determined to give New York a large park, few Americans realized the benefits of such places, and still fewer believed that they should be formed here after European patterns. Seeing the decorous, law-abiding, rule-respecting throngs which now fill Central Park of a Sunday afternoon in spring,—throngs much larger and of much more motley composition than were anticipated in the fifties,—it is amusing to know that, when the plan of Messrs. Olmsted and Vaux was accepted, some of our influential citizens cried: "Such a park is too aristocratic to be sanctioned in America, too artistic to be respected by the American populace. It would be an un-republican waste of money to make it, for only the rich would use it; or, if the poor used it, they would quickly destroy its beauty." One well-known architect declared in a newspaper letter that our people should have a rustic pleasure-ground, not an elegant park; that the thing to do was to fence in the area, introduce cows and geese, let them make the paths, and let the public enjoy the result with perfect freedom. And another prominent person said that the place should be turned into a forest,—planted preferably with Ontario poplars alone, as they grow very quickly,—and then given over to the unaided ministrations of Nature. I fancy that these gentlemen now realize they were mistaken; but their mistakes excellently explain the great responsibility which rested upon Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Vaux. Had their park been a failure, artistically or practically, the making of public parks in America would have been retarded during many years—during years each of which would have rendered the acquisition of suitable lands more difficult and costly. But their success was quickly achieved, was as triumphantly apparent on the side of utility as on the side of beauty, and was welcomed with pride and respect by all the people of New York. Indeed, the whole country soon learned to feel a pride in Central Park, and a respect for the ideas upon which its formation had been based; and the result shows to-

day in the scores of public parks possessed by American cities large and small.

Of course it is not yet a result with which we are satisfied. Hundreds of towns and villages still need to be impressed with the fact that they should secure public pleasure-grounds without another year's delay; and the people at large need to be awakened to the vital concern they have in the right management and quick enlargement of their magnificent possessions in the mountains of the East and the West. But who can compute how far behind even our present condition we might have been to-day had not an artist of Mr. Olmsted's force, intelligence, versatility, and public spirit been given us at just the most critical time? At no other time and in no other place, I think, could Mr. Olmsted have served the cause of art and the cause of humanity so well. And I may lay special stress upon his versatility—upon that originality in conception to which I have already referred. The works in which it most prominently appears have more than an intrinsic value. They have a widely instructive value as showing that there can hardly be a site upon which the hand of an artist may not confer serviceableness and charm; that, therefore, no city, whatever its natural resources, need despair of possessing a satisfactory pleasure-ground.

Serviceableness and charm—these are the two qualities which every work of landscape-art, like every work of architecture, should possess. But as problems vary, so too does the degree of attention which should be concentrated upon each of these qualities. When we wish to pass judgment upon any given piece of work, it is as needful to remember this fact as to remember the limiting, directing force of pre-existing natural conditions. And when we understand it clearly, we see that success in the art to-day proves higher ability than was demanded a hundred and fifty years ago. It is evident that it must be more difficult to create or preserve beauty in a park which is daily visited by many thousand people—passing on foot, on horseback, and in carriages, and demanding facilities for the sports of men and of children—than to do as much in a private estate of the same size. It is evident, too, that the greater the area, the greater the difficulty, if only because in a very large park a wise artist will strive for more distinctively rural effects than in a smaller one—for more of the broad charm of scenery as distinguished from the charm of successive landscape passages; and because character of this kind lends itself least readily to the incorporation of a multitude of useful artificial features. Mr. Olmsted's success in securing such character, even amid natural conditions as unfavorable as those offered by the site of Central Park, has

been very remarkable, but not more remarkable than his ability to secure the utmost practical efficiency in combination with it. His uniting of these qualities—utility and broad, simple, impressive landscape beauty—in so many discreetly varied ways, gives him, I think, an unrivaled position among the dead and living masters of his craft. Nor should it be forgotten that he had to teach himself how to do such work as this. I do not think that there are any large parks in Europe which offer such varied facilities for the refreshment and recreation of the great mass of the people as do the best of ours; and moreover, most of the European parks which at all resemble ours are—at least in their present estate—younger than Central Park.

Catholicity is another distinguishing mark of Mr. Olmsted's art. Despite his preponderant love for the naturalistic style in its broadest, simplest developments, he is quick to see when the formal, architectural style puts in a valid claim; and he realizes that even the most naturalistic landscape-work should not strive to appear actually natural, and should even incorporate distinctly formal elements when they are required for use or for the right explanation of art as art.

But neither catholicity of taste nor versatility in conception has led Mr. Olmsted into the great mistake of confusing radically different ideals. Formal elements may enter into a naturalistic scheme, freely treated elements into a formal scheme; gardenesque features may be furnished somewhere in a park; park-like vistas may open from a garden; or, indeed, a pleasure-ground may have a clearly confessed composite character. But whatever its character, there must be a clear confession of it. We should be left in no doubt as to the broad ideal which guided the artist, the general impression he tried to produce. This great fact Mr. Olmsted always remembers, and the public has learned from him at least some vague knowledge of the truth that not all pleasure-grounds should be designed on the same principles or judged by the same artistic canons. The confusion which still, however, prevails with regard to this matter is revealed by the lax use of all the terms involved, and especially of the word *park*, which has been so misused that we seldom remember it has any distinctive meaning at all. Mr. Olmsted knows, of course, that any lax use of terms tends to deepen the confusion from which it sprang; and he has steadily tried to teach artists, clients, and the public better verbal habits. For this reason—but by no means for this alone—his articles in various cyclopedias, and the many reports upon his works and explanations of his ideas with regard to proposed works which he

has written, should be sought out by all students of landscape-gardening. In short, he has not been merely a capable, diligent artist: he has been in all directions an apostle of his art, crying in a wilderness, truly, but not without finding some eager and intelligent disciples whose number, I am sure, will now rapidly increase. This fact, and not only his last pronounced triumph at Chicago, was fittingly recognized during the past summer when, on the same day, the universities of Harvard and Yale conferred upon him their highest honorary degrees.

I do not dare to dwell upon those more personal traits which have assisted Mr. Olmsted's high artistic gifts in establishing his influence. His friends understand and deeply appreciate them, and they must have impressed to some degree even the most casual client. But they could hardly be explained to strangers, and in making the attempt I fear I should give more pain than pleasure to a singularly gentle and modest spirit which does not yet realize why anything that concerns it must be interesting to the world at large.

It may seem almost as though mere chance had determined that Mr. Olmsted should be an artist. But the best chance can profit no man who is not well prepared to turn it into opportunity. If, at the age of thirty-four, Mr. Olmsted had not been fitted for a landscape-gardener's tasks, the chance which made him superintendent of the workmen in Central Park could not have led him on to the designing of parks; while, on the other hand, knowing how well fitted for such tasks he was, we feel that if just this opportunity had not offered, another would somehow have presented itself.

In the conduct of Mr. Olmsted's education up to the age of thirty-four, chance certainly played a preponderant rôle. But we should not therefore decide that a landscape-gardener's education may always be accidental, or even that it may be modeled consciously upon Mr. Olmsted's unconscious course. This course sufficed, with him, to develop that creative power which must always rest upon a reasoning, analyzing love for beauty, upon a sense for the harmonious, the fitting, the appropriate, as regards the application of special kinds of beauty to special purposes, and upon practical judgment as determining which among possible fitting schemes may most wisely be selected. But, while similar experiences could not fail to have much good effect upon any sensitive spirit, what sufficed with Mr. Olmsted would probably not have sufficed with another. It is safe to say that, as a rule, a landscape-gardener's creative power must indeed be nourished by long contemplation of nature, but also

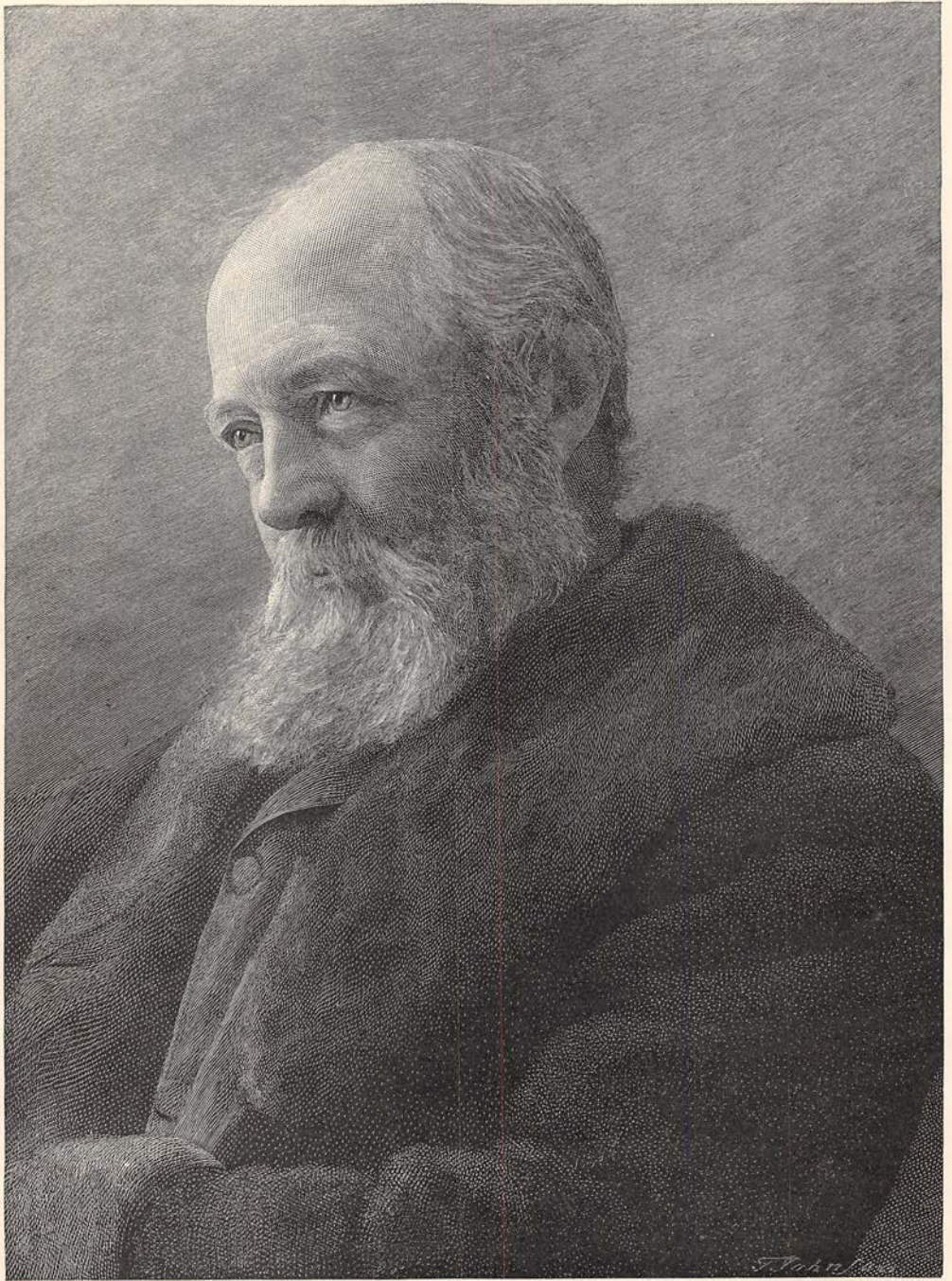
by systematic study of art; and I may add that a knowledge of art is often the influence which best develops an intelligent eye for nature.

Again, while Mr. Olmsted's equipment has proved itself extraordinarily fine in some directions, it has been deficient in others. His statement that without the collaboration of Mr. Vaux he could not have presented a plan for Central Park, shows how needful a thorough knowledge of architecture, engineering, and draftsmanship is to the landscape-gardener. Much knowledge of this sort Mr. Olmsted has since acquired, and his power of architectural conception is sufficiently proved by the single fact that it was he who perceived the necessity for those great marble terraces which have incalculably increased the architectural excellence of the Capitol in Washington.

But, as he would be quick to tell you, he has always been hampered by his lack of practical knowledge with regard to plants. This has forced him to depend upon others, in the execution of his works, even more than every busy landscape-gardener must; and it may also have limited his imagination somewhat, at least in relation to matters of detail. When defects exist in his work, they are sure to be defects in treatment, not in design—mistakes or shortcomings in the elaboration of his scheme, not in the scheme itself, not in the fundamental artistic conception. Here great intelligence and good taste always reveal themselves, and remarkable originality very often; and with a more thorough technical training the same qualities would undoubtedly always have marked all the minor features and details of his work.

In short, Mr. Olmsted's peculiar education, so deep and rich in some directions, so scanty in others, acting upon a singularly receptive yet naturally analytical temperament,—a temperament at once poetic and keenly, practically observant,—gave him an imaginative force which has probably not been equaled in the history of landscape-gardening in any land. But it did not perfect his executive skill, and this deficiency he has been unable to repair entirely during a long life of diligent application to the problems and resources of his art. Would-be landscape-gardeners should remember that they can hardly count upon offsetting blanks in their training by natural abilities as remarkable as his, and that most likely they do not possess temperaments as well adapted as his to profit by what I may call a passive course of education. They should remember that genius can learn much where talent or mere intelligence would gather sparse instruction, and may go very far with an equipment which would carry talent, stumbling, only a little way.

M. G. van Rensselaer.



ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON.

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FREDERICK LAW OLNSTED.