

PLAYGROUNDS FOR CITY SCHOOLS.



BUSINESS led me over on the West Side and into Wooster street the other day. It was the noon hour. Below Bleecker street, in front of Grammar School No. 10, a knot of boys obstructed the sidewalk, intent on some game that was new to me. I stopped to watch them. While I looked, some one in the crowd shouted to go into the yard and finish it, and they all went. I wanted to see the end of the game, so I went too.

The "yard" was a gloomy little well between the school and a big factory building. I was going to say it was called yard by courtesy, but courtesy could never have been stretched so far. Nobody but a boy born in a tenement would have thought of it as a yard. A stairway ran up at the farther end, and to the right was an open door, through which the boys disappeared. I followed them in. If it was twilight in the yard, in there it was midnight. A gas-lamp burned on the opposite side of the room. It seemed to me a long way off, though it was only a few steps. Its rays merely served to show how dense the darkness was. Doors were slamming; they let in smells, but no light. One of the romping boys ran against me, but though I caught and held him, it was some time before my eyes, accustomed to the sunlight in the street, could make him out. By degrees I saw. I was in a room about half the width and, I judged, nearly the length of the building, full of dust and drafts, in which a score of boys were running around. Presently they were all bunched at the rear, where there was some kind of a recess, and a teacher, coming in from the yard, went swiftly over to see what they were doing. The impulse was upon me to do as he did. The place seemed suggestive of nothing so much as of deeds of darkness. Coming back, he told me that some of the class-rooms up-stairs were as dark as this playground. Even on a day as bright with summer sunshine as this one, they had to burn gas in them. Then a bell rang, and all went up-stairs.

I knew well enough that he spoke the truth, for I remembered a report made by Dr. Moreau Morris of the Health Department, two years before, on this Wooster street school among others, and of course it was not to be expected that it would have had any other effect so soon than to make some of the school

officers angry. Schools are not built or reformed in a day—at least not in New York. There was, years ago, a conscientious board of trustees that had doubts as to their school, and resolved to have it investigated by the Board of Health. The inspector reported that it was bad, and told how it should be made good, and supposed that he had heard the last of it. But the next year there was another resolution asking for an inspection. It was made, and disclosed that nothing had been done. The same faults were pointed out, and the same remedies suggested. It was not until this performance had been gone through four or five times—for all I know it is going on yet—that it dawned upon the inspector that he was never to hear the last of it. So I was prepared to find the Wooster school unchanged. I have been at the pains since of looking up Dr. Morris's report, and these are some of the things it said: that the class-rooms were dark; that in some the little light that came in fell on the right side of the children, which was most injurious to their sight; that the closets were foul; that the air in the class-rooms was so "vitiating, foul, and unhealthy" that "the teachers are compelled to suspend the studies for a time during each session to open all the windows and doors for the admission of fresh air, exercising the children by calisthenics during the time the windows are open, whatever may be the outside temperature at any season of the year."

The doctor said nothing about the "playground," for the reason, probably, that there was little to say that would not be a virtual condemnation of every other school playground in the city, and just then he had his hands full with the class-rooms in which the children spent five hours of the day, breathing sometimes little less than rank poison. Such as it is, this Wooster street playground is typical of the New York public school in all essential things. Perhaps it is darker than most of them, but none of them is well lighted. There is always need of the lamp. Herds of rats forage about the old buildings. In all but the newest schools rows of closets open upon the playground. In the cellar-like gloom of this cheery apartment the boys and girls dodge countless iron posts and pillars in their play. In the most recently built schools these have been abolished, and a stone floor has been substituted for the dusty boards, but there is no trick of construction that



IN THE WOOSTER STREET SCHOOL — THE BOYS' PLAYGROUND.

W. P. Dicks

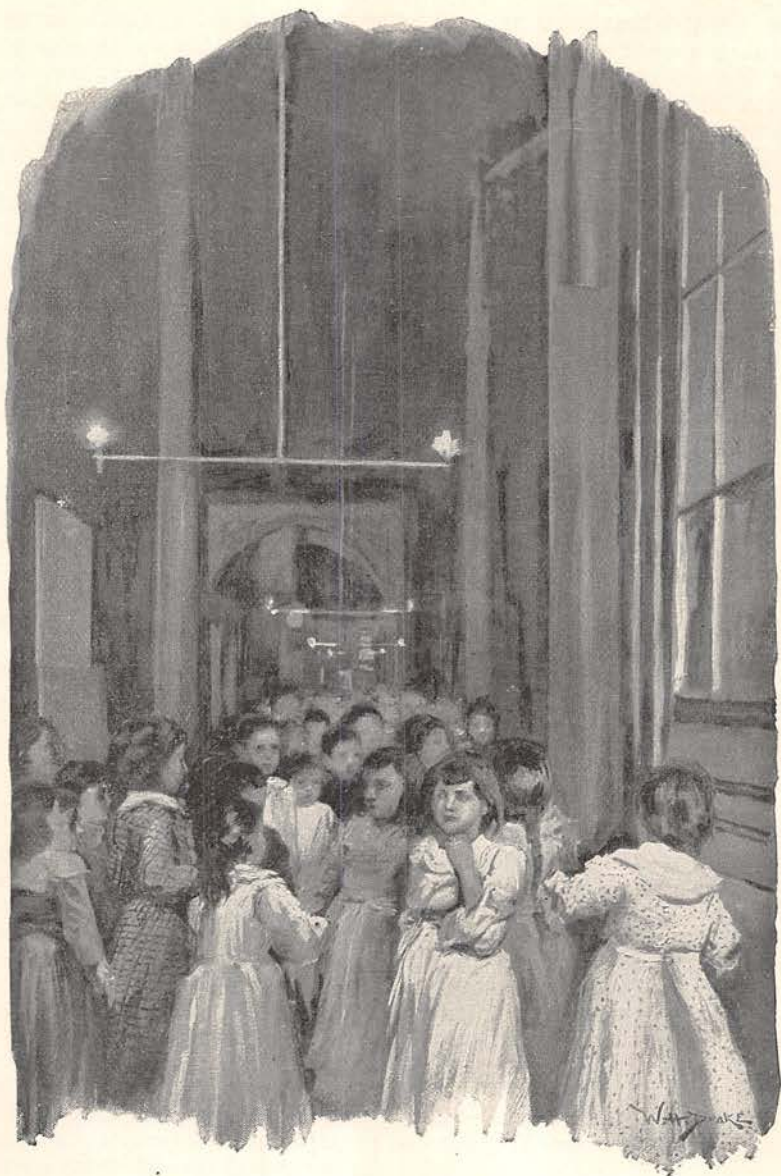
can bring sunlight and cheer into them. I never enter one without experiencing a real shock at the thought that such things can be. I know of a mother in this city, the wife of a missionary, who, having spent half a lifetime sharing her husband's labors among the heathen, returned to New York and civilization overjoyed at the thought of having an opportunity to give her boys proper schooling; but horrified at what she saw at the public school to which she took them, she marched them off at once to the nearest private school that was not like a dungeon, as she said; and there they stayed.

Perhaps it is unjust to criticize the Board of Education on this account. It must be admitted that it is no easy task to keep step, even a long way behind as we do, with the demands of our growing population upon the schools, and the idea that they had any duties in the matter of the children's play that were not covered by the "system" as it has been handed down to them probably never entered the commissioners' heads. If it had, it is highly improbable that any proposition to spend money for such an object in a city that pays thirty millions a year for the running of its municipal machinery would have provoked anything but ridicule in those who hold its purse-strings. It is not to be assumed that they would comprehend that children have other rights than to be stuffed with "knowledge" that is sometimes of more than doubtful quality. The proof of it is in the very recent condemnation by the Health Department of at least one school-building as dangerous to life, and the arraignment by one of the school commissioners of a dozen others as unfit for use. The old Greeks, with whom we are fond of comparing ourselves in seasons of civic gloriation, rather to our own advantage, knew better than that. They gave the boy the first chance, and the man they made of him would have passed muster, intellectually and physically, even with a New York school-board.

In the matter of healthy play the school-boy in New York does not have a chance. Any village boy is better off than he. He has playgrounds, so called, but it is idle to say that he plays there. He could not if he would. With boys, to play is to run. To run one must have room. How much room is there on one floor for the children to run in, who, sitting down, pack three rooms? They must either go on the street, or they are let loose in the play-room on sufferance. The limit is reached as soon as they begin to let themselves out. Up-stairs there are pupils who study during recess, and teachers with nerves. The result was described to me by an employee in one East Side school up-town, one of the best in the city, where more than three thou-

sand children go. "There is generally one of the teachers looking after them to see that they don't over-do it. They have to make noise kind of easy-like, you know. Anyhow, they can't all be here. Most of them stay up-stairs studying at recess. It has to be that way." And down in the Allen street school, No. 42,—which is one of the worst, if not the worst, in the city,—where the playground is, if anything, darker and more repulsive than the one in Wooster street, the janitress explained the prevailing quiet in so great a crowd by the statement that "these children are of a kind that have to be kept down." As if they were not kept down enough out of school, poor wretches! They were the children of the poorest refugee Jews.

I know of at least one school in this city where there never was any other playground than the street outside. After forty years of this sort of thing, I am told that an indoor one is at last to be provided this year, the crowd of children having been reduced enough by the building of another school-house in the neighborhood to allow space for it. In another, where nine hundred of the poorest children go, all little ones, the only playground is a narrow hallway with rows of vile-smelling closets strung along it. To offset these, there is to my knowledge one real public-school playground in New York, not counting the two-acre lot at the West Farms school, or the accidental playground afforded the boys of Grammar School 94, at 68th street and Amsterdam Avenue last winter, by some building lots that are now being fenced in. It is characteristic that this one real playground as such is also an accident, or at least it was never acquired for that purpose. It is in the heart of a tenement block adjoining the First street school, on the site of an old graveyard, which was acquired with infinite trouble to protect the school's light. No less than two special laws had to be passed to gain possession of it. The veteran principal builded better than he knew when he persevered through many obstacles. His school is to-day one of the brightest in the city. It is noted for the spirit his boys put into their singing and into all their work. Nor is it all the reflection of the spirit of the master. The playground, I am persuaded, is responsible for its share of it. "Money would not compensate us for the loss of it," said Mr. Litchfield, the master, to me one day recently. Exclusion from the playground he has found to be a most effective punishment, if any is needed, which is not often. The demand for this, the only playground in the neighborhood, is so great that he has been compelled to allow its use after school-hours in the afternoon. It is not big enough for all at once, but for as many as it can hold it is an ideal spot, with enough shelter



THE HALL THEIR PLAYGROUND—ESSEX MARKET SCHOOL.

when it rains, and sunlight in plenty when it is dry. Some of the boys come an hour earlier in the morning to get a chance for a good romp.

It may have been a mere coincidence that the rough gang of boys which used to disgrace that block on Second Avenue, and occasionally did much mischief, has not been heard from since the old graveyard became a playground. It is a fact, anyhow, and my experience with Poverty Gap makes me feel quite certain that there is a connection between the two things. Over there it used to be next to impossible to go through the block without being pelted with mud by

the ragamuffins, who very early developed into toughs of a peculiarly vicious stamp. They half killed two policemen, and, out of sheer malice, beat to death the one boy in the block with a good reputation. The neighborhood was as desolate as it was desperate; but when the wicked old tenements were torn down, and a public playground was opened on the site of them, with swings and sand-heaps and wheelbarrows and shovels, the whole neighborhood changed as if by magic. There were no more outrages. I don't believe I heard once from Poverty Gap that year through the police. Even a man with spectacles might go undisturbed

through the block. The boys had found other use for the mud. As an ingredient of pies it was a great persuader to peace, whereas in the gutter it had been a standing challenge to combat with society at large. All the wickedness that remained in Poverty Gap spent itself in the name it gave to the playground, "Holy Terror Park." But it was harmless. Unfortunately, the Park is gone. The building of the Wayfarers' Lodge wiped it out in part. There is room yet, however, and a rare chance for some public-spirited citizen to do his day and his generation (all but the police-reporter) a good turn.

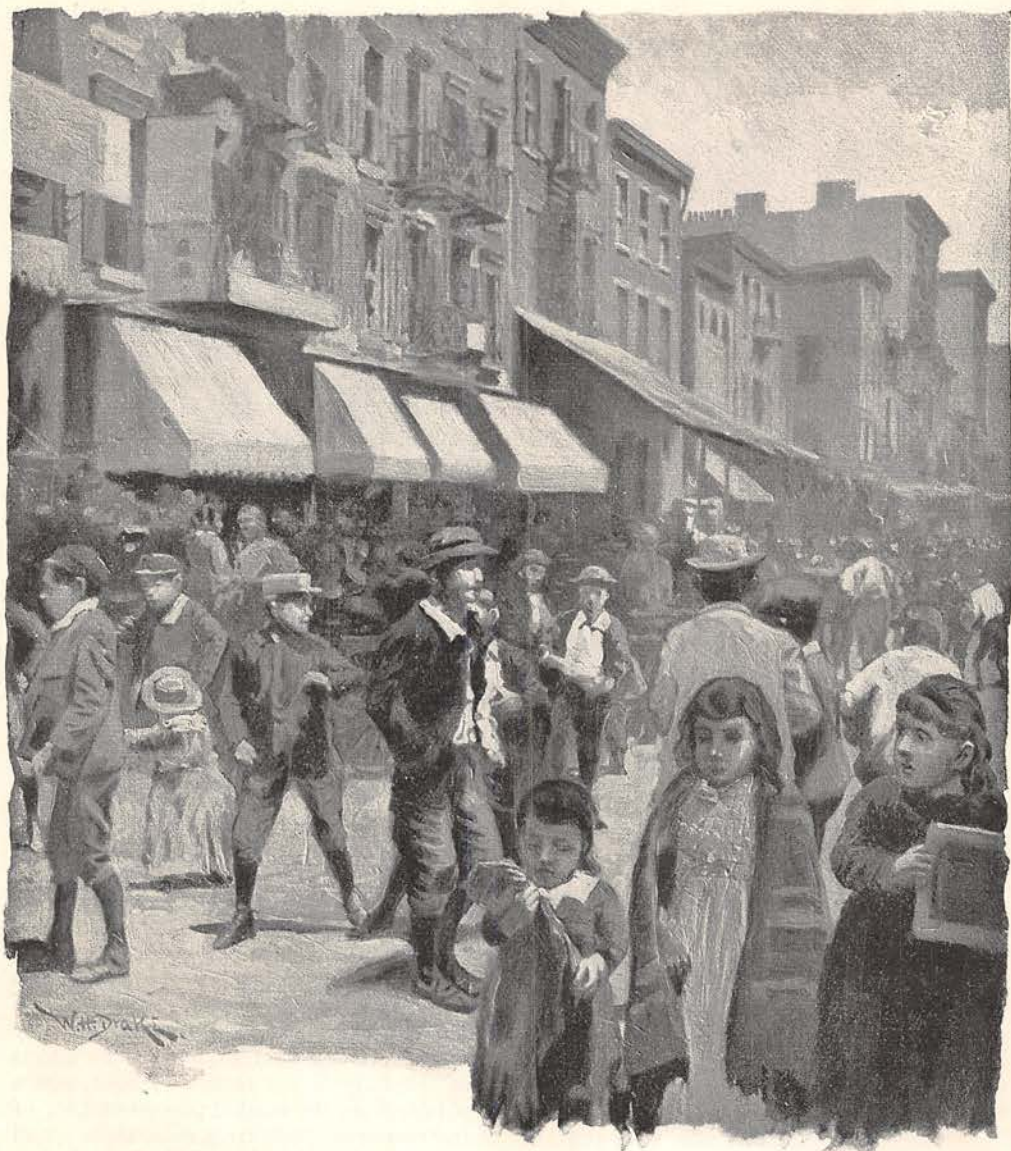
If the transformation of Poverty Gap was magic, it was of a kind school-boards and city authorities ought to learn with all speed. But, after all, it is very simple. Boys in and out of school need to play, and in their own way. Their own way is not "kind of easy-like." They have to yell to be healthy. Unless they have the chance, they are likely to turn out either wicked or dull. Dr. Morris in his report on the schools commented upon the fact that where the ventilation was bad the children were always dull toward the end of the session. There are not a dozen schools among the hundred and thirty-odd in the city where the ventilation is as it should be. There are many in which it is exceedingly bad. The children are required to give close attention to their studies during five hours of every school-day. Unless that day is broken up by intermissions in the open air at healthy play, it is simply impossible for them to do it. They have not the chance. The street is the only playground that is open to them. But the street is an educator with its own plan, and the plan is not a safe one. Poverty Gap gave us a lesson on that point, and we have had more of the kind.

Real playgrounds must be provided for the children of New York, but from where are they to come? I do not know of a single school in the city to-day that is near to a park or other breathing-spot, where the boys and girls may romp to their hearts' content. Indeed, they seem to have been placed with a purpose of avoiding such neighbors. No relief is to be expected from the Board of Education. It has lost some good chances of providing it, and interfered to spoil some promising plans laid by more far-sighted ward trustees. A case in point was the new school, No. 7, in Chrystie street, on the corner of Hester street. It is a building with a magnificent sweep of nearly two hundred feet front, and is in the most densely crowded neighborhood, not only in New York, but in all the world. The census shows the packing of the Tenth Ward to be at the rate of 353,000 to the square mile, and it is growing all the time. The children that attend the school come,

to a large extent, from the poorest and most desolate homes. There is no green spot within easy reach of it. To procure a playground for the children by the purchase of property was beyond the means of the trustees. They determined to make one on the roof of their big building, and laid their plans for a brick floor up there, and a parapet high enough to keep the boldest boy from climbing over. It was a beautiful idea, but it never became more than that. The Board of Education decided that the building would cost too much, and cut off all the "frills." The playground on the roof was the first of these. Now the school has a tin roof, which represents a lost opportunity of rare proportions. The city saved perhaps \$40,000. What it lost cannot easily be computed in money. That roof-garden would have been cheap at almost any cost.

The new school in the Mulberry Bend has an attic gymnasium that was secured by a trick. As an educational influence it will rival the park under its windows, when that becomes a reality. Adjoining Grammar School No. 1, at Ludlow and Delancey streets, there was an open lot with a single tree in it upon which I cast longing eyes for years as a member of a committee interested in locating a playground in that neighborhood; but we were told at the Comptroller's office that it was for the school-children to play in. It was to be laid out for their use. Since then it has been built upon, and there is an end of that plan. I have heard of three or four instances in which ground had been procured with this professed aim, but it has not in any case been utilized. The longest step the Board of Education took in the direction of reforming the physical condition of the schools was when, some years ago, it committed itself to the policy of building thenceforward only on corners;¹ but that, salutary as its effects were, specially in the matter of light, was a step away from the needed playground, for of course corner property costs more money, and leaves less to spend for "frills." And then the improved looks of the thing made it easier to forget what was still lacking. Grammar School No. 77, on First Avenue between 85th and 86th streets, represents the development of that idea to its best advantage, though it was built before the idea was laid down as a rule of conduct. It occupies two corners, covering the whole end of the block, and is in all other respects an excellent school; but its indoor playgrounds are ridiculously inadequate to the accommodation of its three thousand and more

¹ At least so I understood it; but I see that in this year's report Superintendent Jasper recommends that preference be given to such sites, as if it were not a settled principle, as I thought. At all events, it has been the practice.



THE STREET THEIR ALTERNATIVE.

pupils. It is the one I spoke of in which the children had to "play kind of easy-like." Of course the effect is to thrust the children upon the street, which is hostile to the educational idea that the school-board represents.

Some other way must be found, then, of providing the needed playgrounds, if they are ever to come. It happens that there is a perfectly simple and easy way. It is no Utopian backyard reform, but a plain business-measure, for the operation of which the machinery is already provided by law. The need of breathing-spots for old and young in the crowded tenement districts appealed to the legislature seven years ago with sufficient force to procure the pas-

sage of what became known as the Small Parks Law. Under it the Board of Street Opening and Improvement is empowered to condemn lands anywhere below 155th street, and to take the necessary steps to locate and lay out "such and so many" public parks as it may "from time to time determine." Here was an unequaled opportunity, deliberately extended to meet a recognized emergency. How was it used? In seven years the city authorities have located, but not laid out, one park of a single block, which was urgently needed. I refer to the one which is coming, when all the red tape is unwound, in the Mulberry Bend. It has taken the commissioners seven years to award

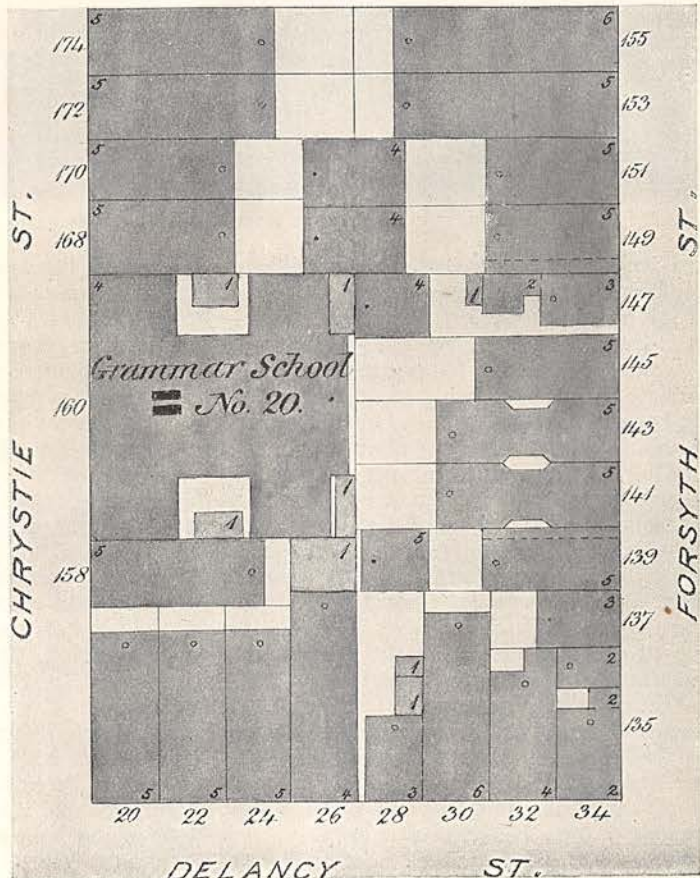
a million and a half, in round numbers, to the holders of property in the block. It took the politicians less than seven weeks to get the half million they assessed for benefit upon adjacent property wiped out, and to saddle the whole thing on the city. That is the way of a good many reform efforts in New York. Still, one might condone even that, if the park were there, or even in sight. But the Bend is there instead, in all its pristine nastiness. All the change wrought so far has been on paper.

I say that is the only visible, or rather invisible, result wrought so far under this most beneficent law. To be sure, an addition was made to the East River Park, up-town, under it, at a cost of half a million, and the old Hudson street graveyard has been condemned at a like figure. But there was no crying demand for either, and as to the Corlear's Hook Park, that was authorized by a special act, and was never urgent except as a political measure. None of the sites that were urged by the health officers have been taken or even considered. As a means of "relieving the congestion of the tenement districts," the Small Parks Law has been a bad failure. The net results of seven years of its operation are an appropriation of two millions and a half, already paid out, or soon to be, and a promise of a park in the Mulberry Street Bend. Clearly, if this generation, or the next, is to derive the intended benefit from it, we must go about it in another way.

Here is the one I propose, for which the law furnishes all the needed machinery: Let enough land be condemned around every public school in the city that is not already isolated, to make a very small park that shall at once be a playground for the children, and a breathing-spot for the over-worked mothers with their babies, as well as a place where the fathers may smoke their evening pipes. And let these parks be laid out at once. There need be no long quarrel about the value of

property to be so seized. It generally goes way up when the city manifests a desire for it; but, as is well known, schools depress rather than boom real estate, so that, without taking advantage of this fact, the fair selling value ought to be ascertained without long palaver. Then this plan would result in locating at once a hundred little "lungs" or more where the greatest crowds are, and where, therefore, they are needed most, and so would end that discussion. The question that arises in everybody's mind at once, quite naturally, is, What would it cost?

Without stopping to consider whether such a system of school-parks would not be cheap at any cost, let us look at the facts a moment. There are in this city from the Battery to West Farms 131 public schools. Of these about eighty-three are in the middle of blocks, squeezed in between other buildings that rob them of light and air, and four more are situated in that way, but run through to the next street. I say "about," because while that is the number at the time of writing this, yet some of them are to be abandoned,—none too soon,—as for instance the Vandewater street and the



PLAN OF CHRYSTIE STREET SCHOOL AND NEIGHBORHOOD.



WHERE THEY BURN GAS BY DAYLIGHT--IN THE ESSEX MARKET SCHOOL.

Roosevelt street school, and are counted here only because they still exist. The rest of the schools are on corners, or isolated for the present at least. Leaving these last, which are all in the annexed district, out of consideration at this time, I find that such parks as I have in mind could be provided at the remaining 116 schools for about thirteen millions of dollars. Keeping in mind what we have or have not got for two millions and a half in seven years, does this seem an exorbitant sum? There is no reason why the carrying out of such a plan should take anything like the time that has been wasted in the Bend. It could be done as easily in seven months as in seven years, in season to give all the work needed by the unemployed next winter without surrendering to their claim that the city should make work for them. The expense of setting each of the 87 school-houses that stand in the middle of their blocks in such a park as I mean, I estimate at ten millions and a half, an average of about one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for each.

But what kind of park can be got for \$125,000? By looking at the ground-plan of Grammar School No. 20, in Chrystie street, the reader

will at once comprehend both the emergency and the scheme of relief. The school is seen to be set in a solid block of tenements, which, as the pressure of the population grows, will grow taller, trenching more upon its light and air until they must be removed. Already the teachers have to burn gas on the two lower floors on the brightest days, and in spite of the use of reflectors to catch what light struggles down between the tenements, the lower rooms resemble dungeons more than places for children to learn their lessons in. The class-rooms are so crowded that in two the children had to get up and move before I could enter. Their legs blocked the door. Their "playground" is dark, with closets opening upon it. The school is in the heart of the crowded Tenth Ward. My scheme includes the removal of one tenement on each side of it in Chrystie street, and the six on Forsyth street behind it. I have been at some pains to ascertain the value of the property to be so condemned, and believe that it could be bought for \$240,000, if not for less. In fact, one of the houses is for sale at a lower figure than I had put upon it. So in the case of No. 7, at Chrystie and Hester streets, only a few blocks away.

There I would pay for the "frills" rejected by the Board of Education by condemning all the property back of the school on Forsyth street at a cost of \$220,000. If this were deemed too liberal an allowance because of the proximity of the other school park in Chrystie street, a hundred feet square or so behind the school, from the corner to No. 51 Forsyth street, might be acquired at a cost of \$130,000. But this is of all places the neighborhood where parks are needed, and I would not skimp here, particularly as there are other localities where a simple playground will suffice. These help to reduce the average of cost, which in some of the East Side schools is much exceeded.

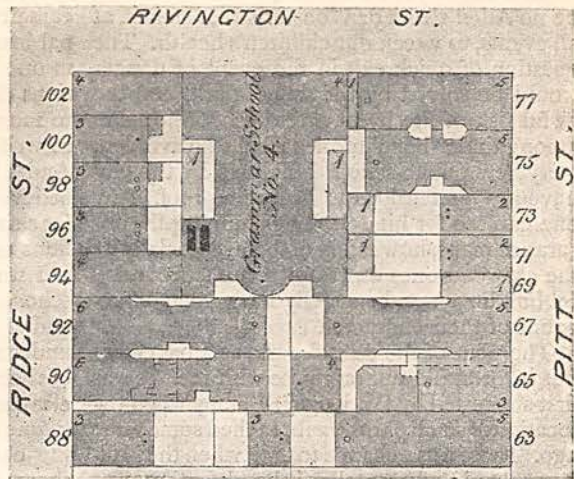
To this class belongs Primary School No. 15, in Stone street, for instance, which has a small attendance, and could get along nicely with a playground, Jeannette Park being in the immediate vicinity. The adjoining lot is in the market for \$60,000. So, in the case of Primary School 34, in Pearl street, near Beekman street, where the population is small, \$75,000 would cover the purchase of enough ground for the children to play in, and to secure light and air for the class-rooms, if the school is to remain there. In the case of Grammar School No. 4, in Rivington street, I would tear down all the houses that back up on it from Ridge and Pitt streets, and so make at once a breathing-spot capable of being made beautiful as well as useful. The city has already, I believe, acquired the property west of the school, but not for a playground. I am informed that a new wing of the school is to be built there at once. If this could not be prevented, the Pitt street property ought at least to be acquired at a cost of not much more than \$100,000, though it is held at a higher figure. And so on. My figures are not random guesses. I have carefully examined the property on the insurance maps and personally, and while they would probably be disputed by those in interest, I am confident that they would not be greatly exceeded in the awards.

If the Wooster school is not to be definitely abandoned, it would be necessary to demolish the factories on both sides to improve its light, as well as to give the children a playground, and I have counted it in my footing at \$175,000; but I do not think it would be worth spending any such amount upon it. Neither would the expenditure of \$125,000 to secure relief for No. 42, in Allen street, be justified by the results. These schools should long since have been condemned, and other sites found. I have included them in my estimate for that event. For the

Vandewater street and the Roosevelt street school I have allowed \$100,000 to be laid out in a breathing-space about the new building in Oliver street. The site is now under discussion, and there is here a fine opportunity to test my plan in a district that is as much in need of a green spot as any in the city.

Sofar I have spoken only of the schools down-town. Some of those up-town are quite as bad as the worst. In the case of those that are not, as for instance Grammar School No. 77, at First Avenue and 85th street, and where Central Park is within reasonable reach of the grown-up people, I would add a playground of generous size by clearing at least two full lots adjoining the school. This is merely for economy's sake, since that is going to be where the fight will come in. If I had my way, I would surround every school in the city, up-town or down-town, with a park that would make it always the most attractive spot in all the neighborhood.

To my mind that is one of the chief advantages to be derived from the school park. Instead of being repelled, children would be attracted to a school that was identified with their playground. Truancy would cease. I



PLAN OF RIVINGTON STREET SCHOOL AND NEIGHBORHOOD.

would adopt the plan that has proved successful in London, of lending the schools to the boys for club-rooms in the evening hours,—under some system of effective but not intrusive surveillance, and not the kind that would aim at "keeping them down,"—those evening hours when the manufacture of the tough goes on most actively in the street. The gangs would soon find their occupation gone when the schools became boys' clubs. Why is it so hard for our city authorities to learn a lesson which any man's unofficial common sense grasps at once? However, the club is not necessarily a part of the school park. It is one of the "frills" to be con-

sidered afterward. The first consideration would be to make the park attractive as well as useful. I would have a few trees in it for shade, a shelter at one end or along the side for rainy days, and some simple gymnastic apparatus for the children. For the rest, there should be a combination of asphalt and grass, with the asphalt predominating, and never a sign of "keep off the grass," if the lawns had to be sodded every year anew. My school-park should be a people's park in which the children might play at recess, and where the mothers might take their babies during school hours. It should be always open, and there should be plenty of seats in it.

A school set in such a park could be made architecturally attractive. Perhaps it would be difficult to accomplish that with some of the structures which now stand, but in time that would follow, once the principle was laid down. Light in plenty there would be, and foul air would no longer make the children dull over their books. Dr. Morris reported that in all the schools he visited "the children and the teachers suffered from colds caused by the dangerous drafts" from the windows that had to be opened lest they smother. Mechanical ventilation might yet be needed, but there would be no Allen street or Wooster street stench, at all events, to wreck our children's health. The question of quick exit in the event of danger would be solved by the school-park, and the awful risk of fire by having a school-house in among tinder-box factories would be avoided. Very few public-school buildings in the city have any pretensions to being fireproof. Any one can see for himself, by examining the insurance maps, how many of them, especially of the crowded ones down-town, are surrounded by buildings rated specially hazardous on account of their character.

The plan of the school-park, as I have here put it forth, did not originate with me. It was first suggested by Dr. Roger S. Tracy when the location of small parks was broached some years ago. There was a chance to try it when the Mulberry Bend Park was taken in hand, for there was a public school in that very block. But that chance, like so many others, was lost. When I called attention to it at the time they were looking for a new site for the school,—since built on the opposite corner, and not included in the estimate above, because of the prospective proximity of the park, and because they have actually a gymnasium up in the attic,—and pointed out that the law allowed the Park Commissioners to erect in the small parks, "for public purposes, for the comfort, health, and instruction of the people," such buildings as they saw fit, I was told by a city official, a high-salaried lawyer, that that could not be made to

include schools, and that the Park Department was not the Board of Education anyhow. There would be "a conflict of authority." Doubtless. This is one of the most efficient means of hindering and hampering reform of any kind. But it ought to be possible to overcome that obstacle in this case. The real argument, so far as there is any, against the school-park plan is on the question of expense. Dr. Cyrus Edson, Health Commissioner, answered that when, in 1892, he, as sanitary superintendent, forwarded Dr. Morris's report to the board with this comment: "The only objection that can be made to the recommendations is that their compliance would entail the expenditure of a large amount of money. This objection should not weigh for a moment against the health of the school-children. Pure air is absolutely essential to their well-being. The air of our school-buildings should be made pure, regardless of cost." In Paris, and in other cities abroad, there are playgrounds for real play at every public school-house. I presume that real estate is high enough in the French capital, if not as high as in cramped New York; yet it does not appear that the city's credit has suffered by its liberality, if the statement is correct which recently came by cable to the effect that a new municipal loan had been taken eighty-five times over in one day by her own people. Local conditions differ; the school-park plan seems to me to meet for New York a double demand quite as well as anything I have heard of abroad. And when it comes to the actual pay-desk, I believe that the revenues of the sinking fund for a single year would almost pay the ten millions and a half, if not the thirteen.

I was told once by an ex-superintendent of school-buildings in a great city that he had no end of trouble trying to make his school-board understand the relation between the number of their scholars and the cubic air-space of the class-rooms. They paid no attention to him until one day he brought a copy of the Talmud to the chief among them, who was a Jew, and showed him that it was all down in the Mosaic law ages and ages ago. That settled it. After that he had his way. We in New York can get up a fine frenzy at short notice over the question of keeping the Bible in our public schools. By all means let it stay, and hoist the flag on the school, too, if it is worthy of it, but until our schools have been made places for which no Christian needs to blush, as he must for many that are crowded every day in this city, this zeal for the Bible is sheer mockery and humbug. It were better to put the Talmud on the principal's desk, and upon the desk of every School Commissioner as well, until they have learned its lesson.

Jacob A. Riis.