

Navy Department by name, residence, or occupation,— and much less is there any organization,— upon whom or upon which it could call in an emergency to perform duty in ships of war. Plenty of men there doubtless are who would be glad to offer their services, and who might in the course of time be enlisted, assigned to duties, and made available for purposes of training; but the enlistment and assignment of any large number would take two months at least, and the training would require a month or two more. During the four months thus consumed, a properly prepared enemy would have destroyed all our construction-yards and naval stations, to say nothing of our commerce and our commercial cities.

To remedy this glaring defect, a plan must be prepared which shall receive the substantial approval of the mercantile and maritime community on the one hand, and of the Government on the other; for these are the two forces whose coöperation is necessary to insure success. Its two underlying features are the enrollment of volunteers from the merchant service, the fishing fleet, and the yacht squadrons, as officers, petty officers, and seamen of the United States Naval Reserve; and secondly, their training from time to time, for short periods—three weeks or a month at the most—in regularly commissioned ships of war, organized, if possible, as a squadron of evolutions. The volunteers should receive compensation while actually in service, and, the period of training finished, they should be free to return to their vocations, retaining their connection with the service by a permanent registration. The details of the plan require careful deliberation, but they present no serious difficulties, and call for no great outlay. Registers opened at the commercial seaports should be inscribed with the names of those desiring to associate themselves with the naval reserve. The Navy Department should devote to the work some of the modern ships of which its home squadron will shortly be composed, with selected officers in sufficient numbers to provide for the instruction of the volunteers. The latter, wearing the uniform of the service, and subject to its regulations, would perform their tour of duty at periods that would cause the least possible interruption of their ordinary occupations.

The plan would not make sailors out of landmen, but that would not be its object. The volunteers, being seafaring men, already know half their business, and they would be given an opportunity to learn the other half,— the handling of weapons, the routine and discipline of a ship of war, and the intelligent use of its manifold mechanical appliances. The adoption of such a plan would enable the Government, at the first sign of war, to fit out at once all the ships laid up at its yards, instead of marking time while its squadrons returned from distant stations, or, worse still, while Congress deliberated upon the best method of mobilizing a force that was not yet organized, trained, or even recruited. Certainly no measure of national defence is more reasonable or practical than this, and there is none that calls more urgently for immediate action.

The Niagara Reservation.

Few public measures, based upon considerations other than those of economic benefit, have met with such wide-spread and hearty approval as has greeted

the establishment of the Niagara Reservation. No question involving simply the public's chances of future pleasure can have a greater interest than the question, What now is to be done with this property which the people of the State of New-York hold in trust for the people of all the world?

Entrance-fees have already been abolished, and many eyesores and incumbrances in the shape of mills and fences and vulgar places of amusement have already been removed. But it will easily be understood that a great deal of further work—and of a constructive as well as of a destructive character— will be required if the Reservation is to show that its owners appreciate its value and the responsibility which its possession lays upon them. We are sorry to say that there is no immediate prospect of this work being undertaken. That is, no money has yet been appropriated by the Legislature to begin it. But the Board which has the Reservation in charge has accepted the plan of improvement suggested by the landscape artists to whose consideration the matter was submitted;* and we think it only needs that the outlines of this plan should be laid before the public to excite a strong wish that it shall as soon as possible be put in execution. Seldom, we think, has a task of the kind been approached in a spirit which so unites common sense with artistic feeling, and so carefully holds the balance true between what is due to the property itself and what is due to the persons who will visit it.

The problem was by no means an easy one to master. Its very first theoretic stages were, indeed, simple enough. Of course, as Messrs. Olmsted and Vaux begin by saying, it is desirable “that whatever is done shall tell toward a general result that shall be lastingly satisfactory, nothing being wasted on matters of temporary expediency”; and of course this means that preparation must be made for the presence of even greater crowds of visitors than have been in the habit of assembling in the past. Again, it is obvious that “the greatest good of the greatest number” is the one aim to be kept in view. The rights of local property-owners have already been made to yield to it; and to it must be subordinated also the privileges of individual tourists in so far as they seem likely to conflict with general enjoyment.

Up to this point no great difficulty presented itself. But then to decide what really is the greatest good in such a case, and, this having been settled, so to elaborate a plan of improvement that it might be thoroughly well secured, but that individual privileges might be interfered with no more than strict necessity compelled, and in such a manner as to excite the least possible feeling of constraint in the most selfish of tourists—these were matters which demanded the exercise of patient thought, clear judgment, wise foresight, and that practical knowledge which could only have grown from long experience with similar problems.

As revealed in their lucid, full, and logical statement,

* “General Plan for the Improvement of the Niagara Reservation.” New York: Martin B. Brown, 49 & 51 Park Place. 1887. (A pamphlet containing the report addressed to the Hon. William Dorsheimer, President of the Board of Commissioners of the State Reservation at Niagara, by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Landscape-architects; and a large map of the property as it will appear if remodeled in accordance.)

Messrs. Olmsted and Vaux's primary idea is that the greatest good which they can secure to their clients is the enjoyment of natural scenery in as pure and undiluted an aspect as the decent, safe, and comfortable accommodation of great throngs of visitors will permit. That is to say, people will in future be expected to come to Niagara to look at Niagara, not to picnic or to play, and not to gaze at mountebanks, or peep-shows, or "galleries of art," or collections of natural curiosities. And they will be shown it as nearly as possible as nature made it, neither desecrated nor, in the cant sense, "improved," and under the beams of the sun and moon, but never again of colored calcium-lights. Its beauty and its wonderfulness are to be given the freest chance to speak to our emotions, while the petty and discordant tones of humanity's creations are as much as possible to be suppressed. And, with keen artistic taste, this rule is so extended as to war against all artificial accentuation of natural charms, all deliberate emphasizing of natural impressions. Every opportunity will be given the visitor to see all there is to see, but no effort will be made to enhance astonishment, to excite amazement, or to stimulate mere curiosity.

Surely these decisions are wise. So, also, is the cogent decision that, as "the more artificial features fill the eye the less will be the effect of natural features," no object or arrangement "of an artificial character should be allowed a place on the property, no matter how valuable it might be under other circumstances, and no matter at how little cost it may be had, the presence of which can be avoided consistently with the provision of necessary conditions for making the enjoyment of the natural scenery available." Those objects and arrangements which, in the pursuance of this end, cannot be avoided will be only too numerous, and will be only too conspicuous despite the care that will be taken to make them unobtrusive in both form and color. Roads and walks must be constructed in greater numbers than they exist to-day, if all other portions of the surface are to be guarded as carefully as they should be—much more carefully, that is, than they have been in the past. Standing and turning places for carriages must be laid out. Abundant seats and various bridges and stairways are of course a necessity. Shelters must be built containing ample accommodations for the guardians of the place and for the comfort of the greatest possible crowds of visitors. Especially when the narrowness of the long belt which forms the Reservation is considered, do we feel how wise, therefore, is the judgment which would exclude all other objects save those which nature intended the ground to bear; not only all appliances for "amusement," but all works of art, all exotic ornamental trees and shrubs, all "decorative" flower-beds,—everything that could further interfere with the natural aspect of the place or (quite as important a point) could attract the eye to details when it should be contemplating broad general effects.

Another thing which this precept obliges (and which the comfort of the great body of visitors also necessitates) is that there shall be no places of entertainment, or of more than temporary shelter except at the very entrance of the Reservation, and that stringent care shall be taken to prevent the monopolizing of attractive spots by picnic parties and the littering of the ground with sandwich-papers, soda-water bottles, and

tomato-cans. Vast numbers of people—sometimes as many as ten thousand a day—come every summer for a brief look at the Falls, who neither would nor could come were they obliged to refresh and rest themselves at the village hotels. For these, and their babies and baskets, ample and even luxurious accommodation will be provided in a large (but low) reception-building at the entrance to the Reservation in the Upper Grove, and in adjacent half-open pavilions. But beyond these buildings no carrying of food will be permitted, and nowhere else will it be supplied. The hardship resulting from this rule will be very small, for the distance from the site of the old eating-house on Goat Island to the new reception-rooms or to the village hotels is scarcely greater than a ten minutes' walk will cover. In truth, it will be no hardship but a positive benefit to the average unthinking tourist if he is thus persuaded to rest and refresh himself before he does his sight-seeing.

The good sense shown by another decision is perhaps less immediately obvious, but is quite as evident when the reasons for it are studied in the report and by the aid of the map. Involving as they do calculations with regard to the numbers who are likely to visit the Reservation in future years, statements as to the insecurity of certain portions of the water-front, descriptions of the lay of the ground in various directions, and a balancing of the relative claims of accommodation and of natural beauty, these reasons are far too long and complicated to be quoted here. But they clearly show, we repeat, the wisdom of the decision that the carriage-drives and halting-places, both on the mainland and on Goat Island, shall be kept a little away from the shore, and that the best points of view shall be approachable only on foot. Nor is the hardship which this decision may seem to involve much more than an apparent one. To make some thirty paces on foot is but a small exertion for the able-bodied, and wheeled chairs are to be supplied for the use of invalids. The greatest good of the greatest number will be promoted by this arrangement almost more than by any other that is proposed.

One or two additional intentions may be noted. All hazardous points along the brink will be rendered as safe as possible, and carefully guarded against overcrowding. All plantings will be made with native trees in desirable variety, more regard being paid to permanent than to speedily effective results; and they will be so arranged as to screen off the village from the Reservation, while allowing constant views or glimpses of the water from all the roads and paths. The shore line above the falls will be restored to naturalness of aspect and protected against the encroachment of the water in inconspicuous ways. The present staircase to the Cave of the Winds will be retained for immediate use; but as the recession of the cliff will eventually necessitate its removal, it is advised that at some future day a shaft and tunnel containing an elevator should be built, the entrance to be placed some fifty feet from the edge of the bank. Further to reduce the inconveniences and expenses which hitherto have afflicted the tourist, a cheap omnibus-service will be established, and modest guide-posts will direct pedestrians.

This then, in its main outlines, is the scheme for the execution of which we hope the next Legislature will

be asked to vote sufficient funds. Of course not everything which it suggests need be done at once; but with regard to some things there is the greatest necessity for immediate action. It is especially desirable, for instance, that the new drives on Goat Island should be at once constructed, for those which exist are so insufficient that visitors are seriously inconvenienced, and many intervening stretches of ground are month by month more seriously injured by trampling feet. But the truth is that there is scarcely a yard of the entire Reservation which does not need treatment of some sort — either for alteration or for conservation; and as all the work requires much time for its completion, none of it can be begun too soon.

Even after it is, so to say, completed, much additional time must elapse before its full results will be apparent, for a landscape-artist must wait years for his labors to finish themselves after he has finished upon the soil the plan he had sketched on paper. The main thing, therefore, is, to begin. But when once we have begun, the main thing will be to remember through all coming years that the property must not only be made, but kept, what its wisely chosen name implies,—*a piece of nature defended as strictly as possible against all*

intrusion of artificiality. As such it will have no more room for certain kinds of beauty to display themselves than for any kind of ugliness. To try to prettify it with fountains and statues, and exotic shrubs and brilliant flower-beds, would be as unwise, as inartistic, and as vulgar almost, as to try to add to its attractions by merry-go-rounds and menageries, and illuminations, and ice-cream stalls. One feels sure that the Reservation will never again wear that disgraceful resemblance to a country fair-ground which it has worn so long. But we wish one could feel just as sure that it will never be made into a park or a garden or a pleasure-ground of any kind, even the most sumptuously "aristocratic."

We wish too that it were entirely certain, that if the year of Queen Victoria's jubilee is indeed to be signalized by the forming of a Government Reservation on the Canada shore, this too will be planned and managed in accordance with this general idea. The views from the Canada bank are much more extensive and imposing than those from our own. There is all the greater reason, therefore, why their effect should not be lessened by "ornamental" park-like foregrounds, or forced into unworthy rivalry with the attractions of places of amusement and bodily refreshment.

OPEN LETTERS.

Education of the Blind.

NO. I. AS CHILDREN.

NOTWITHSTANDING the attention given to this subject during the past two or three decades by able and philanthropic persons, and the excellent work in certain directions and within certain limits now done in many of our State institutions, the matter is still but very imperfectly understood, even by those who make it a specialty, and scarcely at all by the general public. Yet it is one of almost universal interest. There are, comparatively speaking, but few families in this or any other country which are not sooner or later, directly or indirectly, called upon to exercise their thoughts and sympathies in behalf of some afflicted member, friend, or acquaintance, for whom, in their ignorance of possibilities and precedents, they entertain the most exaggerated compassion, the most needlessly doleful and hopeless ideas.

The experience and observation of many years enable me to speak with definite, vivid, personal knowledge upon this theme; and though I have by no means the intention, nor perhaps the ability, to formulate a complete system of study and training for those deprived of sight, I may possibly, by a few practical suggestions, throw a little light into some darkened existences, render less appalling the roar of life's battle to some about entering it under fearful disadvantages, or show a gleam of hope to the heavy heart of some discouraged mother, who sees her child, in all the glad bright promise of the future which her fond maternal pride has pictured in advance, entombed alive in midnight blackness, blighted with the curse of useless, joyless dependence — for such its fate appears to her. If I can succeed in giving aid or comfort to any of these, my labor will be repaid tenfold.

The chief difficulty in the past, and perhaps an unavoidable one in the way of more satisfactory results in the education of the blind as a class, has been that most of the theorizing and experimenting, as well as the practical work in this direction, has been done by seeing persons, who are never wholly able to divest their minds of certain prejudices and misapprehensions with regard to those under their charge, nor to enter fully into their real condition and actual needs. Many of them have been intelligent and earnestly devoted to their task, and a few have really hit upon some very rational projects and ingenious contrivances to ameliorate the condition and add to the comfort of their pupils and protégés; but the majority have been led astray by erroneous conceptions of the state with which they had to deal, which rendered their best-meant endeavors fruitless; while no small number have been fantastic dreamers or pig-headed hobbyists, erratic cranks of every description, who have either used this form of philanthropy as an easy means of gaining a livelihood, or have regarded the unfortunates under their charge as only important in the light of suitable and legitimate subjects for every variety of experiment, psychological and physical, from fanatical, monomaniac piety, to hydropathy.

Some of the theories put in practice, in defiance of common sense, by men whom the state supports and the public applauds, would be boundlessly ludicrous, if their results were not pitifully sad. For instance, the superintendent of a large and richly endowed institution for the blind at Naples maintains that all sightless persons should be kept in utter ignorance of sight; that in justice and mercy they should never be allowed to know what they miss,— that is, should never be permitted to meet, either in their specially prepared