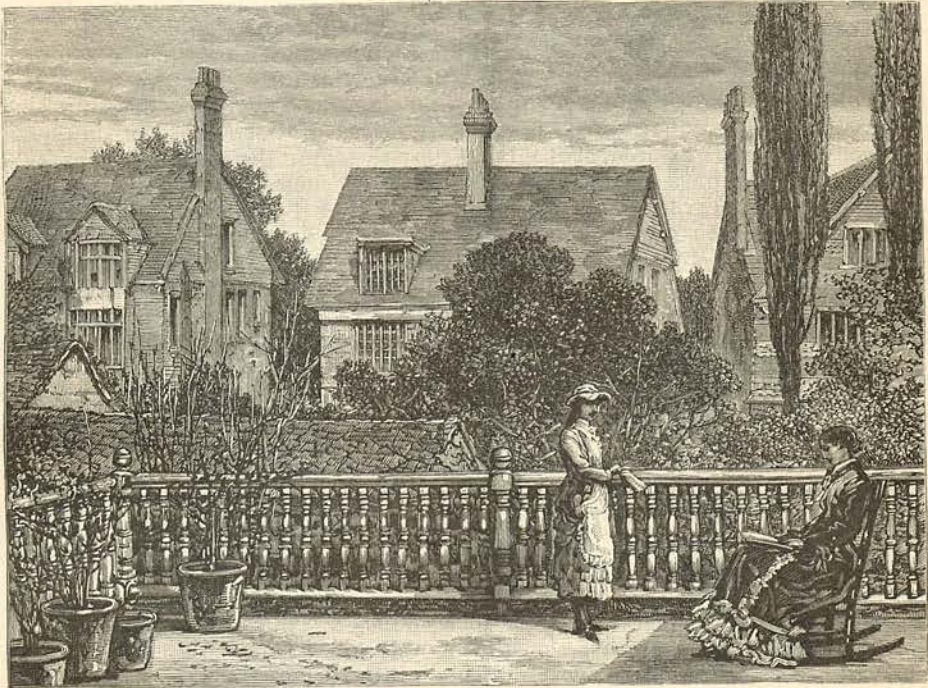


# HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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BEDFORD PARK.



VIEW FROM A BALCONY.

FIVE years ago I happened to pass through Chiswick, near London, and paused near a field where Prince Rupert and his little army camped overnight on their retreat before Hampden and his Roundheads—a scene which the perspective of time has made into an allegorical tableau of Aristocracy retreating before Yeomanry. (It is a retreat that steadily goes on still.) At that time I found it pleasant to see large and beautiful gardens, with stately poplars and every variety of fruit tree, glorifying the acres once steeped with the bluest blood of England. Eight hundred Cavaliers were here found dead when the Roundheads came in the

early morning, glowing with victory, to pitch their tents where the Cavaliers had just folded theirs. Last year I turned in to take another look at the same place. I paused again near the Rupert House—surely a very civil-seeming home for the barbaric prince whose name was twisted into “Prince Robber.” Two lions couch above the projecting doorway, two child-figures stand on the ground beneath, which may be emblems of that ferocity for which the prince was famed beyond all warriors of his time, until he fell in love with the pretty actress under whose sway he became gentle as a child.

I meant to enter on the grass-covered

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Roman Road along which the prince retreated some seventeen centuries after the Romans made it. Here Roman coins and bits of ancient tile have been found, are still occasionally found. At any rate, it is well enough to keep one's eyes sharp upon the ground for a few hundred yards. But first another good look at the beautiful gardens which cover the camp of the Cavaliers—gardens planned and planted by Lindley, the famous horticulturist and botanist, father of the present Mr. Justice Lindley.

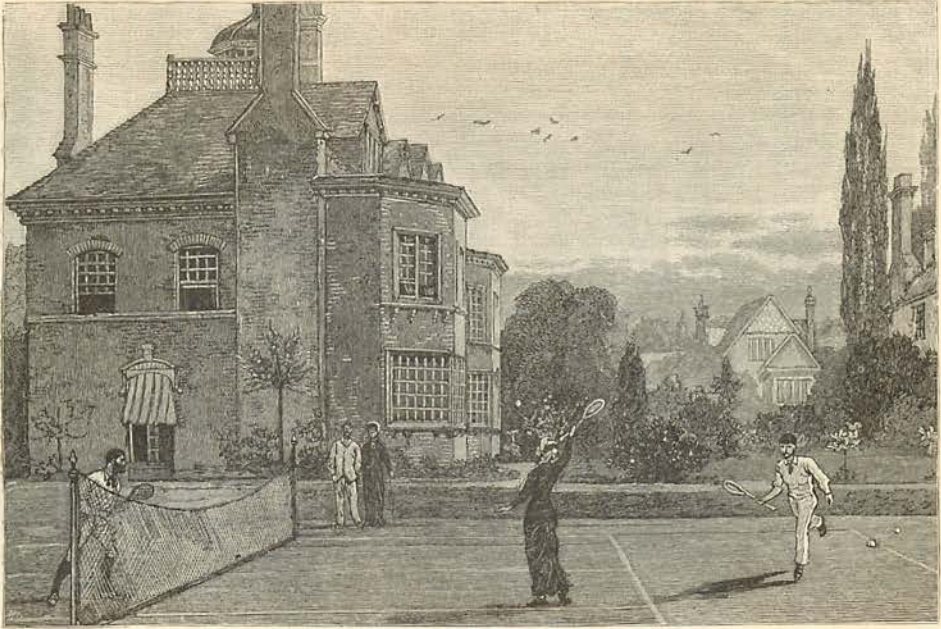
Angels and ministers of grace! am I dreaming? Right before me is the apparition of a little red town made up of quaintest Queen Anne houses. It is visible through the railway arch, as it might be a lunette picture projected upon a landscape. Surely my eyes are cheating me; they must have been gathering impressions of by-gone architecture along the Malls, and are now turning them to visions, and building them by ideal mirage into this dream of old-time homesteads!

I was almost afraid to rub my eyes lest the antique townlet should vanish, and crept softly along as one expecting to surprise fairies in their retreat. But when across the common a Metropolitan train came thundering, and the buildings did not disappear, I began to feel that they were fabrics not quite baseless. That they should be real seemed even stranger than that they should be fantasies. The old trees still stood, the poplars waved their green streamers in the summer breeze, the huge willows branched out on every side; but the turnips and pumpkins they once overhung had become æsthetic houses, and amid the flowers and fruit trees rosy children at play had taken the place of grimy laborers. I passed beneath a medlar—who ever before heard of a medlar-tree out on a sidewalk?—on through a wide avenue of houses that differed from each other sympathetically, in pleasing competition as to which could be prettiest. Their gables sometimes fronting the street, their doorways adorned with varied touches of taste, the windows surrounded with tinted glass, the lattices thrown open, and many comely young faces under dainty caps visible here and there, altogether impressed me with a sense of being in some enchanted land. After turning into several streets of this character, and strolling into several houses not yet inhabited, watching the decorators silently engaged

upon their work, I recognized that this was the veritable land of the lotus-eaters, where they who arrive may sit them down and say, "We will return no more."

My summer ramble ended in a conviction that Bedford Park was an adequate answer to Mr. Mallock's question, "Is life worth living?" If lived at Bedford Park, decidedly yes! In one year's time an architectural design adapted to our taste and needs stood finished in brick, amid trees planted by Lindley; the last convenience was completed, the ornamentation added; and therein I now sit to write this little sketch of the prettiest and pleasantest townlet in England, while my neighbor Mr. Nash is out on the balcony sketching the trees and houses that wave and smile through my study windows. For those who dwell here the world is divided into two great classes—those who live at Bedford Park, and those who do not. Nevertheless, we of the first class are not so far removed from those of the second as not to feel for them, and to help them as well as we can to see our village, so far as it can be put on paper in white and black. It is with that compassionate feeling that Mr. Nash with his pencil and I with my pen have prepared some account and illustration of what has been done toward building a Utopia in brick and paint in the suburbs of London.

For a long time cultured taste in London for persons of moderate means had been able to express itself only on paper. Any deviation from the normal style could be achieved only by the wealthy. The Dutch have the proverb, "Nothing is cheaper than paint," but the Dutch might have discovered their mistake had they lived in London within recent years, and ventured to desire any variation from the conventional decoration of houses. Even fifteen years ago the artistically decorated (modern) houses in this vast metropolis might almost be counted on one's fingers and toes, and they were the houses of millionaires or of artists. The artists could do much of the work themselves, and the millionaires could command special labors. But meanwhile the people who most desired beautiful homes were those of the younger generation whom the new culture had educated above the mere pursuit of riches, at the same time awakening in them refined tastes which only through riches could obtain their satisfaction. However, London is a vast place;



TOWER HOUSE AND LAWN-TENNIS GROUNDS.

one of the best things about it is that nearly every head, however ingeniously constructed, can find a circle of other heads to which it is related. The demand of a few expanded until its supply was at hand. Jonathan Carr, member of a family to which much of this kind of artistic activity in London is due, had become the proprietor of a hundred acres of land out here at Chiswick. It was land on which art had already been at work; a considerable part of it had been the home garden of Bedford House, where, as already said, Lindley had resided. Around the large garden were orchards and green fields. Mr. Carr believed that his land might fairly be made the site of a number of picturesque houses, both as to architecture and decoration, such as many of his acquaintances were longing for; he believed that if a considerable number of persons should contract for such houses, that kind of work which has been costly because exceptional might be much reduced; he believed also that there were architects and decorators who, out of materials sufficiently alike to be secured in large quantities, could produce a rich variety of combinations, so that a maximum of individual taste might be expressed at a minimum of cost. Mr. Carr consulted Norman Shaw on the matter; that architect encouraged

the project, and agreed to devote himself personally to it. And I may say here that the speedy success of the scheme was largely due to the well-known characters of the landlord and the architect. Their enthusiasm for art, their liberality and honor, excluded all suspicion that the scheme was a money-making bubble; the slow-growing plant of confidence was already grown in their case for the kind of people who really wanted these houses. In the course of little more than three years three hundred and fifty houses have been erected. They are embowered amid trees, and surrounded by orchards; their generous gardens are well stocked with trees, flowers, and fruits, so that these houses appear as if they had been here for generations. No one could imagine that four years ago they were all little sketches on paper, passing between landlord, architect, and residents; and indeed my friend Abbey, the artist, who has visited us occasionally, says he can not yet get it out of his head that he is walking through a water-color.

The first consideration is health. Bedford Park is naturally healthy. It is situated upon a gravel-bed, remote from the fogs of London, and with easy access to the river for its drains. Kensington is only nine minutes nearer the centre of



DINING-ROOM IN TOWER HOUSE.

London than Bedford Park, yet at Kensington few afternoons between October and February can be passed without gas-light, whereas here there were only four or five occasions last fall and winter when the lights were required before evening. There are beautiful walks around, and in ten minutes by train we reach Kew Gardens. The Chiswick Horticultural Gardens are under ten minutes' walk. There is no lack of breathing space. Co-operating with these natural sanitary advantages we have a system of open drain-pipes completely separating each house from the main drain, carrying all its drain-pipes outside of every house, thus preventing any back draught of sewer gas, and any serious evil or immediate discomfort arising from accidents to the water system of the house. The houses are built with fourteen-inch brick walls, and without cellars. It is in conformity with what has been decided to be the prudent plan in London that under-ground rooms are unknown here, each house being founded on a solid bed of concrete, the floors raised sufficiently high above this to allow of full and free ventilation beneath every house.

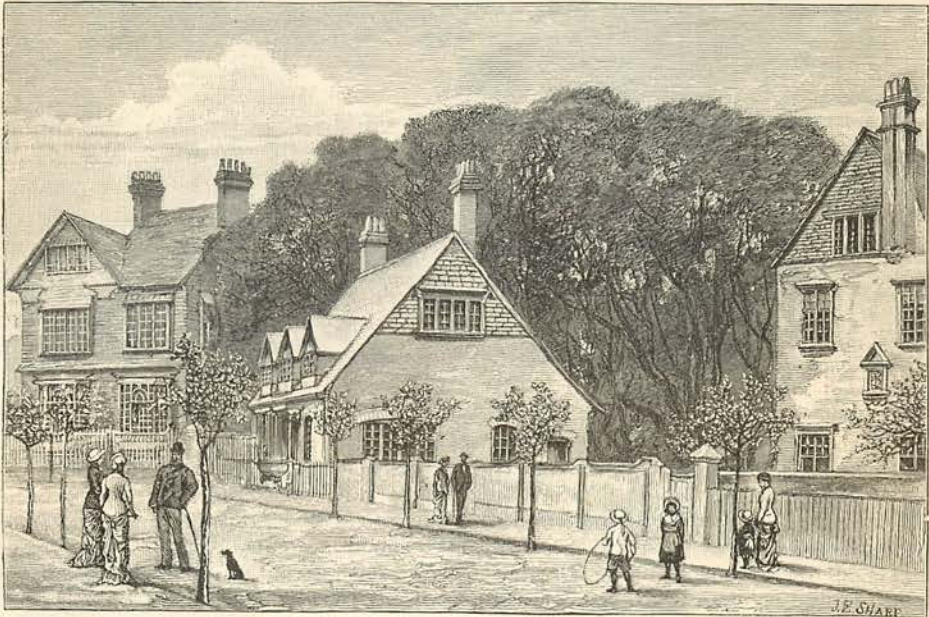
Sanitary considerations are not neglected in the decorations. Matting is used in the lining of halls and staircases; it is easy to keep clean, and does not gather or

send forth dust every time a door is opened, as is often the case with paper. Tiles are also much employed, which are also easy to keep clean; and although stained glass is used, it is as a decorative casement, and is not allowed to impede the light, which can never be spared in England.

What at once impresses the intelligent visitor to Bedford Park is the fact that the beauty which has been admittedly secured is not fictitious. A competent writer in the *Sporting and Dramatic News* (September 27, 1879) speaks very truly of this feature of the new village: "We have here no unchangeable cast-iron work, but hand-wrought wooden balustrades and palings; no great sheets of plate-glass, but small panes set in frames of wood which look strong and solid, although, the windows being large, they supply ample illumination for the spacious rooms within. There is no attempt to conceal with false fronts, or stucco ornament, or unmeaning balustrades, that which is full of comfortable suggestiveness in a climate like our own—the house roof; everything is simple, honest, unpretending. Within, no clumsy imitations of one wood to conceal another, but a preserving surface of beautifully flatted paint, made handsome by judicious arrangements of color. Here brick is openly brick, and wood is openly wood, and paint is openly paint. Noth-

ing comes in a mean, sneaking way, pretending to be that which it is not. Varnish is unknown. There is an old-world air about the place despite its newness, a strong touch of Dutch homeliness, with an air of English comfort and luxuriousness, but not a bit of the showy, artificial French stuffs which prevailed in our

dependently of each other, could hardly have occurred a few years ago, or, if it had occurred, would have been a misfortune of monotony; but recently these designs have been sufficiently varied, and the new patterns, which may be had in divers colors and shades, are now so numerous that it is quite possible for all to



QUEEN ANNE GARDENS.

homes when Queen Anne was on the throne, when we imported our furniture from France, and believed in nothing which was not French."

Those who purchase or lease houses at Bedford Park are allowed the choice where their wall-papers shall be purchased, what designs shall be selected, and what colors shall be used on the wood-work. A certain amount is allotted for the decoration of the drawing-room, dining-room, and so on, and the occupants are invited to select up to that sum freely; or if they fancy some costlier paper or decoration, the excess of price is added. As a matter of fact, a majority of the residents have used the wall-papers and designs of Morris, the draught on whose decorative works has become so serious that a branch of the Bloomsbury establishment will probably become necessary in the vicinity of Bedford Park. This natural selection of the Morris designs by so many families, in-

be satisfied without a calamitous sameness. And this result is largely due to the excellent taste and ingenuity of the founder of the village, who is pretty certain to give those arranging the interiors of their houses the best advice, not unfrequently guiding them about the place to see the effect of certain papers already on walls, and showing how by new combinations of dado-paper and wall-paper, or distemper, repetitions of neighboring decorations may be avoided. The besetting sin of the new decoration—monotony—is thus measurably escaped.

The best standards, indeed, Mr. Carr is generally able to show in his own house. His taste and that of his wife have made their house very beautiful indeed. It would be difficult to find a more beautiful room than the dining-room, which our artist has drawn with care, but much of its beauty depends upon the soft colors and tints of its walls and its genuinely



CO-OPERATIVE STORES AND TABARD INN.

old furniture. This house, known as the Tower House, is as elegant, comfortable, and charming as need be desired even by those whose home is the seat of a continuous and liberal hospitality. The hall, landings, and rooms are all spacious and well proportioned; yet the entire building, arrangements, and decorations have probably not cost more than two thousand pounds.

In Mr. Nash's sketch of "Queen Anne Gardens" the observer may see some characteristic features of the place, such as the venerable air of our trees, and the relation of our streets to the old characters traced upon the soil by the gardens which preceded these. It is said some of the streets of Boston, Massachusetts, followed the old sheep-paths; and it may now be entered in the archives of Bedford Park, against its becoming a city, that its streets and gardens have been largely decided by Dr. Lindley's trees. Some of them curve to make way for the lofty patriarchs of the estate, which we hope may long wave over us. There has been an accompanying good result, that wherever the eye looks it meets something beautiful.

One of our views is slightly utilitarian. It is taken from the old Roman Road, and from the Co-operative Stores in the foreground commands the railway, on which

trains bear us to the heart of London in thirty minutes. Indeed, one can start from our little station for a voyage round the world, so many are the junctions to be reached from it. The portico of the church is visible on the right in this picture, and in the distance the steeple of Turnham Green parish church. Beside the Co-operative Stores stands the one inn of Bedford Park. It is a part of the contract of each lessee that he shall not allow any public-house (or drinking house) to be opened on his premises, nor allow any trade to be carried on upon the same. Yet there is need of an inn that families may come to experiment on the place, and where lodgings may be obtained when houses are overfull of guests, Bedford Park being much given to hospitality. The inn is called "The Tabard." That was the name of the old inn in the borough, near London Bridge, from which Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims started.

Another of Mr. Nash's views shows our Tennis lawn and Badminton floor (asphalt), which are pretty generally the scene of merry games. These beautiful grounds are at the west end of Tower House (seen on the left). Its garden is not fenced off from the Tennis ground, and extends to the Club-house. It contains beautiful trees, among others the first

Wellingtonia (as the English insist on naming that American institution) planted in England.

The Club is the social heart of Bedford Park, and it is speaking moderately to say it is as pure a sample of civilization as any institution upon this planet. After claiming that, my reader need hardly be informed that in it ladies and gentlemen are on a perfect equality. Whatever distinctions are made are such as instinct and taste suggest. The ladies did not enter the billiard-room, possibly fearing that they might put too much restraint upon gentlemen who not only smoke, but some-

new books with which the table is always stocked, or to take refreshments. Outside of this superb window may be seen flowers and ornamental shrubs by day, but the time selected by our artist for presenting it was somewhat after midnight, on an occasion when there were prettier flowers inside—those of the night-blooming variety, which never fail to spring up when the summons has gone forth for a fancy-dress ball.

The book-shelves, settees, and, indeed, most of the furniture in these rooms are genuinely antique and finely carved oak of the seventeenth century; other pieces are



READING AND BILLIARD ROOM, CLUB-HOUSE.

times like to take their coats off at the game; so there has been added a ladies' billiard-room, exquisitely panelled and papered. The wainscot is of oak which was once in a church of London City built by Sir Christopher Wren: the wood was so sound after all those years as to "bleed" when sawn for this room. Above this panelling there is a soft golden paper. A door opens between this and the reading-room, beyond which is the gentlemen's billiard-room. One of our two sketches made in this room looks toward this door; the other shows its great bay-window, on the seats about which ladies and gentlemen are wont to sit to read the

of the dark perforated pattern formerly made in India. In the reading-room are to be found all the appliances of the Pall Mall clubs, the journals and periodicals of the world, and the newest works from the great circulating libraries. The Club has a large hall for assemblies; it is beautifully decorated, and especially rejoices in some old panels, with classical subjects wrought in gold on ebony, which fill the wall space above the mantel-piece. There is a stage, with drop-scene representing one of our streets, and appointments for theatrical representations. Here the inhabitants assemble to witness the performances of their amateur company, and to



A FANCY-DRESS PARTY AT THE CLUB.

listen to concerts by their musical neighbors. Here they enjoy lectures, poetical and dramatic recitations, and other entertainments, at the close of which they generally dance.

Fancy-dress balls are an amusement much esteemed at Bedford Park. There is, indeed, a rumor in the adjacent town of London that the people of Bedford Park move about in fancy dress every day. And so far as the ladies are concerned it is true that many of their costumes, open-air as well as other, might some years ago have been regarded as fancy dress, and would still cause a sensation in some Philistine quarters. At our last fancy-dress ball some young men, having danced until five o'clock, when it was bright daylight, concluded not to go to bed at all, but went out to take a game of tennis. At eight they were still playing, but though they were in fancy costumes they did not attract much attention. The tradesmen and others moving about at that hour no doubt supposed it was only some new Bedford Park fashion. There seems to be a superstition on the Continent that fancy-

dress balls must take place in the winter, and end with *Mi-Carême*. It does not prevail here. It was on one of the softest nights of July that we had our last ball of that character. The grounds, which in one of our pictures are seen beyond the tennis-players, were overhung with Chinese lanterns, and the sward and bushes were lit up, as it were, with many-tinted giant glow-worms. The *fête-champêtre* and the mirth of the ball-room went on side by side, with only a balcony and its luxurious cushions between them. Comparatively few of the ladies sought to represent any particular "character"; there were about two hundred present, and fancy costumes for both sexes were *de rigueur*; yet among all these there were few conventionally historical or allegorical characters. There was a notable absence of ambitious and costly dresses. The ladies had indulged their own tastes in design and color, largely assisted, no doubt, by the many artists which Bedford Park can boast, and the result was decidedly the most beautiful scene of the kind I have ever witnessed.



There is hardly an evening of the spring and summer when Bedford Park does not show unpurposed tableaux, which, were they visible any evening at the opera, would be declared fine achievements of managerial art. Through the low and wide windows, on which the curtains often do not fall, the light of wax candles comes out to mingle with the moonlight, and many are they who wend their way from the more dismal suburbs to gaze in at the happy families *en tableau*, and listen to the music stealing out on the ever-quiet air.

The new suburb which has thus come into existence swiftly, yet so quietly that the building of it has not scared the nightingale I heard yesternight nor the skylarks singing while I write, has gone far toward the realization of some aims not its own, ideals that have hitherto failed. There is not a member of it who would not be startled, if not scandalized, at any suggestion that he or she belonged to a community largely socialistic. They would allege, with perfect truth, that they are not even acquainted with the majority of their neighbors, have their own circle of friends, and go on with their business as men and women of the world. Nevertheless, it is as certainly true that a degree in social evolution is represented by Bedford Park, and that it is in the direction of that co-operative life which animated the dreams of Père Enfantin and Saint-Simon. All society, indeed, must steadily and normally advance in that direction. For a long time there have been tendencies to put more and more of the domestic work out upon establishments which all have in common. As one baker prepares bread for many families, and one laundry washes for many, and the railway, omnibus, cab, ply for many, so other accommodations needed by all are found to be within reach of the co-operative principle; even the luxuries of life are found to be largely within reach of it. This village has been rendered possible by that principle, though it had another aim. Houses of similar architecture have in recent years been built here and there in London and other cities, but they have probably cost their owners a third more than they have cost here, because the large number of families which agreed to buy or rent houses enabled the landlord and founder of Bedford Park to make large, therefore comparatively cheap, arrangements for the supply of materials and

labor, elsewhere special or exceptional. By this means one of the chief advantages of co-operation was to some extent secured. We have also our co-operative stores; our newspapers and current literature are obtained in common; we have billiard-rooms, tennis lawns, club conveniences, and entertainments to a considerable extent in common; and perhaps by the time this paper is read the Tabard may be supplying the *table d'hôte* at a rate sufficiently moderate to place a daily dinner within reach of families who may find that desirable. Thus the co-operative principle has shown its applicability to the requirements of the cultured class, who are especially interested in making for their families beautiful homes, without, as Thoreau said, sacrificing life to its means. Incomes are largely increased when they need no longer be expended on the physical appliances of comfort beyond the actual advantage derived. To keep a private carriage in order that it may be used an hour or two each day is not economy, if an equally good carriage can be hired for the hours needed. Now and then we hear a little gossip when some of the dishes at a distinguished dinner party are suspected of having been prepared by Duclos instead of a private *chef*, but the tendency of refined society is to smile still more at large outlays for ostentation.

But while in some regards Bedford Park must be considered a socialistic village, it is almost the reverse of any community which has been so called hitherto, and is far away from the rocks on which most of them have been wrecked. No step in the planting or development of the village has been artificial, or even prescribed; each institution has appeared in response to a definite want. It was not in consequence of any original scheme that the co-operative stores, the club, or the Tabard Inn were built. The entire freedom of the village and of its inhabitants is unqualified by any theory whatever, whether social, political, or economic.

Bedford Park is in danger of becoming a show place. Now and then the fair riders of Hyde Park extend afternoon exercise to enjoy a look at the new suburb. And sometimes the statesman, weary with his midnight work in Parliament or in Downing Street, finds relief in this quiet retreat. Professor Fawcett is apt to put in an appearance on Sunday afternoons, and one day the grand face of John Bright, with



AN ARTIST'S STUDIO.

its white halo of silken hair, was seen among us. M. Renan, when he was delivering his Hibbert lectures, was entertained in one of our homes, and pronounced Bedford Park "une véritable utopie." He appeared quite amazed at finding in London that ideal place which French enthusiasm has often dreamed of, and which differs from the "plain living and high thinking" of the English philosophers. For here where we have the scientific lecture one evening, we may have theatricals on the next; and if we have ambrosial poetry or classic music one day, on the next the ladies will be found attending the School for Cookery, and learning how to make dishes dainty enough to set before any gourmand. Minister Lowell has also paid us a visit, and I believe he thought Bedford Park ought to be somewhere in the neighborhood of Harvard University. But our most memorable visitor was "H. H.," whose eyes illuminated our town for a day or two, and then went away with such pictures as can only be painted when such vision as hers comes upon such a vision as she found here. She came from a beautiful home in a beautiful land; from bright rooms decorated with many a brilliant stripe and spot contributed by the wild creatures and growths of Colorado, and touched all over with her own poetic taste;

and she realized at once that she had come to sister homes with hers, where there was the same desire to cultivate beauty in harmony with nature. The brilliant letter she wrote about her visit here comes back to Bedford Park just as I write this my last page, and among the many reports that have been written of us none is more true. My distant readers will perceive that my enthusiasm is not of delusion, if I conclude my rambling paper by borrowing for a moment the pen of "H. H." "Only thirty minutes by rail from Charing Cross—gardens, country air, lanes, bits of opens where daisies grow, where fogs do not hang, and from which far horizons can be seen—is not the London prisoner lucky that can flee his jail at night, and sleep till morning in such a suburb? Lucky indeed, no matter to what sort of house he escaped, so it stood on a spot like this. But when to the opens, the clear air, lanes, and daisies, it is added that, fleeing thither, the London prisoner may sit down and rest, lie down and sleep in, and rise up and enjoy, a charming little Queen Anne house, built, colored, and decorated throughout with good taste by artists who know what souls need as well as what bodies require, there is conferred on him a double, nay, an immeasurable, benefit and unreckonable obligation."