

ties, often on the part of the janitor, to the use of the front yard, if there happens to be a square yard of green grass in it. In New England we have a great many school-yards where, when the city property committee commenced operations in the direction of building, they carefully removed all the trees and everything that suggested a vestige of shade, and left a dreary, barren place for a playground. But if by any chance they have left a tree, we are warned against harming that tree, and the best assurance against harming is to keep away from the tree. In spite of that, we have in Springfield benches under the trees and on the ground; and two years ago when strong opposition was made against our use of the land in any way whatever, we simply agreed that if at the end of the summer term the grass had been destroyed and the city property committee demanded it, we would pay the cost of replacing the turf. We did wear away some grass, but I think the city property committee had undergone a change of heart, for we never were asked to replace the turf.

The next item on the program is a paper entitled "Landscape Gardening in Playgrounds", by Mr. Charles Mulford Robinson, one whom we know to be an authority on this subject, one who has a great love of the beautiful, and has had it in his power "to make the desert blossom as the rose", doing splendid work throughout this country. Unfortunately, Mr. Robinson will be unable to read his paper, but it will be read by Mr. Howard Bradstreet, Secretary of the Parks and Playground Association of New York City.

I beg to introduce Mr. Bradstreet.

LANDSCAPE GARDENING FOR PLAYGROUNDS

PAPER OF MR. CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

The subject of this paper was assigned. The fact is significant. It would not mean very much for an individual to think that there ought to be landscape gardening in playgrounds and to write about it, because there very seldom is any. But to have the national organization of playground workers consider the subject so deserving of thought as to ask for a paper on it, must mean something. Necessarily the ideas put forth are the

writer's; but underlying them is the significant fact that the request for the paper came, uninvited, from the Association.

It has seemed best to emphasize this point, lest there might be hope that the paper would prove like the famously brief discussion of snakes in Ireland. To destroy that delusion at once, let me say that the discussion will be divided into two main questions: First, why should there be landscape gardening in playgrounds? Second, how, if it be desirable, can its effects be secured?

Why should there be landscape gardening in children's playgrounds? Do you remember the legacies contained in a document published a year or so ago, said to be the will of a patient in the Insane Asylum of Cook County, Illinois? These were his bequests to children:

"I leave to children, all and every, the flowers of the field, and the blossoms of the woods, and the right to play among them freely, according to the customs of children, warning them at the same time against thistles and thorns, —and I leave the children the long, long days to be merry in, in a thousand ways. I devise to boys, jointly, all the useful idle fields and commons where ball may be played; all pleasant waters where one may swim; all snow-clad hills where one may coast, and all streams and ponds where one may fish, or where, when grim winter comes, one may skate; to have and to hold the same for the period of their boyhood."

Now, as soon as a city becomes of such size that there are a great many children, multitudes of boys and of girls, there are not left any flowers and fields and woods. The "idle fields and commons," the pleasant waters where one may freely swim, snow-clad hills where one may coast, or skate, are so far away as to be inaccessible, quite out of the children's world as far as practical usefulness goes. It is to supply their want that playgrounds are created. That is why the grounds are equipped with ball fields, swimming pools, toboggan slides, and skating ponds. We are only trying to give to childhood, city-born as well as country, its rightful heritage.

It has been found by experiment that it is easier, cheaper, and more satisfactory to the children themselves to do this by bringing into the city little oases of country, that shall be the

children's own and that they can use every day, than once in a long while to take them out to the real country. But in bringing these playground oases of country into town, it is strange how often we have forgotten "the flowers of the fields and the blossoms of the woods"—the very first articles which the insane man itemized as a legacy "to children, all and every." We have provided toys and games and brought in the opportunities for sport of various sort, but we have forgotten the flowers. Yet never was child, boy or girl, taken for the first time into the country and left alone who did not go at once for the flowers. Before ball is tossed or race is run, starved little hands clutch for buttercups and daisies.

It is a curious thing that we makers of playgrounds have so commonly overlooked the flowers; have fancied that any old vacant lot, however bare, would perform its full playground function of giving chance for the play of muscles. For when we build parks, which are only bigger playgrounds for bigger people—the making accessible for grown folk of some larger bits of country—the flowers and the beauty of landscape are the first things thought of. That is, when we plan for ourselves, we recognize that beauty is one of the things most craved in the parks—to be thought of ahead of golf links, or boating, or zoos. But when we are planning for the children, to whom nature's book never has been opened, we tell them to run and jump, to learn basketry and the principles of civic government; but to look for nothing beautiful—even though, as consequence, the seals never fall from their eyes and the loveliness of plant life never be revealed.

It is a great responsibility to take. The propriety of bringing into the playgrounds that beauty which landscape gardening commands, even in the most restricted area and under the most unfavorable conditions, seems to me overwhelmingly convincing. But this other article may also be advanced. In the parks, beauty and landscape find a sufficient justification in the pleasure they give. Beauty rests, soothes, and pleases us; but generally it makes us no wiser. In the playgrounds, where to its æsthetic attraction there is added the merit of novelty, it is also uniformly educational.

The very constituents of a gardening composition—tree and grass and bush and flower—are delightful to a child, even apart from the picture they may make. There is the appeal of life

to life. And think what, on the purely physical side, natural shade and the freshness of living green may mean, on a hot day, to the children of the scorching tenements. In Chicago, where the playgrounds are the best in the world, there is told a story of a little barefoot girl who rang the bell at one of the fine houses and asked, "Please, sir, may I put my feet on your grass?" Playgrounds are too often developed on the theory that she would have asked to swing on the area gate or to slide down the railing of the steps, and never have noticed that there was grass. Yet the wish she expressed was normal; and it seems to me that the voice of that little child in the great twentieth century city echoed humbly a thought of the Prophet Isaiah, when, dreaming of a city beautiful, thousands of years ago, he cried, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!"—and then in his fine ecstasy: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem!" It is for us, as this little child unconsciously asked, to comfort the children and redeem the playground by giving to it its beautiful garment.

There is, then, no consistency in the phrase I find in one playground leaflet, "The maximum of utility and the minimum of ornament." Did you ever know a child who did not love ornament and beautiful things? Shall we, who pretend to feed—and do feed the little bodies that are hungry for a chance to play—give only stones to the starving spirit, senselessly bragging of a "maximum of utility" in such provision? We must redeem in order to comfort.

How to do this in a practical way, with the handicaps imposed by the playground, is the second question.

Let us begin at the entrance. Whatever that entrance is, we shall be stealing no play space if we use a few feet or inches on either side for some growing thing that will make it pleasant and inviting. If the entrance be the beginning of a path, which the children do not keep to very carefully as they come running in, so that a trodden space is worn on either side of it, a few prickly barberries will keep bare feet (and stockinged legs too) where they belong, and will put at the threshold of the playground a little splash of color, which—with berry and leaf—is beautiful all the year. Perhaps, instead of posts, pyramidal arbor vitæ can stand on either side; or morning glories can climb

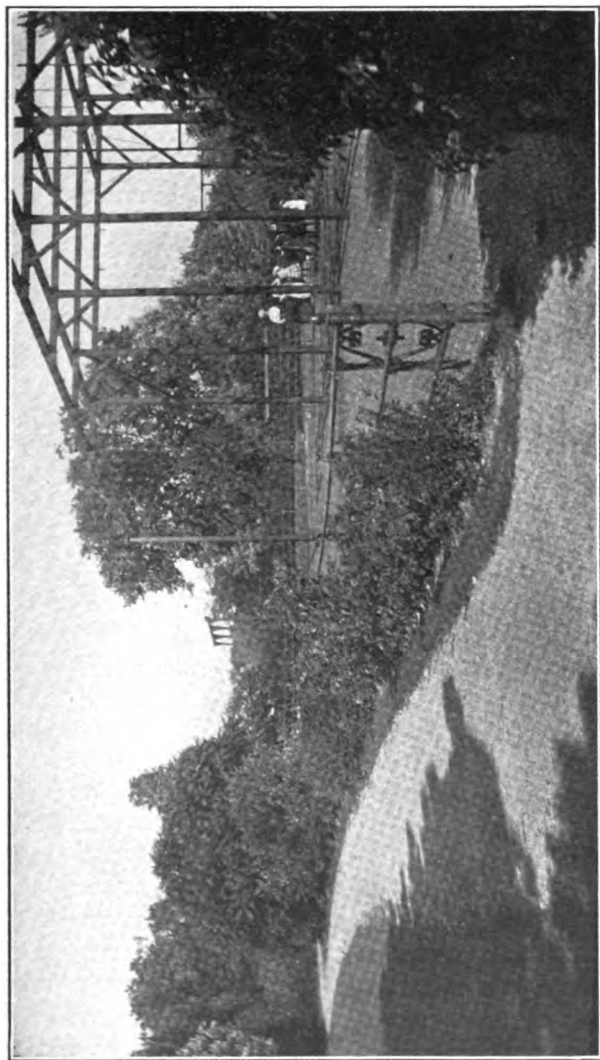
a wire netting—too fine to invite boy-climbing—and so make an arch of beauty into that children's fairyland where there is nothing but fun.

The boundaries of the plot surely do not need to be bare wall or fence. A hedge, formal or informal, in mixed shrub planting—according to the local conditions—can usually take the place of a fence. Disagreeable boundaries—as old sheds, or a railroad—can be screened by planting; and a bare wall that seems discouragingly insistent can be quickly clothed with ampelopsis, that is made gay with a fringe of hollyhocks studding it with color. Perhaps this seems a very rudimentary sort of landscape gardening; but if we can get the frame of our picture satisfactory, we have made a good start; and if, besides that, we dignify and give a pleasant emphasis to our entrances, we shall really have gone a long way toward a "composition".

Then there is the matter of the building, or buildings. These, as the dominating note of the space, can be treated as the culminating feature of the architectural layout. That ought to be planned at the very start, when walks are to be laid down, light placed, the flag-pole located, and the grounds perhaps graded. I should hope that close against the building there might be space for some bright flowers—and it may be that a little band of formal gardening could be arranged there. It would be appropriate. But we will not be dependent for flowers on the gay annuals or perennials of the formal garden. Among our shrubs we shall have lilacs, bridal wreath, deutzia, dogwood, and rhododendrons and azalias, if they will grow, and roses, and sumac, and hawthorne—all the flowers and gay foliage we can mass successfully together. And while doing this, we will give to the building, as the crown of the composition, the glory that goes with propriety of setting and adequacy of support.

I am not forgetting the play spaces. They, of course, are what the playground is primarily for. Our plans have not trespassed upon them, for we have talked only of the entrance and the boundaries of the building, which there have to be in the case, and the latter's immediate surroundings.

On the grounds there ought to be some trees. These will not in the least interfere with the play, for they are useful as bases and goals; and it might even be that God, in his love for little children, would make one of them grow in such a way that there could be seats in it; or, if it were on the girls' side, a natural



EVEN THE OUTDOOR GYMNASIUM MAY HAVE A PLEASANT SETTING

playhouse under drooping branches, or, on the boys' side, a cave! So the trees, with their beauty and grateful shade, may even add to the play-availability of the space.

Finally, the well-equipped playground for little children has a wading pool. Usually, this has a concrete border, though sometimes clean sand is placed around its edge to enhance the resemblance to the beach of sea or lake. The pool gives infinite delight. Its social service is such that almost any æsthetic shortcoming of which it might be guilty could be forgiven. But why should the pool have æsthetic shortcomings? Why should it not be made the charming adjunct to the playground that it is in almost any other landscape? It seems to me that to have the planning of the small area which a playground usually covers, and to be told to put a pool of water in it, is to be given a good opportunity. A pergola at one side or end, making a shady place where mothers can sit and watch their children, incidentally makes a pleasant picture. A jet of water rising in the middle of the basin as a fountain adds much to the fun of the pool, and another element to its æsthetic charm. Or we may forego formalism and thought of Italian gardens, and give to the pool, behind its screen of shrubs and bushes, such seclusion as the naiads might have coveted in the fastnesses of enchanted woods. The while, we shall save real little naiads, with skirts rolled high in the innocence of childhood, from the street's too intrusive gaze. Or yet again, the wading pool may not be a pool at all. Why not give to it the form of a stream, if there be some fall to the grounds? I never have seen this done; but it would be easy to arrange—easier, indeed, to manage than is a big round basin, as far as space is concerned. It would be a simple matter to beautify it then, and what joy to the children to tramp its length and feel the little current eddying around their legs! And small dams could be built by the boys and destroyed again, and little water-wheels, that would give measureless pleasure and some instruction.

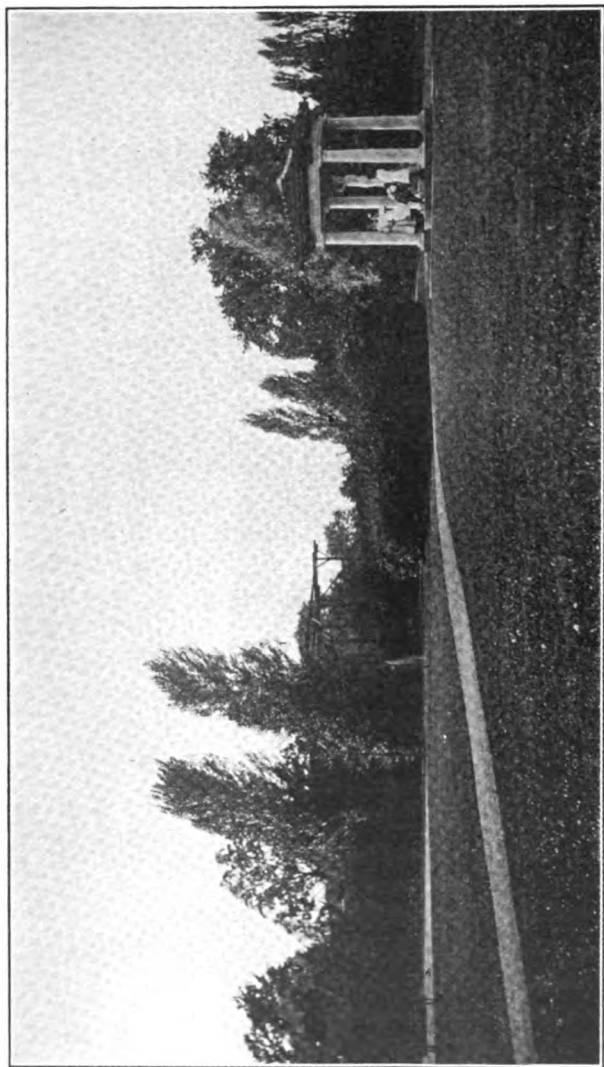
In fact, to my mind, the whole playground conception has heretofore been wrong. We have taken as our ideal a bare city lot equipped with paraphernalia for children's exercise. The truer deal would be an acre or so of natural looking country, which we should create if necessary where are "the flowers of the fields and the blossoms of the woods" and "pleasant waters"—a chance for the city child to know the delights of a real outdoors, of

a place where in the night there might be fairies, as there never would be in the ordinary city playground.

The potential educational value of the playground thus developed must suggest itself without the need of exposition. At the Washington dinner last winter Commissioner Macfarland suggested that the playground ought to have been named the "outdoor school". It was a terse stating of a big fact; and there can be no question that our "outdoor school" would be more effective with less of city in it and more of nature—with less policemen and more God. Also the general influence and tendency would be better.

But aside from that effect, more readily admitted than measured, I should like to see the playground include deliberate nature-study work. If a bed of children's gardens edged the whole space, it might not have to be more than a foot, or perhaps six inches, in width, to give to every child frequenting the ground an individual bed to prepare and sow and weed and tend and harvest. One instructor, taking one side a day, could easily supervise them all. Prizes for best results would keep up the interest were artificial stimulus needed; but there are not many things that a city child loves better than a chance to dig. In Rochester, a little truant Johnny was preparing himself for State's prison as fast as he could. In desperation he was transferred to another school, whose principal has a wonderful "knack with boys". There he was told that if he would not run away for two days, on the third he might dig in the garden. The bribe was accepted, and it was found that by degrees the intervals of school attendance, to pay for so dear a privilege, could be lengthened. Johnny's garden took the first prize that spring, and Johnny had become one of the best boys in school. I was one of the committee who awarded the prize, and heard the story in consequence.

Besides the space around the edge of the playground, there is the possible formal garden in connection with the shelter. In either case the bright flowers of the children's beds would do much to increase the attractiveness of the playground. Of course, there are some boys who will be unruly and who might injure the beds. Usually that element is barely noticeable on a well-conducted ground; but if there were such an element to be feared, an organization of the boys themselves, to protect



DRINKING FOUNTAIN IN A CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND AT CANANDAIGUA, N. Y.

their playground and act as knights to guard the flowers of the defenseless girls, would effectually check it.

And then I would have parties of playground children given country walks now and again. This is done in Chicago and possibly elsewhere. The suggestion pertinent to this paper is that one main purpose would be to have the children see the playground flora in its natural habitat, to help them to identify it in its wild state; and when any portion of the planting needed replenishing, not to get the stock from a nursery or from the park commissioners, but to have the boys taken into the country, to get it themselves and to plant it themselves. For the stock should be native as far as possible, and the children's sense of proprietorship in their playground and responsibility for its care should be fostered.

At Pittsburg, and I hope the custom exists in some other places, the Playground Association conducts flower days. For these occasions, bunches of cut flowers are sent from private gardens all over the city, and from the suburbs, making a brave and beautiful showing, and then the flowers are distributed among the school and playground children, who take them home. That is a step in the right direction. It helps to develop that appreciation of the beautiful which there is such need of developing; and which the usual city playground starves. The influence of these things goes beyond the child—further, indeed, than we can measure. A properly developed playground would cast something of its glory and wonder over even its most bedraggled little visitor. Though he were only

* * * * a dirty little fellow in a dirty part of town
Where the window-panes are sooty and the roofs are tumble-down,
Where the snow falls black in winter, and the wilting sultry heat
Comes like a pestilence in summer, thro' the narrow dirty street,
Yet, amid the want and squalor of the crowded, sorry place
You could find the little fellow by his happy smiling face.

DISCUSSION FOLLOWING MR. ROBINSON'S PAPER

MR. DWIGHT H. PERKINS, member of the Special Park Commission and chairman of the Playground Commission, Chicago, spoke as follows: You ask what might be done in a small way. I beg to say that at another time lantern slides will be shown of some of these gardens as found in one or two of the Chicago

playgrounds for a number of years, but inasmuch as there was some apparent recognition given to practical considerations, I think it might be interesting if the conference knew not only what has been done, but what is about to be done in the Chicago school playgrounds.

We always hear of the difficulty of money and the lack of money, but with a little side-stepping, which I think is admissible, I believe that it is possible to make an outline for just what Mr. Robinson has so admirably and suggestively pictured.

The Chicago Board of Education is in the habit of spending five dollars a running foot for a heavy, wrought-iron fence with iron posts. This is put all around playgrounds, in order that discipline may be maintained. I happen to have the good fortune to have three relations to playgrounds. I happen to be a member of the Special Park Commission. We have discovered a wire fence, made of wire mesh, which can be put up at 50 cents per running foot. I am not now talking art, I am talking money, with a view to what I think may be practical and which may also make these beautiful things possible. We are planning now instead of putting up the high iron fence at five dollars per foot, to put up a concrete and wire fence at one dollar per foot. We are planning to put up a fence giving perfect opportunity for the school to control the children, for discipline, and yet have four dollars left per foot for planting. That leaves a chance to dig out eighteen inches and put in clay soil with loam on top and to put in all the shrubs which Mr. Robinson has described. Then we may still say to our practical boards that we have saved them two dollars per running foot.

A representative of the Boston playgrounds said: We have a playground about one-eighth of a mile long, which contains two hundred and forty individual gardens, about three feet wide and eight feet long, which is the width of the strip. Around this we use wire fencing. The children pick the flowers themselves and take them home, as well as the vegetables. The only discipline necessary is to threaten to take away a garden. We also have a cut-flower festival, but that is too much in the nature of a hand-out.

MR. WILLIAM A. STECHER, of Philadelphia: I can explain that in Philadelphia, in the Fairview Playground, there also is a garden. The playground is perhaps five acres in extent. There are bath-houses in one corner, a playground for little

children at the other end, a baseball field in another corner, and between these the individual gardens are situated. Each child at the beginning of the year applies for a plot. The plots are open to both boys and girls, equally. The size of the plot is six by eight. Surrounding it we have the so-called class plots, taken care of by all the children. What a child raises on its own plot belongs to him or to her; and the flowers and shrubs from the class gardens are usually given to hospitals.

MRS. H. H. FASSETT, of San Francisco: When the California Club of San Francisco established playgrounds, they had accomplished a great deal, and they eventually turned them over to the Board of Education for care. Then, under the leadership of Mrs. Lovell White, the president of the Outdoor Art League, we undertook to introduce gardens in schools, and met with the usual opposition from the Board of Education. The Outdoor Art League made itself a committee to attend to the planting of the playgrounds. We covered the walls with vines; we covered the buildings. We paid for soil, very narrow strips of loam. We encouraged the children in home gardening, and supplied them with flowers. We feel that the greatest work that women can do in their clubs is to do the initial part and to show the men how these things go, if they are only permitted to go.

A representative from New London, Conn., spoke as follows: It may perhaps interest some of you to hear how I managed to get a small appropriation. We had a number of fine buildings in the middle of a large block. I secured the coöperation of a man who was a professional landscape gardener and asked the board for fifty dollars to make a beginning. I told them that if they did not appropriate the money, I would pay it. That was a bluff. We made a great showing with that fifty dollars, and what was the result? The result was that at the last meeting of the board, when they were making up the budget for the next year, the supervisor wanted something done in planting in the garden of his school. Get the proper example, and you will get what you want.

MRS. MARY F. B. O'CONNELL, of the New York City Park Department, said: I may state that on the municipal playgrounds in the city of New York, the Park Department within the last fourteen months has planted two hundred shrubs and trees around gymnasiums and playgrounds in the city.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that most of us when we first read of what took place in Chicago a year ago thought of it as something far beyond the reach of the smaller cities. In Springfield, Mass., two weeks ago yesterday, the playground season was brought to a close by a playground festival held in the middle of the city, on a much smaller scale, of course, than anything that was done in Chicago; but it was an experiment. We did not know how it was coming out, but we went at it, and for three hours there was something doing every minute of the time. Boys and girls to the number of one thousand gathered in that enclosure. We had seven per cent. of the total population of 80,000 people around that square to witness the fun.

One of the great problems, perhaps the greatest problem that this country is facing, is the immigration problem—the assimilating of races; and there are those who believe that a long step toward the solution of this problem is right in this playground movement, and in this festival, which should come perhaps not once, but two or three times a year. At the gathering of which I spoke nine nationalities were represented by the children. Their parents were there, and I think it is not overstepping the truth when I say that for the time being we forgot the racial question. We were all one family, citizens of Springfield, out for a good time, and all took hold regardless of nationality or color; and to my mind it is something that is possible for every community to engage in on a larger or smaller scale.

The next speaker, Miss Amalie Hofer, of Chicago, will give us a paper on "National Festivals in Chicago during the Past Year".

. Miss Hofer.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECENT NATIONAL FESTIVALS IN CHICAGO

PAPER OF MISS AMALIE HOFER

The national festival has to do with the heart history of a people, and ever centers about such experiences and events as lift the deeper passions of a race into united, heroic action. Groups thus stirred by some valid human exigent are brought into coherency, which in time assumes the form of picturesque