

RANDOM NOTES.

Kindly disposed persons with impressive pocketbooks have made strenuous efforts to let a little sunshine and happiness into the lives of the submerged population of New York. Considerable movements, having for their object the bringing of these people in contact with the pure air and perfect freedom of the fields, have been instituted and a great deal of money has been spent to this end. Active agents have entered the homes of darkness and dirt and misery, holding out the promise of a health-giving, joy imparting season by ocean side, in wooded glen and flowered fields, and, generally, they have found contentment in squalor, and the men and women who live like herded cattle have said that they had no desire to get away and live otherwise.

Within a few miles of the greatest city in the world, and, with one exception, the most populous, are many places of rural beauty. No Chinese wall cuts off the denizen of the packed district of the town from the beauties of nature unadorned. There are no difficulties in the way of transportation. There is no lack of invitation. If it is a question of thrift, then are unlimited opportunities for profitable labor in the regions near enough to New York to be properly called suburban. In the nearby villages and towns on the farms of Westchester county, Long Island and New Jersey there is a constant demand for the labor of men and women. While in the city there are from one to two hundred thousand persons who suffer from chronic idleness, who cannot get enough work to do to much more than dampen the bottom of the inevitable growler. But the advantages of the country are ignored, for the most part, while reeking tenements echo with the groans of the distressed.

It is much the same with persons of ampler means. Somehow the habit of living crowded and cramped in a stuffy flat, with the everlasting jangle of "L" trains and cable cars, grows upon these veritable cliff dwellers, and all the year around, with the exception, perhaps, of two or three weeks in July or August, they remain cooped in their dismal quarters, uncomfortable and happy.

A month ago some persons who had lately come to New York from the country where the wind blows off the sand hills and sweeps unrestrained across blazing prairies, bethought them of the world that lies beyond the Battery and beyond Harlem, of the other world that is not bounded on one side by the North river and on the other by the East river, and one day they set out to find, not Arcadia, but a place where there are no charity-fair story buildings, no paved streets, no park policemen around elevated trains. It may be interesting to know how easily these persons who had but lately scraped the sand from their eyes found just what they sought and that right at the gate of the city where the thousands might come in if they chose, but happily do not.

These venturesome persons at the very first endeavor stopped at a place just nine miles from the City Hall, which, as everybody knows, is at the lower end of the town. And here, almost in sight of the tall buildings they wanted to escape, they found a spot as little affected by proximity to William Lyson Strong's bailiwick as if it were a hundred miles removed from urban influences. The patron of Russell Sage's "L" road who leaves the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street station on Eighth avenue, may, in a few minute's walk or ride, reach the Fort Lee ferry on the Hudson river. It is the farthest uptown of the

ferrise, and is promisingly primitive. Directly across is the little attenuated village of Undercliff, nestling as its name implies under the shelter of the beetling Palisades. The ride across the river affords, especially at this time of year, a view of surpassing loveliness. On its east shore, from Grant's tomb on the heights above Manhattanville, to the far away hill's of Yonkers, a distance of fifteen miles, there is a stretch of picturesque country, with the peaks and turrets of castled piles rising above a wealth of verdure that reaches to the water's edge. The Palisades crowned with lordly trees extend in unbroken symmetry and beauty as far as the eye can see on the other shore.

It was to Undercliff that the investigators went. The village has a straggling growth for a mile or more up the river, resting on the grassy beach between the water and the hills. Along the old turnpike, now almost splashed by the gentle waves, now rising twenty or thirty feet above the river, are rows of oak and elm trees, and here and there is an ancient homestead slowly crumbling away. The road passes the huts of fishermen, which in the busy shad season, but recently closed, have been hives of industry. When the fishermen are not bringing in their catch in big boats they are mending their nets, and one may purchase glistening fish that but a few minutes before were coursing the stream. Lilacs bloom along the way "and the dandelions hiding in the water, velvet grass seem like little pools of sunshine, fit to splash in as you pass."

The most stylish turnout that one is apt to meet is the prehistoric bus that ambles along in a desultory way, and the whirling wheelman is the sole disturber of the scene's equanimity. The cottage that the persons afore mentioned selected as their summer home faces the Hudson river, with a meadow space filled just now with waving timothy, between, and at the river's brink is a row of fine trees, the varied tones of oak and elm and chestnut and maple blending in a bullwark of gorgeous green. Through a gap in the trees may be seen the smooth surface of the water, dotted with the sails of an unnumbered fleet, and now and then pierced by great steamers. Back of the cottage, rising from the very door, are the Palisades, which at this point are three hundred feet high, and here Flora has strewn her favors with a lavish hand. The breezes blow through boughs of oak and birch and elm, fluttering in the distance is a fall of snow white dogwood blossoms. Violets but a week ago, purpled the tangled grass, and the cowslip added dots of gold. In a canyon, through which a small stream descends with musical sound, are boulders and jagged rocks, and in the thin covering of earth, mountain peaks show their vivid hues. The violets are gone now and with them the myrtle, and the other delicate flowers that came with the first warmth of spring, but the paths are strewn with primroses and wild daisies and dainty white and yellow strawberry blossoms. Blackberry bushes are just beginning to be spotted with white and the buds of wild roses are exposing their pink leaves. There is a large lake, in a basin on the highest part of the Palisades, directly back of the cottage, where pond lilies grow. The woods extend for miles with ever changing beauty. There are points from which one may view the panorama of New York across the river, and the mountains up the Hudson. At night one may see from the cottage porch or from the lofty height above, the thousands of sparkling lights that invest New York, after sunset, with a beautiful glow and brilliance.

There are no excursion parties, as sight-seers. One may be as much alone as Thoreau in Walden Woods. And one may enjoy all this within one hour and ten minutes of Trinity church. But the millions prefer to remain in the city and swelter and mayhap eke out pleasure in roof gardens and wild rides in their avenue cabs.

New York, May 24, 1897.

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