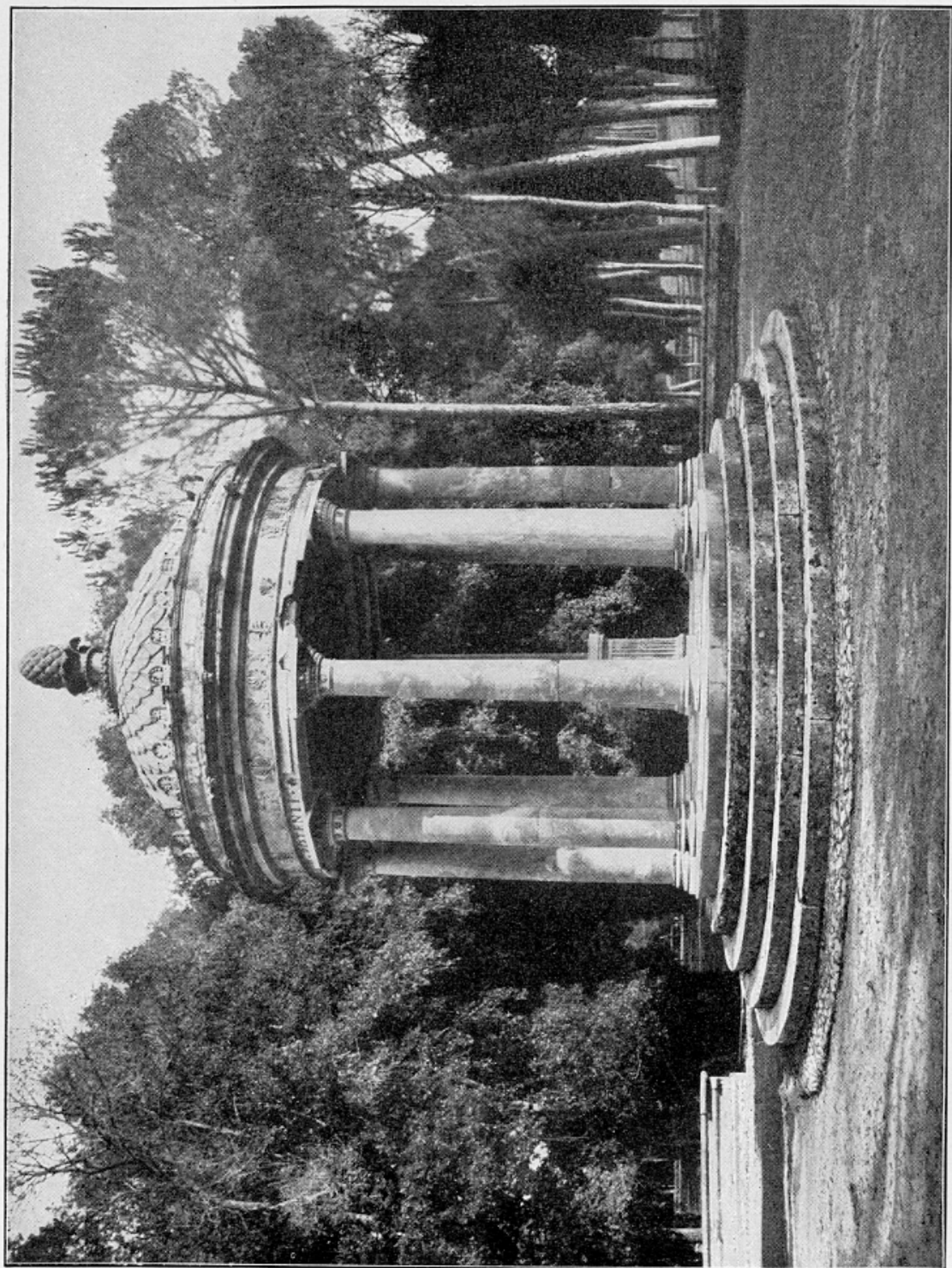


OUTLYING PARKS AND PARK CONNECTIONS.



NO. 106.—TEMPLE, VILLA BORGHESI, ROME. THE ARCHITECTURAL ACCENT OF A SHADED VISTA.

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PARKS.

ENCIRCLING the city of Washington on the west, north, east, and, if the Potomac River be included, on the south also, are situated the areas in which are the parks of the District as distinguished from the city squares and grounds appertaining to public buildings. For the most part these areas are in their natural state, with hills and valleys, plateaus and ravines, as yet untouched by the pick and shovel of the improver; but along main lines the building is advancing at such a rate as to make it certain that within a few decades city blocks and asphalt paving will occupy the areas already marked out on the permanent system of highways. Whatever of natural beauty is to be preserved and whatever park spaces are still to be acquired must be provided for during the next few years or it will be forever too late.

Fortunately the larger areas necessary for an adequate park system have either been acquired or are awaiting reclamation. What remains to be done is to select and acquire those areas which are best fitted for connections between existing parks; to provide for the preservation and improvement of certain spots of exceptional beauty, like the chain of abandoned forts encircling the District; to bring into use for pleasure purposes the wild and picturesque banks of the Potomac, and to secure many smaller spaces in order to extend the park system of the city to keep pace with the extension of the streets and avenues. In order to make clear how the above-mentioned tracts relate to the city and to each other it is necessary to explain the topography of the region in which they lie.

The District of Columbia, extending for ten miles along the left bank of the Potomac, is divided into three distinct parts by two tributary streams, the Anacostia River to the southeast of the center, and Rock Creek to the northwest. Both valleys are deep and are flanked by high hills; but the valley of the Anacostia is broad while that of Rock Creek is narrow and abrupt. The

Natural conditions of the District.

southeasterly section, beyond the Anacostia River, consists of a series of long connecting ridges, ranging from 160 to 300 feet in height above the river, comparatively flat on top, but cut up by small valleys on their flanks into innumerable projecting points and minor sloping ridges.

The northwestern section is a more solid mass, rising abruptly from the Potomac to a height of 100 feet or more, sloping up to an elevation of 300 feet within half or three-quarters of a mile and reaching to over 400 feet in the middle of the area. The mass is dissected, like the Anacostia ridges, by numerous steep-sided valleys, some flowing east into Rock Creek and some south into the Potomac. The steepness of the declivities and the considerable height of the hills in both of these sections constantly present extensive and impressive views.

The central section is subdivided into a northern, outer, hilly part, similar to the sections already described, although not so abrupt in its topography, and a southern or inner part, forming the point between the two main valleys, of gently undulating surface and occupied by the main body of the city of Washington. It was this inner portion, admirably adapted to urban development, that was originally selected and laid out as the Federal city, with an area as large as the areas of densely built European capitals of a hundred years ago, but quite insufficient for a modern city of large population. The three outer sections of the district, healthful and charming as country, are very ill adapted for ordinary urban occupation, and their use for such purposes involves many difficult problems which have not all been successfully solved as yet.

The most important feature of the Washington climate, so far as it affects the park problem, is the oppressive summer heat which the Government officials and employees and other residents must for the most part undergo—a factor which seems to call strongly for several palliatives: the maintenance of shade, the preservation of many hilltops where breezes may be caught, the preservation of many of the deep, shady valleys in which the cooler air appears to settle on summer afternoons, and the liberal use of fresh running water all about the city and its parks, whether in the form of springs and brooks or of fountains and basins.

If the present distribution of park lands within the boundary of the old city of Washington is, as we believe, no more than reasonable, and if the distribution of parks in and around the capitals of other great

nations and our own large cities is not unreasonable, it is evident from a glance at the accompanying diagrams that a considerable increase in the number of parks in the outer part of the District is absolutely requisite if provision is to be made for the needs of the immediate future. It is true that the resident population of Washington at the present time is much smaller than the population of such capitals as London and Paris, or such American cities as New York and Boston, with which its park area is compared in these diagrams, but even in proportion to its present population it would not compare very favorably with Paris as to park area; and it is to be remembered, first, that Washington is growing very rapidly with the growth of the nation in numbers and prosperity, and, second, that its parks, like its public buildings, are not to be considered merely in reference to its resident population, but in relation to the millions of citizens from far and near who come to Washington expecting, and having a right to expect, that here, at the seat of government, they shall find not merely what is considered "good enough" in their workaday home cities, where most of the citizens' energy must perforce be spent on commercial struggles, but the very best that is to be had.

In considering what might wisely be added to the park system, we have not fixed upon any arbitrary proportion to area or to estimated population, but have selected only those places which from their natural conditions, whether because of steepness, inaccessibility, or difficulties of drainage, or from their peculiar and exceptional natural beauty, seemed likely to bring a smaller return to the community if used for the ordinary purposes of private occupancy than if used for parks. In order to have a sound basis for our conclusions, we have made careful personal examinations of nearly all parts of the District. This examination has been guided and supplemented by the use of the admirable topographical map of the District made by the Coast and Geodetic Survey. When our general conclusions were reached, the proposed additions were plotted on the map; and, after carefully considering their relations to the highway extension system and other proposed improvements, we examined the lines on the ground with map in hand. Before coming to definite conclusions, and, indeed, throughout our investigation, we consulted with the District Commissioners and their assistants, with the officer in charge of the Potomac Flats improvements, and with other officials, all of whom were most considerate in giving information and advising with us.



NO. 193.—RIVERSIDE PARK, WADING POOL, HARTFORD, CONN.

## TREATMENT OF THE MINOR RESERVATIONS.

WITHIN the old city limits no additional small reservations are needed, but in the remaining four-fifths of the District there are practically none, as against 275 in the city. Distributed with the same wise foresight as was shown by the founders of the city, and with equal liberality, there should be some ten or twelve hundred in the outlying district. Without adopting any such arbitrary rule, we can say that considerable numbers of these minor spaces ought now to be secured while much of the land is selling at acre prices. In many cases there is no strong ground of choice among several good areas in one neighborhood, and the final determination must depend very largely upon the prices at which the several parcels are offered by their owners.

Aside from a few particularly agreeable groves, the points that are singled out by natural conditions as especially worthy of preservation are mainly hilltops from which extensive views may be obtained. It so happens that most of these hilltops from their commanding positions were occupied by forts during the civil war as part of the defenses of Washington, thus adding historical associations to the reasons which would otherwise suggest their acquisition. As the small areas thus specifically recommended for purchase are shown on map No. D-288 and are enumerated in detail in Appendix I, it will suffice to say here that they number 17 and amount to a total area of 364 acres. To these should be added a much greater number of small pieces, which can be selected more wisely by a board authorized to negotiate with the landowners and obtain options.

One other point to be borne in mind in choosing these reservations is that the future will call for schoolhouses in all parts of the District, and that it will be of the utmost value to secure in advance well-distributed schoolhouse sites having adequate area suitable for playgrounds.

There are within the city 26 squares, circles, etc., between one acre and 25 acres in extent, and 275 ranging from one acre down to 405 square feet, making a total of 301, with a total acreage of 166.93.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the larger of these areas occupy well-chosen and important positions suggested by the lay of the land, and the original street system of the city was adapted to them so as to recognize and emphasize their importance, while most of the smaller areas are pieces left at the intersections of the streets thus determined. They are distributed quite uniformly throughout the original city, but practically none have yet been provided for the remaining four-fifths of the District.

With the exception of one, temporarily fitted for use as a playground, those that have been improved<sup>2</sup> have been treated in accordance with one general ideal, although exhibiting some variety in



Water basin at the Villa Medici, Rome.

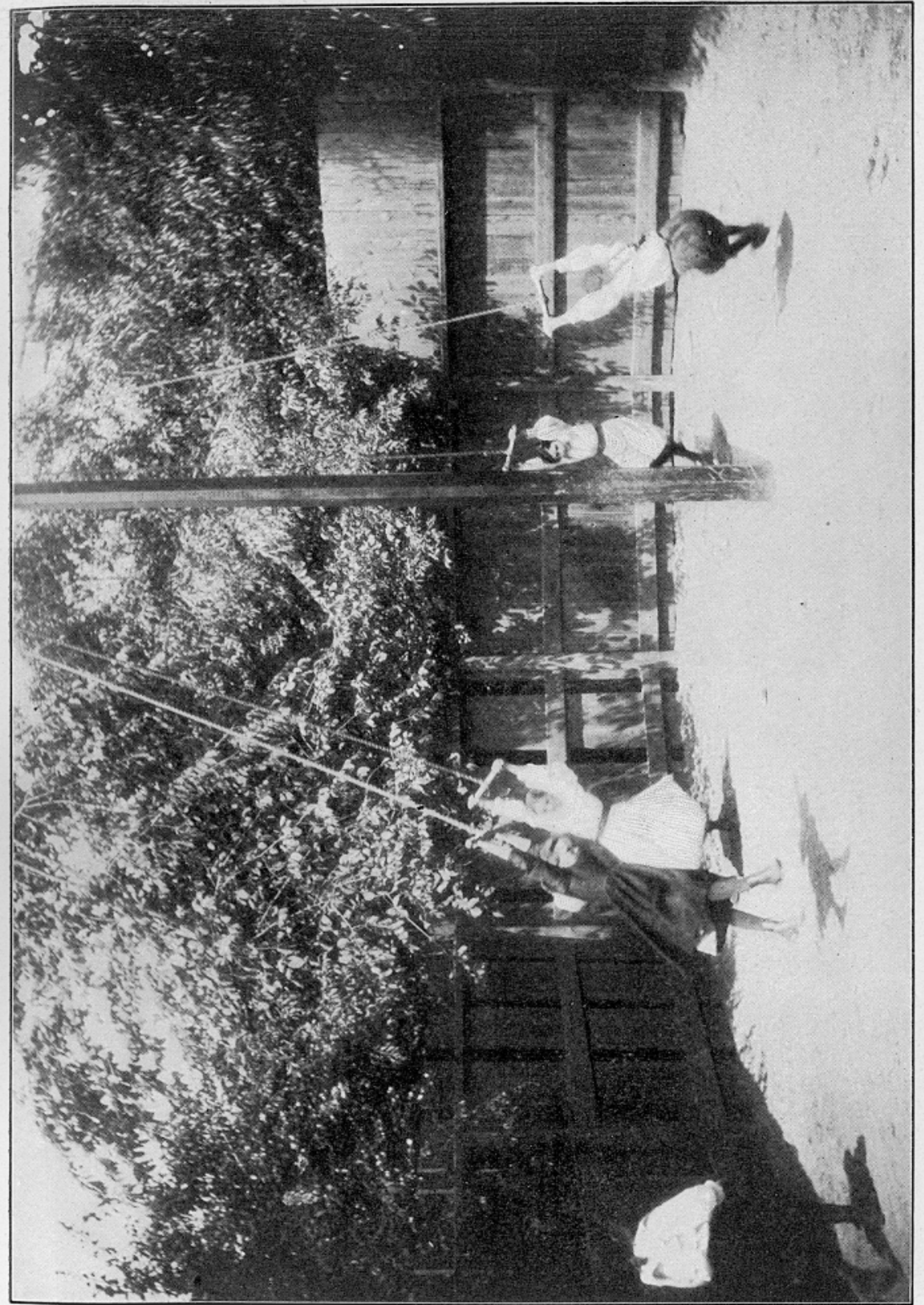
arrangement and detail. The treatment adopted aims to provide an agreeable appearance to passers-by, and shade and pleasant surroundings for those who resort to the squares for recreation. To these ends they are generally planted with trees, turfed, more or less decorated with shrubs,

flowers, and sculptural monuments, often defined and protected by curbing or fences, and when of sufficient size provided with paths and benches. Unfortunately for the general effect, the sculptural decorations have seldom been treated as a part of the design, but have been inserted as independent objects valued for their historic or memorial qualities or sometimes for their individual beauty, regardless of the effect on their surroundings.

Treated as they are, these well-distributed areas are of the utmost

<sup>1</sup>A detailed list will be found in Appendix G. Tables I and II, page 153.

<sup>2</sup>About 35 per cent of the total number have been "improved," and 24 per cent "partially-improved."



NO. 201.—IN THE GIRLS' GYMNASIUM, CHARLES BANK, BOSTON.

value to the city, contributing largely to the cheerful and comfortable character by which all visitors are struck and attracted; but we believe that without the sacrifice of this effect it would be possible to introduce a greater variety of treatment, giving each area a more distinct individuality and providing for more special forms of recreation chosen with a view to the surroundings and capabilities of each particular area.

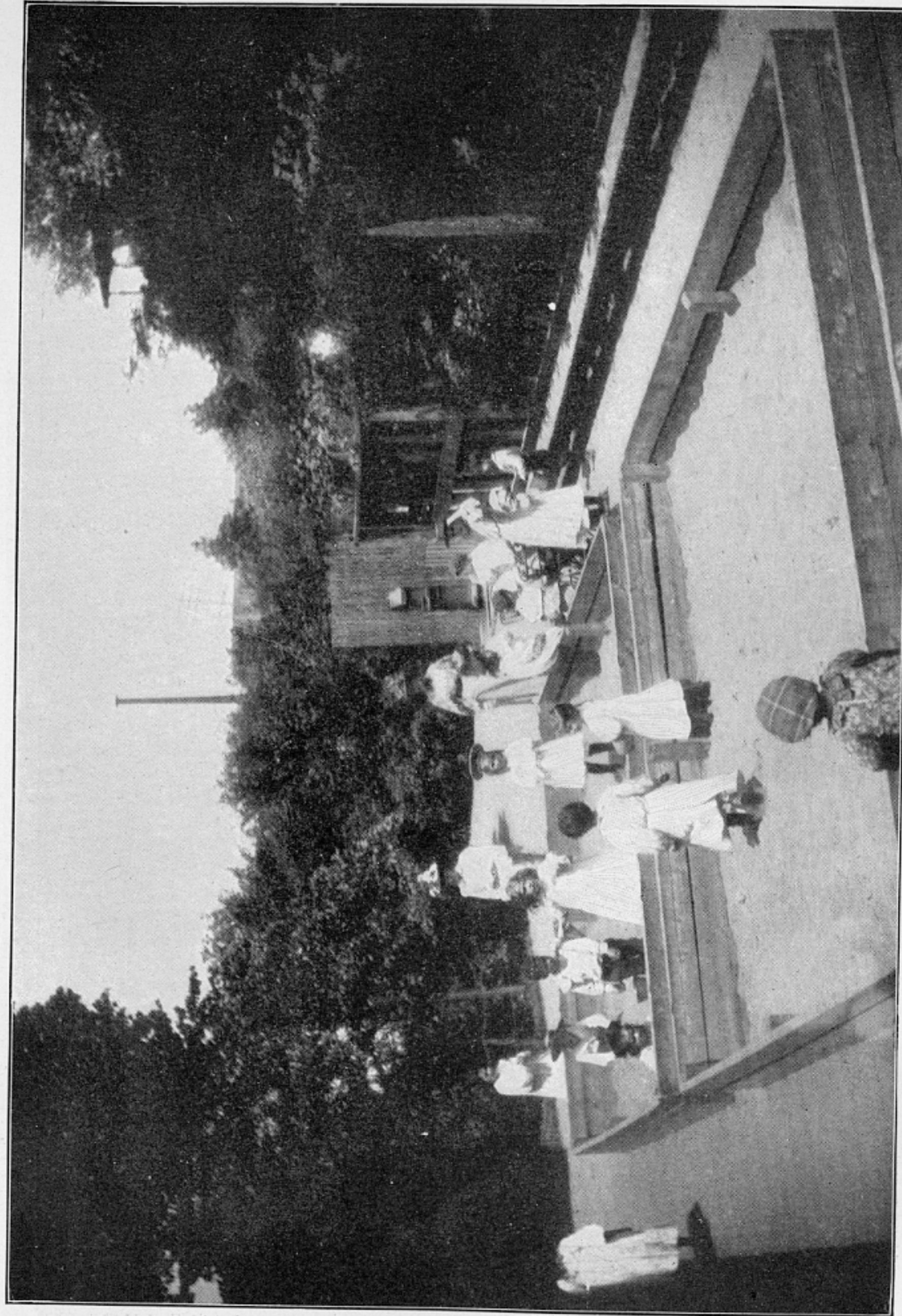
One such special use to which several squares should be devoted in different parts of the city is that of playgrounds; and these, too, should be considered individually and not in any wholesale or uniform way. In some cases they should provide especially

**Playgrounds.**

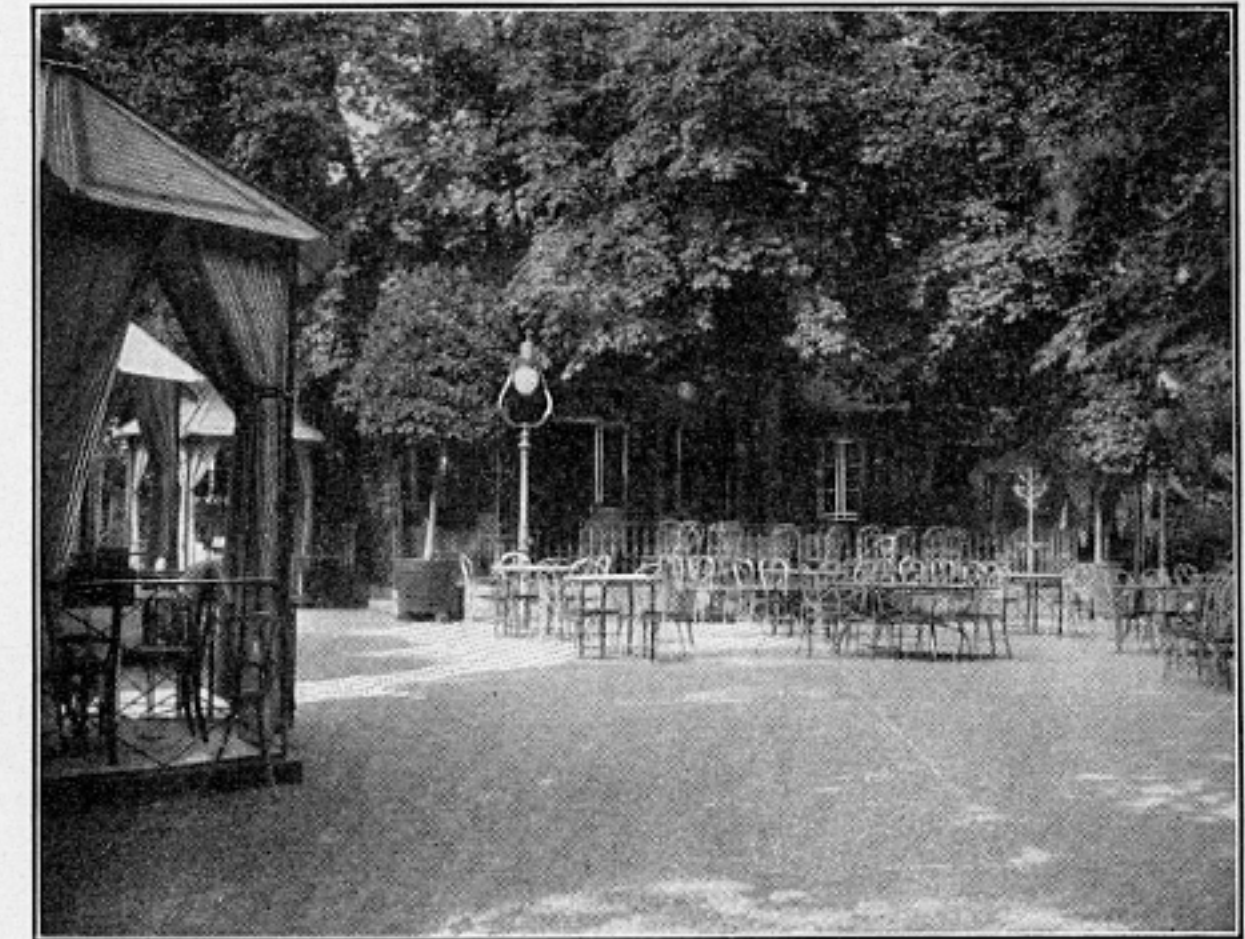
for little children, with smooth protected lawns, with swings and teeter boards, with sand courts, and with safe and shallow wading pools in view of sheltered seats for the mothers or nurses. In some there should be regular outdoor gymnasias, with apparatus for jumping, vaulting, climbing, swinging, and the like, with tracks for running and spaces for the lesser athletic contests, such as putting the shot and quoits and bowling; in others there should be provision

for the larger games, whether the schoolboys' games of tag and prisoners-base and scrub, or the organized games of baseball and football between regular teams.

But even within the limits of more passive recreation there might well be some specialization; some areas, for instance, arranged as shady concert groves, with little or no turf, for the comfortable accommodation of large crowds at band concerts; one or more places arranged for night illuminations with electric fountains, and for the display of fireworks on the occasion of national celebrations; one or more squares treated with a series of basins for the display of the brilliant aquatic



NO. 200.—CHILDREN'S SAND PILES, CHARLES BANK, BOSTON.

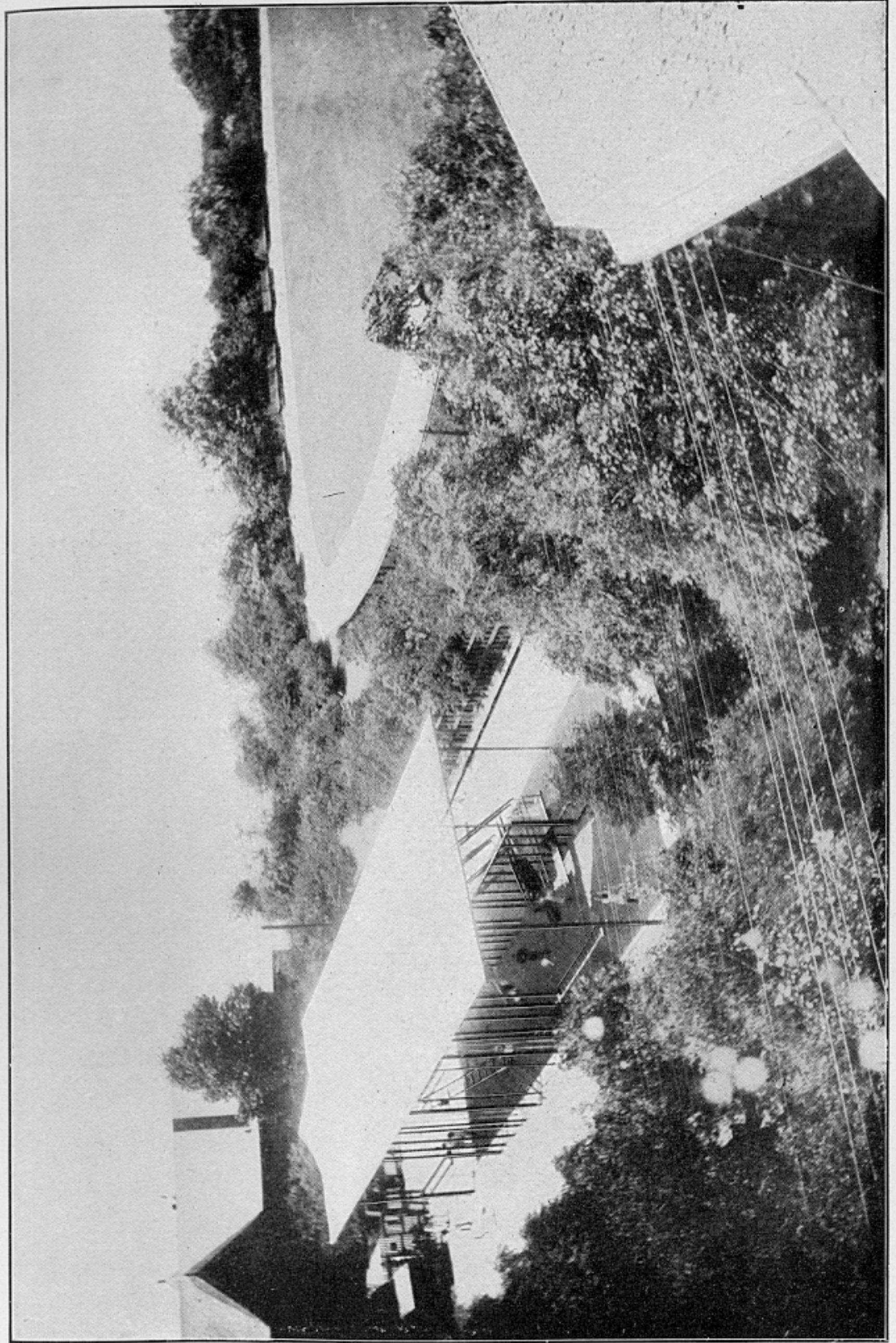


No. 165.—Open-air restaurant in the Prater, Vienna.

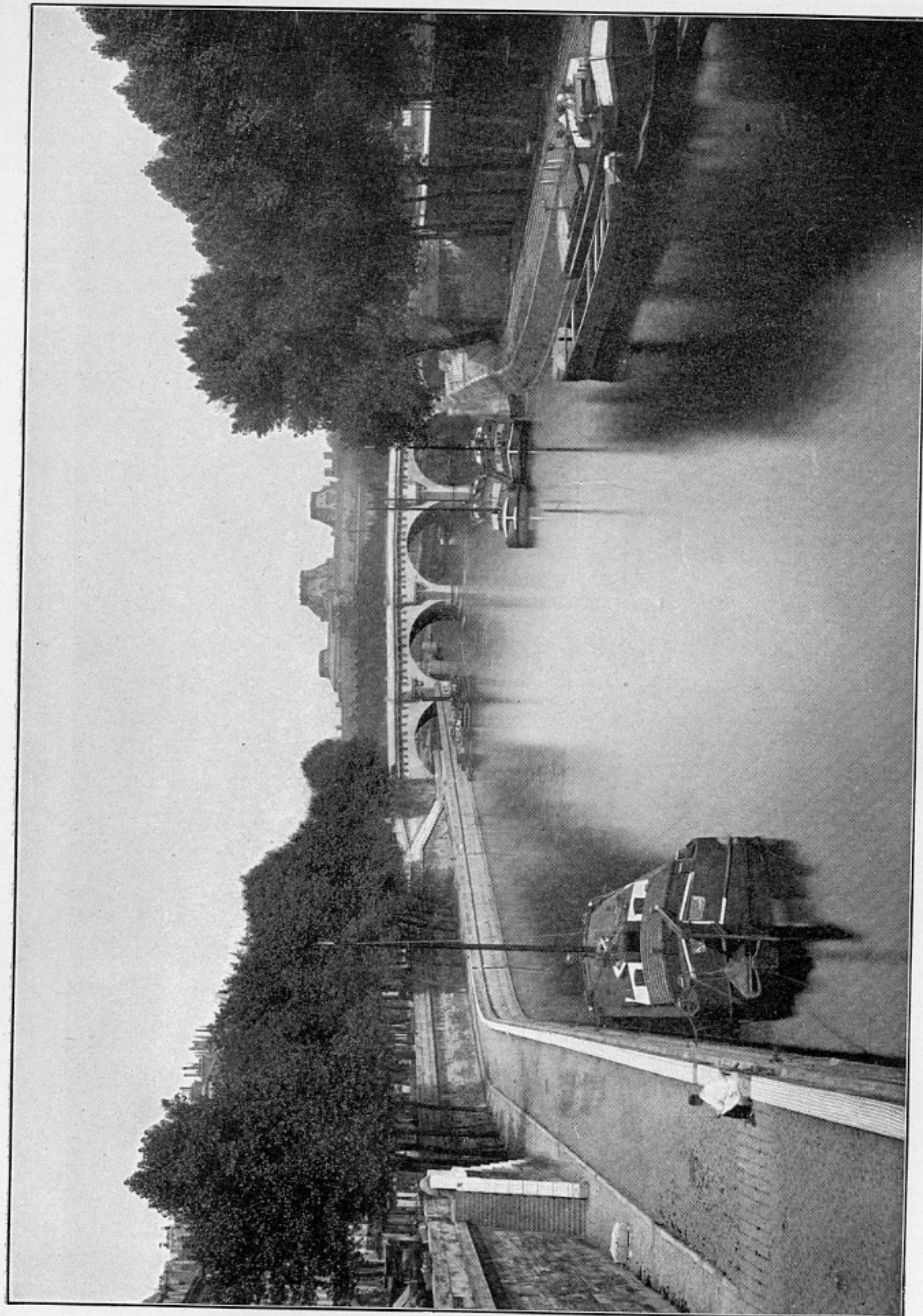
flowers; some devoted especially to evergreen winter effects; and very many arranged in all their details with a view to giving the maximum refreshment in the hot summer weather by means of shade well distributed and by means of gushing, rippling, sparkling, living water—not in a series of repeated commonplace forms, but infinite in its variations, and when wisely used always full of a new charm and refreshment.

The amount invested in the land of these squares at current prices amounts to several million dollars, and to secure a fair rate of interest in recreative value requires the application of as much purposeful ingenuity and well-trained judgment in design and management as is needed in the conduct of any business enterprise of similar magnitude.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The existing parks are shown on map No. D-287; the proposed additions are shown on map No. D-288; the positions and boundaries of the several areas discussed in this report can be followed most readily on the combined map No. D-289.



NO. 199.—OPEN-AIR GYMNASIUM, CHARLES RIVER EMBANKMENT, BOSTON.



NO. 187.—LE PONT NEUF AND QUAYS, PARIS.

## THE LARGER PARKS AND THEIR CONNECTIONS.

IN discussing the larger parks and their connections we shall begin at the western end of the Mall, and take the western, central, and eastern sections of the District in order, ending with the Potomac Park on the south. Beginning at the site of the Lincoln memorial, at the westerly extremity of the Mall as extended to the Potomac, a parkway should skirt the bank of the Potomac to the mouth of Rock Creek.

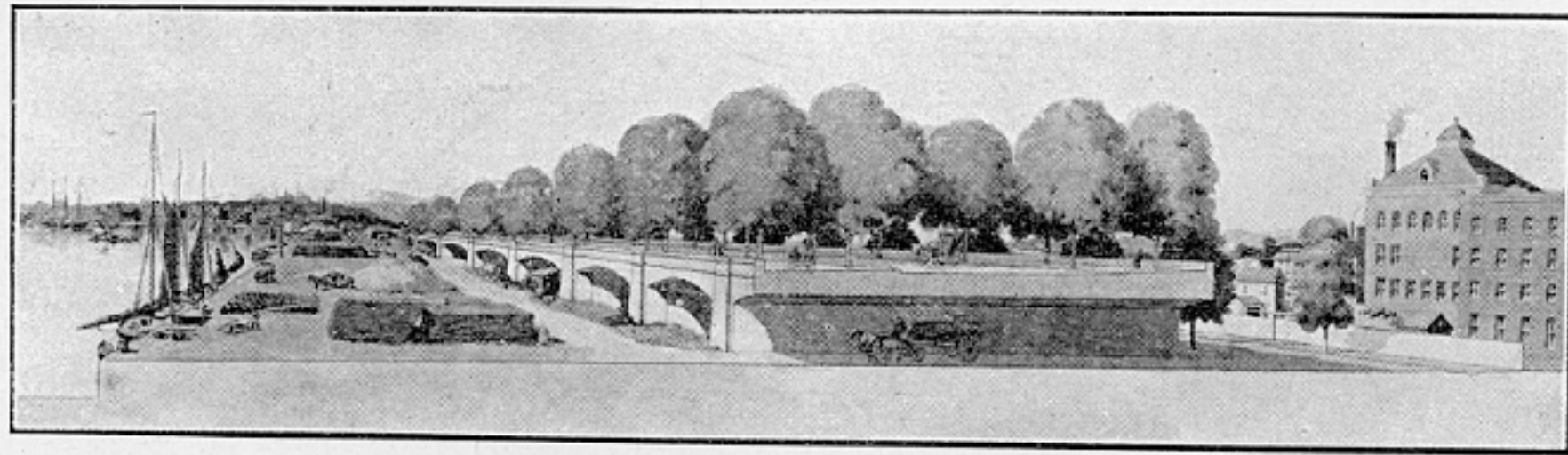
A broad, paved quay or landing place should extend the shore line out to the deep main channel and present to the river a smooth, continuous wall, instead of jutting piers which retard the current and tend to cause shoaling. This quay should be on a level with the adjacent land, which is likely to be occupied in the future, as at present, by various industries using bulky waterborne freight—such as coal yards, gas works, paving concerns, and the like—to which the material can be transferred from the quay by wagons, tram cars, or belt conveyors, much as it is now handled by the more enterprising abutters. The park drive and promenade should be carried through at the landward side of the quay proper, between it and the commercial establishments, but at a higher level with frequent arched openings underneath for the transfer of goods, and possibly, also, for storage purposes.

Separated by the difference in level from actual conflict with the pleasure travel, the activity of the water front would really add to the interest of the parkway and give a character to it possessed by no other in this country. In several European river cities, notably Paris, Vienna, and Budapest, there are such combinations of a commercial quay with a promenade at a higher level, and they form, in many cases, the most popular and delightful resorts for the people; but in no case, we believe, are the conditions so favorable as at Wash-



ington, for elsewhere the abutting private land and streets are invariably at the higher level, thus necessitating the transfer of goods up occasional inclines and across the promenade at grade, whereas, in this instance, merchandise can be readily transferred at any point without the least interference between business and pleasure.

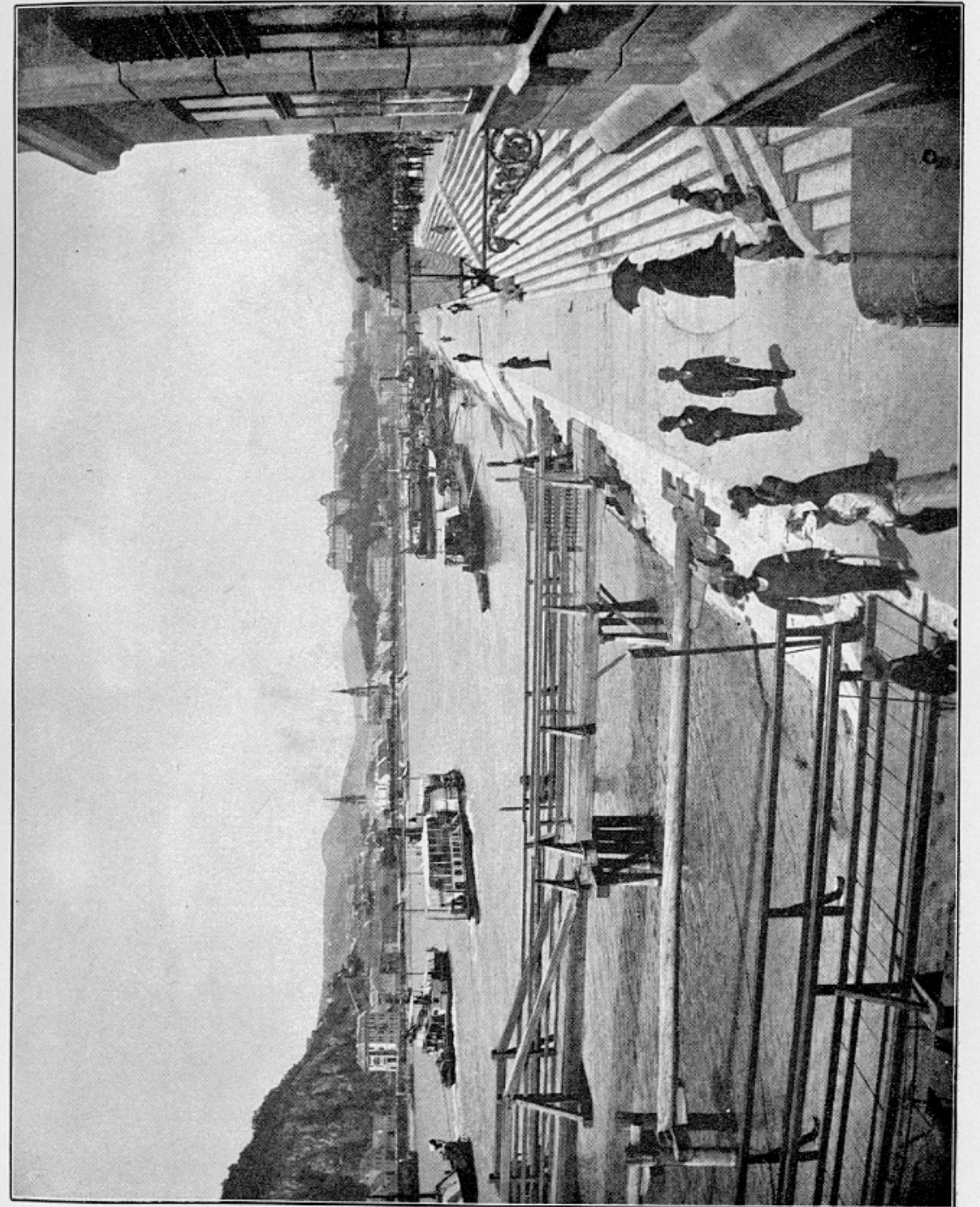
This quay treatment is proposed for the entire stretch between Potomac Park and the Pennsylvania avenue bridge across Rock Creek, as the lower portion of the creek is a part of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and is as much a part of the commercial water front as the



No. 10.—Typical treatment of Potomac Quay.

Potomac itself; but above Pennsylvania avenue entirely different conditions prevail, and another treatment must be adopted. Moreover, it is to be understood that the accompanying section for the quay is merely typical, and would be modified at various points to meet local conditions—at places by the omission of the street on the inner side of the drive, at places by different arrangements of the levels, at places, perhaps, by the omission of the inner retaining wall and the substitution of a bank. The precise line, moreover, of the quay front and of the taking line can be fixed only after a detailed survey, with soundings and foundation tests; but in the main the project here set forth is unquestionably practicable, and would provide at once the most convenient and the most agreeable treatment for the connection between the parks and for the commercial water front.

It would be possible, if it should ultimately be thought wise, to continue a similar treatment along the whole frontage of Georgetown Harbor, and thus to arrange a continuous drive along the river from Potomac Park past the Aqueduct Bridge and by a rising grade to the upper Potomac drive, but such a construction would be so costly that it has not been seriously contemplated, the more so as the difficulties in the way of such an undertaking are not likely to increase with the passage of time.

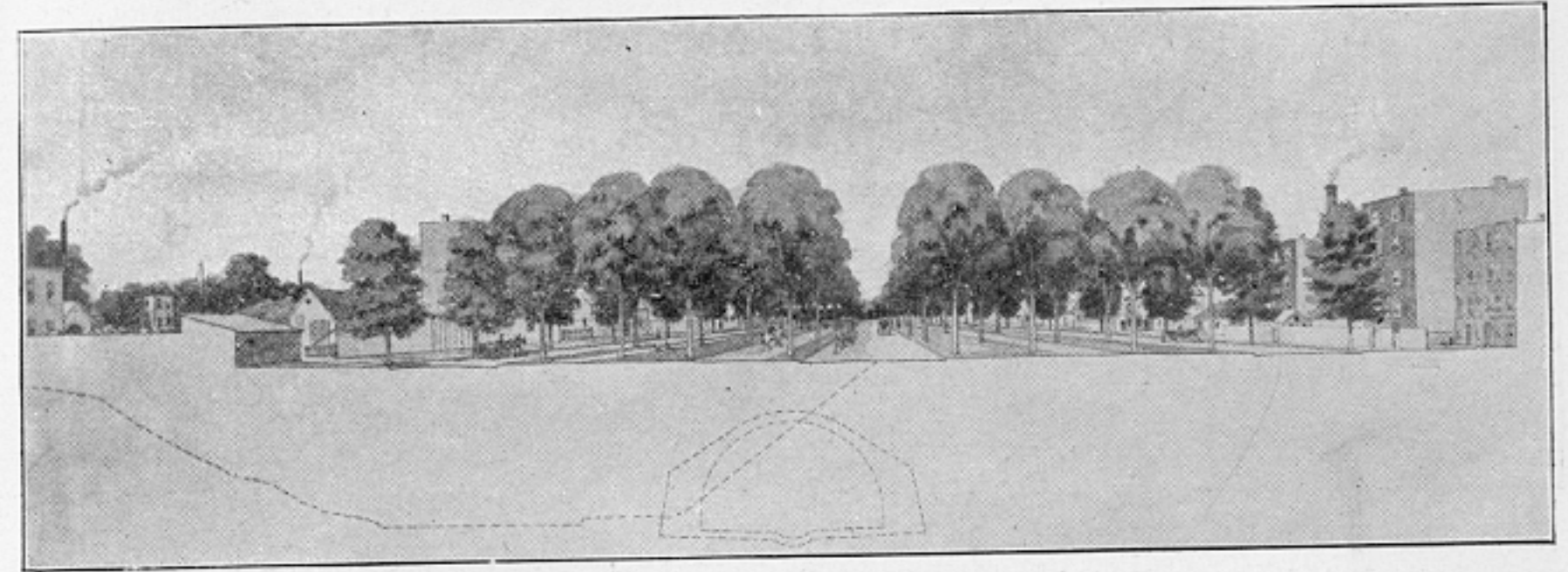


NO. 192.—QUAYS AND CORSO, BUDAPEST.

Two radically different plans have been suggested as alternatives in the treatment of Rock Creek and its accompanying Rock Creek Parkway. The first plan is a parkway between Pennsylvania avenue and Massachusetts avenue:

First. To build a large covered masonry culvert or sewer for the creek, and to fill around and over this structure so as to obliterate the valley and raise it to the level of the adjacent lands, constructing a parkway or boulevard upon a portion of the filled land and subdividing the remainder into streets and lots for sale.<sup>1</sup>

Second. To improve the present open channel of the creek, regrade its banks, and improve them for park purposes, and to construct roads and paths within the park thus formed, spanning the valley by frequent street bridges to provide close connection with Georgetown.<sup>2</sup>



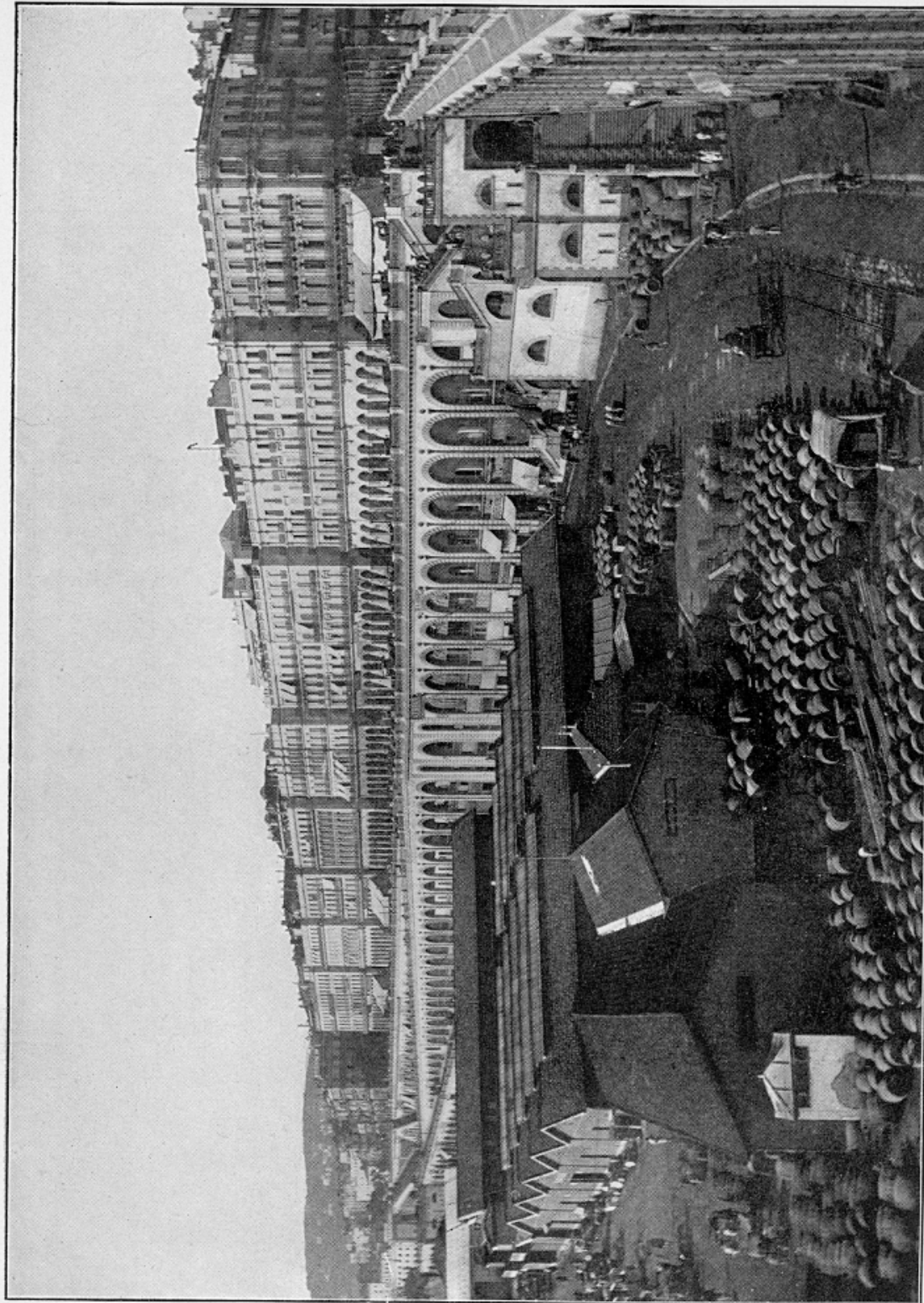
No. 12.—Typical section of Rock Creek Parkway—Alternative project with covered channel.

The general character of the two projects is indicated by the accompanying sections.

The Massachusetts avenue crossing over Rock Creek has been designed and is under construction as a culvert and fill upon the assumption that the first plan will be carried out, but although this fill will interfere with the perfect execution of the open valley plan, we feel compelled to recommend the definite adoption of the latter on grounds of economy, convenience, and beauty. An explicit statement of the steps which led to this conclusion would burden the report needlessly and is therefore confined to Appendix D, page 135.

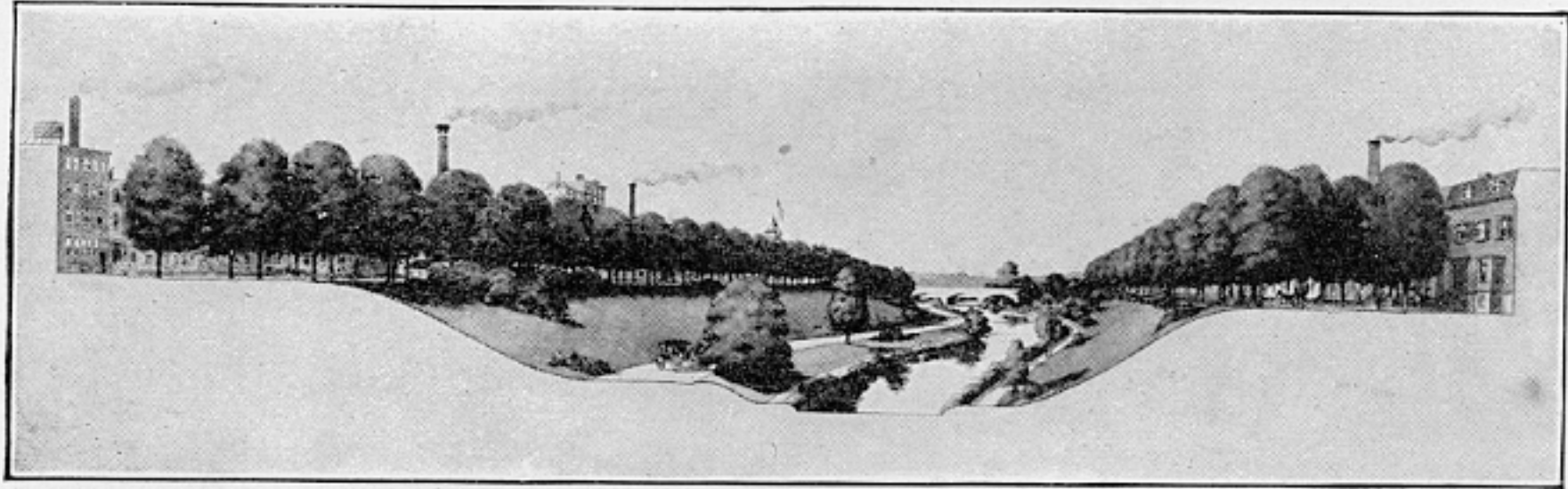
<sup>1</sup> Discussed, except as to construction of parkway, in Senate Mis. Doc. No. 21, Fifty-second Congress, second session.

<sup>2</sup> Proposed by committee of Washington Board of Trade, December 15, 1899. See Park Improvement Papers, No. 7.



NO. 172.—THE BOULEVARD OF THE REPUBLIC, ALGIERS, SHOWING WIDE COMMERCIAL QUAYS AND STORAGE SPACES BELOW THE BOULEVARD.

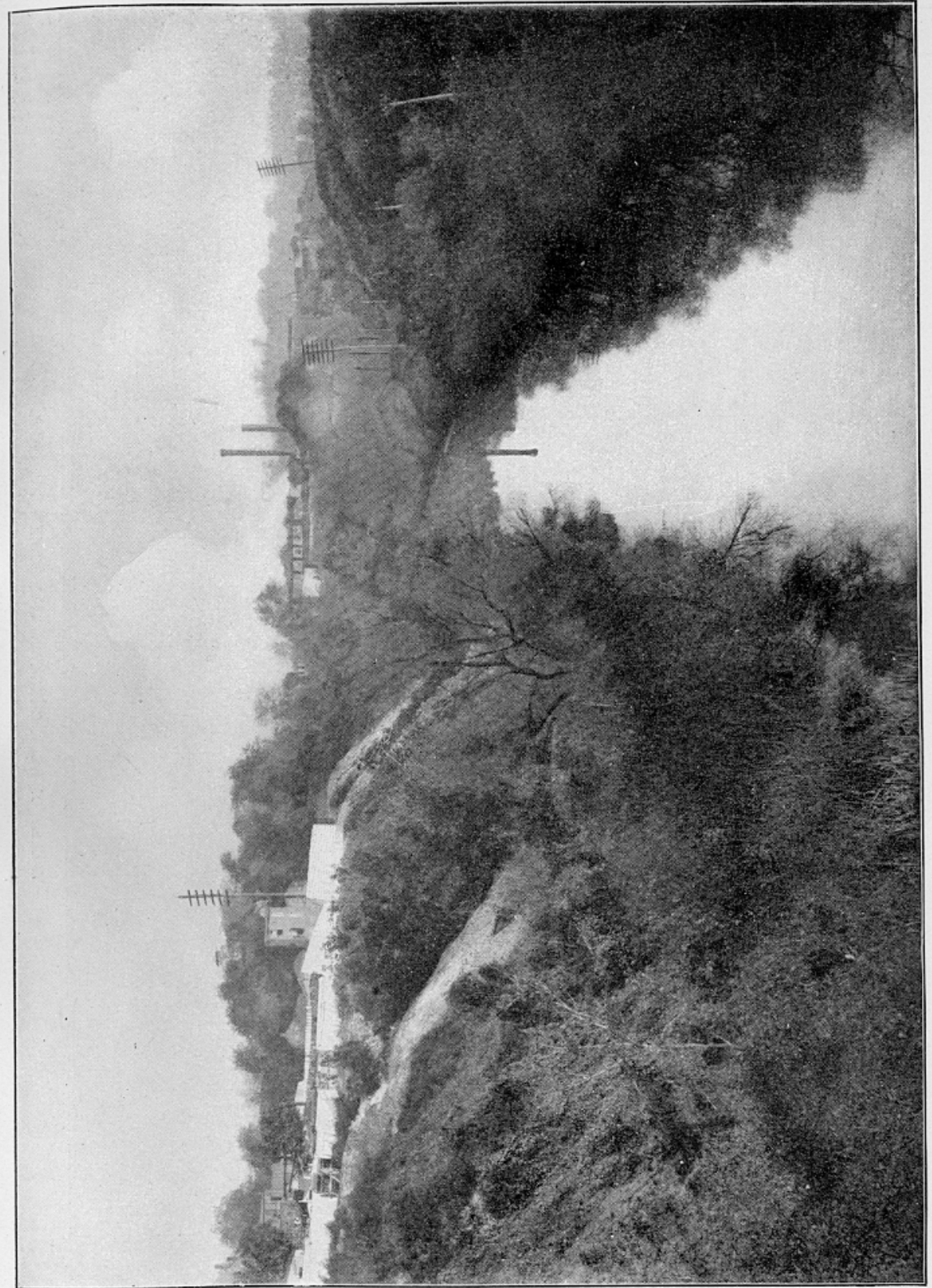
We may point out, however, that the park drives and paths under the open-valley plan would be separated by grade, like those of the Georgetown Harbor quay, from conflict with the commercial traffic of a busy district; but while the activity of the water front is interesting to look down upon, the sights of the inland region between Pennsylvania avenue and Q street are for the most part merely shabby, sordid, and disagreeable. It is therefore a very fortunate opportunity that permits the seclusion of the parkway in a valley the immediate sides of which can be controlled and can be made to limit the view to a self-contained landscape, which may be beautiful even though restricted. North of Q street the valley becomes very attractive and takes on something of the sylvan character which it has in its upper portion. A branch drive should lead to Sheridan circle, and the main drive should rise along the easterly side of the valley so as to



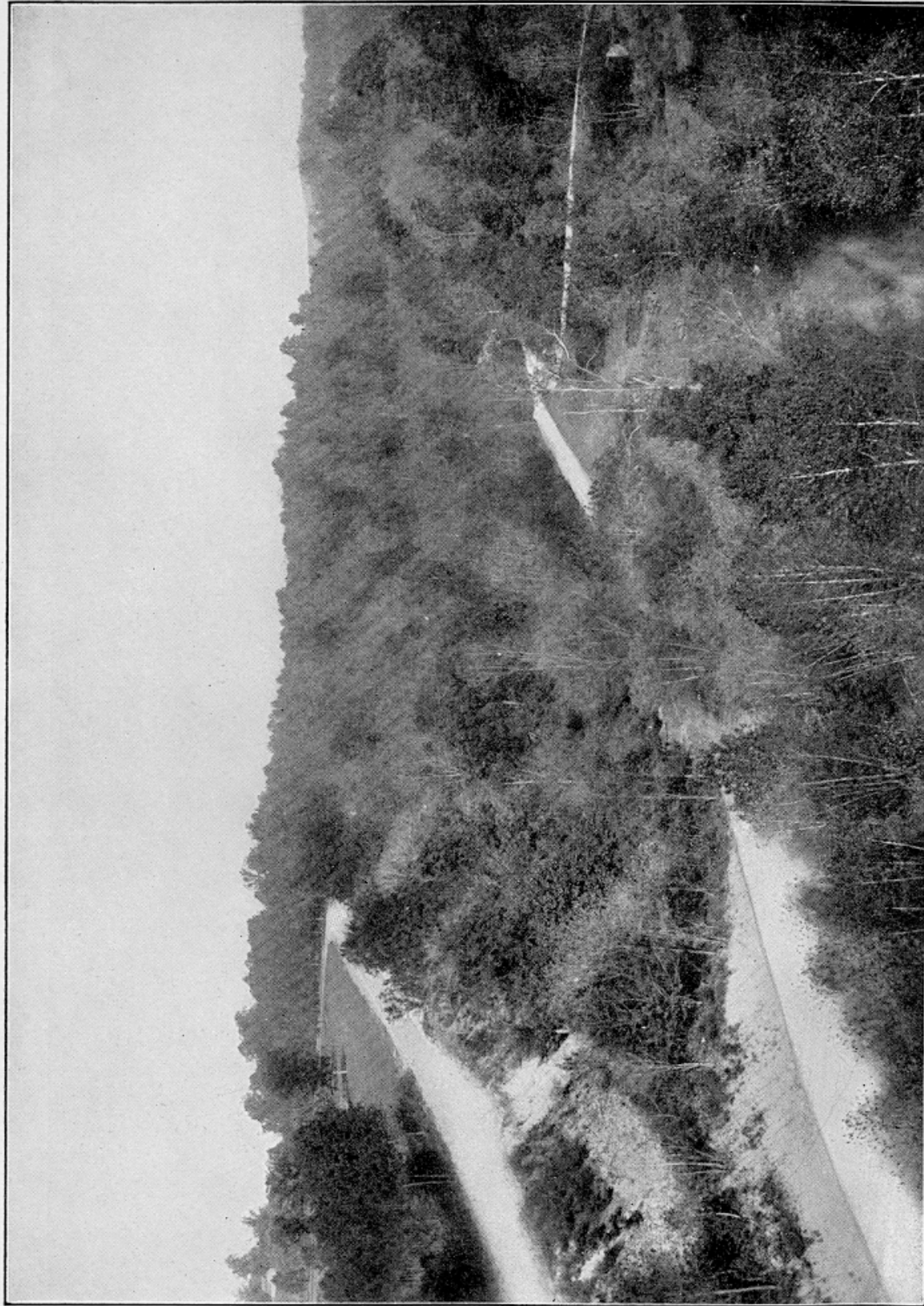
No. 11.—Typical section of Rock Creek Parkway—Treatment recommended.

get a plunging view and so as to pass just under Massachusetts avenue, permitting an easy connection with it. From this point to the Zoological Park there are no serious difficulties, and the problem reduces itself to one of careful and judicious detailed adjustment of the construction to the topography and vegetation of the valley.

The boundaries shown on the map are determined below Q street so as to include only what is needed for the proper regrading of the valley sides and other essential construction. Above that point they are determined partly for those reasons, but in places so as to include some exceptionally fine hillside woods that now form an important part of the valley landscape, and if cut down and replaced by houses would utterly change its character. In so far as it was practicable, without essential injury to the parkway, we have followed lines already fixed for streets on the highway plans and elsewhere have provided for new boundary streets.



NO. 180.—ROCK CREEK, LOOKING NORTH FROM M STREET BRIDGE, SHOWING LANDSCAPE VALUE OF THE OPEN WATER SURFACE AND THE FOLIAGE OF THE VALLEY, AND INDICATING THE DISAGREEABLE CHARACTER OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SURROUNDINGS.



VALLEY OF ROCK CREEK AT THE ZOOLOGICAL PARK.

The Zoological Park, 170 acres in extent, lies along Rock Creek about 2 miles from its mouth and directly northwest from the central part of the city. Although regularly open to the public as a place of recreation, the purpose of the park is distinctly specialized, namely, to preserve and exhibit a collection of living animals under agreeable and natural surroundings. The health of the animals and the convenience of the public in seeing them must be the controlling considerations here, and the natural landscape of the park, although of recognized importance, must necessarily be modified and adapted to the provision of numerous buildings, fences, roads, and paths, and the need of bare ground or pavement that is caused by crowds of people and herds of animals. The natural condition of rugged sylvan wildness could not, therefore, consistently be maintained in this park, but the steep topography and the passages of untouched woods suggest a picturesqueness in the style and arrangement of the artificial constructions which has been followed for the most part successfully.

In the future development of the park there are two dangers to be guarded against—the introduction, on the one hand, of buildings or other constructions or plantations of a highly organized and formal character, out of harmony with the character already adopted; and on the other, the confusion due to the scattering of numerous structures and features without any method or massing. There is always the danger, too, in attempting picturesque and rugged effects in a place resorted to by large crowds that the accommodation for the crowds will be made insufficient through fear of making the paths, roads, steps, and the like, too conspicuous, with the result that the crowds overflow the places made for them and reduce the whole park to shabbiness. One of the most important points, therefore, in the continued improvement of the Zoological Park is to watch its use carefully; to forecast its future use by larger crowds, and to provide such accommodations that the people will be led always to concentrate their wear and tear on the places prepared to withstand it, leaving the remainder fresh and wild looking, to give character to the whole.

Certain additions are very essential to the proper treatment and maintenance of the park, and we can not urge too strongly that these be made without delay. A statement of them, with the reason for each, is to be found in Appendix I.

Rock Creek Park occupies the valley of the creek from the Zoological Park northward to the District line, including an area of 1,605.9 acres varying in width from less than 300 yards to a little over a mile, with a total length of about 4 miles.

*Rock Creek Park.*

The valley is crooked and narrow and flanked by steep, high, and thickly wooded hills. In the southern portion of the park some of the hill tops are comparatively level, but with the exception of these limited plateaus and a few narrow strips of bottom land along the creek the whole area is hilly in the extreme. Most of the land is timbered and much of the wood is of considerable age and beauty, especially in the narrow and gorge-like portions of the valley, offering some very beautiful sylvan scenery. This has recently been made accessible by a macadamized road, known as Beach Drive, along the creek from the Zoological Park halfway to the northern end, connecting with the Military road at that point, and continued by an earth road along the remainder of the creek. This road, which was very skillfully laid out, has brought a large number of visitors into the valley to enjoy the beauty of its scenery, and, as the road is of limited width, there is danger that it may soon become overcrowded; if so, a very serious problem in the development of the park will arise at once.

Narrow as the present road is, and skillfully as it was built, there are several points where it has very appreciably injured the scenery, and to widen it by any considerable amount would be a calamity. It is true that the value of the park scenery depends absolutely upon making it conveniently accessible to the people, but nothing can be gained if the means of access destroys the scenery which it is meant to exhibit, and we believe that as wide a road as the future population is likely to demand would injure the character of the valley irretrievably. Possibly the solution is to be found in the ultimate construction of another and wider drive, or drives, high enough on the valley sides to leave the wild sylvan character of the stream at the bottom of the gorge uninjured, but yet within sight and sound of the water and seeming to be of the valley. Such a road would doubtless require more grading, would cost more, and would destroy more trees and more square yards of pretty undergrowth than a road of equal width in the bottom of the gorge, but the damage of the latter would be done at the vital spot. It would be the pound of flesh from nearest the heart, while the former would compare with the amputation of a leg. We discuss this point, not because we wish to urge this par-

ticular treatment, but in order to make clear that the peculiar topography of Rock Creek Park, while giving a great share of beauty, renders its development as the principal park of a populous city a matter of great perplexity, requiring the most careful study.

After the completion at its present width of the road along the creek, we would advise most urgently that no further work of development be attempted until careful studies have been made for the comprehensive treatment of the whole park, and, if the park is to be made available, such studies should be promptly undertaken. This applies not only to matters of construction, but to the treatment of the vegetation. Should certain open areas be planted in order to block certain undesirable outlooks? Should certain other areas now growing up with young trees be cleared out for the sake of the views, or, if not, which are the trees to be encouraged in each instance? Hundreds of such questions ought to be asked and answered before the maintenance and improvement of the park can be directed intelligently and economically toward the best future results.

As a rule, the boundary should be upon such a line as to permit the construction of a border street, which will separate the park from the adjacent property, causing the neighboring buildings to face upon it, making it easier to police, and in general adding to its dignity. Partly in order to provide for boundary streets on reasonable grades and partly that the crests of the overlooking hills may be under the control of the park authorities so as to prevent objectionable structures from being obtruded into the landscape, a considerable number of additional purchases are requisite, as set forth seriatim with specific reasons in Appendix I. These additions are of varying degrees of importance, but several of them are more essential to the future value of the park than adjacent land already acquired, and provision for their purchase is one of the most pressing needs of the park system.