

The Palisades Mountain Park.

The proposition to preserve the Palisades of the Hudson River from further mutilation by their purchase by the public and their reservation as a pleasure ground, has been met by favorable expressions of public sentiment in all parts of the country.

The Joint Commission appointed by the Governors of New York and New Jersey appear to be giving the subject their careful attention, and as a preliminary to the forming of any opinion, have been examining the physical aspects of the territory, the legal questions involved, and the

pographically attractive and also possessing mercantile advantages, must necessarily be great, and the first impulse of a business man and a taxpayer is naturally to restrict the area to be so withdrawn from mercantile use and taxation to the smallest possible limits consistent with what appears to him to be the end in view. Where, moreover, the whole or a portion of such expenditure is expected to be borne by the general public whether in that term is included the people of a single State alone, or of the nation, the legislator, State or national, looks with suspicion upon the appropriation of the public



A QUARRY ON THE PALISADES NEAR CLINTON POINT.

equally important pecuniary problems which present themselves in connection with the removal from private occupation and the devotion to public use of so large a tract of land.

In the consideration of a question of this kind, the cost of the carrying out of any scheme is, in the minds of many men, and, indeed, it may be said of the majority of those who are likely to be entrusted with the work, the most important problem. The purchase of a large tract of land in the vicinity of a great city, to-

funds to that purpose. A member of the New Jersey Legislature from Atlantic county, or of the New York Legislature from Jefferson county, is apt to look with different eyes upon the purchase of several thousand acres of land on the banks of the Hudson from those with which the members of Bergen and Rockland counties might view the subject. So, too, in Congress, the members from Maine and Mississippi might not be inclined to view the expenditure of a large sum of money by the United States to preserve the great waterway to the country with

as much favor as might the members from New York and New Jersey.

It behooves the Commission, therefore, to proceed with great discretion in the designation of the exact area to be acquired for the public use. But while extravagance is to be guarded against, too great parsimony is equally to be avoided. What is proposed to be accomplished is not so much for the benefit of those now living, certainly not of those who have passed the middle age, as for the good of posterity, and it is better for any public man to be blamed for taking too broad a view of the subject than to be criticised

offers peculiar facilities for the pleasure and profit of the adjacent densely crowded masses of population and affords protection against foreign and domestic foes, and at the same time is a delight to the eye of the lover of the picturesque in nature. This wonderful sheet of basalt which burst out from the bowels of the earth and overlapped the sandstones which for hundreds of thousands of years has been forming at the bottom of the seas, and then was in its turn for ages ground and scoured by the mighty glacier which came down from the Northwest, is now covered with the best preserved belt of



A FOREST GLADE ON THE PALISADES NEAR FORT LEE.

and ridiculed to all eternity for having displayed a lack of breadth of view.

The grounds on which the demand for public action in the matter of the preservation of the Palisades is based, are such as appeal to the patriot, the educator, the man of business and the artist. Right here, at the chief seaport and business metropolis of the country, there exists a geological formation which is renowned throughout the civilized world, presents unique features illustrating various epochs of the creation and formation of the earth as it now exists,

forest in the State of New Jersey, whilst at its base, five hundred feet below, flow the waters of the Hudson River. So solid is the texture of this stupendous sample of the material composing the nucleus of the earth that neither time nor ice nor flowing water have been able for myriads of years to do more than crumble off a few fragments from its face, and these lie heaped in picturesque confusion at its base, and forests have grown up and over them.

So long as the beauty of the Palisade Range from the Hudson River was undisturbed, no

thought was taken of the necessity for its protection, but since a systematic mutilation of the features which make it attractive has been begun, it is necessary to consider why and how it ought to be protected.

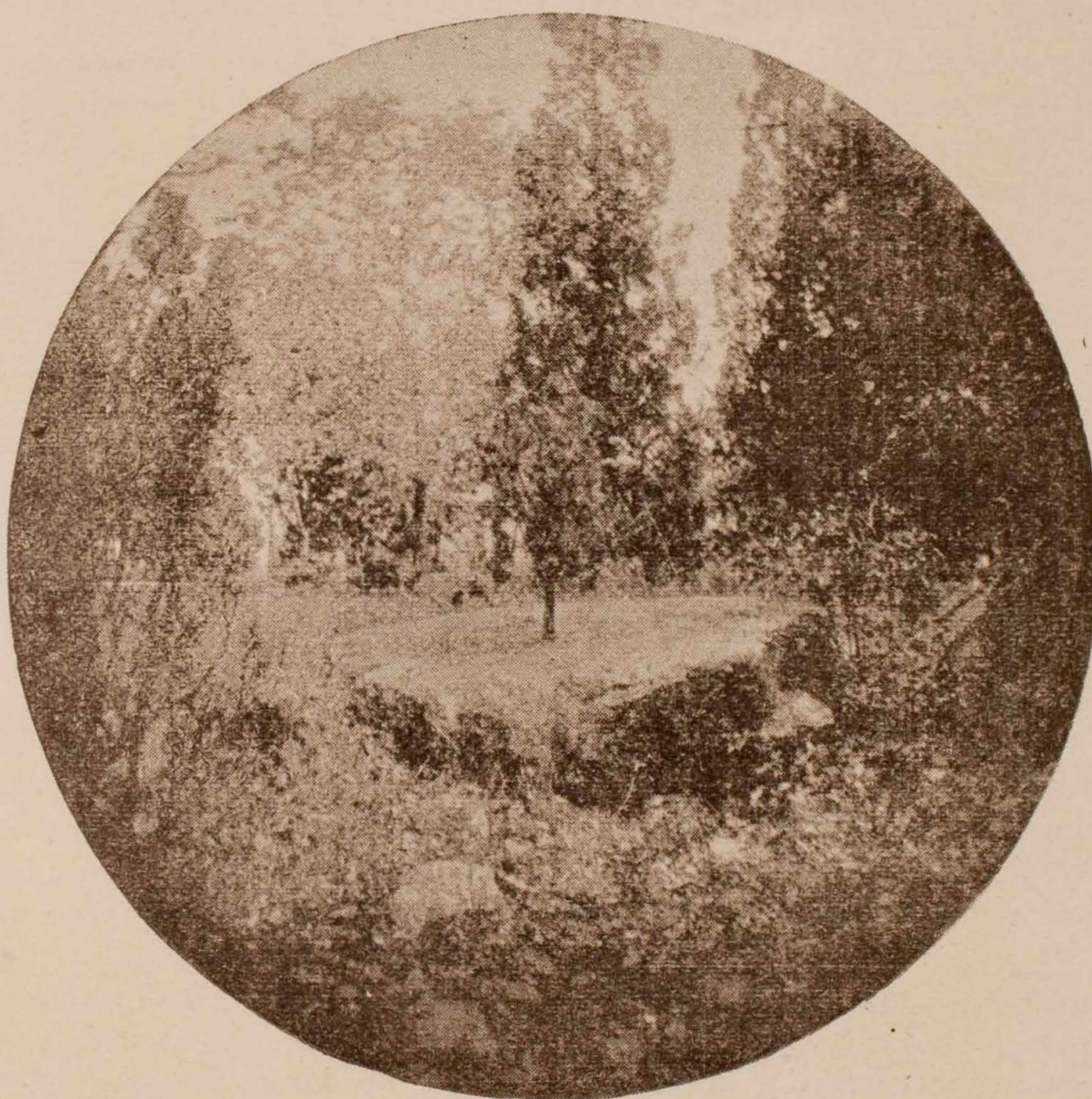
First and foremost is the purely sentimental consideration. It is a "thing of beauty" and therefore ought to be undisturbed. If it is to be preserved for its beauty, it must be as a whole and not in fragments. Scars like those made by Carpenter Brothers at Fort Lee, Brown and Fleming at Clinton Point, and Treanor at Bumy Hook, spoil the whole range in the same way that a battered hat, a crumpled shirt and patched trousers would mar the appearance of an otherwise well-dressed man.

From this standpoint, the extent of territory which must be restricted from defacement, is from Edgewater, opposite General Grant's tomb, to Piermont, a distance of sixteen miles. Not only the vertical wall of basalt, but its approaches at each end, the portals to the Palisades canon, as it would be called if it were a couple of thousand miles farther west, must be preserved from mutilation. Nature has clearly defined those portals. At each end there is a wooded eminence a little back from the river front, leading the eye to a depression in the hill, beyond which there rises a beautifully sloping rounded promontory at whose summit on the river shore the vertical wall of basalt begins, and for eleven miles continuously challenges the passers' admiration by its bold and picturesque front, rising sheer from three hundred to five hundred feet above the river level, and fringed at its base with the picturesquely wooded talus. The State of New Jersey, the State of New York, the American Nation, can't afford to have this front gashed by greedy contractors.

But aside from sentiment, this tract of land is

needed for the recreation and instruction of the millions of adjoining residents.

From the river front the summit slopes gradually to the west for two miles. The line of two hundred feet elevation runs nearly parallel to the river and about one mile and a quarter distant from the shore line and the intervening space is covered very generally with a thirty to fifty years growth of timber. This area of about eight thousand acres, taken in connection with the two approaches extending respectively to Edgewater and Piermont, each comprising about two thousand acres, offers unparalleled



A CEDAR IN A TRAP-ROCK CLEFT ON THE PALISADES.

advantages for the site of a woodland park for the cities of northeastern New Jersey and the southern Hudson river counties of New York. It is as near to Jersey City, Newark, Passaic, Paterson, Nyack, Yonkers, Tarrytown, Sing Sing and White Plains, as the four thousand acres of new parks of New York City are to the centre of population of the city, and it offers advantages in the way of access by land or water, and of enjoyment of magnificent views, and of driving, wheeling and climbing, that no park lands anywhere else possess. As a forest preserve, including within its bound-

aries phenomenal natural scenery, this tract of 12,000 acres is as worthy of preservation at the public expense as are the 17,565,160 acres of lands in the far West which the United States Government has set apart for preservation, or the 2,807,760 acres of Adirondack wilderness which the State of New York has set apart and has partially purchased, or the one hundred and seven acres at Niagara which the State has purchased at a cost of \$1,433,429.50. Its immediate advantages would be felt by a far greater number of people than are affected by either the Niagara, Adirondack or Wyoming Reserve.

In the third place, the Nation owes it to the metropolitan city of the country, its chief seaport and its financial centre, to provide it with an adequate and dignified military post and headquarters of defence against foreign and domestic foes. Every great city needs such a post in its vicinity, for a store-house for arms and ammunitions of war, a training ground for troops of all arms of the service, a rendezvous for the concentration of masses of men and their speedy utilization in an emergency such as has arisen already in several instances and is likely to arise at any time in any great city where thousands of the worst classes of the community are congregated. Those who remember the draft riots in New York in 1863, when for four days a large part of the city was at the mercy of a mob who pillaged, burned and slaughtered all that came in their way, cannot but realize the necessity for the establishment of such a post. Chicago, after the Anarchist riots, awoke to the necessity, and the result is Fort Sheridan on a wooded bluff on the shore of Lake Michigan, from which, when the great railway strike last year threatened disorder, there issued promptly the Government troops armed and equipped for active service, and order reigned in the city.

The metropolitan district of the country is entitled to and demands from the Nation the establishment of such a post in a commanding position and within easy access of all portions of the district by land or water. The summit of the Palisades is the only locality around New York which offers the required conditions, and whose acquisition by the United States would serve the double purpose of military protection and the preservation of natural scenery, for both of which millions have been expended by the Nation in other localities. The extent of the territory required would be eleven miles in

length and from one mile to one-quarter of a mile in width from the shore of the Hudson River, comprising some two thousand acres, giving room for barracks, store-houses, practice and parade grounds, military roads and out-works for defence.

There are, therefore, three objects to be accomplished: The preservation of forests and striking natural features, the provision of pleasure grounds for three million people and the military protection of those people, and there are three parties to share the cost, the States of New Jersey and New York and the United States.

Five-sixths of the territory needed would be in the State of New Jersey and one-sixth in the State of New York. The proportion needed for national purposes is one-sixth of the whole.

If acquired directly by the National Government, either by condemnation or by purchase, that one-sixth would cost two-thirds of the price which would have to be paid for the entire territory, comprising as it does, all the property which has an exceptional value for residential purposes. If, however, the whole tract were taken for public purposes by the States, a fair proportion for the United States to pay would be one-third of the entire cost, the State of New York paying one-sixth and the State of New Jersey one-half.

Such, in a general way, may be said to be the fundamental conditions of the problem which the Commissioners have to solve.

If, after a thorough study of the scheme, it appears to be on too large a scale to be carried out successfully, modes of reducing it may be considered, but it must be constantly borne in mind that symmetry and harmony in the design are essential to success, and that to secure aid from the National Government, the States must show themselves willing to bear a considerable share of the burden. It must also be considered whether the localities directly benefitted ought not to be called upon to lessen the burden on the States themselves.

As a last resort, it may be worth considering whether, in case of disinclination of the General Government to do its duty in the premises, the State of New Jersey itself would not be willing to expend out of the surplus in its treasury, less than one-third of a million dollars to preserve her own character as a civilized community, by purchasing as a public ground the talus between the vertical cliff of the Palisade Range and the shore of the Hudson River. C.