

N. E. Map.
Sept 1896.

THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN RESERVATIONS.

By Charles Eliot.

A GREAT work has been quietly accomplished in the neighborhood of Boston during the last two years, and a sketch of it may perhaps encourage the people of other American neighborhoods to go and do likewise.

Surrounding Boston and forming with Boston the so-called metropolitan district lie thirty-seven separate and independent municipalities, comprising twelve "cities" and twenty-five "towns," all of which lie either wholly or partly within the sweep of a radius of eleven miles from the State House. The population of this group of towns and cities is about one million of people, and the total of taxed property about one thousand millions of dollars.

In 1892 the central city of Boston already possessed and had in part developed a costly series of public squares and parks within her own boundaries, sixteen of the surrounding municipalities had secured one or more local recreation grounds, and some of these communities had acquired still other lands for the sake of preserving the purity of public water supplies. Nevertheless it was evident to all observing citizens that a great body of new population was spreading throughout the district much more rapidly than the local park commissions and water commissions were acquiring public open spaces, and that if any considerable islands of green country or fringes of sea or river shore were to be saved from the flood of buildings and made accessible to the people, it could only be by means of some new and central authority raised above the need of regarding local municipal boundaries and endowed by the people with the necessary powers and money. Ac-

cordingly the whole problem was laid before the legislature of 1891 by a committee appointed at a meeting of the local park commissions, aided by representatives from the Trustees of Public Reservations, the Appalachian Mountain Club and other organizations, and by numerous and influential petitions from all parts of the district. A preliminary or inquiring Commission was the result. This Commission, headed by Charles Francis Adams as chairman, examined the district in detail, discussed the problem with the local authorities, became thoroughly convinced of the need of prompt coöperative action, and so reported to the succeeding legislature; whereupon an act was passed establishing a permanent Metropolitan Park Commission, which act was signed by the governor, June 3, 1893.

The accompanying outline map illustrates the distribution and the area of the open spaces acquired for the public by this Commission down to December 1, 1895, the date of the last annual report to the General Court. In the very centre of the district the Commission has taken possession of several miles of the marshy banks of the estuary of Charles River. (See No. 5' on the accompanying map). Most of the remaining frontage on this obnoxious tidal stream is controlled by the Cambridge Park Commission and certain semi-public institutions; so that the metropolitan district is now in a position to make for itself, whenever it may so desire, a river park which, with its bordering drives, will extend six miles west from the State House. The broad Basin, surrounded as it will be by handsome promenades, is destined to become the central "court of honor"

of the metropolitan district; while, by building a dam which shall exclude the tides, the pleasing scenery of the fresh water river, with all its delightful opportunities for boating and skating, may be brought down stream to the central basin itself.

North-northeast of the State House, and between eight and eleven miles distant, Lynn Woods Reservation, containing some 2,000 acres (No. 1 on map), had been acquired by the city of Lynn some years before the establishment of the Metropolitan Park Commission. Lying in the corresponding southerly direction from the State House and exactly the same number of miles distant are found the highest hills of the whole neighborhood of Boston—hills whose broken sky line is the chief ornament of every prospect from the towers of the great city, from the other hills about it, and from the bay and the sea. Among these loftiest hills of the district there is extremely little land adapted to house-lots, but there is abundant interesting scenery and opportunity for the gradual development of even greater impressiveness and beauty. Here the new Commission has acquired the Blue Hills Reservation five miles in length (No. 1' on map).*

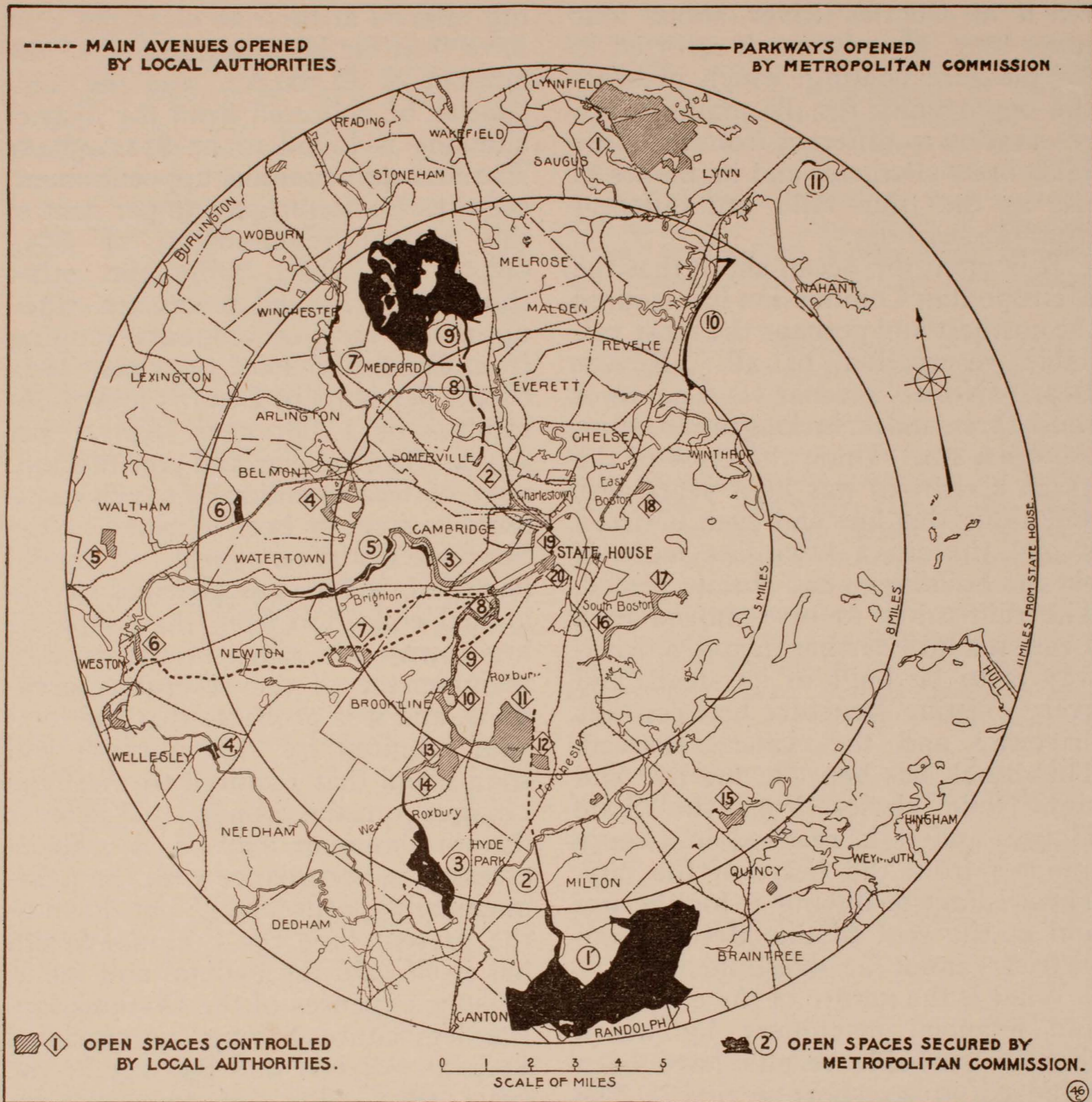
Between the Lynn Woods and the Charles River Reservation and between the Blue Hills and the same central domain lie many square miles of more or less densely settled but rapidly growing suburbs. When the Metropolitan Commission was created the southern section of these suburbs already possessed several hundred acres of public open space in Leverett Park, Jamaica Park, the Arboretum and Franklin Park, while the corresponding northern suburbs controlled few public grounds,—indeed almost none. Accordingly the Metropolitan Commission has acquired in the southern region the com-

paratively small but costly Stony Brook Reservation (No. 3' on map), while in the northern region there has been secured the broad domain of the Middlesex Fells (No. 9' on map). The narrow and deep valley of Stony Brook, with Bellevue Hill at its head, undoubtedly presents the most strikingly picturesque landscapes to be found in the region between Dedham and the Basin, and the new reservation will make a valuable addition to the already long chain of the Boston and Brookline parks. The Fells, on the other hand, include the most interesting scenery to be found between Woburn, Wakefield and Boston, scenery compounded of hills, rocks and waters, and well worthy of being preserved in a single reservation to answer for the northern suburbs the purposes of Jamaica Park, Franklin Park, the Arboretum and Bellevue Hill combined in one area.

Westward again two additional but small areas yet remain to be mentioned, each of which preserves scenery of remarkable beauty. Beaver Brook Reservation (No. 6' on map) contains a waterfall and a group of the largest oak trees in Massachusetts (the Waverley oaks), and lies just five miles distant from the nearest corner of the Fells.* Hemlock Gorge Reservation (No. 4' on map) preserves a series of beautiful pictures formed by the passage of Charles River between high and rocky banks, and lies just five miles distant from the nearest corner of the new reservation at Stony Brook. Thus, if the Lynn domain may be counted as a metropolitan reservation (and it ought to be made one of the series), the distribution of the seven new inland open spaces thus far mentioned is remarkably symmetrical. The only part of the metropolitan district not yet provided with a fairly accessible and large public open space is the extreme western part (see map); and it so happens that there is found in this very region a

* See the illustrated article on "The Blue Hills of Milton," in the August number of the *New England Magazine*, the first of a series of illustrated articles to be devoted to the Boston Park System.—*Editor*.

* See article, "Round About the Waverley Oaks," in the April, 1896, number of the *New England Magazine*.—*Editor*.



THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN DISTRICT.

Key to figures on the map.

OPEN SPACES CONTROLLED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Lynn Woods, Lynn. | 11 Franklin Park, Boston. |
| 2 Broadway Park, Somerville. | 12 Franklin Field, Boston. |
| 3 Charles River Parkway, Cambridge. | 13 Arnold Arboretum, Boston. |
| 4 Fresh Pond Reservoir, Cambridge. | 14 West Roxbury Parkway, Boston. |
| 5 Prospect Hill, Waltham. | 15 Merrymount Park, Quincy. |
| 6 Riverside Park, Newton. | 16 Strandway, Boston. |
| 7 Chestnut Hill Reservoir, Boston. | 17 Marine Park, Boston. |
| 8 Back Bay Fens, Boston. | 18 Wood Island Park, Boston. |
| 9 Leverett Park, Boston. | 19 Public Garden, Boston. |
| 10 Jamaica Park, Boston. | 20 Common, Boston. |

OPEN SPACES SECURED BY METROPOLITAN PARK COMMISSION.

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1' Blue Hills Reservation. | 7' Mystic Valley Parkway. |
| 2' Blue Hills Parkway. | 8' Middlesex Fells Parkway. |
| 3' Stony Brook Reservation. | 9' Middlesex Fells Reservation. |
| 4' Hemlock Gorge Reservation. | 10' Revere Beach Reservation. |
| 5' Charles River Reservation. | 11' King's Beach Reservation. |
| 6' Beaver Brook Reservation. | |

reach of Charles River about four miles long, already much resorted to for pleasure boating, which presents the opportunity for the making of a reservation as different from the Blue Hills in its character and its modes of use as the Blue Hills are different from the seashore.

It is upon the ocean shore that the Metropolitan Commission has secured the costliest and perhaps the most valuable reservation of all. Revere Beach (No. 10' on map) is a curve of sand three miles in length, fronting the open sea. Upon the crest of the beach a railroad was built years ago, and along this line and even between it and the sea a town-like mass of cheap buildings has been placed. The railroad is to be removed to a location a little farther inland, a driveway is to be built in its stead, and every existing structure between this driveway and the water removed. This beach lies between the five and eight mile circles from the State House, and it is reached in twenty minutes from the heart of the city. The wisdom of buying it for the use and at the cost of the Metropolitan district cannot be questioned.

What is the nature of the executive and financial machinery by which these remarkable results have been achieved in so short a time? The Commission consists of five gentlemen who serve the community without pay. The Governor of the Commonwealth, acting for the metropolitan district, appoints one new member every year, the term of service being five years. The General Court of the Commonwealth, acting for the metropolitan district, authorizes from time to time the sale of bonds by the State Treasurer, who is directed to collect annually the amount of the interest and the sinking fund charges from the towns and cities of the metropolitan district in accordance with an apportionment newly made every five years by a special commission appointed by the Supreme Court. Bonds running forty years and bear-

ing interest at the rate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent have thus far been authorized to the amount of \$2,300,000, and the total sum to be collected from the district annually is found to be \$111,253.99. The first quinquennial apportionment requires Boston to pay 50 per cent of this annual requirement, or \$55,627.00 per year, while the other thirty-six cities and towns are called upon for varying amounts ranging from Cambridge's $6\frac{8}{10}$ per cent (\$7,600.50 per year) to Dover's four thousandths of 1 per cent (\$48.92 per year). The validity and constitutionality of this ingenious financial system has recently been affirmed by the Supreme Court on appeal. It should be added that the law provides for the annual collection from the coöperating towns and cities of the cost of maintenance of the several reservations, and it is probable that the total sum required for this purpose will soon equal that required to meet the charges on the bonds. Whatever the total amount may be, it is to be assessed in accordance with the quinquennial apportionment; but down to the present time the Commonwealth has itself paid the general and maintenance expenses of the Commission, the legislature having appropriated \$10,000, \$20,000 and \$38,943 in the years 1893, 1894 and 1895 respectively.

The following condensed statements concerning the work of the Commission have been compiled from the three successive annual reports of the Board:

The Commission was originally composed as follows:—

Charles Francis Adams, Chairman, Quincy; William B. de las Casas, Malden; Philip A. Chase, Lynn; Abraham L. Richards, Watertown; James Jeffery Roche, Boston. William L. Chase, of Brookline, succeeded James Jeffery Roche, resigned, but died in July, 1895, and was succeeded by Edwin B. Haskell of Newton. Augustus Hemenway of Canton has also been appointed in place of Charles Francis Adams, resigned. William B. de las Casas is Chairman of the present Board. The commission

meets every week and sits from two until six o'clock; its members also make frequent excursions to the scenes of their labors.

Executive Department.—Secretary, H. S. Carruth, July, 1893, to January 1, 1896. John Woodbury, January 1, 1896, to date.—The secretary is the salaried executive officer of the Commission, and all departments report through him. He is the general manager of the work of the Commission and arranges for the financial settlements with the owners of the lands acquired. The total number of acres thus far taken for reservations is 6,822, embracing lands belonging to 603 claimants for damages. At the date of the last report 367 of these claims, representing 5,156 acres, had been adjusted at prices ranging all the way from forty dollars an acre to one dollar per square foot. So far there have been very few cases of litigation. It is pleasant to note that six persons have presented lands to the Commission. The sum of the three annual appropriations of the General Court (\$68,943) has been expended by the executive department for office rent, salaries, traveling, repairs, tools, etc., and for the pay of the keepers or police of the reservations (about \$20,000 to date).

Law Department.—Messrs. Balch and Rackemann, attorneys and conveyancers, have from the first drafted the legal papers required for the taking of lands by eminent domain and for other purposes. They have represented the Commission in such suits as have been brought by landowners who have been unable to come to terms with the secretary or the Commission. They have also prosecuted a few violators of the ordinances governing the reservations. The principal work of this department has, however, been the searching of the titles to the lands of the reservations in order to make sure that only rightful claims are paid. This tedious task has been accomplished by employing a large force of skilled assistants.

Landscape Architects' Department.—Messrs. Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot have from the first advised with the Commission as to the choice of lands for the reservations, as to the boundaries of each reservation, and as to all questions relating to the appearance or scenery of the lands acquired. More than thirty miles of boundaries have been studied and re-studied in detail.

Engineering Department.—Engineer, William T. Pierce.—With a varying number of assistants the engineer prepares the plans of "takings," land maps to accompany filed deeds, projects for necessary works here and there in the reservations, and so on. During the first year or two different engineers were engaged in different places for special works. Topographical surveys of the Fells and Blue Hills Reservations have been exe-

cuted for the Commission by surveyors employed under a contract. The engineering department is at present principally occupied in supervising the construction of certain "parkways" not previously mentioned (Nos. 2', 7' and 8' on map), money for which to the amount of \$500,000 was placed at the disposal of the Metropolitan Park Commission by an Act of 1894, which in this case divided the financial burden evenly between the Commonwealth and the metropolitan district.

Construction Department.—Wilfred Rackemann, General Superintendent.—About twenty miles of old woods-roads in the forest reservations have been made usable by pleasure carriages, and many additional miles have been made practicable for horse-back riders. The whole area of the inland reservations has been cleared of the wood-choppers' slashings, the fire-killed trees, and all the dangerous, because dead and dry, tinder with which the lands were found heaped. About one hundred men have been employed during three winters in this last mentioned safeguarding work. Several buildings have also been torn down, fences built and odd jobs of all sorts done.

The drafts on the sum of the loans (\$2,300,000) may, accordingly, be classified thus:

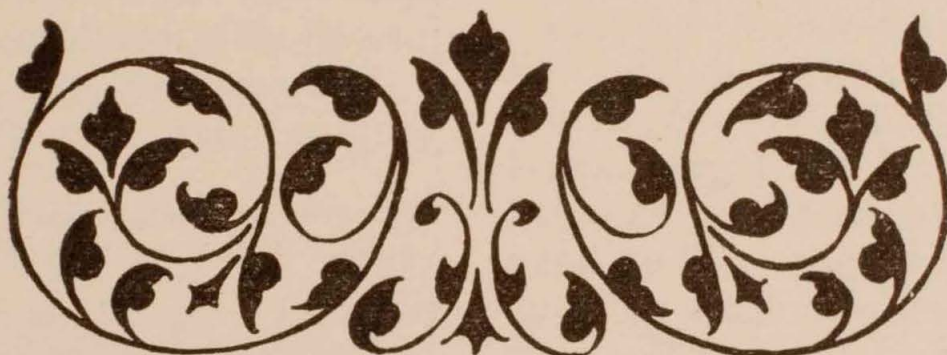
Payments for lands (to date of last report)	\$940,739 77
Counsel and conveyancers' fees and expenses	52,199 79
Landscape architects' fees and expenses	7,147 78
Engineering expenses (including cost of topographical surveys, \$17,012.90)	31,857 57
Labor and supervision thereof	146,402 60
Miscellaneous expenditures	16,303 90
Total	\$1,194,651 41

It is estimated that the whole of the balance of the loans (\$1,105,348.59), and possibly more, will be required to meet the remaining claims of land-owners, the cost of moving the Revere Beach Railroad, and a few other minor but necessary works.

Every rural as well as every crowded district of the United States possesses at least a few exceptionally interesting scenes, the enclosure or destruction of which for private pleasure or gain would impoverish the life of the people. Very often these strongly characterized scenes are framed by lands or strips of land which, like the Blue Hills, the banks of the Charles, and Revere Beach, are either almost unproductive or else are put by their private owners to by no means their highest use. In many districts now is the time when these

financially profitless summits, cañons, crags, ravines and strips of ground along the seashores, lake shores, rivers and brooks ought to be preserved as natural pictures, and put to use as public recreation grounds. To enable benevolent citizens or bodies of voluntary subscribers to achieve the permanent preservation of such scenes, Massachusetts has created a board of trustees, known as the Trustees of Public Reservations, who are empowered to hold free of all taxes such lands and money as may be given into their keeping—an institution which ought to be found in every state. In special regions, however, where the establishment of such a board of trustees would be ineffectual, either because large sums of

money are required promptly or because the power of eminent domain must be invoked, the methods of the Massachusetts Metropolitan Park Commission may be profitably followed on either a humbler or a grander scale. The establishment and the successful working of this Commission proves that at least one great and complex American democracy is alive to the usefulness of the beautiful and the value of public open space; also that this democracy is capable of coöperation and of foresight, ready to tax itself severely for an end which it believes in, and able to secure as executors of its expressed but undefined desires commissioners capable of realizing these desires in a remarkably comprehensive and equitable manner.



THE HERBS OF LONG AGO.

By Minna Irving.

IT stands upon a wooded hill
 Among the murmuring leaves,—
 An ancient house with shingle roof,
 And mosses on its eaves.
 Around its weather-beaten door
 The running roses blow,
 And all the narrow yard is sweet
 With herbs of long ago.

In dewy borders edged with box
 The poppy shakes its seeds,
 The silver sage and lavender
 Are struggling with the weeds;
 And in the dusk a withered form
 Goes softly to and fro,
 Still seeking with a trembling hand
 The herbs of long ago.

She lifts the wooden latch again
And climbs the creaking stair,
To breathe beneath the massive beams
The garret's fragrant air.
For there along the dusky walls
And from the rafters low
They hang, in dainty bunches tied,—
The herbs of long ago.

The balsam with its fluffy buds,
The roots of sassafras,
The catnip, and the peppermint
That loves the meadow grass:
They held a cure for every ill,
A balm for every woe,
When gathered in the morning dew,—
The herbs of long ago.

She sleeps, the little dame I knew,
Where Sabbath silence broods;
The bramble on her simple stone
Its glossy fruit intrudes;
But o'er the smoky chimney-tops
And in the street below,
I smell again the pleasant herbs
She gathered long ago.

The cricket tunes his violin
Beside a broken sill;
Untrained the hardy trumpet-flowers
Their cups of scarlet spill;
But in the lonely garret yet
They hang in many a row,
With healing in their brittle leaves,—
The herbs of long ago.



EDITOR'S TABLE.

RUFUS CHOATE once gave an address—it was at Salem in 1833—on “The Importance of Illustrating New England History by a Series of Romances like the *Waverley Novels*.” The address holds the first place in the first volume of Mr. Choate’s collected works; and we wish that every reader of the *New England Magazine* might turn to it there. It is morally certain that very few of them will do it,—we have ourself met only one person who had read the essay; and we are strongly tempted, breaking customary rule, to reprint it sometime in the magazine, so unique and noteworthy is its insight into the picturesqueness of New England life and history and so forcible its plea for those interests for which this magazine chiefly stands.

Mr. Choate is certainly not the only great man who has borne eloquent testimony to the high historical function of historical novels and the historical services of writers like Sir Walter Scott. “At Lincoln Cathedral,” says Macaulay in his essay on History, “there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully flung behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the

novelist has appropriated. The history of the government and the history of the people would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in ‘Old Mortality’; for one-half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in the ‘Fortunes of Nigel.’”

Many such words we might quote. The writing of history has become a very different thing, in the best hands, from what it was when Macaulay wrote; indeed Macaulay himself did much to make possible such histories as that, in our own time, of John Richard Green—histories with atmosphere and color and flesh and blood, histories recognizing the fact that the life of a people expresses itself not alone in parliaments and laws and battles and treaties, but also in literature and science and art and religion and philosophy and business and sport, the farm, the shop, the street, the home. But when sober history has entirely ceased to be one-sided and dull, there will still remain room for the historical novel and romance; and it is in its broad and sympathetic appreciation of the fine field which New England offers for such literary treatment that the value of Mr. Choate’s essay consists. The essay analyzes the method of the true historical novelist, pointing out the fidelity and thoroughness required in the study of the chosen period and how all the qualities of the good historian must be united to the qualities of the literary man in order to genuine service and to a success like that of Scott. But the great charm of the