



Picturesque America; or, the land we live in

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

Bryant, William Cullen

New York, 1874

New York And Brooklyn.

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NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARRY FENN.



New-York Bay.

THERE are few cities in the world so admirably situated as New York. The grand Hudson rolls its waters on one side; the swift and deep tides of the East River wash it on the other; both unite at its southern extremity, where they expand into a broad bay; and this bay is practically a land-locked harbor, that, by a narrow gate-way, opens into the expanses of the Atlantic. The Hudson comes down from the north, a wide, deep stream for a hundred and fifty miles, opening intercourse with the far interior; the East River, which is an arm of the sea rather than a river, opens twenty

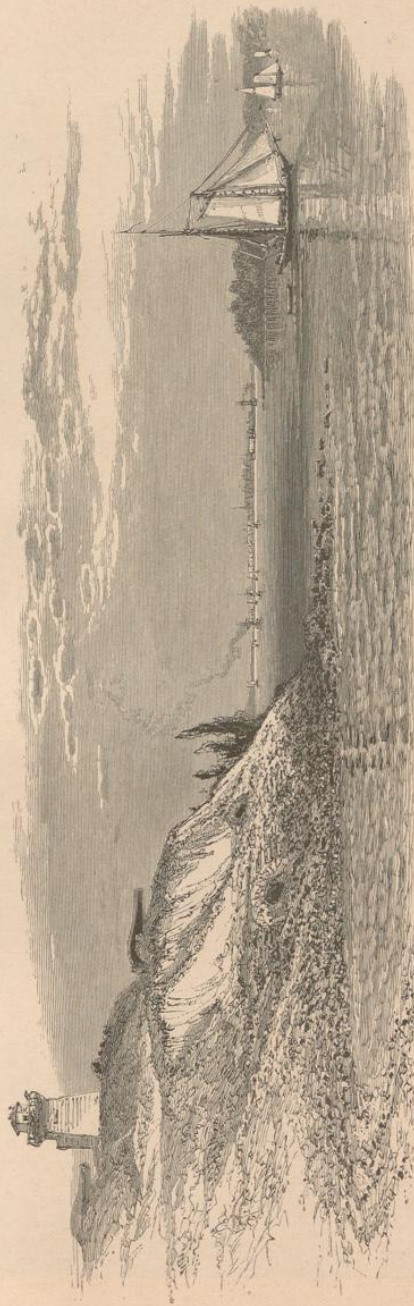


The Lower Bay, from Staten Island.

miles from its mouth into Long-Island Sound, establishing by this water-course and tributary streams connection with the New-England States. Bays and rivers completely encompass the place. It is an island, very narrow at its southern or bay end, broadening in its centre to a width of two miles, and narrowing again at its northern extremity. On its eastern side, eight miles from the Battery, is the mouth of the Harlem, a mere bayou of East River, which, running west and then northerly, connects by Spuyten-Duyvil Creek with the Hudson, forming the northern boundary of the island, which, on its eastern side, is eleven miles long. The island is frequently known by the name of Manhattan, so called after the Indian tribe that once made it their home.

Our artist approaches the city by the way of the sea. We sail up the broad expanse of water known as the Lower Bay, nearing the famous Narrows, a comparatively contracted channel, formed by the projection of Long Island on one side and Staten Island on the other. The shore of each island, at the narrowest part, is crowned with forts, fortified by embankments, and both bristle with cannon. The Long-Island shore is comparatively flat, but is handsomely wooded, and some pretty villages and villas peep out from their screens of foliage. Staten Island rises into fine hills, which are crowned with noble mansions and graced with park-like grounds, while at their feet, on the shore, cluster busy and bustling villages.

Through the Narrows opens the Inner Bay ; and, as we swiftly cut through the crisp and ever-fretted waters, New York rises before us from the sea, in the centre of the picture ; the city of Brooklyn, on Long Island, to the right, spreads a far and measureless sea of roofs, with endless, sky-aspiring spires ; the shores of New Jersey extend along the far western border of the picture, on the left, with faint markings of Jersey City a little beyond, on the shores of the Hudson. The picture cannot easily be excelled for beauty ; but one or two bays in the world are finer, and none are more animated with stirring and picturesque life. Here are the tall, white-sailed ships ; the swift, black-funnelled steamers ; the stately steamboats from the Hudson or the Sound ; the graceful, winged pleasure-yachts ; the snorting, bull-dog tugs ; the quaint, tall-masted, and broad-sailed schooners ; the flotilla of barges and canal-boats ; the crab-shaped but swift-motioned ferry-boats, all coming, going, swiftly or slowly, amid fleets of anchored ships, from whose gaffs fly the flags of far-off nations. New-York Bay, when the air is crisp and bright, the sky brilliant with summer blue, the swelling shores clear and distinct in their wooded hills and clustering villages, the waters dancing in white-crested waves in the glaring sun, affords a picture that can scarcely be equalled. A similar animation marks the two rivers. Our artist has sketched the moving panorama of the East River, also showing the unfinished tower of the contemplated bridge—a picture full of life, color, and light.

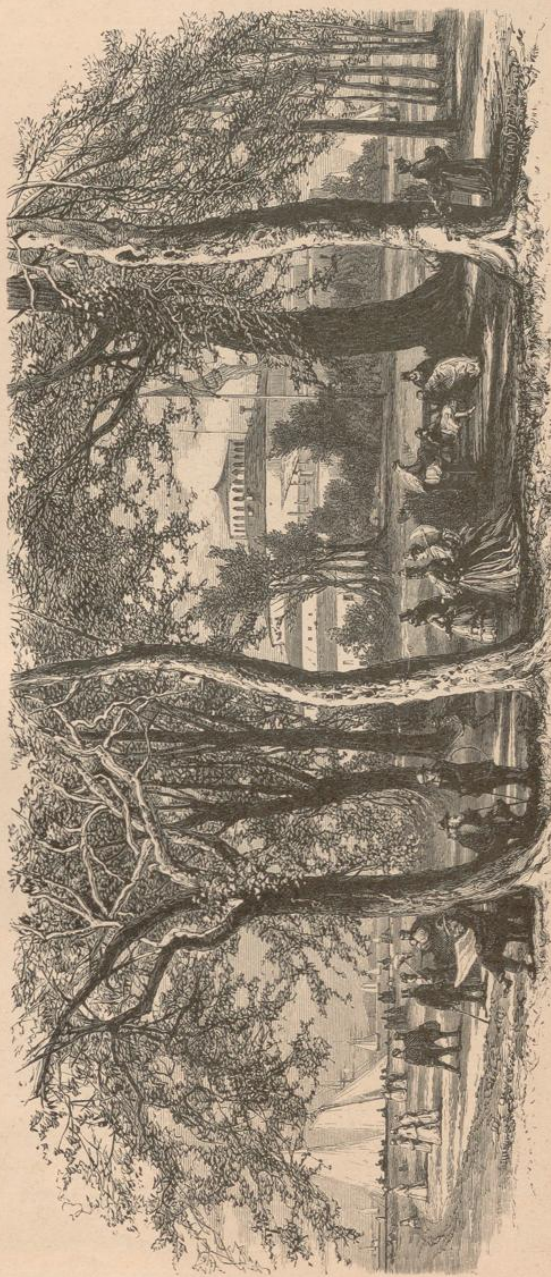


Glimpse of New York, from the Narrows.



SCENE ON THE EAST RIVER.

As we approach the city we note the fringe of trees and the circular, fort-like structure that mark the lower border. These are the Battery and the Castle Garden—the Battery a pleasure-promenade, with a fine seawall, and the Garden, so called, the great *entrepôt* through which the vast bodies of immigrants from the Old World pass into the life of the New World. Castle Garden was once a fort, afterward a summer tea-garden, then a music-hall and public assembly-room, and is now the headquarters of the Commissioners of Emigration. The Battery was once the only pleasure-ground of the New-Yorkers, and, if its history were accurately and fully written, it would tell a strange story of love and flirtation, of famous persons and fair dames, of ancient Knickerbockers, of life social and political, interwoven in a varied woof. It has fallen into fashionable disrepute, although it has been enlarged and laid out anew. But the fine old trees that mark the ancient place look scornfully down upon the unhistoric extension, with its feeble new trees and its walks barren of asso-



The Battery and Castle Garden.

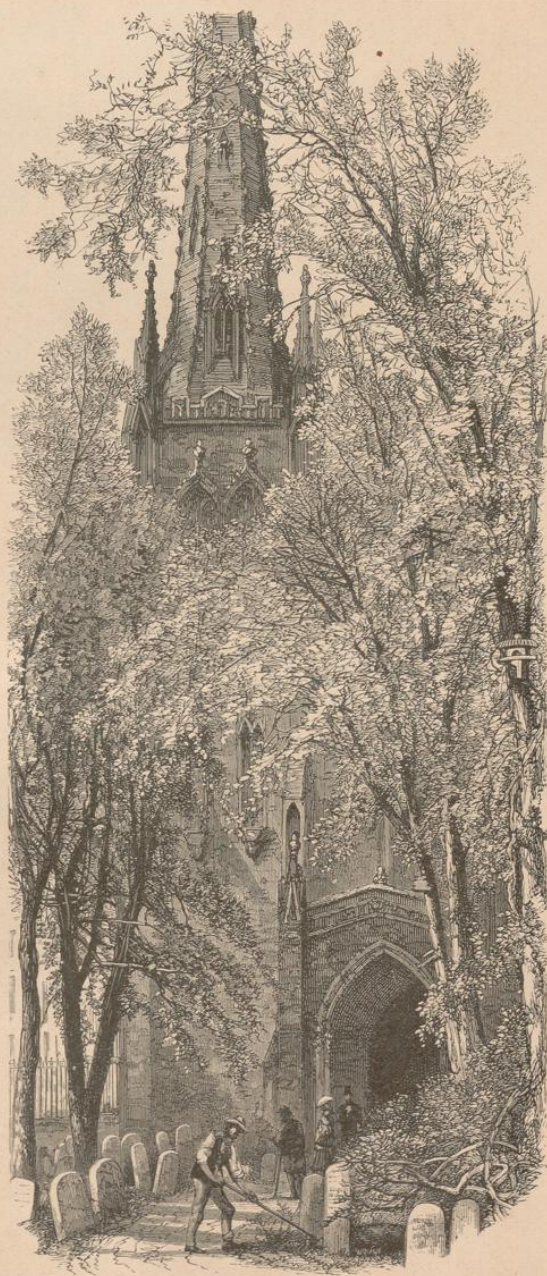


A NEW-YORK RIVER-FRONT.

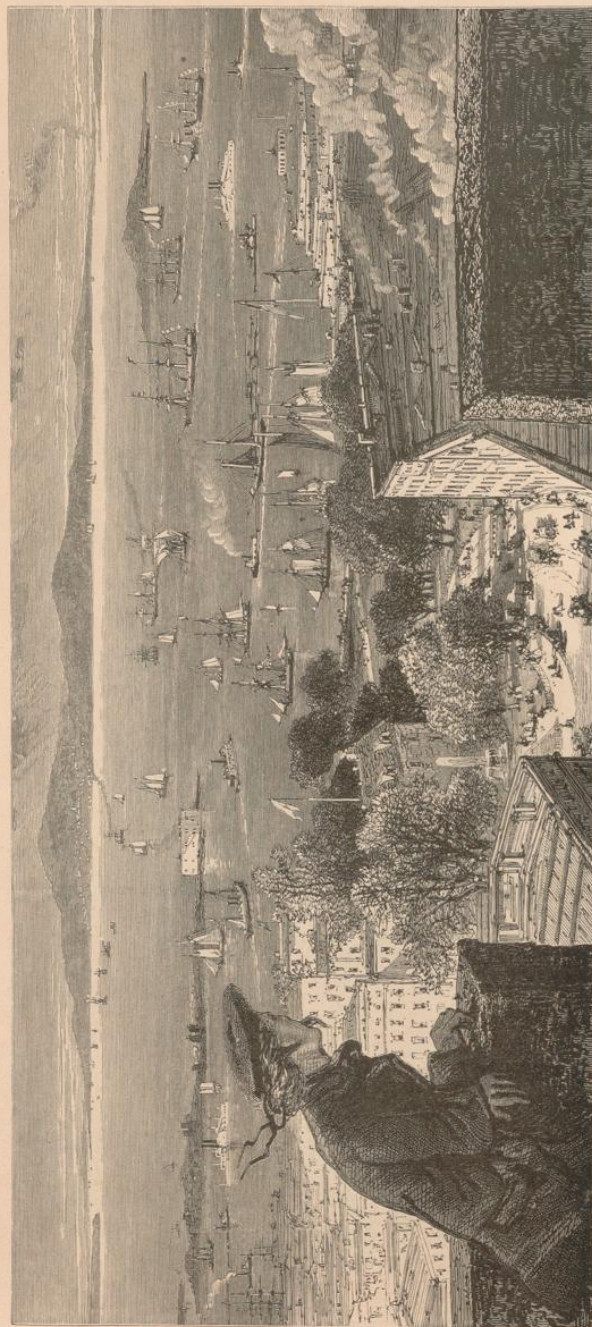
ciation and unfamiliar with romance.

Before entering the heart of the city, let us glance with the artist at a quaint and picturesque scene, lying but a short distance from the Battery on the East-River side. This is a portion of the town which modern improvement has left untouched; the wharves where the old-fashioned ships from far-off ports discharge their precious cargoes; where merchants of the old Knickerbocker quality conduct their business in dark and unsavory chambers; where the old tars, the Cuttles and Bunsbys, are wont to assemble; where the very idea of a steamship is profanation — a venerable, quaint, and decaying place, dear to the hearts of the ancient mariners.

Within the city, our artist takes us at once to the spire of Trinity Church. This famous edifice is comparatively a new church upon the site of one dating far back into the annals of the city. It is a new church, but the grounds around it are marked by ancient and crumbling grave-stones, an antique, tree-embowered spot in the heart of the busiest portion of the town. Trinity Church is less than half a mile from the Battery, standing on Broadway and facing down Wall Street



Trinity-Church Tower.



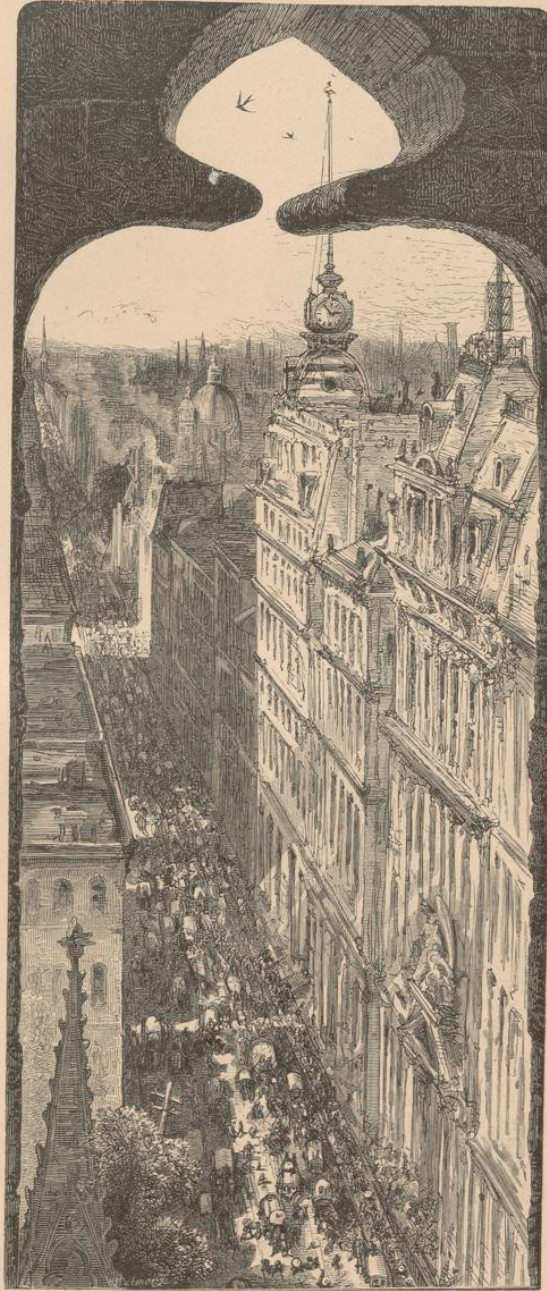
View from Trinity-Church Steeple.

which all the world knows as the monetary centre of the continent. From the outlook of the spire the picture is a varied one. Looking southward, the spectator sees Bowling Green, a small enclosure at the terminus of Broadway, and, just beyond, the Battery, with the circular mass of Castle Garden. Beyond these are the bay, with Governor's Island and its fort, and the distant hills of Staten Island. The views from our elevated position are all good. The artist has given a glance up Broadway, which gives one an idea of the spirit of this part of the street, shows some of the tall, marble structures, and indicates the bustling throngs upon the pavements below.

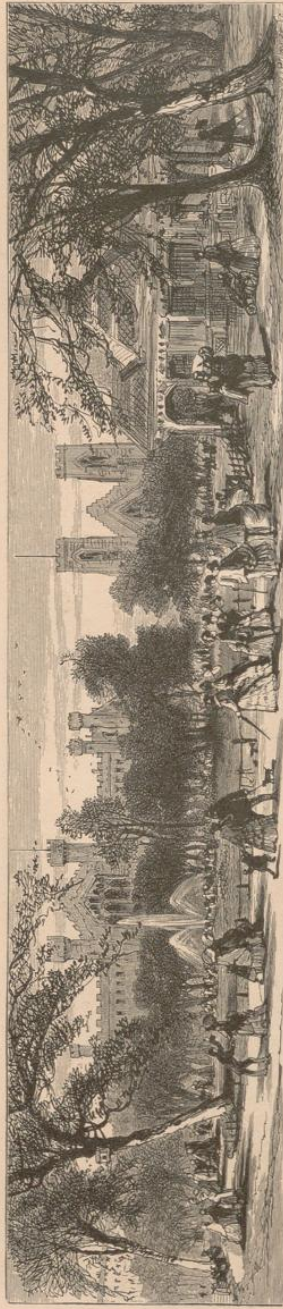
The artist has made no attempt to illustrate the varied features of the metropolis, but simply to give a glimpse or two at its interior, by which the imagination may build up a tolerably correct idea of the characteristics of the place.

In one picture he has combined views of three of the most noted of the small parks of the city. Washington Park lies off a little west of Broadway, and is the starting-point of the fashionable Fifth Avenue. The castellated-looking building that stands on its eastern border is the University, a Gothic pile of considerable age and quaint aspect, suggestive of the mediæval structures that lie scattered through the European countries. Union Square is at the bend of the main division of Broadway; Fourteenth Street is its southern and Fourth Avenue its eastern border. Here are statues of Washington and Lincoln. Madison Square is half a mile north of this, lying with great hotels and business places on its western side, and sedate, aristocratic, brown-stone houses on its other confines. It is at a point that is considered the social centre of the city.

From this point our artist takes us to the tower of the novel, Oriental-looking synagogue at the corner of Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, from which we have a cursory glance at the highway of fashion. Every city has as handsome streets as Fifth Avenue; to those, indeed, who like



Broadway, from Trinity, New York.



WASHINGTON SQUARE



MADISON SQUARE



UNION SQUARE

WASHINGTON, MADISON, AND UNION SQUARES.

streets of embowered villas, many are handsomer; but no city has an avenue of such length given over exclusively to wealth and elegance. From its southern extremity at Washington Park to the entrance of Central Park at Fifty-ninth Street, the distance is two miles and a half, and, with the exception of the short space at Madison Square, it presents through this long extent one unbroken line of costly and luxurious mansions. The streets that branch from it to the right and the left have mostly this same characteristic for a quarter of a mile either way; so that, in an oblong square of two miles and a half by half a mile, there is concentrated an undisputed and undisturbed social supremacy.

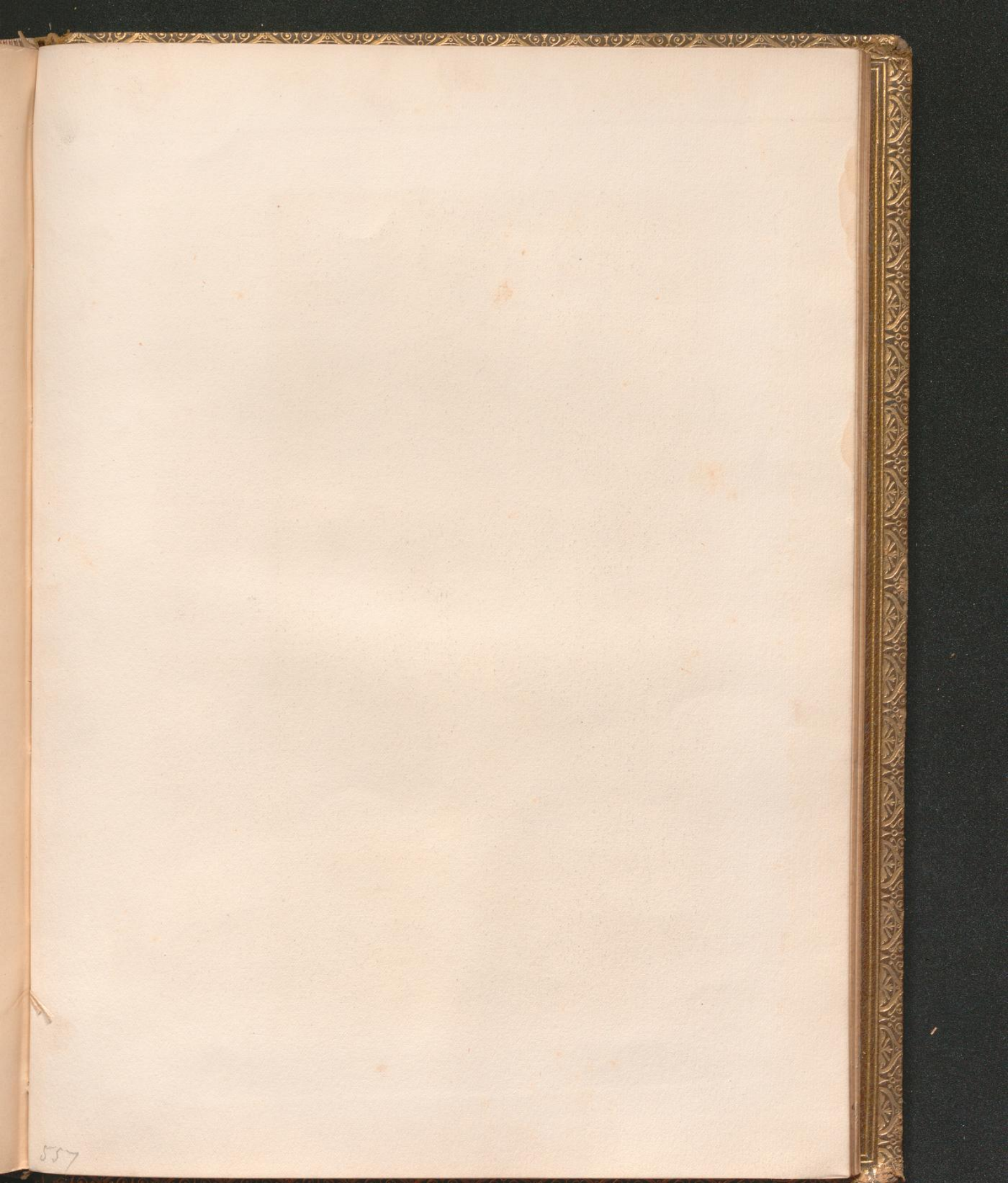
At the corner of Fifty-ninth Street and Fifth Avenue is the main entrance to Central Park. This park extends northward to One Hundred and Tenth Street, or a distance of two and a half miles, but it is not more than half a mile wide. Central Park is the pride of the metropolis. Less than twenty years ago the greater part of its area was a mass of rude rocks, tangled brushwood, and ash-heaps. It had long been the ground for



A Glimpse of Fifth Avenue.



SCENES IN CENTRAL PARK.



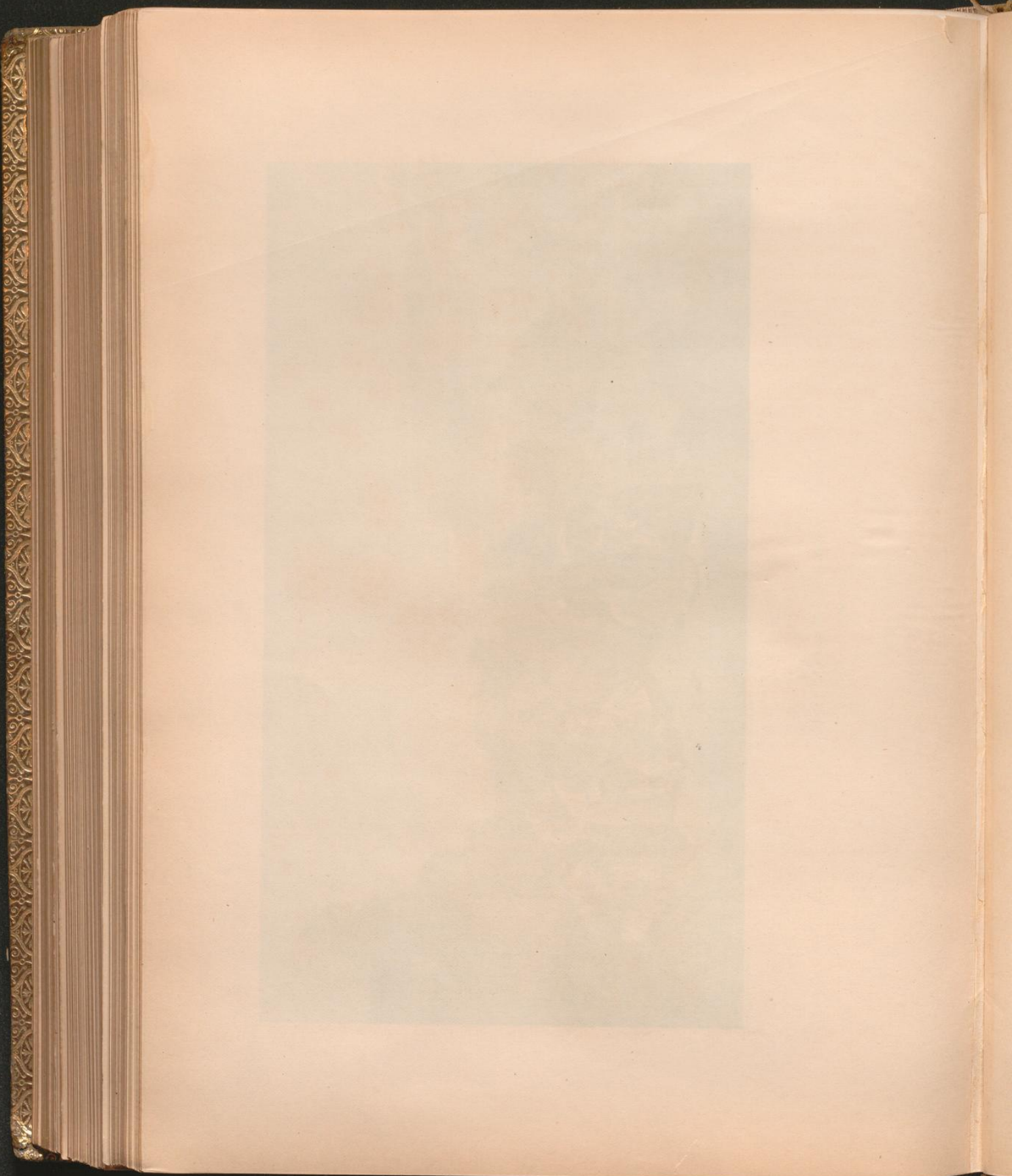
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The Terrace Central Park

NEW YORK

Wm. York, D. Appleton & Co.



depositing city-refuse, and tens of thousands of cart-loads of this refuse had to be removed before the natural surface could be reached or the laying out begun. Art had to do every thing for it. There were no forests, no groves, no lawns, no lakes, no walks; it was simply a desert of rocks and rubbish. The ground was excavated for lakes; trees were planted; roads and paths laid out; bridges built. The result is a pleasure-ground that is already famous, and only needs a little more maturing of the trees to be one of the handsomest parks of the world. It is not so large as some in Europe, but its size is not insignificant, numbering eight hundred and forty-three acres; while, in its union of art with Nature, its many bridges of quaint design, its Italian-like terrace, its towers and rustic houses, its boat-covered lakes, its secluded rambles and picturesque nooks, its wide walks and promenades, it is unapproached in this country and

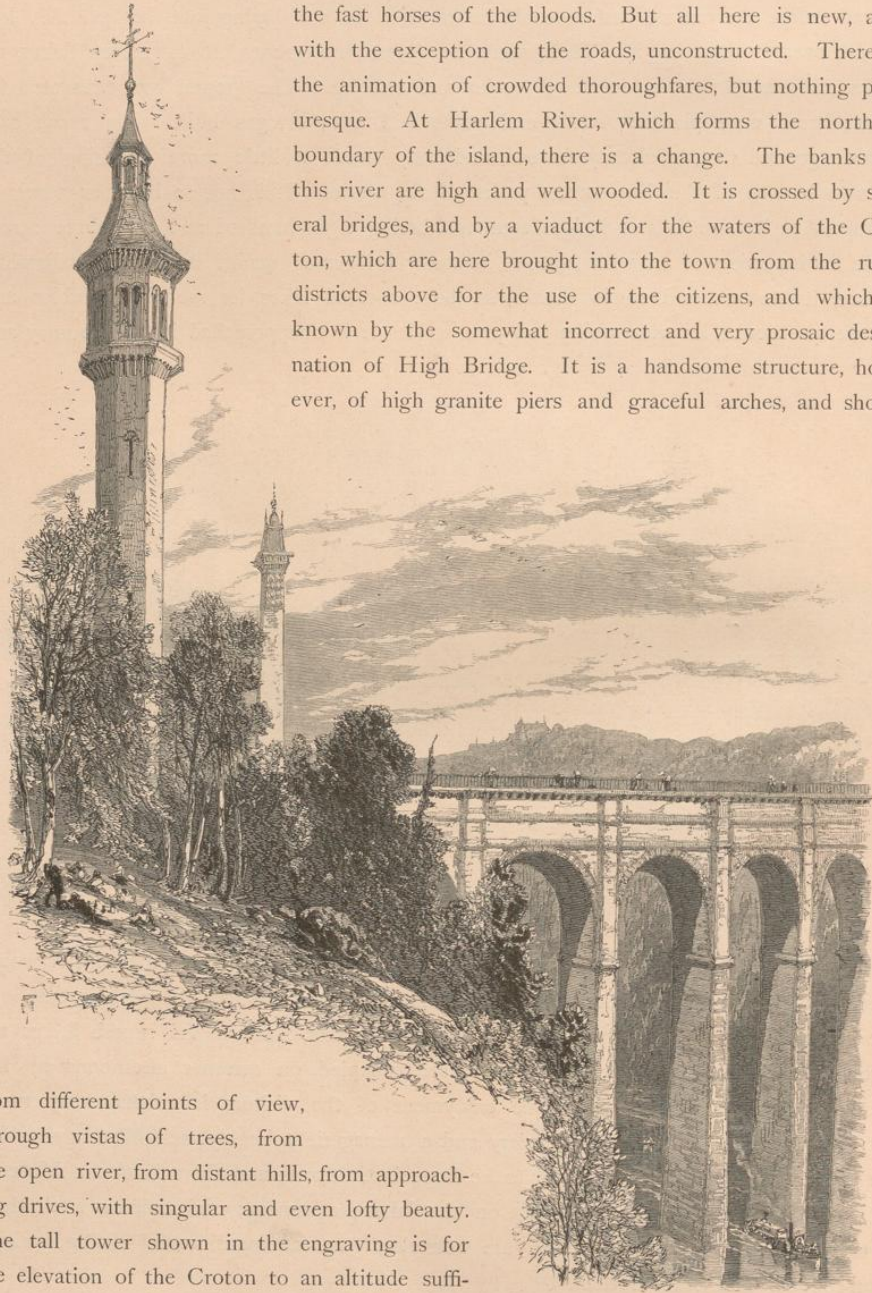


Harlem River, High Bridge.

unexcelled abroad. Our artist gives a few glimpses at places in the park, but it would take a volume to illustrate it fully. One element of satisfaction in the park is that it is not only an art and picturesque triumph—it is a popular success. Its superb drives are thronged with vehicles, while all its paths are occupied on summer afternoons by immense numbers of the people. The enjoyment of the visitors is enhanced by many extraneous means. There are an aviary and a menagerie tolerably well filled, and which are the nuclei of what are destined to be large institutions; and there is also a Museum of Natural History. There are boats on the lakes; a camera; and twice a week there is music. For the children there are nurseries, goat-carriages, camel-riding, swings, "run-rounds," and other devices.

Above Central Park, the whole island has been recently laid out anew in superb

drives and broad public ways, where one may always see the fast horses of the bloods. But all here is new, and, with the exception of the roads, unconstructed. There is the animation of crowded thoroughfares, but nothing picturesque. At Harlem River, which forms the northern boundary of the island, there is a change. The banks of this river are high and well wooded. It is crossed by several bridges, and by a viaduct for the waters of the Croton, which are here brought into the town from the rural districts above for the use of the citizens, and which is known by the somewhat incorrect and very prosaic designation of High Bridge. It is a handsome structure, however, of high granite piers and graceful arches, and shows



from different points of view, through vistas of trees, from the open river, from distant hills, from approaching drives, with singular and even lofty beauty. The tall tower shown in the engraving is for the elevation of the Croton to an altitude sufficient to give it force for the supply of resi-

High Bridge and Water-Tower.

dences on the high banks in the upper part of the city. Tower and bridge make a fine effect.

King's Bridge crosses the river near Spuyten-Duyvil Creek, which unites the Harlem



King's Bridge.

with the Hudson. This is an old, historic bridge, identified with many of the early events in the history of the town. The scene here has something of that ripe mellow-ness and effective grouping of landscape with adjuncts of art that give such a charm



Spuyten-Duyvil Creek.

to old-country scenes. The artist also gives us a glimpse of

Spuyten Duyvil near the Hudson, the tall escarpments in the distance being the well-known Palisades of the Hudson.

From Harlem we proceed to the great city of Brooklyn, lying opposite to New York, on Long Island, glancing on our way at two famous points in the East River. One is Hell Gate, situated at a narrow bend of the river, near the point where the Harlem debouches. It is filled with dangerous rocks and shallows; and, as the tide is very swift, the channel narrow, the bend abrupt, there is always danger that a vessel may be driven upon the rocks. Some of the more dangerous obstructions have been removed, and, as we write, extensive subterranean channels are becoming opened under the rocks, which are eventually to be filled with powder, and the shallow reefs blown to atoms. Blackwell's Island begins just below Hell Gate, and extends about two miles southward. It is occupied solely by city institutions, penal and otherwise. Here are the House of Correction, Lunatic Asylum, Workhouse, and City Penitentiary. The beauty

of the place is not lost by the uses to which it is put, while its interest is enhanced by its fine buildings and imposing official character.

Brooklyn lies directly opposite to New York; it spreads seaward along Long-Island shore toward the Narrows, and extends along East River for some miles. It is a city without public buildings of interest, and without a commerce of its own, being little



Hell Gate.

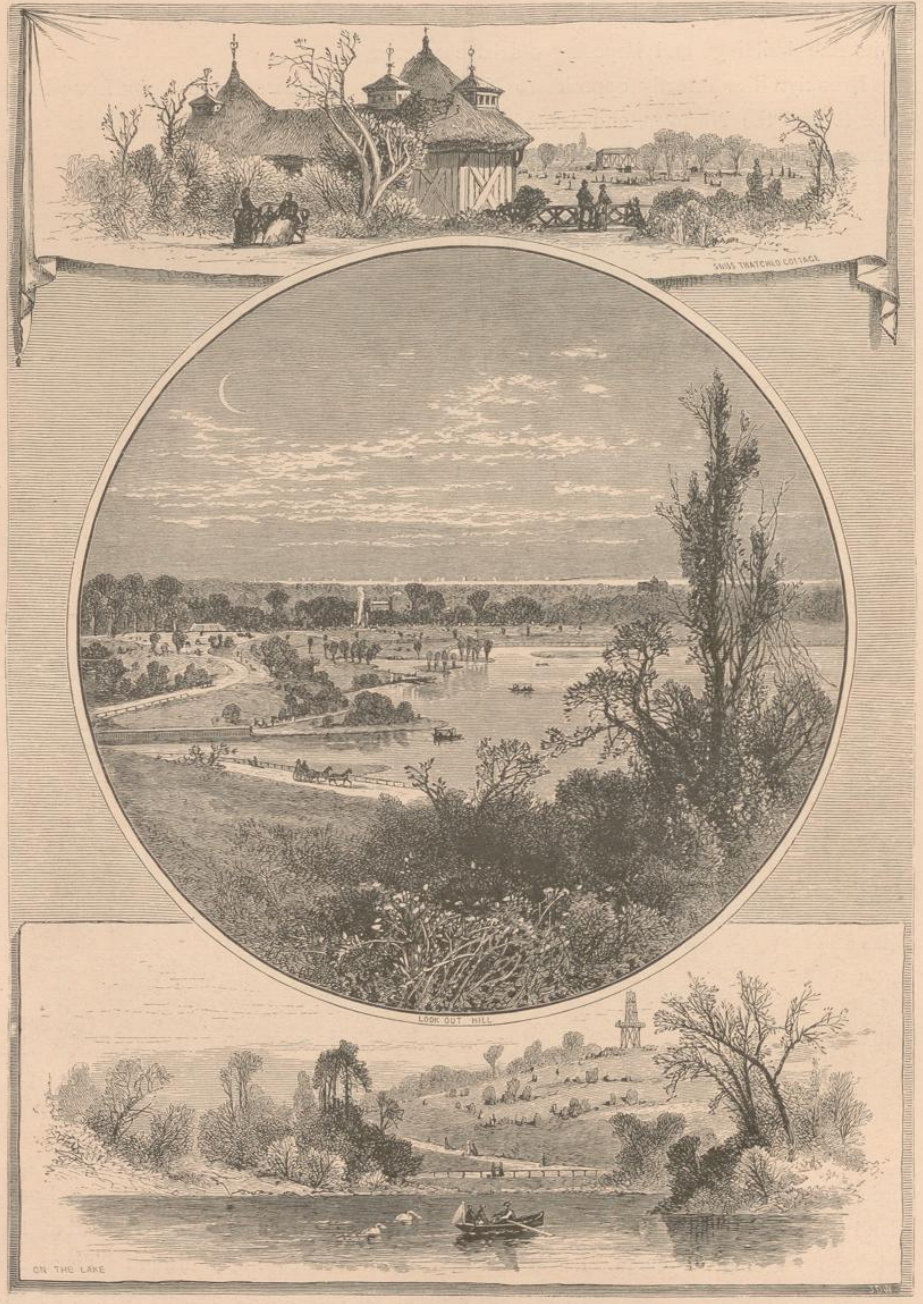
more than New York's vast dormitory. It is a very attractive city, however, on account of its handsome streets, its home-like residences, its many churches, and one or two highly picturesque spots. Clinton Avenue is considered the most elegant of the streets. It is not unlike the tree-embowered, villa-lined avenues of many other cities; although unexcelled, it is perhaps quite equalled by some of its rivals. The residences on the Heights are choicely situated, commanding from their rear windows views of New York, the river, and the bay—a wonderfully brilliant and stirring picture.

Brooklyn boasts of a handsome public park, of five hundred and fifty acres in extent, and known as Prospect Park. It is situated on an elevated ridge on the southwest

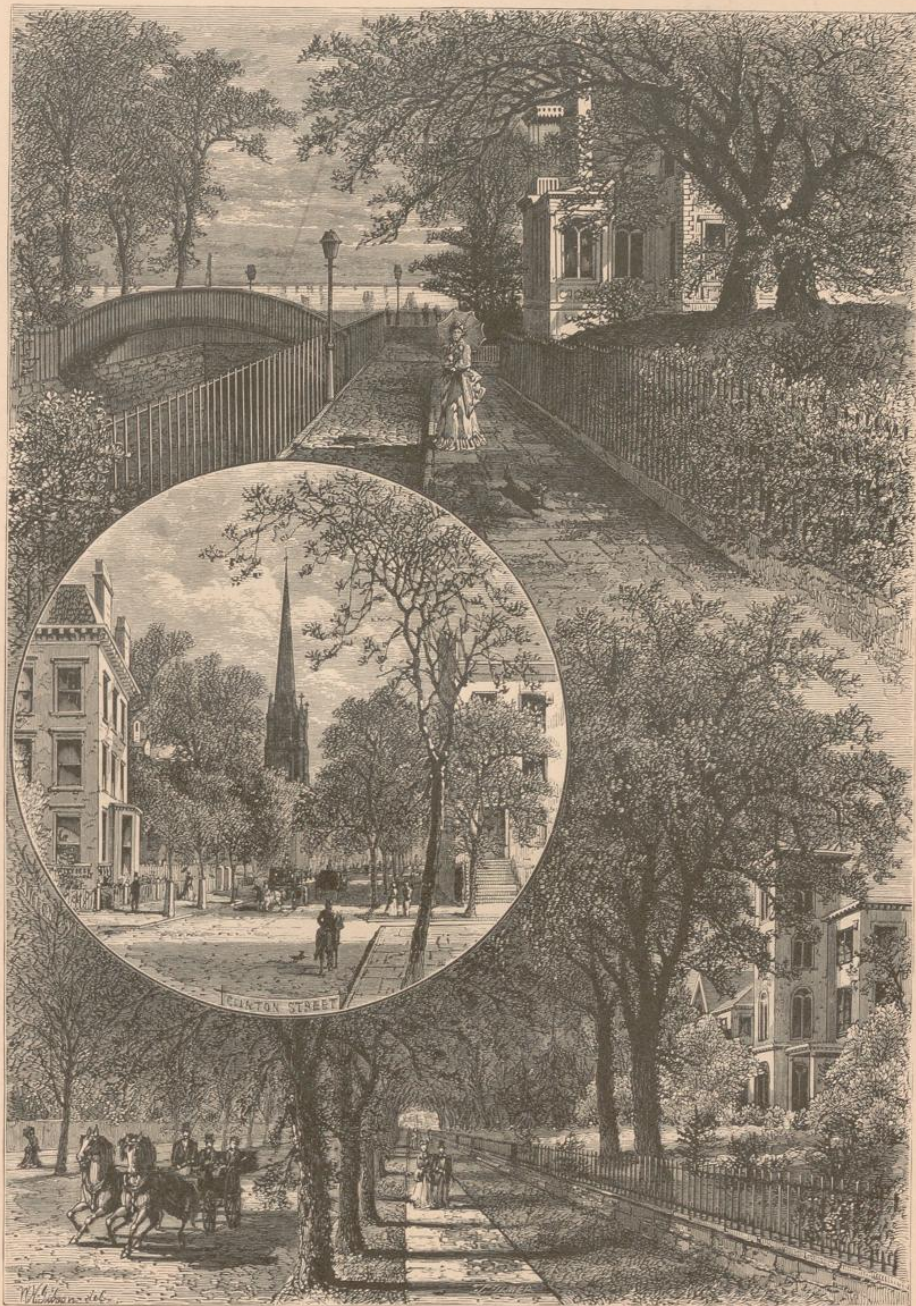


Blackwell's Island.

border of the city, affording, from many points, extensive views of the ocean, Long-Island Sound, the bays, and New-York Harbor. Fine, broad ways lead out from the park, one reaching to Coney Island, on the Atlantic, three miles distant. There are beautiful groves of old trees in the park, a lake, summer-houses, etc., its natural advantages having been supplemented by many tasteful devices of the landscape-gardener.



PROSPECT PARK, BROOKLYN.



BROOKLYN STREET-SCENES.

Within the precincts of Brooklyn, on what were once called Gowanus Heights, is Greenwood, the handsomest cemetery, probably, in the world. It is over four hundred acres in extent, beautiful, undulating, covered with ancient trees of many kinds, and varied with several lakes—a very rural paradise in its natural attractions, while art and pious devotion have graced it with many noble monuments.

Brooklyn, in size, is the third city of the Union. It has been almost as rapid in its growth as some of the Western cities. In 1800 it contained only four thousand inhabitants; in 1855, after the incorporation of Williamsburgh, two hundred and five thousand; while now (1874) the population is about four hundred thousand.

We should mention that the Brooklyn illustrations are not by Mr. Fenn, as all the New-York drawings are. Prospect Park is by Mr. Woodward; the Brooklyn street-scenes and the view from Greenwood are by Mr. Gibson.



New-York Bay, from Greenwood Cemetery.