



AT THE DRINKING FOUNTAIN IN DAVIS SQUARE, SOUTH PARK, CHICAGO



Chicago's Answer

By J. Horace McFarland

President of the American Civic Association

"And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?"

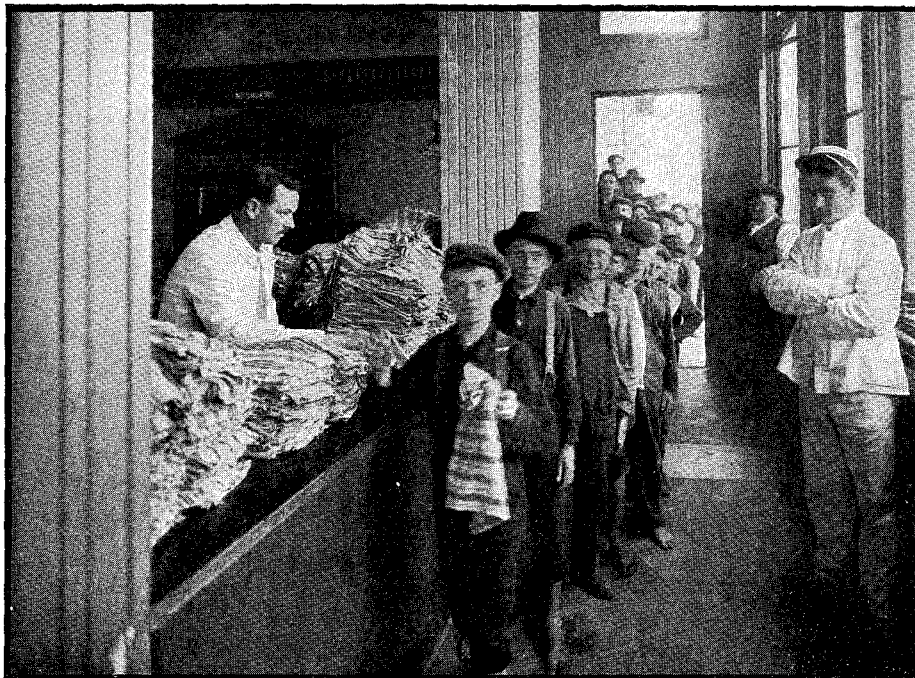
TO understand Chicago's answer to this age-old question, which answer is to my mind her greatest present glory, one must first understand the occasion for the question.

Chicago, the second city of America, includes a population of approximately 2,649,000. Of the employed population, 1,100,000, it is estimated that 89 per cent are artisans, laborers, clerks, operators, and the like. That is, they are not of those in the community who can choose their own hours of labor or places of residence. They are, to be sure, technically "free Americans," but in so far as their daily livelihood is concerned, their freedom is distinctly restricted. A very considerable portion of this large number of human beings is free to labor, and then to eat. If they labor not, they eat not; and the margin, the reserve, for existence without labor is usually small.

Moreover, to this class of citizens the economic range of place of living and of

hours of labor is, as I have indicated, not considerably within their own power to control, despite the organizations called "unions." Their opportunity for that daily recreation, that change, which we call "play" in childhood, and used to think was at least unnecessary, if not disgraceful, in those of adult years, is closely circumscribed by the scanty margin of their livelihood and hours, and by the practically enforced places of their residence. The stockyards worker is really not at liberty to go daily to a spacious suburban residence, nor do his earnings continue should he take "a day off."

Further, the nationality of the members of this vast army of workers has an important relation to their supposed freedom. Chicago has many citizens to whom English is an unaccustomed language and to whom America is a new home. Of our institutions they have little knowledge previous to their arrival in the country, and they are not informed either particularly or accurately by any public agency in the United States. They must do mostly as



GETTING THEIR BATHING SUITS AT DAVIS SQUARE

they can, not as they would like, even if they really knew what they would like in this new and strange country.

I try to fancy what would be my own course if I was induced by alluring reports to emigrate to Russia, for instance, knowing practically nothing of its language or customs, having but little money above my bare transportation—and that necessarily to be changed into a strange coinage—and being practically an unskilled worker. I think I would do as most of the immigrants do—associate quickly with any compatriots I could find, and crowd into one of their homes at almost any inconvenience, if I could. The English language would have a grateful sound to a bewildered American in Russia, even if it fell only from the lips of a “tough” or a saloon-keeper, or was spoken by the inmates of an already overcrowded and squalid boarding-house.

So nationality also complicates the situation. The Slav, the Lithuanian, the Russian Jew, crowds in upon other Slavs, Lithuanians, and Russian Jews, for conversation, information, guidance—in short, for society. That it is often the blind leading the blind does not remove any difficulties from the economic situation.

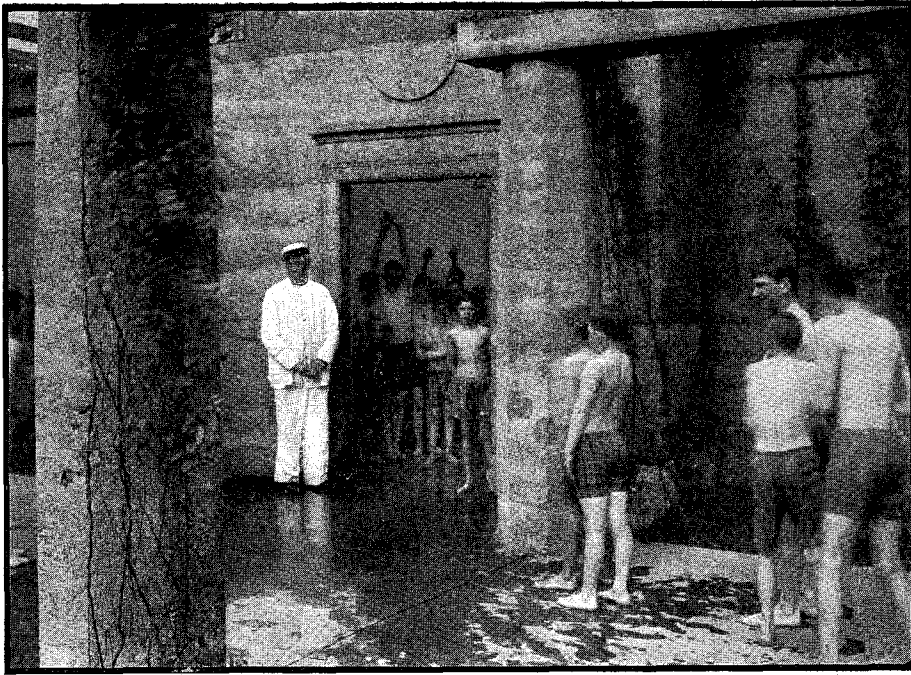
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These foreigners are here, they must work, we need their labor—and, incidentally, they must live. Yet more incidentally, they also fall sick and die, or are injured or killed “industrially,” having sometimes previously engaged our officials of justice, and often our charitable agencies, in a somewhat expensive endeavor to care for them. Further, when the head of such a family is thus removed, his nearly helpless family remains.

Even more of an incident, a by-product, so to speak, is the assumption by these “outlanders” of voting citizenship through naturalization; and the vote of a Greek peasant, just his five years and no more in America, having absorbed barely such suggestion of information as to American institutions as will enable him to pass the test applied by a weary or an indifferent judge, is exactly as efficient as is the vote of Dr. Eliot of Harvard!

Then, too, it is not among the workers and the immigrants that “race suicide” especially prevails. So there are children, many of them, in Chicago, and the children are to be “Americanized” in some fashion.

The impulse for change and recreation of which I have spoken is felt by all. It



AFTER THE BATH AT DAVIS SQUARE

is the social impulse as well, and it is necessary to existence—almost as necessary as is food. Who has not experienced the added pleasure and benefit of absorbing food and drink under congenial social conditions? Watch the gang of ditch-diggers nearest, and note how groups gather with their dinner-pails to do what you do in your home or in your club.

The first American answers to the social needs of these people are bad answers. The crowded and unwholesome tenement, in which proper social life and proper physical development are impracticable, is one most uneconomic reply, and it predicates another. It is in the American saloon that the tired worker who must live sordidly, or the dazed foreigner who hungers for association, may find light, cheer, equality, and a sort of comfort, while he is being drugged with strange drinks. His daughter finds the dance-hall, or worse; his children have the gutter, or, if luxuriously provided with money, the "nickel theater" or the "penny arcade."

And these answers—of the Evil One—are quick and convenient. The facilities for such relaxation as the agencies of evil afford are not far from any one in most

American communities, and certainly not far nor infrequent in crowded, busy, polyglot Chicago.

Slowly has civilized and Christian man come to see that he is his brother's keeper, perforce. If he keeps him not in health and social happiness because of God's law of love, he must keep him in disease and deficiency through man's law of taxation. All the crime, all the sickness, all the bodily deficiencies in a mutual government of, by, and for the people, react in cost upon all. I pay my share of the cost of tenement living and saloon recreation in Chicago, involuntarily, just as I am assessed for a portion of the cost of the vile existing conditions in the Pennsylvania coal regions. I may not recognize the charge, but I pay it as inevitably as I pay my share (or more than my share?) of the cost of government through the action of a protective tariff.

There! The political economy side of this story is written down, and I'm glad of it. It needs to be considered if we are to understand Chicago's answer to the question of Cain, which is a great, resounding Yes! And, to avoid any misunderstanding, let me say that the question applies to all the communities of



GYMNASTICS AT MARK WHITE SQUARE

America as well as to Chicago. I know of little towns of less than three thousand in which misery dwells, because there is no answer—yet. Many communities are replying, but I think Chicago's affirmative is more direct and efficient. It is the way of that wonderful city to be direct and efficient, no less in good than in evil, thank God!

Now go with me on a hot July Sunday and see what is happening in Chicago. It is not simply a warm day—it is hot, and the air pulsates and shimmers as it rises in waves of humid discomfort from the radiating surfaces of the paved streets and the thickly set buildings and factories.

We head toward the populous industrial South Side, and cross the reeking river. Our route avoids the great boulevards, along which live the few who may

choose their habitations, for we are to see the habitations of the many who do not have that choice. These habitations—we may hardly dare to call them homes—of the unfree workers are not the cool-looking boulevard homes. They line the hot streets that have no suggestion of anything but dust, dirt, labor, and squalor.

But a sound of shouting, a joyous and care-free sound, attracts us, and we follow its direction to where, right in the reek of the stock-yards, there is a glint of green. A thronging multitude is seeing that bit of grass, and using it. We enter, listening amazed to the polyglot babel of tongues, and behold a scene not, I think, matched anywhere else.

It is but a little “play park,” as it is officially designated, this ten-acre Davis Square. Lest that perfectly truthful designation be misunderstood by some who



IN THE SHOWER HOUSE AT DAVIS SQUARE

do not yet realize what part "play" has in community health and net economic efficiency, I will say that it might be called a People's Country Club, "and then some!" For here the multitudinous People—those from the four quarters of the globe who come to labor in the stock-yards and the mills and the factories of great Chicago—are doing things, and their wives and babies, their children and friends, are with them, also doing things, in pleasure and not of compulsion.

First, there is grass to see, and to walk upon, or rather roll and loll upon. Do you, my lawn-loving and lawn-owning reader, understand just what this means to the Slav or the Italian, a year or more from his native green fields, and just a minute or so from dirty cobblestones and a twice-heated and thrice-crowded portion of a squalid and grassless habitation?

Here must be noted a somewhat paradoxical condition. It is a very hot day, this July Sunday, and your impulse and mine, home-having reader, is to seek any possible shade. But these workers of a great city, after six days of toilsome vibration between crowded factory and overcrowded habitations, desire space, open air, grass, and such sight of blue sky as is possible, and they get out of the shade into the open. Their sweat to-day is that of recreation and not of toil.

So that sound of shouting came from an open field, and we quickly see that baseball is engaging the attention of a happy multitude, the game being most unprofessional, and surely most interesting to the participants and spectators. We note, too, that upon another open grassy area there are proceeding some strange games and dances—those of the lands of

the players and the dancers, here happily made possible.

A low, homelike, and most attractive building is part of the "play park." It is officially a Field House, and no country club field house anywhere better serves its purpose. I call it a house of civic wonders; but another shouting center draws us too quickly through its open center to now see its details. This time it is the shriller sound of boys' voices that takes us to a great open swimming-pool, crowded with splashing, joyous juveniles.

An inquiry of a kindly attendant tells us of an hour's limit for each admitted "gang" of the comfortable capacity of the pool. The waiting boys are lined up, each to receive a sterilized suit and towel when the gong strikes. It is a jolly throng, and I am glad to get "in the push"—and it is a real push! The boys chaff me, and I hear at once, "Get on to de guy wid de camera!" Listening to the talk—and all the boys talk "American"—I overhear one eight-year-old whispering to his neighbor, "Gee! if I gits in dis time, it'll be de sevent' to-day!" He knows the rules—one swim only in one day—but he worms through in the crush. The attendants are wisely more concerned with the safety of those in the water than with an occasional repeater.

A ten-minute bell rings, warning the "gang" in the water that it must vacate and be dressed in that time. Do the boys hurry out? Hardly! The fun, the diving, the splashing, increase. Two minutes is ample time to waste on the unimportant details of wriggling out of a wet bathing suit and into a scanty street suit, with a towel-wipe between!

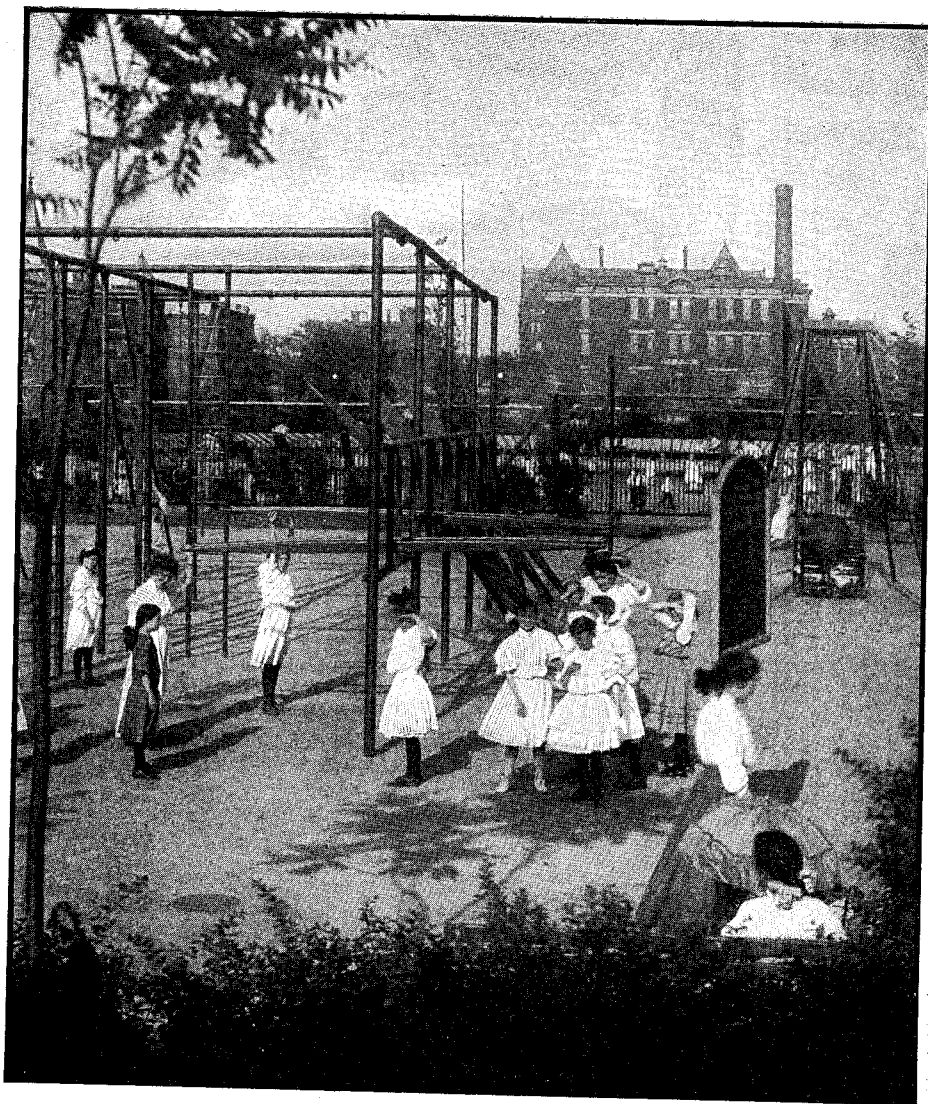
From the bathing-pool on either side we see other forms of recreative play proceeding. There are open-air gymnasiums for both men and women, admirably equipped, capably attended, and doing a heavy business to-day. Most attractive, however, is the "little children's playground," where chubby children—and some sadly not chubby—are doing all sorts of stunts. The wading-pool is hardly more of a delight than the semicircular sand-courts close by, for here one gets into the heart of the matter, seeing tired-looking foreign mothers who are "visit-

ing" with others, but whose eyes are continually turning to the very little babies delightedly playing in the fascinating warm sand. These babies, thank God! are not gasping out their little lives to-day in germ-laden "homes," but instead are drinking in vitality, while mother and father and brother and sister are all happily active or contentedly passive near by. For a penny, too, the baby may have pure milk to drink—milk municipally safeguarded and provided.

Some one mentions ice-cream as a possibility, and that cooling hint takes us back to the field house, where it promptly becomes a yet more cooling reality. There is a "refectory," and a nickel brings me a generous portion of municipally-made ice-cream of delicious quality—I have never tasted better. Simple food and pure milk—as I have said, life for the babies!—are accessible at cost prices. And the "cost" is not the cost to a concessionaire, including his profit, but to the South Park Commissioners, courageously and successfully operating directly all the utilities and facilities that will build into health and happiness for the people.

Before going outdoors we may glance profitably at the other indoor facilities of this field house of the people. There is a fine assembly-room, which hints at the needs of evenings. Several "club-rooms" excite inquiry, which is answered to the effect that these rooms are reserved for any proper social purpose for any date upon application by any person. Think of it, you who deplore the saloon and yet know that it serves an otherwise neglected social need—here is the first definite and practical civic substitute. For Mrs. Rosinsky, as I see on the bulletin-board, is going to have her daughter's wedding in Room 13 next week, and the South Side Social Club has arranged a little dance in Room A for Tuesday night.

I have almost forgotten the shower baths included in this field house. The hot, weary, toil-grimed workers in the near-by stock-yards do not forget them, it seems, for the superintendent of this Davis Square "play park" tells me, with obvious pride, that "yesterday [Saturday] 2,762 men used the showers after four o'clock in the afternoon." Saloons do not have shower baths, so far as I



OUTDOOR GYMNASTICS AT ARMOUR SQUARE

know, and men bathing and cleaning and cooling themselves in a municipal place, of which they know themselves to be part owners, are restoring and not depleting the energies that make their livelihood possible.

There is a reading-room, with books and magazines, and also a child-size reading-room, with a pleasant-faced young woman to help the boys and girls who are inclined to adventure in literature. There are no debasing "penny arcade" facilities, and these children are not being poisoned in mind or body.

There is no charge for all this, and only

one limitation. Read the rule for it: "The assembly halls and club-rooms are reserved for the use of clubs and assemblies for almost any moral purpose, including dances—politics and religious services excepted."

Now this is a hot July Sunday, and there are three hundred and sixty-four other days in a year, some just as hot and some just as cold in Chicago. What of the rest of the year? Read again the official statement: "The buildings are open for the use of the people every day in the year. . . . The shower baths are in use every day in the year. . . . The swimming-pools (outdoor) are open from

about June 1 until about October 1, two days a week being set aside for women and girls. . . . All gymnasiums and playgrounds are in the care of trained instructors, who conduct classes in gymnastics, dancing, and games indoors from October to May, and games, athletics, and sports outdoors from May to October." I find that a score of trained—and most kindly, interested, and courteous—attendants remain "on the job" the year round. Because they see what happens, they are optimists all. There are policemen too, but doing mighty little policing in the familiar sense.

I have written of Davis Square. If it were the only "play park" in Chicago, it would be a credit, but inadequate, even though it has a record of use in a single year by 752,782 of "the public." But it is only one of *ten* such centers on the South Side, and one of the four smallest. In each there is the same minimum equipment as I have mentioned, while several include, because of greater area, additional facilities for making men and women over into happy and productive citizens. Sherman Park for instance, and Ogden Park as well, are both of sixty acres extent, and both have great and lovely lagoons for boating, and greater play-fields for all sorts of outdoor fun. McKinley Park, of seventy-five acres, adds other facilities.

These "play parks," too, are well scattered. They spot Chicago's South Side map of industry, habitations, and highways with oases of green as grateful and more important by far to more people than ever had eyes gladdened as they neared a Sahara palm patch. The greater parks—Washington and Jackson notably—supply vast and delightful areas as beneficently useful, and the intersecting parked boulevards, such as Michigan Avenue and those of Garfield, Western, and Grand, give quick relief of trees and grass as well as of open space, diffusing oxygen and chlorophyll instead of germs and smoke.

All taken together, these South Side park enterprises, equipped and maintained in a definite, even if unstated, attempt to answer the question of Cain, and giving upward of six million park visits each year, make the answer an encouraging

Yes! That it has required large expenditures to do this, that houses have had to be razed to get the open spaces where they are needed, does not make the answer less, but more, emphatic. Chicago plans now to avoid the high cost of "hind-sight," for she looks ahead for more play parks and more boulevards and more grass and more field houses, to meet the more people coming who are thus to be more adequately Americanized.

In Chicago's municipal organization it happens that there are several park districts and several park bodies. The play parks of which I have written in this attempt to find Chicago's answer are on the South Side. A tremendous population, an imperial city in itself, including more people and work and wealth than is under many a king abroad, lies in that section known as the West Side. Though under another set of commissioners, the same ideals prevail here, not yet so fully developed. There have been provided so far but three of what are here called "small parks," and they are therefore vastly important. In each case they are in places of excessive congestion of working population. What they have done is best stated in the words of the President of the West Chicago Park Commission:

"The small parks have become a vital factor in community life. They have become organized neighborhood social centers, uplifting the social, moral, and physical life of the community. The swimming-pools and shower baths, the playgrounds and the gymnasiums, the outdoor and indoor recreation, all make for a better physical life; the dances and clubs promote a better social life, while the concerts, lectures, and entertainments stimulate the intellectual and moral life."

Again, in begging for money to make more of these oases, Mr. Smulski writes:

"To the wage-earner, the clerk, the mechanic, the artisan, and the laborer . . . to him, to his wife, and particularly to his children, the small park has become the center of education and recreation, the breathing-spot of pure air, where the grass, the flowers, the trees, the gymnasium, the reading-room and the lecture-room preach daily a sermon appealing to the better nature and inspiring them to

be good, pure, and ambitious . . . a place where the filth and grime of the tannery, the shop, and the ditch are removed and forgotten, and all the nobler impulses and incentives appeal to the reason and the heart. . . . Every dollar expended for small parks in the crowded districts of a large city is an investment that will not only bring good returns, but will pay munificent dividends in undefiled manhood and womanhood."

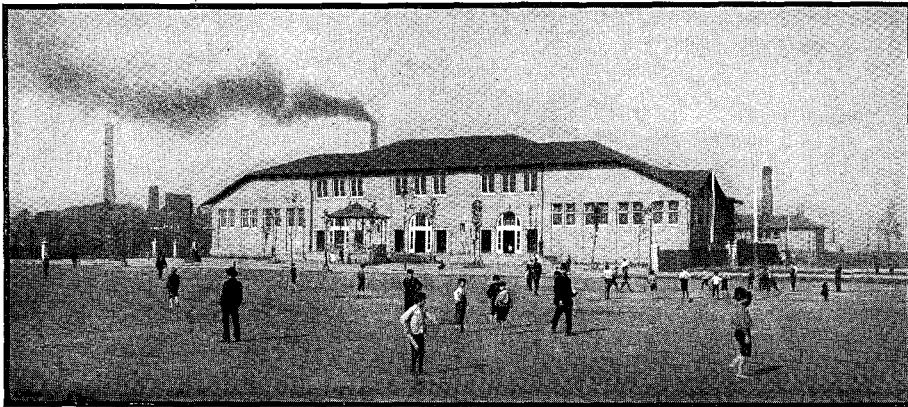
Now I have written, and pleaded, and preached, and pictured in many patient magazines and cities, but I have not been able to reach the concrete eloquence of this devoted man on the job—the job of fighting the forces of evil and deterioration in a great city.

In my Chicago journeyings I have had one most pleasing experience. It was in connection with the opening of the field house in Small Park No. 2, which park had been carved right out of the heart of Chicago's Ghetto, some fifty-seven densely crowded houses having been demolished to get room for its scant three acres of space. The date for the opening was Washington's Birthday, but as I was to talk in a Western community of Washington's immortal work on the plan for his Federal City, I was a day too soon for the actual opening. I was, however, just in time to see the unique and significant preparations.

The manager was everywhere at once, and, like all the other Chicago park workers I have met, a very dynamo of enthusiasm and energy. There were a thousand boys—mostly of the lineage of

Abraham—at a flag rehearsal. They were to sing, and all to tail on to the rope which should, on the birthday of the Father of his Country, first raise to the chill February wind the flag of the free over this beneficent field house that meant so much to the neighborhood. The clothes of the boys were not notably elaborate, but their eyes! how they glistened! and how their shrill voices joined in the National anthem! So here was patriotism being tied right into pure milk, and shower baths, and a reading-room, and all the other beneficences.

I was with Mr. Teller in spirit the next day, and I have his letters to show just what did occur. That grandest of American women, Jane Addams, explained "The Child and the Park," and then there were other addresses, but, most of all, the boys and girls and directors of the other small parks were there to show how things were to be done. Mat tumbling, a Highland fling, a swimming drill, songs, and folk-dances—all these came in the events of the day. Continues Mr. Teller: "At 2:30 P.M. there were twenty-five hundred here. We had a parade, the event of the neighborhood. . . . Then came thirty-one boys of the 'Children of the Republic George Washington Club,' carrying the playground flag, each grasping a bit of it while carrying a small American flag in the other hand. . . . Then we tied the flag to the rope of the pole, and twenty-five hundred children cheered as it went up. The band played the 'Star-spangled Banner,' and then, amid a hush in which you could hear a pin drop, these thirty-



THE BALL FIELD AT DAVIS SQUARE

one boys lined up and saluted the flag, saying: 'I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the country for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.' . . . We handled four thousand people that day, and did not have one chair broken. Is not that evidence of how they acted?"

Later I learned that within two weeks fifteen hundred were enrolled in the gymnasiums. At an Arbor Day celebration five thousand children were present, and the next day some of them came again, expecting to see some evidence of growth in the trees they had seen planted! Since, a complete circulating library and a domestic science department have been added to the working facilities of this municipal man-factory. To his own credit, and to the vast joy of the thronging children and their equally thronging parents, be it noted that Governor Deneen made a patriotic address on July 3 at this new and lively little park.

Now I have written naught of any individual or private uplift agencies in Chicago. I am not here bringing forward Hull House, or Henry Booth House, or telling of the Saturday Afternoon Walking Clubs. It is with Chicago's municipal and direct

attention to the question of Cain, and then only in a hinting at the spirit which marks that attention, that I have dealt. That spirit shines in the faces of the park workers; it speaks forth in the words of the foreign-born Park Commission president, from whose official reports I have quoted.

That it is a fine and high spirit I insist. It says nothing, you will observe, of the sacredness of untrodden grass, nor does it in the least approach that anomalous state of mind which has caused in New York City some outcry against the use of a little portion of Central Park for the direct benefit in playgrounds of the sadly neglected children of the metropolis. Chicago has outdistanced her seaboard bigger sister in humanitarian endeavor in a municipal way, and no one there rises in wrath because those of clear sight are trying to make the people's property most useful to the people.

There are "social centers" elsewhere, and some other cities approach Chicago's park and playground efficiency. Yet the fact remains that here, where the need is great, and where least might have been expected from a supposed spirit of commercialism, is the finest answer in all America to the Question of Cain.

IN THE OPEN

BY HAROLD TROWBRIDGE PULSIFER

Here life has sung
 With loving tongue;
 The sun-lit moon,
 The sweet warm light of afternoon,
 The flaming spurt of the cardinal flower,
 The wan white rose,
 The winter gale and April shower.
 The least of these, God knows,
 Had I the power
 To fashion prayerfully with joyous hand
 To such awakening music that the soul
 Of sleeping man could hear,—and understand,—
 To-morrow might I glimpse the goal
 Of those great hearts that guard the silent land!