THE SQUARES OF PARIS.

ONE of the best features of the park system of Paris is the number of small squares scattered about in the different quarters of the city. The parks themselves, especially the larger ones, are at such great distances from the crowded centres of population, that the working classes, except on Sundays and holidays, seldom have a chance to visit them, so that these squares admirably serve the purpose of keeping the children out of the streets, and of allowing the poorer people, in the few hours of leisure they have during the week, to get a breath of fresh air and a glimpse of green.

A stranger, on first entering one of them, marvels as he sees how neatly they are kept while so thickly crowded with visitors, reading, working or playing. In plan they are usually quite simple, as the accompanying diagram will show. A broad gravel walk, ten or twelve feet wide, following near but separated from the boundary by occasional shrubbery plantations, encloses a quiet piece of lawn sufficiently open to get a glimpse through to the opposite end, but planted on the sides with trees, shrubs and foliage plants.

There are few attempts at fancy gardening, but much care has been taken to select hardy shrubs and plants with the view of avoiding bare and empty beds during the winter. The condition of the turf is everywhere excellent, for water is freely used, and suitable small playgrounds are provided for the children, which serve the purpose of keeping them off the grass. These playgrounds, which are an admirable feature, are generally formed by simply widening the walks in the corners and planting enough trees there to afford ample shade. There are always one or two flower beds, which are kept bright and attractive during the spring and summer by a constant succession of showy flowering and foliage plants. Permanent seats are provided, but not in sufficient numbers to accommodate every one, but for a very small sum a chair for the whole morning or afternoon can be hired and you can move it about at will.

The only serious fault in all these squares is the stiff and formal appearance of the shrubberies. Almost without exception these plantations are in the form of regular figures—circles, ovals or ellipses—and they are always planted on slight mounds. These two facts detract very much from any effect of naturalness, and it seems a great pity that, when it is so easy to give a varying outline to the groups, it has not been done. It would also be an improvement to plant the borders of these beds with plants or shrubs of low, half trailing habit, and thus, in a measure, hide the sharp, stiff outline between the turf and the dug ground of the bed . . . in Paris there are no less than seventy breathing places, not counting the boulevards and other tree-planted streets. They are usually most attractive spots and teach a lesson which might very well be copied in many of the crowded cities of our country.

Paris. Henry S. Codman

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