

## PARKS IN CROWDED DISTRICTS

Mr. Gilder Calls Mayor Strong's Attention to the Recommendations of the Tenement House Committee.

Richard Watson Gilder, Chairman of the Tenement House Committee, has sent the following letter concerning small parks to Mayor Strong:

55 Clinton Place, New-York,

Jan. 22, 1895.

Dear Sir: Having seen the Controller's letter to yourself on the subject of Mulberry Bend Park, I beg leave to state that the Tenement House Committee (which has just sent in its report to the Legislature) made a careful study of the question of small parks as a means of relief for the overcrowded tenement house districts.

The committee found the following to be the situation in regard to the three parks taken under the so-called Small Parks act:

The law passed in 1887, during the Mayoralty of Mr. Hewitt, and commonly known as the Small Parks act, empowers the Board of Street Opening to select, locate, and lay out such public parks as it may from time to time determine, south of One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street, and it provides that no more than \$1,000,000 shall be expended in any one year, this amount not being cumulative from year to year. Up to date, the following expenditures have been incurred under the act:

	Land and Buildings.	Cost of Taking.	Total.
Mulberry Bend Park .....	\$1,476,557	\$45,498.60	\$1,522,055.60
East River Extension Park.	503,825	18,293.88	522,118.88
St. John's Cemetery Park...	520,000	*3,728.42	.....
Estimated further cost. ....	.....	300.00	524,028.42

Total.....\$2,568,202.90

\*To date.

Of the above there has been expended to date only the sum required for the East River extension park, \$522,118.88, whereas up to Jan. 1, 1895, there might have been expended under the act \$8,000,000. The work on one only of these has even been begun—the East River extension. At Mulberry Bend the delay has been the means of placing the city itself in the unfortunate position of landlord of houses already virtually condemned and in an extremely bad sanitary condition.

In order to relieve the financial situation in regard to the above parks, and with the purpose especially of extending to the people the advantages which would accrue from the prompt opening of Mulberry Bend Park, the committee, after consultation with all those branches of the City Government immediately in contact with the subject, presented to the Legislature an amendment to the Small Parks act, which, while it does not abridge in any way the one-million-a-year feature of that act, authorizes further payments as follows: After the words "but no more than the sum of one million dollars shall be expended in any one year under the provisions of this act," the following words are added:

Except that there may be issued in addition to said sum of \$1,000,000 in each year, such additional bonds or stocks as above mentioned of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of the City of New-York as may be necessary to pay the expenses of the construction, completion, and acquisition of the land and of estates and interest therein, and of the construction of the parks hereinafter named, and of the erection and furnishing of buildings therein, to wit:

The park commonly called Mulberry Bend Park, being a tract of land bounded by Mulberry, Park, Bayard, and Baxter Streets, in the Sixth Ward of the City of New-York; St. John's Park, in the Ninth Ward of said city, and the park commonly called the East River Extension Park, being the land bounded on the west by Avenue B, on the north and east by the Harlem and East Rivers, and on the south by East Eighty-sixth Street, all in the City of New-York.

But the committee also found that on the lower east side of the city there is a district of 711 acres which "is 750 feet distant from either river, and 500 feet from any existing, constructing, or proposed park. Yet it is the home of about 324,000 people. This is nearly one-sixth of the total estimated population of New-York on July 1, 1894, and much more than the number of inhabitants of the entire city of either Cincinnati or San Francisco, as given by the census of 1890. The density for the whole area rises to 476.6 persons per acre. Part of this area has double this density, and as a whole the district is the most crowded in the world."

The committee, therefore, made the following specific recommendation, (No. 12.)

Small Parks, with Playgrounds. — That within the next three years not less than two small parks, a part of each of which shall be constructed as public playgrounds, shall be laid out and begun in the district east of the Bowery and Catharine Street and south of Fourth Street, and that the city be authorized to issue its bonds to the amount of \$3,000,000 for such purposes.

The committee's separate bill carrying out this recommendation permits school-houses and school playgrounds to be maintained on these new parks, also municipal baths, should the corporation conclude to erect such baths in the future, and it was the hope of the committee that with the \$3,000,000 named at least three small parks might be built.

It will be seen that no bill prepared by the committee compels the expenditure of the \$1,000,000 which may annually be expended under the Small Parks act; and that in simply providing in one bill for the payment of the obligations already incurred in relation to the three small parks named; and in insisting in another bill upon the expenditure of \$3,000,000, (not more, in fact, than the Small Parks act itself permits) it has made, in fact, a very moderate and reasonable recommendation in order to alleviate an intolerable condition of things in a phenomenally overcrowded neighborhood.

In relation to the general subject of small parks, the committee recommended "that the whole matter should be more carefully studied by the proper authorities, and that there should hereafter be less accident and individual initiative, and more system and science in the selection of park spaces adapted especially to what may be called the neighborhood needs of the masses of our people."

All of which is respectfully submitted.

Yours truly,

R. W. GILDER.

### Acquitted of Murder.

Thomas Reilly of 482 East Seventy-fourth Street, who had been on trial before Justice Fitzgerald, in the Court of General Sessions, for several days for killing Michael Matthew, a watchman, on March 14, 1892, was acquitted last night.