

I CONGRATULATE Mr. Beck on the satisfactory result of his labours with regard to Clissold Park. Like Mr. Deputy Bedford, Mr. H. R. Williams, and others, he has fought a good fight, and future generations as well as the people of to-day will thank him for preserving another beautiful open space for the health and enjoyment of London's teeming population.

THE WEEKLY RECORDER

AUGUST 3, 1888.

Correspondence.

CLISSOLD PARK.

To the Editor of the Weekly Recorder.

SIR,—The time has at length arrived when I can throw aside the reserve I have thought it prudent to maintain, and congratulate the inhabitants of North London on having secured for their use for ever 53 acres of the most beautiful park in the neighbourhood of the metropolis.

So long as negotiations were pending, I abstained from alluding to the criticisms, sometimes not very complimentary, but mostly commendatory, on the part I have taken in the matter. It must not be forgotten how much of our success has been due to the active support of a very influential committee. As regards allusions adverse to myself I can afford to forgive and forget. No one ever engages in any good work without exposing himself to having his motives misunderstood. What concerns your readers more is the query—What has the Clissold Park Preservation Committee accomplished?

The park will shortly be in the hands of the public, and they will be able to judge for themselves as to the natural beauties it possesses. And this boon they will have obtained without, as I am prepared to show, its having cost the inhabitants of the adjoining districts one single penny. The Local Authorities have subscribed £23,500 out of a total cost of £95,000. This contribution of £23,500 is to be spread over a period of 50 years, so that a sum of about £1000 will have to be raised each year to extinguish the principal and interest. Owing to the number of new houses built all around, the old-fashioned houses have been emptied for those possessing modern conveniences. At the same time, owing to the crowded condition of the neighbourhood, it has not been worth the landlord's while to rebuild these old and inconvenient tenements. Thus there are a large number of empties, all of which are included in the assessments, and cause a great loss to the rates. Now that we have prevented Clissold Park from being covered with some thousand of small houses, now that there is so charming a recreation ground in the neighbourhood, it will be worth while for the landlords to replace the old-fashioned houses with new ones, and the result will be a great gain to the rates, far greater than the amount which will have to be paid towards the cost of the park. This is no visionary notion, but a certainty which must result from our action.

I know that some will say your remarks may be true as concerns Stoke Newington and South Hornsey, but how about Hackney and Islington. I would reply, all will share the benefits.

There has been too much disposition to endeavour to raise antagonistic feelings between different districts; such notions are I trust fading away under the much higher duty of each doing its part towards the general mass and working together for the common good.

It will be from the narrow streets of Shore-ditch, from the pent-up alleys of Clerkenwell and Islington, that thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow beings will issue to enjoy the sweet breezes and lie under the shade of the old and handsome trees of Clissold Park. It will be on the soft grass that the little ones will romp and play and learn the charm of getting for a short time under the benignant influence of bright sunshine and fresh air.

The matter is now taken out of our hands. The Metropolitan Board of Works and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have now to settle the necessary legal transfers. It will be a delight to the former body (if they are to be supplanted) to accomplish this grand work as a final memorial of their good deeds. And I feel sure the latter body will rejoice that whilst they have not done injustice to those great trusts they administer, means have been found to prevent the desecration of those green fields and the cutting down of those grand old trees, which planted by our ancestors, have for more than a hundred years adorned the spot. And now one word in conclusion personal to myself. I have most cordially to thank the committee for their valuable services; I have to thank Mr. J. Runtz, our member at the Metropolitan Board of Works, for his untiring efforts and valuable co-operation. I have to thank the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for the liberal and courteous manner in which they have met us, the Charity Commissioners for their liberal construction of the Clissold Park Act, the Metropolitan Board of Works for their generous aid, the Public Boards for their support, the Press for the public spirit they have shown, and their readiness to throw open their columns to us in times of need, and the General Public, who often, when the prospect seemed dark and the future doubtful, have encouraged us by their enthusiasm, and materially aided us in accomplishing the object of our efforts.

Believe me, yours obediently,

JOSEPH BECK.

Chairman of The Clissold Park Preservation Committee.
Barton House, Albion Road,
Stoke Newington. July 30th, 1888.