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RECORD

OF

THE METROPOLITAN FAIR

IN AID OF THE

United States Sanitary Commission,

HELD AT NEW YORK,

IN APRIL, 1864.

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS.



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TO THE
BENEFICENT LADIES OF NEW YORK
THIS ACCOUNT
OF THEIR GREAT CHARITY
IS INSCRIBED.

PREFATORY NOTE.

SOME apology is due to the public for the lateness of day at which this account of the Metropolitan Fair is printed. Those who most properly should have written its story were prevented by other more pressing duties. Finally, after nearly two years had elapsed, and after various unsuccessful attempts, the material, such as it was, was placed in the hands of the present writers, on whom the task had unexpectedly devolved. At a distance so far removed from the actual occurrence, the particulars of many things which had not been reduced to writing had passed from memory, many papers had been mislaid or lost, and the work was one of extreme difficulty. The writers, therefore, hope that they may be pardoned for many errors and slips of detail, in the hope that they have given a tolerably faithful picture of the general features of the Fair. They owe many thanks to the many persons who have assisted them in their work by conversation, by letters, and by papers.

J. S. F.

E. S.

PHOTOGRAPHS.



	<i>To face page</i>
No. 1. VIEW IN ARMS AND TROPHIES ROOM,	34
(J. Gurney and Son, Photographers.)	
No. 2. VIEW IN THE WIGWAM,	50
(J. Gurney and Son, Photographers.)	
No. 3. VIEW IN CURIOSITY SHOP,	74
(J. Gurney and Son, Photographers.)	
No. 4. VIEW IN ART GALLERY,	98
(J. Gurney and Son, Photographers.)	
No. 5. IRVING COCKLOFT,	122
(J. Gurney & Son, Photographers.)	
No. 6. VIEW IN MAIN HALL, 14TH STREET BUILDING,	156
(J. Gurney & Son, Photographers.)	
No. 7. HARTFORD BOOTH,	178
(M. Stadtfeld, Photographer.)	
No. 8. COSTUMES OF LADIES IN KNICKERBOCKER KITCHEN,	184
(M. Stadtfeld, Photographer.)	

THE RECORD

OF

The Metropolitan Fair.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22.

The journals of this day devote nearly all the space given to the Fair to the "sword contest," which had been gradually assuming a foremost importance among the topics of the day. True, we are told that the yesterday's attendance was every thing that could be wished, that the weather was beautiful, and so on in a scale of diminishing interest. But as much space is given to the swords, or rather to the army sword, as a few days before was granted to a half dozen departments. The polls had been so besieged for several days back as to call forth a remonstrance from some of the newspapers. Remarks as to the destination of votes about to be deposited were freely bandied about by the crowd, and, more than all, a political significance seemed to be attached to the issue of the vote by many more zealous than wise people. McClellan's name had stood at the head of the lists on every morning except two since the second day of the Fair, yet his adherents had repeatedly shown a strange uneasiness as to the final result. It was openly said in at least one of the leading dailies, that there was really no hope for McClellan in the "sword contest," as the polls were exclusively under the control of people devoted to Grant, who would not suffer their hero to be defeated. The language in which this was couched contained an insinuation too ridiculous to deserve a serious defense; but it was not until the heat of disappointment had caused the same daily to utter still more loudly the cry of *corruption*, that such enthusiasts saw how worthless was the charge so lightly made. The arrangements made to secure order in the final voting were violently abused as a cover to dishonesty, but, of course, no one, not even the fault-finders, for a moment put any belief in such talk. The voting at the polls was mostly done by ladies, but the end showed that all the while the lords of creation were getting more and more

interested, and were only preserving a strategic inactivity. They withheld their forces for the sealed ballot of Saturday, which every one began to see was to be larger than any that had yet been polled, though how much larger was little guessed by the uninitiated public.

Having come now to the next to the last day of our chronicle, we may as well give the vote of the last three days together. There is no object in keeping back the result, for every one remembers it, and we wish to have Saturday for a general review, unclogged by any business of the day. On Thursday, then, the vote stood

For McClellan	8,209
For Grant,	7,824
Scattering,	123
	<hr/>
	16,156

McClellan's majority was therefore, out of 2,042 votes cast that day, 385. On Friday night the books stood —

For McClellan,	10,062
For Grant,	8,442
Scattering,	137
	<hr/>
	18,641

The vote of the day was 2,485, and McClellan's majority 1,620. Large as was this vote, and this majority, it failed to prepare people for the vote and majority of Saturday. At the closing of the polls the final vote stood —

For McClellan,	14,509
For Grant,	30,291
Scattering,	163
	<hr/>
	44,963

The vote of the day was 26,322, and Grant's majority 15,782. The number of votes cast on Saturday for General Grant was therefore 21,849.

It need scarcely be told that the excitement following

the announcement of the issue of this contest was intense. It had been feared that under the original method of voting, the closing hours might be marred by a struggle on the part of the friends of one of the candidates to gain exclusive possession of the books; and the greatest care was taken that no disturbance should check either voting or counting under the system of sealed ballots. There were several rough-looking fellows about the stand during the evening, who talked loudly and boisterously, and announced that they were there to see fair play for ——, which of the candidates we will not say. But a force of twenty-five policemen who were summoned at this emergency, took the question of fair play into their own hands, and treated it as successfully, if not as noisily, as those self-constituted champions of purity of the ballot. When the result was announced, there was great cheering and waving of handkerchiefs, mingled with hisses and groans from some of the disappointed. Indeed, the feeling seemed to run so high that the gas was partially turned off, and the buildings emptied as soon as possible to avert any possible collision. That end was gained, but, if it be not too late to express the feeling, we should have thought it more consonant with the dignity of the occasion, that the Metropolitan Fair should have closed its doors to the sound of a hymn of thanksgiving, — that it might have ended as it began, with a recognition of its humane and Christian significance. However, that is only question of outward form; the real dignity of the work did not fail of appreciation, and the few errors and shortcomings did not weigh against the great beneficence and beauty — at least they did not with any whose perception was one whit clearer than that of the cobbler who only saw in the Belvedere Apollo a foot that he would not care to fit for a shoe.

It was at Union Square that the largest votes were deposited during the last hours of hurry. The crowd was

in Fourteenth Street, and very heavy voting was done there, several envelopes containing five hundred dollars each being found in the boxes; but in the box from Union Square were found such votes as these — “Loyal Men of New York, Grant, \$2,097;” “Loyal New-Englander, Grant, \$3,000;” “Loyal Men of New York, Grant, \$1,000;” “Sundry persons, Grant, \$1,000;” “Loyal Men of New York, Grant, \$10,000.” When the largest vote upon the other side was not more than four hundred dollars, what wonder that the contest was finally lost to those who had quietly submitted to a daily defeat for more than a fortnight, but had reserved such strength for the end of the battle?

The voting was for the most part conducted in excellent spirit. The slight acrimony that touched the overzeal of some, one can easily afford to forget; and the bitter charges and hard words of disappointment, one can as easily afford to forgive. The sum brought by the two swords to the treasury of the Fair was \$45,885. Of this, the navy sword contributed nine hundred and twenty-two dollars, thus made up —

For Commodore Farragut,	332 votes.
For Commander Rowan,	462 “
Scattering,	128 “
	—
Total,	922 votes.

Commander Rowan’s majority was therefore 130 votes.

The Arms and Trophies Committee made over to the general treasury of the Fair, after all expenses were paid, \$62,499.29, which sum includes the amount realized by the two swords, together with the receipts of their museum, from admissions, sales, and gifts.

We have frequently mentioned the exhibitions given by Public Schools in aid of the Fair, yet we have by no means indicated the great assistance rendered from this source. There lies before us at this moment a list of the

results of these entertainments. Every ward in the city, excepting the Second — in that stronghold of trade we believe there is no public school — is represented in this record of generosity. The sum raised by the Public Schools was \$23,706.69, and after the inevitable deductions had been made, the contribution figures in the Treasurer's columns as \$23,605.39. The largest gift was from the schools of the Twenty-second Ward, \$2,400.12. In one ward a single "Colored School" gave more than all the other schools of the ward. We mention the fact not as making against the schools which were distanced in the kindly race, for circumstances beyond our knowledge might serve to explain away the defeat, but rather as showing the generous zeal in behalf of our charity felt by a people who are poor and untrained, and of whom so many of us are ready to believe worse things. Indeed, the Colored Schools in several instances made a creditable show alongside the other schools of the wards. If we knew better the material of which other schools were made, no doubt we should find many to be worthy of special remark; or, which is quite as likely, we might be in doubt as to where to stop our roll of honor short of naming all alike. We have found, however, among the papers relating to the Fair which have been put into our hands, a tribute to the work of the Public Schools which has not yet been printed, but which tells a pleasant story of cheerful devotion that may be applied to all. We are glad to give this paper entire, premising only that it is from the hand of a gentleman whose position as a Commissioner of Public Schools, entitles him to speak *ex cathedra* : —

" In the absence of any detailed report of the School Committee, it is not well to let the great Fair pass away without a few words respecting the contributions of the Public Schools. When I visited the office where the ladies met in making preparations for the Fair, and suggested to one of the managers an appeal to the Public Schools in behalf of the Fair, she seemed very doubtful. She thought the result of the appeal would

be trifling, but that perhaps, if the children could all be assembled in the Academy of Music, the public might be induced to pay a dollar admission fee to see them. I left the office much discouraged; convinced that after the 60,000 school children in average daily attendance were comfortably seated in the Academy of Music, there would be little room for the public at any price."

[The next sentence embodies a mistake—a committee was afterwards formed which worked with the teachers of the schools].

"Meanwhile, however, the schools had taken the matter into their own charge, and nowhere else were found warmer hearts or busier hands, while the supervision of the trained and accomplished teachers gave to this inexhaustible youthful energy, a most efficient and practical direction.

"Contributions were volunteered by the children, many a little fellow going without his lunch in order to give to the Fair the few pennies constituting his entire income for the day. Remember that these offerings, so far from being forced, were given with such an entire appreciation of the object that it would have wounded the feelings of the little donors to refuse them. Exhibitions were given, consisting of recitations, dialogues, calisthenics, singing, and other school exercises often admirably executed, and always attractive to those whose spirits are not so worn and jaded as to be insensible to the natural grace and fresh young voices of little children. It was found that the patrons and friends of a single department of two or three hundred children were sufficiently numerous to crowd the Academy of Music, or the Hall of the Cooper Union. Many articles of wearing apparel as well as fancy articles were made in the schools, and placed on some of the various tables of the Fair, and a large quantity were sold at the Public School Table by a few of the pupils of one of the Departments. A play was acted by some of the pupils of a Male Grammar-School, and altogether I think that the public, whose notions have been somewhat aristocratic and utterly vague in regard to our schools, have been pleasantly introduced to the great unknown power growing up silently among us to support with new columns the superstructure of the Republic.

"As a slight return for all their labor the schools were admitted free to the Fair, and thousands passed through without accident or disorder, assisted in the most kindly manner by the police, who expressed their own surprise at this new evidence of the effect of discipline. These scholars are the children of all classes in this community,—the wealthier as well as the poorer.—but by far the larger portion are in very moder-

ate or needy circumstances ; and when I read in your list of contributions the condensed single line —

‘ Public School Committee, \$23,706.69,’

I feel that the report though incomplete remains a monument honorable to the Public School System, which might truly bear the inscription —

‘ In memory of the Love and Labor of the People’s Children.’ ”

Beside this noble gift from the Public School children, there was also a contribution of \$1,129.15 from some of the Private Schools of the city — and this reminds us to mention a few of those contributions that made no show at booths, and so have escaped mention in this chronicle. We have already recorded some of them, — as the gifts of coal, and flags, the gifts from the clerks in the Post-Office, from the Metropolitan Police, etc. On looking down the columns of the Treasurer’s report we come across many that we will now set down just as they are there written, satisfied that the names representing so many different interests, and the figures set opposite the names, will be sufficiently eloquent as to the common concern which all New Yorkers had in the Soldiers’ Fair. —

Public Conveyances	\$8,280.80
Trades and Associations	3,224.48
Foreign Contributions (not included in any we have mentioned)	5,255.77
Hide and Leather Committee	6,770.00
Light Gymnastics	745.55
Interest on United States Loans	1,451.09
Express Companies’ Committee	20,000.00
Out-of-Town Contributors	3,081.12
Hartford	1,005.00
Produce and Commission Committee	5,750.00
Insurance	943.83
Newspaper Donations	1,245.04
Dentists’ Committee	2,913.50
7th Regiment N. Y. S. N. G.	8,583.50
Cotton and Raw Goods Committee	8,475.00

There is one more Committee whose work must be recorded. The Drama was, as we have often enough said, a very present help to the Fair, but we have left it till the end of our work to show what and how much was the aid rendered from this source. The Committee on Public Amusements was formed early in December of 1865. The managers of the city theatres were soon interested, and during the winter several plays were given for the benefit of the coming Fair. The first of these was "Rosedale," at that time running its wonderful course of popularity at Wallack's. The other theatres followed, until nearly all had contributed their share. Barnum's, the circuses, and a billiard tournament, gave also through the Dramatic Committee. Many of these entertainments we have spoken of during the course of our chronicle. Some—we hope they were few—resulted in a loss to the givers, and so were not represented in the returns of any committee—even the kind motive that got them up could not win the favor of Fortune, and so like other greater and less failures they quietly slipped away into oblivion. Some entertainments there were, too, whose receipts figure in the returns of various committees and booths. There is no record of half the performances that were given in aid of the Metropolitan Fair, but the most successful were under the supervision of the Dramatic Committee, and their number and returns were as follows:—

Wallack's Theatre	\$954.25
Winter Garden	606.50
Howe's Circus	22.30
Olympic Theatre	627.50
Barnum's Museum	296.95
Hippotheatron	136.37
Billiard Tournament	211.00
Dramatic Reading (private)	500.00
Cinderella	2,705.50
Niblo's	940.50

Old Bowery	350.00
New Bowery	321.00
Private performances at Mr. Jerome's Theatre . .	6,365.70
	<hr/>
The sum of these receipts is	\$14,037.57

Though it only appears in the Treasurer's report as \$13,829.72, and has to suffer a final deduction which leaves \$13,593.44 as the actual and serviceable contribution of the Dramatic Committee. But it is not alone from the pecuniary point of view that the labors and gifts of this committee are pleasing. To any kind-hearted lover of amusements what can be more gratifying than to see pleasure ministering to duty;—or, to put the case again tropically, who loves not to see the Old World muses, Melpomene and Thalia, turned Christian, and waiting on the footsteps of mild-eyed Charity? Such a spectacle has been often granted to us in these latter days, and the Sanitary Commission was, during its short but wonderful career, many times blessed with the rewards of such good service. There are many New Yorkers who remember a performance of "Macbeth" at the Academy of Music, — one of a series of benefits given by Miss Charlotte Cushman to the Sanitary Commission. There was Miss Cushman and Edwin Booth; and the glittering house was packed to the roof with patriotic play-goers. How much a thing of memory that evening is—there is no repeating it. The great actress was not only making a noble gift to the cause of her country, but was bidding farewell to both stage and native land. The scene of her action has passed away; the object for which she played has finished its work and no longer exists. But though three years have worked such a change, they have not destroyed the memory of that occasion. It was perhaps the most memorable of all the public performances given to the Sanitary Commission — the place, the combination of two such

actors, the circumstances, all help to lift it into pre-eminence. Perhaps an old play-goer, here and there, remembered that it was in "Macbeth" that Miss Cushman won her first success a quarter of a century ago; and then he thought over the long line of triumphs "unto this last." The actors, the spectators, the times suggested by such a retrospect, could not fail to come into curious contrast with the present occasion; but we must turn our backs upon the tempting theme to consider one equally seductive, which may be found in our arid-looking list of the returns of the Dramatic Committee. At the very end of the list there is set the legend —

"Private performances at Mr. Jerome's Theatre, \$6,365.70."

And it is of six brilliant evenings that it now becomes our pleasant task to write.

It was a cosy theatre; pretty and well lighted. A stage not so large but that its drawing-rooms might seem adapted to human conveniences, while an ordinary conversational tone might be heard from one side of its boudoirs to the other. Its actors did not have to play at being ladies and gentlemen, and its audience were not obliged to be warmed into interest through dispiriting, cold and dreary first acts. Greenroom and parterre were connected by other than artistic ties. Ladies and gentlemen of the same society were before and behind the curtain. On one side rows of ladies in the freshest and most exquisite *toilettes*; delicate silks and laces and tissues, with here and there the diamonds of a dowager. "Waterfalls" and "rats" were then comparatively new and strange, and their unaccustomed effects went far to stimulate the wit of those occasions, though among the black-garbed and white-gloved men there were many whose wit was keen enough without such stimulus. Behind the curtain was Fairy-land. Zerlina was there, and Pierrotto; Lady Teazle and the choleric