

The American "Vauxhall" of the Federal Era

THE American "Vauxhall" of the Federal Era filled a definite place—indeed, a definite want—in the social scheme of the day. Anglo-Saxons (more, perhaps, than any other race) have ever been prone in pleasant weather to stroll about outdoors in their hours of relaxation and be diverted the while by sights or sounds. If there be refreshments too—edible, drinkable, or both—so much the better. This sort of thing appealed to the ladies in high-waisted frocks and the beaux in white beaver "toppers," brass-buttoned blue "swallow-tails" and saffron-coloured nankeen pantaloons, quite as much as ever it did to the children of any other age. Had not the local Vauxhalls given them a chance to see and be seen as they sought mild entertainment, our city forebears of the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth would have missed a cherished outlet for their innate peacock instinct and city life in mild weather would have lost much of its sparkle. The sundry Vauxhall enterprises had their distinctly commercial side, too, as well as their purely social aspect. Not a few persons found profitable employment in ministering to the popular taste for public-garden diversion and promoters laid out considerable sums in equipping and maintaining these seasonal urban resorts, to say nothing of the ingenuity they brought to bear in devising novel attractions.

The Vauxhall of the Federal Era was not an isolated phenomenon peculiar to that period alone; it certainly didn't burst suddenly "out of the blue," a completely and independently-organised feature of contemporary city life, like Athene springing full-panoplied from the head of Zeus. It was the ripe outcome of long and gradual evolution. It had antecedents—highly illustrious antecedents!

To trace its lineage no further back than the sixteenth century, it is said that England's "Great Lord Chancellor," St. Thomas More, kept open house at Chelsea on Sunday afternoons; thither London's

beau monde were wont to resort, going up the river in barges and wherries. They walked in St. Thomas's "marvellous fair" garden that stretched down to Thames side, they conversed, they listened to music and looked at the curious birds and beasts the Lord Chancellor delighted to keep, not forgetting the ferret, the rabbits and the tame fox Erasmus mentions, nor the monkey Holbein's pencil immortalised. Here we have the essential elements of future Vauxhalls without, however, the motley assemblages of "all sorts and conditions of men" and the prices charged and paid for entertainment.

Exactly what was a "Vauxhall"? We might almost as well say a "Ranelagh" or a "Sadler's Wells." They, and sundry others less famous, all followed the same general pattern and had much the same function. That function was to provide an agreeable outdoor resort, well laid out and planted, where city-dwelling patrons might promenade to their hearts' content, obtain refreshment for the inner man, and get entertainment from some sort of "thrill." The "thrill" might be exceedingly mild, or it might reach a climax of excitement; it might be music discoursed by a string band, or it might run from amateurish tumbling and tightrope walking all the way to elaborate "floor-shows," intricate spectacular exhibitions, fireworks and balloon ascensions. There might even be two or three outstanding features on an evening's programme. And there might be frequent changes of programme to ensure a variety that would whet curiosity and prompt the public to repeat their visits at short intervals.

The immediate progenitors of the American Vauxhall of the Federal Era were, of course, the London Vauxhalls, Ranelaghs, Sadler's Wells and other eighteenth-century pleasure gardens.¹ Some of those pleasure gardens, indeed, dated from the seventeenth century. Vauxhall itself—best-known of them all—"a prettily contrived plantation, laid out with walks and arbours," began its long career as early as 1661, early enough for Mr. Pepys to regale himself there with "a lobster or a syllabub," listen to the nightingales, and watch people a—"pulling cherries and God knows what" from the trees. It was not until much later that successive managements built the Rotunda, the Orchestra, the Triumphal Arches and other architectural embellish-

¹ For further particulars of the London pleasure gardens see, Warwick Wroth, F. S. A., *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century* (Macmillan & Co., London and New York, 1896).

ments; introduced "Consorts of Musick," both instrumental and vocal; adorned the place with statues, grottoes and water conceits; and contrived ingenious illuminations, spectacles, fireworks and (much later) balloon ascensions. Incidentally, they provided skimpy-portioned and high-priced food and wine for such supper parties there as Horace Walpole describes.

Sadler's Wells, Clerkenwell, began life as a garden surrounding a one-storey Music House. There the public came to drink the chalybeate waters of a recently re-discovered ancient well. The proprietor engaged "posturers, tumblers and rope-dancers" who performed in the open air.

A Mrs. Pearson played on the dulcimer on summer evenings at the end of the Long Walk, and visitors danced to the strains of a band stationed on a rock of shell-work construction.

For a while the place drew a numerous attendance, but somehow soon went into eclipse. Assiduous advertising, however, restored popularity of a sort by the end of the eighteenth century. There were concerts in the Music House twice a week with an orchestra of violins, hautboys, trumpets and kettledrums. A new management added the extra attraction of an "ingurgitating monster," a man who, "for a stake of five guineas, performed the hardly credible feat of eating a live cock"! Presumably he ate feathers and all. Also, we learn that

A brightly painted gallery in the saloon used for the entertainments appears to have been occupied by the quieter portion of the audience, who were able from thence to survey the pit below, which was filled . . . with butchers, bailiffs, prize-fighters, and house-breakers. The audience smoked and regaled themselves with ale and cheese-cakes; while the organ played, a scarlet-clad fiddler performed, and a girl of eleven gave a sword dance.

For a number of years servants and folk of the "baser sort" were the chief frequenters of Sadler's Wells. In *Humphry Clinker* (c. 1771), Winifred Jenkins naïvely recounts her not too agreeable visit there:

I was afterwards of a party at Sadler's Wells, where I saw such tumbling and dancing on ropes and wires that I was frightened and ready to go into a fit. I tho't it was all enchantment, and believing myself bewitched, began for to cry. You knows as how the witches in Wales fly on broom-sticks; but as here was flying without any broom-stick or thing in the varsal world, and firing of pistols in the air and blowing of trumpets and singing, and rolling of wheelbarrows on a wire (God bless us!) no thicker than a sewing thread; that to be sure they must deal with the

Devil. A fine gentleman with a pig's tail and a golden sword by his side, came to comfit me and offered for to treat me with a pint of wind; but I would not stay; and so in going through the dark passage he began to show his cloven futt and went for to be rude; my fellow sarvant Umphry Klinker bid him be sivil, and he gave the young man a dous in the chops; but i 'fackins Mr. Klinker warn't long in his debt; with a good oaken sapling he dusted his doublet, for all his golden cheese-toaster; and fipping me under his arm carried me huom, I nose not how, being I was in such a flustration.

With rowdyism rampant and such disgusting shows as devouring live cocks, the fortunes of Sadler's Wells eventually waned; the next revival stressed dramatic performances and the later history of the place belongs mainly to the chronicles of the theatre.

More fortunate in holding popular vogue as a pleasure garden, and likewise the varnish of respectability, was nearby Bagnigge Wells. Thither people flocked to drink the ferruginous and cathartic waters. They heard music in the Long Room with its concave and convex distorting mirrors, tried their luck on the bowling green or in the skittle-alley, walked the trim alleys of box and holly, examined the newly-imported goldfish in the ponds, ate delicacies from the bun-house, or sipped tea ("with china and gilt spoons") in the arbours covered with honeysuckle and sweetbriar. In a song of the day, an amorous swain alludes to the garden's charms:

Come prithee make it up, Miss, and be as lovers be.

We'll go to Bagnigge Wells, Miss, and there we'll have some tea;

It's there you'll see the lady-birds perched on the stinging nettles,

The crystal water fountain, and the copper shining kettles.

It's there you'll see the fishes, more curious they than whales.

And they're made of gold and silver, Miss, and wags their little tails;

They wags their little tails, they wags their little tails.

To Ranelagh Dr. Johnson often went and found it "a place of innocent recreation."² Perhaps the plenty of good tea obtainable there may have won the great Doctor's favourable attitude. He told Boswell that on first entering Ranelagh it gave his mind "an expansion and gay sensation" and that "the *coup d'oeil*" was "the finest thing he had ever seen." Everybody (that is, everybody that "counted") went to Ranelagh. Horace Walpole was perpetually going there, "breakfasting this morning at Ranelagh Garden,"³ or

² Boswell, *Life*: 1777-78, ch. lxi., p. 561, ed. Croker; *ibid.* ch. xxvi., p. 236.

³ Walpole to Mann, April 22, 1742.

"every night constantly" to Ranelagh, "which has totally beat Vauxhall."⁴ Again, he writes:

Nobody goes anywhere else; everybody goes there. My Lord Chesterfield is so fond of it, that he says he has ordered all his letters to be directed thither. . . . The floor, [says Walpole,] is all of beaten princes . . . you can't set your foot without treading on a Prince or Duke of Cumberland.⁵

The chief attractions were promenading, whether in the Rotunda or in the grounds, good music, and good food and drink, with occasional dances, masquerades and other gala functions. From the outset Ranelagh achieved, and always kept, its prosperous and fashionable popularity, its eminent and splendid decorum and—as some insisted—its dulness. One hostile critic (he had evidently been in Italy) ridiculed the promenading and said one-half the people were

following one another's tails in an eternal circle like asses in an olive mill while the other half are drinking hot water under the denomination of tea.

But enough of the London pleasure gardens! Their functions and general characteristics are sufficiently obvious. As a well-established institution they flourished throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth. It was not until cheap and ready means of public transportation came into common use and enabled city folk to go farther away for their diversion that the old pleasure gardens ran down at heel, fell into disuse and faded one by one from the scene. But in their palmy days they had set a pattern for American emulation.

Knowing what a confirmed habit it was with eighteenth-century Americans to keep fully informed of everything going on in London (just as country folk nowadays scan the social columns and fashion pages of our city newspapers), knowing, too, the punctilious solicitude with which those same eighteenth-century Americans followed London fashions, it is easy to see whence came the Vauxhall idea. It would doubtless have taken root—at least, have been tried—even had there been no real need for it. But there was such need; certainly in the larger cities. Public amusement of some kind—or, if there be no organised agency for it, then a means of assuring the individual adequate opportunity to create independent diversion—has always

⁴ Walpole to Conway, June 29, 1744.

⁵ Walpole to Conway, June 29, 1744.

been a necessity in any large community of normal people, especially when limited transportation facilities prevent their going far afield in their leisure hours.

In the Federal Era, wholly dependent as it was on horse-drawn vehicles or saddle horses (and none too many of either, at that), a journey out of town into even the nearby country was an "event" that had to be planned for, took much time to accomplish, and was within command of only those relatively few who were fortunate enough to own horses and carriages, or able to hire them. Local public conveyances were not numerous, were restricted in capacity, went to only a few places, and ran infrequently. The majority of city folk, therefore, had to seek their recreations near home. There were, to be sure, some self-contained "stay-at-home" bodies here and there, like Philadelphia's Elizabeth Drinker, who seemed never to crave any outside stimulus. If Mrs. Drinker could contentedly write in her *Diary*,

I stay much at home, and my business I mind,
Take note of ye weather, and how blows the wind,
The changes of Seasons, The Sun, Moon and Stars,
The Setting of Venus, and riseing of Mars.
Birds, Beasts and Insects, and more I cold mention,
That pleases my leisure, and draws my attention.
But respecting my Neighbours. . . .
What matches are making, whos plain, or whos gay,
I leave to their parents, or Guardians to say;
For most of those things, are out of my Way,⁶

it was most likely because she was a Quakeress. And it was a matter of principle among the stricter Quakers to frown upon all "worldly" amusements. When Elizabeth Drinker wrote the foregoing lines, moreover, Quakers and even those "Quakerly affected" had long since been a dwindling minority in the total population of Philadelphia; elsewhere, for the most part, they were numerically negligible. Their attitude of disapprobation, therefore, was not a factor to be seriously heeded.

There were theatres, certainly, in the Federal Era; they were good, and the plays and acting were highly creditable. But the theatres then, as now, had their "seasons" and their sabbatical periods of

⁶ Cecil K. Drinker, *Not So Long Ago, A Chronicle of Medicine and Doctors in Colonial Philadelphia* (Oxford University Press, N. Y., 1937), 11.

closing usually came in summer when the public most strongly felt the urge of outdoors. There were institutions like Ricketts's Circus, but Ricketts's Circus was a completely enclosed and roofed structure without any open-air appeal. There were occasional concerts, but these, again, were indoors; for most people the concerts had no compelling attraction and, at their best, they were pretty jejune affairs. Now and again there were lectures for those who wished to be "improved"; but then, as now, only a small fraction of the masses were athirst for "improvement." There were a few incipient museums; but their embryonic collections had little to offer and the few "curious" who visited them soon plumbed their resources and rarely went back a second time. Most of the churches and chapels had Wednesday evening services or prayer-meetings; but attendance at these gatherings could hardly be deemed an exhilarating recreation, although instances did sometimes occur when people afflicted with abnormal piety (would not *piosity* be an apt term for the ailment?) professed to find therein all the diversion their humour required.⁷ Fox-hunting was seasonal and was within reach of only a select handful. There was horse-racing; but that brought out only the sporting element. There was cock-fighting; but from its very nature, indulgence in this pastime had to be more or less surreptitious. However, one of the leading members of the Philadelphia medical profession, and he a pillar of the Presbyterian Kirk too, kept game-cocks and went to fights whenever he could; he was as keen about it as any of the Negroes. Both Philadelphia and New York had staged bull-baitings, but public sentiment finally compelled the rougher element to forego this barbarity; in Philadelphia, Robert Wharton, when he was Mayor, suppressed it with a firm foot.

There was a "but" to every item in the foregoing catalogue of public amusements in which city folk, irrespective of class, could

⁷ The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, in 1768, printed a letter from an "exemplary" and indignant young gentleman. Ordinary civility had obliged him and several friends to accept complimentary tickets for the theatre. "The scandalised correspondent had no taste for such exhibitions; he was too good to go to such an infamous place so, with rare generosity, gave the ticket, granting entrance to the 'temple of perdition,' to a negro" and went himself to hear a sermon. "The 'virtuous slave,' instead of having *his* morals corrupted, 'sold the ticket for half-price, with which he immediately purchased a prayer-book'! His own virtue (?) in giving a ticket to an 'immoral place' to an irresponsible slave apparently didn't strike him." We hope the "unco-guid" young prig enjoyed the homily. Eberlein and Hubbard, *Portrait of a Colonial City* (J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, 1939), 222.

share. No one of them offered varied open-air entertainment for young and old, at little cost, and easily reached. With the rapid growth of urban population, the situation posed a problem. The pleasure garden—the "Vauxhall"—plainly supplied the solution.

The pleasure garden was essentially a city phenomenon; it could find support only where there was a large population to draw upon. The two American cities where it found adequate patronage and flourished vigorously were Philadelphia and New York. Philadelphia was the metropolis and most populous⁸ city of the young Republic, the centre of culture, refinement, wealth and fashion, the "London of America,"⁹ as Wansey called it, and Philadelphia was always ready to adopt any institution upon which London herself had already set her seal of approval. New York, though smaller, was cosmopolitan in spirit and in fact, forward-looking, alert, and quick to grasp and further any new venture that gave evidence of promising possibilities. In her readiness to accept the pleasure garden, New York adopted the very names of the London prototypes; in Manhattan there were several Vauxhalls, Ranelaghs, White's Conduit Houses and the like, while Philadelphia nomenclature mustered only one namesake, Vauxhall, and that not until 1814.

Boston, Baltimore and Charleston all had their Vauxhalls, too. Boston, however, seems at first not to have tempted the entertainment promoters to any extensive venture. For one thing, Bostonians were blessed with their Common, of which they made full use for strolling; for sports exacting strength or prowess, like bowling, quoits, or throwing the "long bullet"; and for any public occasions that called for an outdoor setting. That, in the main, apparently satisfied them. William Priest, the actor, says,

The favourite promenade of the Bostonians, is the Mall, which has trees on each side, as in St. James's Park, London. This walk commands some beautiful prospects of the adjacent continent.¹⁰

Or, possibly, the ordeal of securing from the Selectmen the requisite

⁸ The Census of 1790 gives Philadelphia a population of 42,444; New York 33,131; the same Census gives the population of Boston as 18,038; Charleston 16,359; and Baltimore 13,503.

⁹ Henry Wansey, *The Journal of an Excursion to the United States of America in 1794* (Salisbury, 1796), 73. He likens New York to Liverpool and Boston to Bristol.

¹⁰ William Priest, *Travels in the United States of America, Commencing in the Year 1793, and Ending in 1797* (London, 1802), 163.

license for any sort of Vauxhall seemed so formidable that it deterred promoters from making the essay.

One of the earliest recorded attempts to create a local amusement centre outdoors was the opening by subscription of a "‘Musick-house’ at the foot of the common" in July, 1785, "with music by the band from 7 to 10," when "many ladies and gentlemen were present in the gallery and on the green around the building." The next year, under the discreet censorship of the Selectmen and

Upon the Petition of a number of the respectable Inhabitants that Mr. Thomas Pool may be permitted to perform his Feats of Horsemanship in the Town, among other reasons, on account of his services & Sufferings in the public service—The Town Clerk is directed to acquaint Mr. Pool that the Selectmen have no objection to his performing said Feats provided the same be done in a proper inclosure.¹¹

The "proper inclosure" was "near the Mall." Mr. Pool's programme in part called for him to mount

a single horse in full speed, with his right foot in the near stirrup, and his left leg extended at a considerable distance from the horse; [to mount] two horses in full speed, with a foot in the stirrup of each saddle, and in that position [leap a bar; to mount] a single horse in full speed and, [firing] a pistol, [fall backward.] At the conclusion of the performances, [the said Mr. Pool was to introduce] three horses, who will lay themselves down as if dead. One will groan apparently through extreme sickness and pain, afterwards rise and make his manners to the Ladies and Gentlemen. Another, having laid down for a considerable time, will rise and set up like a Lady's lap-dog. [And] between the different parts [there was to be] a Clown to amuse the spectators, [and] there might be time for an exhibition of brilliant Fire Works.¹²

When the City Fathers saw all this, did they realise they'd had a *circus* let loose on them? Mr. Pool called it a "*Ménage*" (meaning *Manège*), but it was a circus. A little one-ring affair, true, but a real circus! We are not told whether Mr. Pool wore pink satin tights.

By 1817, whatever inhibitions there may have been formerly about pleasure gardens had plainly ceased to inhibit. On May 10, the *Boston Intelligencer* carried an announcement that "Vauxhall Washington Gardens," as a spring and summer establishment, would "again open for the reception of company." Every delicacy could be had, including the "very best of Soda Water and Ice Creams." On May 31, the same newspaper printed a flaring advertisement that on

¹¹ Isaac J. Greenwood, *The Circus: Its Origin and Growth Prior to 1835* (New York, 1909), 66, 69.

¹² *Pennsylvania Packet*, Aug. 15, 1785.

Monday evening, June 2, "Washington Gardens Vauxhall" would open for the season, and continued that

J. H. Schaffer, has the honour to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of Boston, and Strangers who may be in town, that he has, at a very considerable expense, prepared the Gardens in a style at once commodious and pleasant [including illuminations] with that wonderful and ingenious Invention, the GAS LIGHTS.

Also there would be "Concerts, Instrumental and Vocal," and the performances would end with a display of "Fire-Works." There had previously been an advertisement in the *Intelligencer* that a "Lapland White Bear" was on exhibition at "Jacob's Stable" from "8 A.M. to 10 P.M." Considering that the bear did sundry tricks and "walked with her arms folded," it would have been a case for the S.P.C.A.—had there been one then—to protest that "Ursa" was being overworked. But the significant thing about the bear "ad" is that the last insertion in the advertising columns ended, "N.B. On Monday next [June 2] the Animal will be removed to the *Washington Gardens*, near the Mall." All this scarcely deserved the acid comment of that "sour puss," the Chevalier de Beaujour (although he did not make it particularly of Bostonians) that

. . . Americans . . . in social life have less [happiness]; and if they live almost without pain, they also nearly live without pleasure. They do not know the art of multiplying or varying their enjoyments, and the monotony of their existence, resembles the silence of the tombs.¹³

Charleston, as the chief city of the South, also had its Vauxhall. In the *Charleston Courier* of June 4, 1804, it was announced that

The public are respectfully informed that Vauxhall Gardens will open for the Summer Season THIS EVENING [with a] GRAND CONCERT of Vocal and Instrumental Music [at 8 o'clock. At] Three quarters past 8 . . . Song Mounseer Nong Tong Paw, by Mr. Hodgkinson, [with other songs and singers at 15-minute intervals till 9.45, after which the evening's entertainment was] To conclude with a Grand SYMPHONIE and MARCH. Admittance Half a Dollar.

This was very reasonable; local public dinners were being advertised at \$7.00 a cover. There was no mention of "eats," drinks, illuminations or other "features" and the show could hardly have been exciting. The songs were different on the Monday, Wednesday and Friday

¹³ Le Chevalier Felix de Beaujour (William Walton, translator), *Sketch of the United States of North America, At the Commencement of the Nineteenth Century; from 1800 to 1810* (London, 1814), 153.

evenings when the "Gardens" were open, *weather permitting*, but the singers were the same, evidently drawn from the stock company of actors at the Charleston Theatre during the "season." Possibly the Garden was an expedient to help the company with their finances while the Theatre was closed; there were occasional benefit nights for the different performers. The Mr. Sully, whose name appears in the company at both the Garden and the Theatre, was the artist's father.

Sometimes, instead of winding up the evening with a "symphonie" or "grand march," the players would present a farce, such as "The Horse and the Widow," and on July 12 they finished off with an "Opera, called THE WATERMAN." By July 19

An AMPHITHEATRE has been raised opposite the stage for the accommodation of the ladies, [and on July 28 it was announced] The middle walk of the Garden will be illuminated by new invented Lamps, just arrived from Europe.

The management were doing their best to emulate the parent Vauxhall in London. On June 6, the next year, they advertise

AN ELEGANT DISPLAY OF FIRE-WORKS [at 7.30, with the caution,] N.B. As some persons may object to the exhibition on account of the moon's injuring the brilliancy of the Fire-Works, Mr. R. informs them that the Theatre of the Garden is perfectly shaded by the trees.

After that date all advertisements cease; one is curious to know whether the enterprise had strained Mr. R.'s finances to the breaking-point and whether Vauxhall went up in a blaze of glory along with the "Fire-Works."

As early as 1792 the *Baltimore Daily Repository* of May 31 advertised an

Afternoon's Amusement. The New Company of Tight Rope Dancers, Tumblers, &c, just arrived from Philadelphia, will exhibit in Chatsworth Gardens, *To-Morrow Evening*, at five o'clock precisely. . . . Tickets, one quarter of a dollar each.

As no other attractions were mentioned, it is likely there was no illumination, and apparently it was a short engagement for the performers. At any rate, Chatsworth Gardens are on record. On June 30 the *Repository* gave notice "To the Curious" that "a beautiful African LION" is on view

at the sign of the Black Horse opposite the Centre Market. . . . His legs and tail are as thick as those of a common-sized ox. [Caught when a whelp,] He is as tame as any domestic animal whatever.

The "Curious" are warned that this twenty-five cent show is having a short stand; the owner of the "beautiful LION" intends touring the United States with him. On July 25 the *Repository* carried a two-inch advertisement as follows:

Jalland's Garden. The subscriber respectfully informs the Public and his Friends, that, on account of the liberal encouragement given him, his Garden will be ILLUMINATED, during the season, every evening in the week, if fair, Sundays excepted. On Tuesday and Friday evenings the illumination will be accompanied with Music.

Judging from other advertisements in the *Repository*, Jalland seems to have been a liquor dealer, so it is likely that patrons could "wet their whistles" as well as see the illuminations "accompanied with Music."

Baltimore, although an amazingly "up-and-coming" place in the Federal Era, still had a relatively small population. This fact presumably curtailed the enterprise of pleasure-garden sponsors who would naturally centre their attentions where potential patrons were most numerous. In 1810 the Chevalier de Beaujour attributed to Philadelphia 120,000 inhabitants, New York 90,000, and Baltimore 40,000.¹⁴ The Chevalier's statistics ought to be accurate, as the figures of a Consul-General are expected to be. It is to Philadelphia and New York, then, that we must look for the amplest flowering of the American Vauxhall.

The full-fledged pleasure garden of the Federal Era, patterned after the London pleasure garden as it admittedly was, nevertheless had also its American pre-Federal forerunners—advance guards, so to speak, that tried out methods of drawing remunerative patronage from the public. The beginnings of public diversion we may pass by without going into too much detail; for example, the exhibition of a moose, described in the press of the day as having

a face like a mouse, ears like an ass, neck and back like a camel, hind-parts like a horse, tail like a rabbit, and feet like a heifer.

There was, again, the early Philadelphia merry-go-round, described as 'flying coaches and horses,' affixed to a whirligig frame, where the women sat in boxes for coaches, and the men strode on wooden horses—and in those positions they were whirled around.

¹⁴ De Beaujour, *Sketch of the United States*, etc., 75.

Philadelphia likewise had its Bathsheba's Bath and Bower on Society Hill, where people made their "tea regale" at the spring. New York also boasted places where early city-dwellers could promenade, like the "Governour's Garden" of the seventeenth-century, or the Cherry Garden (at the present junction of Pearl and Cherry Streets) where seventeenth-century Manhattanites could stroll and likewise get refreshment.¹⁵ There were also various concerts, plays, exhibitions and games got up at inns, which in many ways functioned as the country clubs of their day; or such spots of natural topographical emphasis as Philadelphia's Lower Ferry (later to become Gray's Gardens) whither, in 1744, the Secretary of the Province, with several other representative citizens of Philadelphia, went out to meet the Commissioners from Virginia. The latter declared that the local leaders

Receiv'd us very kindly, and Welcom'd us into their Province with a Bowl of fine Lemon Punch big enough to have Swimm'd half a dozen of young Geese.¹⁶

Of Philadelphia's Bath or Bathtown, in the Northern Liberties, which began to offer tentative pleasure-garden attractions in 1765, there has already been mention in these pages. Of nearby Harrogate, which likewise based its *raison d'être* on the waters, there has also been mention.¹⁷ In New York, the Old Bowling Green Garden (afterwards one of the Vauxhalls) began to function about the middle of the eighteenth century as a popular suburban eating-place; other features and amusements came later. Samuel Fraunces (he of Fraunces's Tavern fame and renowned as a restaurateur), on getting possession prior to 1765, changed the name to Vauxhall Garden¹⁸ and, in 1768, gave notice that a group of "Magnificent Wax Figures" could be seen from 8 A.M. until 10 P.M., charge 4/- per person. They were

Ten in number, rich and elegantly dressed, according to the ancient Roman and present Mode; which figures bear the most striking resemblance to real life and represent the great Roman general, Publius Scipio, who conquered the city of Carthage, standing by his tent pitched in a grove of trees.

¹⁵ W. Harrison Bayles, *Old Taverns of New York* (New York, 1915), 44, 184.

¹⁶ PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY, I (1877), 342.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, LXVII (1943), 36, 39.

¹⁸ Bayles, *Old Taverns of New York*, 218.

Other attractions he added from time to time. New York's first Ranelagh¹⁹ opened in June, 1765, "for breakfast and evening entertainment," with ground "laid out at great expense." On Monday and Thursday evenings there was music by "a complete band" and, not long afterwards, there were vocal and instrumental concerts and fireworks. The movement had started, it had captured popular fancy, and other promoters entered the race from time to time with such novel attractions as they could devise. But always—whatever "features" might add a special appeal—the claim to public favour rested on the solid basis of food and drink, with a garden in which to sit, walk or go a-courting.

The true Vauxhall as a finished creation, far outstripping all these incipient essays, came into its own soon after the Revolutionary War and continued in full career throughout the Federal Era, its many diverse manifestations traceable to the keen rivalries among sponsors and impressarios. One of the earliest, and also most celebrated, of its kind was Gray's Gardens, at the Lower Ferry over Schuylkill (west bank), laid out close on the heels of the Peace and appointed for the enticement of Philadelphians. The Grays, who held the ferry (afterwards toll floating bridge) concession, had an inn there where all traffic to and from the South had to pass their door. Samuel Vaughan, to whom Philadelphia owes much for his timely suggestions about civic improvements, pointed out an opportunity which the proprietors were quick to grasp. A naturally beautiful site, with fine trees of native growth, they further embellished with exotic plantings and laid out a garden to whose charms (enhanced by the refreshments to be had) the public readily responded. It immediately became one of the city's "sights" and not only an objective for parties of pleasure from town but also a favourite place to welcome the coming and speed the parting guest. Delegations of representative Philadelphians were wont to escort distinguished visitors as far as Gray's Gardens and there tender them a "stirrup-cup" and godspeed as they left for the South; in like manner citizen committees would there meet important personages arriving and accompany them to the city. Gray's Gardens, in fact, came to hold an almost official or diplomatic status. At their comings and goings, the President and Mrs. Washington repeatedly received these civilities at what may be called the

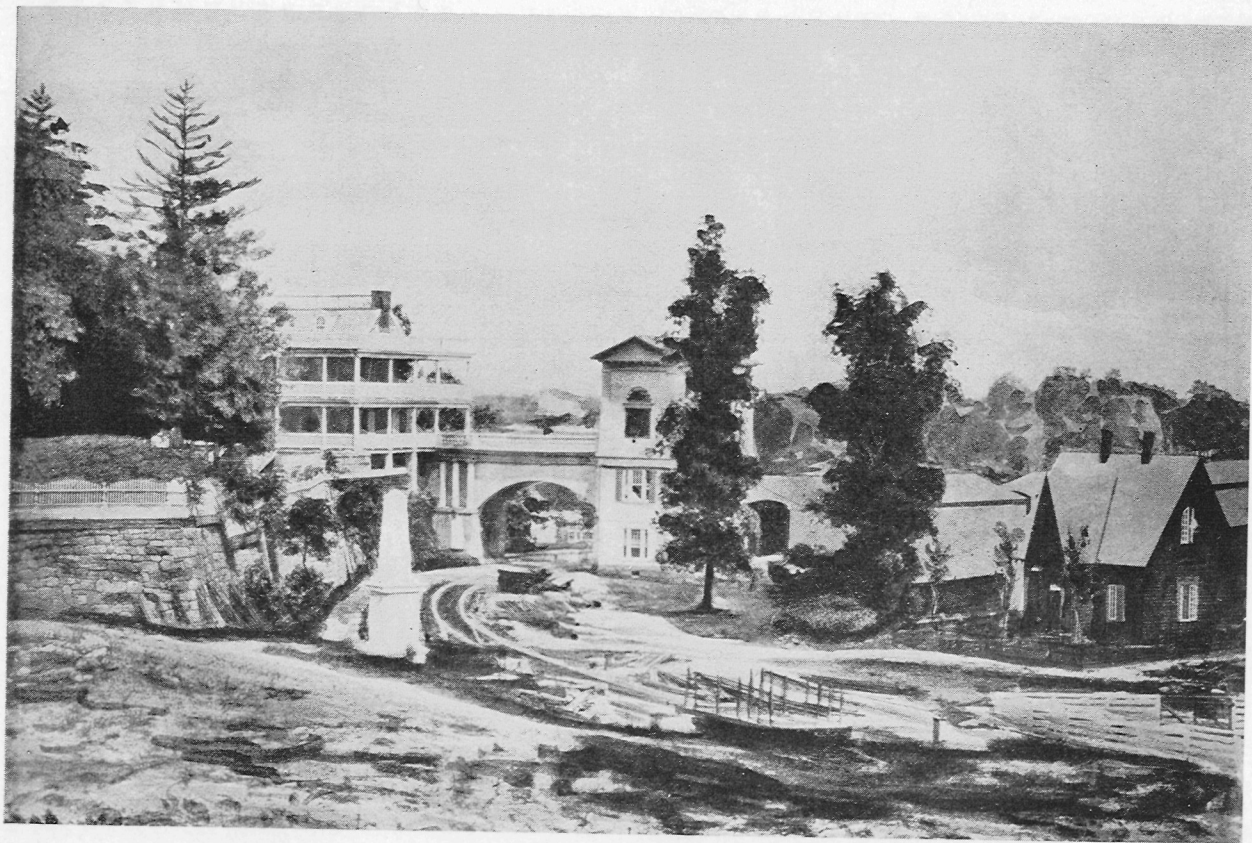
¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

old gateway to Philadelphia. While Philadelphia was the capital of the country, most of the distinguished visitors to the city were familiar with Gray's Gardens; it was then in the hey-day of prosperity and fashion's favour.

On July 14, 1787, the observant Dr. Manasseh Cutler, in company with several other gentlemen and piloted by Mr. Vaughan, made an early morning visit to Bartram's Garden. Leaving there, they breakfasted a little after nine at Gray's Gardens and then went on a tour of inspection. Says Dr. Cutler in his *Journal*:²⁰

There we were entertained with scenes romantic and delightful beyond the power of description, [whereupon he launches into a minute description of everything—the inn,] a large pile of buildings, mostly old, but with some new additions, [the] serpentine gravel walks, . . . the Greenhouse [or Orangery, which] is a very large stone building, three storeys in the front and two in the rear, [whose] windows are enormous, I believe some of them to be twenty feet in length, and proportionably wide. [Of the private dining-rooms or boxes behind the Orangery he says,] All these apartments are handsomely furnished. On top of the house is a spacious walk, where we had a delightful view of the city of Philadelphia. [Of the exotic plants, he notes] most of the trees and fruits that grow in the hottest climates. Oranges, lemons, etc., in every stage from blossoms to ripe fruit; pine-apples in bloom, and those that were fully ripe. [The Gardens, he observes,] seemed to be in a number of detached areas, all different in size and form. The alleys were none of them straight, nor were there any two alike. At every end, side, and corner, there were *summer-houses*, arbours covered with vines or flowers, or shady bowers encircled with trees and flowering shrubs, each of which was formed in a different taste. In the borders were arranged every kind of flower. [He tells of three] high arched bridges . . . built in the Chinese style; the rails on the sides open work of various figures and beautifully painted; [of the hermitage; of the groves and the paths running mysteriously in divergent directions; of the various surprises, among them] one of the finest cascades in America [which] falls about seventy feet perpendicular. [Down near the river bank there were] Grottoes wrought out of the sides of ledges of rocks, . . . a curious labyrinth with numerous windings [and, atop a large rock,] a spacious summer-house. . . . The roof was in Chinese form. It was surrounded with rails of open work, and a beautiful winding staircase led up to it [seemingly a pagoda. He continues,] During the whole of this romantic rural scene, I fancied myself on enchanted ground, and could hardly help looking out for flying dragons, magic castles, little Fairies, Knight-errants, distressed Ladies, and all the apparatus of eastern fable. I found my mind really fatigued with so long a scene of pleasure. [After exhausting his rhapsody, he explains that Mr. Vaughan, after suggesting the Gardens to Gray, had] promised him to plan the works and furnish him with a gardener from England. . . . This gardener is now with him, and he constantly employs about ten labourers under the gardener's direction. The company from Philadelphia, we are told, far exceeded the Inn-keeper's expectations, and he finds himself in a fair way to make a fortune.

²⁰ W. P. Cutler and J. P. Cutler, *Life, Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler, LL.D.* (Cincinnati, 1888), I, 274, *et seq.*



Gray's Gardens, at the Lower Ferry.
(From the Print Collection in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)

Besides the items enumerated in Dr. Cutler's description, Gray had included sculpture, arches and other structural conceits to the equipment of his Gardens; for "features" he had concerts, illuminations, dramatic performances, fireworks and occasional pageants. In short, Thackeray's description in *Vanity Fair* of Vauxhall and its enticements would have served equally well for Gray's; the parallel might readily extend to local Joseph Sedleys and Becky Sharps, and Joseph having too much to drink.

The Fourth of July, throughout the Federal Era, gave the proprietors of "Vauxhalls" a chance for a spectacular "fling" of concerts, fireworks and pageants. At Gray's Gardens, for the Fourth of July celebration in 1790, besides concerts and fireworks, the floating bridge was beflagged with the colours of the several States and decked with flowers and shrubbery; the ship "Union" (an exhibit from the Federal procession of 1789), flying the flags of all nations, lay off the Gardens;

a 'Federal Temple,' [in the Gardens,] had for one of its ornaments a vault of twelve stones, representing the Federal Union—the keystone now completed by the accession of Rhode Island. From a grove in the garden came . . . thirteen young ladies dressed as shepherdesses, and thirteen young men attired as shepherds. They proceeded to the Federal Temple, where they sang an ode to Liberty, which was diversified with solos, choruses, and responses.

At night there was a grand illumination of everything, including a portrait of the President and all the "statues of heathen deities."²¹

The refreshments, solid and liquid alike, were always in high repute; Gray's was especially famous for tea and coffee of supreme excellence, accompanied by abundant "relishes." Of these, Priest says:

I took a memorandum of what was on the table; viz. *coffee, cheese, sweet cakes, hung beef, sugar, pickled salmon, butter, crackers, ham, cream, and bread*. The ladies all declared, it was a most *charming relish*!²²

Certainly lavish for a "relish," but quite in accord with the Gargantuan meals people habitually ate at that period. Even after Gray's vogue as a pleasure garden waned, it kept its reputation for unparalleled refreshments.

²¹ Scharf & Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, I, 464; II, 942.

²² William Priest, *Travels in the United States of America*, 34.

Before the end of the century Harrogate, to the north of the city, began to rival Gray's in popularity. The management multiplied Harrogate's attractions and fickle fashion, ever on the look out for something new, flocked thither to patronise the good restaurant, eat ice cream (America had now become exceedingly ice-cream-conscious), hearken to the celebrated soloists and performers who assisted at the concerts, promenade, and get "thrills" from the exhibitions, transparencies, fireworks, illuminations "in the Chinese style," and other spectacles. But in time, fashion tired of Harrogate, too. It was getting a bit "common." As early as 1794, Wansey speaks of it as

a place of entertainment and relaxation, for the tradesmen of Philadelphia to partake of upon a Sunday, like those in the vicinity of London.²³

By 1810 Harrogate was unquestionably on the down grade. Fickle fashion had something to do with its decline but the chief causes were its distance from the city (although the proprietor arranged for two stages daily), and the fact that new and equally engaging places had started up in or very near the city. Harrogate gradually sank into a state of rowdiness.

Rosy-cheeked, fair-haired German lads and lasses, for whom Monday was the hebdomadal holiday, resorted thither weekly. They usually arrived in the morning, drank beer, danced and, altogether, had a serenely happy time. In the afternoon an Irish contingent from Port Richmond would appear, previously fortified for the long journey from beyond Gunnar's Run (something more than a mile) by sundry repeated imbibings of whisky. Their aim was to cut out the 'Dutchies,' as they called them, gain for themselves the smiles and favour of the Teuton maids, and supplant the German waltz on the dancing floor by the Irish jig. Confusion and heartburnings, if nothing worse, always resulted—worse did almost invariably follow and added the testimony of broken pates to the unwisdom of mixing drinks.²⁴

Of the sundry Philadelphia "Vauxhalls" within or just outside the city limits, one of the first competitors with Gray's and Harrogate for public favour was the Wigwam, opened by John Coyle in 1791 on the banks of the Schuylkill at the end of Race Street. Its special claims to attention were its baths, a good restaurant with excellent coffee, and a bowling green. Its career ended when it was taken for

²³ Henry Wansey, *The Journal of an Excursion to the United States of America in 1794*, 110.

²⁴ Eberlein and Hubbard, *Portrait of a Colonial City* (1939), 131. Information anent the latter estate of Harrogate Garden was supplied from personal recollection by the late John T. Morris, Esq., whose old home, "Cedar Grove" (since removed to Fairmount Park), was at Harrogate not far from the Garden.

a yellow-fever hospital during one of the early epidemics. Bush Hill, rented from Andrew Hamilton in 1796, was another pleasure garden nearly extinguished by requisition for a yellow-fever hospital, but it was subsequently revived and had some success. The Centre House Garden (near the present City Hall) was really a pre-Revolutionary establishment but seems never to have been much of a garden; it figured mainly as a place for tightrope feats, tumbling and early attempts at circus-like exhibitions. Louth Hall, on Tenth Street between Arch and Race, came on the scene in 1803 and won renown for its superlative cookery. Gastronomic considerations were ever of moment in Philadelphia. The Lombardy Gardens, at Fifteenth and Market Streets (on the present site of Broad Street Station), besides all their other attractions of good concerts, illuminations, fireworks and the rest of the usual stock-in-trade of pleasure gardens, relied much on their turtle soup. The Lebanon Gardens, on South Street between Tenth and Eleventh, had the customary accompaniments and entertainments; public dinners often took place there. Hunting Park (where the present Hunting Park now is) was opened as a race-track in 1808; it seems to have functioned also as a pleasure garden. The Tivoli Garden, on the north side of Market Street between Thirteenth and Centre Square (first opened in 1813 as the Columbian Garden), besides the other pleasure-garden enticements had a "summer theatre" for pantomimes and light acting; from about 1820 onwards there were more serious dramatic efforts and it became a theatrical centre of some importance. McAran's Garden, on the south side of Arch Street between Seventeenth and Eighteenth, began as a nursery and horticultural establishment. McAran had formerly been gardener for William Hamilton of The Woodlands and, after that, for Henry Pratt at Lemon Hill. He grafted the pleasure garden on the nursery garden and found the result profitable. Besides providing illuminations, pyrotechnical displays and the like, he specialised in giving his patrons strawberries and cream in the season and also had an aviary and a small menagerie.

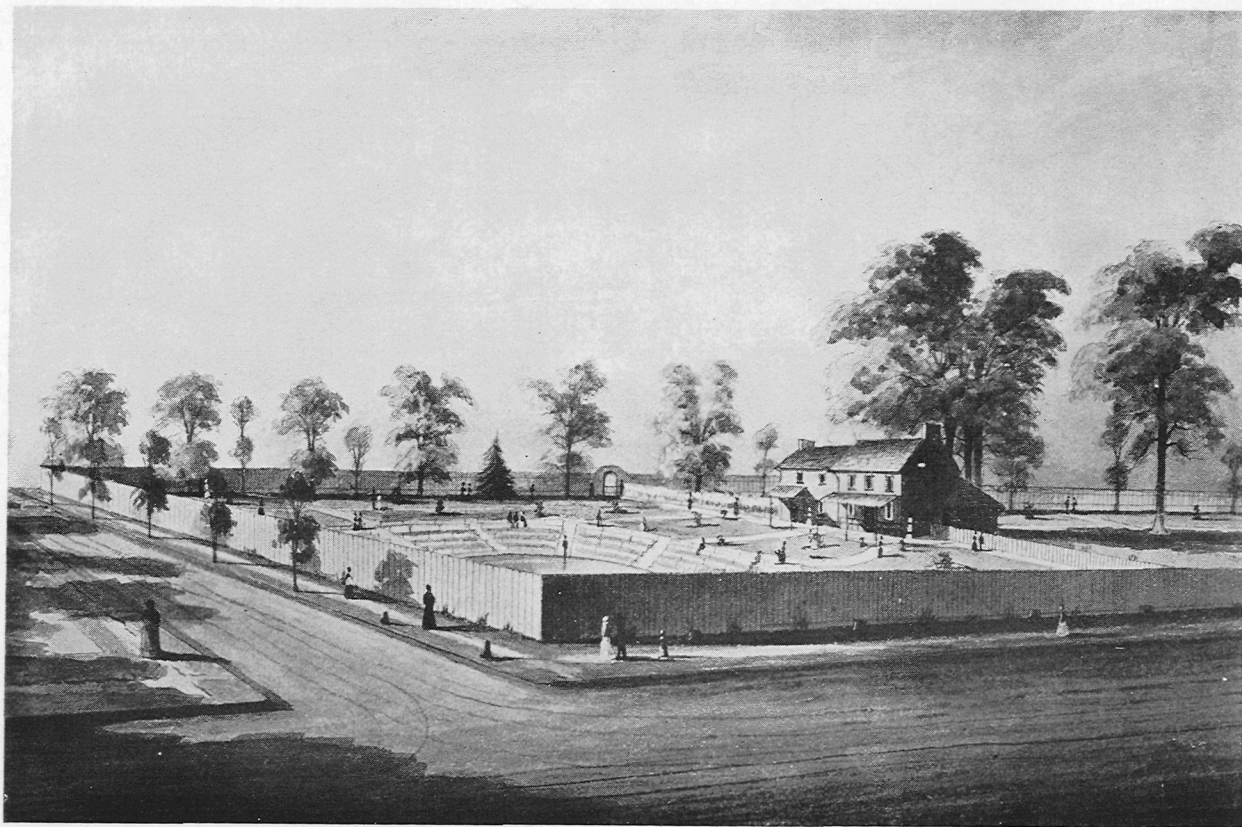
By far the most important and justly celebrated of Philadelphia's later pleasure gardens was Vauxhall, opened by John Dunlap in May, 1814. The Garden was where the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Building now stands and covered all the space bounded by Walnut, Broad, Sansom and Juniper Streets. The site had natural advantages

to begin with, and Captain Dunlap further embellished it with choice planting, flowers and gravelled walks. There was a summer theatre for concerts and vaudeville performances, and there was a dancing-room large enough for balls. Vauxhall was the most fashionable and popular of all the city pleasure gardens, and the management procured the best talent obtainable to gratify the numerous clientèle. There was always good music, the turtle soup and the ice cream were of unexceptionable quality, and part of the illumination consisted of vari-coloured lights hung among the boughs of the trees. Visitors described the place as "a little paradise." From time to time there were elaborate fireworks depicting, for instance, such subjects as Niagara Falls, with the pyrotechnist leaping into the whirlpool below. Vauxhall was also a favourite spot for balloon ascensions, which invariably drew large crowds. On one occasion, a French aeronaut descended with a parachute "in the car of which was a monkey. Both came down safely," we are told, "the frightened monkey reaching the earth some minutes before his master." Not long before this (September 8, 1819), an advertised balloon ascension from Vauxhall, said to have drawn a throng of 35,000 spectators in and around the Garden, ended in a tragedy, whereupon the mob wrecked the Garden. The aeronaut had trouble with his inflation, long after the appointed time the balloon would not rise, a boy from the impatient gathering, trying to climb the fence, was seriously hurt by a guard, the onlookers thought he was killed and

At this the crowd became inflamed and resorted to stones and other missiles, one of which punctured the bag [of the balloon] and made the feat impossible. The mob then broke into the enclosure, set fire to the theatre, drank the liquors, stole the cash-box, and engaged in a general destruction of property.

This catastrophe put an end to the Garden's season for that year; it also showed what a Philadelphia mob could do, once it got out of hand. The damage was repaired and the Garden opened as usual the following spring.²⁵ At Lafayette's first visit to Philadelphia, in 1824, it did not figure conspicuously in the entertainment. On his birthday, September 6, a procession of livery-stable vehicles bore the old Marquis and his entourage to the Coffee House.

²⁵ Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia: A History of the City and Its People*, II, 45, *et seq.*; and Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, I, 598.



McAran's Garden, Arch Street at Seventeenth.
The small pond served as the "Bay of Naples" for the "Eruption of Mt. Vesuvius" fireworks.
(Sketch by David J. Kennedy, from the Gilpin Library of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)



Pagoda and Labyrinth Garden, designed by John Haviland.
(Original in Print Collection in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Reproduced from Portrait of a Colonial City, through the courtesy of the J. B. Lippincott Co.)

There [Yankee Doodle] and other national airs were played. Then the carriages proceeded up Chestnut street and finally to the Vauxhall Garden . . . where refreshments were served to the old man.²⁶

At his second visit, however, in 1825, Vauxhall did better.

A grand exhibition of fireworks was given there . . . on the 23rd of July of that year, in honour of Gen. Lafayette. The grand arch of Columbia, with the Goddess of Liberty reclining on the pillar of Fame, the Tree of Liberty, the American Eagle, etc., was the great feature of the exhibition. Lafayette was received at the entrance of the garden by one hundred little girls all dressed in white. [Another account says the Marquis de Lafayette] entered the garden at nine o'clock, and was received by a numerous band of little boys and girls, each holding a torch. The stage, steps, and ornamental architecture of the garden were canopied with red, white and gold; the American flag and the French flag were displayed.²⁷

The last Philadelphia pleasure garden of note to be opened was the Chinese Pagoda and Labyrinth Garden, made ready to receive the public in July, 1828. It was on the rising ground northeast of Fairmount, and the buildings were designed by Haviland.²⁸ It is cause for lasting regret that the Pagoda and its accompanying Pavilion were ever demolished; they were striking examples of Haviland's work (of which we have too little left), and had they remained we might have possessed a rival to the Pagoda in Kew Gardens. Haviland's Pagoda, standing "in a labyrinthine pleasure garden," was 100 feet high and ascended by a winding stair; from the top there was a splendid view of the river. The sponsor of this project was the ingenious Peter A. Browne, who was closely identified with the Franklin Institute. Unfortunately, the roads from town to the Chinese Pagoda were usually in bad condition and it was then so far out of the city proper that patrons had to (or thought they had to) drive; consequently the enterprise was not a business success.²⁹

The early history of the pleasure garden in both England and America was a story of mixed associations, as we have seen. Inns, taverns, baths, wells or springs—any one of these might become the

²⁶ Oberholtzer, *ibid.*, II, 134.

²⁷ Scharf and Westcott, *ibid.*, II, 958; and I, 615.

²⁸ By an inadvertance the Pagoda was attributed to Strickland in *The Portrait of a Colonial City*; the architect was not Strickland but John Haviland, an error of attribution which the authors wish to note.

²⁹ The amusement features on Smith's and Windmill Islands in the Delaware belonged to a somewhat later period; baths were introduced about 1826, but the fuller development came later.

nucleus about which a later pleasure garden grew up. In New York, the infancy of the pleasure garden is, above all else, closely linked with confectionery and catering. There were no wells nor springs of any particular merit to supply the initial impetus for a future Vauxhall. When baths for the paying public first appeared, the tea-garden or some equivalent already had the start; the baths, *per se*, had to have the accompaniment of enticements to coax people to use them. Most of the well-established inns and taverns were not blessed with overmuch ground space to devote to the making of pleasure gardens, and what space there was had generally been pre-empted for quoits, ninepins, bowls or the like. Hence the many bids on the part of confectioners and pastry-cooks to increase their business in warm weather by contriving agreeable outdoor places where customers might come and eat ice cream and other cates. Ice cream played an highly significant rôle in the history of the New York pleasure garden. To these small tentative beginnings, under the aegis of ice cream and light refreshments, may be ascribed in large measure the seemingly migratory character of some of Manhattan's pleasure gardens. As these ventures grew and prospered, the proprietors added new and more varied means of entertainment for their customers; when their old quarters became too cramped, they moved to new sites but kept the old names; the pastry-cook in time became the astute, experienced showman.

There is no better instance of this evolutionary process than the story of the most enduring and celebrated of New York's several Vauxhalls that bore the very name — the Vauxhall *par excellence* over whose growth and fortunes the Delacroix family presided. In 1796, at 112 Broadway (now 120, the site of the Equitable Building), Jacques Madelaine Joseph Delacroix had a small ice-cream garden, which he had appointed with some imagination and taste. Assisted by his sons, he dispensed also various kinds of confectionery and cordials of his own making. The place and its wares became popular, and it seems to have been dignified by the name of Vauxhall (source of designation, whether Delacroix himself or the public, uncertain). Encouraged by his success, he leased the Bayard house and grounds (the area now enclosed by Grand, Broome, Crosby and Lafayette Streets), called it Vauxhall Garden and opened it to the public

May 7, 1798.³⁰ He advertised "Harmonical Music" four times a week (in addition to the ice cream, confections, drinkables and pleasant garden surroundings). "In case of uncertain weather," however, "the music will attend at his House, No. 112, Broadway." On the Fourth of July there were "Grand Fireworks in the evening, accompanied by Several Transparent Paintings executed by Mr. Snyder." He also arranged for "two neat Carriages" to "ply between his house, No. 112, Broadway, and his Garden, at one shilling each person."³¹ There were also parades and a review, followed by an oration in St. Paul's Church. "The city's expenses for the celebration . . . were \$120.00 'for 8 Cask Gun Powder' and £7.4.0. 'for the Sextons ringing the Bells'."³²

On July 4, 1799, Delacroix had another festive celebration at his Vauxhall Garden:

His beautiful garden was opened at 6 o'clock in the morning, and the colours were hoisted under a discharge of 16 guns. The 16 summer houses being the names of the Sixteen United States, each were decorated with the Emblematical Colours belonging to each State, and ornamented with Flowers and Garlands. At 5 o'clock in the evening, the sixteen colours of each Summer-house were carried, at the sound of the music, to the Grand Temple of Independence, which is 20 feet diameter, and 20 feet high . . . in the middle of which was presented, the Bust of the great Washington as large as life, and near him a Grand Gold Column, representing the Constitution, and below the said Column the Figure of Fame, 6 feet high, presenting to him with one hand a Crown of Laurel, and with the other holding a Trumpet, announcing to the public that she crowns Real Merit. Round the Pedestal were seen Military Trophies. The sixteen colours above-mentioned were placed round the Pedestal, at the sound of Martial Music—and at each colour being placed round the Bust it was announced by the firing of cannon . . .³³

³⁰ *Daily Advertiser*, May 4, 1798.

When Samuel Fraunces took over the old Bowling Green Garden (a farm property fronting on the North River that belonged to Trinity Church Corporation) in 1764, he changed the name to Vauxhall Garden, as we have already seen. Although he made the gardens an agreeable place to frequent and introduced wax-figures and other mild exhibitions as extra attractions, Fraunces was first and foremost a restaurateur and the sheet anchor on which he placed his reliance for a profitable return was food. Good food—food and drink—supplied the very backbone for a successful pleasure garden—the superstructure, so to speak, of which food was the foundation. All the successful pleasure garden proprietors were fully alive to this fact. In our own day, food weighs lighter in the balance; "hot dogs," peanuts, popcorn and soft drinks may satisfy the majority, while the demand for more and newer 'thrills' is insistent.

In 1774 Erasmus Williams succeeded Fraunces and renamed Vauxhall Mount Pleasant. In 1802 the property was turned over to the proprietors of the Cupola Iron Furnace. *New York Evening Post*, Aug. 17, 1802.

³¹ *New York Gazette and General Advertiser*, June 25, 29, 1798.

³² M. C. C. [1784-1831], II, 457.

³³ *Spectator*, July 6, 1799.

This sort of thing, with sundry variations and additions, went on until 1805, when Delacroix moved his Vauxhall to larger quarters on a plot of ground near Astor Place, between Broadway and Fourth Avenue. In the meanwhile he assiduously advertised his ice cream, his candy factory, his distillery and

informs the public in general that he has now in the store, a large assortment of Sugar Works, best quality. Likewise, cordials, syrups, sweetmeats in boxes ready for exportation, at a fixed price.³⁴

At the same time, he undertakes to do catering for all manner of private or public functions and, in 1802, offers "genuine beautifying Perfumeries, the most in vogue in Europe."³⁵ Delacroix possessed not only the showman's instinct but also the lynx-eyed Gallic "thrift" that made him keenly sensitive to the nimbleness of the sixpence and the manifold ways of coaxing it out of others' pockets into his own.

The new Vauxhall opened with a great fanfare on June 25, 1805. Delacroix informs his "Friends and the Public" that

The labour and expence of this establishment has exceeded that of any similar one in the United States, . . . [that] he has at a very considerable risk and expence, procured from Europe a choice selection of Statues and Busts, mostly from the first models of Antiquity, . . . the walks are ornamented with Pillars, Arches, Pedestals, Figures, &c. the whole of which when illuminated, cannot fail to create pleasure. A large and elevated Orchestra is erected for the Concerts, which will be in the best stile, and composed of the best performers the City can produce. Nothing has been spared which could contribute to render it a genteel [How the Federal Era loved that adjective!] and entertaining place of resort. . . .

The Busts and Statues are dispersed throughout the Garden, each having its name in gilt letters fixed upon the Pedestals . . .

The Garden will be illuminated with 2000 Lamps.

Admittance 4 s. —Doors open at 6 o'clock.³⁶

There was also a "Grand Concert" in two parts, with a large variety of fireworks during the intermission. Of course the ice cream, confectionery, cates of divers sorts and drinkables were thoroughly in evidence. Amongst other showman's qualifications, Delacroix knew how to frame his advertisements and likewise had the knack of securing favourable "write-ups."

³⁴ *Daily Advertiser*, December 7, 1799.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, December 18, 1802.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, June 25, 1805.

Before this splendiferous outburst, Delacroix had staged a balloon ascension at the old Vauxhall. In a

Patent Federal Balloon, or Vertical Aerial Coach, [patented by Phineas Parker,] Valetudinarians may experience a restoration of Health, the motion being highly approved by the faculty, and persons in health may receive the pleasure of being transported in a safe and easy Carriage 1500 feet per minute, nearly 20 miles an hour, but slower if they chuse; and have a rich variety of Landscapes, equal to any in the world, and alternate views of the Waters of the East and North Rivers, of the City of New York, and the neighbouring Villages. Eight persons take seats at a time . . .³⁷

It sounds like the patter of a quack-medicine hawker. This was one of the earliest spectacular "thrills" in which visitors (on payment of an appropriate fee) might take part themselves. It was at the old Vauxhall, too, that Delacroix introduced another new feature in New York pleasure-garden entertainment—an equestrian performer.

Mr. Robertson, the equestrian performer, has erected a temporary circus at Delacroix's Vauxhall Garden, and announces his first exhibition in it on Sept. 21, his feats being in the same stile as at Astley's in London.³⁸

At times, admission to Vauxhall seems to have been free; visitors were expected to spend their money after they got inside. "Dead-heads" who didn't spend their money for refreshments but came only to look at the show apparently became a source of anxiety to Delacroix; in 1803 he explains in an advertisement his reasons for thereafter making a regular charge:

1st [when free], Many persons with the only intent of walking in the garden, without any benefit to the house. 2nd. All persons genteely dressed had free right to enter, many persons answering that description were not genteel in character, therefore not suited to the chief part of the company. . . . 3d. No public place of resort can be supported in a genteel and expensive style when every person has an indistinct right of entrance. 4th. The receipts were not adequate to the expenses and support of the place. . . . All persons entering the garden will take a ticket for two shillings, which entitles them to a glass of any refreshment. . . . the entrance on Sunday will remain as heretofore—Free.³⁹

Fêtes, spectacles, exhibitions, concerts, pageants, pantomimes, farces, musical comedies and novel "thrills" of one sort or another moved on in constant procession at Vauxhall and drew a large (and, of course, profitable) attendance. Occasionally the Garden was the scene of public functions and Lafayette was taken there in 1824

³⁷ *Daily Advertiser*, July 2, 1800.

³⁸ *New York Gazette and General Advertiser*, Sept. 18, 1802.

³⁹ *Daily Advertiser*, April 28, 1803.

because Vauxhall was one of the "sights" of the town. Eventually, about 1830, a decline set in and although the place was kept going for some years longer, the march of the city northward at last swallowed it up and the site was built over.

Delacroix's chief rival in the pleasure-garden business was Joseph Corré, another of the confectioner-pastry-cook tribe, very nearly as capable and enterprising as Delacroix himself. Corré opened the Columbian Garden, near the junction of State and Pearl Streets, in May, 1798. In 1800 he also opened the Mount Vernon Garden, one of whose attractions was a summer theatre. Then followed an acrimonious controversy between Delacroix and Corré because the latter had presumed to offer some attractions on the same evenings of the week which Delacroix had always reserved for his own special features. The rivalry between the two never ceased. However, there seems to have been room for both of them and, between them, they managed to offer a wide diversity of enticements so that the public really benefitted by the variety to choose from.

Besides the four or five Vauxhalls, the two or three Ranelaghs, Corré's two gardens, and the successive White's Conduit Houses, there were the Washington Garden, Mount Pitt Garden, Richmond Hill Garden, the New York Garden, Niblo's Garden and others. The history of one, so far as general character is concerned, is virtually the history of all. Some, it is true, inclined more to theatrical production, others to exhibitions and spectacles, but all of them fulfilled the same general function towards the public. They were all legitimate ancestors of the Coney Islands of to-day. About the last of these places to be opened was Castle Garden which had a long and eventful career. Even when it first ceased to be Castle Clinton and was turned over to the mercies of the City, it became a bone of contention. Some were for tearing it down at once; others were for keeping it and suggested a variety of appropriate uses. It was the subject of bitter fights amongst newspaper correspondents and much printers' ink was shed. In an editorial of July 12, 1823, the *New York Evening Post* deplores the idea of demolition and suggests the building might be converted into public baths. For in that case:

"Bathing might easily be rendered a fashionable as well as healthy amusement."

Philadelphia

HAROLD DONALDSON EBERLEIN
CORTLANDT VAN DYKE HUBBARD