

# A Comprehensive Plan for Toronto.

BY B. E. WALKER.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club,—I came back to Toronto on Thursday last and one of the first telephone calls I received was from a gentleman I had always regarded as a great personal friend. But I got very doubtful when I received his message. He wanted me to address the Canadian Club on Monday or Tuesday evening. When I offered some protest he argued that he felt I could easily say again what had been said before. I didn't have quite such a small idea of the capacity of the Canadian Club, but I have taken him at his word. I really have had no time for preparation and must ask you to bear with me if I read parts of the little I have to say.

Before we can hope to have any plan for the benefit of the city realized we must secure the interest of the young men. They are looking back. We are told that your young men shall see visions and your old men dream dreams. They must not, like Shakespeare's Falstaff, dabble in green fields and think little about the future. This trust in

the future is the greatest impetus to any community. The young men must bear the greater responsibility for they not only look forward to the future but they inherit it.

This trust in the future is one of the essential elements in the successful life of a new country. Yet temporary and ugly conditions are put up with which would never be tolerated in anything but a new country. In the old world men are mainly interested in the thing which they are to enjoy immediately and hence they would not submit to the ugliness of the temporary expedients with which we readily bear. The old world wouldn't put up with what we stand in Toronto. In Mr. Hyne's views we have seen to-night much of what can be—and has been—accomplished. If he had gone over the whole of Europe, city after city, he could have shown you further everywhere beautiful parks completed and perfected. Compare them with the ugliness of Toronto. There are many of these uglinesses. There are the trolley poles, hideous, antique and years out of date, disfiguring our streets. There are the telephone poles—at least I thought so until my friend Mr. Dunstan, whom I see here to-night—convinced me that there were no telephone poles, so they must be telegraph and fire-alarm poles. But I know we could not take a picture of any of the Bank of Commerce buildings without including these unsightly relics of our ugliness. Then there are our wharves and waterfronts, ghastly and disgraceful; our wretched system of street signs and, worse still, our bill boards. It is a pleasure to visit Berlin where no bill boards are allowed. They have what they call circular drums there.

Then there is also the ugliness of the undecorated interiors of our public buildings. Only Canada—and perhaps some new portions of the western United States—would put up with what we have put up with. Pray do not imagine that I do not regard as a virtue our readiness to accept the things which are possible, ugly though they be, until such time as we are able to accomplish better things. It is not always wiser to go without electric lights because we won't have an imperfect system. But the danger lies in becoming contented with temporary conditions. We may bear them for a time, but our faces should be set absolutely against them. We are wealthy and comfortable. Surely it is time for improvement.

In domestic architecture we are in the van. The interiors of our homes, the furniture, the pictures and the gardens evidence our taste and culture. All that man has immediately around him and for which he has immediate responsibility—none have advanced more in the last fifteen or twenty years than us. It is a curious anomaly that all our surroundings, not so immediately annexed to us as our back yards, shame us in every respect as citizens.

Some one may say this is not fair. We have made great improvements in civic matters, in pavements, etc. Of course, and every part

of Canada has improved. The question before us—and we should not seek to escape from it—is, do we in any sense measure with the other cities in the world with which Toronto naturally compares itself? I sometimes question whether we have any civic pride. As long as a question like this, of universal interest, fails to produce our enthusiastic interest and stir up our newspapers, we have it. We are comfortably interested in ourselves. And because of our indifference we do not improve our taste in public matters as we do in domestic matters.

We are ready to shift responsibility on the mayor and aldermen. But we cannot expect the mayor and aldermen to act without a mandate from the people. They will not act in advance of public opinion. This is not an excuse. We all know the condition for ourselves and we are all to blame. If we know that civic improvement ought to be made and don't give the mandate to the council then we must blame ourselves.

Thus far we have been looking at the matter from a purely ethical and aesthetic standpoint; let us view it from a practical point of view. And, after all, are not ethical and aesthetical considerations really practical considerations? We have been interested and edified by the examples of achievement in Europe and America which Mr. Hynes has presented. There is a wonderful and commendable advancement going on everywhere. All the important cities in North America are seeking to do something to beautify and benefit themselves.

Think of what London has done in the matter of parks since the beginning of the century. Kensington Gardens have developed from a district once crowded with four and five storey houses. What would it have meant to London not to have had Kensington and to have had to build new throats for her traffic? Without these, with all her wealth, London would be bankrupt. Think of what Napoleon did for Paris in adding to its charm and beauty; think of Deer Park in the heart of Berlin and the trees stretching along for miles and miles into the country; think of Hamburg and, in fact, all the German cities; go to Scotland and view Glasgow and Edinburgh. Everywhere the lesson is taught. We must develop industrial parks and means of conveyance different from the zig-zag plan of the present time. All who have confidence in the future of this city, who are loyal to Toronto, realize that we must have some such system of parks and some such system of radial roads.

It has its practical—its material—advantages. The people who move will move to nearly outside districts. The value of property in the outside places will increase. That is an ordinary real estate axiom. And we are safe in saying that two prime requisites of great cities and parks and wide thoroughfares for traffic. We cannot escape the fact that in Toronto a great park system must very soon be created. We cannot escape the fact that the transportation of our people and goods in our city, built as it is on the gridiron plan, must very soon be radi-

cally improved. Every year of delay in action must bring sharper and sharper punishment for our folly.

The scheme proposed is not the vagarie of some people who want to see the city beautified, but the awakening of the conscience of Toronto. The plan itself is the result of the labor of many gentlemen and the expenditure of money by a few citizens, no one of whom, so far as I am aware, has any axe to grind. They are very sincere. No more unselfish labor was ever undertaken for the general good of Toronto. Everybody who could help was invited to give criticism. Mr. Urquhart, then mayor, Mr. Jennings, the Toronto Street Railway were all asked to assist. The plan may have defects, it may be perfect or imperfect—that is not now the material thing. The question is: Does it not in some real sense embody the impera-needs of our city? I was glad to read in an evening paper that Mr. Rust said that radial roads were not a new idea and that they were entitled to consideration. Evidence as to the cost of the work should certainly be obtained. It may cost twenty millions or it may not. The primary question is: Are the plans suitable? Are they too ambitious or are they not ambitious enough? Compared with the plans carried out in the United States ours seems a humble plan. And we can afford to do anything any 300,000 people in the world can afford to do.

The Englishmen are profuse in their expressions of admiration for Canadians, Toronto and its people particularly. Nothing astonished them more than the interior of our houses. We are universally well-dressed. There are not 300,000 people better off in the world. We are as intelligent as any—though we don't always show that—and we are quite as well able as any to have the surroundings which it is good for us to have.

There is something irritating about the position so many take when twenty millions is mentioned as the cost, that that disposes of it. If a man suddenly found himself on King Street without clothes, he wouldn't take long to seek shelter and array himself in habiliments. He would not dispute very keenly what it cost; he must have the clothing. We laugh, but our civic position is very similar to that of the man. We want to clothe Toronto.

Do not let us have misapprehensions as to this project. Suppose, after analysis, the plan submitted is declared to be a suitable one. We can afford it if we desire it. We can make it cost as little or as much each year as we choose. If the present plan is defective abridge it or enlarge it just as is found best. See what \$50,000 is doing to Ottawa! It can be done as fast or as slow as we desire.

While not so closely interdependent the enlarging of our streets should have immediate attention. York Street should be widened and money made for everybody with property and interests there. Does anybody doubt but that the widening of York Street, the expropriation

of the property on each side and its re-sale can be accomplished without cost to the city. Money would be made in the transaction. Clearly, too, the cost of the radials will be infinitely less than that of any other system of bringing about ease in transportation. It will doubtless cost a lot of money, but we are not going to do it in one fell swoop. It will be spread over a number of years.

As to the machinery for carrying out such a plan. We sometimes call ourselves more democratic than the United States and much opposition may be evidenced to the suggestion of a commission. The name is like a red rag to many. And yet to say that it should be governed by the whole city would be an insult to Toronto. The mayor and aldermen wouldn't pretend that they had the time. My personal opinion is that the city should seek legislation approving of the plan generally and setting forth how a commission is to be created to carry it out. The commission could be appointed by the Legislative Assembly partly to be elected by the people. In any event a commission will give continuity of purpose and a body that will keep its own counsel.

We must stir up our civic representatives to action. Toronto should issue a mandate to the men at the city hall that they cannot be elected at all except on that basis. And I would like to see the plan approved by the Legislature in such a way that no one but the commission could alter it. A model of the plan should be installed on the rotunda of the city hall, and it should be printed on every directory and every map of Toronto. We would soon find the body of public opinion in favor of the work going on faster.

As to the financial aspect I say frankly that I haven't any idea what the cost will be. But it is conceded by municipal experts, both in this country and in England, that the cost of public improvements from which the future is to benefit most largely should be spread over the generations to come. But we can just as well pay this in forty years as longer. A certain portion of the money could be raised out of the taxation each year, that portion of the cost which the present generation has decided to bear. We all spend uselessly much that could be secured in this simple way. The Government gave annuities for \$30,000 for thirty years for the university. Some such assistance might well be secured, and capital also secured from the sum of money to be raised over succeeding years. This should be spent through the commission, wisely spent. It would satisfy all and prove not a matter of money, but a matter of time.

Canada has grown enormously in wealth. Individual progress has been marked—more than, I am sorry to say, the progress of Dominion, Provincial and municipal governments. We are discussing the bearing of a share our indebtedness to the British Empire, we haven't failed to assist in her wars, and we talk—in our own funny way—of doing something towards Imperial defence. Toronto is the second largest city of

our country; it is the largest of English speaking people. It is the educational centre. We want to show the Briton abroad what our material civilization amounts to.

Have we no national or civic pride? Bye-and-bye, perhaps, this will be evidenced, but not now. We do not always want to remain a wooden backwoods place with narrow provincial ideas. We aim to be cosmopolitan, to have a larger outlook. Winnipeg is a dangerous rival in the west. She does things earlier in her day than we did in ours. If Canada is to be a nation and the twentieth century belongs to us, then we must do our part—and do it well.

I am thankful to have the opportunity of speaking a word to your club. It has, I believe, done more than any other organization in Canada to develop our national pride. And in closing I appeal to your club to lend its powerful assistance to the bringing about of Toronto's reasonable beauties and the early coming of a time when the scorn of our ugly streets shall have passed away.