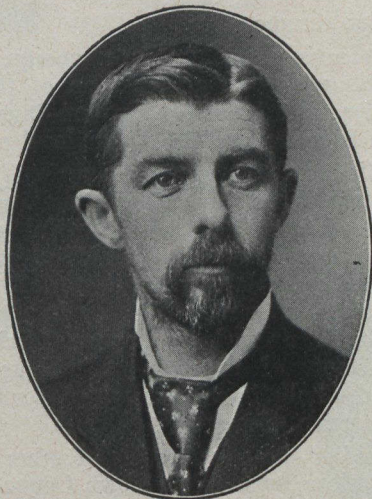


The Civic Improvement Movement in Ontario

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It is very evident to those who travel, or even to those who merely read the papers, that a strong movement has set in on this continent for civic and rural improvement. Just what it may result in, it is impossible to say at present; but it is safe to predict the movement is going to have a marked effect on the appearance and character of our country generally.

The civic improvement movement has been the outcome of a growing appreciation of art, and a desire for real beauty, which has resulted from the prosperity of the times and the tendency to travel. Its origin might, no doubt, be traced to Europe, where many of the towns and cities have become centres of attraction for American tourists. From the old land we have learned much and have still much to learn. European travellers always speak with delight of the architectural and landscape beauties of Paris, Brussels, Vienna, and Edinburgh. Just when and where the civic improvement movement first made its appearance here cannot be stated definitely, but like many other movements, some good, and others not so good, its effects were first seen in the country to the south of us. The town of Stockbridge, Mass., claims the honor of having, nearly fifty years ago, the first organization whose object was the preservation of natural beauties and the general improvement of the village surroundings. In later years many organizations having similar aims have been formed in various parts of the country, but the one which has been the most active in giving a national impetus to the civic improvement has been the American Civic Association. This association was formed in 1904, by the union of two associations which had for years been working along somewhat the same lines, viz., "The American Park and Outdoor Art Association," and "The American League for Civic Improvement". The new organization was said at the time to represent four hundred and eighty local improvement organizations.

Mr. J. Horace McFarland, whom many of us had the pleasure of hearing at some of our local society meetings last spring, has been president of the new association since its formation, and he has by judicious use of the press kept the work of the association prominently before the people of the whole continent. There are at present twenty-two members of the American Civic As-

sociations in Canada. These are scattered here and there from Halifax to Calgary. In this connection, I may say that I think it would pay all of our Canadian Horticultural Societies to get in as close touch as possible with this progressive national association, and make the work, at least, if not the organization, international in character. Our Superintendent, Mr. E. Lockie Wilson, and I expect to attend the annual meeting of the American Civic Association to be held in Pittsburg, Pa., next week, and we hope to get many pointers that may help us in furthering the work in this country.

The organization of our Provincial Horticultural Association three years ago was in itself a result of the influence of the American Association formed a year or two previous. For it was felt that we should have a Canadian organization with similar unselfish aims.

Attending this convention, we have delegates from a large number of the sixty-six local Horticultural Societies already formed in this Province,—all interested in promoting local civic and rural improvement. It should be the duty, therefore, of this Association to take the lead in assisting, directing and promoting such movements in all parts of the country. We have a big field for operations, and a splendid work to do.

The Aim and Object of the Movement.

The aim of the civic improvement movement, put in a nutshell, is for "A better and more beautiful America." The scope of this improvement may be inferred from an enumeration of the departments of work undertaken by the American Civic Association. These are fifteen in number, with a Vice-President at the head of each department, and include:—Arts and Crafts, Women's Outdoor Art League, Children's Gardens, School Extension, City Making, Factory Betterment, Libraries, Outdoor Art, Parks and Reservations, Public Nuisances, Public Recreation, Railroad Improvements, Rural Improvement, Social Settlement, and the Press.

One of the strong features of the work of the American Civic Association has been its use of the press in educating public sentiment and spreading abroad information regarding what has been accomplished in different places and what may be done in others.

In Ontario, we need not at present undertake so many kinds of work, but I think it would be well for us to begin at once to concentrate our efforts on a few lines which need most attention at present. To this end, I would suggest that our association appoint committees or departments this year to deal with such problems as:

1. The Improvement of Home Surroundings.
2. The Improvement of School Grounds.
3. Care and Management of Streets and Boulevards.
4. Establishment of Parks and Playgrounds.
5. Abatement of Public Nuisances.
6. Promoting Rural Improvement.
7. The Press.

Many others might be added, but this would make a good beginning. If the right person were put at the head of each committee and work was begun at once, this association would make itself a power for good in the country, and we should have valuable reports from such at our next meeting.

As a matter of encouragement to those who may be looking for more rapid changes, it may be well to call attention to the steady and even rapid progress that is being made in many parts of the Province. There have been a number of agencies contributing to this progress which may be used to still greater purpose in the future:

1. The more general use of cement in the making of pavements and sidewalks has had a marked effect on