

## St. Thomas the Flower City

The holding of the twelfth annual show of the American Gladiolus Society this year in St. Thomas was not only a compliment to Canada but a decided recognition of the enterprise of the local horticultural society which is composed of practically all the home owners and tenants in this little Ontario city. Starting with nothing but enthusiasm the St. Thomas Horticultural Society, under the genial leadership of Dr. Bennett has developed into an organization of international renown. The society, with the splendid successes of its exhibits at the best shows of Canada and the United States, cannot help but be a continuous advertisement of the right kind for the city and district. The value of such advertisement is immeasurable. As the different flowers come into season, which in St. Thomas means the

greater part of the year, the gardens and streets are one mass of bloom and perfume. This is bound to have an energizing influence on the inhabitants, such as cannot be secured by any other means, for who is so devoid of the sense of beauty as not to feel the better for a glimpse of nature at its best? We like to think that the citizens of Canada are not all material in their make-up; that they have a spiritual and an aesthetic side which only requires a little encouragement, such as they are giving in St. Thomas, to bring it out.

What has been done in St. Thomas to better the lives of the people can be done in every other community in Canada. The cost is small. It is surprising how small the amount the council is called upon to pay, but the result is great. It has enabled the citizens to find their civic soul and pride.

## The Montreal Tramways System

In our January issue we published an article on the Montreal Tramways System which brought in many inquiries because of the uniqueness of the organization in so far as it affects the public, particularly in relation to service and protection. The tramways system of the commercial metropolis, while administered by a private company, is under the direct supervision of a commission appointed by the Provincial Government. This seeming contradiction of terms relating to administration may be explained as follows: The Montreal Tramways Company, which controls the huge tramways system of the metropolitan district is, by contract with the city, responsible for both its policy and administration to the above commission, from which body appeal can only be made to the Public Utilities Commission of the province. So well has the arrangement worked out that it can truly be said that the City of Montreal has in its tramways system all the benefits but none of the defects of public ownership. And last years financial report bears out the statement.

The great difficulty in the administration of public utilities, whether public or private owned, is to define and work out a balance between service and profit. Public utilities are established primarily to give public service; when owned by private interests the administration expects to secure profits according to the service given to the public; when publicly owned a public utility in the past was not expected to make profits. But latterly a feeling has grown that however wide its range of usefulness any utility, such as a tramway, only benefits a limited number at the expense of the community as a whole, consequently provision should be made to ensure not only sufficient profit to cover any contingency, and to allow for a sinking fund, but enough to pay taxes. Much of the change in sentiment towards service vs. profit-making has been brought about by so many public owned utilities—administered for service only—becoming a burden on the rates. In the Montreal tramways system the balance between service and profits leans slightly in favor of service, in spite of the fact that it is privately

owned. This is because of the well-defined conditions of the contract, conditions which it is the duty of the commission to see are fully carried out, not only to the letter, but in the spirit.

At first sight it would appear that such a system of tramway administration was unworkable, and probably in the hands of small men it would be unworkable, but with the executives of the company and the three commissioners, being all keen business men, with only one desire to make good, the relations between the two bodies are cordial, with the result that the city and district of Montreal has one of the most up-to-date and best administered tramway systems in the world.

### THE RIGHT PERSONNEL FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCILS.

We note, with pleasure, that a number of the daily newspapers of the larger cities are actually taking cognisance of civic government as a real factor in the development of the nation, even though they do it usually in the form of carping criticism against the personnel. In an otherwise excellent editorial on the subject of municipal government printed elsewhere in this issue, the Montreal "Gazette" says: "Populations grow so suddenly, so tragically, in great centres that men of small calibre have been overwhelmed in the very security of civic office to which they were appointed, not because of merit but because of a penal vote." While there is no doubt about the apathy of the general public towards municipal government and though a few of the members of the municipal councils of Canada may be men of the "small calibre" so sneeringly spoken of in the above quotation, the personnel of the average council of to-day is decidedly above the average standard of citizenship, at least so far as public responsibility is concerned. While there is room in every council for men of "large calibre" it is the men of average intelligence, imbued with the right public spirit, that make the best mayors and aldermen because they know better the real sentiments of the people who elected them.