

Public Parks and Playgrounds.

In "Town Planning and Conservation of Life," Mr. Thomas Adams takes up the very important subject of Public Parks and Playgrounds in Cities in a way that cannot help but give food for thought to the municipal administrator. The article is reproduced in this issue. Mr. Adams, in his plea for more playgrounds, says that, "Whatever efforts we may make to prevent men from abusing themselves and their time in the saloon will fail unless we provide the means for them to find healthy recreation." This statement is too true, as those who have studied sociology can testify. Our reformers are so busy in the destroying of the means of evil—the saloon, the brothel, the slum—that they forget that in such destruction, without building up something equally attractive to take its place, they are simply spreading the evil. It has been well said that the saloon is the poor man's meeting place. He has no other means. The counter-attraction that the reformer offers is often the basement of a church or school, usually with bare walls. Cold comfort for a working man looking for recreation and an opportunity to meet his fellow workers in a social way. The example of a real counter-attraction to the saloon has been set by the Town Council of Renfrew (Ont.) in providing a public baseball diamond, tennis

tourts, swimming pools for both sexes, etc., and a meeting place for indoor games in the winter, though other municipalities are going good work in providing the citizens with the means of recreation.

Another reason that Mr. Adams gives for more playgrounds, particularly for children, is the rapidly increasing motor traffic that for a long time has made the roads and streets unsafe, if not impossible, for children to play in. Street accidents to children from automobiles are increasing each year in every urban centre, and will keep on increasing unless better playground provision is made. Every accident is an economic loss to the community, so that the providing of playgrounds, as a prevention against accidents, is an economic necessity, and not "fool idealism," as some one once put it. It seems absurd in a country of great land areas, that the acreage given to parks and playgrounds should be so small. Montreal, for instance, has one acre for 769 persons, and many of our smaller municipalities have not even one foot of land set aside for parks or playgrounds. The urban life of Canada is growing rapidly, so that there is a special responsibility laid on our municipal councils to provide land right now, not only for the recreation of the present, but for future generations of citizens.

Ugliness in Small Town Buildings.

The discussion that is taking place regarding the ugliness or otherwise of the buildings in Canadian villages and small towns is an indication that the citizens are beginning to take an interest in the "town beautiful." The Toronto Globe, in commenting on the subject, while maintaining that there was plenty of room for improvement, resents the unfavourable comparison with the villages of the Old Country, and picks out the mining villages of the North of England and South of Scotland as examples of ugliness. There is much to be said in favour of the Globe's stand. It is not a good policy for those who would instil a love of the beautiful into Canadian small town life to always set up English examples to follow, for every country has its own style and standard of architectural beauty; while it is true that the English villages are really beautiful, Canada, because of the extremes in heat and cold, must necessarily have her own system of architecture. But this does not mean that the box-like dwellings—without any attempt at design or even paint—that are so prevalent in most of the small towns, can really represent the artistic spirit of Canada. They do not. These dwellings are just the manifestations of men desirous of having homes of their own, and not having the means to engage architects, they have built, often with their own hands, as they knew best. They have had no time to study design—but they have built dwelling places for

themselves and their families. They have taken the first step to true independence. Now that Canada has got to the stage of desiring beauty in her home life, these citizens of small towns and villages will rise to the occasion and beautify their homes, but they will do it in their own time and in their own way—with a little diplomatic guidance. But one thing the Canadians will not stand for, and that is the beauty of other countries thrust down their throats. They insist on developing themselves by themselves.

MUNICIPAL PLAYGROUNDS.

The Town Council of Renfrew, Ont., have given practical evidence of their sense of responsibility as the elected leaders of the community in the issuance of ten-year debentures for the purpose of providing recreation for the citizens. The local race track and fair ground is to be divided into a baseball diamond, a lawn tennis court, a bowling green, and a children's playground, while the basement of the fire hall is to be converted into a swimming pool for both sexes. Such an expenditure is an excellent and wise investment for the community and infinitely better than the system followed in too many communities of depending on public subscriptions. Public playgrounds are just as essential to the health of the community as proper drainage, and should be as much a public charge.