

PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS IN CITIES.

THOMAS ADAMS.

Probably there never was a time when it was as important as it is at present to develop outdoor recreation and to improve the park areas and playgrounds of our cities.

In proportion as we close the saloon we must open and extend the park; as we shorten the hours of labour and extend manufacturing, we must provide facilities for healthy, outdoor recreation; as we enlarge our cities we must enlarge their lungs. In proportion as we extend the uses of the automobile and develop good roads we must have playgrounds to enable children to play in safety.

With regard to the first matter it will ever be true that constructive temperance reform is to be found only in healthy means of recreation and social intercourse. 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. The greatest constructive social reformers in England have found from long experience that good housing conditions and recreation facilities were the only permanent antidotes to intemperance. Mr. George Cadbury at Bournville, Mrs. Barnett at Hampstead, and others, have given valuable demonstrations of that fact. There is also need for healthy occupation for the leisure time of the workers as a means of maintaining industrial efficiency.

Employers and employees are not quite agreed as to whether the same production can be secured with an eight-hour as with a nine-hour day. Does it not partly depend on how the leisure time of the worker is occupied? Those captains of industry who have succeeded in making the shorter working day profitable to themselves did it by providing their workpeople with opportunities for recreation and education. A man may use his spare time to make himself either a better or a worse instrument of production. Owing to the nervous strain caused by modern industrial methods, it is almost necessary to have shorter hours than in the past, but if they are to be obtained without loss of production we must see to it that the time outside of the working hours is profitably used. Both in Britain and the United States hundreds of millions of dollars were spent in building model houses and laying out recreation grounds as a means of increasing output of munitions during the war.

Cities Will Continue to Grow.

Whatever we in Canada may do to increase our agricultural population we are going to have growing cities. As these cities grow and a larger proportion of our people become urbanized, the health and morals of our citizens need not deteriorate if our housing and recreation facilities are developed in a proper degree. Deterioration is now taking place, and is due in a large measure to the absence of these facilities in our industrial areas.

The motor car is only in its infancy, but even now our streets are more dangerous than our railways. Apart from danger to life from accident, the dusty roads are not healthy place for children to play on, and, as they are better paved and fast traffic increases, they will become greater danger traps for our children.

We want bigger ideas about the provision we should make for parks and playgrounds.

In city development there are several sound reasons to justify the acquisition of park lands at an early stage of building development, not the least of which is their direct effect upon the value of city property, and, therefore, their indirect influence upon the city's income from the taxation of land. It has been found in the case of Madison, Wisconsin, that new parks not only meet all charges, but, by reason of the increased value of adjoining property, paid into the city treasury not less than \$10,000 a year in increased taxes. A similar state of affairs exists in New York, where the amount collected (in taxes) in twenty-five years on the property of the three wards (contiguous to Central Park) over and above the ordinary increase in the taxable value of the real estate in the rest of the city, was \$65,000,000, or about \$21,000,000 more than the aggregate expense attending and following the establishment of the park until 1914. In other words in addition to acquiring lands valued at \$20,000,000, the city of New York has made \$21,000,000 in cash out of this transaction. (The original price paid for the 840 acres forming Central Park was \$6,664,500.)

Baltimore has nearly fifty parks, with a total area of 2,402 acres, for which the city has paid a direct cost of only about \$10,000. The cost has been met out of the city's percentage of the gross receipts of the street railway company.

Every city should have its Park Board. In Canada, out of 94 cities to whom inquiries were addressed, 54 had a Park Board or Commissioner.

Parks Areas in Canada.

To find out how we stand in Canada as regards park areas, let us compare 9 of our cities with several cities in the United States and in Europe. We will find that in spite of our great abundance of land we have room for improvement. Montreal falls below the standard of New York and London, while Vancouver and Edmonton compare favourably with Washington in the acreage of park space available per capita.

The following table gives the percentage of total area of 9 Canadian cities devoted to parks and the population per acre of park:—

City.	Percentage of area in parks.	Acreage of park per capita
Vancouver	13.6	1 acre to 69.3 persons
Halifax	8.2	" 140.9 "
Hamilton	7.7	" 200.3 "
Toronto	7.3	" 247.8 "
Winnipeg	4.1	" 314 "
Ottawa	3.7	" 514.3 "
Edmonton	3.5	" 54.8 "
Montreal	3.2	" 773.8 "
Regina	3	" 155.6 "

In the United States the percentages are as follows in nine cities:—

City.	Percentage of area in parks.	Acreage of park per capita
Washington	14	1 acre to 69 persons
Boston	13	" 207 "
Baltimore	12	" 241 "
Rochester	11	" 133 "
St. Louis	7	" 266 "
Philadelphia	6	" 322 "
Kansas City	5	" 144 "
New York	4.1	" 689 "
Chicago	4	" 545 "

In Europe, Paris has the largest park area, having 26 per cent in parks, or 1 acre to every 554 persons. Dusseldorf, Germany, has 10 per cent in parks, or one acre to every 149 persons, and London County has 9 per cent in parks, or 1 acre to 677 persons. The United States cities show up the best, but Edmonton has the largest area per capita, while Vancouver shows the best results in Canada and in the United States, both per capita and in respect of the percentage of its area. Ottawa, in spite of its very fine parks, is low in the list, but it has a large park area outside the city boundaries, although other cities have the same.

Of the small towns, Truro, N.S. has one acre to every 7.5 persons and is superior to every other city or town, while St. Hyacinthe has only one acre to every 4,076 persons.

More ample facilities should be made in our parks for recreation, and more encouragement should be given to athletics.

We have splendid opportunities to develop a public golf course and only a little effort is needed to provide what would be a great public boon. We need to spend some of our money in getting utility as well as beauty.

Encourage Athletics.

Greater use should be made of Exhibition grounds to encourage athletics—to develop the energies and physical fitness of our people. If public money was used for this purpose it would be as beneficial as the money spent in improving farm stock.

(Continued on Page 348.)