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Engineers—And

Town Planning

CHRISTOPHER J. YORATH, A. M. Inst. C. E. (Eng.)
City Commissioner, Saskatoon, Sask.

Read at the Convention of the U. C. M., see pages to

Aristotle is said to have defined a City as "a place where men live a common life for a noble end", which implies an end or aim.

There can be no question that although the end is not a single one, there has been in the building of every City some object in view, some aim towards which those who have been responsible for its foundation and growth have consciously, or unconsciously, been aiming.

Unfortunately in the majority of cases the aim has been an unconscious one, with the result that cities have grown up in a haphazard manner, and many a beautiful spot turned into an ugly accumulation of bricks and mortar.

Great Britain by the passing of the Town Planning Act of 1909 took the first step towards the undoing of mistakes of centuries, and hopes by planning the future growth of existing and new Cities, to avoid the enormous expense occasioned through the lack of planning.

Until recent years it was thought that the checkboard system of planning was all that could be desired, but anyone who has studied the subject of town planning will realize at once that it is failure, and has necessitated, even in what are known as the New World Cities, large expenditures to rectify some of its many defects. How can a system be called a plan which does not take into consideration local characteristics such as the undulation of the ground, a winding river, and thickly wooded spots?

If Great Britain realizes the necessity of passing a Town Planning Act, surely such an Act would be of infinitely more use to Canada, which at present has only a population of about eight millions, or slightly more than that of London, while its area is $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions square miles compared to 112,000 square miles comprising Great Britain.

A careful study of what wise town planning, the liberal provision of attractive amenities can do, and has done for some of the cities of Europe, will convince the greatest anti-town planner of the wisdom of looking well ahead.

It invariably happens that town planning is not thought of, or put into operation until a certain amount of development has taken place. In Great Britain this does not interfere to any great extent with the planning for the future, as the undeveloped land is not staked out into lots and held by numerous land holders, but is usually in possession of a few; whereas in Canada, owing to the checkboard system, and the selling of outlying plots far in advance of the time when the land is ripe for development, the proper planning of the future is rendered far more difficult, and probably in many cases the difficulties will be so great as likely to make a scheme impracticable without special legislation.

A city attractive by its beauty, by its artistic symmetry and design, and by the convenience which it offers, will gain a reputation and an individuality, of which not only its Council and its landowners, but also its citizens, may be proud.

What then should be the aim of every City? and to answer that question we are at once thrown back upon