

PERMANENT ART COMMISSIONS.

It will be observed that the address of the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, part of which was reprinted in our last issue entered very seriously, and at greater length than in any other part of his remarks, into the question of the improvement of London. The President of the Society of Architects, whose address is reported in the English architectural journals, placed equal weight upon this question. The last meetings of the Architectural League of America and of the American Institute of Architects had papers upon the subject; and the policy of planning improvements to Washington was the theme of Mr. Roosevelt's remarks at the Institute dinner. The annual meeting of the Ontario Association of Architects last year had, in the same manner, two important papers upon the subject of city improving, and a committee formed by that body has since made a plan for The Toronto Guild of Civic Art which will now become the property of the Guild and it is hoped will before long be the property and working plan of the city of Toronto. There is nothing solitary about this effort. However original may have been the impulse that led to it, the effort is only part of a general movement on this continent. We have heard a great deal of the Cleveland Architectural Club's work in accomplishing the celebrated "group plan"; and, under whatever influence, other cities are deep in the same work—Buffalo, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Chicago, not to speak of Boston and New York which have got past the stage of spasmodic effort and entered to some extent upon the sort of methodical process which it is the purpose of this article to advocate.

If there is one thing of which we can speak confidently as a contribution of our own century to the history of art, it is this—the popular desire to beautify cities. Earlier generations built beautiful buildings or groups of buildings, and made spaces for beauty here and there. Nobles and kings had wealth and power that enabled them to make beauty conspicuous in a city, but the city itself was not the object of their effort. Now it is different. As the individual lessens and the community grows more conscious of its existence as a whole, we are not satisfied with perfection in buildings here and there and squalor between, but want the whole town to be as much as possible a pleasant place to live in.

This first took the form of sanitation, to which we are now so accustomed that we hardly realize it to have been the work of the last century.

We read of London gentlemen, in the time of the Stuarts and later, being dressed in silk and velvet trimmed with lace, and we look at our own sober tweeds and think the world is not what it was. That is true but in another way. The gentlemen in silk and lace walked close to the walls of the houses as they passed along the street, for fear of being splashed, by a passing horseman, with the liquid mud of the roadway. We are practically unacquainted with mud. We have a little dust and grumble much about it; but our grumbling cannot compare with that of Charles II, who declined to drive to the city because the wheels of his coach stirred up such a stench from the roadway. If this was the condition of main avenues, the site of palaces and great churches, what must have been the state of by-ways and alleys where, as Macaulay has

said, "men died as fast then in the towns of England as they do now on the coast of Guinea."

All this—after centuries of indifference to it, founded on ignorance—disappeared under the influence of advancing science; and London's 300 miles of streets have, by the force of one impulse, been all drained, paved, and piped for gas and water.

Our generation has been born to this state of affairs and expects nothing less, but, just like our forefathers before the days of sanitation, we have expected nothing more. That anything at all resembling the immense sums that have been spent in making cities comfortable to live in should be spent in making them beautiful startles us. Events however are familiarizing us with the idea. It is not so strange to the public mind as it was a few years ago. But it has not yet become part of the matter of municipal politics. There must have been something of the same halting start in the beginnings of sanitation. But, though the expense of draining a whole city or laying on water to every house must have at first appalled, the conviction of its necessity soon found a method for its accomplishment.

It is method we want in the matter of beautifying cities. Conviction is gaining strength continually but we have no method. It seems to have been generally supposed that this was a matter for individual effort; that those who like beauty should promote its attainment and procure the means for it. That did very well to start with; when the state of the public mind in regard to the matter was not known; but the state of the public mind is quite clear now. There are not only a number of societies in the cities formed to promote "civic art"—we have a name for it now—but bodies formed for other purposes altogether send delegates to the civic art societies and pass resolutions at their own business meetings in support of projects for beautifying their town. The public in general is thoroughly aroused upon the subject, and all those who stand in the place of guides and guardians for the public back up the movement as a step essential to advance.

Then, if we all want to have our cities add to their other comforts the supreme comfort of beauty, why should we not get on with the work? It only wants method. For the mere want of method the present generation may go on all its life, wanting and not having; while satisfaction—not all at once perhaps but continually increasing—is within its reach for the expenditure of a moderate sum per annum.

The amount per annum to be spent may in time perhaps be settled as bearing some fixed relation to the rate of taxation for general purposes, but at first it will be easier to settle upon a round sum.

This has been done for the city of Ottawa by the Dominion Government, and the progress that is made in the beautification of the capital by means of a yearly grant may be taken as an object lesson for the other cities of the Dominion. For Ottawa \$60,000 per annum was considered a proper amount. Therefore in proposing a sum of \$50,000 per annum for cities like Montreal or Toronto—or Winnipeg, which is growing rapidly and would do well to grow wisely—we are proposing what may be truly called a moderate sum.

Yet how much could be done with the certainty of such a sum being available every year. It means a quarter of a million in five years. With that behind