

TOWN PLANNING AND HOUSING

BY CHARLES A. HODGETTS, M.D., L.R.C.P. (LOND.), F.R.S.I.,

MEDICAL ADVISER, THE COMMISSION OF CONSERVATION, OTTAWA.

In the brief time allotted for the presentation of these two important subjects, it is impossible to do more than touch upon a few of the salient features and leave to a more opportune time their presentation in an elaborated and comprehensive manner such as their importance demands.

After a careful survey of the work which is being carried on in Great Britain and Germany, one must acknowledge that we are behind the times and Canadians have made and continue to make serious mistakes in the laying out of our cities and towns and in not planning for their development.

Acknowledging this fact, it is our duty as citizens of no mean country, and one which is developing rapidly, to learn by the mistakes of the older countries of Europe and set ourselves at once and earnestly to work in an united effort to correct the evils, which can be seen in every city, every town and every village in the Dominion.

It will not do to say the future must take care of itself—our forefathers in their ignorance repeated the mistakes which they brought with them from the old land whither they emigrated to this great western country. We know now of their mistakes and the responsibility rests upon us of to-day to set to work to right those mistakes, which to-day are evils, prejudicial to the health, morality and financial well-being of our cities. We owe it to posterity, we owe it to ourselves and we owe it to our country that a rightabout be made at once and our cities put in order ere it is too late.

We need go back only a few decades in the history of Canada to judge of the rapid development of our urban population. What were Montreal and Toronto, Ottawa and Winnipeg in 1867—the year of Confederation?

A study of the census returns shows how villages have grown by leaps and bounds into cities, and how great has been the growth of many of the older cities—all of which are, from the town-planning and, in-

deed, from the housing standpoint—monstrosities.

All along the line there has been a growth. The lumber town of forty years ago is still a lumber town, overgrown, it has not risen to a realization of its importance or to the dignity of its position as the Federal Capital of a great and growing nation. Nor does the great seaport of Canada, its commercial capital, present any outstanding features to lead one to eulogize the foresight of its wealthy and intellectual citizens in regard to the manner in which they have permitted their metropolis to grow—or the system adapted of converting a once fine family residence into an apartment house or tenement of the worst type.

The town which was once the seat of Government of Upper Canada would be a finer, more dignified and healthier and wealthier city to-day if in Governor Simcoe's time some system of town planning had been applied to Muddy York—if there had been a planning of more Yonge streets which would have been highways to the outlying country districts.

Of the prairie city which forty years ago, had a population of some 250 people, it can be said there has been more good judgment shown in its planning, but even here mistakes have been made. The growth has been marvellous, but how much wealthier the municipality would have been had large portions of land been acquired by the corporation when the prices were low?

It is to be hoped in the replanning of these great cities that some at least of the natural beauties and advantages will be conserved and the indiscretions of their youthful days, at least, atoned for, it is too late to correct some of them.

We have mistakes peculiar to Canada in town planning, if we may apply this dignified term to the civic monstrosity, the result of too intimate a relationship between the land speculator and the provincial land surveyor, and here I would note the tendency which is in evidence in all