



TOWN PLANNING.

The Brisbane Conference

Mr. S. Hurst Seager, F.R.I.B.A., gave a talk to the Town Planning Association, Wellington, and also a public lecture on Town Planning, early this month on his return from the Conference of Town Planners held recently in Brisbane, at which he represented this country.

The Conference attracted 542 delegates, and was the means of bringing forward some excellent papers on Town Planning, housing, etc. There was a most valuable exhibition of great educational value, no less than 40,000 superficial feet of wall space being covered with illustrations on all branches of the subject. "The exhibition—like all other exhibitions," says Mr. Seager, "was not ready for the opening day, but a visit shows the very great value of it as an educational medium. It will, I think, make a far stronger appeal than the papers read. Some of the illustrations were prepared with great care and skill, and the whole made a most attractive show. If the whole time at the disposal of the delegates were spent in examining carefully this wealth of material, they would, I think, get a much better knowledge of what town planning means than they could get in any other way. It is for this reason that the greatest value accrues from having the conference in the different States. I most sincerely hope that in future years New Zealand will help to contribute to the success of the exhibition more fully than to this one, in order that she may earn the right to ask that she be included in the cycle of conferences. In South Australia great advances in practical town planning have followed the holding of the conference at Adelaide.

Brisbane—judging from the talks I have had with committees, and business men—will, I think, take the lessons to heart with equal readiness. There is a very great need for improvement. Like Sydney and Auckland, Brisbane has not sold, but actually thrown away, its birthright. It had glorious opportunities. A beautiful broad winding river surrounding gently undulating slopes forming such a site for a city as town planners would rejoice in. Owing to the many curves in the river there must be a frontage of about 17 or 18 miles round the city, yet of all this there is only about 2½ to 3 miles of river road. The streets do not follow the contour of the modulations, but run over hill and valley in blocks of perfectly straight lines at right angles to each other. The central portion of the city has its blocks of rectangular streets named George, Albert, and Edward for those which run parallel in one direction, and Alice, Margaret, Mary, Charlotte, Elizabeth, Queen, and Ann for those which run parallel in the other. This appeared to me a

convenient arrangement, but to an "innocent abroad" who overheard us discussing town planning it appeared to leave nothing further to be desired. "Brisbane is a beautifully planned city. All its lady streets run one way, and its gentlemen streets the other." What more was there to be said?

A beginning is being made in replanning parts of the city, and some very fine buildings have been erected. The Government buildings ranged round a large open space, are very fine. The Anglican Cathedral reaches the high-water mark of ecclesiastical art. It is from designs by Pearson, the eminent Gothic architect, who designed Truro Cathedral. The nave, towers, and spires have yet to be built, but the eastern portion now completed gives promise of a magnificent whole. It will undoubtedly be the finest Anglican Cathedral in Australasia, and a worthy rival to the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Sydney. Brisbane, therefore, has very fine works to form the nucleus of city beautification. But the most urgent necessity is the better housing of industrial workers, and it is to the solution of this most important problem that Brisbane will be led in the conference.

The reception of the delegates to the Town Planning Conference by the Mayor was an extremely interesting function. Brisbane is even worse off than ourselves for a hall in which civic functions can be held with proper civic dignity. It was held in a dilapidated old structure approached along a right-of-way giving access to a billiard saloon and other places—a very poor setting indeed for the Mayor, in all his rich panoply of office, including a cocked hat. The Mayor (Alderman John McMaster) is a most interesting personality. In architectural language we should speak of him as being about 2½ diameters high—his short body carries a large head covered with a mass of grey hair and a Kruger-like beard. He is Brisbane's "grand old man," and it added much to the interest of the proceedings that he was receiving us on his 89th birthday.

Delegates were made to feel at once at home by being asked to sit round small tables loaded with light refreshments. The State delegates, including New Zealand's representative, were invited to the platform. There was no formality; fun, banter and humour were the notes struck by the Mayor, and they became the dominant notes of all the subsequent speeches.

At last year's conference, a reference to a "slumless Adelaide" threw down the gauntlet, which was quickly taken up by the other inter-State delegates, who each in turn stoutly maintained that