

attempted to explain a system newly installed to some members of the fire-brigade, he could not get them to understand it. So the brigade, or at any rate the bosses, have some new ideas to get hold of; which no doubt they will do by practice. But amid the fire appliances, the preventive appliances, and the construction and mechanical equipment of buildings, the chief wants a good deal of technical knowledge, and public opinion is turning in the direction of an engineering qualification for this office. Among the deductions of Mr. Edwin O. Sachs from the reports on the Baltimore fire (discussed in another column), is "The necessity of officers in charge of fire-brigades having a technical, i.e. either constructional or engineering education of a high standard."

Mr. John Belcher, in his opening **Censorship of Buildings**, address as President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, advocates the establishment of public censorship of buildings. He would have the First Commissioner of Works act as a minister of fine art with the aid of an advisory committee, and possess despotic power to decide what may and what may not be done in the treatment of public places and the spaces and buildings around public institutions, in the formation of new thoroughfares and in the question of buildings harmonizing with an existing or determined general scheme. A building act, Mr. Belcher says, can determine heights and so on, but no act of Parliament can define the subtle qualities and delicate *nuances* which make the difference between art and lack of art.

This is very true, and in England it is possible to find not only First Commissioners of cultivated taste but also an advisory committee which may be trusted to be as expert as the expert whose work is in question; so that on the whole there is a greater safety in giving authority to a combination of this sort than in giving free sway to individual indifference or extravagance or even to individual good taste; for a standing commission would be the means of maintaining what is the greatest deficiency in modern streets—unity of style. The greatest thing in a street architect is harmony. A high level of taste in one manner (we are assuming a high level) is better than a jumble of motives, even if here and there (and it would be only here and there) it touched perfection. Mr. Belcher seems to derive support from the United States, where, he says, "some such exercise of authority has been found necessary." If this means the municipal Art Commissions, they hardly go as far as Mr. Belcher proposes, but to judge from some newspaper utterances they are a success as far as they go. Their power is only one of veto, but this is a great power; for no one, whose work has to come before the Commission, wishes to run the chance of crowning his labors with a veto. He does some wholesome vetoing himself as the work progresses. This, which is the process of all good design, is thus forced upon aspirants for municipal work who, before the appointment of an independent commission might have trusted to political influence to carry them through.

Models in Staff.

Anxieties about the result of altering the east front of the Capitol at Washington have drawn from the Mr. W. S. Eames, President of the American Institute of Ar-

chitects, a suggestion that a full-size model of the proposed alteration should be erected. The cost is estimated at \$100,000, and it is thought worth while to go to this expense although the scheme of the architectural committee's advisors, Messrs. Carrère & Hastings, is presented in the form of a model and there is another scheme of which a model is also provided. The contention is that a small size model is so completely grasped by the eye that it may mislead as to the actual effect in the case of a large building or one with a limited range of distance for points of view. All architects, no doubt, meet occasionally with unpleasant surprises in their executed work, but the conditions under which the work is done have much to do with that. In the case of the Capitol the conditions—a complete model to show the design, an existing building to help the eye of the imagination in judging the effect when completed, a stereotyped style which has few surprises for any architect and can have none for the firm advising the committee—all these conditions make so much for certainty in the present case that it gives an emphasis to this public confession of architects (for Mr. Eames fills a representative place) that the only result of the high development of architecture during recent years in the United States is to make the profession tread with fear where an earlier generation went confidently on. It is not a stimulating position. Is it really so impossible to conceive the effect of a design from the usual aids—drawing, modelling to scale, helped occasionally by a full size model of a leading feature set up in place—that we must consider it necessary in work of unusual importance to resort to the study of a full size model of the whole, or at any rate of the whole front? One thing is certain—that however much the frequent use of full size models may increase perfection it is pretty sure to decrease power. To do without such aids is a struggle for the imagination, but it is exercise that makes it strong. The strain to conceive a design "in the round," the practice of visualizing it by the help of other buildings that have little in common with it but similar bulk, the consideration of detail by criticizing existing examples, the study of one's own earlier work in the light of new experience—this habit of brooding over a design, engendered by the very uncertainties it involves, is far more educative and developing than the pottering process of altering a model.

CANADIAN PAVILION AT LIEGE, BELGIUM.

When Hon. Sydney Fisher returns to the Capitol he will decide upon the purchase of a site for the Canadian pavilion which is to be erected at Liege Exposition. Liege is a great centre in Belgium and any display which Canada makes there will be brought prominently before a large consuming population. The cost of Canadian building, including the site, may run to \$45,000.

FOR THIRTY DWELLINGS.

The section of land purchased recently by Professor Goldwin Smith, on Gerrard street, east of the Don, as sites for artisans' dwellings, will be handed over to the Artizans' Dwelling Company. The land secured will provide sites for thirty dwellings.