

modesty, but if so we would encourage a feeling of more pride and assurance as perfectly justifiable in regard to the work of Canadian architects, who have no reason to discount their work or allow others to do so, and no opportunity should be unused of letting this be understood, whether in Association work, private practice or a public lecture such as the one referred to. We trust we shall have other lectures of a similar kind, in which we shall see and hear more about Canadian architects and examples of their work.

AN electric launch from the World's Fair has been introduced upon the Grand Canal at Venice and the trial has been pronounced successful. This time it cannot well be said that progress is not an improvement for, apart from the fact that the graceful movements of the electric launch will be more in harmony with the style of Venice than were the steamboats which are to be displaced, the damage to the marbles of the palaces from the contamination of the atmosphere by smoke, which Ruskin deplored, will be removed. The silent progress of the electric launches is also in harmony with the quiet of a city in which there is neither wheel or hoop and in which the noise of the little steamboats was an intrusion. But, and here there is another side to the question, the steamboats on account of their necessarily large size, were confined to the Grand Canal (where in truth they have been a great comfort) but a storage battery electric launch can be built small enough to navigate the small canals, and the gondola is in danger. The gondola amply exhibited its inferiority at the World's Fair where it plied over the same ground as the electric launches. But this very inferiority may save it. To those who had seen the gondola at home and watched constantly with increasing delight the ease and rapidity with which it threads its way through the traffic on the narrow canals, the lumbering appearance it presented on the lagoons of the World's Fair was a surprise and disappointment. The apparent speed of the gondola at home turns out to be only relative to the obstruction it meets and the absolute speed of the electric launch may turn out to be too fast. It is perhaps safest to hope that it will, for we know that with the gondola the local flavour which should be present with the architecture, is safe.

ARCHITECTS in all countries will watch with a lively interest the developments in the struggle which the American Institute of Architects are making to bring about a reform in the manner of furnishing designs for United States Government buildings. With the exception of a few comparatively unimportant buildings, the designs for many years have been prepared in what might be termed the Government's machine shop for designs, known as the Supervising Architect's office. The people's money has been lavishly employed for public buildings, and the architects through their Institute show very clearly that many millions of dollars have been expended with the grossest extravagance and to no purpose but that of providing for the needs of political favorites. It is now about ten years since the A. I. A. began the present fight against the existing system. They so far succeeded that in March, 1893, a bill which had been passed by Congress was signed by the President and became law, providing for the opening of government designs to competition. For the last twelve months the A. I. A. have been making strenuous efforts to have this new law put into operation, but so far without success. The bill seems to have been passed without a mandatory clause, and its operation is largely discretionary with the Secretary of the Treasury Department. There has been a considerable amount of correspondence between the present incumbent of that office and the President of the A. I. A., in which some strong language has been used, and the result at this time looks like a deadlock between the government and the Institute as will be seen from the following letter from the Treasury Department to the President of the American Institute of Architects:

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 12th, 1894.
MR. D. T. C. BURNHAM, President A. I. A., The Rookery, Chicago, Ill.
SIR:—Your very offensive and ungentlemanly letter of the 9th instant is just received, and you are informed that this Department will have no further correspondence with you upon the subject to which it relates, or any other subject.
Very respectfully,

(signed) J. G. CARLISLE, Secretary.

The letter from Mr. Burnham which is characterized by the Treasury Department as offensive and ungentlemanly is written in very plain language and amounts to an expression of the

opinion on the part of Mr. Burnham, that while the head of the Governmental Department addressed professes to be in sympathy with the architects and favorable to the new law, he is casting about for excuses to prevent its being of any effect. It is unfortunate that the controversy has been brought to such a conclusion. It may have been injudicious of Mr. Burnham to have written so candidly, but after reading the full text of the correspondence as published in the *American Architect* of the 7th inst., we think he is quite justified in holding the opinion which he has expressed.

THERE are many buildings in our cities built just on the street line or very close to it, and so roofed that dangerous snowslides are of frequent occurrence, and at other times icicles are formed overhanging sidewalks so that if not removed they are a menace to the safety of passers by. A lesser evil, although a very disagreeable one arising from the same cause, is the falling of water from choked down pipes and overflowing eave troughs, in such quantities that people are driven from the sidewalk in places to avoid a drenching. In some cities there are regulations intended to provide for the proper disposal of roof water, but there is not sufficient care exercised for protection from snow and ice. On business streets, or any other, no part of a roof should be constructed in such shape that persons on the sidewalk below would be in any danger of a sudden fall of snow or ice. For dwelling houses the simplest prevention is to keep them far enough away from the street line to insure snow or ice from the roof falling inside private ground. If people wish to risk their own heads or those of callers, by allowing snowslides to make a target of the front steps they may be entitled to that privilege, but the line should be drawn when it comes to endangering in this manner all who are obliged or may happen to pass their property. On business streets where buildings are of considerable height and in solid blocks, showy roof architecture counts for comparatively little, and it would be in the interest of public safety if there were regulations making avalanches of snow and ice from roofs to sidewalks an impossibility. In this climate roofs sloping toward the sidewalk, with cornices and eave trough overhanging the street line, should not be allowed. Whenever there are buildings so constructed and situated that there is danger of the kind mentioned, and we are prepared to point out many such, especially in the city of Montreal, the authorities should compel owners to put suitable snow guards on roofs.

BUSINESS people in all parts of the Dominion have been greatly interested during the past few weeks in the revised schedule of customs duties, as proposed by the government at Ottawa. In many respects the changes are not as great as some would advocate, but it is probable that those who favor the strongest measures of tariff reduction, were they in power, would be obliged to proceed cautiously. Those interests connected with new building work in its various branches will not be directly affected by the new tariff except in a slight degree, as the changes are few and small. In some cases there should be changes where there are none. We will mention only as an instance of this, the item of plate glass, on which the duty is entirely too high. This is an important item among building materials, and as the duty is in no sense protective but all for revenue, the charge of 30 per cent. should be reduced by one half. We will be glad to receive any expression of opinion from interested persons relative to the duty on this or other building materials. An increasing and continued activity among the building trades must come from demands for present necessities which are comparatively easy to estimate, and from a general feeling of strong confidence in the future prosperity of the country. Expectation of new tariff legislation always creates uncertainty and interferes more or less with steady industrial progress. As the extent of cause for this feeling of uncertainty and hesitation is generally magnified to undue proportions, building interests will no doubt be enhanced by the knowledge of what the new tariff is to be, and by the greater confidence it will inspire in the stability of the business of the whole country. Let architects, contractors and all interested in building work keep up united action on any questions affecting their welfare, and which may be entitled to more consideration, legislative or otherwise. In alluding to questions involved in tariff regulations we would urge the most careful attention to the great need for