

they have, by means of a letter imitating typewriting, succeeded in bringing these reminders of their goods, before his eye, on their way to the waste-paper basket. How far the method is wise it is hard for an ordinary man to say. It is at any rate wasteful. Nature, it is true, is the same. Many seeds are dispersed for one that takes root. But the extra output of nature has value as food, while the product of the waste-paper basket is food only for the furnace, and bad for that. In so far as the waste of an architect's time is involved, these advertisements, that gain attention under the guise of correspondence, are not only wasteful but are injurious to their own interests; for the first property of advertising matter is to be attractive, but these are repellent.

A Builders' Organization.

Some years ago a series of articles was published in this Journal advocating the formation of a Builders' Association for the Province of Ontario. Apparently the time was not ripe for such a movement and no action resulted. Recently, however, the Builders' Exchanges at London and Brantford have taken up this question, and are endeavoring to secure the formation of such an organization. At the Annual Banquet of the Toronto Builders' Exchange last month, the representatives from the London and Brantford Exchanges brought this subject prominently to the front, and on the following day the matter was further considered at an informal meeting of the Toronto Exchange. The opinion of the Builders' Exchanges throughout the Province will be invited, and they will be asked to offer suggestions as to the basis on which a Provincial organization should be formed. The opinion prevails among members of the Toronto, London and Brantford Exchanges that if an organization can be properly constituted, work of much value to the building interests might be accomplished. This opinion is in a measure based on the good results which have already been attained by the local organizations. There are certain questions of a broad nature which these local organizations are not competent to deal with, and which it is felt might be effectively dealt with by a central association. Among these might be mentioned legislation affecting the interests of builders, insurance, the question of apprenticeship, a uniform agreement between employers and employees, etc.

The builders feel that they are surrounded on all sides by organizations with which they have intimate business relations, and it is time that they also should band themselves together for the consideration and furtherance of their interests. The Canadian Architect and Builder will be pleased to publish the views of any reader on this question.

Cement Blocks.

There is no doubt that the cement block has a future. It has as a matter of fact a present. But the present is not altogether satisfactory, and there are difficulties about making it so. Yet it is in the improvement of the present that the chance for the future lies. There are two points in question—strength and appearance. As to the first, it is difficult to establish any guarantee but that of the character of the manufacturing firm; and it is of the first interest for every manufacturer to establish a character for strength and durability in his blocks, and to see that nothing happens to give occasion for doubt in that respect. It

is easy to spoil a block or a set of blocks, and there is money to be made (for a time) in making them carelessly. The wet process is the best for the block; but requires a large number of moulds, if there is to be rapid production. The moist process is therefore introduced, in order to save moulds. There is no objection to this, apparently, if the blocks, when taken from the mould, are put in water, or damp sand or sawdust, to harden. In other words moulds may be saved but not labour. The tendency will naturally be to go as far as possible towards saving both. This process, as well as the materials used and the manner of mixing, will require, for constantly good results, not only liberality of mind but constant and careful supervision.

Defects of this kind, however, though hard to perceive in the block, are not really difficult to prevent, if there is the will to do it. It is the question of appearance which is of the first importance; for it occupies the perception, to the exclusion of everything else, and is difficult to make satisfactory. If negative criticism will do any good, it is not hard to see that the failure lies in monotony. Both the colour and the unvarying size and shape of the blocks would be a hard matter to overcome in any case, but the makers add to these disadvantages by trying to give the blocks a face like natural stone. The accidental spalling of a rock face is selected—a surface which the most experienced stone cutter could not strike twice, exactly alike, in a hundred trials—and this is repeated, all round the house, in even courses, all the way up, until whatever life is possible to the material is lost in expressionless monotony.

Far preferable to this would be an abandonment of all effort to give appearance to the block. Let it have just true edges and a plain face. It is conceivable that there might be two heights of courses, running alternately. It facilitates work to have a sill course; and this may be repeated where there are no sills. At any rate a sill course and a head course, different from the walling, would be a relief. And moulding (discretely) is suggested by the nature of the material.

The question of colour appears to be difficult but not impossible. Chemical admixtures are not good for compositions of cement, and some otherwise effective substances would be dangerous to use on this account. But there appears to be a mistaken idea—if one may judge from expressions in Mr. Sherer's paper, reprinted in this issue—that much colouring is necessary. "A strong, deep, cherry red," "moss or olive green with streaks of a livelier colour running through"—this is immoderate language to use about architectonic material. Architectural colours are slight. In stones (and concrete classes with stone) the colour, properly so called, is so slight as to be hard to name. Building stones have tone rather than colour. There are dark stones and light stones, each inclining but slightly to some colour. The best tones for building are light tones; and cement has a light tone. Cement is unfortunately harsh in tone, but it ought not to take much colour to overcome this; making it much as it was, but mellow. Slight variations in the blocks would be gain, if they were the result not of effort but of intelligent indifference. But who shall persuade the conscientious foreman that this is good work!