

IN connection with improvements which are being made to Queen Victoria School, Toronto, Mr. Thos. Cruttenden, the contractor for the brickwork, was recently charged, at the instance of some of the workmen on the job, with having used inferior material in the construction of one of the walls. The Public School Board employed Mr. Siddall, architect, to examine and report upon the work, and his report entirely exonerated the contractor. The charge is alleged to have been prompted by spite on the part of some of the workmen who had been discharged on account of their irregular habits. Notwithstanding the annoyance and loss to which the contractor has been subjected, as the law stands at present he has no redress. He might bring suit for damages against the workmen who incited the charge, but the chance of securing compensation from such a quarter would be so extremely doubtful as not to justify proceedings on that line. Thus it appears that contractors are at all times in danger of being injured in reputation and put to financial loss whenever it may suit the purpose of an unscrupulous employee to fabricate a charge against them. It would seem but right that the law should be so amended that spite work of this character would be punishable with imprisonment.

THE ivy plant, which for centuries has lent attractiveness to the towns and cities of England, has within the last decade come largely into prominence in some parts of Canada, more particularly perhaps in Toronto, where in certain residential localities it may be seen clinging to the walls of almost every house. Judiciously employed, it greatly enhances the beauty of residence thoroughfares, but it should not be allowed to obscure the architectural beauty of our buildings. It is difficult to discover the wisdom of erecting costly buildings, displaying wealth of carving and other interesting features, to be hidden from view in a few years by the luxurious ivy. An English writer declares that there is no ground for the opinion which many persons hold, that ivy is a cause of destruction to buildings and of injury to the health of the occupants. On this point he says: "So long as such opinions prevail it cannot be too often repeated that the attachment of ivy to walls is an advantage altogether. If the walls are damp before the ivy is planted, the damp will disappear as the ivy overspreads their surfaces. If the walls are dry to begin with, ivy will keep them so by a double action, for should dampness occur through some accident, the ivy will suck out the moisture into its own substance, and in the event of driving rains, that occasionally act with force on walls, the imbrication of hard leafage will prevent the access of rain to the structure, and thus ivy is not only a remover, but a preventer of damp. As regards the integrity of the structure, however, the case is less clear. Fissures in walls clothed with ivy will sooner or later be discovered by the plant and filled up, and then mischief may be expected. When a shoot or root pushes through a fissure in the wall, and is left undisturbed, its natural growth soon begins to tell upon the structure. As the little nut tree carried the millstone, so the slender shoot of ivy will, by increase of girth, begin to push against the sides of the fissure, with the certainty of increasing it, and the probability of bringing the wall down. But where the wall is sound it is exposed to no such danger. Ivy does not make fissures, however quick it may be to discover them where they already exist. It follows, therefore, that, as a rule, ivy may be regarded as defending against time and accident, the walls that afford it support."

#### AN ARCHITECT'S VIGOROUS INDICTMENT.

WE are in receipt of a copy, in pamphlet form, of the address of Mr. C. Baillargé, C.E., etc., delivered before the Quebec Association of Architects, on the occasion of his vacating the presidency at the recent convention of that body. It bears the somewhat pretentious title, "Bribery and Boodling, Fraud, Hypocrisy and Humbug, Professional Charges and Pecuniary Ethics," and is a scathing indictment of the methods practised by some contractors and others to swindle the public and line their own pockets. We should be sorry to think that the practises Mr. Baillargé condemns prevail to any great extent—that they did would shake one's faith in the goodness of human nature—but we fear he is speaking by the book, and that in his city (Quebec) and province there has been far too much boodling and bribing in connection with contracts. Nor would we forget that recent

events have shown that we cannot cast a stone at our neighbors in this respect. Mr. Baillargé's words of warning are therefore well timed, and though somewhat too forcibly expressed in places, and partaking to some extent of a personal character, should have the effect of putting architects, and others who heard them, on their guard against such practices. Want of space prevents us giving extracts, but we must express our appreciation of Mr. Baillargé's boldness in dealing with such a subject.

#### THE SIMPSON DEPARTMENTAL STORE.

THE Simpson building, now towering up at the corner of Yonge and Queen streets, in Toronto, taking the place of that destroyed last January, presents some unique features, which render it interesting from an architectural point of view. During the Industrial Exhibition, when its large iron skeleton stood out, without any covering, it attracted much attention, and few visitors passed without stopping to gaze on a structure, the like of which many of them had never before seen.

The building is considerably larger than the one whose place it takes. It covers an area of 118 feet on Yonge street by 157 feet on Queen street, with an annex 24 feet square on the south west corner, extending in the rear of the buildings on Yonge street. It is six stories high besides the basement, so that the total floor area, most of which will be utilized for selling goods, amounts in all to nearly 1,340,000 square feet.

The building is practically indestructible by fire. Should a conflagration occur in any flat among the goods, it can easily be confined to that flat, and the building itself would not burn. Stand pipes will be provided on every flat, with hose, available at all times. So-called fireproof buildings have shown that they are not such in great conflagrations. The iron beams and columns which enter into their construction will not burn, it is true, but they warp and twist with the heat, being thereby rendered useless, while their removal becomes all the more difficult and expensive. Measures have accordingly been taken in this building to fireproof the iron, if such a paradoxical expression may be allowed. The outside columns and beams are covered with stone and brickwork, those within are enclosed in concrete. Boxes were erected around the uprights and the concrete poured in, the boxes being removed when it had set. The beams are covered with slabs of concrete, and the joints will be filled with the adamant plaster put on for finish. This is a new method of fireproofing such a building, introduced into Canada for the first time. The work is being done by a firm in Pittsburg, Penn. The spaces between the floor beams will be filled in with hollow blocks of concrete, and on these the floors will rest. They will be of hardwood, and in the event of fire would only char, even if not flooded with water. The shelving and counters will of course be of wood.

The fronts of the first and second stories, facing on the two thoroughfares, will be filled in with plate glass. The four upper stories are of brick, built on to the iron frame. The rear walls are of solid brick, thick enough to resist any attack by fire from the outside. The roof will be of concrete blocks covered with felt and gravel.

The total weight of iron in the skeleton of this great building is about 3,000,000 lbs. The girders were prepared at the Hamilton Bridge Works, and had only to be assembled and riveted together when brought on the ground. So rapidly was the work done that in seven weeks from the time the first column was set the iron work was completed, and 13 or 14 weeks will see the building closed in ready for the inside finish.

The cost of the building will be in the vicinity of \$250,000, and it shows what the departmental shop has become when Toronto can afford such a palatial structure in the retail trade.

Messrs. Burke & Horwood are the architects.

A nail combination has been formed which includes all Canadian manufacturers, and prices will likely be advanced.

THE City Council of Toronto will consider an amendment to the building by-law, to prohibit the erection of any dwelling house, on any street, lane or open space less than thirty feet wide, and providing that every dwelling house must have at least 300 square feet of land attached to it on which no building is maintained.