

WE have frequently regarded with curiosity a house recently erected on one of the leading avenues of the city of Toronto, the total width of which we should judge does not exceed ten feet. If the value of real estate in Toronto, so early in its history, prompts the erection of such a narrow structure, there is good reason to fear that we shall ultimately reach a standard of economy equal to that of a wealthy New York contractor who, having a piece of land 120 feet in depth and only five feet in width, which he found impossible to sell, erected upon it a dwelling for himself. The actual width of the building is said to be four feet. It is described as being built of brick, four stories high. The sills and lintels are of white marble, and three bay windows run up from the first floor to the roof. Small, round windows, like port-holes, let light into the basement, and the doors are mere slits in the brick walls. Few, we fancy, will feel inclined to envy the dwellers in houses of such strikingly modern design.

WE have reason for believing that the advantages of organization are becoming more widely understood amongst builders and contractors of the better class throughout Ontario. The number of letters which have lately appeared in this journal in favor of the formation of a Provincial Association of Builders and Contractors, is alone sufficient indication of the feeling on the subject, and should warrant the taking of some definite steps to bring about the desired end. It is quite natural that those interested in the matter should look to the builders and contractors of Toronto to take the initiatory steps towards organization. So far, we regret to say, more interest appears to have been taken in the movement outside than in Toronto. We are aware, however, that a number of Toronto master builders are becoming more and more impressed with the need of such an Association, and we look for the introduction of the question to the Toronto Builders' Exchange at an early day. Meanwhile, we continue to invite expressions of opinion from our readers, in order that the subject may be as thoroughly ventilated as possible before action comes to be taken.

WE have ceased to wonder at the numerous failures amongst master builders since we learned how slipshod and unbusinesslike are the methods of estimating practised by many of them. So long as such methods are followed, success must be the exception rather than the rule. We know of instances in which the tenders on a contract varied as much as fifty per cent. The recklessness or want of knowledge which such a condition of things reveals is sufficient to account, not only for the frequent failures of incompetent contractors, but also for the difficulty which the honest, competent builder experiences in making anything like a decent profit on his work. We feel inclined to agree with one of our subscribers who, writing on this subject, expresses his belief that the failure of so many contractors to estimate correctly is due, in a majority of cases, to lack of arithmetical knowledge, care and time expended in exact calculation of details, and the use of systematic methods of arriving at conclusions. Realizing that the possession and application of such knowledge would save many contractors from engaging in ruinous undertakings, we have arranged with one of our contributors, whose experience as a builder and contractor entitles him to speak authoritatively on the subject, to write a series of articles on "How to Estimate." The first of these articles will be found printed in the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER for June, and will repay careful perusal.

THE astonishing improvement in the character of public buildings and private dwellings in Canadian cities during the last decade has on previous occasions formed the subject of comment in this journal. This improvement is due in a large measure to the use of more beautiful and costly finishing materials. In no class of material is improvement more noticeable than in hardware. There is at present sold in this country each year a very considerable quantity of the finer class of bronze hardware, and the demand is growing rapidly. There are two reasons for this. One is the accumulation of wealth in the

country, and the other, the cheapness of production which has recently been attained in the manufacture of fine hardware. By the use of improved machinery and appliances, it is now possible to sell fine bronze goods at a price little above what our forefathers had to pay for an article which, however useful, could certainly not be called ornamental. Thus far, all the finer kinds of hardware used in Canada, have been imported from the United States. We believe the time has arrived, however, when some of our Canadian hardware manufacturers might profitably turn their attention to the production of these goods. While their manufacture requires a large outlay for expensive machinery, and American manufacturers with a much wider market have been enabled to reduce the cost of manufacture to a minimum, these advantages would be offset by the protection of 35 per cent. afforded by the tariff to the Canadian manufacturer. Who will be the first to try the experiment of manufacturing a fine class of building hardware in Canada?

THE position of the retail lumber dealer in Toronto, if we have been correctly informed, is not an enviable one. The wholesale dealer is said to have been steadily encroaching upon the field of the retailer, until at last the latter finds in the former a direct competitor. Until recently the wholesale dealer would refuse to sell a less quantity than a car load of one kind of lumber. Now, we are informed, wholesale dealers will sell to a contractor as little as a wagon load. Some who make a pretence of selling nothing less than a car load will nevertheless mix in the car load as many varieties of lumber as the purchaser may desire and in the required quantities, which is equivalent to selling in retail quantities. Thus the dividing line between wholesaler and retailer, once broad and distinct, has become well-nigh obliterated, while the fierce competition for possession of the retail trade has resulted in seriously decreasing the profits of both classes. This matter is one which indirectly affects injuriously the interests of the *bona fide* contractor. The eagerness of the retail lumber dealer to hold their trade as against the wholesalers, has induced them to extend credit to persons styling themselves builders and contractors, but who are without experience or capital. Such persons, being as we have said without experience, and having nothing to lose, take contracts at prices which result in failure to themselves and a general lowering of the standards for work to an extent which leaves no profit in the business for the contractor who seeks to perform his work in a thorough and workmanlike manner. If there was a Provincial Association of Builders and Contractors, it might, by agreeing to purchase only from *bona fide* retail dealers, improve the position of such dealers, and compel them to cease selling on credit to incompetent and irresponsible parties.

A RECENT case before the Toronto Courts has led to strict enquiry on the part of the city authorities into the character of work and material in connection with the block paving of the streets. It has been found that both work and material are below the standard called for by the specifications. The contractors admit this, but in extenuation say that first-growth cedar, perfectly sound and free from pin-holes, such as the specifications demand, cannot be obtained in sufficient quantity. The correctness or otherwise of this plea is at present the subject of many newspaper articles. By some it is asserted that cedar of the quality required can be procured in abundance on Manitoulin Island, but Mr. J. C. Bailey, a civil engineer of large experience, denies that such is the case. Mr. Bailey concludes a letter on the subject by saying: "The whole trouble seems to me to be caused in allowing wooden block pavement of any kind to be used in cities. It is of such perishable material, hence expensive on account of frequent renewals, also unhealthy. Stone is altogether the best for large cities, and we have lots of first-class material within easy distance and access for this purpose. We have the traps—gneiss and granite near Gravenhurst; again the same just east of Peterboro on the Ontario & Quebec Railway. Stone may be noisy, but it is more lasting, healthier and cheaper in the end." We have more than once during the past year expressed the hope that something more lasting than cedar would soon be adopted for paving the business