

THE BUILDING OUTLOOK.

INFLUENCED by the general depression in business, the building trade in Canada has for some years been in a state of inactivity, and much below what might be expected in a young and vigorous country. As each year passed by, it was hoped that the worst had been encountered, yet the season of 1896 proved to be one of the least prosperous. The unsettled condition of the country politically, and the uncertainty with regard to the tariff both in Canada and the United States, had a depressing effect, and many buildings which would otherwise have been erected still remain in a embryo state until the action of the government is made known. The low rentals obtainable in many of the larger cities offered little inducement to speculators, and consequently a few office buildings constituted the major portion of construction.

With the object of learning as far as possible the conditions likely to prevail in the building trades during the approaching season, letters were dispatched by the publisher of the ARCHITECT AND BUILDER to architects in the different cities, asking their opinion of the outlook. The replies received, although pointing out that many projected works are yet in an unsettled state, and may or may not be proceeded with, afford some degree of encouragement. It is generally conceded that little change will be made in the tariff by the government, and the official announcement of this fact will be certain to stimulate building operations and restore confidence to business in general.

In Toronto, the new building at the north-west corner of Yonge and King streets is perhaps the largest yet arranged for; the plans are being prepared by Messrs. Darling & Pearson. A large hotel and several other buildings of some prominence are spoken of, but are not yet regarded as certainties. The renovation and remodelling of office buildings is likely to account for a considerable expenditure, as the owners will be compelled to improve their properties in order to retain their tenants. Montreal architects report the season to be opening up somewhat brighter than last year, with several undertakings hanging in the balance. The towns adjacent to Montreal are apparently more prosperous. In the city of Ottawa the prospects for building operations are decidedly encouraging, a number of recent fires having assisted in this direction. The rebuilding of the departmental block and the new building of the C. Ross Company are the most important works now under construction. The addition to the Protestant hospital and a proposed opera house will reach in value \$100,000, while other buildings equally costly are either under way or contemplated. In western Ontario architects do not take a discouraging view of the future. A \$60,000 hospital is talked of at London, and two buildings of good size will be erected in Hamilton. The bulk of the work in the latter city, however, will consist of residences and alterations to existing buildings. In the vicinity of Stratford a fair amount of building is reported, and at Owen Sound elevator and flour shed extensions comprise the main work.

Very few large buildings are likely to be erected this year in Manitoba and British Columbia. A large university building will probably be built at Winnipeg, at a cost of \$60,000. In the Pacific coast province the cheaper class of buildings promise to predominate particularly in the vicinity of mining operations. From

the maritime provinces favorable reports are received.

No small amount of material and labor promises to be utilized in 1897 in government work, the appropriation made by the Dominion parliament for canals alone reaching five million dollars. Comparing the situation with past years, we think there is a fair prospect of an improvement in building during the present season.

BY THE WAY.

AN interesting decision was given by the Court of Appeal at Montreal the other day. A stone cutter named Jacques Perrault sought to recover damages from the Stonecutters' Union, alleging that he had been deprived of his employment by reason of the refusal of the officers and members of the Union to work with him. At the first hearing the case was dismissed, but the Court of Review, on appeal, awarded the plaintiff damages in the sum of \$137. This decision has now been reversed by the Court of Appeal, thus affirming the right of the members of the union to refuse to work with a non-union workman. It should be mentioned, however, that the decision was not concurred in by two of the judges before whom the appeal was argued.

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FROM the past and present condition of some of the gaol buildings in Canada, it might be inferred that the county authorities are of the opinion that the health of a prisoner is a matter of little or no consequence—in other words that anything should be good enough for a "gaol bird." Many persons regard the matter in a different light, however, and properly maintain that neglect to provide conditions conducive to health should not form part of the punishment meted out to prisoners. Holding strongly to this view, I note with pleasure that the Inspector of Gaols, Prisons and Reformatories for the Province of Ontario reports that considerable improvement has been made by many of the County Councils throughout the province in remodelling, repairing and furnishing gaols during the past year, and greater attention has been given to their ventilation, drainage, heating, lighting and water supply. The inspector adds that much yet remains to be done in this direction, and intimates that some of the derelict counties are financially well able to remodel or rebuild their buildings.

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IN Scripture we are told that no sensible man commences the erection of a building until after he has first counted the cost and carefully considered the condition of his bank account. Some individuals and public bodies overlook this very necessary preliminary procedure, and plunge right into the enterprise, trusting to chance or Providence to help them out. Such persons bring ridicule upon themselves by their lack of sound judgment. Public bodies seem to make blunders of this character quite as frequently as private individuals, and their undertakings being a rule on a larger scale, their mistakes are more conspicuous. In France, we are told, owing to the state of the national finances, many public buildings stand in an uncompleted condition, and so surrounded by scaffolding as to be almost concealed from view. The Arc de Triomphe, in Paris, was thus obscured, until the recent visit of the Czar, when the sense of national pride caused the scaffolding to be removed. Some years ago it was discovered that the statues which adorned the