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TERRA COTTA FINIAL, TOWER MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, TORONTO; HEIGHT, 13 FEET.

abruptly into Bastion Street, passes the positively hideous court house, and so on to his destination. Visitor, whom we may presume to be of the genus architect and of an observant and enquiring disposition, takes an early opportunity of critically examining our street architecture, hopeful of finding much of a virile western character to interest him, but is doomed to disappointment, for the buildings prove to be almost wholly flat roofed, two storied structures of a feeble nondescript sort with a monotonous skyline of open parapets and crude cornices; painted brickwork prevails, and our friend quickly realizes that the business portion of Victoria contains little of architectural interest.

We refrain from giving his criticisms of the variegated sidewalks with their playful habit of suddenly letting the wayfarer down a foot or two when he steps on the loose end of a plank—the other end jumping up at him in an alarmingly threatening manner, neither do we judge it wise to repeat his vitriolic comments on the spikes which “stub” his toes and threaten to trip him up.

The first building which attracts attention as a very decided exception to prevailing mediocrity and excites feelings of interest and pleasure is the Bank of Montreal, an excellently well handled little piece of English Renaissance in its modern interpretation, handled with refreshing breadth of purpose and simplicity: the steep roof and the management of the parapet line is delightful, and the architect Mr. F. M. Rattenbury, is to be congratulated on eschewing all galvanized iron sham detail, all painted and striped brickwork and for putting a roof and not a deck on his building. The Banking Hall is pleasingly and carefully detailed, though reasonable objection may be taken to the streaky effect of the marble die of the counter and it seems out of place to surmount fine marble columns with plaster instead of bronze capitals, the impression received being akin to that afforded by the clay feet of the Golden Image, for the effect is somewhat paltry.

The Five Sisters Block though not exactly a new building is one of the more recent improvements, a plain red brick building with mansard roof, with refined detail throughout, marred by its execution in painted metal, a hopelessly lifeless material to design in. The Bank of British Columbia though not lacking a certain degree of dignity is rendered trivial by its overload of cement and metal ornament, some of which is flimsy; the style is a conventional style of Italian; the little single storied Bank of British North America is a quaintly plain piece of granite work with an

entire freedom from the tawdiness that distinguishes so many buildings; the Dricord Hotel from its size and importance as an hostelry next commands attention, which its architectural merits could not earn for it; the Board of Trade Building and the new home of the Colonist newspaper are attempts in that species of American architecture which is described by the ubiquitous reporter—as “That Splendid Block” or “That Handsome Structure,” both having much of the swaggering, braggadocio, painted sand galvanized iron, rock faced stone and tuck pointed brick genus of features which may be more but generally are less original and cannot be deemed architectural.

The new Post Office and Custom House occupies a fine site commanding the approach to Government street from the James Bay Bridge and is a big solid mass of stone work, three stories in height, with a great mansard roof. The whole is bold in appearance, designed in a characterless version of modern French Renaissance, but very coarse in detail and uninteresting; the Post Office has a pannelled ceiling, heavy in effect and certainly not beautiful; the screens are quite ugly and the upper portions filled with a vulgar sort of stock pattern description of stained glass contrasting strangely with the huge radiators built of stacks of uncompromisingly utilitarian iron pipes gorgeously arrayed in gold paint. The building as a whole is a fair type of Dominion Government Official Architecture and causes one to deeply regret that this sort of work is not offered to public competition with assessors of known ability and undoubted professional standing, in the manner now commonly adopted by public bodies in the Old Country to the great gain of the British public and of Architecture. This system of competition first revealed to England the wealth of architectural talent she possesses in such men as Aston Webb, Inghram Bell, T. E. Colcutt, E. W. Mountford, Hare, Belcher, Gibson & Russell, Carpenter & Lugdow, Bloomfield, Bryden, Waterhouse, and a host of others, who originally proved their calibre in competition work. But for the wise course adopted by inviting great and small to compete on the fairest of terms for all the important works which 25 years ago were customarily entrusted to the tender mercies of the Town Surveyor or some petty official fossilized by long service in departmental grooves, many of the ablest architects would have never secured the longed-for opportunity; moreover one has but to consult the architectural papers to fully realize the splendid educational work that is done by competitions fairly conducted.

But all this, as Rudyard Kipling says, is another story—still the digression may be excused as a natural one forced from us by sad experiences.

The most important work now in progress is a five-storied flat roofed red brick building on Government Street, designed by Mr. T. C. Sorby for Messrs. Weiler Bros.; it is a warehouse probably 60 x 120 or thereabouts, with three frontages unbroken by any projections except those afforded by string courses and cornices; the building is unpretentious in a good honest “A warehouse is a warehouse,” mode which is distinctly refreshing; the stone fronts are cleverly detailed and the few decorative features are refined throughout.

Though the street architecture of Victoria is not particularly ambitious or interesting, her churches, though more pretentious, are scarcely more successful efforts in design; the R. C. Church is of considerable dimensions and bears evidence that its author had a general acquaintance with a certain phase of modern Gothic, but that he was not intimate with ancient work, the conventional foliage, the moldings and details generally being the rocks upon which he suffered pretty complete shipwreck. An extraordinary edifice in an exaggerated form of the “rock faced” mania, with tin pinnacled buttresses and a roof the grouping of which baffles all efforts to elucidate, is the proud possession of the Methodists. The Anglican Cathedral is an uncompromising box with the all too customary hollow buttresses of “rustic” and a square tower with parapet, all of the same hopeless style; the interior though a modern travesty of a stone construction, has a certain ecclesiastical feeling which is heightened by a good stained East window and a pulpit rail and reredos in oak too evidently new and too good for the building.

That a small town which until very recent years was in a singularly isolated position should possess so much building of a somewhat perfunctory description is not very surprising, and with increased prosperity, great, possibly very great, improvements may be confidently augured. The indifferent materials with which the earlier builders had to work must be accepted as being largely responsible for many shortcomings; bricks no longer require to be painted that they may be weather-proof and fine building