

# THE BUSINESS OF ARCHITECTURE.---As a Profession It is Misunderstood.---As a Business It Begets Contempt.---Controlling Circumstances Are Created by Architects Themselves.---Less Commercialism and More Professionalism Required. ∴ By F. W. FITZPATRICK

**S**TRANGE it is, indeed, how lowly a place the grandest, the mother of all arts, holds in public esteem, and how blessed little is known about it by even the better class of the masses. Why, little children today prattle learnedly about literature and its shining lights. The average man is surprisingly well read upon most subjects. He will entertain you with detailed accounts of the deeds of ancient and modern heroes, even the Spartan and the Gaul; he knows all about the great discoverers and historians; he does not balk overmuch at the names of famous painters, musicians, astronomers and travellers. Wonderfully erudite is he, our average man.

But most wonderfully ignorant is he of the names of the men who have contributed most to his and his ancestors' comfort, education, refinement—yes, his very civilization—the architects.

A beautiful poem always recalls the name of its author, a masterly oration, a grand literary success is never referred to without mentioning him who gave it to us; great battles glorify the contending generals, scant value is attached to a painting unsigned or unattributed to a master, but we see, we admire, we read of and think about and live in our great buildings, the beautiful structures of antiquity and of our own times, and never waste a thought about their designers, the men who created them and placed them as the most conspicuous and unerring milestones in the progress of our civilization.

## DESIGNERS DISREGARDED AND UNKNOWN.

People go into ecstasies about the Parthenon. The very wise will tell you, perhaps, that Phidias designed it; that is, if any should deign to ask whose work it is; but that shows how little is known about it. Phidias did but the sculptural work, the embellishment. Ictinus was the architect. Not one out of a hundred thousand of you know it, either.

How many of you know that the Coliseum at Rome was designed by Rabirius and completed by Mustius?

Michael Angelo Buonarroti did manage to get himself handed down to posterity, the one man of them all who was saved from darkest oblivion. I wonder how he managed it. I believe that about one person out of every twenty thousand who visit St. Peter's at Rome learns that he had something to do with its design. But then, this spasm of knowledge is counterbalanced by the supreme indifference—concerning architects—with which we visit an equally imposing domed structure, the magnificent capitol at Washington. We praise its splendid outlines and step reverently through its sacred halls, but not one out of two hundred thousand who visit it give a snap of the finger for the men from whose brains it sprang. Who cares a rap about Hallet, or Hadfield, or Hoban, or Latrobe, or Walter?

For our indifference to the genius of past generations our text-books, schools and histories are to blame. It has become the fashion with those guides to public opinion to ignore our profession, while they rapturously extol the warriors, the poets, the travellers, the monks of old.

As a matter of fact, I am not quite sure whether it is that that public indifference has influenced those authorities to thus neglect the practitioners of the finest of fine arts, or that those authorities are really to blame primarily for that state of public opinion. Perhaps the fault may lie with the architects themselves.

Then, too, familiarity certainly does breed contempt, you know. Achievements in other lines are more noticed, talked about, because less is seen of them and their actual accomplishments, the mode of procedure. A great bridge is finished, it is something people do not see every day, its engineer is feasted and dined and glorified. You see his picture in the papers, much is made over him. A new opera is played, the composer is loudly called for, bouquets and speeches are thrown at him; he, too, is a great man, if only for a day. But do you ever hear of any fuss being made over an architect?

A great building is completed; we are accustomed to great buildings, be it ever so grand, however splendid an achievement of engineering skill and artistic perfection; the only thing you will hear about is a lot of grumbling because it was not finished in thirty days instead of the year it did take to build it. It is occupied in unseemly haste, while men are still working in it; everything is tumbled into it in undignified confusion; there may be an opening banquet given to the directors of the institution, who will pat each other on the back and swell up in righteous pride over *their* great accomplishment; a poor "half-tone" of the building, with all the names and pedigrees of the aforesaid directors, will appear in the next morning's papers. But who is the architect? Who designed the building, guided its infant steps, as it were, foresaw all the difficulties that would beset it, and finally completed it, ready for that opening banquet? Who knows, and, furthermore, who cares a continental?

I have seen of late an article or two in some magazine or other throwing wordy bouquets at the profession, describing in glowing terms the enormous fees we get, and the wondrous things we do. These articles were great surprises to me, for they actually indicated some public interest in us—or the editors would not have published them. But that sort of thing is on the milk-and-water order. More heroic treatment is necessary if we really desire to attain the place in public esteem that the accomplishments of some of our number would seem to entitle the profession to.

## LACKS DIGNITY OF OTHER PROFESSIONS.

We should rank with the lawyers, the doctors, the ministers. That we do not is, I think, entirely our own fault. We have cheapened ourselves and brought the whole profession down to a low level of consideration indeed.

Let us glance at things as they really are.

Few doctors go about soliciting practice. You call those who do charlatans. A lawyer who would beg you to give him a case, or offer to prepare briefs until you found one to please you, you would put down as a small fry—a pettifogger of the lowest type. Now, we solicit business actually, or, at least, indirectly, by our everlasting willingness—the best of us, too—to compete for it.

Of course, there are those among us who are dignified, who have made enough of a name to insure some people coming to them direct anyway, or who have married well and cultivated their brothers-in-law and other relatives so assiduously that they have an assured practice; yet these, also, itch to get into competition occasionally. The others will sit about a man's doorstep whom they suspect of even dreaming of building a house, and they will plead and beg for that commission; they will turn the whole broadside of friends and politics and other "pulls" upon a committee in charge of a church or