

ACCORDING to a recent decision of the Court of Appeal in New York, builders of fire escapes are legally responsible for loss of life or limb which may arise from defects in their construction. In the case under review, a man while escaping from a burning factory was scorched by the flames issuing from a window and lost his footing, falling not on the platform of the escape, but to the ground. The Court held that the escape was not so constructed as to afford a safe means of retreat, and awarded damages.

THE galleries of the Parliamentary Library at Ottawa are floored with semi-transparent glass, which has the effect of shedding downward natural light in daytime, and upward artificial light at night. The Chief Librarian, Mr. Griffin, is of opinion that it is the material best adapted for the purpose. The problem now confronting the Librarian and Parliament is how to meet the requirements for increased accommodation without impairing the architectural beauty of the building. The only road out of the difficulty seems to lie in the direction of an additional and distinct building.

MR. Joseph Neilson, a well known engineer and railway contractor, of London, England, was in Toronto recently, and paid the city quite a compliment on the excellent condition of its streets. Nor is it the first compliment of the kind which Mr. Neilson has paid Toronto, for after a previous visit in 1868, and seeing our wooden block pavements on plank foundation, he offered to lay a similar pavement in London. The offer was refused, but subsequently block pavements on concrete foundations were adopted. In the moist climate of England asphalt is so slippery as to cause serious disadvantage. Jarrah wood from western Australia, which is very dense, is being substituted for pine and asphalt.

A WRITER in Architecture and Building puts in a plea on behalf of high buildings, but he seems to look at the matter largely from a selfish standpoint. He professes not to understand the agitation which has arisen against these huge structures—scientific monuments of the resources of our times, as he calls them—and condemns in no measured terms the enactment of laws against them. As we understand it, the agitation is based largely on sanitary grounds. A street lined with sky-scraping buildings can get little sunlight, and sunshine is a necessary requisite to health and comfort. It does not seem strange, to our way of thinking, that there should be a revulsion against these towers very early in their history.

IT is undoubtedly to the interest of the architect to seek a wide acquaintance in the community where he resides, as upon the number and character of his friends, combined with his own individual ability, will depend the volume of his practice. Attention has recently been directed to this phase of architectural practice by the fact that a commission has very unexpectedly reached a Toronto architect from Christiana, Sweden, to prepare plans for three dwellings of American type to be erected in that city. The client is a Swedish gentleman who for a couple of years occupied a position in one of the Toronto banks, but afterwards returned to his native land, accumulated money, is about to marry, and wishes to enjoy the comforts which the domestic architecture of Canada affords.

IN designing their buildings architects should endeavor to keep out of ruts. It is not unfrequently possible to distinguish the architect of a building by a single feature of design to which he has become partial, and which he has repeated over and over again in his practice. The writer has in mind a certain style of turret, the favorite of a certain architect, and which may be seen adorning the corners of half a dozen new residences, all within a quarter of a mile of each other. Because an architectural feature has been found to look well in a certain position is not sufficient reason for its unlimited reproduction. By working thus in a groove, architects are standing in the way of variety of architectural expression, and helping to perpetuate the monotony which marks to too great an extent the appearance of many of the business and residential streets of Canadian towns and cities.

WHEN we read in foreign architectural journals accounts of the conventions of the National Associations of Builders of the United States, Great Britain and Australia, we are led to wonder to what may be attributed the entire absence of organization on the part of Canadian builders and contractors. Are the conditions here so nearly perfect that there is nothing in the nature of reforms to be considered, either in methods of construction or as regards the relation of the building trades to other branches of business, or are the builders of Canada behind the times in the matter of organization?

A USEFUL little pamphlet entitled "How to construct and equip mills, factories and warehouses as fire hazards," has been issued by Messrs. Scott & Walmsley, fire underwriters, of Toronto. The authors regard fireproof construction as impracticable, but suggest means to bring about slow combustion, and facilities for extinguishing fires. Special stress is laid upon the danger of hollow spaces in walls, roof and floors, where fire may lurk unobserved, and which it is difficult to reach when discovered. If builders would follow the suggestions contained in this useful little work fires would be of less frequent occurrence.

THE rapid increase in the use of concrete for sidewalks, floors and other like purposes, has caused an unprecedented demand for cement. A large proportion of the cement is imported from England, Germany and the United States, but there is no reason why more should not be manufactured in Canada. We have the raw material, and a little capital and enterprise would keep some of the money at home which is now sent abroad. The main difficulty is that extensive experience is required, and that kind of experience which can only be acquired on the spot, for material from which cement is made varies greatly in quality, and unless properly worked the output is very liable to be inferior.

PARIS has hitherto been supposed to possess the largest theatre in the modern world, though our ancient friends could outdo us in this respect. But Ichabod, the glory has departed from the gay French capital, and the largest city in the world now possesses the largest theatre. It was opened in London, at Earl's Court exhibition, on August 31st. The building is 417 feet long and 220 feet wide, and the height of the roof 117 feet. The stage is 315x100 feet, large enough surely to accommodate any company. There are nearly 5,000 seats, and being without pillars, the view is good from nearly all of them. We are not told about its acoustic properties, but presume they are as perfect as can be secured. Compared with the Massey Hall in Toronto, this new theatre has considerably greater accommodation, the Massey Hall having seats for 3,500 in front of the stage.

IN the last number of the ARCHITECT AND BUILDER we referred to the by-law in force in Toronto restricting the area of certain classes of buildings to 4,000 feet, and the way it is ignored. Since then the matter has come before the City Council, a movement having been made to repeal the by-law. Ald. Shaw, Chief Graham, of the fire department, and Mr. Coatsworth, City Commissioner, went to Buffalo to inspect certain fire appliances, and took occasion to visit some of the departmental stores, where they found that there was no restriction, one shop there having an area of 32,900 feet. When they returned they recommended the repeal of the by-law, which recommendation the Fire and Light Committee passed on to the Council with its approval. But the architects of the city rose in arms, and when the matter came up the Council referred it back, so that the restriction continues in the meantime, but parties who have violated it will not be prosecuted. Our opinion remains unchanged. If an unlimited area is wanted the building should be made fire-proof. It is not right that any one should jeopardize his neighbor's property. Immense floor areas, filled with inflammable materials, whether goods in a departmental shop, or oil or other material in a factory, are hazardous, and the by-law is founded on a just conception of the situation. We do not need to follow the example of Buffalo or New York in this matter.