

THE LONDON COMPETITION.

WE desire to draw attention to the unfairness of the conditions under which competitive plans are invited for the re-building of Dundas street Methodist church, London, Ont. These conditions are as follows:

"The trustees do not bind themselves to accept any plan, but should they select one, and desire to use the same without employing the architect of such plan, he shall provide all necessary specifications and working drawings for the sum of \$400—four hundred dollars.

"First drawings and estimates to be delivered to the Secretary in London on or before the 21st day of March, 1895, and completed specifications and working drawings to be ready for inspection and use of contractors on or before the 11th day of April, 1895.

"The architect to state in writing what percentage on his estimate he will charge to personally superintend the erection and completion of the work, and should the trustees engage him for such service, then the aforesaid \$400 will not be paid for plans, it being agreed that the percentage named by the architect includes plans, specifications and superintendence of the work.

"Architects preparing plans will please withhold their names from said plans, and instead of name put thereon a distinctive mark, advising us under separate sealed cover what mark they will use.

"Kindly advise if you will submit plans.

Among the principal objections to these conditions, the following may be cited: (1) They do not guarantee that the best plans will be accepted; (2) Only one per cent. is offered for working plans and specifications, instead of 2½ per cent.; (3) Cheap work is invited by requesting architects to state *what they will charge* for doing the work where there is only one possible percentage which can be charged by respectable architects. We cannot see how any self-respecting architect can consent to enter a competition under such conditions as these.

TORONTO BUILDERS' EXCHANGE.

IN recognition of his valuable services as President of the Exchange, Mr. William Pears was recently presented with the following address: "In accordance with the unanimous vote of the Builders' Exchange, as expressed at the annual meeting held on January 21st, it is requested that you accept the accompanying cigar-case as a slight expression of the friendship and good feeling entertained towards you by your fellow-members. During your two terms of office as president of the Exchange, no effort was wanting on your part to promote the efficiency and usefulness of this association, and it is hoped that the accompanying memento may express in some degree the appreciation of your fellow-members. With best wishes for the welfare of yourself and family, we remain, yours truly, John B. Vick, Geo. Oakley, C. S. Boon, on behalf of the Exchange."

PERSONAL.

Mr. R. Mackay Fripp, F. R. I. B. A., of Vancouver, B. C., passed through Toronto last month en route for Europe.

Mr. Geo. A. Clare, of the firm of Clare Bros., of Preston, Ont., has been honored with the Conservative nomination for the House of Commons, for the South Riding of Waterloo, Ont.

Mr. W. W. Summers, one of the oldest contractors in Hamilton, and well known in Masonic circles, died in that city last month. Mr. Summers was born in Hadleigh, Essex county, England, on January 2, 1822. He came to Hamilton in 1854 to superintend the erection of the Anglo-American Hotel, now the Wesleyan Ladies' College.

Intelligence comes from British Columbia of the death at the Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, of Mr. Frederick Toms, the well-known Ottawa contractor. Mr. Toms was attacked by bronchial pneumonia soon after his arrival on the coast, whither he went for the purpose of erecting the new Government building at Victoria. When the gravity of his condition became apparent he abandoned his contract, which was taken over by Messrs. Elford & Smith, of Victoria. Mr. Toms was a native of Newfoundland, and had been engaged on a number of very important works, making his headquarters at Ottawa, where his interest took place.

The news of the death of Mr. N. B. Dick, architect, which occurred at his home in Toronto, last week, came as a sad surprise to his many acquaintances. His death resulted from consumption induced by a severe cold contracted a year ago. Mr. Norman Bethune Dick was born in Toronto in April, 1860, and was the son of the late captain James Dick. He began his architectural education in the office of Messrs. Smith & Gemmell, of Toronto, and after leaving them went to Cleveland and spent considerable time there and in some neighboring cities. On his return to Canada he settled temporarily in Kingston, but subsequently went to St. John, New Brunswick, where the great fire afforded a splendid opening for one in his profession. He commenced practice in Toronto in 1879, and soon enjoyed a quiet but good and steady business, and in 1890 formed a partnership with Mr. A. Frank Wickson. Among the buildings erected by Mr. Dick were the Granite Rink, the Victoria Club House and Rink on Huron street, the Academy of Music, on King street. Mr. Dick was ardently interested in yachting, and has held the position of rear commodore in the Royal Canadian Yacht Club; he was one of the owners of the racing yacht "Zelma." He was one of the original members of the Toronto Architectural Guild, which preceded the formation of the Ontario Association of Architects.

The large Portland cement works erected by the C.P.R. at Vancouver, B.C., have been put in operation under the management of Mr. S. Warsup, late Assistant Superintendent of Messrs. Francis, Sons & Co., of London, Eng. These works have a capacity of 600 barrels per week. All necessary ingredients are obtained in the Province, limestone being procured from Texada Island and clay from Wharnock.

STAFF.

BY W. J. HYNES.

THERE is probably none of the various departments necessary to the completion of our buildings so neglected and misunderstood as plastering. Amongst the many branches of the trade that require a better understanding on the part of architects, is staff.

Staff is a compound principally of plaster of Paris in which a large amount of strong fibre has been incorporated before setting, rendering the resulting cast very strong so that it will stand much rough usage; it may be sawed, nailed and handled much the same as wood. For many years English and European decorators have used similar compositions. Fibrous plaster, plaster and canvas, and like compounds have been used extensively in interiors. They have met with favor because artistic light in weight, easily secured and lasting.

Staff was first used as a temporary decorative material in the Paris Exhibition, where its use was confined to foliations and statuary. The success attending it there led to its adoption at the World's Fair, as the cheapest and best material for mouldings, reliefs, statuary columns—in fact the entire covering of all buildings, inside and outside, was staff, except the larger plain surfaces which were lathed and plastered.

To its use may be largely attributed the architectural and artistic success of the Fair. For the first time in their experience, architects found themselves free to design with practically no limitations. That this liberty was not abused, we have their work as evidence.

As at present composed, staff should not be used for any exterior work, unless for temporary purposes. Plaster of Paris, its principal component part, will not stand the action of frost, nor weather, unless protected by paint or other insoluble washes. At the World's Fair its use on exteriors was justified by the requirements, and the fact that it stood so well the winter of 1892-'93 is greatly in its favor, but there is nothing to justify its application outside on permanent structures.

These objections do not hold against its use on interior work. All that is necessary is a proper understanding of the material and its manner of application. To this end it must be understood that staff work is always cast in moulds. These moulds are made from different materials, as required by the character of the work to be reproduced. A free architectural design will require wood moulds for plain mouldings; plaster-piece-moulds for more intricate designs; white foliations and plastic designs are best reproduced by gelatine moulds which give a faithful copy of the modeller's work to the minutest detail, with all the necessary under-cuts and treatment.

When staff is being cast from the moulds the plaster composition is poured into them in a fluid state, and before this sets the fibre is incorporated. The cast, which results, is very strong, the fibre holding the various parts together even after fracture; it requires a saw to cut it, and nails can be driven into it freely. This admits of its being fixed by nails and screws to the joist, studs, brackets and grounds prepared by the carpenter, and the result is security such as cannot be obtained by the old lath and plaster work. As a covering for wood or iron work there is much to commend this material. Settlements and shrinkage cannot dislodge it when securely nailed. If not fire proof, it certainly is not inflammable, and is also a very poor conductor of heat. These qualities have led to many forms of plaster board, grooved plaster slabs, and other compounds similar to staff for lathing. Sections from three to four feet square are also made for ceiling covering, either plain or decorated, and can be panelled with mouldings or finished plain as may be desired. A staff cornice for an ordinary room does not compel the designer to confine himself to the outline of the angle; the thickness of material is not a consideration; it allows the greatest liberty. It is needless to enlarge upon the possibilities. The World's Columbian Exhibition furnished an object lesson that ought to be remembered.

Staff, like all other materials, has its place, and good sense will dictate its use; it is a covering and decorating material stronger and more lasting than plastering. In addition to this it is most suitable for decorating wood-work, running ornaments, capitals for columns, panels for pilasters, terminals for exposed construction trusses, brackets—in fact any decorations required.

One of the strongest recommendations this material has is its low cost. While the first cost of models in plaster are equal to carving in wood, staff reproductions are cheap; if enough are required from one design, a very low price can be secured.

The facility with which staff can be reproduced in almost any size or design, the faithfulness with which the artist modeller's treatment can be duplicated, are factors that will in time work a great change in the architectural treatment of interiors. Relief work and mouldings will replace the flat surfaces which are now so common. The architect will have an opportunity of stamping his individuality upon interiors, instead of this work being left as now to the modern decorator and his wall paper. A building may have a permanent character all its own, interiorly as well as exteriorly, and not to be subject to whimsical changes of style. This will call for careful study of interior architecture and cannot fail to have a good effect.