

The Canadian Architect & Builder

A Journal of
Constructive and Decorative Art

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY

HUGH C. MACLEAN, LIMITED
TORONTO, CANADA.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Canada and Great Britain	- -	\$2.00
United States and Foreign	- -	2.50

Toronto	MARCH, 1908	Montreal
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THE advent of spring is near. Soon nature shall arise jubilant with song, and beauty adorn every tree. Then we shall see the revival of the building trade after the long rest of winter. The decisive tap of the bricklayer's trowel may then be heard, while at intervals he may be seen laying his plumb-line to the face of the wall to see that every brick is properly adjusted and level. This process may be termed the "material" adjustment. But there is also a preparatory stage which we may call the "business adjustment" which must have his most serious and careful attention, otherwise the whole fabric of "the contract" may suffer disaster. During the long months of winter the architect has been preparing the plans and making out the specification, and now the contractor has them in his possession to figure out the cost. But how has this to be done? There is no schedule of quantities prepared wherewith to facilitate his method of pricing accurately the cost, or give him a basis of satisfaction that he is in any way near the mark. This is a deplorable state of affairs, for he knows that, however carefully he may go over his plans in detail making his calculations, his other competitors may figure out their estimates in a haphazard manner, and be considerably under his amount in the lump sum offer. This to him is a waste of time and energy, and precludes him from getting many jobs that he could have done satisfactorily at his price, at the same time having a reasonable margin of profit. In such circumstances he is either to reduce his offer below that of the lowest competitor, or lose the job. If he adopts the former method, then he may be strongly tempted to give inferior material and workmanship, and ruin his reputation, whereas if he

submits to the latter, he may be a "poor," but "honest" man. To obviate this state of matters among contractors, it seems absolutely essential that an uniform system of measurement be adopted, upon which basis schedules of quantities may be drawn out, and submitted to each contractor to figure upon. This is now being keenly felt by members of the building trades, and is being "voiced" in the building journals. Such a system, applicable to every trade and competent to meet every requirement, has been introduced quite recently into Canada, and it lies within the power of all the Builders' Exchanges throughout the Dominion to adopt the rules connected therewith, and put them into active operation, if they are desirous of having an account and safe method of estimating.

The advantages of this system may be reverted to more particularly at some other time, but we would indicate that accuracy of detail, facility and saving of time in pricing, and the satisfaction that each contractor is working upon the same basis, are some of its prominent characteristics. The prospects for the building trades this season are bright. With the loosening of the firm, cold hands of winter upon the sinews of nature, will come the genial flow of "money circulation" from the banks, and general business and commercial prosperity. There is a vast field for development in the building trade in the large cities and towns of our older provinces, whereas in the growing cities and towns of our Western provinces there are railway and other facilities arising that shall operate in no small measure in promoting our national prosperity.

It is a common saying that "Competition is the life of trade," but frequently it turns out the "death" of trade to some unfortunate speculative builders. There is legitimate and illegitimate competition, and this, we find in all branches of industry and commerce. The former is conducive to a nation's well-being and prosperity, the latter productive of its decay and ultimate dissolution. In connection with the building trades competition is generally controlled by the process of "tendering." This can be legitimately carried out when each contractor has an uniform basis of quantities to operate upon, and carefully and accurately computes each item according to the current rates. But when "guess-work" is resorted to, then we could not class such a method as "legitimate," because it may be either prejudicial to the interests of the contractor or owner. The system of "legitimate tendering" by a basis of accurate quantities would be beneficial to both parties, and prevent much unnecessary litigation. When a schedule of quantities is supplied, the method of pricing is simplified by calculating the cost of the material, the amount of labor expended in its manipulation, and in building or fixing it. These can all be included in the price per superficial foot or yard, lineal foot or yard, or cubic contents specified. When these prices are calculated correctly and extended into the cash column, and