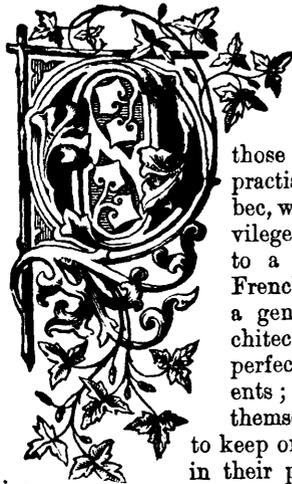


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THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF ARCHITECTS.

OUR remarks are intended to apply particularly to those members of the profession practising in the Province of Quebec, whose responsibilities and privileges are controlled and governed, to a great extent, by the old French laws of this Province. As a general thing, the duties of architects in Canada are very imperfectly understood by their clients; in fact, many architects themselves find it a difficult matter to keep on the right side of the line in their profession without deviating into that of a clerk or foreman of works, so indistinctly is it defined or understood. We should, in the present day, in a large city like Montreal, be surprised to find a practising physician vending his own medicines and doing the duty of a physician and chemist together; or to see an advocate, also, performing the duties of a bailiff; and therefore if architects desire, as a body, to uphold the dignity and importance of their profession, they should refrain from exercising those duties which appertain to a clerk or foreman of works. Unfortunately so little unanimity exists among themselves as Art members of a high profession, and so conflicting are their opinions as to the proper line of their duties—constrained as they are by an old French law which long since ought to have been expunged from the Code—that we regret to think all are not actuated by that high spirit of excellence and ambition which impels onward their brethren on the other side of the Atlantic. Each member here seems to work according to his own ideas, independent of any of those fixed rules of professional etiquette and government, which are necessary to form a standard for their profession. In fact, it is the only profession in Canada whose members are not recognized in law by a Charter defining their proper rights and privileges.

When an architect deviates from the proper line of his profession and assumes also that of a clerk of works,

he, to a great extent, lowers his professional standing; and when he mingles himself up with business transactions between his client and those employed to execute the work, he no longer remains a disinterested adviser, and becomes suspected by both parties; so whilst, on the one hand, the client thinks him too lenient towards the builders and conniving at imperfect workmanship and materials, on the other hand, if he acts as agent to his client, and bound to stand by his interests, whether just or otherwise, he lays himself open to suspicion, and every unprincipled workman thinks him fair game to dupe and over-reach all he can. The want of a general accepted principle among architects is the reason why many clients expect more from them than they have a right to expect, or they to perform, and until the profession becomes more united in action with respect to their proper line of duties, responsibilities and privileges, so long will they be tossed about by the whims and varying fancies of the public, abused for errors, real or supposed, and treated with a general want of confidence.

The duties of an architect may be described as the artistic and constructive adviser of his employer, to prepare the plans and specification, and to see that the work is executed in accordance with his design and in strict conformity with the specification. Nothing can be more prejudicial to the profession than the accepting of any principle that lays an architect open to suspicion, and nothing but a rigid stand on the honor of the profession, by all its members, will ultimately remove the feeling on the part of a client that architects, as a rule, are too lenient towards builders and perform their duties too laxly. It is a mistaken idea of the public that because an architect is paid by his employer to design a house and superintend its construction, that he is, on account of alterations in the plans, &c., to endeavour to exact from the builder more than he is justly bound to perform; it is his duty to be as honorable in his dealings towards the builder as to the client who employs him. It is his duty to see that the work is executed in strict accordance with the spirit of the plans and specifications, and not to deviate one iota from the original, unless by the express order of his client.

When an employer seeks the aid of an architect, his ideas are generally undeveloped; he has an undefined and misty perception of the style of building he