

A TIME SAVING DEVICE FOR CONTRACTORS AND ARCHITECTS.

The primitive system of tendering for builders' work, which still obtains in this country; a system by which every man takes off the quantities for his own trade himself; has nothing that an ordinary person can see to recommend it except this one thing, that, if there is any mistake, the contractor has no one to blame but himself. The question is whether this advantage is an advantage; and, if so, whether it is an advantage sufficient to make up for the labour expended in taking off the quantities of innumerable jobs that he does not get.

It is quite possible for a contractor, who has not enough work, to take off the quantities of sixty or seventy buildings, in the course of a season. When one comes to think what this means for the principal trades, with the multiplicity of detail that has to be

function is to design buildings and see that the designs are carried out. If he, on his side, is conscientious about his work, and the circumstances demand it, of course this all comprehensive function has to be made to comprehend indefinitely. If a carpenter thinks a wire nail is as good as a tenon, the architect has to uphold the other doctrine. If the flooring has not made its appearance when flooring is due, the architect has to see that it arrives, and that it knows enough to come in out of the rain when it does arrive. But these are not properly parts of the architect's function at all. When an architect has supplied drawings for his design, and defined the quality of work required, it properly remains for him only to see that his drawings are understood. That he should have to see that the ordinary methods of good building are followed, or mingle himself with the contractor's business in order to have the work done with proper expedition, is in

FROM THE MASON'S BILL.

Yards	Feet	In.		Rate	\$	cts.
	1178		cube	Sills, scantling lengths 4 feet, 5 feet, 5 feet 9 inches, 7 feet, 7 feet 6 inches.....		
	811		sup	" labour only, preparatory top bed.....		
	560		"	" " , pitched face.....		
	545	6	"	" " , sunk chiselled splay.....		
	511	6	"	" " , groove for water bar.....		
			No. 184	" " , leave stool for jambs.....		
Carried forward					\$	

FROM THE CARPENTER'S BILL.

Yards	Feet	In.		Rate	\$	cts.
	1140		run	3 in. x 4 in. rebated and moulded window frame.....		
	344		"	2 1/2 in. x 6 in. cedar rebated, weathered and grooved sills to last		
	1190		sup	2 1/2 in. moulded rebated fixed sashes, and prepared for plate glass with shifting mouldings, cups and screws.....		
	344		run	Extra on moulded and throated transom to same 2 1/2 in. x 3 in..		
	344		"	1 1/2 in. x 6 in. facia, moulded one edge to window frames, scribed to arches.....		
	1055		"	1 1/2 in. x 2 in. facia, moulded one edge to inside reveals, scribed to walls.....		
	344		"	1 1/2 in. x 4 in. facia, moulded two edges to sills.....		
	344		"	Bed sills in red lead.....		
	344		"	3/8 in. x 1 in. metal water bar and bedding same.....		
					\$	

considered in connection with them, it becomes clear that there is in the system a great loss of labor to the community. A hundred men are occupied in doing the work which one could do, and do much better.

In the meantime while the contractors are playing at being quantity surveyors, their work is calling for them on the buildings upon which they are already engaged. Their current work is of necessity done without the care it ought to have. There is no time to really think about it. If the contractor can keep his contracts moving enough to keep the architect off his back, that is all he can do; and he cannot usually do this. There is no time for precision of work; for that love of seeing things done properly, which is bound to grow upon a workman who understands his work, and has time to think about it: and there is no doubt but that the standard of good work has been very much lowered for this reason.

It is left to the architect to oversee both the running of the work and its execution, neither of which matters are part of his function at all. An architect's

reality a disgraceful state of affairs; and it does not say much for "the dignity of labour" that contractors should be content with it. As long as contractors have not time to attend to their work, and are obliged to go about in fear of the architect, as naughty boys in fear of a schoolmaster; as long as the architect's attention is distracted from his designing; the standard of work is bound to be lower than it ought to be: and building, though one of the arts of peace brings anything but peace to those engaged in it.

To establish a system of tendering, which will relieve contractors of undue labor in that direction, is not likely to be a cure-all for bad work; but it will remove a condition of distracted attention which produces slighted work, from men who would tend naturally to do good work if they could give their minds to it; and it is safe doctrine to assume that these are in the majority.

The way out of the difficulty is evidently to have quantities supplied by a firm of quantity surveyors. Then the contractor need spend no more time over the