

The system of appointing an assessor or professional judge in English architectural competitions is gaining ground, and marks a new era in the history of the craft and in the education of the public. The aforesaid public is, we hope, beginning to see that men of ability will not put themselves unreservedly into the hands of every Tom, Dick and Harry who may happen to be foisted on to a building committee regardless of fitness for the position. The next point that should be strenuously insisted upon by architects, is the naming of the judge or judges simultaneously with the announcement of the competition, and that the terms of competition should be drawn up by or with their advice. When this procedure is followed, the competitor knows what he is about and what to expect. With regard to the tendency to pander to the tastes of the assessor, "Goth," in *Building News* "Wayside Notes," puts it naively when he says:—"There is such a thing as—there has, indeed, been too much—pandering to the tastes of the assessor, but short of this it is to the common advantage of competitors to know that Mr. Dog-tooth or Mr. Egg-and-Tongue has been appointed. Panders, doubtless, often deceive themselves, as there must be many men who would rather be prejudiced against competitors that they suspected of pandering to their known views on architectural design. My own reason for liking to see the name of the assessor beforehand is, that one is prevented from wasting time on a subject of which the assessor may be ignorant. Often architects, unlearned in the design of the class of buildings to which a certain competitor refers, have been appointed assessors, and I can say from experience that it is no joyful news to learn that an assessor has been appointed to judge plans who knows about as much about the special design of the particular building as a milkman knows how to make milk."

Appropos of the above remarks on competitions comes the news that the government of New South Wales has decided to throw open to competition all public buildings in future erected in the colony at a cost of £10,000 and upwards. The conditions have been prepared by a commission of prominent architects, including the government architect, and the advertisement of the first competition, a goal to cost £16,000, has been published. We note as part of the conditions that the drawings will be placed before a board of advisers consisting of (a) the government architect, (b) an officer from the department for which the special building is intended, to be appointed by the ministerial head of that department, and (c) one non-official and non-competing architect to be chosen by the Minister of Public Works. The local architects are, like their English confreres, very desirous of having all the names of the board published, indicating that there seems to be world-wide consensus of opinion on this point. The conditions are on the whole very satisfactory and such as a professional board would be expected to draw up.

M. BRINCOURT, in Planat's "Encyclopédie de l'Architecture et de la Construction," has an article on the architecture of the United States, which is most interesting as being the estimate of a representative of a nation which has long since through its ateliers crystalized the art of architecture into a classic conservatism which only a comparatively few bold spirits have been able to break through. To him, therefore, the point of interest is, that this architecture represents the manners and civilization of a new people, ingenious, practical, with no past and no school behind them. Their ideas have been borrowed from the various countries which they have come in contact with, and they have copied, assimilated and modified to suit their own ideas and tastes. M. Brincourt then proceeds to cite a few examples of religious, civil and private architecture. He regards the first as the least original or characteristic, especially in edifices of importance, and he traces the influence of the French school, but with English inspirations attributable to the similarity of religious beliefs and forms. He looks upon the designs of the less pretentious chapels as the embodiment of odd and unexpected conceptions, some of which indicate on the exterior no religious use whatever. With regard to the civil architecture of the United States, he notes the prevailing tendency to what he terms the Anglo-Romanesque, while the classic has its devotees, reproducing European buildings, which he thinks look somewhat strange and out of place in their new settings. Some of the tall office buildings are considered interesting, and their architects are

complimented for the, on the whole, successful solution of a most difficult problem. The planning of buildings for athletic associations, with their complications of bathing conveniences, gymnasiums, club rooms and parlors, is set down as distinctively American, as is also the planning of the monster hotels, such as the De Soto, at Savannah and the Ponce de Leon, at St. Augustine.

Coming now to private, or domestic, architecture, M. Brincourt abounds with praise. To use his own words, it is "varied and original, spirited and graphic," and "possesses all the qualities needed to attract and charm." He thinks that even in cities, where the buildings must be kept in line and are limited by stiff party walls on either side, a successful treatment is obtained by means of cleverly managed projections and other features, giving individuality of character to the various houses. Then when economy of space ceases to be a *sine qua non*, and the architect plans for the suburbs or the country, what he terms to be the "suppleness" of the designer displays itself, and this suppleness is, he thinks, employed with much charm in their villas and cottages. Confusion and restlessness, he considers, result from the attempt, especially in pretentious houses, to produce silhouette and pretentious effects. The favorite architectural elements appear to him to be the tower and the porch, the omission of the former feature seeming to be the exception in all houses above the ordinary. He closes as follows:—"To recapitulate, the architecture of the United States, made up from different schools and styles, and adapted to new and special needs, by an essentially practical and industrious people, is full of instructiveness. Not feeling forced to follow traditions which are often incompatible with modern needs, the American architects are right in attempting merely to satisfy, as artistically as possible but also in the most practical way, the requirements of their present mode of life; and it is along that line that their productions may be studied with greatest profit."

A SERIOUS CASE.

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EDITOR CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.

"ARCHITECTS AND THE LAW."

SIR,—I should like to call the attention of the profession to a case recently decided in the English courts against an architect, which, if it is to form a precedent, is a very dangerous one. Moot v. Newmarch; tried 10th July, 1891; London. The plaintiff Moot is a doctor, and he desired to have his surgery, which is built at the side of his house, enlarged. He employed the defendant, Newmarch, an architect, to carry out the work for him.

There were some houses in the rear of the plaintiff's surgery, and the owners obtained an injunction to prevent the doctor from proceeding with the enlargement of his surgery, on the ground that the light and air to these houses would be interfered with. The doctor could not resist the application for the injunction, and had to pay the cost, amounting to £277 5s. 10d. He then sued his architect, Newmarch, for this amount as damages, on the ground that he had been negligent in not obtaining the consent of the owners of the houses in the rear to the proposed additions to the surgery.

The architect denied that there was any duty upon him to obtain such consent, and he counterclaimed £125 for professional services. To meet the counterclaim the plaintiff paid into court £66 11s.

The jury, after listening to the case for a day and a half, in fifteen minutes decided that the architect was liable, and as to the counterclaim, the sum paid into court was sufficient.

Such a responsibility has never before been thrust upon architects, but now that this decision has been given, it behooves architects to remember that they must either make themselves acquainted with all the rights and privileges of all "adjoining owners," and to do this must spend a great deal of time in hunting up and perusing leases, deeds of sale, and all such documents, or they must enter into an agreement in writing with the client to the effect that the responsibility of interfering with any such rights rests upon him (the client), and not upon the architect.

Yours truly,

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