

THE ARCHITECT.*

As this is the first time that I have had the pleasure of reading a paper either before architects or others I sincerely trust that you will bear with me, look kindly upon any errors I may make, and if the paper as a whole be weak I hope you will be light in your vituperation and that I may be strengthened in this to better prepare another at some other time. I have chosen as you see for a subject "The Architect."

It has been said that any one possessing the knowledge of a poor carpenter, the skill of an indifferent draughtsman, a little audacity and a ten dollar bill, can appoint himself an architect. Certainly in the present state of affairs all persons are privileged alike in practising architecture, or rather in, shall I say, designing, and superintending the construction of buildings, notwithstanding the important consideration of health and safety of life involved, to say nothing of the hideous aberrations that our cities and towns are often besmeared with by men whose only passport to public patronage is their "gall" and the assumption of the name of architect.

It seems a pity that something cannot be done to limit the practice of architecture to properly qualified men. I have sometimes thought that instead of having the word "Registered" removed from Clause 25 of the Ontario Architects' Act, that those only who have passed examination be allowed to call themselves "Registered"; all others who though still being allowed to practice, would not term themselves "registered architects" and thus save the ignorant public, if they choose, from being victimized.

I have also thought a measure of the trouble might be averted, the beauty of the city improved and the architectural profession edified, if the city would not grant a permit for any building unless a copy of the plan as made by, and bearing the signature of an architect be filed, and if the architect would not undertake to make plans for any person unless he be commissioned to superintend the construction of the building as well.

Loan companies and money lenders would have better security for their money if they would insist that the building on which they are asked to advance money should be planned and superintended by an architect.

But before the general public will be able to distinguish between architects and ARCHITECTS, it will necessary that they be educated to distinguish between good and bad architecture—to accomplish which there is no doubt this Association has done and is doing a great deal, but perhaps if architects would voice their opinions through the press oftener on things architectural the matter would receive more consideration from the public. The taste of the coming generation would be greatly cultivated along this line if the study of architecture were brought into our public schools. In whatever way this great change shall be brought about I cannot say, but I sincerely trust that the time is not far distant when incompetent men, such as real estate agents and mechanics, will not be allowed to practice architecture without the proper qualifications.

How often we see exemplified the sarcasm of Lessing when he says—

Tomkins forsakes his last and awl
For literary squabbles,
Styles himself poet
But his trade remains the same—he cobbles.

I remember hearing of one of this stamp erecting a large building for manufacturing purposes where all the internal supports were wooden posts from basement floor to roof; the weight to be imposed on each support would be something enormous. Under each post he had one stone 18" x 18" x 9" resting on the earth, and but for the better judgment of the builder who objected to carrying out the plans in this respect, there would probably have been very disastrous results. This architect, with fear and trembling, went to the owner and made the excuse that owing to the softness of the earth which he had not foreseen, it would be necessary to enlarge the footings under the posts.

When we hear such things as this about people who call themselves architects, we can hardly wonder at owners employing what is known as the "practical man," instead of an architect, for this kind of work.

Plagiarism, or purloining the designs of others and calling them your own, is, unfortunately practiced by this class of people who usurp the name of architect, who, if they do not crib the entire design, pick out the features they think suitable for their purpose from the published work of other architects and who manage in this way to form some sort of a design, and hearing whatever praise the unsuspecting client may have given expression to, he "bears his blushing honors thick upon him" just as if they had been honestly merited. I remember being asked to compete for a small country church. Out of respect for the feelings of the kind friend through whose influence I was asked, I submitted plans, but was not, however, the fortunate man. In conversation with the secretary of the Building Committee he informed me that he had in his possession one design which met with the approval of the committee. He showed me the plans and perspective drawing, the latter being a tracing from the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER of a published design which I myself had made.

Dryden has aptly marked the three steps in the career of most men of genius, thus—

"What the child admired
The youth endeavored and the man acquired."

In my mind I can scarcely conceive of a man being proficient in this profession whose career has not been marked by these three steps—one who has studied the profession from his early youth, spent a number of years in the office of a recognized member of the profession at all kinds of work in connection with architecture, and who makes a constant study of his profession.

It is perhaps a misfortune of the profession that its members must be at once artists, business men and scientific experts, and they cannot choose to be either more than the other without great injury to their usefulness and success. It is thought by a great many to be beyond human capacity to excel in design and anything else at the same time. The man who would be a thorough architect, while taking great pleasure in exercising his designing qualities, should not overlook the importance of making constant efforts to keep himself familiar with details of construction, prices and specifications.

It is often found that an architect for fear of discouraging his client at the beginning, systematically makes all sorts of encouraging responses to enquiries regarding the cost, and does everything to get a building started; so the owner after having seen a most elaborate sketch is tempted to go on with the work, although the tenders have now exceeded his appropriation by say \$2,000. Afterwards tenders are to be taken for mantels, gas fixtures, heating, etc. Of course the architect told him that these were not included in the original estimate, but he had no idea they would run into so much money: so that when the building is completed it has cost several thousand dollars more than he intended. The owner in his discouragement of course blames the architect. If the architect had spoken plainly to his client in the first place and told him he was expecting too much for the money, all the trouble would most likely have been prevented. There is far more merit in being able to build well on a minimum allowance than to design artistically, but unfortunately without any regard for cost. What

credit is it to the architect who makes a pretty building where cost has not been a consideration?

The architect should bear in mind that his first clients will generally be his personal friends, and that defective specifications or ignorant supervision, bad construction or impossible plans, may bring extra expense and bitter disappointment to them; and to him, an unfavorable reputation from which he will suffer through his whole professional life.

I have heard very many definitions of what an architect is. The most amusing one to me was from the simple son of a lady client. It was my unpleasant duty, at one stage of the work, to condemn a large piece of Credit Valley stone. The contractor in the presence of Bob, the son, was affirming very forcibly that he thought the stone was good enough, and expressed several other things that he thought. "Well," says Bob, "That's all right, Mr. —, but there's a man paid to do the thinking."

There was a lesson in the remark for me, and to every conscientious architect, to be always thoughtful of his work, considering every detail—that the design be most suited to the purpose for which it is intended and to the purse of the owner—that from the foundation to the ridge every constructional problem be thoroughly considered, and that when completed the building will be beautiful. We will then find we shall have the mightiest of all proofs of success, that our clients will come to us for plans the next time they build, and use their influence with others on our behalf.

HAMILTON.

(Correspondence of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.)

A special committee of the Hamilton City Council have recently recommended that the building by-law be amended by extending the fire limits, and providing that all schools, theatres, and other public buildings shall have fire escapes attached, and that no explosives be permitted to be stored in any building. The owner or contractor is made liable for the infraction of the by-law. The fire limits, which at present are Bay street on the west, John street east, the mountain on the south, and the Grand Trunk railway on the north, are to be changed to Wentworth street on the east, from the Grand Trunk Railway to the Northern and North-Western track, thence west to Ferguson avenue, south to Aberdeen avenue, west to Locke street, north to King street, west to Dundurn street, north to the Grand Trunk railway tracks, thence in a south-east direction to Queen street, south along that street to York street, east to Hess, north to Cannon, east to Bay street, and north to the Grand Trunk railway. Builders will be required to deposit with the inspector a ground plan of the buildings. Nothing but stone or brick buildings will be permitted to be erected within the fire limits.

MONTREAL.

(Correspondence of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.)

Mr. Geo. E. Wade, R. A., of London, Eng., who won the competition for designs for a memorial statue to the late Sir John A. Macdonald, to be erected on Dominion Square, in this city, has sent a representative here in the person of Mr. F. A. Williams to make the preliminary arrangements. The statue is to cost \$20,000, which amount has already been subscribed. It will stand on a base of unpolished granite, 12 feet in height, with steps on the four sides leading up to the pedestal of the main statue. The statue itself will be surrounded by twelve polished red granite clustered columns fourteen feet in height, and with bronze caps. Resting on these columns is a sculptured arch nine feet in height, with reliefs in bronze, emblematical of Canada's progress. Resting on the arch are four colossal lions in bronze, and above these stand a group of seven figures, holding shields and linked arm-in-arm to represent the seven provinces of the Dominion, which were confederated by Sir John Macdonald. In the centre of these figures, and overtopping them, will be the statue of the Queen of Plenty, holding in her hand a cornucopia filled with Canadian products. Different bronzes, representing the various industries of the country, are placed at the base of the pillars. The model of the statue has been completed by Mr. Wade, and has been approved by Her Majesty, the Queen, and the Prince of Wales. The impression prevails that the winners of the second and third prizes in this competition will be declared to be Mr. Griffiths, of London, Eng., and Signor Xemenes, of Rome.

Contracts are about to be let for the erection of the Canada Life Association's new office building, plans for which have been prepared by Mr. Waite, of Buffalo. The building, which has been designed in the free Renaissance style, will consist of seven stories and a basement. It will stand at the corner of St. James and St. Peter street, extending back to Fortification Lane. It will have a frontage of 58 feet on St. James street. The frame work will be of steel, encased in fire proof materials and faced with Ohio blue stone. There will be two principal entrances, on James and St. Peter streets respectively. Offices for the owners will be arranged on the first floor; the ground floor story is to be occupied by the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

Referring to the appointment of a committee by the Architectural League of New York to draft an ordinance to forbid the erection of buildings of excessive height, on the ground of their being insecure, insanitary and inartistic, the Insurance and Finance Chronicle, of this city, says: If the action of the architects is backed up by the insurance companies, and all who have judgment enough to realize how health must be endangered by streets running through deep defiles of buildings that keep out sunlight and air, there will be a limit placed on these Babel-like structures.

A dinner was recently tendered at the St. James club, in this city, to the Hon. Mr. Nantel, Provincial Commissioner of Public Works, on the eve of his departure on an extended trip to Europe and the Holy Land.

The Building Inspector reports that the number of buildings erected during 1893 was 561 as compared with 640 in the previous year. The value of the buildings erected last year was \$2,835,800, as against \$2,598,825 in 1892, thus showing the buildings put up last year to have been of a much superior class to those of the previous year. As the result of his recent visit to the convention of Building Commissioners and Inspectors of the United States, Mr. Lacroix will recommend that our building ordinance be amended so as to provide for the erection of fire escapes to a much greater extent than heretofore.

An old stone front building in the rear of the Home of the Sisters of Notre Dame collapsed recently, throwing into the street the walls and windows of the third story. Fortunately no one happened to be passing at the time; if there had been, one or more deaths would have to be recorded. This occurrence points to the necessity for frequent and careful inspection of old structures which front on public thoroughfares. It is due to our Building Inspector to say that he has usually shown himself to be thoroughly alive to the duties of his position in this regard.

The fifteenth annual spring exhibition of the Montreal Art Association will be opened on April 20th next in the galleries of the Association, and will close on May 9.

* Paper read by Mr. H. Simpson, read at the fifth annual convention of the Ontario Association of Architects.