

Jones; but that is a long time ago and the structural stone seems to be practically unimpaired.

Vitiated Air in Tall Buildings.

If overcrowding in lofty buildings is considered a menace to health, so much so that a speaker in New York has held the sky-scraper and the hospital for tuberculosis to be parallel institutions, what are we to say of the fate of those persons who spend their days in the top storeys of the sky-scrappers; whose air supply is the air that has already served its turn in the lower storeys. Anyone who has ever occupied a room on the top floor of one of these buildings will recognize that they are like flues for the passage of air from below to above. A visitor to the roof of one of them through a little door at the top will, if its communication with the main shaft of the building is direct, find it necessary to hold on to his hat to keep it from being blown away by the gust of air that passes out when the door is opened. Even in summer, when the balance of weight might, one would think, be in favor of the air within the building, it is impossible to open the windows in the top rooms of a tall building without annoyance from the draught, which flutters papers every time the door is opened, and has been known to flutter them out of the window. Here is something to be obviated in planning these buildings. The fresh air question does not always command respect in active life, but it is obvious that it is one with a question that does, viz., the fire question, or at any rate the question of suffocating smoke.

Overhead Signs and Telephone Poles.

The Toronto Board of Control has ordered the removal of signs which over-hang the street. The time limit for the change being set a year away, the support of public opinion may be necessary to prevent reversal of the decision. Merchants who have spent a good deal of money upon signs of this description protest that their signs are an ornament to the street. In a picturesque way there is perhaps something to be said for them, but, even if the question were one of beauty merely, rather than of safety, it must be said that this kind of adornment, which is said to enliven the streets of a Chinese town, is hardly the thing for a city like Toronto. A marshalling of lines in some way is necessary for the attainment of appropriate dignity. On this ground there is therefore an argument for getting rid of the higgledy-piggledy effect of projecting signs.

There is however not much use in talking about any dignity in streets that have overhead wires and are lined by telephone poles sticking up at every angle. If any preacher wants a comparison for the way in which evil fills the eye to the exclusion of the good let him refer to the telephone poles. Slight as they are and small in comparison with the buildings beside them it is extraordinary how the eye selects the drunken lines of the poles to the exclusion of the solid and abundant perpendicular of the buildings behind them. Indeed when there is a conflict of a single building and a single pole it is often the building that looks out of plumb, the eye giving all its confidence to the telephone company.

A Torontonion writing from Cape Town says he could not understand why the town, though smaller, is so much more pleasing and dignified than Toronto, until

it struck him that it was the absence of telephone poles. There seems to be no town in Canada so small that it can do without the telephone, and we have to submit to the accompaniment of pine poles sticking up in our streets as they do in our forests. If there is anything in harmoniousness of character we have got it. Where nature flourishes (after the usual fire) the woods are topped by pine poles. And the habitations of man are similarly adorned.

New Building Laws and Old Buildings.

If the municipal attempt to have the staircase exit from the top floor of the Masonic Temple in Chicago increased, so as to make it sufficient for the uses to which the top floor has been put, is upheld, a precedent will have been created giving power to the municipality to regulate public safety to an extent so much beyond the usual bearing of a by-law that reflection upon it comes in alternate waves of satisfaction and doubt. The conditions of building in the United States are so like our own that a strong regulation must arouse our interest.

The facts are that the Masonic Temple, though built in compliance with the building law in force at the time of its construction, is now considered to be so flagrantly out of date in the matter of provision for the safety of its occupants, in case of fire or panic, that the city authorities have stepped in with demands for changes, and a lower court has ruled that they are within their rights in doing so. The case has been taken to the Appellate Court and further movement in the matter awaits this court's decision.

The present building law will allow no hall of 200 capacity higher than 45 feet above the sidewalk. It will allow a number of halls aggregating not more than a capacity of 500 if the halls are small and there are two sets of staircases provided for egress from them. In the Masonic Temple there are eleven halls with an aggregate capacity of 1,300; and the halls are all on the upper floors, said to be "hundreds of feet" above the maximum height allowed by law. What is required from the owner is to make two clear flights of stairs down to the bottom floor.

It is true, as one American journal says, that there are "owners who are eager to take as little precaution in the matter of public safety in public and semi-public buildings as they can get along with." If a building owner, who sees an expensive restriction coming, considers merely that he has done a good stroke of business if he gets his permit through and his building up before any one has a right to stop him, no freedom of action to deal with him, on the part of a municipality, will be beyond our sympathy. It is well that this sort of builder should know that he is not immune from interference because his building is built. For the other kind who keep genuinely up to current ideas, and only fall behind with time and the advance of experience, it is not such a hard case as may be supposed; for genuine thought is not likely to produce results that will be outclassed before they have served their turn with profit. The Masonic Temple, if it was originally designed for its present uses in the upper floor, never was safe; and that is why it suffers from municipal interference now.