

CORRESPONDENCE

THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS.

Spectator Bldg., Hamilton, Ont., Feb. 6, 1899.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.

SIR,—I have read with interest the report of the meeting of the Ontario Association of Architects in January. The President referred to those "objectors who complain that the Council is not active enough and that the Association fails to give them a direct return for the fees paid, or who are continually crying to the Council to do something—they never say what—to make the Association more interesting to its members." I am not one of these, because I am not a member. But as an outsider, a former member, and one who would come under the President's description of "objectors" if I was a member now, I should like to say a few things. You may remember that the President asked me to attend the convention and read a paper making a suggestion as to how the Association could be made of use to architects outside Toronto. The Registrar, in forwarding the President's invitation, took occasion to "warn me it would be of little use my coming unless I had a scheme prepared, cut and dried." My reply was that I considered it the duty of the Council to prepare such a scheme, and that it was not possible for one man to do the duty of the Board. Please understand my position. If the Ontario Association could be made one particle of use to architects of Ontario, I would gladly apply to be re-admitted to membership, and I should be glad to do all I could to further the Association's objects in my part of the province. But I maintain the Council has followed a policy that, instead of attracting architects to the Association, has driven them away. I do not want to hurt anyone's feelings, but I am going to be a little personal, because this matter is not a private one, but one that concerns every architect in the province, and that there are many who think somewhat in the same way as I do is shown by the fact that, as the President said, the present register of the Association contains the names of only two-thirds of the architects of Ontario. What has the retiring President, Mr. Townsend, done during the whole year of his presidency? Has he succeeded in bringing the Association and the public an inch nearer together? Does he feel that his term of office has redounded one wit to the good of the Association or the public? Does Mr. Langton, as Registrar, think that he is doing anything to draw outside members into closer communion with the Toronto members, or even to help Toronto members themselves, when he feels as he expressed himself at the convention, that he prefers his fireside and his book to taking any interest in furthering the objects of the Toronto Chapter by attending the meetings? And with all due respect to a gentleman of Mr. Belcher's years and professional experience, what possible good can he do the Association as President? Here is a fine opportunity for Mr. Wickson, as Vice-President, with the President non-resident in Toronto. Active work ought to fall to him, and upon him should devolve the initiative of many a good thing. But will he prove himself equal to the occasion? Will he initiate anything, or will he follow in the footsteps of his many predecessors, and be a figure-head only?

Mr. Baker made a suggestion which is by no means new, but which ought to be carried out and should have been years ago, namely, that suitable headquarters for the Association should be provided. Why have there been no rooms where papers were on file, where members might drop in, where country members could come in contact with city members, where the public could find the Association and have proof that it existed? Why? Because the Councils have been behind the times, because there was no life in them, and active notions of any sort were always sneered at and discouraged. Mr. Baker makes the only practical suggestion of any real value, and then the committee appointed to carry out or consider the matter is formed without his name being on the list. No wonder, then, the Association is a failure; no wonder the Treasurer's report is discourag-

ing; no wonder that outside members take no interest, and young architects starting for themselves do not care for membership.

Mr. Townsend, as outgoing President, said in his address that the Council had formulated building laws "which if adopted and enforced," etc. But that is just it; they are not adopted, and municipalities do not take the trouble to adopt the Association's by-laws, because they do not know anything about the Association itself.

"Conventions and exhibitions and public lectures;" how did these educate the public? The public knew hardly anything about them, and the lectures when delivered by architects were so utterly dry that the few "public" who attended one might well be excused from attending a second. Then, when an outsider is brought in to give a lecture on architecture, his theories do not agree with facts, and the public get taught incorrect notions of architecture. As to "esprit de corps," its a fine idea, and in a few cases exists, but as we know from every-day facts how members of the O.A.A. back-bite each another, and exhibit such childish jealousy of each other, to say nothing of the manner in which they are continually wire-pulling and trying to cut each other out of a "job," the less said about "good fellowship" the better, because it is nothing but rank hypocrisy. Architects do not care a fig for the "advancement of the art they love or ought to love"; they are too human and have pockets to fill, and all they care about now-a-days is to fill their own pockets. I do not say that is a good thing—it is a pity—but it is a fact. I think the sooner the Association has an honorary Registrar the better, as suggested as a necessity by the Treasurer, because the Registrar's office is one of great power for good to the whole profession, and a man who fills the office for his "love" of the profession and his desire to advance its interest will do so more earnestly and effectually than one who is paid. Have a paid Secretary if the work requires it, but have an honorary Registrar.

Yours truly,

R. W. GAMBIER-BOUSFIELD.

Canada Life Bldg., Toronto, Feb. 10th, 1899.

Editor CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.

DEAR SIR,—I am obliged to you for sending me Mr. Bousfield's letter to look at. The best answer I can make to it is to repeat what, in my letter inviting him to attend the convention and read a paper upon the subject of how to make the Association of value to its members, I said before: "I may as well warn you that it will be only by working out a scheme practically that you can do much good. There are no new suggestions in your letter (letter to the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER for December). Everything mentioned has been already acted upon; and, unless you are prepared to show how any proposal you may make is to be worked so as to bring success, you may be confronted with the statement that it has been already tried. In other words, if you suggest what has been tried before, you may still make a valuable suggestion if you can show a systematic way of going to work that will give hope of making more of it than has been made before."

There is an instance of this now. The question of whether the Association should have rooms of its own or not is a live question, but it turns upon the question of evidence as to whether a room will be really of such use to members that they will find it worth while to pay for it. If Mr. Bousfield wishes to speak for outsiders and will get any names of outsiders who would resume membership of the Association, so as to share the advantage of such a room and the attendant cost, he will approach the question in an effective manner.

I perhaps ought to point out what Mr. Bousfield could not know, as the order in which the proceedings took place is reversed in the published report: That Mr. Baker was not appointed on the committee connected with his motion because he had just been elected a member of the Council, and in that capacity would meet the committee which was appointed to "confer with the Council."

Yours truly,

W. A. LANGTON.