

THE close of the contractors' "busy season" is approaching, and the hope returns that during the coming winter months steps will be taken to organize a Canadian Association of Builders and Contractors, with the object of remedying the many evils which have crept into the business. These evils, many of which were pointed out in the series of articles on this subject published recently in the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER, have so affected the business, that it is scarcely possible any longer for those engaged in it to secure a living profit. When competition has been carried to this pitch in other lines of business, the men whose interests are affected usually adopt the common-sense view that they are acting the fool's part in cutting one another's throats for the benefit of the public, and proceed to organize for mutual protection. There is ample evidence to prove that the majority of Canadian contractors are doing work at unremunerative figures. A very large number of them are doing even worse than this—absolutely working for nothing, or at a loss. This is a suicidal policy which must end disastrously to all who pursue it. If an association were formed embracing the best men in the ranks of the master builders, the members of which should pledge themselves to refrain from cutting prices to an unprofitable extent, the inferior men who are prepared to sacrifice everything in order to secure a contract, might very well be left to the task of devouring one another and making way for a better order of things. The correspondence on this subject from various towns and cities throughout the province which was published in this journal several months ago, proved conclusively the existence of the evil to which we have referred and a number of others scarcely less damaging, as well as a desire on the part of many master builders for an association to deal with them. The opinion seems to prevail, however, that the initiative should be taken by Toronto men, as representing the largest city in the Province. This is a reasonable view, but we regret to state that thus far Toronto builders have manifested much less interest in the matter than those of other places. Their careless attitude cannot be accounted for on the ground that they do not suffer from the abuses referred to, for we can bear personal testimony to the fact that nowhere have these abuses pressed more heavily than on the shoulders of Toronto contractors. We trust that in a matter affecting so vitally the contractor's pocket, the lethargy of the past will soon give way to determination to adopt intelligent means to secure the fair rewards of honest effort. Our columns will be at all times open for the discussion of this subject.

THE Dominion Trades and Labor Congress, at its recent meeting in Montreal, discussed the subject of technical education. Its views thereon are embodied in the following resolution: "That this congress, while favoring a judicious system of technical education, considers that the system of manual training in our schools, such as proposed by the Minister of Education in Ontario, is prejudicial to the interest and welfare of mechanics and wage earners generally." The discussion which took place on the above resolution shows that the proposal to introduce a system of manual training in the public schools is opposed by the representatives of the unions through fear that it might add to the competition in the labor market, and that some of the "botches" which it is claimed such a system would produce may supplant some of the skilled union laborers. One delegate is reported to have said that "The element he most feared was the theoretical mechanic, who, having friends and influence, crowded practical mechanics out in the cold." Could anything be more absurd than such a method of reasoning? It is a well known fact that a botch cannot do the work of a skillful mechanic, and that a theorist cannot fill the place of a mechanic trained in the school of practical experience. Yet here we have the spectacle of men calling themselves practical, skilled mechanics, acknowledging themselves afraid of the competition of a lot of botches and theorists. Surely such men show but little confidence in their own mechanical ability, and will have no cause to complain if employers of skilled labor take them at their own estimate.

The tenor of the discussion throughout clearly showed that the

delegates to the Congress misunderstood the objects of the system of training which the Minister of Education proposes to introduce. It is not the intention, we believe, to attempt to teach trades in the public schools. Such a proposal would be impracticable in the short period which a boy usually devotes to acquiring an elementary education in the public school. The purpose of the Minister of Education, as we understand it, is simply to make the pupil familiar with the underlying principles of mechanical law, provide means by which he may become acquainted with the purpose for which different tools are used, and perhaps acquire a certain amount of adaptability in their use. This we believe to be the very outside limit to which such a system of instruction could be carried in the public schools, and the effect of it would be to give the boy who intends to learn a trade a start under more advantageous circumstances than at present. It can readily be seen that a boy who enters the workshop possessed of such a preparatory training, will make more rapid progress and ultimately develop into a more intelligent and competent workman, than the lad who commences to learn a trade without any knowledge whatever of mechanical theory, and is compelled to grope for years in the dark before finding out the why and wherefore of things. The youth who would be most benefited by such a course of instruction would be the sons of mechanics, who are in many instances without the means to pursue a University course and enter the ranks of the over-crowded professions. In view of this, the opposition of those professing to speak on behalf of skilled labor, seems singularly ill-advised and ungrateful. It would be interesting to have a definition of the "judicious system of technical education" favored by the Trades and Labor Congress.

#### AN ERROR CORRECTED.

IN the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER for August the statement appeared that the Government had accepted the plans of Mr. Alex. White, of Woodstock, for the new drill shed at Brantford. We presume the information was obtained from one of the Brantford papers, its manifest incorrectness being unfortunately overlooked. Mr. H. James, chief architect of the Militia Department, writes us on the subject as follows: "I notice a paragraph in your paper for August re the Brantford drill shed which is entirely incorrect. Mr. Fred. White of this office took my preliminary plans of this building to Brantford for the inspection of the officers and citizens interested, and I am now busy preparing the drawings necessary to obtain tenders, which I expect will enable the work to be commenced about a month from now."

#### "CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER" SERIES OF PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

THE announcement was made in the August number of this journal of our intention to institute a series of prize competitions, the details of which were to have been published this month.

After giving the matter further consideration, we have decided to elaborate a series of competitions which shall extend over a period of six months or more, and prove a source of interest and profit to our readers throughout the coming year. As the architects' offices are yet crowded with work, and the time of students consequently fully occupied, full details of the entire series of competitions will be held over for publication in our October number.

In the meantime, however, we invite competitive plans for a serving pantry, two square feet in size, showing cupboards, shelving, etc., with details of same. For the best design sent in, a prize of \$5 will be paid, and for the second best design, one year's subscription to the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.

Drawings must be made on sheets of heavy white paper or Bristol board, 14 x 20 inches in size, and must be drawn to allow of their being reduced to one-half the above size. Drawings must be made in *firm, strong lines*, with pen and black ink. No color or brush work will be allowed.

Each drawing must be marked with the *nom de plume* of its