

**T**HE Toronto Saturday Night, last week, sounded a timely note of comment upon a pressing matter in Toronto. It is just four years ago since fire wiped out the centre of Toronto's business blocks. During all that time, much of the property burned ras lain beneath the ruins, and has been an eyesore and a sting to the pride of the citizens. How much revenue has been lost to the citizens by the idleness of all this land cannot be estimated. The city has tried, time and time again to have the railways forced into activity and at the outset of the trouble, private citizens fought against the expropriation of their property, but to no avail. The railways always have their way. The rebuilding of the ruined section, unaffected was a boon to builders and architects. The remaining ruins cover the site of possible buildings which would bring prosperity to many architects and activity to the profession.

Conditions to-day are just at the turning point with the architects. If they are called upon to go through a quiet season, many of them will not be able to figure much profit on the season's work. If activity becomes general, they will have an opportunity to overcome the evil effects of the recent dullness. The commencement of operations on Toronto's Union Station, and the liberation of the neighboring property, now unbuilt upon for fear of its being expropriated also, would go far towards improving things.

Early next month a session of the Board of Railway Commissioners will be held in Toronto to consider this question and also the question of building a railway viaduct along Toronto's front. The railway companies had until June 1st next to complete their Union Station, and if building had been going on during the years while the land has lain idle, the station would probably be near completion today. The railways will ask for an extension of time, and of course they will have to get it. What will they do then? Will they go to sleep again and leave the city for another four years, with a disreputable front? If the commission does its duty it will attach to the extension of time, cast iron conditions to compel the railways to go ahead with the building.

**S**PRING building prospects are the subject of greatest interest to architects just now. Conditions are widely variant in different parts of the country. In Ontario and the older parts of Canada generally, the indications are for a moderately lively summer, but with little promise of any unusual activity. Most of the architects are getting along pretty well, with just enough work to keep their staffs busy. One does not hear of any of the staffs being enlarged. A few of the largest firms are as usual crowded with work. It is noticeable however, that most of the large work now on hand was ordered some time ago. No very large orders are making their appearance just now. The financial depression of the past winter has effected the profession generally, throughout older Canada, and although no disastrous results are looked for conditions will not be so pleasant as they were last summer. Those who were able to make hay while the sun shone last year will have little to complain of, if they find themselves able to take things a little easier this year. It is not likely, however, that matters will remain as quiet as they are for a very long period. Before the summer is well advanced the turn of the tide is expected, and if the present indications of renewed activity materialize, it is probable that building activity will be resumed within a short time.

In the newer parts of Canada, the west in particular, matters are in a different condition altogether. Reports show that although the depression of the winter had some effect, it does not seem to have lessened the desire of the people to put up more buildings. The encouraging crop reports recently received by the Canadian Pacific Railway will go a long way to establish the confidence which has already been developed. It is to be expected that a heavy building season will result in the west. High rates for money are a drawback to some extent, but the great influx of American settlers is certain to make things lively in the building trade. The architects cannot fail to be affected by this. American settlers all bring their effects, together with a fair supply of money. They must have homes. Many of them will build their own temporary homes, but their presence and activity will have a moral and a monetary effect which will stimulate everything industrial, coming within the range of their influence.

British Columbia reports of the building trade show that an exceptionally busy season has already commenced. The activity so general all over the west will be a good thing for the east. Its influence will probably be felt as soon as the building season has got well under way.

### Historic Hotel Disappears.

One of the most interesting landmarks of New York City, the old Fifth Avenue Hotel, has seen its last days. It was closed early this month, and is to be torn down. The Fifth Avenue Hotel was built in 1859 by Paran Stevens, who owned the Tremont House, Boston, after which the Toronto hotel of the same name was called. The ground at the corner of Fifth avenue and Twenty-third street has become too valuable for so small a hotel. The Fifth Avenue was the scene of many historic incidents. The present King of England, then Prince of Wales, stayed there in 1860, and among other celebrities who visited it were, Dom Pedro, of Brazil, who held court there; Crown Prince Marco, of Siam, and the Emperor of Corea. It was the first hotel to install elevators, and thereby paved the way for the skyscraping hotel which is one of the chief causes of driving it out of business.

### Inexpensive Andirons.

If you will examine the andirons in fireplaces of most small apartments, fireplaces where nothing, or at best a gas-log, is to be burned, you will see an example of the cheapest kind of spun brass andiron. It is merely lengths of thin brass piping and lacquered brass balls strung together on invisible iron frames. A slight blow will dent the brass balls, and you have only to pick the things up to realize how flimsy they are.

Many thousands of home builders who have real fireplaces in which they burn wood furnish them with these cheap andirons.

There are plenty of good cast brass andirons made nowadays, but they cost three times as much as a pair of spun brass. You may buy the latter as low as \$2.50 a pair. It is hard to get good modern cast brass andirons for less than \$7 or \$8 a pair, and they come as high as \$100.

It is no longer easy to pick up old cast brass andirons at the junk shops, and the antique shops hold them at high prices. If you keep your eyes open when visiting the country you may still pick up good old andirons at \$3 or \$4 a pair, and they are usually quite as well made as the best of the modern cast brass.—The House Beautiful.