

ARCHITECTURAL FAILURES.

Architecture is not a profession for a poor man to enter; yet it is one which is exceedingly attractive to parents who have not the capital with which to start their sons in what is known as business—in other words in trade. In its lower ranks it is a very cheap profession to enter. The premium asked in small provincial offices is generally small and often non-existent. Instruction of a sort is obtainable in the technical schools at nominal fees, and at the outset of an independent career there is no expensive stock-in-trade required. It is certainly a fact that in all professions the only definite capital upon which a practitioner can depend is his brains, and the only commodity for which he can charge is his time. Yet, in all other professions, there is so considerable an outlay necessitated in the education which is an essential prelude to commencing practice, that a poor man hesitates before entering his son in a calling which demands so great an expense in the initial stages, and the result is that the proportion of men who for want of capital are unable to tide over a period of depression is not so large as it is in architecture.

This condition of affairs, handicapping many a man at the outset of his career, is particularly deplorable in a profession which depends upon one of the most fluctuating of all industries—that of building. The legal professions are by no means so greatly influenced by good and bad seasons, for men will quarrel at all times, and legal business must be done. It is much the same with the medical profession, for the state of trade has little to do with the health of the community, and so long as human beings are subject to human ill, the doctor will find work to do. Given a few bad years of generally depressed trading, the capital available for building enterprise is withdrawn, building ceases, and there is no work left for architects to do. Such has been the condition of affairs now ever since

the boom which preceded the Boer war, and its long continuance in having very very serious effects, to which we have drawn attention on more than one occasion. It is exceedingly difficult to suggest how best to meet the circumstances at this moment. Young men keep crowding into the profession, as is evidenced by the steadily-increasing number of the entrants for Institute examinations, only to find, when they come out of their articles, that there is no room for them either as assistants or principals. They, however, are young, and can look forward to the natural swing of the pendulum, while it is possible that before they have reached the age when the subsequent rebound takes place and bad times recur, there will be some measure of registration such as will put a stop to the entrance of the horde of half-qualified men, who now make the earning of a living so difficult, both for themselves and their more competent brethren. Meanwhile, it would be idle to disguise the fact that there are middle-aged men at the present moment, brought up as architects, who have been honourable practitioners for many years, and now find that they must turn to some other means of earning a livelihood. Those who still retain energy and business capacity can perhaps find work to do. Our advertisement columns show that there is a demand for them by the occasional announcement of a vacancy for a traveller who is acquainted with architectural work. It is not every cultivated gentleman, however, who can in this way put aside the prejudices of a life-time and become a successful traveller or tradesman after having proved an unsuccessful architect. *The Building News.*

The building strike in Zurich, one of the longest and most severe that Switzerland has known, has resulted in a complete victory for the masters. After a three months' struggle, which has been a period of great misery for a large number of families, the men have gone back to work unconditionally. The strike has cost the country and the town of Zurich £4,000.

ARCHITECTS!

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