

CONFEDERATION LIFE ASSOCIATION BUILDING COMPETITION—EXPERTS' REPORT.

TORONTO, October, 19th, 1889.

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DEAR SIR,—In accordance with instructions, I have made a careful examination of the eighteen designs submitted in competition for the proposed building to be erected by the Confederation Life Association in this city, and beg to report,—that in order to arrive at a fair and proper consideration of the merits of the respective designs, I decided that the "Conditions and Instructions" issued by the Association for the guidance of competing architects ought and were intended to be strictly carried out by them, and also should at the same time be a guide to myself in forming due opinion upon the merits of each design.

On the 11th inst., I proceeded to examine and compare the drawings, which were in portfolios each bearing a distinguishing motto or cypher. The sealed envelopes containing the names of the authors were handed to you unopened, and are still in your possession.

After a thorough and careful comparison of the designs, I eventually selected five, as in my opinion the ones which the most closely complied with the "Instructions," and which I also considered the most suitable for the intended building.

Out of these five, the design bearing the motto "Lux" appeared to me to be in all respects the best, and for the following reasons, namely: all the requirements contained in the "Instructions" have been carefully carried out, and the drawings have been prepared with considerable skill, and fully express the intention of their author.

The buildings, i. e., the main or Association's, and that forming the shop on Yonge street, are not only distinct in themselves, but to a great extent entirely separate, having a passage-way of fifteen feet in width between them, excepting a portion of sixteen feet by thirty-two feet on the upper floors on Richmond street, over the archway on the first floor. There is however no connection between the two buildings at any point, and in consequence of this arrangement, light is obtained on all sides for the main building, as well as on three sides for the shop, whilst the risk from fire in either building is very materially diminished.

The main office will be a light well-proportioned room, thoroughly lighted, having a frontage on Victoria street, as well as having windows on the lane in rear, and on the open space on the west side.

The basement, which is entered from the street level, as well as the upper floors are laid out in such a manner as to obtain abundance of light and air, and whilst being ample in size are suitable for tenants requiring single, or offices in suites of useful dimensions.

The attic story has been laid out in a manner which will probably prove a source of revenue, should it be leased for the purpose indicated, where otherwise the space in the roof would be lost.

The exterior of the building is of a very pleasing and distinctive character, and shews at a glance the purpose for which it is intended, namely, a public institution, and at the same time a commercial building.

The shop on Yonge and Richmond streets, whilst distinct in itself, harmonizes with and forms a portion of the whole structure. (It is a question for consideration whether a lighter appearance could be obtained on the Yonge street front ground floor, without injuring the effect evidently aimed at by the designer, viz., that of solidity of base, for the superstructure, by altering its size or increasing the number of the openings on that street.)

Several of the other designs submitted are very meritorious, and give evidence of great painstaking thought in the arrangement of plan, and in character and expression in the elevations. It has been no easy task to determine in my own mind the order in which the three other recipients of prizes should be placed, one design possessing what in my opinion the other lacked.

The drawings submitted by "Business," "Ajax," "Utility," "Observanda," "Practical," "Dorian," "Simplex," "Ici," and "C. L. A.," all possess considerable merit. However, after mature consideration, I have concluded to submit the following, and in the order named; for the second, third and fourth prizes, to the judgment of the directors, as having adhered the most closely to the "Instructions," and laid out the site of the intended buildings to the best advantage, viz:

"BUSINESS."
"OBSERVANDA."
"UTILITY."
"AJAX."

With reference to the above I would remark that "Observanda" has the principal tower on the corner of Yonge street, on the leasehold property. This is the only design having this arrangement, which, however, is not prescribed by the "Instructions."

With regard to "Utility" and "Ajax," bracketed together, I am of opinion that to carry out the latter with the tower, as shown on the "flap" on Richmond street elevation, and perspective sketch, would materially exceed the sum named as the limit of expenditure, and without the tower, a principal feature in the design, the latter would lose one of its salient points of attraction.

Having examined with equal care the whole of the eighteen designs submitted in competition, I have deemed it well to give the Directors a brief synopsis of the notes which I made seriatim upon each during my examination thereof.

"FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT CÆLUM."—"The main, or Association's building, is separated by a party-wall from the leasehold, or shop portion of the edifice. The main office fronts on Richmond street, and would thus have good light, but the mode of access by the public to the Manager's and Secretary's offices is objectionable, inasmuch as they would have to pass between the windows and the offices in the main office. There is no 'retiring room' for the manager, nor any fireplace in his room. Basement offices are below the street level, and reached by areas, involving loss of space. Entrance to the main office possibly objectionable. Elevations not particularly novel or specially attractive. All requirements as to number of drawings have been complied with.

"UTILITY."—"The freehold and leasehold portions of the buildings are distinct throughout. The main office fronts on Victoria street. Access to it and other offices of the company is obtained from a large central hall, in which is the main staircase leading to the offices on the upper floor. The shop on Yonge street is of ample size, but it is questionable whether the height of the ground floor is sufficient for the size this is designed to be, unless by opening up the large well-holes in the floors, which are shown on the plans but not on the section. Externally, the design gives an appearance of a very lofty shop, the windows of the two lowest stories forming apparently one. Access to the offices in basement under the company's

portion is gained from the street level by means of some steps inside the several rooms. Two shops are contemplated on Richmond street in the main building, whereby considerable revenue might be realized, a point worth consideration. This design exhibits a good deal of taste in the exterior, and the drawings are very carefully made, and full as to the number required by the "Instructions."

"PRACICAL."—"Submits the proper number of drawings, etc. His buildings are distinct throughout. The intention is to enter from Victoria street for the offices over the Association's portion, keeping the latter with its entrance from Richmond street entirely separate. The main office fronts to the rear, so to speak, having three large windows thereon—four on two open areas on each side. The Secretary has not the supervision of the public to the design, and the basement of the building under the Association's offices is not utilized to the extent that it could be were the ground floor raised sufficiently to admit more light and easy access given to the basement, as asked for in "Instructions." The elevations are plain, but sufficiently broken up on Richmond and Victoria streets to give effect. The entrance on the former is relieved by carving, but the canopy over it looks somewhat heavy in the perspective sketch. The type writers have not the full space asked for, 133 feet, instead of 150 feet.

"PELICAN."—"Submits the requisite number of plans, but only one section (a cross), rendering it somewhat difficult to discover how he proposes to finish the main and other offices, the section being also of the plainest description, exhibiting no detail whatever, and the short memorandum accompanying the plans being of the briefest kind. In the plan of the Association's offices the route from the entrance for the public to the main office is very circuitous, and the Secretary has no supervision of the office. The elevations are very plain in character, and the effect of building a rough-faced stone tower over the brick facade below it, is very questionable. The buildings communicate on three floors, having offices on each.

"PAID UP POLICY."—"The buildings communicate above ground floor. Main office is in the rear, and the greatest portion of both street fronts is taken up by subsidiary offices, and supply room, &c. Elevations plain in character; stone up to first floor, brick above with stone lintels in windows. Flat roof throughout. One section only submitted.

"LUX."—"See 'ant' respecting first prize, &c.

"UTILITY."—"Submits plans &c., as required by 'Instructions,' but has not followed them sufficiently closely, as he has not given the number of square feet in each room on his plans. He sends a separate memo in his description of the room areas in square feet. The Secretary has no supervision of the space for the public, and would have to traverse the whole of his room to reach the Manager, leaving the Secretary no space for himself. There is no retiring room in connection with the Manager's room as required. Main office fronts on Victoria street, and depends for additional light on the glazed dome in the ceiling. There are two wells to light offices above the ground floor, good, and a pleasing effect.

"OBSERVANDA."—"Submits all drawings, &c., and renders. The buildings communicate above the first floor. The main tower is on the leasehold property, a possible objection, as it is one of the most expensive portions of the building. The entrances, of which there are two on Richmond street, are not sufficiently important in appearance, and the one between, to the basement is too low. The main office fronts on Victoria street, and the portion allotted to the public may be dark. Corridors to upper floors &c., over shops, insufficiently lighted. Elevations good, excepting entrances, &c., above named. The towers are apparently not utilized in any way, but might be made available.

"BUSINESS."—"Submits all required drawings and description. The main office is on the angle formed by Richmond and Victoria streets. Plenty of light and height. An entrance from Victoria street. Basement to offices on the ground floor and to upper stories by a central staircase is provided, as well as a general entrance from Richmond street, and a separate one to Association's offices on same street. Basement Victoria street, vault foundations come somewhat in the way in one store. Offices on upper floors somewhat short of vaults; six only on each floor. The buildings are distinct, separating the leasehold from the freehold portion. The area occupied by the Association's offices is large in this design as in most of the others, and the cost would therefore be relatively high. The elevations are effective without being costly, this being due in a great measure to the importance and richness given to the several entrances."

"SIMPLEX."—"Submits number of plans, &c., required. The buildings are distinct up to the top floor, where there is an opening, and offices are proposed on this floor, over the shop portion. In the main office the space for the public is too large, and the Secretary does not oversee this space. I am afraid there might be a deficiency of light, excepting from the skylight, which is over a portion of the office, and that not in the centre. The carrying of the corridors to offices over the main office on piers would impinge upon the upper portion of the office, and tend to intercept the light from the side windows to a certain extent. The janitor's rooms are not well placed, and have only one outside window to three rooms. This might be remedied in execution. In the basement there is no communication between the offices and the elevators, and no staircase appears to give access to the tower. Access to basement offices from the street is by outside steps. Elevations plain but of a pleasing design and main entrance good.

"ICI."—"Submits the necessary number of drawings, but gives the number of cubic in place of the number of square feet in the several rooms. The main office fronts on Richmond street, and the Secretary has no supervision of the public to the design, and the basement of the building under the Association's offices is not utilized to the extent that it could be were the ground floor raised sufficiently to admit more light and easy access given to the basement, as asked for in "Instructions." The elevations are plain, but sufficiently broken up on Richmond and Victoria streets to give effect. The entrance on the former is relieved by carving, but the canopy over it looks somewhat heavy in the perspective sketch. The type writers have not the full space asked for, 133 feet, instead of 150 feet.

"AJAX."—"Furnishes all the required drawings and descriptions of his design. The buildings are distinct throughout. This is a very carefully prepared set of drawings. The main office fronts on Victoria street, and derives additional light from a domed ceiling-light. The type-writers' and lunch room occupy a considerable portion of the two principal floors, which is not desired. The space occupied by the public is larger than is asked. The main entrance hall and staircase have no external light on the basement and ground floors, and depend entirely upon a skylight on the ground floor. The basement entrance and rear portion of the restaurant would be positively dark were it not for a portion of the floor of main office being glazed to admit light to the basement, and this would be a very questionable expedient. The basement floor is four feet below the street level. The main retiring room appears to be too large, and has no external light of much practical utility. The Secretary's office having three doors in it, would oblige him to sit in the darkest portion of it. The elevations are to