

THE ONTARIO ARCHITECTS' ACT.

In another column will be found a letter from Mr. S. John Ireland, principal of the Hamilton Art School, in which he upholds the idea of exacting a standard of education from architects, but objects to the amendment to the Ontario Architects' Act, by which it has been proposed to effect this end in Ontario.

The intention of the proposed amendment is, briefly : To allow all architects who are at present making their living as architects to continue to call themselves so, but to prohibit after a certain date anyone from beginning to call himself an architect without having undergone a certain process of education. And the education of the future architect is to be accomplished by preparation for a series of examinations, either in private or by attending the School of Practical Science or another training school, and by serving a certain length of time in an architect's office in order to acquire an acquaintance with the practical work of architecture.

Mr. Ireland's contention is chiefly that this period of apprenticeship is unnecessary, and that a school such as his own can turn out architects fully prepared to enter upon practical work. He seems to think, by the way, that graduates of the School of Practical Science are exempted from serving in an architect's office, but this is an error. Their time of service is, however, shortened from five years to three. He draws a very gloomy picture of the student's work in an architect's office, and it is true that there are good offices and bad offices ; but if Mr. Ireland thinks that time is wasted which is concerned with specifications, drawing plans, keeping office files and arrangements in working order, seeing persons who call in the absence of the architect, and even in setting up and rendering perspectives, he knows little of the nature of the experience that is necessary before a young man, however high he may have ranked at an art school, is fit to undertake the practical work of the business responsibilities connected with putting up a building. The legislature is concerned with the rights of the public as much as with those of the student (if indeed the right of a student to balk his own education is at all one of those rights for which legislators have consideration), and we fancy it will not see its way, in the case of any bill which is brought before it, to abolishing the enactment that students shall serve some time in the office of a practising architect.

Mr. Ireland seems also to think that the legislature should abolish what he calls the "self-dubbed architect," but how to do this is a difficulty. The "self-dubbed architect" is simply the existing architect, and to abolish him would be to abolish vested interests. It is not the doing of anyone interested in the bill, but of the tradition of English legislation that "as the bill was framed the present self-dubbed architects are to be architects still." To take every occasion of alluding to them as "self-dubbed" is therefore unkind of Mr. Ireland ; but to go further and allude to them as a "ring" which would try to keep out younger and better trained men, or to allow himself to conceive the idea that an architect would dismiss his student with the gift of his fare to the United States in order to get him out of the country, or to suppose that students would have to "endure" the raising of obstacles to prevent their starting an office in Ontario, is to imagine a lowness of mind in the members of an artistic profession which we should not have expected to find attributed to them by the principal of an art school. It is worth noticing in this

connection that the objection which has been raised in England to making the title "Architect" obtainable only by examination is not that existing practitioners will repress younger men, but that the profession will be flooded by young men because it will have risen in dignity. So with many men there are many minds. But it is about details. The main idea that architects should be properly qualified for what they profess, and that the title "Architect" should be assumed only as a degree, representing the attainment of a certain standard of education and training, is coming to be a matter of general agreement, and Mr. Ireland appears to be prepared to approve of legislation, which would properly attain this end.

In the latter part of his letter Mr. Ireland gives some items of advice to intending legislators or promoters of legislation. Article 3, to "avoid mentioning that people must employ an architect," emphasizes what is, we fear, a very common misapprehension. There are no doubt many persons who think that an attempt is being made to make it impossible to build a shed without the intervention of an architect and what Mr. Ireland calls "the inevitable 5 per cent." It seems also that some builders think they will no more be free to build from their own plans, but that at the first sign of building some monopolist architect will be down upon them and place his veto on the work until he is called in—and gets his fee. It is no wonder that legislators who approve of the measure themselves are nevertheless timid about being associated with it. As a matter of fact, neither the Act nor the amendment do or could declare that an architect must be employed for anything. It is the architect himself upon whom it is proposed that the law should lay its hands and say what he must do ; that if he wants to profess architecture he must give evidence that he is qualified to produce sound architecture. That is the whole story, and if anyone can extract from such a proposal anything but benefit to the public, or any direct benefit to the architect, or any indirect benefit to the architect which is not also a benefit to the public, he has a statement to make that has never been made before ; for any objections that have been raised hitherto have been founded either upon mere anxiety or upon misapprehension of what is proposed.

In simple truth, the Act is intended to benefit—not the architect, but architecture. But the architect believes that everything which raises his art will make his own life better worth living. Therefore he favors it.

PUBLICATIONS.

William Paul Gerhard, C. E., Consulting Sanitary Engineer, is the author of a book entitled, "Theatre Fires and Panics—their Cause and Prevention," the first edition of which has just been published by John Wiley & Sons, New York. Price \$1.50.

We have received from the publisher, Mr. Wm. T. Comstock, 23 Warren street, New York, a copy of his Directory of Architects of the United States and Canada for the year 1896-97. An examination of the book shows the list of Canadian architects to be so full of errors, as to be of little value. The price of the directory is \$1.00.

The cutting in half of the ordinary rate for weekly papers by the Montreal Weekly Gazette has been attended by a large increase in circulation, which the publishers expect to see still further expanded during the coming season. The Weekly Gazette gives all the news and interests all classes who take an intelligent interest in public affairs and the development of Canada's resources. At fifty cents a year it is the cheapest of the metropolitan weeklies, and it is good. It is published by the Gazette Printing Company, Richard White Managing Director, Montreal, to whom correspondence and orders should be addressed.