

THE BYSTANDER.

THE social element in human nature goes a long way to smooth down the rough places everyone meets in his path-way in life; and when this feature of character is found wanting in man, either individually or collectively, the circumstance is likely to produce comment. The Bystander heard the charge made a short time since that the architects of this city were an exclusive and unsociable body of men. "There could be no doubt, but that they were a fine class of men," said a member of the profession, "and when assembled in their annual gathering, they are hail fellows well met, and an enjoyable, as well as a profitable, time can always be spent in their company. When, however, they get outside of the walls of their association meetings, they are as unsociable as members of some of our religious bodies, when disassociated from the organized body, or on the ordinary six days of the week." The complaint of this friend was that each one seemed to be so taken up with his own personal affairs, no opportunity was given to cultivate that spirit of cordiality that ought to exist, he believed, among any class of people engaged in the same calling. The Bystander has always held that not alone is it an agreeable thing for men in the same business to get together occasionally, but that it is a very profitable matter. Our ideas are broadened as we rub shoulders with one another. The suggestion was made, as one means at the present time of bringing the brethren together and helping to break down this barrier of exclusiveness, that the drawings that had been sent for exhibition at the Quebec Association by the Toronto architects, should be placed on exhibition at some central point in the city, where each could learn what the other had done on this occasion, and thus meet, exchange views and become better acquainted. On this matter of personal sociability, the Bystander thinks of a remark made by Henry Ward Beecher, that people sometimes charge others with being unsociable, when they themselves are the real source of the trouble. He said, "I have known persons to cross to the opposite side of the street, when seeing an acquaintance coming along, having the notion that he would not care to speak to him, where the real fact is the individual in question only wanted the opportunity to cultivate a better acquaintance."

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An old saw that finds many illustrations in everyday life is that which tells that extremes meet. Human nature seems born to run to excess, for no sooner is the folly or the excess of yesterday learned, than to day the disposition is to go to the opposite extreme. Only a few years ago, and a year is a short period in the history of a country, times were flush almost the world over, and little importance was placed on the out-go by any class of people. Reaction came, as it had come before, and as it will come again, and multitudes struck hard bottom. To-day there is seen, as a result of this change, the extreme of the profligate age, and "cheap," and "squeeze" is the policy of the day. Everybody sees this kind of thing in the ordinary commercial transactions of life. The Bystander has been impressed with the fact that this prevailing spirit of hard times has few, if any, limitations. How it crops out in the matter of building contracts. No value would seem to be placed by many on their own individual time or labor, or that of their employees. Chatting the other day with a city architect, he said: "Let me show you what encouragement there is to embark in contracting and building in these times. Here are the drawings for a house that I figured down to \$5,000, without heating, which added would represent several hundred dollars extra. Now in my judgment this figure could not possibly stand any paring, and even allow a living wage to the contractor and the opportunity to pay his men the current wage of the day. What is the situation? I have just now let that contract to a man in this city who agrees to construct the house according to plans and complete it with heating, all for \$4,800." How is he going to manage it? was a natural question to ask. "It is just like this in his case," said the informant. "This man is a mechanic himself; within his family are bricklayers and stone masons. They will keep the work largely within their own hands. None of them can make so much as a journeyman's wages, but work is slack and they are glad to get anything to do and accept any price." From one point of view this seems a common sense method to adopt. Better half a loaf than none. It is a method,

however, that may someday serve as a boomerang. Many workmen who are not situated as the parties who took this contract and able to work together, are tied down to the regulations of their trades unions, and they must walk the streets day in and day out. The Bystander is informed that with certain trades the carrying on of work during the depression of the past few years has been absolutely blocked because of the determined attitude assumed by workmen in the matter of wages. And yet the winter approaches and those who would not deviate 25c a day from the standard wage, when capital has been earning its smallest interest, would accept a half wage for a day or two at the city's expense to toss snowballs in the air. Of such it may well be said, with Milton: "They feel by turns the bitter change of fierce experience."

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A pleasant hour was spent by the Bystander a short time since in the studio of Mr. J. W. L. Forster, the well-known and talented portrait-painter of this city, whose portraits of Mayor Kennedy and other prominent citizens have from time to time elicited many encomiums. Excelling in his own special line of art he is also able to take a long view of artistic affairs. He sees a close relationship between the work of an artist, using the term in its usually accepted sense, and that of the architect. Both, in fact, are artists, and Mr. Forster expressed the view that each might learn something from the other by an occasional interchange of opinions. The conversation getting down to something specific, a discussion followed touching the matter of interior decorations. The view was expressed by this artist that the artistic effect of a room might be largely enhanced, if the plan were adopted of darkening the lower part of the windows and allowing the natural light from the heavens above to pour into the room, rather than the imperfect light there comes through a window as now constructed. And suiting the action to the word he illustrated what he meant by darkening his own window at the lower part, closing out the light in that manner, but allowing it to come in from above. "Now," said he, "observe the softening effect on everything in the room, the carpets, the furniture, and even the clothes that one may wear." How would it answer to arrange for a social gathering some evening of the artists and architects of the city?

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Everyone has not the courage to speak out in meeting, but were it not for some brave mortal doing this occasionally, things could come easily to a standstill in some of our best regulated organizations. A letter in the October CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER proding the Executive of the Ontario Association of Architects is a case in point. The Bystander has learned that some of the profession do not take kindly to the criticism. This, however, is not the unanimous view. It is held by not a few leading architects that the Ontario Association of Architects could show an increased measure of activity, and then not over-exert itself. It is to be remembered that the annual meeting is near by, and yet very little has been done to secure a successful and profitable gathering. Aside from this, members of the profession say to the Bystander, why should we exist only for the sake of getting together once a year? Other associations map out programme enough to keep themselves fairly in the front the year through. Furthermore, whilst a large number of the members of the Association are residents of Toronto, yet a number are outside of the city, and they would like to know occasionally what the Executive is thinking about. The letter of "City Member" is believed to have more truth than poetry in it. At the same time, a member of the Executive has said: "Let this writer reveal himself and we will give him the opportunity to show his activity." Others are wont to quote Byron, and say:

Seek roses in December; ice in June;
Hope constancy in wind, or corn in chaff;
Believe a woman, or an epitaph,
Or any other thing that's false, before
You trust in critics.

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There recently visited this city the correspondent of an American lumber journal, and in a published letter, he made this statement: "I found at Toronto, and the same is presumably more or less true of other border cities on the Canadian side, that considerable yellow pine timber and joist was being used in the construction of public and other large buildings. Some of these are