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THE ABILITY OF ARCHITECTS TO ESTIMATE.

A SUBJECT that will be of mutual interest and advantage to architect, contractor and proprietor, will undoubtedly prove acceptable in the columns of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER. I would therefore respectfully submit the following suggestions and remarks, hoping that they will be received in the spirit in which they are given.

The attention of the public is continually being drawn to the wide discrepancy between the architect's estimate of a proposed building and that ascertained by the contractor's tenders, and in many instances it would seem that the architect in stating such probable cost had really made no estimate at all, or else had hesitated in giving what his skill and experience justified his client in expecting from him. A very striking instance of this is shown in the late competition for the new Library Building in the City of Hamilton as set forth in the September number of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER. The appropriation for the erection of the building was placed at \$20,000, but when the contractors' tenders were received, the figures showed the cost to exceed the architect's estimate by \$13,000. This was certainly a very great discrepancy, but by no means an unusual one—so much so, that most clients in having designs prepared for a new style of building place a very modest reliance on the architect's idea of the actual cost of the building when erected according to the plans he is instructed to prepare, and conclude that as the tenders may be much higher than he desires, he will notify the contractors that he is not bound to accept any of the tenders. In such cases the loss of time and money falls on the contractors estimating for the work.

This state of things is all radically wrong, and should not be. An architect is presumed to be, and it is only right that he should be, competent to measure up the different branches of work required in the erection of a proposed building after his plans and specifications are *merely outlined*, and then from his ascertained knowledge of material and labor, make up a fair average estimate of the cost when finished, and submit the same to his client. The latter could then readily make any necessary alterations, and save disappointment and the expense of preparing new plans. By so doing the architect would certainly command his client's respect and confidence in his practical ability.

In Canada the architects seem to have a different and certainly an erroneous opinion in this connection. They maintain that their duty is to prepare the plans and specifications in accordance with their client's instructions, and then await the contractors' tenders for the cost of the erection of the building "because they are architects and designers, not building surveyors or measurers." Now in the cities of the old country the builders generally engage the services of a professional building surveyor to go to the architect's office and take out the quantities, and to which they affix their prices and make up their tenders; and it is quite customary for the architect to engage the surveyor to take out the quantities and have them manifolded and supplied to the contractors at a certain price each, or a charge covering the whole expense made to the successful competitor. By this procedure all the tenders are founded on the same measurements or quantities, so that the tenders can only vary to the extent of each contractor's own valuation of the work. The architect would also find the Bill of Quantities with prices affixed a fair criterion to go by in making