

alert for the possibilities of such catastrophes and insistent even to the point of over-scrupulousness on attention to the city's building requirements. The possibility of offending a proprietor by compelling him to submit to greater expense in his construction or comply with what at the time may appear so much "red tape," is a mere secondary consideration when there is also taken into account the loss of human life which even a slight laxness may entail. In the present instance the legal battle, which will in all probability follow, is likely to be the greatest London has ever known, and thousands of dollars will be involved for damage suits.

So far but little light has been thrown upon the cause of the catastrophe by the preliminary investigation, and the blame has been fixed upon no one. The architect having charge of the alterations professes ignorance as to the reason for the fatality and apparently is as much in the dark as anyone, and yet it is to him that the public must ultimately look for a solution of the mystery. The contractor appears equally mystified as to the cause of the collapse. However, he took care when questioned at the investigation to make it clear that the contractor "gets his plans from the architect and goes by them" and "accepts as all right the plans of the architect." In this particular case an ordinary course of procedure was followed in making the alterations, with apparently little attention being paid to the presence on the upper floor of a heavy load from accumulating stock, and with no regard for the fact that one of the walls on which operations were being conducted was noticeably poor and unreliable. Doubtless these facts, brought to light by the inquest, have been duplicated many a time in other similar cases, but with no disastrous results, and it has remained for a serious catastrophe to call to the attention of the public the necessity for greater care being exercised by architects and builders alike in the conduct of operations wherein even a slight lack of observation may entail deplorable loss of life. The further developments of the investigation will be awaited with much interest.

Painters' Specifications.

In another part of this journal will be found the substance of an address by Mr. J. W. Knott, of Toronto, at the convention of Master House Painters and Decorators, held in London last month. In that address is voiced an ancient grievance of the master painter against the architect, Mr. Knott's treatment of which will bear some consideration at the hands of the architectural profession. As the address states, it is of the utmost importance that there should be harmony and confidence between architect and painter, a condition the importance of which the former realizes quite as much as the latter. Moreover, architects will readily admit that their specifications may leave something to be desired, so far as the rapid taking off of quantities by the painter is concerned, and a little agitation by the latter may prove effectual in remedying this trouble. As it is, much of the painter's work is to be found in the carpenter's specifications, through which he necessarily goes to learn the ground his contract must cover. Now it is just possible that, through lack of a definite painter's specification, he may overlook some import-

ant part of the work which falls especially under his jurisdiction, and it probably would be to his advantage to have a definite specification drawn up, outlining the painting and finishing. To do so, however, must obviously necessitate much useless repetition which most architects would consider entirely superfluous.

As Mr. Knott correctly points out, it is a well-known fact that no contractor can so successfully deceive the architect as can the painter. If he sets out with the purpose of "doing" his employer he can usually succeed and avoid detection. However, it is a question whether this is due in any degree to the lack of a definite painter's specification. If this is the case it would surely be an act of righteousness to draw up such without delay.

The glass question, moreover, has long been a source of dispute between architect and painter, and in the course of his address Mr. Knott suggested that the architect mark on the plans some of the sizes. Now it is very questionable whether such a plan is either practicable or necessary. In the first place, the architect in planning his window openings seldom allows the standard widths of glass to influence him in the slightest degrees, and it must be from the openings themselves, as marked on the plan, that the painter estimates the quantity of glass required. Such being the case, the painter can surely rely sufficiently upon his own judgment to make no error in estimating the size of the openings and counting their number. As regards inaccuracy on the part of the draughtsman in correctly marking his openings, it may safely be assumed that any reliable architectural firm can be depended upon to draw up plans to scale with sufficient accuracy to safeguard the painter against financial loss, providing he exercises sufficient care to take his measurements correctly.

Mr. Knott no doubt speaks from experience when he says: "I have known of great loss arising from the difference in the size which the plan measured and that which had to be provided to fill the opening. In a very large sheet of plate glass an inch or two makes an enormous difference." Admitted that such is the case, but at whose door lies the fault? If a painter is careful to measure his openings—the opening in the brick, which can always be depended upon—he can have no reason for making mistakes beyond his own carelessness. It is a well-known fact that painters have been known to measure for their glass, not the distance marked on the plan between the brick wall, which is always drawn to scale, but the distance between lines put in at random later by the draughtsman to represent the frame, and which are not intended to be regarded as sufficiently correct for taking off quantities. If, by any chance, the building contractor should fail to adhere sufficiently to the architect's specifications as to modify the size of an opening to the detriment of the painter, the latter has a sufficient cause for claiming an extra. Otherwise, the fault is ordinarily his own. As conditions are in Canada today, it seems that the painter must reconcile himself to existing methods of specification, at least until we can adopt the English system and employ a quantity surveyor to estimate the quantities of material, not only for the painter, but for the various other contractors as well.