

materials have reached the lowest point, and that with a revival in business conditions will come a rise in prices.

The Duty on Cement. THE Dominion government is said to have been impelled to substitute an ad valorem duty for the specific duty formerly imposed on imported cement, by the fact that foreign cement was being brought into the country in barrels 475 pounds in weight, with the object of materially reducing the duty of 40 cents per barrel. If such a practice existed under the old tariff, it cannot continue under the new. The present duty is 12½ cents per 100 pounds, which, taking a barrel of 350 pounds as the standard, is little greater than under the former tariff.

A Suggestion to Architects.

WE beg to suggest to the Toronto Chapter of Architects the desirability of organizing a bicycle sketch club. While the regular meetings of the Chapter have been called off during the summer, the interest of the members might be maintained and many pleasant and profitable outings enjoyed, if bicycle sketching parties were organized. No doubt interesting material for sketches and photographs could be found within a day's ride of Toronto. By this plan, the students would be given the opportunity of showing their ability with the pencil, and of collecting useful ideas; while the practising members of the profession could, as it were, live their youth over again, and afford assistance to those who in the future shall fill their places.

Legislation Affecting Buildings.

OUR readers will no doubt be interested in particulars of several important measures affecting the building interests which have lately been introduced in the legislature of the state of Massachusetts. One provides that 80 feet shall be the limit of height of buildings, other than public buildings, to be erected in Boston in the future. Another authorizes the use of concrete for all kinds of building construction, provided the quality has been tested and found satisfactory by the American Society of Civil Engineers. It is provided in another Bill that before permission is sought for the erection of stables, advertisements must be inserted in the newspapers and notices served on the owners and tenants of adjoining buildings. The erection of bay and oriel windows over any public road or square is prohibited, and it is proposed to repeal present legislation compelling annual registration by plumbers, the working of the regulation not having proved satisfactory.

Life of Brick Pavements.

REFERRING to letters of correspondents appearing in these pages regarding the relative advantages of various kinds of paving materials, the question is one which should only be decided in the light of local circumstances. The amount and character of the traffic to which the pavement will be subjected is a most important factor in deciding the choice of material. For residential streets vitrified brick appears to be in most favor in Toronto at the present time, while for business thoroughfares asphalt and granite setts hold first place. With a view to reducing the cost, the proposal has been made to lay the brick on a foundation of sand or gravel instead of concrete. There is reason to believe that work done in this manner would give satisfactory results for perhaps a period of eight or ten years in a

city like Toronto, where the soil is dry sand, but under different conditions the experiment would be attended with risk.

Architectural Competitions.

THERE is something to be said in favor of architectural competitions for public buildings, when conducted under proper conditions. When, however, they are either devoid of conditions, or drawn with the deliberate purpose of placing the competitors wholly at the mercy of those for whose benefit the competition has been instituted, they are a source of great injury to architects and architecture. In Canada competitions have been rapidly degenerating, until they have reached a plane so low and unjust that no self-respecting architect should have anything to do with them. A somewhat similar condition appears to obtain in the United States, and some of the leading architects have wisely determined to make an effort to check the evil. With this object an agreement has been signed by the principal architects of New York and Boston, binding them not to take part in architectural competitions except on certain specified terms. It is to be hoped that this movement will spread until it shall embrace all the leading architects of the country, so that the public may know that a competition not based on proper conditions will be entered only by architects of second or third rate standing. Canadian architects are making a tremendous mistake by not grappling with this evil, instead of assisting to perpetuate it by entering, as many of them do, every competition regardless of terms. In the majority of instances, whether they win or lose, they reap nothing better than disappointment, and the feeling of having in a measure sacrificed their self-respect. Even in cases where some slight pecuniary advantage is derived, it is at the future expense of the architect and of the profession as a whole, the status of which is gradually being lowered in the eyes of the public. The architects have the remedy for the present condition of affairs in their own hands, if they choose to exercise it. It is for them collectively, but especially as individuals, to say whether this evil shall be allowed to go from bad to worse, or whether, by refusing to enter competitions except under fair terms, they will stamp it out.

Lessons of Recent Fires.

RECENT conflagrations in Toronto and elsewhere have drawn attention to the inadaptability to resist fire of the methods of construction employed in many of our modern store buildings. The statement has been made, so far as we know without contradiction, that in the case of the fire which recently destroyed one of the large departmental stores in Toronto, the walls of the building fell in within fifteen minutes after the sounding of the fire alarm. The building is said to have been originally intended for residence purposes. Three or four years ago it was extended in size and height and fitted up as a departmental store. Unfavorable comment was heard at the time regarding the constructional features of the building and doubts were freely expressed as to its safety. Whether or not these were well founded, the structure was certainly not adapted to withstand for even a reasonable time the action of fire. This brings us to consideration of the important question of the means to be employed to reduce the fire hazard in modern store buildings. As a first step in this direction the outer walls should be strongly built of hard burned bricks or other fire-resisting ma-