

IMPRESSIONS OF A VISITOR.

Mr. Edward Swales, architect, of Doncaster, England, some of whose charming sketches appeared in the pages of this journal a few months ago, is at present on a visit to the United States and Canada. He has expressed himself as being pleased with much of what he has seen of Canada and Canadian architecture. The latter impresses him as being more substantial in character than that of the United States. The new city buildings, now nearing completion in Toronto, and several of the large modern buildings, elicited his praise. He referred in complimentary terms to the pleasing effect stone produced by carving in low relief which is characteristic of American architecture, in contradistinction to the style of heavy undercutting and high relief which obtains in Europe. On the other hand he found ground for criticism in the total disregard of scale exhibited in the design of many of our buildings, the finials on which were a source of amusement, owing to the abrupt manner in which they are made to terminate in a flattened knob, or spread out to huge dimensions. Mr. Swales remarked that thus far he had seen very little good gothic work on this side of the water. It is his intention, before returning to Europe the latter part of September, to visit the western States, and to winter in Spain.

THE VICTORIAN ERA EXPOSITION.

THE approach of the opening day of the Victorian Era Exposition, which commences this year on August 30 and lasts till Sept 11, is deserving of more than passing attention. By no other feature of its civic life is the city more widely and favorably known than by this annually recurring exhibition of the products, the resources, the capabilities of our country and people. It is popularly known as Canada's Greatest Fair, and the title does not belie its scope and comprehensiveness. The little affair which started with local aims assumed provincial proportions and then continued to spread until it is now entitled to be looked upon as a Dominion affair. Especially so is it the case with this exhibition, which in the value and number of its exhibits, the attractiveness and scale of its many entertaining features, far surpasses any preceding exposition. Take only one feature, the Jubilee parade, a replica of the scene which took place in London. Everything will be exactly the same as in London on June 22. The escort of colonial and British troops, the Indian Princes, the Princes and Princesses of the royal family, Queen Victoria, her carriage, state trumpeters—everything will be an exact reproduction of the London pageant. An idea of the scale upon which this feature will be presented can be gathered from the fact that the frame work and structure of St. Paul's Cathedral and Buckingham Palace is over 650 feet in length and runs up to 80 feet in height. Take again the tableaux of historical events during her majesty's reign; they cover hundreds of feet in area. These features are more than entertaining, they are educational. They enable Canadians to grasp the immense size of the British Empire, and great variety of races bound together by the same ties of loyalty to the one institution. They also give a vivid idea of the might and pomp of the empire and well illustrate the meaning of that phrase, "Hands across the Sea," words which in this Jubilee year possess so much significance to the people of the Anglo-Saxon race. Add to these the great variety of the objects

displayed, from the minerals of British Columbia to those of Nova Scotia, from the products of the west to those of the east. Visited in a proper spirit the fair is more than an exhibition, it is a source of instruction, for there one can see and appreciate in a short time the great extent, value and variety of Canada's resources.

COST OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

Few people, even in these days of palmy extravagance and millionaire display, have any adequate impression of the gigantic cost of the great temple of Solomon. According to Villalpandus, the "talents" of gold, silver, and brass were equal to the enormous sum of £6,879,822,000. The worth of the jewels is generally placed at a figure equally as high. The vessels of gold, according to Josephus, were valued at 140,000 talents, which reduced to English money (as has been shown by Chapel's reduction tables), was equal to £575,296,203. The vessels of silver, according to the same authorities, were still more valuable, being set down as worth £646,344,000. Priests' vestments and robes of singers, £2,010,000; trumpets, £200,000.

To this add the expense of building materials, labour, etc., and we get some wonderful figures. Ten thousand men hewing cedars, 60,000 bearers of burdens, 80,000 hewers of stone, 3,300 overseers, all of which were employed for seven years, and upon whom, beside their wages, Solomon bestowed £6,733,970. If their daily food was worth 50 cents each, the sum total for all was £63,877,088 during the time of building. The materials in the rough are estimated as having been worth £2,545,337,000.

STEEL MANTELS.

ONE of the newest improvements in the construction of dwellings is the steel mantel, which is just being introduced to builders. In these all the surface below the slab is composed of 20-gauge wrought steel, pressed into any desired shape or style by heavy machinery. The outside surface of this is enameled to imitate any wood or marble, and the character of the enameling is such that it withstands all changes of temperature without injury. Many advantages are claimed for these mantels besides their economy. First is the decreased weight, as compared with slate or marble mantels, which they take the place of. One of these weighs 400 pounds, while one of steel weighs only 100, which includes 70 pounds for the slate slab, which is supplied with the metal mantel-pieces. When these are set up and backed with sand or ashes the difference is more difficult to detect, as tapping it with the finger or hammer makes the same noise as solid stone or wood. These mantels hold their shape as a house settles, as there are no joints to part. They are also recommended from a sanitary standpoint, as they harbor no dirt or vermin, and they even act as a radiator of the heat instead of absorbing it. The fact that they are fire-proof is also an argument in favor of the steel mantel's use. In order to secure fancy effects uprights are sometimes demanded on either side to support the mantel seat. In this case they are made of wood, and these posts, as well as the slate slabs, are subject to the same process which the metal work has undergone, so that the tone of the wood, metal and the material which enters into the construction of these mantels are all the same.