

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS.

The fifth annual convention of the Ontario Association of Architects was held at the School of Practical Science, Queen's Park, Toronto, on Tuesday and Wednesday, January the 16th and 17th. The first session was called for 2 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon, and shortly after that hour the following members had assembled:

David G. Baxter, Stratford; G. R. Harper, Toronto; H. B. Gordon, Toronto; J. W. Power, Kingston; Thomas Kennedy, Barrie; A. E. Paull, Toronto; F. Darling, Toronto; W. A. Edwards, Hamilton; D. B. Dick (President), Toronto; J. Gemmell, Toronto; W. R. Gregg, Toronto; G. W. Gouinlock, Toronto; W. R. Billings, Ottawa; Mark Hall, Toronto; M. B. Aylsworth, Toronto; R. W. Gambier-Bousfield, Toronto; J. W. Gray, Toronto; S. G. Curry, Port Hope; S. G. Kinsey, Port Elgin; E. Burke, Toronto; S. H. Townsend, Toronto; E. B. Jarvis, Toronto; and W. A. Langton (Registrar), Toronto.

The President called the convention to order at 3 o'clock, and the minutes of the last convention were then read and confirmed.

The President then read his address as follows:—

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

We are now assembled in the fourth convention since the incorporation of the association. This convention marks a critical period in its history, the most critical in fact, which has yet been reached. The past year has been one of great depression in business throughout the world. The United States have passed through a financial crisis of almost unexampled duration if not of unparalleled severity, and the effects of it have been felt in Canada in almost every department of business. This is a kind of reciprocity which no tariff wall, however high, can keep from coming into operation. There has been a universal cry of "hard times." Less money than usual has been available for building purposes. Consequently fewer buildings have been erected, and there has been less work for architects to do. The last similar period of depression occurred after the financial panic of 1873. That flurry was of shorter duration, and its effects on building were not so disastrous, for several reasons. The cost of building was much lower then than it is now. Buildings were fewer in proportion to population, and those who had money to invest exercised a judicious foresight, and took advantage of the low prices to make provision for the needs of the future. The case is different now. Owing to the advance in wages and the increase in the price of materials, the cost of building has increased enormously. But rents have not increased in the same proportion. The cities, too, are more built up in proportion to population. There is therefore not the same inducement offered to those who are in a position to command money, to invest it in buildings. In Toronto these circumstances are aggravated by the fact that she was suffering from a period of severe depression, following naturally on the cessation of the boom which had been going on for some years previously. This is a local matter, but I may be permitted to mention it in consideration of the fact that so large a proportion of the members of the association reside in Toronto. But the depression has been felt in all parts of the country. The decrease in the amount for which building permits have issued in the cities and towns is conclusive evidence of this. And it is probable that the depression has affected, to a greater or less extent, the business of almost every member of the association. In times of prosperity, even a busy man will give more freely, both of his time and means for the advancement of his profession, or any other object that appeals to his public spirit, than he will be likely to do when he is anxious, and perhaps harassed about his own private affairs. It would therefore be too much to expect that this association should not have suffered somewhat from the general depression.

There are also special circumstances connected with the association itself which make this a critical period in its history—circumstances which may have a grave bearing on its future, and which therefore demand our most earnest consideration. I refer especially to the question of the amending of our act of incorporation, and the present position of that question. We did not propose to ask for much—only the elimination of that one little word "Registered." But under the circumstances even that little proved to be too much. Observe, however, that the boon was not refused; because as soon as it became apparent that "discretion was the better part of valour," the bill was withdrawn. One important factor in bringing about this result was the fact that—notwithstanding the accusations that have been freely made against us of an extreme desire to be exclusive—we, unfortunately, got into bad company. We could not, however, help ourselves in this, and were not to blame for it. "Misfortune makes strange bedfellows," and so we found ourselves, however unwillingly on our part, classed with druggists, undertakers and (save the mark) milkmen—all of whom came asking for special privileges. We need not concern ourselves with the justice or otherwise of the demands of these different bodies. But the result was, as the Premier informed us at an interview with the Cabinet, at which we were most courteously received, that the temper of the House at that time, was such, that any proposal which seemed even to point in the direction of increasing the number of close corporations would certainly be voted down. Under these circumstances the only course open to us was to withdraw the bill for the time being. To have persevered and pushed it to a decision would have been to court disaster. Had we done so, and the bill been rejected by, as it is probable, a very large majority, there would have been no hope of its being favourably considered for years to come. Members of the House who had once placed themselves publicly on record as opposed to the granting of our petition, would feel themselves not only free, but bound to oppose it on the next occasion on which it might be brought forward. We should thus have been now in a much less hopeful position than that in which we stand to-day. Practically we are very much in the same position as at the date of the last convention. We have undoubtedly made some friends. So far as I know we have made no enemies, and we have gained a great deal of experience that will be useful in the future. The work that was done last winter has not been thrown away. A good deal of it will not have to be done over again, but rather supplemented by further efforts on the same lines. We have no reason to feel hopeless or even discouraged. When we consider how many similar associations in different countries have failed in their efforts to obtain such legislation as we have been striving after, it seems as if we were perhaps too sanguine in hoping that we should reach our goal at the very first attempt. You are doubtless all aware that the Quebec Association stands in precisely the same position as we do in regard to this question, the work "Registered" having been inserted by the Government in their act in the same way as it was in ours.

A great deal of work was done last winter, not only by the council or the Toronto members of the association, but by many members in different parts of the Province. The work should not be confined to the time when the legislature is in session; it should be going on all the time. Each member of the association should keep it on his mind, and whenever an opportunity offers, he should take advantage of it to set before influential persons in

the community, and more especially members present or prospective of the Legislative Assembly, correct views of what our objects and aims are. This can best be done by those who are personally acquainted with the persons whom they wish to influence. Each member should therefore make it his business to persuade the representative of his own district in the House that the granting of our request would be in the public interest. It is only in this way that the desired end can be attained. It is not the members of the Ministry who have to be convinced that our claims are just, but the people and their representatives. This question has been discussed until you are so familiar with the arguments pro and con, that it would only weary you were I to enlarge upon them now. We should not, however, allow ourselves to talk or feel as if this were the sole end and object of our existence as an association. It is only one of our objects. Indeed it is not properly in itself an object at all, but only the means to an end.

It is declared in the original constitution that the objects of the association are "To unite in fellowship the architects of the province of Ontario, to combine their efforts so as to promote the artistic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession, and to cultivate and encourage the study of kindred arts," as well to obtain legislation. What has the association done to promote these objects? It has certainly done a great deal to accomplish the first named, that of uniting the architects of the province. Before the organization of the association, the architects of the Province were practically unknown to each other. Those who lived in the same place might happen to be acquainted with each other just as other residents might; but if so it was only by chance, and as individuals, not as brother architects. No one could depend upon getting any advice or assistance in a professional difficulty, from any other architect unless he could claim it on the ground of personal friendship, and it is to be feared that professional rivalry was much more frequent than professional friendship. Such a thing as generous emulation was not to be expected. There was no feeling of esprit de corps because there was nothing to call it into existence. There was no rallying point. Each man fought his own battle for his own hand, but not, it is to be hoped, without endeavouring so far as lay in his power to elevate the character of architectural design, and the tone of professional life in his district. But there could not be the same stimulus to exertion in this direction when each man felt himself entirely alone, as there should be now when each can regard himself as one of a large brotherhood, all of whom are striving to advance a common cause and are united in the bond of a common sympathy. A man can carry himself with more confidence when he feels that in any just cause, he has the influence of practically the whole of his profession in the province at his back.

There is something too in the mere feeling of association that compels a man to put forth all his power, and so to do better work than he could do without this stimulating influence. "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." There is more in this than perhaps may appear at the first glance. Even if it is somewhat indefinable, it is there. If it were not so why should it be a fact that in all ages, men whose avocations and tastes were similar have sought to associate themselves together in guilds, or companies, or societies? What but this was the origin of Freemasonry, of the old trade guilds, of associations of artists, whether painters, sculptors or musicians? It is by no means solely to advance their material interests that legal and medical practitioners associate themselves together, but also for mutual encouragement and assistance in the advancement of their respective sciences.

An association can make its influence felt in a way that would be impossible for the same number of separate individuals, even if it were possible to get them to combine on occasion for a special purpose. The very machinery for calling them together would be wanting. Take for instance the question of the proper regulation of competitions. The influence of this association has been most distinctly and beneficially felt in regard to this. It is not too much to hope that the Conditions of Competition prepared by this association will soon be the conditions of every competition taking place in the province. All that is required to bring about this result is that the members should be loyal to each other. A gratifying instance of the good which has already been done was the case of the competition for new legislative buildings for British Columbia, when the council of this association was requested by the government of that province to select and send out two experts to assist them in deciding on the respective merits of the different designs submitted, which duty was, I believe, satisfactorily accomplished by our representatives.

It may be necessary on occasion for this association to watch the course of legislation and perhaps to offer active interference; and to do this effectively an association must be so strong as to be able to speak authoritatively on behalf of those whom it professes to represent. It must also be possessed of the "sinews of war"; and for this reason it is most desirable that the surplus which has been accumulated should not be treasured upon for ordinary purposes to the extent of one dollar more than circumstances render absolutely unavoidable. Again, builders and tradesmen of all sorts are banded together for mutual protection, and where the relations are so intimate as between the builders and the architects, it is impossible but that cases must frequently arise in which negotiation between the two bodies becomes necessary. How are these negotiations to be carried on if the architects are not associated together as well as the builders? The principal reason, however, why we should maintain and seek to strengthen the association, is, as it appears to my mind, that it enables us to do something to advance the cause of architectural education. If we cannot do much directly, we can do a great deal indirectly. If we can do nothing more than organize and conduct a complete system of examinations, it be well worth while to have the association even for that purpose alone. If this association is seen to be doing all it can do, that fact will bring to the notice of those who have more in their power, the urgent need for more being done in this direction. After all it is the young who will derive the most benefit from any increase of facilities for architectural education, and it is one of the functions of this association to make such arrangements as will induce or compel the young men to take advantage of them. I venture to say that unless there is a strong association which recognizes as one of the principal reasons for its existence, the duty of promoting the cause of architectural education, no complete or thoroughly comprehensive scheme will ever be formulated by any educational or other body. It is said that a work well begun is half ended. Our most hearty gratitude is therefore due to the legislature of this province, and especially to the Hon. Minister of Education, for that admirable beginning which has been made in this very School of Practical Science in which we are now assembled. Although the number of students taking the architectural course is not so large as we could desire, it is gratifying to see that the number is increasing. There were twelve students during the last session, and seven of these were in the first year, as compared with three in the third; it shows that the number is increasing. There were also a few special students taking partial courses.

It may be said without exaggeration that, with the single exception perhaps of pure literature, there is no calling for which it is so difficult completely to train a student as that of architecture. I mean so to train him that he will be competent immediately to begin practice for himself. The reason is this, that the art of architecture consists in *building beautifully*, not in making even good designs on paper; and no school ever had or will have the