

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL CONVENTION.

The fifteenth annual convention of the Association was held in the rooms of the Association, 94 King Street West, Toronto, on Tuesday and Wednesday, January 13th and 14th, 1903. Present—Mr. W. A. Langton, presiding, and Messrs. Aylsworth, Baker, Belcher, Bishop, Burke, Colwill, Curry, Denison, Duck, Edwards, Gemmell, Gouinlock, Gray, A. H. Gregg, W. R. Gregg, Hall, Helliwell, McBride, H. E. Moore, Munro, Pearson, Siddall, Simpson, Strickland, Symons, Townsend, Wickson and Wright. There were also present a number of visiting architects and others.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

In addressing, from the President's chair, an annual meeting of this Association, one naturally turns in the first instance to review the progress of the Association, and I must trouble you to follow me, to begin with, over some old ground.

We have been for two years established in these convenient and suitable rooms, and I think there is no doubt that the establishment in this manner is permanent. We have become an institution in Toronto, in fact, as well as a Provincial institution, by constitution; and I think it is by our activity in Toronto that we can best forward the interests of architecture throughout the Province. It is to the nature of these activities, the use that we are making of these rooms, that one turns in reflecting upon our progress.

We have always tried to make the education of students our special work as an Association. It is the particular work contemplated in our charter. The charter was enacted in order to advance architecture, by giving a prestige to membership of this Association, which would make the examinations required for entrance into the Association the first aim of all students of architecture intending to practise in the Province, and so bring about the improvement of architecture by ultimately producing a professional body, consisting entirely of educated men.

As former registrar of the Association, during the first ten years of trying to make the act effective, I can testify to the faithfulness with which the councils endeavored to carry out the purpose of the act. But failure was written in the act itself; because there was no real step taken to give to membership of the Association the prestige necessary to make architectural students feel membership of the Association, and in consequence, the examination which leads to membership, to be a necessary condition of entering upon practice in this Province. An act of this description, which aimed at a public reform and contained no provision for enforcing it, presupposed a higher standard of thought and aspiration in this country about architectural production than was likely to exist in a new country.

An attempt to carry out the act soon convinced the council that they, or, to speak more exactly, the ideas of the act were without disciples; the attempt to make the aims of the act effective by amending its provisions so as to create prestige for the Association, by giving its members the sole title to call themselves architects, soon convinced them that not only the ideas of the act, but they themselves were acquiring enemies.

We have, at this moment, a body of architects outside of the Association, opposed to us for the reason

that we have tried in the past to establish a standard of education, as defined by our act, by asking for legislation which would make the use of the title architect conditional upon passing our examinations. I cannot but consider all objections I have heard to this effort to be academical objections. That any one would be injured is not true; for, when such a drastic measure became operative, any one then calling himself an architect would be entitled to continue doing so; would, in fact, become by right of his own previous career, a member of the Association. Nor is there any real force in the stock objection, that architecture is an art, that an architect must be an artist, and an artist cannot be made by examination. One usually flies from the imputation of thinking that examinations can make an artist—for as the point is stated, it does seem to place the supporter of examinations in a ridiculous light. But there is much in the way of putting a thing, and I am not afraid to take the highest type of architect as a subject for the examination theory, and affirm that the saying that an artist is born, not made, is only half a truth. That one cannot be made an artist who is not born an artist, is true; but it is equally true that one who is born a potential artist must also be made an effective artist. An artist must be both born and made, and examination—which is but a short form of expression for the education which the examinations are instituted to test,—education then, and, if necessary to make education an assured thing, examination, and even compulsory examination, is the only sure road to make a heaven-gifted artist able to make use of his gifts. What is at the bottom of the development of American architecture in the last twenty years? Nothing but education. The country is full of architectural colleges; a course at the Ecole des Beaux Arts is an ordinary thing now for an aspiring young architect. It has come to be recognized in the United States that office practice alone, as a course of study for the profession, is not enough; that it is necessary to study design theoretically, and to train the mind to powers of creative imagination, by exercising it in consecutive courses of study, designed expressly to develop those powers. In other words, for all classes of minds there is no hope of being up to the mark of modern design without a course of abstract study which can hardly be too extensive.

This, then, is the justification of this Association which, having to deal with a state of ignorance on the part of the public about this matter of the depth and extension of the training needed for public design, sought to place matters in such a position that the judgment of those who knew what architecture was like, rather than the indifference of those who did not, might fix the nature of the preparation of young architects for the profession.

The question whether or not this was a good move, as a means of getting the question of architectural education settled, is now a matter of history. This way of dealing with the matter is not likely to be attempted again without the co-operation of the Eighteen Club, who are at present opposed to it. In the matter of theoretical education, as a condition precedent to practice, the Eighteen Club and ourselves are agreed and, fortunately I think for the advancement of architecture in this Province, we have this year agreed to work together in carrying on classes to give students the benefit of instruction in mathematics and design—the former because they