



OLD FRENCH HOUSES.

TORONTO MASTER PLUMBERS' ASSOCIATION.

The first monthly entertainment meeting of the master plumbers and supply men of Toronto was held on the evening of November 23rd in the association rooms, 21 Richmond street west. The room was handsomely decorated with flags. About three hundred members and friends assembled. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Fred. Armstrong, who, after expressing thanks for the large attendance, gave due credit to Mr. Clapperton, who had been the means of having instituted such social gatherings every alternate meeting. Mr. Armstrong then delivered the following address, which was listened to very attentively by all present :

At a meeting of the Association it was moved by one of the members that each alternate meeting night of the Association be set apart and devoted to social purposes. This idea emanated from a feeling that it would be wise to vary the ordinary routine of business so that it would not become monotonous. At the same time it was not thought desirable to stray too far from our proper field, but to always keep in view the fact that our Association was formed with some definite object in view and for some beneficial purpose. So it was suggested that part of the evening should be devoted to the reading of a paper or the delivering of an address and part to social or entertainment features upon which the committee would decide. I have been honored by the chairman of the committee in being requested to deliver the first address and to take charge of the first night's proceedings, and I may very frankly confess that I accepted this task with no little trepidation, realizing that much of the success of future meetings would depend upon the success of this the inaugural one.

In discussing matters relative to these meetings it was thought advisable that a paper should be read upon some trade question, but I have looked carefully into the matter and have come to the conclusion that upon this occasion it would be better that we should simply have a heart to heart talk upon a subject which is most interesting to every member of the Association, and if what I can say will interest the members I have no doubt it will lead to further addresses or papers being read on trade subjects by the other members of the Association who are more able than I to deal with such weighty matters.

For to-night, therefore, we will talk about our Association, its objects and aims, and apply what I have to say to all those who are interested, directly or indirectly, and endeavor to prove that an association such as we have formed is beneficial not only to master plumbers but to the supply man, to the architect and to the general public. I only regret that more of these are not present to-night so that they might learn that the master plumbers of this city whom they have for some time regarded as a band of pirates sailing on the high sea of commerce holding up the public and making them walk the plank to the tune of higher prices is a body of men intensely interested in the uplifting and upbuilding of a calling which through neglect has fallen from the high position it should occupy until it is looked upon by many with much ridicule and made the butt of every cheap wit. It is our work to alter that opinion, but we must first learn to respect ourselves before we can hope to command the respect of others.

Let us consider the Association as it appeals to and is of inter-

est to the supply man. But first let me say that by Association I do not mean any body of men who are gathered with the sole object in view of enhancing the value of any public commodity. Such a combination was never intended. When the Master Plumbers' Association was formed and since its formation the members have endeavored to discuss every question from an ethical and social as well as a commercial standpoint. Its members are willing to learn and have been taught by the experience of others that in order to do business it is necessary to consider all of the details in connection with that business. They have learned that the question of percentage is a most elusive one and that there are certain fixed charges which must be added to the first cost of an article before it becomes marketable or before they can arrive at the real cost. The object of the Association is therefore to discuss these matters, to consider the proper amount

to be charged as a natural and uncontrollable expense in conducting business; to point out the shrinkage which occurs, to make provision for uncollectable accounts, and then consider what is a fair and equitable charge.

The manufacturer and supply man can surely rest assured that they will be paid for their goods when dealing with a body of men thoroughly conversant with business principles, taught the value of doing business in a business-like manner, and not engaged in any system of ruinous competition.

It is also apparent that where all of the men engaged in the business gather together to talk matters over, there will be a general desire to uphold the character of the goods they are handling and no striving for cheap products. Every man in the business will endeavor to use as good an article as the means of his client will permit. It will not therefore be necessary for the supply-man to take chances in the production of cheap articles of uncertain character when he knows that every member of our Association will hesitate to recommend anything that does not comply with what the Master Plumbers' Association deem essential for the making of a thoroughly good job. If the supply-men have only to supply good material which they are certain will give them no trouble, to men who understand their business and do their work properly and receive a fair compensation therefor, it is certain that risks are reduced to a minimum, and if they make concessions to members of our Association, it is because they recognize the great benefit it will be to them in conducting their business.

Let us for a moment turn our attention to the architects. We are largely indebted to the good services of these gentlemen for much of the progressive and up-to-date plumbing which is installed in dwellings to-day, and it should not be necessary to use any arguments to convince them that an Association is a good thing. In the city of Toronto there are I believe two associations of architects and every reputable member of that profession belongs to either one or the other. Possibly the most convincing argument which they use is the statement that membership in their Association is an evidence of the ability of its members. If imitation is the sincerest kind of flattery, we pay these gentlemen a compliment in following the good example they have set us in forming an Association where we are just as discriminatory regarding our membership as they could possibly be. We take no man into our Association who is not duly accredited and ultimately hope to arrive at that state where membership in our organization will also be an evidence of a man's real worth and ability.

But there is another phase of the question. The architect designs and prepares specifications but the construction is in the hands of the contractor, and unless there is harmony of interest between the architect and the contractor the best prepared plans and specifications may result in defective work. How can we best effect that harmony of interest. I answer by our Association. Let us endeavor to interest the architects. Let us show them we are proud of our Association; explain the good work we are doing; solicit their assistance, have joint meetings; discuss technical features of plumbing, heating and ventilation and apply our practical knowledge. The result will be that the very best class of work will be done in the city of Toronto. It is good to-day but we can make it better, and who shall say that an association of interests such as I have described will not be a benefit to the architect.

The general public as a rule look with distrust upon combinations, trusts and associations. They say they prevent com-