

works injustice to the architect. Mr. Gilbert's first contract with the Board in charge of the building operations was for a proposed cost of \$1,500,000 on a sliding scale which averaged 4 per cent. When the appropriation was increased the fee for the remainder according to the sliding scale would have been 2 per cent.; but, as he had already sufficiently proved that the expenses of his office were considerably in excess of this he protested, or more properly speaking resumed a protest that he had made from the first, against the diminution of the scale of fee to 2 per cent. He argues that "if the first portion of the work is worth 5 per cent., the last portion, which is always the most elaborate, cannot be performed for 2 per cent." The Board saw the essential fairness of his position and wrote a new contract with him, extending the old contract upon the basis of 5 per cent. for all work above the \$1,500,000. The Board's action was made the subject of investigation by a committee of the House of Representatives and was sustained by the House. Mr. Gilbert says that much of the 5 per cent. work was done at a loss, even at that figure. His opinion is that "no matter how large the work may be, if it is at all enriched in detail and finish, 5 per cent. is a small compensation, although it may look large in bulk when taken by itself," without considering the work done. He suggests that we should "compare it with the compensation paid to real estate men for the buying and selling of land" and "compare the amount of the work in each case." Mr. Gilbert's letter was written originally not for publication but to correct an understatement of the amount of his fee that appeared in *The Western Architect*, and to suggest to the editor that he should advocate a 5 per cent. minimum, so as to prevent other Boards from making the mistake of attempting to employ architects on the sliding scale basis. The action of the Minnesota Capitol Board and its support by the Legislative Investigation Committee, are strong evidence against the reasonableness of the sliding scale system.

Whatever may be the case in **Signing Architecture**, the old world, which gives a thought too much regard to graphic artists, in this country, in fact on this continent, the architect is the leading figure. The names of prominent architects are well known, not in their own city only but throughout their own country and beyond it. It is questionable whether any architect in the history of the world has ever been so widely known, in his own generation, to a general public, as is, at the present moment, Mr. Daniel H. Burnham. This is partly due to the widening of the architects' sphere, and in Mr. Burnham's case, to a celebrity gained by his successful conduct of the building operations of the Chicago Exhibition, continued by his connection with the Washington improvements project, and by the frequency with which he is applied to now for advice by cities that are devising improvements in their plan. But while these large dealings naturally attract attention, so that the newspapers mention Mr. Burnham's name with the same simplicity as they would a general's, in full confidence that every one will know who he is, there are architects who are not architects of cities, but only of buildings, who are almost, if not quite, equally well known. Building is in fact going large now-a-days; a single structure

may be an important addition to any city, and this importance naturally gives the architect a new interest for the public. The interest spreads to the smaller designers, partly as members of the same profession but partly for another reason—the new importance that is attached by the mass of the people to their houses, since it has become as easy to own as to rent. Indeed in some places in Canada it is more easy to own than to rent; for speculative builders build only to sell and will not rent. This state of affairs has brought about a widely spread domestic sentiment which is acting as a wholesome counteragent to the idea that life in a flat, without housekeeping or other responsibilities, is the American woman's due. The use in the United States of the pregnant word "home" instead of the simple word "house", irritating as it is when used on all occasions, marks how this sentiment has grown and how, (which is our present object in noting it), the interest taken in small houses has become attached to their architects.

Even the press is not without signs of abandoning its tradition of ignoring the architect in its notice of buildings. The editors of the daily papers are still as sensitive to a "free ad." as they are to a typographical error, yet the names of the architects of projected buildings are always mentioned under the cuts of the buildings which are so frequently inserted now in the newspapers.

This growing interest in architects is a mark of awakening recognition that architecture is an art. This—it being the truth—it is a good thing to have recognized. It is to the advantage of everybody that the recognition should be furthered in every possible way; and one way which has been frequently proposed, is that architects should sign their buildings. In speaking of it recently, in a presidential address to the Architectural Association, Mr. Guy Dawber said that the signature of buildings is a custom on the Continent. That it is not unknown in England may be seen on the terra-cotta face of an hotel building in Piccadilly, where the signature of Messrs. Ernest George and Peto, architects, appears as a conspicuous corner decoration. When one sees a signature, placed thus in a prominent position, one becomes seriously aware that it does not make for benefit to the architect unless he has done well. The proceeding clearly has a double side—both working for good: that the art of architecture should be exalted in the eyes of the public and that the architect's sense of responsibility should be kept alert. When an architect did his work under a cloud of oblivion; paired off with the plumber in building operations, as equally undesirable and only not so necessary; it required stout and enduring character and conscience not sometimes to sink into a state of indifference and compromise. It is hard to uphold the fine thing against its neglect. It is hard to uphold an art alone. Indeed—as art that is alive always gets its living quality by expressing the life of its time, and only pedantry or eccentricity comes from the secluded artist—the more the architect is in touch with the world the better for his art.

The growing interest in architecture and architects is wholesome, and if it is assisted by a movement towards signing buildings it will be a good thing. It is quite likely that no formal assistance will be needed to such a movement, but that a custom so much in accordance with the general feeling of this time of Renaissance will arise, as customs do arise, all at once, everybody apparently following everybody else.