

TORONTO CITY HALL.



Golden key used by the Mayor at the formal opening of the new Municipal Buildings. Designed and Presented to the City by Messrs. Ryrie Bros., Toronto.

THE formal opening of the Toronto City Hall has at last taken place, and although after the manner of such buildings the carver is still at work and there is other work to do to make the building look complete, it is at least populated. The Toronto city officials have hitherto been painfully lacking in that luxuriousness of accommodation in working hours which is usually the fortune of civil servants. But all that is changed, and the clerk, who formerly spent his days in a low, dark and rather fusty room, with a prospect to one of the side streets below the market, and now finds himself in spacious and lofty quarters, with large windows looking to the genial south and the genial activity of Queen street, must feel all the fresh delight with which a convalescent, when he emerges from seclusion, looks upon the world. It has been questioned

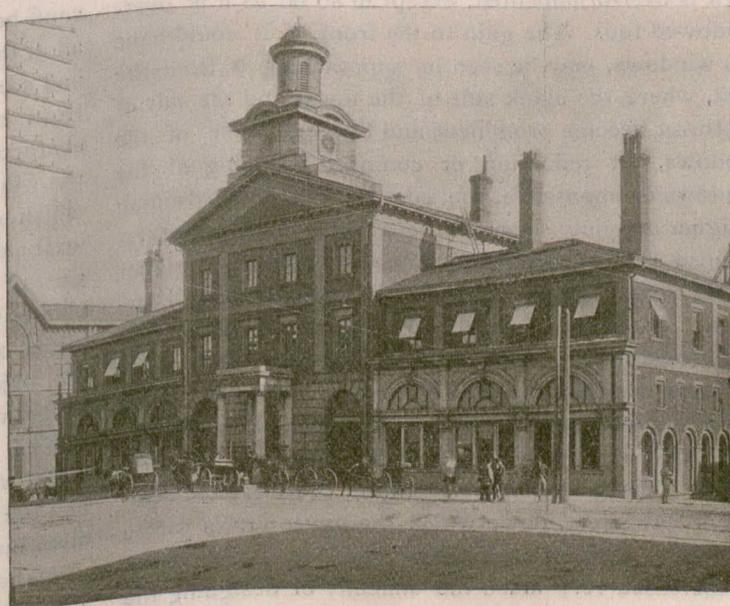
whether sufficient

spaciousness and loftiness for the officials' needs, and sufficient splendor for the city's honour, could not have been obtained for the original estimate of \$1,650,000. It certainly is a handsome sum; but to judge fairly if less would do, and what less would do, and what less it would cost if it would do, is beyond an outsider, unless he is prepared to undertake labor about equal to that of learning a language. Nor has the history of the rise in cost been clearly given to the public, so that they may understand its reason and reasonableness. But the resulting structure is before us to judge of and calls for remark.

Whatever may be said in criticism of the work this must be said in its praise, that comparison with the Ontario Parliament Buildings, by Mr. Waite, of Buffalo, a work similar in size and character, disposes of the doctrine

formulated when the Parliament Buildings were proposed—that it is not safe to trust to a Toronto architect work greater than has been executed in Toronto before; that for unusually large work it is necessary to employ an American architect. The unfortunate result of the employment of Mr. Waite has been before us for some years as evidence in the negative, and we have now positive evidence, in Mr. Lennox's completed work, that a Toronto man can rise to an occasion. Mr. Lennox's work is the work of an architect, while Mr. Waite's looks like that of a draughtsman. Indeed it is exceedingly likely that the work of a draughtsman is what it actually was. The American work getter has no time to be given to the slow processes of design, and his mind must be to a great extent off that bent. We have little else to expect, in dealing with the class of American architect into whose hands promoters of new building enterprises here are likely to fall, than that a draughtsman will be the creator of the design. The City Hall on the contrary has been not only personally designed but personally superintended, and whatever we have to say in criticism is about the design, which is a matter of taste and of which there is more than one solution, not about the construction, which is a matter of attention to facts, and of better ways or worse ways; of this it is the opinion of experts who examined the building in connection with the law suits with the contractor, that the work is done throughout in an admirable manner, and we may dismiss the question of construction with an expression of belief that about it nothing can be said but praise.

One fatal deficiency there is in the construction—that it is not fireproof. In the early stages, when it was discovered that economy was not going to have a voice in the matter, this necessary and repaying outlay should have been resolved on. It was not too late to make havoc of the architect's external treatment in order to meet this internal expense. Unrestrained lavishness is seldom as great a begetter of beauty as are limiting conditions. It is the necessity for making much of what he has that turns the designer's attention to concentration of effect which is breadth, the greatest quality in architecture.—This is lacking in the City Hall. There is too much on a facade, and the force of the design is somewhat weakened by it. The characteristic quality of the Richardsonian Romanesque is solidity of wall. Against this must be set the modern



THE OLD CITY HALL—1844-1899.