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## “AN ARCHITECT”

IN THE October number of *Buildings and Building Management* there appears an article on “Tall Buildings in Smaller Cities as Investments,” by William C. Lengel, which should offer some interesting facts for the consideration of both architects and investors.

It is not our purpose, however, to deal with the questions of economic interest involved, nor to hold any brief for the architect who designed the building under consideration, which, “like a gigantic dry-goods box placed on end, stands at the intersection of the two principal streets of ———.” We cannot dissent from the opinion that the failure of the building to pay might well be charged to bad planning. What we should like to point out, however, is the element of unfairness which is easily woven into the writer’s statement that at the beginning of the operations the owner called in “an architect.” The phrase seems to carry the same stigma that the man in the street means to convey when, after a

disagreeable experience, he refers sarcastically to “a plumber,” or “a doctor,” or “a banker.” It seems to be a universal method of castigating a whole profession, or calling, for the mistakes of one of its members. We should much prefer to learn that the owner called in “an incompetent architect,” or that a man had dealt with “a dishonest plumber,” or “an ignorant doctor,” or “an untrustworthy banker.”

All of these things are in existence—there are men practising architecture who are totally incompetent; but as this is a matter of almost common knowledge, the remedy lies in the choosing of the man—not in accepting incompetency and dishonesty as universal.

We do not believe that Mr. Lengel meant to imply the wholesale incompetence of architects, and we feel sure that a succeeding article will illustrate what a competent architect can really do for a client in the matter of plan and design. The examples are surely sufficiently numerous.

## BUILDING HEIGHTS

IN view of the forthcoming report of the Heights of Buildings Committee of New York City, which promises to be one of the most illuminating investigations ever undertaken, it is, per-

haps, idle to attempt comment upon the suggestion of Thomas Hastings (F.), of New York, relative to the imposition of a progressive tax on every building now erected above a certain height.

## HOW SHALL THE CURRENT OF TRADITION BE RE-ESTABLISHED?

of this great art as to show the student how the great problems of building design, many of which today are as insistent as they ever were, have been solved by his predecessors. How Peruzzi thought this and Bramante that, and why; and how Michelangelo did not agree with either, and which was right. Apart from the history of each style, of its relation to others, of its rise and its decline, there should be clearly set forth the structural problems set by the needs of the time, with the answers the architects of that day made to these problems. The ideas of each period should be given on planning, on construction, and on the use of materials, and not merely on ornament. \*There is a perfect line of development for every element of architecture—column, lintel, arch, gable, vault—a reason for every change they have passed through in their long careers, and these changes and the reasons for them should be part of the stock in trade

of every student. To know the date of a building is of little use if we cannot tell how it was built and why it was built as it was.

Perhaps these words seem pessimistic. They are not intended to be despairing, though they state a perplexity. The conclusion of the whole matter, if lame and impotent—how we ought to thank Shakespeare for those words—is not hopeless, either, though it must be another question. For, when I have said what it seems proper to do, I must still ask: How is it to be done? How can we administer these correctives in the atelier? I do not see, as yet, but I believe it can be done. Perhaps the atelier can take the initiative. Perhaps the Chapter can do so, not by any pressure on the atelier, but by leading the students to see what they need and to ask for it. The attempt should be made, for the condition is serious and we should do something to improve it.

NORMAN MORRISON ISHAM (M)

\*W. R. Lethaby, *Architecture*, p. 248.

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### IN MEMORIAM

MICHEL M. LE BRUN (M)

Died September 27, 1913

Admitted to the Institute in 1911

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ROBERT MAYNICKE (F)

Died September 29, 1913

Admitted to the Institute in 1908; to Fellowship in 1910

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