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NEWS NOTES

The American Housing Competition

Greatly to our regret it has been found impossible to hold a meeting of the Jury in the Housing Competition until early in May. Announcement of the winners will be made in the May Journal or will be given to the press early in that month.

Housing in England

"A Housing Department is being established. It is estimated to cost £90,000 a year. Major Prescott was curious about the appointment of Sir James Carmichael as Commissioner-General. He wanted to know Sir James' experience in housing and town-planning schemes. In his reply Dr. Addison was able to refer to Sir James' work on Reconstruction Committees, and to the fact that he was a Past-President of the Institute of Builders and London Master Builders' Association—the kind of answer which reminds one of the English-French grammar, where, in response to the question, 'Have you the knife of the butcher's nephew?' you are given the answer, 'No, but I have the penwiper of the gardener's wife.'"—*Architects Journal* (London).

Some Interesting History of the Early Use of Reinforced Concrete

In writing for the Journal an appreciation of Mr. Leon Dessez, published elsewhere in this issue, Mr. Ashford recalls the following interesting experience that befell Mr. Dessez in connection with the Century office building in Washington: "This is an eight-story office building designed in 1899 and constructed entirely of reinforced concrete. Walls, columns, floors and roof are all of reinforced concrete. The floor slabs, with spans of 20 feet, are also of the same material. At the time this building was constructed, now twenty years ago, this type of construction was a decided innovation and reinforced concrete used in such manner was practically untried. When application was made for the building permit, the Inspector of Buildings had no formulas or regulations covering such construction and appealed to the Building Departments of New York, Philadelphia and Boston for advice as to the proper design for such a building. New York replied, saying, 'The concrete system of construction is not recognized by the New York Building Law.' Philadelphia wrote, 'We have not, as yet, had presented to us any proposition to construct the walls of a building of concrete, and have not given the matter full consideration.' Boston wrote, 'Concrete construction is not recognized in said building laws except for the footings of foundations.' Mr. Dessez had presented, twenty years ago, a most complete set of plans for an office building about 90 feet high, with walls and all other structural features of reinforced concrete, and the Building Departments of four large cities acknowledged that it was the first example of such construction.

"The Inspector of Buildings of Washington noted on the application for a permit, 'I cannot stamp these drawings for the reason that they are not in compliance with the building regulations.' The matter was therefore forwarded to Col. D. D. Gaillard, Assistant Engineer Com-

missioner, who will always be remembered for his great services and sacrifices in the construction of the Panama Canal, and he endorsed on the application the following: 'The combination of iron and concrete is a type of construction which is apparently growing in favor, but, so far as I am aware, is not embraced in the building regulations of other cities as applied to walls of buildings. . . . So far as this city is concerned, this building must be regarded as experimental. . . . That the building be regarded as of an entirely new type.'

"The Engineer Commissioner, Col. L. H. Beach, placed upon the application the following: 'While the building is a new type of construction, it appears to be designed upon rational lines, and although not covered by the building regulations, I would recommend that permit be issued for its construction.' The building stands today as an almost indestructible example of Mr. Dessez's foresight and ability, and within the twenty years following its erection thousands of similar buildings have been constructed. Formulas and regulations have been made to guide others in the design of such a building after Mr. Dessez had first shown the way."

The Museum and Art

At the meeting of the Architectural League of New York on March 13 last, Lieut. de Ricci, a member of the commission selected by the French Government for the purpose of bringing the history of French art more prominently before the people of the United States, said in substance: "The mistake made by museum directors of today lies in exhibiting such quantities of one kind of article, of several periods, all in one room. The whole aim that should guide a museum is spoiled by this sort of poor judgment."

In referring to the history and progress of art in France, he said: "French art was controlled by the kings in power, and is designated by their names. The people were ambitious to imitate their sovereigns, and thus the ideas and styles of the kings had great vogue. In England, on the contrary, the styles took the name of the artist or craftsman, or even of the town where the work was produced." He illustrated his lecture with interesting specimens of work.

In closing he said: "I beg that the artists of today may remember that there is but one universal Art. Do not look despairingly on any one style. On the contrary, if artists would strive more toward making their work of benefit to the masses of mankind, they would do a great deal toward drawing them closer to the everlasting ideal of life, labor and the future."

Obituary

Arthur Durand Rogers

An understanding sympathy, a gentle courtesy bordering on courtliness, deep-rooted optimism, fearlessness coupled with innate modesty and an unswerving faith in his fellow-man, tempered with full appreciation of the element of human frailty in the efforts of our profession, were the outstanding characteristics of Arthur Durand Rogers which endeared him to the architects of America.

His breadth of vision, ever broadening, is typified by the

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breaking of the bonds imposed by the name "Brickbuilder"—limiting his field of activity to the clay products—that he might traverse the gamut under the all-inclusive title of the "Architectural Forum."

A frank but always kindly critic, his aim was ever to build up—never to destroy. Controversy, attack, nor inuendo never marred his spoken or published word, but by dignified suggestion he sought to alter policies and correct abuses—consistently, constructively.

An indefatigable worker, he maintained constant touch with the constructed work as well as the creative spirit of its designer by those periodical advents which stand as milestones in the careers of so many of us.

Of all the wealth of endowments an All-wise Providence had vouchsafed him, he has left behind a goodly heritage. Whatever material capital he may have invested in his publication, it was the soul of the man, committed to the enterprise, that enriched it with a vital, living force.

"Loyal friend, courageous publicist, defender of the faith in all the fields of architectural effort, ardent purveyor of helpfulness to the younger men in whom his farsighted vision saw the Architect of tomorrow"—would be a fitting enumeration of his endearing characteristics which might be pronounced could such a degree be conferred upon him as Honorary Associate in the profession whose highest ideals were his guiding principles.

JOHN LAWRENCE MAURAN.

Leon E. Dessez

Elected to the Institute as a Fellow in 1896.

Died at Washington, D. C., December 25, 1918

Mr. Dessez was born in Washington, D. C., April 12, 1858, and was educated in the public schools. He began the study of architecture in the office of Hornblower and Poindexter, later Hornblower and Marshall, and was employed for three years on plans for the Washington Monument under direction of Colonel Casey, and for three years as architectural and engineering draftsman in the Navy Yard at Washington. In April, 1886 he began the practice of architecture in Washington. He designed many private residences in Washington City and in Maryland and Virginia.

Among the many public buildings designed by Mr. Dessez should be mentioned the Miner Normal School on Georgia Avenue and the Gallinger Hospital; at the time of his last illness he was employed on plans for the Soldiers Home Hospital. In 1909 he was employed with the Municipal Architect in the preparation of the plans for the workhouse at Occoquan, which has revolutionized the architecture of penal institutions and was the beginning of the so-called "open air" treatment for prisoners, who are housed in dormitories, with abundant light and air, and no cells, locks, or bars to suggest the ordinary old-fashioned prison.

In his profession he combined the enviable qualifications of the artistic designer with those of the technical structural engineer. The esthetic and practical were com-

bined in him to afford a real and useful architect and a credit to the profession. He was for a time vice-president of the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and one of the charter members in 1887. He served on a committee for the restoration of the old Octagon House, now the headquarters of the Institute, and rendered other services for the advancement and improvement of the profession.

In 1908 he served, with no other remuneration than his self-satisfying consciousness of a service to the public, on a committee appointed by the Commissioners to revise the Building Regulations. This was an arduous task and with his assistance the District was able to publish in 1909 the first consistent and complete edition of the Building Code for the District of Columbia.

In 1908 he was appointed on a committee of architects and builders to inspect the public school buildings and report on their construction, general condition, and safety from fire. This service demanded about five months of his time and resulted in a most valuable report which was published by Congress as a public record for the benefit of the schools.

The foregoing but briefly and imperfectly records his career as an architect and a citizen. Volumes would not do justice to him as a man; all who knew him soon recognized his forceful character, his sincere frankness, his absolutely fearless stand for his convictions, his utter lack of selfishness, and his generous support of his friends. He was the personification of truth and honor and uprightness. The architectural profession lost a distinguished member, the city of Washington lost a useful citizen, and his friends lost a most reliable man when he died on Christmas Day, 1918.

SNOWDEN ASHFORD.

Owen Brainard

Elected to the Institute in 1907; to Fellowship in 1915

Died at New York City, April 2, 1919

Mr. Brainard was born at Haddam, Conn., in 1865, but went to New York City when still a boy. After finishing his education in the public and private schools, he entered the office of Carrere & Hastings, as their chief engineer, in 1893. He became a member of the firm in 1901 and remained with it until 1907, during which time he assisted in designing and supervising many notable buildings: the New York Public Library, the Senate and House office buildings at Washington, the extension of the United States Capitol, the Yale University memorial buildings, and the buildings at Cornell University.

In 1907 Mr. Brainard established a business of his own, since which time he has held many important commissions. Among the last things to which he devoted himself, under great discouragement, were some of the housing projects for the United States Housing Corporation. He was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Architectural League of New York, the City Planning Institute, and of the Century, Apawamis, and Engineers Clubs.