

## Interesting Talk by Professor Shelley on Architecture.

The experiment of inviting the public to see a show of architectural drawings was again carried out at the annual meeting of the New Zealand Institute of Architects at Christchurch early this month, with very pronounced success.

The acting-President, Mr. Wm. Page, of Wellington, in welcoming, on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Wood, and Mrs. Page, the guests at the exhibition of drawings in the Art Gallery on the 7th, explained that at last year's conference in Wanganui a similar exhibition was arranged, chiefly for the edification of the delegates. A prominent citizen, however, persuaded them to throw it open to the public, and such large numbers availed themselves of the opportunity to inspect the drawings that it was decided to repeat the exhibition this year. At the back of their heads there might be a lurking hope that the exhibition would arouse a new and general interest in buildings and cities. Mr. Page went on to develop the proposition that architects were not the only persons interested in architecture, and that it was a matter of vital interest to the whole community. Architects, jointly with the members of the medical profession, were the custodians of the public health. Frankly (and he hoped he would not unduly shock his fellow architects) he considered that such exhibitions would be an excellent advertisement for the Institute. Architects, like medical men, considered it very improper to advertise; but medical men came before the public and preached the gospel of good health. Architects, also, had such a gospel to preach, not only physical but mental—indeed, he went further and claimed that buildings had an effect on the spiritual good health of the people. While he hoped the exhibition would stimulate a little interest in the work of the architect, too much importance should not be attached to the drawings which were only a means to an end. The architect's business was not to make pictures, but to build sound, efficient, healthy and beautiful buildings. He asked Professor J. Shelley to address the gathering.

Prof. Shelley made a striking attack on bad building, and in the course of his evening's address gave the architect much food for thought. He began by quoting Omar's famous lines:—

"Ah, Love, could thou and I with Fate conspire  
To grasp this sorry state of things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's desire?"

and, explaining that it was not customary to address architects nowadays in such endearing terms, he used the lines by way of introduction to what proved a most stimulating and thoughtful address. He whimsically claimed the right to address the profession on the ground that "he had to put up with the things that architects themselves put up."

The architect, said the professor, was capable, more than anyone else, of expressing the heart's desire of the community, and so he might be invoked in the words of Omar Khayyam. The typical art of the present age was town-planning. No other was expressive of the community. Never before had mankind deliberately set out to plan and build whole new cities. Painting and music had come to be an individual affair. The architect had become more than ever the communal artist. If he were to do his work properly, he would have to emulate the ideals of the architect-priests of the Middle Ages. He would have to be not only an architect, but also a good, i.e., an active citizen. He had the chance to give the community its heart's desire. "And," said Professor Shelley, "it's up to us to see that he takes it!"

### LOYALTIES.

An architect, the speaker said at an earlier stage of his address, must have a number of loyalties. He must be loyal to his own sight. Sometimes architects overdid this, and designed buildings to match bad buildings next door. Unfortunately such bad buildings were usually Gothic—a legacy from the middle of the 19th century. He must be loyal to the purpose of his building. An example of the other thing was the "Freshmen's Church" at Cambridge, which looked like a place of worship, but actually housed the "University Press." There were buildings in Christchurch which exemplified the same fault.

He must be loyal to his material. In certain New Zealand towns (not Christchurch) decadent or "perpendicular" Gothic churches were being built in armoured concrete instead of stone. This was simply "telling lies." Any beauty which modern methods of construction achieved—and he believed that they would achieve it—must come through acknowledging the nature of the materials used, viz., steel girders and concrete. In the same way, the architect must be loyal to his method of construction. He must use the lines of construction as the basis of his decoration, emphasising them, not hiding them. He must be loyal to himself—to his own dreams, and to the society and the age in which he lived. Lastly, he must be loyal to his client, but there was little need for the outsider to worry about this. The client could be trusted to see to that himself. The architect's duty was to give the other things upon which the client might not insist.

### BUILDINGS THAT SCREAM.

"No other professional man can make himself such a public nuisance as an architect," remarked the professor. "You may restrict the blowing of whistles and the playing of string bands to certain times, but an architect can scream at you from his building for half a century." On the other hand,