

No Baths for England's Prime Minister!

Speaking at the National Economy Exhibition, in London, Mrs. Lloyd George disclosed some interesting "Cabinet" secrets. "Perhaps you will not believe me when I tell you that when Mr. Asquith came to 10, Downing Street, nine years ago, there was not a single bathroom in the whole place. At No. 11, Downing Street, where we went to live about the same time, we found a basement scullery there with not a window, not a gleam of light or ventilation of any sort. It took me some little time before I could persuade the Office of Works to build me a scullery. I did not rest till I got it. Now there is a good scullery, with a glass roof and a window, which opens into the garden."

A Cathedral Design

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A really successful architect, in the highest sense of the term, must be one who is able to express in his designs the underlying ideas of modern construction and materials. He must in fact be inventive and fertile of imagination, for the spirit behind all organic architecture demands economy of material and the attainment of an object by the simplest and most direct methods possible. It is an axiom impressed upon the world by the best teachers that "Utility is the parent of beauty," and any increase in fitness is an increase in beauty." This being admitted, the architect of to-day should cheerfully discard, where necessary, those old forms which in their turn met the problems of past ages but are unsuited for this, at the same time he should adopt and adapt those which have proved themselves suitable and best in present as well as in former times. The motto of the London Architectural Association "Design in Beauty built in Truth" should be impressed in burning characters on all who aim at improving architecture and forming, wherever they may be working, a national style of building. We know, of course, that as long as the ignorant and prejudiced are the patrons of architecture that the process of evolution in style will be a slow one. The ordinary man seeks in a design something that will take his imagination to some shadowy past, something with association, and he is slow to see that in a modern building it is impossible to successfully turn back the pages of time and to reproduce in this century and under modern conditions a building that expresses the obsolete ideas of long past centuries. The exponent of true Gothic art is he who will design as one of the fourteenth or fifteenth century architects would have designed had he possessed modern materials and advantages in machinery and so forth with which to deal. This we say should be the aim of the really successful architect, but as it is much easier to follow the beaten and popular path we fear few seriously attempt to attain it. One leading writer and teacher (Mr. Claude Bragdon) has said lately, "The architect to-day fails to think and work in terms of his time and place," and later he

adds that he also "fails to work in terms of his materials." These sentences probably mean nothing to the shallow thinker but they express in succinct language the chief disease from which present-day architecture is suffering.

This prelude in a measure justifies our illustrating Mr. Clere's attempt to design a re-inforced concrete cathedral for a New Zealand City, subject to earthquakes. In it the use of a material which exercises little or no outward thrust is exemplified by the absence of buttresses, and the accentuation of the vertical columns upon and into which the weights are concentrated, and it designates clearly the beams which tie the whole together horizontally, the uprights between the panning suggesting the shear bars which are an important factor in ferro-concrete construction. Whether Mr. Clere has done this and yet maintained the true Gothic feeling we must leave the educated critics to judge. With his long experience in this country, with its materials and workmen and of the earthquakes to which it is subjected, it would be surprising if he had not done something to solve the architectural problems of his "time and place" as well as that of the materials to be used. The building is planned so that the weight is evenly distributed, and though association with the English Church demands a spire "pointing heavenwards," the one he gives is strongly supported on all four sides by walls which would spread its weight evenly in every direction. The perpendicular period of Gothic (a modified form of which he has chosen) lends itself admirably to re-inforced concrete, an advantage which could never be claimed by the advocates of flamboyant or of geometric Gothic. The design illustrated has been somewhat hurriedly prepared by Mr. Clere at the request of friends who feel that he ought to express in some intelligible way the ideas which have been formulating in his mind during the past thirty years or more, as to how a large church should be designed to meet the special requirements of this Dominion and people. Mr. Clere in doing this has been influenced in some degree by the wishes of these friends, but had he been left entirely to follow out his own ideas the departure from English models would probably have been more marked. Though he is absolutely satisfied that there would be no difficulty in safely constructing the somewhat high gables, he would have taken Mr. Gilbert Scott's ideas, as expressed in Liverpool Cathedral, and given flatter ones and a low pitched or flat roof, these being more appropriate to a country subject to earthquakes and to one in which there is never any snow. Possibly too he would have been satisfied with a tower (or towers) without the spire, as towers seem more appropriate when in a setting of high hills, than do spires which find their best expression in a flat country. It is better, however, that an architect should design a building in one key rather than produce one the discordant parts of which are so apparent as to be actually painful to any one with but the slightest artistic feeling, and he has therefore exercised a restraint which we think has resulted in a restful and harmonious design. We may hope, however, that he will perhaps prepare a second design where our national requirements will be more clearly defined than in the one we are illustrating.