

### BY THE WAY.

MR. H. E. EDGE, a prominent lumberman of Sydney, N.S.W., is making a tour of Canada, investigating the merits of the various electrical systems. He expresses surprise at the number of water powers. In Australia, he says, there are but two systems operated by water power, and to obtain the water for one of these a tunnel one mile in length was constructed. The rivers of Australia differ from those of Canada, in that they run for some miles and then disappear for miles. This, he says, is due to the porous nature of the ground in some parts.

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DURING the four or five years of business depression through which we have been passing, all classes have been on the lookout for indications of returning prosperity. As a rule they have seen little of an encouraging character, while with some things have been going from bad to worse. I met a man thus situated recently, to whom I propounded the oft-put question: "What is the business outlook?" The answer I received is worthy of preservation. Said he, "Two or three years ago, you and I were living on our Faith that the times would improve. Last year we thought we could discern signs of promise and we lived on Hope. This year I am living on Charity."

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THE pathway of the sales agent of an electric manufacturing company is not always strewn with roses, judging by an experience which one of them related to me the other day. "You remember," said he, that the city of ——— was lately equipped with an electric street railway. Well, I am the individual who worked that enterprise up from its very foundation, and failed to get either credit or dollars for my labor. First of all I directed my attention to the Council, and after much expenditure of time and the breaking of more than one bottle of wine, secured for the promoters of the road a franchise, which, owing to local prejudices, they could not have obtained for themselves. I next prepared plans and specifications upon which they might invite tenders for the apparatus and construction. Tenders were called, and a meeting of the Council held to consider them, at which I could not be present on account of having to appear as a witness in a suit for the recovery of \$250 misapplied funds. In my absence another representative of our company, who was totally unknown to the aldermen, was delegated to attend the meeting of the Council in the interests of our tender. The result was that the Council accepted the tender of a rival concern, and we were out the profits on a \$30,000 contract, plus time, effort and incidental expenses the latter of which came out of my own pocket. When, afterwards, I ventured to ask some of the promoters if they did not think I was entitled to a little more consideration, after all I had done in getting them the franchise, etc., they frankly admitted that they had entirely overlooked that feature of the matter, and had simply voted that the lowest tender be accepted, regardless of everything else. If it had not been for that paltry law suit, I would have been certain to have got that contract. The last straw on the camel's back was the fact that the law suit went against us also, and we lost the whole business." Fortunately such extraordinarily "rough" experiences do not strike a man often, but when they do they hit him hard.

As the result of the efforts of a Canadian syndicate the antipathy to the trolley system of street car propulsion in England bids fair to be largely overcome. This syndicate is composed of Mr. Wm. Mackenzie, president of the Toronto Street Railway Company, and Mr. James Ross, manager of the Montreal Street Railway, who have been negotiating for the purchase of the franchise of the existing street railway company of Birmingham, Eng. I met Mr. Mackenzie a few days after his return from Europe, and he informed me that the deal was considered as good as closed. He said: "There is just Mr. Ross and myself in the company as yet. The conditions of the purchase are that we secure an extension of 21 years of the lease of the road, and that the City Council permit the use of the trolley system, but we do not anticipate any difficulty in that line. Of course, the work of electrifying the system will not be commenced until next spring. The road is forty miles in length, and the population of Birmingham, I should say, about three times as large as Toronto." To the question, "Is it your intention to endeavor to secure other franchises?" Mr. Mackenzie remarked that after the Birmingham system was in operation, he might get other cities would soon fall in line. He hopes eventually to secure the adoption of the trolley system in London, where horse cars and busses are now used, and where the prejudice against poles and overhead wires is very strong. "About the best electric railway in England," he said, "is on the Isle of Man; it is eight miles in length, double-tracked, and works very efficiently. In the matter of lighting they are much further advanced, and I had the pleasure of visiting an immense installation at London. As regards electrical machinery, I do not think they are quite as far advanced in Great Britain, and it is just possible that some American machinery will be required for the proposed conversion of the Birmingham road." Mr. Mackenzie purposes making another trip to Europe this fall.

### ECONOMIES IN CENTRAL STATION PRACTICE.

A paper on the above subject presented recently before the Chicago Electrical Association by Mr. Thos. C. Grier, concludes as follows:—

There are 'little' economies 'in details.' Here are a few short quotations from letters I received in response to my query as to little economies:

'The first to come to mind under your paper is discount all bills promptly, as your supply house can afford to give better prices when they know their invoices will be paid promptly.'

'If furnishing street lights, show your council and committee that you are trying to give the city all the contract calls for.'

'Treat your customers as reasonably as possible; they will reciprocate.'

'Collect all your bills before the 10th of the month.'

'Keep the stock-room under lock and key and have supplies taken out on requisition; men get careless and this is a leak that foots up very fast.'

'Bad joints, that is, joints not soldered, and loose, is poor economy.'

'The use of exhaust steam for heating in winter is economy.'

Every plant in itself is a distinct problem and what may be economy in one may not answer in another.