

be a high or low one. Theoretically, however, it would seem to be proper that the government standard should be fixed reasonably high.

THE important position of City Engineer, Toronto, which has been allowed to remain vacant for a year, has finally been filled by the appointment of Mr. E. H. Keating. Mr. Keating was formerly City Engineer of Halifax, and occupies at present a similar position at Duluth, Minn. His reputation would indicate his fitness for his new position. The successful administration of this most important department of the city service will certainly afford scope for ability of the highest order. The amount connected with the appointment as salary was placed at \$4,000, but Mr. Keating asks \$5,000. The sum is not too great for a first-class man, but the mayor's right to assure Mr. Keating that the extra \$1,000 a year would be given him, without having laid the matter before the Council, is open to question.

THE district immediately north of Bloor street has within the last four or five years come to be regarded as one of the most desirable for residence purposes in the city of Toronto. This is due in a measure to its favorable location in proximity to the Queen's Park, the colleges and university, as well as the excellent street car accommodation, but more particularly to the fact that building restrictions are imposed governing the sale of lands, making it impossible for a cheap class of houses to be erected. In view of the precautions thus taken it is very disappointing to find that the result sought to be attained has to a large extent been defeated by the unsatisfactory character, in point of design, of the buildings erected. Unfortunately, much of the land in this locality has fallen into the hands of the speculative builder, who, while obliged to comply with the restrictions as to cost, is under no compulsion to have his designing done by other than a third-class architect. As a result we see a vast amount of good material which might have been made to assume forms of beauty delighting the eye and refining to the taste of the onlooker, wrought into forms of ugliness. Out of the hundreds of houses erected in this beautiful locality within the last five years, the number that can be said to be satisfactory in design might easily be counted on one's fingers.

THE introduction of the trolley electric system for the propulsion of street cars in Toronto was strongly objected to because it would result in adding to the number of overhead wires. When the fact was demonstrated that the trolley was the only successful system which could be adopted, the objectors had no alternative other than to philosophically try to make the best of the situation. There is a strong probability that with the electric street railway will come an improvement in the present arrangement of overhead wires, by which to a large extent their unsightliness and danger will be removed. It is understood that the street railway, electric light and telegraph companies have expressed their willingness to occupy jointly two lines of poles planted on either side of all streets on which cars will run. It is proposed to erect iron poles of sufficient height and strength to carry all the necessary wires. The carrying out of this proposal would allow of the removal of thousands of the large poles carrying electric light and telegraph wires now disfiguring the streets. The advantages would be about equal to those of the underground system, and without the added cost to consumers of electric light which would be certain to follow the construction and maintenance of the conduit system. We hope to see the idea successfully carried out.

WE publish elsewhere a series of "suggestions" issued by the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects, for the conduct of competitions. The proposal to have the expert appointed to judge the designs advise as to the limit of cost, is designed to place all competitors on an equal footing. It has been the practice in Great Britain to charge competitors ten dollars or so for a copy of the instructions, which sum was returned only in the case of those who furnished a *bona fide* design. As it sometimes happens that a perusal of the instructions is sufficient to cause the architect to decide to have nothing to do with the competition, and as he is not in a position without the instructions to decide whether or not the competition is one which he might desire to enter, the Institute suggests that architects should be entitled to

be refunded the sum thus paid, in cases in which they do not desire to compete and in which they return the instructions within the period of thirty days. We are not aware that in Canada competitors have ever been asked to pay for the information necessary to enable them to decide whether or not they should comply with the invitation to compete. It is manifestly unfair that they should. The *Building News*, in discussing the value of these suggestions, admits that they embody many needed reforms, but says: "The main difficulty remains, the difficulty of finding in each case a suitable professional assessor. This has always been in principle, the weak point of the system. A happy accident has so far kept it from being very obviously such, but in course of time its weakness can hardly fail to become conspicuous. It is this difficulty, more than any other, which needs for the future the earnest attention of architects and their representatives." The appointment of three assessors, instead of one, should it be possible to obtain them, would no doubt tend to insure an impartial and satisfactory decision.

IT is said to be the practice of architects in Montreal to include the electric wiring of buildings in the plumber's specification. To entrust this work to the plumber, who, probably in nine cases out of ten has never devoted an hour to the study of electricity, seems like deliberately preparing the way for future difficulty. In this connection we quote as follows from a paper on "Safe Wiring" read by Mr. A. B. Smith, Inspector for the Underwriters' Association, at the recent convention of the Canadian Electrical Association: "While in a few instances much trouble and annoyance is caused by unskilled electric men, who have an idea they possess more knowledge than can be carried by one single brain, still there is a source of trouble to electric light people and the underwriters which is most serious. What I refer to is, the ignorant and clumsy interference with good wiring by plumbers, steam and gas fitters and other pipe men, and our friend the ubiquitous bell hanger. These individuals, with supreme contempt of others' rights, or through ignorance, not realizing the danger of their practices, are constantly making mischief. Nine cases out of ten, where trouble is located in an otherwise perfect piece of work, these pirates are to blame. It is a common occurrence to find gas or water pipes resting upon electric wires, these pipes or other iron work, having been placed in position after the electrical work was completed. Furthermore, there is a certain class of men, especially gas fitters, who really have an idea that they do know something about electricity, and who believe that because wires are sometimes run in pipes, that it is their special vocation to do it. It is true in this as in other matters, that 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.' Unfortunately the public have no protection against these half-baked electricians, and it is against this class of work that the insurance companies have to fight their greatest battles. Serious loss has only been averted by constant and skillful supervision, and were it not so, the loss from this source would be vastly greater."

THE wisdom of the large expenditures of the Dominion Government in the construction of canals, as well as in the deepening of those canals sufficiently to admit of the passage of heavily laden vessels from the great inland lakes to the seaboard, is now becoming apparent. As a result of the advantages in the amount of cargo and saving in cost of transhipment offered by the Canadian route over the Erie canal, the exports of grain and flour of the city of New York are steadily decreasing, while those of Montreal are to a proportionate extent increasing. In consequence, the Americans are becoming alarmed, and in the House of Representatives it has been proposed to make an appropriation to cover the cost of a survey to determine the most desirable and practical route for a deep water canal wholly within the territory of the United States, from the great lakes to deep water in the Hudson river. In view of these circumstances, and of the fact that the volume of water transportation as compared with transportation by rail is shown by trade statistics to be on the increase, we are pleased to see the revival of the project to connect Lake Ontario with the Georgian Bay by means of a ship-railway. If this connection were made, either by ship-railway or canal, it would be the means of shortening the route from the grain producing districts of the north-