

## DISCUSSION.

Mr. Jas. Shirra, in proposing a vote of thanks, said: We are much indebted to our President for his interesting and suggestive address. Some of the points he has touched on are engaging the attention of Engineering Societies all over the world—that relating to the status of engineers, for instance. The father of all our Societies, the Institution of Civil Engineers, is offering a prize for the best paper on how to improve the status, the competition remaining open for a number of years. He (the speaker) understood many of the writers of the papers laid stress on this indefiniteness of the title “Engineer.”

While on the Committee on the proposed State Boiler Bill, he noticed in the Queensland “Inspection of Machinery” Act that “extra first-class engine-drivers’ certificates” are issued there to men who are trained and competent engineering workmen with practical knowledge of handling engines, who can pass an examination in drawing, mathematics, physical science, thermodynamics, and the setting, erecting, and working of boilers and engines; the holder of such certificate is to be designated therein an “Engineer,” as he surely must be, but it is only an engine-driver’s certificate. In New South Wales we issue a certificate as Engineer (third class) to anyone who can show a year’s experience with an engine and boiler, and pass a very easy examination on marine engines. However, he was glad to say that the regulation by which this is now allowed is about to be modified for the better.

Nothing has been heard of this Boiler Bill since our report was sent in; possibly it is felt that it is too late, that steam boilers are really getting obsolete, the suction gas engine our President has referred to taking

the place of steam engines in many cases. There are numbers of small suction-gas plants throughout the country, using charcoal, a fuel nearly everywhere obtainable. He had heard of one on a river craft, for the Murray-Darling trade; the owner was desirous of knowing if it would be classed as a steamship in New South Wales, but of course we could not reckon it as such altogether.

The President's ideas for encouraging inventive talent are praiseworthy, but if, as he pointed out, we may have to reduce our printing expenses, he (the speaker) did not see where the prizes are to come from. It would be a grand thing, certainly, if we could develop here the ideas of our own inventive geniuses, like Brennan, for instance, who brought out the automatic torpedo and the gyroscopic mono-railway, but had to go to the old country to perfect them; but we must cut our coat according to our cloth.

He quite agreed that we should encourage local talent all we can. He might mention that in the administration of our State lighthouses (this may be interesting in view of their early transfer to the Commonwealth) we are introducing a petrol vapour incandescent burner, entirely a Sydney invention, made at the Government Dockyard, which is likely to be a great success. Incandescent burners are being introduced in all the Australian States, but they are imported ones. In Melbourne, indeed, they have made some locally, but they are copies of a French burner; ours is entirely original and very simple.

In conclusion, he desired to propose a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Erskine for his thoughtful and interesting address.