

## HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE BUILDINGS ACT.

On Wednesday night Sir J. Graham moved for leave to bring in a bill to amend the 7th and 8th of Vict. c. 84, for regulating the construction and use of buildings in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, by authorizing the appointment of a third referee. This addition to the number of the referees would not increase the expense, because one of the present referees, each of whom received 1,000*l.* a year, having declined to act, it was proposed to divide his salary between the one to be appointed in his place and the third referee, giving them 500*l.* a year each, and allowing them at the same time to pursue their professional avocations, which they would be disqualified from doing under the present law.

Mr. Hawes said, that if this proposed bill was to be passed into law, there should be a distinct understanding that some other measure would also be brought forward by the Government to remove the multitudinous defects of the Metropolitan Buildings Act. He had received complaints respecting it from every quarter, and all the parties seemed to think that there was only one remedy, and that was to repeal the Act. He had a book in his hand relative to the business transacted by the official referee, and he might show the house many instances of the vexatious and trifling interference which had taken place. One man wanted to alter his pigeon-house; this was disputed by the district surveyor, and the opinion of the referees had to be taken to know whether a pigeon-house came within the meaning of the Act? All these cases, when they came before the referees, had to be decided on the payment of very large fees; which must be paid by the appellant, though the decision should be in his favour. The best plan would be to repeal this Act altogether, and to take up the old Building Act, which, with a few amendments, would accomplish all the objects aimed at by the existing Act.

Mr. Hume assured the right hon. baronet that of all the Acts passed by Parliament he never knew one so fruitful of complaints, impositions, and charges, as the one which had been referred to by the hon. member who last spoke. He agreed with that hon. member that the simplest mode of dealing with the subject would be to repeal that Act altogether. It had been productive of unmixed evil, and he should say that not a particle of benefit had been derived from it.

Mr. R. Hodgson, Sir C. T. D'Eyncourt, Mr. Forster, and Mr. Henley, also spoke against the bill.

Sir J. Graham in reply, said he was extremely sorry to find that the measure which passed the House last year should have met with such general condemnation. The House would bear in mind that the Government had endeavoured to make that measure as perfect as possible. The bill underwent much discussion, and he had hoped, therefore, that the Bill, as amended, would have given satisfaction; but he was sorry to say, from what he had heard from both sides of the house, and from what he had heard in private, that there was great dissatisfaction with the measure as it now stood. He had therefore resolved to bring in an amended Bill, which was in a great state of preparation, and hoped to bring it under the consideration of the House at no distant day. If brought forward too rapidly, however, he was afraid sufficient attention would not be paid to the details. In regard to the particular Bill under consideration, unless the operation of the law as it now stood was to be altogether abandoned, that Bill was indispensable. By the measure of last session there were two official referees at a salary of 1,000*l.* a year. One of those referees had declined to discharge the duty, and it was now proposed to divide the salary, to appoint two referees at 500*l.* each, and to remove the disqualification by which they were prevented from acting as surveyors. He thought the disqualification was of no value to the public, and if it was removed there would be no difficulty in finding persons of eminence to undertake the duty. A third referee was absolutely necessary, because, so long as there were only two, there was no one to decide upon any question on which they might be divided in opinion.

Leave was then given to bring in the Bill, which was subsequently introduced, and read.

## RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

A DREADEFUL explosion of gunpowder, on the South-Eastern Railway, took place last week. Thirteen men, who were employed in constructing a sea-wall at the Rounddown Cliff, near Dover, were at dinner, between 12 and 1 o'clock, when a shower of rain came on; and to protect themselves from the wet, one of the men forced open the door of a cave in the chalk cliff, which, being used as a store for gunpowder, had been kept locked. One of the men, after lighting his pipe, threw down the match, when the powder exploded, and left but two survivors to tell the tale. Whether any blame can attach to the parties in charge of the powder is at present unknown. An inquest is now sitting on the unfortunate sufferers.—Above 300 labourers are again employed on the works of the Waterford and Limerick Railway terminus, and the company have excluded those who caused the recent strike on the line. The country labourers eagerly accepted the terms, which they never had before, viz. 1*s.* 6*d.* a day. Seven cargoes of railway iron have already arrived from Cardiff.—Operations have been commenced in Bradford by workmen pulling down houses in Dunkirk-street, and carting away the rubbish preparatory to the erection of the station in connection with the Leeds and Bradford line.

—Mr. John Aughton, builder, of Preston, has contracted for the erection of electric telegraphs on the lines of railway from York to Newcastle and Hull.—Last week, during the progress of the Rugby and Huntingdon line before the House of Commons' sub-committee No. 1, proceedings were brought to a stand owing to certain witnesses not being in attendance. The chairman, in consequence, announced that for the future, if parties did not choose to have their witnesses ready in attendance, the committee would proceed with the case, and declare the standing orders not complied with, and let the parties take upon themselves the consequences of the expense and trouble of proving their case before the Standing Orders' Committee.—The following is the gross summary of work executed up to the present time on the Eastern Union line:—1,350,000 cube yards earthwork removed; 12 miles single permanent road laid; 35 miles single fencing set, including bridge approaches; 26 bridges, 2 viaducts, and 30 culverts completed. The stations and sheds at Manningtree, Ardleigh, and Bentley are contracted for, and also the temporary station and sheds at Ipswich, which are being erected.—The contracts connected with the Elv and Huntingdon line will be advertised in a short time; the delay is occasioned by the Bedford level corporation.—The resolution come to a few days since by the shareholders of the Metropolitan Junction Railway Company to put the law in force civilly and criminally against the provisional committee, has excited much interest, for if successful, the example will doubtless be followed in many similar cases.—The plan of attaching a second-class carriage to each train for the special use of those who like to indulge in a cigar while travelling, is again being mooted. The practice is carried on to a great extent in spite of penalties, and as frequently as otherwise, to the great inconvenience of fellow-passengers, who, nevertheless, decline preferring a complaint.—The works near Penhill, on the Taw Vale line, are progressing rapidly; a considerable portion of the excavation through the point having been made, and the embankment formed upwards of a quarter of a mile in length. During the recent unprecedented high tides, not the slightest damage was done to the bank, although almost every embankment along the Taw and Torridge suffered from the same cause.—The works which had been commenced at the Huddersfield end of the line from that town to Manchester have been nearly at a stand, for several days, in consequence of the masonry having been pulled down by the orders of the inspectors of the works, on account of bad materials used and inferior workmanship.

—The Lords of the Admiralty having had plans of the proposed walls under the Trent, in connection with the Manchester, Huddersfield, and Great Grimby line, submitted to them by Mr. Billington, C.E., have, on the application of the solicitor to the company, not only granted permission to the company, but approve of their project of diving a clean hole under the Trent at the proposed point of

tunnelling at Butterwick, which is thirty feet below the bed of the river.—The directors of the Grand Junction line have agreed to establish a morning as well as an evening express train between London and Liverpool. It will thus be possible to pass the previous night at Liverpool, to spend four or five hours in London, and again to reach Liverpool the same evening. The distance travelled will not be less than 420 miles. Twenty years ago it was considered a feat to go from Liverpool to Manchester, transact business and return the same day, although the distance travelled over was only 72 miles.—A station for passengers and goods will be erected near the wharf of the canal company at Coventry for the Oxford Coventry, and Burton line, and not, as has been reported, at the top of Bishop's-street.—Tenders will in a few days be advertised for by the Newcastle and Berwick Railway Company for the construction of a bridge across the Tweed. According to the present design, the bridge and the continuing viaduct will be formed of 120 arches, the 11 larger, over the river, to be 66 feet in span each, those of the viaduct gradually diminishing to a span of 25 feet. The estimated cost is nearly 200,000*l.*

## GAS FITTINGS.

STR.—Goodness of the fittings is absolutely necessary to obtain perfect lighting, yet this subject has been the most neglected, and serious loss and inconvenience have been the result to the companies as well as consumers. It is a matter of surprise, that the engineers of the companies have not turned their attention to this very essential subject for their own credit; for it matters not how well and economically they may carry on their operations at the works, if they have to send their gas into defective and badly arranged fittings. Until very lately, the gas fitters were, with few exceptions, a most ignorant set of men, who, being timorous and able to make joints, fancied themselves competent to become gas fitters; thus a majority of the present fittings are put up without care or judgment. The consumers, not knowing better, have to pay a higher price for bad materials and worse workmanship, and the companies, who ought to have seen to the proper execution of the work, have left it entirely unnoticed.

The companies, instead of being in the hands of the fitters, ought to exercise the powers they have to control their operations, and not allow improper parties to be employed, who are the cause of the great prejudice existing in the minds of many against gas. There are plenty of men in London who have paid great attention to this subject, and whose respectability and standing are a guarantee that the work would be well done; and I hope that the engineers of the companies will at once see the necessity of paying attention to this important branch of their profession, as also the architects of public buildings, who, I am sure, must be much annoyed at the ignorance too often displayed in carrying out their views as regards the requisite fittings for the proper distribution of the lights.

In Liverpool, the gas companies execute their own fittings at cost price, and keep them in repair free of expense; and this system works well: the consumers have good and cheap fittings. The companies obtain an increased rental, and are able to supply gas at a low price, and have not to work at the enormous pressures required in London. I do not imagine this system could be brought to bear in London; but the companies might see that the work was properly done, and that their customers were not imposed upon by being charged three times what they ought to be: for I know of no greater drawback to the introduction of gas than the high price of fittings. Indeed, I am not sure that it would not be to the interest of the companies to fit up the houses free of cost, and charge a rental for the use of the fittings: the original outlay would soon be repaid to them by a great accession of business.—I am, Sir, &c. CARBON.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE HOSPITAL.—The committee have determined to complete the hospital by erecting the north wing. The first stone will be laid by Lord Brougham on Wednesday, May 20th.