

THE LIGHT, AIR, AND HEALTH TAX.—In the Commons on Thursday last week, Lord Duncan brought on his motion for the immediate and total abolition of this now more and more than ever unpopular and offensive tax. He entered pretty fully into its history and demerits, pointing out the fact, that windows were no more a criterion of the value of the house, or the ability of its occupant, than were the buttons on a coat of the merits of the man, or the weight of his purse. Mr. Huime scouted the idea of administering a sanitary antidote to the people mixed up with such a bane as the light and air tax. All—even the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself—admitted the indefensibility of it on its own merits, and it was even clearly shewn, that independent of its sanitary bearings, the pressure of it on the people was absurdly and even preposterously unequal. Various members, however, Lord Ashley inclusive, were so inconsistent as to point out, clearly and ably, what was right, and then to turn round and do deliberately what was wrong, merely because a Chancellor of Exchequer declared he wanted the proceeds of the unqualified evil,—the admitted wrong. Mr. Wakley, as a medical adviser, and in strong language, denounced both the evil and its supporters, regretting that the public would now be convinced, from the determined objection of the Government to remove it, that all hope of retrenchment by them was gone. He asked if architects had ever been consulted on the subject. Even Sir Robert Peel recommended them to seek a substitute less open to objection, though he voted with them; but on the motion being pressed to a division, the Government and its thick and thin supporters outvoted the more consistent members by a majority of 160 to 68.

APPOINTMENT OF ARCHITECTS BY THE CHURCH-BUILDING SOCIETY.—At a meeting last week of the Incorporated Society for aiding in building and repairing churches, a report of a sub-committee was brought up, from which it appeared that it has been repeatedly represented by professional persons and others well skilled in these matters, that much injury has been done, and needless expense incurred, through unskilful persons having been employed. It has been further represented that the alteration of an old church generally requires, not merely the assistance of an architect, but of one who has given his attention more particularly to the subject of works of that kind, which, when constructed upon the true geometric principle so well understood and practised in the middle ages, display a wonderful intimacy with that great division of superior mathematics by which the simple elements of "lateral thrust" and incumbent pressure are so beautifully balanced, and, indeed, harmonised, in our most stupendous architectural constructions of that era, but which are incomprehensible to ordinary minds. The society, which has long felt the need of some inspection of the works in progress, have therefore secured the co-operation of several architects, who, it is said, from their skill and long standing in their profession, can be safely relied upon, who will advise with clergymen upon the best means of restoring or altering their churches, but without in any way interfering with the employment of an architect, or other person, to whom it may be wished that the work should be intrusted; and who will, as opportunity may offer or the parties desire it, inspect the works as they are carried on under the sanction and with the aid of this society; thus affording additional assurance that such works are properly executed. We are compelled to view such interference with distrust.

THE CITY SEWERS.—A deputation of the corporation having waited on Lord Morpeth to ask what were the intentions of the Government as to the second reading of the Bill for the enlargement of the powers of the City Commissioners of Sewers, his lordship gave them distinctly to understand that they would feel it their duty to oppose it, as he expected in about a fortnight to introduce a Bill for the consolidation of the system of sewers throughout the whole metropolis. The utmost his lordship would consent to was, that he would not oppose any resolution for postponement that might be moved.

AN OFFERING FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE.—The clerk of the Holy Trinity Church, in Bridgewater, Mr. John Hayward, has recently presented to that church an oak cover for the font, six feet two inches high, designed and carved by himself, as a memento of gratitude for restoration to health. When we say that the donor is an accountant, and having lost the use of his right shoulder joint, has worked the whole of the cover with his left hand, our readers will give him credit for much perseverance as well as a good motive.

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH.—A sketcher in Felix Farley's *Bristol Journal*, talked lately of "Blenheim and its Architect," and more-over talked pleasantly. We take a couple of his paragraphs:—"Do any of the ladies and gentlemen who welcome our hebdomadal pro-lusions understand architecture? We have ourselves studied it with extrema assiduity, being solicitous to be delighted according to rule, and never to be guilty of misplaced admiration. But, somehow or other, we are apt to be rather erroneous in our raptures. We cannot avoid being somewhat pleased with Blenheim. At any rate we admire its architect, who was certainly no ordinary man. It is a very rare thing for the same skull to confine both an architectural and a dramatic genius—

He writes you comedies, draws schemes, and models, And builds dukes' houses upon very odd hills!

A combination so strange, *outré*, fantastic; the power of working with two such opposite materials in two such contradictory modes; and the decided attainment of a certain excellence in both. There never was a case at all similar. Ben Jonson was a mere working bricklayer; yet he would seem a far likelier man for an architect than Sir John Vanbrugh. One naturally invests your architects with architectural qualities, such as gravity, steadfastness, stability; how alien from the wild wit, the mad method, the fiery reckless vigour of a dramatic author in the days of the second Charles! An astronomical discovery by Shakspeare—not such a one as Romeo makes—were not more truly amazing than a mansion built by Vanbrugh. Is it possible that the creator of Lord Poppington was the contriver of Castle Howard? The architecture of Vanbrugh, in his two greatest works, Blenheim and Castle Howard, and in several other magnificent mansions which he built, is characterised by an irregular grandeur; but in his lesser edifices, where fancy and lightness were requisite, he has decidedly failed. Sir Joshua Reynolds, a very competent authority in such matters, speaks of his architectural genius in terms of high laudation. "We passed through Blenheim's stately halls and magnificent parks, thinking less of its hero than its architect. We had few remembrances for the founder of the ducal house of Marlborough; his good sword has already acquired a rust which will never dim the facile pen of Vanbrugh. Those great soldiers, who for their life-time fill the eye of the world, and are regaled with a perpetual pension of praise, suffer terrible diminution in the judgment of posterity. How is it that words are so triumphant over deeds?"

BEVERLY MINISTER.—A correspondent from Lewes says: Not long ago I visited Beverly, for the purpose of inspecting its celebrated and beautiful minister. A gem, indeed, it is, and would be a perfect model of a beautiful ecclesiastical structure, were it not for two sad inconsistencies—one external, and the other internal. I allude to the absence of the central tower—which one would imagine, in a wealthy county like Yorkshire, could easily be subscribed for—and to the barbarous treatment of the interior, by erecting a hideous rood-screen, of the very worst taste, of the cinque-cento period, and filling up the lofty and beautiful chancel arch with red cloth, as the clerk informed me,—to keep the place warm. He, however, told me that it was proposed to remove it, and fill the arch with glass instead. Now, the miserable effect of this Vandalism every ecclesiologist knows in Lichfield Cathedral, where the taste of Mr. Wyatt introduced it. Surely the officiating clergy in Beverly Minister are not so bent upon their own comfort that they will allow the beautiful perspective of their "long-drawn aisles" to be sacrificed to it. Let us hope for better things.

FIRE-PROOF AND ROT-PROOF HOUSES.—Sir: In connection with a recent inquiry as to the prevention of rot in houses, I would direct your attention to a plan of building by Mr. Grimsley. He builds houses without any wood whatever, except for doors and window-frames: his roofs are self-supporting, and so are his floors. The roof is turned with a brick arch, with bricks of a peculiar form, made to support each other, and firmly put together with cement, about five feet apart. The floor is supported with wrought iron girders placed five feet apart, arched in proportion to the width, and the space between the girders is filled by arched brickwork, also laid in cement. These bricks, both for floors and roofs, are hollow and light as timber. Any one who is about to build in a damp situation, or wishes for a fire-proof house at a moderate cost, would do wisely to visit Oxford, where he can see both the University Record-office and St. Paul's School, both built on this plan.—T. C.

RELICS OF ANCIENT GLOUCESTER.—In consequence of a survey by Messrs. Hamilton and Medland for a new street about to be formed in Gloucester, as a main approach to the docks, an interesting portion of the monastic buildings in Blackfriars-square has been brought under notice. It has long been known only as the "malthouse," and includes an apartment of considerable size, which the local antiquaries call a *scriptorium*, with an open timbered roof of curious construction, partly carried on stone corbels, which go down to the floor, and so form a series of *carrols*, or shallow inclosures, to read in.

ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION TO MERCHANTS.—It has a tendency to exalt the character, and, in some measure, to correct and subdue the taste for gross sensuality. It enables the possessor to beguile his leisure moments (and every man has such) in an innocent, at least, if not in a useful manner. The poor man who can read, and who possesses a taste for reading, can find entertainment at home, without being tempted to repair to the public-house for that purpose. His mind can find employment where his body is at rest. There is in the mind of such a man an intellectual spring urging him to the pursuit of mental good; and if the minds of his family also are a little cultivated, conversation becomes the more interesting, and the sphere of domestic enjoyment enlarged. The calm satisfaction which books afford, puts him into a disposition to relish more exquisitely the tranquil delight of conjugal and parental affection; and as he will be more respectable in the eyes of his family than he who can teach them nothing, he will be naturally induced to cultivate whatever may preserve, and to shun whatever would impair, that respect.—Robert Hall.

CHRONICLES OF OLD LONDON BRIDGE.—Sir: In looking over the early volumes of the *Northampton Mercury*, I found the following paragraphs relative to old London-bridge, which may perhaps interest some of your numerous readers.

Northampton. E. PRETTY.

London, May 27, 1721.—"This day they will begin to work upon the drawbridge (of London-bridge), and 'tis thought it may take up three days to mend the timber-work; during which time no carts, coaches, &c., can pass over."

Mercury of May 19, 1722.—"The new drawbridge of London, as aforementioned, is now finished, and a free passage made between Surrey and London, except for those who design a longer journey, and then a passport is required."

June 29, 1728.—"They are at work in widening the passage through the gate at London-bridge, that two coaches, waggons, or carts, may pass at the same time, the portcullis being taken down, and two posterns to be built for foot passengers."

The inconvenience felt by the public on the above occasions produced the following:—

July 1, 1728.—"Read a third time and passed, the Malt Bill; read also, petitions of the freeholders of Kent, Sussex, Surrey, and Southampton, also of the inhabitants of Southwark and Westminster, praying a Bill may be brought in for building a bridge from Lambeth to Westminster ferry, on river Thames, and referred to the Committee."