

RE ANGLESEA BRIDGE, CORK

AT meeting of the Harbour Board on the 8th inst., the annexed communication was read from Mr. T. C. Fidler, C.E., received through the Town Clerk's office:-

13 Great George's street,
Westminster, S.W.

SIR—I am in receipt of your letter of the 28th inst., enclosing a report from Mr. Barry to the board in reference to certain modifications which have been introduced in the construction of the turntable of Anglesea Bridge. The detail was discussed with Mr. Barry in September last, but had been mentioned to the committee some considerable time previously, and I was always under the impression (which appears to have been incorrect), that Mr. Barry was entirely acquainted with the details. The alteration relates only to the superstructure of the swing bridge, and was proposed by the contractor in order to avoid certain practical difficulties in the manufacture and filling of some of the heavy castings which formed part of the design. On considering the means and appliances which were available for the production and machinery of these castings, it was apparent that the work would be attended with some difficulty and risk of certain faults and defects in the work, which could not easily be detected afterwards, and as the modified construction avoids this difficulty, I consider it advisable to consent to the alterations, subject to the conditions that the strength and stiffness of the structure should be preserved unimpaired and that the Corporation should be liable to no additional expense directly or indirectly. The alteration does not in any way affect the working part of the turntable or roller paths or the opening machinery of bridge, which remains unaltered, with the exception that the rollers have been made of steel instead of cast iron, for the reasons already explained in my report to the committee of June, 1881.

January 31st 1882.

Mr. Barry, the engineer, read the following reply to Mr. Fidler's letter:—

GENTLEMEN,—I am, through the kindness of the Corporation Committee in permitting me to see Mr. Fidler's, letter, now prepared to offer remarks upon the subject. I may premise by saying that Mr. Fidler's reply does not in any way alter the statement of facts as I have reported them to your board on the 25th January last. Mr. Fidler having made use of the expression "that the alteration was discussed with me in September last," which would imply that I was consulted, and was a party to it, I feel bound to declare the circumstances of the case more fully than I considered it necessary to do in the report alluded to. I learned for the first time that it was proposed to alter the designs of the turn-table from Mr. Rooney's communication to me on 16th July, 1881, which gave rise to the great delay in paying the Corporation the first installment of your contribution to the bridge. On the 10th September following I wrote to Mr. Walker for an explanation. I give the following extract from that letter:—"Sir, I have received a long communication from Mr. Rooney with reference to the foundations of the south abutment, and alterations alleged to have been made in iron piling at the north abutment in the turn-table. As to latter, I have not as yet received any intimation from you or Mr. Fidler, and if Mr. Rooney is correct in his assertions that the plans and specifications approved of have been materially deviated from, be good enough to take me as reserving my right to approve or disapprove of such alterations. This letter was forwarded to Mr. Fidler for reply, and he

having learned that I was going to London shortly after, no written reply was given to me. I called upon Mr. Fidler in London, when he explained to me, with other matters, the nature of the alterations in the turn-table. I expressly abstained from offering any opinion upon it, and requested that Mr. Fidler would, as soon as possible, furnish us with the drawings and particulars of the alteration, in order that, I may lay them before my Board. This is the interview in September which Mr. Fidler alludes to as having discussed the subject with me. As a matter of fact, I have reason to believe that the whole thing was discussed and settled a considerable time previously. On the 17th December last I received for the first time a tracing of the alteration, but no further particulars. I would suggest for your consideration, as Mr. Stoney of Dublin, has been already employed to report upon the whole structure that his opinion be now asked upon the alteration made to the turn-table.

The following discussion ensued:—

Mr. Sugrue—I think there is a very serious question for the consideration of this board about that bridge. The expense of maintaining and keeping the open part of the bridge in good order rests with the board. If that bridge has been built on a principle different from what was approved by our engineer, I think we are relieved from our responsibility altogether, and I don't see why we should not take steps to relieve ourselves from it.

Mr. Scott—Oh, I don't know that we should go quite so far as that.

The Chairman—I think we should adopt the engineer's suggestion, which is a very good one.

Mr. Kennedy thought it was better to refer the matter to the committee and have Mr. Barry's own opinion on the question of the departure from the contract, and if we are not satisfied with that we can take Mr. Stoney's opinion. As a member of that board, and a member of the corporation, he should say that he believed there had been a great deal of work going on in connection with that bridge that neither body knew anything about, and which would meet with very severe censure. It was a matter affecting the stability of the bridge, and the cost of its working and he thought it was the duty of the engineer, in whose hands the Corporation had unreservedly placed themselves, to see that whatever was contracted for in the first instance should be got, no matter what the expense, and Mr. Fidler had to explain to the board and to the Corporation why that was not done. He thought that Mr. Barry's account of the conversation in which the assent was supposed to be given was very clear, and kept him very clear of the transaction.

Mr. Scott said that Mr. Kennedy's suggestion was a very proper one, and it should be adopted. It would be well if the committee, with the assistance of the engineer, prepared a report on the subject and submitted it to the board.

The Mayor said that from his official position he might be expected to make some observations on the correspondence which has been read, but for obvious reasons he thought it more prudent not to do so for the present.

The Chairman asked would the board empower the committee to consult Mr. Stoney, C.E. on the matter?

Mr. Kennedy—I think it would be better to report to the board direct first. It is a public question now, and is of sufficient importance to be discussed publicly.

The matter was accordingly referred to the committee to report on.

[Taken from *Irish Builder*, Vol. XXIV, 1882, p.65]