

## EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY.

### BRIDGEWORK.

BY MR. F. M. BOWMAN,

*Bridge Department, Pennsylvania Steel Co., Steelton, Pa., December 31st, 1891.*

*Mr. President and Gentlemen,*—It may not be amiss to give you a few ideas that have occurred to me during my connection with bridgework. The greatest difficulty to the young graduate intending to take up this branch of engineering is to get a start. This, of course, is a difficulty in all branches, but it seems to be peculiarly present in the case of bridgework. In other branches the trouble generally lies in the supply being greater than the demand, and very often experienced men are as unable to secure employment as the less experienced. But it is different with bridgework. Almost every issue of the *Engineering News* contains advertisements for experienced bridge designers and draughtsmen, while the contra advertisements of such men seeking employment are not so numerous.

Having made it clear, then, that securing initial employment is the one great obstacle of the beginner, I shall now state some methods which have been adopted to overcome this difficulty. The method which meets with least success is that of applying by letter. Such a letter may or may not be answered, but in either case it is filed away, and in the case of the uninitiated (the one under consideration) it is never referred to again. If, through some friend or otherwise, an engagement can be made at a nominal salary, it is wise to make it, trusting to ability to secure a speedy advancement. In other cases, again, men are often successful by applying personally. This is probably the best way of ensuring success. Again, I have known several young graduates of the best American engineering schools to secure the work of blue-printer or some like position, and with the opportunities thus afforded were soon advanced. Some companies, such as G. W. G. Ferris & Co., of Pittsburg, Pa., make special arrangements with young graduates to give a fixed salary to those who contract to stay with them for two years or so; the company, on their part, agreeing not only to expound the mysteries of the bridge, but also to assist in securing for their employee a good position after the two years have expired.

It is necessary to work for at least two years as a bridge draughtsman

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