CHAPTER XVII.

BRIDGE LETTINGS.

The ordinary modus operandi of bridge lettings is by no means the most perfect that could be devised.

A couple of months before the letting, advertisements are inserted in some of the local newspapers, stating that on a certain day at noon, in the county town, at the court-house, there will be let the contract for building a bridge, or several bridges, in the county. The length of span and clear roadway are nearly always given; and sometimes this is all, for the commissioners, as a general rule, do not know whether they want an iron or a combination bridge. Sometimes, even, they accept a wooden one after advertising for an iron bridge. Occasionally a very fair list of data is advertised, but such is not the rule. In addition to the local advertisements, circulars are often sent to the various bridge companies, requesting them to send representatives to attend the letting. Little do the commissioners think, that in the end the county has to pay the travelling expenses of each representative who attends, as well as for his time. Instead, they say, “The more, the merrier,” and congratulate themselves when they have a good attendance, thinking, that, the more representatives, the greater the competition. It may be so in certain cases; but ultimately some one has to pay each traveller’s expenses, and who but the counties is there to do it?

It is true that mailed bids are received: but they are very seldom accepted, even if the figures be the lowest; for the commissioners are generally unable to resist the combined eloquence of half a dozen bridge-men. It would be much better for all parties concerned if bids were all sent by mail, and if the awards were made by a competent engineer. It would permit