

1895.

NEW ZEALAND

PORIRUA LUNATIC ASYLUM:

COPY OF CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO INSPECTION OF WORKS.

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr Seddon by leave of the House.

No. 1.

The ENGINEER for DEFENCES to the ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

New Zealand Defences, Wellington, 10th July, 1891.

Porirua Asylum.

SIR,—

1. I have to report that on Tuesday last, the 7th instant, the Hon. the Minister for Public Works sent for me and directed me to take over the charge of the works at this asylum.

2. Having asked the Minister if he had already spoken to yourself on the subject, upon his replying in the affirmative, I informed you verbally on leaving the Minister's room of the tenor of the interview, and thereafter placed myself in communication with Mr Holmes, C.E., your officer in present charge.

3. I arranged to visit the works on Friday, the 10th instant, it being necessary for me, before making any useful visit to the ground, to study and make myself conversant with all the plans, specifications, papers, &c., connected with the contract.

4. I visited Porirua accordingly in company with Mr Holmes to-day. Just before going on the work I told Mr Holmes that I merely wanted to see things for myself on the ground on this occasion, as I had no written authority to formally give me official standing. I therefore requested that he would inspect and give orders himself exactly as usual on his visits, and not allude to any change of control.

5. I was present on the works accordingly merely as a casual visitor who had happened to come out with the Engineer, and in that capacity was enabled to stroll about and see everything that had been done and was being done or proposed without any one having any idea of special purpose.

6. Availing myself of the advantages of this position, I observed and noted some matters which it appears to me desirable to submit at this stage.

A. The clay through which the foundation trenches have been excavated is fairly compact and solid, while somewhat of a nodular nature. The actual foundation-bottom of trenches, I was informed, is on the bastard rock, which is the characteristic formation in Wellington and vicinity. There is nothing to prevent a building of the character and height of this asylum being founded thereon with confidence without special provision.

B. The whole of the concrete foundations were in to the full height throughout, and no opportunity therefore was afforded of seeing the actual foundation-work in operation. Apparently the concrete is good and solid, and I have no reason whatever to doubt that it is so, but could not express an opinion without seeing one or two walls cut through.

C. Upon these concrete foundations the brickwork has, over the greater portion, been brought up to damp-course level and asphalted. The damp-course (made to specification) is somewhat brittle and porous, and requires surface-treating with tar and sand. Mr Holmes informed me that he has already arranged for this.

D. The rest of the brick foundation-courses were in course of being put in, and the work was busily going on to-day in one particular block. There are some special remarks which I desire to make hereon, which will be found further on. (See F.)

E. The appliances, sheds, kilns, &c., for brickmaking from the clay obtained on the site are fairly good. The bricks turned out are, as far as I can tell by impromptu means of examination, sound and solid, and fairly well burnt, and an average sample, defective only in exact regularity of shape and degree of burning. I was informed that this clay will not stand more than a certain temperature in the kiln, accounting for both shortcomings. Special care is taken with the face and moulded bricks.

F *Special remarks referred to under D.*—The surface of the concrete foundation was more or less strewn with nodules of clay, and joined with clay-paste. The bricklayers were laying the lowermost bricks thereon, without the concrete surface being properly cleaned, and with only partial bedding course of mortar. The Inspector of Works was in active supervision. I stood and watched the work as a casually-interested stranger for some time. The bricklayers went on quite happily, and the Inspector stood over them. He said nothing. I regarded the proceedings with