

much astonishment. Leaving this trench, I went to another in a similar stage. Same thing was going on. The Inspector came over, stood by, but said nothing. I strolled away, and came back again in a quarter of an hour. No change. Strolled away and came back again in half an hour. No change. Concrete foundations now nearly covered with bottom course of bricks. On each occasion I was by the bricklayers a quarter of an hour at a time, and the Inspector passed to and fro from one trench to another. The men received no check or direction to clean the concrete. After this repeated examination, and regarding the whole proceedings as most reprehensible, I walked over to Mr Holmes, who had been all the time since my arrival busily engaged with the contractor setting out, &c., at a distant angle of the building, and had not been at the bricklayers' end at all, and quietly told him what was going on. Mr Holmes told me he had spoken about this before, and he at once went over and stopped it, of course. At the same time I noted that the bricklayers were being allowed in the Inspector's presence to grout in the foundation-course in a manner no doubt convenient to themselves and profitable to the contractor, but which is not permissible in a building of this importance. It is also contrary to the specifications. I noticed also that workmen engaged in filling in the trenches about the foundation-courses were not ramming the stuff, but shovelling loosely up to height. I do not say ramming had not been done, but it was not being done to-day, nor did the Inspector check the loose shovelling. I noticed also that the mortar used by the bricklayers was not uniform, one-third of it, say, was about right, the other two-thirds far too wet for its proper application.

All these are matters absolutely for an Inspector's continual presence, and not for an occasionally visiting officer. They are of unquestionable importance in the foundation-work of a large and substantial building like this, and there should be no possible room for doubt as to the competency, firmness, judgment, and practical knowledge of the Clerk of Works employed. Had I been present in official authority, I should have suspended the Inspector on my own authority forthwith.

I am sorry to have to speak so strongly, but am compelled to do so, because, if I have to take over charge of these works, I must decline to be held responsible for work supervised by an Inspector who cannot, after what I saw to-day, be equal to the position. It is not unlikely that cracks, &c., due to uneven settlement, may occur in the walls when they are erected. If so, such damage and other possible eventualities will be attributable to the novel practice of allowing a film of clay to interpose here and there between the concrete foundations and brickwork bottom course. I know nothing about this Inspector whatever, and do not remember ever to have heard his name or seen him before. I did not speak to any one on the works, except quite casually to the hut "boss" about his firewood, and so on, nor did any one on the works speak to me.

As regards the laying-out and arrangement of the work, the orders given and on record, and the functions legitimately the work of the Resident Engineer of the works, you will perhaps allow me to say that, if my visit had been in the capacity of, say, an inspecting officer, I should have been quite satisfied, subject to a few minor points more due to personal equation than actual difference of opinion.

With regard to any instructions to take over the charge of these works, having received direct orders to that effect from the Hon. Minister, it behoves me to obey forthwith, and I am prepared to do so accordingly, but I wish under this head to mention some essential matters.

A. On taking charge at the present stage, and therewith responsibility for the subsequent building, I must formally satisfy myself as to all foundation-work done to date of taking-over. For this purpose the walls must be cut through in my presence in one or two test places, and the contractor will have to be advised accordingly, and the reason explained, and, of course, he must be paid for the cutting and replacing.

B. Although I may take charge, I will take no general responsibility for an important building like this if the person whom I must most trust and rely upon is one who, as upon my visit of to-day, shows serious unfitness at the outset of the work. The Inspector should be changed immediately.

C. The architect-draughtsman who designed the building requires to be entirely allotted to this work alone. There are numbers of details and sketches now already necessary, and the demands will henceforth be continuous. There is three months' steady work at least for a draughtsman the whole of his time, and that at once. It is most injurious to be behindhand with the detail-drawings required. It interferes with the proper progress of the work, and is a most fruitful source of mistakes, alterations, disputes, extras, and all sorts of trouble and dissatisfaction generally, not to mention the inevitable claims on account of non-supply of drawings at settling-up. I do not see how these are, one or all, to be avoided unless the designer of the building is absolutely set aside for the time named to attend to nothing but the details.

D. It is immediately urgent that the heating system and the cooking and drying apparatus should be elaborated and ordered, and the contractor at once supplied with all information as to lines of trenches, openings in walls, &c. These are very important matters. Mr Holmes has specially studied them for some months in view of this building, and has the question in grasp. The whole subsequent comfort and convenience of the asylum depends upon their efficient and perfect arrangement and emplacement in detail. I need not remind you that these are specialist questions, which are in general Home practice referred even by the leading architects to heating-engineers, with copies of the plans and specifications at the time tenders are called for, so that their special sketches and specifications may be attached to the contract when it is taken up. In the colonies these facilities and opportunities do not afford themselves so readily, but, between the time for deciding to call for tenders and the contractor actually requiring the information, there is always time to work up the subject as far as is required. Now, in this case I shall be called upon actually at a day's notice (the contractor is now pressing daily for sketches and details of the heating-system, and the cooking apparatus must be ordered at once) to issue full instructions and specifications and orders under both these heads. While not saying that I have not some general knowledge of this sort of thing, I am not in the least ashamed to add that I am not at all prepared at a day's notice,