

4
CENTENNIAL BRICK COMPANY'S WORKS
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The recent trade disputes have undoubtedly had a deteriorating effect on the industries of the colonies, and not a few of them have ceased to exist. Whether this has been due to the want of energy and perseverance on the part of the persons interested, or is a direct result of the antagonism existing between capital and labor—an antagonism the result of which is necessarily the survival of the fittest—it is difficult to say, but the fact remains that through the stoppage of various industries hundreds of people have been thrown out of employment, and want and wretchedness engendered. It is pleasing indeed to be able to evolve from this commercial chaos something which tends to prove that there is still enough vitality left in some of our capitalists to endeavour to surmount all difficulties. The most recent local example of this enterprise that has come under our notice is the re-building and re-organisation, on a larger and vastly superior scale, of the brickworks until recently known as Edelmann's Brick & Tile Company, but which are now nearing completion under the imposing appellation of the Centennial Brick & Pipe Company. On Friday last, through the courtesy of the manager's son, Mr. F Button, our representative was shown over the works. Starting from the pits, from whence the clay is taken, we were shown the mode of removing the clay to the machines. A tram line is built from above the mixer to the pits, and the clay is conveyed from the pits and put into a trolley on the line; the machinery regulating the trolley is then put in motion, and the trolley is drawn up till it reaches the mixer; the clay is then emptied into the mixer. The machines are immediately under the mixer, and the knives in the latter work the clay into dies in the pug-mill. There are ten dies in this mill, which revolves till the dies reach the receiving table, when the mill stops for a few seconds to allow an arm under the pug-mill to shove the bricks up out of the die on to the table; the bricks are then carried under the press by a slide, and from thence they emerge ready for the kilns. They are taken from the table in wheelbarrows, and placed in the kiln. This kiln is built on the most approved principle, and is similar to the Hoffmann kiln. There are nine chambers on each side of the kiln, all fitted up with a view to the proper burning of the bricks; a great advantage claimed for this kiln over the Hoffmann is that in the former the arches of the chambers are so constructed that the bricks cool at the bottom first, and the heat gradually works up; in the Hoffmann kiln the bricks cool at the top first, and after a time they turn quite green. Mr Button then conducted us to the room over the kiln, from whence the chambers are fed by means of numerous feed holes, through which the coal is put. This is an improved method of feeding the kiln, and saves both time and labor. Dampers are also placed at intervals, to take the draught from the chambers. We were next shown the engine room, in which is a large engine, with a 45-horse power boiler; this engine will drive the three machines which it is proposed to erect. Mr Button informed us that each of the nine chambers would hold 22,000 bricks, and that the kiln was capable of burning 1,000,000 bricks in six weeks, two men being sufficient to produce this number, so far as the immediate working of the kiln (after the bricks have been placed in the chambers) is concerned. When it is remembered what a tedious process for feeding the kiln was previously in vogue, and the number of men required for the work, the great saving in time and labor will be at once recognised. This economy is rendered more necessary from the fact that Mr. Button, sen. (who is a large shareholder, and is also the manager of the company), is under contract to put the bricks into the trucks for £1 per 1000. When the works are in full swing some 30 or 40 hands will be employed, and this should absorb our surplus unemployed. Mr Button, senr., was absent when our representative called, but Mr F Button courteously accompanied us over the works and intelligently explained the functions of the different objects. Both the manager and his son entertain the most sanguine hopes of the success of the undertaking, and with the appliances at their disposal (and what is equally as important, the thorough knowledge of the use of those appliances), there seems every probability of their hopes being fully realised.