

3
The Dandenong Brick and Tile Company
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On Friday last an event occurred in connection with this company which may be recorded in the annals of Dandenong as a mark of its rapid progress and wealth. A general invitation was issued to the townspeople to take part in the celebration of driving the first brick-compressing machine of the company by steam, which is the indication of a practical start having been made. About fifty gentlemen from Melbourne, including Mr. Zox, M.L.A., and Dr. L.L. Smith, were present on the occasion. The works are adjacent to the railway station, and connected therewith by a short line of rails, which enables the company to dispense with horses and drays. The beds of clay which belong to the company extend over an area of fourteen acres, represent an almost inexhaustible supply of bricks during the present decade. The plant comprises two kilns, capable of burning 120,000 bricks at the same time, and sheds for drying purposes containing accommodation for 250,000. The brick-compressor, which is one of Gills patent, cost £100, and is driven by a new 12 horse power portable steam engine, which was obtained by order at a cost of nearly £500. This is only the first instalment from England of an extensive plant of machinery, which is destined to cause a great reduction in the price of bricks and a corresponding increase in building operations. The new machine can press about 60,000 bricks per week, but when all the machines are erected and in working order the company will be able to turn out bricks to the number of 200,000 in the same period. The new machinery will combine the operations of moulding and pressing, thereby supplanting the old and slower method of hand-moulding. The clay pit is situated close to the works, and a good supply of water is constantly at hand in dams constructed for the purpose. The bricks are in great demand at Melbourne, and have actually been sent on a journey of 65 miles to Broadford. The number of men at present employed on the works is 23, but will shortly be increased to 35 or 40. Mr Henry Powis, the company's manager, conducted the curious and interested visitors all over the works, clearly explaining the method of moulding, drying and burning the bricks. The clay was at present obtained at a depth of 25 feet, but bricks had been made from clay at a depth of 42 feet. Before being moulded the clay was well worked up with water, and then passed through heavy iron rollers in order to reduce it to its proper consistency. It was then moulded and allowed to stand a week before it is pressed into solid bricks by the machine. Whilst the bricks are being passed through the machine they receive a clear impression of the name of the company, and when taken out they present a splendid surface with very keen edges. On the arrival of the other machinery a more powerful engine will be required to enable them to carry out their arrangements for producing such a large number of bricks.

This close inspection of the works soon terminated, and the hungry assemblage sat down to discuss the more congenial subject of the appetizing viands that constituted the luncheon, which had been tastefully laid out in one of the sheds by Mrs Dunbar. Mr Carson presided, and the first toast, "The Queen," was proposed and loyally responded to.

Mr Taylor then proposed "Success to the Dandenong Brick and Tile Company."

He remarked that he had been called on unexpectedly to propose that toast, and that he would begin his remarks by mentioning that he was not interested in any brick company. He gave place to none in the interest which he felt in the development of such an industry. Those who were interested in the enterprise had before them a field in which they need not be alarmed as to the results of its development. They must not run away with the idea that they had similar facilities to those possessed by the Northcote and Brunswick works. They had some difficulties yet before them, but he was sure of their ability to overcome them. Bricks had been delivered at Essendon, Brighton, Broadford, and other places, and he would venture to say that no company at present in existence could deliver bricks at such distances and rates as the Dandenong Company. They had seen the processes of moulding and pressing, but he was sorry they had not been given an opportunity of inspecting bricks that had been burnt in the kiln. Bricks from the Dandenong works were turned out at 38s per thousand, whilst those from Brunswick cost 42s. He thought the bricks made at the latter place were superior, but with the advantages they possessed it would be very strange if they could not turn out bricks of the same quality. At the present time the company had not been able to keep pace with the orders they had received, which should be very gratifying to the shareholders. They could now turn out 80,000 bricks per week, and he hoped that when they were able to produce 200,000 in a similar period he would congratulate the shareholders for being unable to keep pace with the demand for bricks.

Mr Carson replied on behalf of the directors and manager of the company. He said it was his duty to return thanks for the glowing expressions of opinion that had been volunteered by Mr. Taylor. The directors were alive to the difficulties they had to contend against, and they expected, when the order for more machinery was completed, to produce bricks equal to any made in the colony. It would be the aim of the directors to turn out an article that would always recommend itself.

Other toasts were subsequently proposed and duly acknowledged. After vociferous cheering for Mr. Powis, the manager of the works, this part of the proceedings terminated, and the City visitors returned by a special train.

In the afternoon a few innocent amusements were indulged in by the youthful population of the township, the principal among which were foot races for prizes given by the company. The youngsters were marshalled up in military style by Mr. Macpherson, and fruit, drinks, and confectionery were dispensed along the ranks by the captain's self-elected orderlies. A tug of war, in which the "brickies" challenged all comers, caused great merriment. The pull was very steady for a few minutes, but the invincible "brickies" succeeded, with a splendid tug, in throwing their more weighty antagonists off their feet, and consequently had the rope all to themselves. In the evening a ball was given in the Mechanics' Institute, which was well attended. The music was discoursed by Boom's band, and gave entire satisfaction. Dancing was indulged in for several hours until the majority were compelled to give in through fatigue, and departed for their homes,

thoroughly satisfied with the arrangements that had been made for their enjoyment.