

Architecture and Building

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Brickwork—from the Aesthetic point of view, and the lines of its possible development in N.Z.

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Introduction.

THE object of this article is to suggest lines of probable progress of the future development of brickwork in New Zealand, and as the majority of colonial students either study in England or America I think that the movement towards artistic brick designs will be on similar lines to those of the countries mentioned. The subject seems naturally to arrange itself under the following headings:—

Part I.—A brief historical survey of the older work in the two countries, and

Part II.—An analysis of the factors which tend to satisfactory results in the use of brickwork with examples of present day work taken from both England and America.

Stone is accorded the first place as a building material, and is freely used in localities where it can be economically obtained and prepared. It is in those areas where this does not apply and where good material for making bricks is found, that brickwork will predominate and the art become strongly developed.

In New Zealand building stone becomes expensive if used at any distance from its quarry, and is therefore out of reach of the majority of business people, who decline to go to the expense of using stone when they can obtain a cheaper substitute. This substitute up to the present time has been brick and as a good brick clay is procurable in almost any part of the Dominion bricks are manufactured in nearly all places.

The finished brick possesses very good qualities, and from a constructional point of view is badly in need of a "standardization," as not only does the size of the brick vary for each of the main centres of the Dominion, but the sizes adopted by each of the manufacturers in a town sometimes differ. The difference in sizes of bricks may not be very great, but to obtain a good finished brick effect, one must have suitable materials to work with. Certainly the majority of the city buildings are built in brick, but in most cases the whole is totally spoiled by the use of stucco all over in imitation of stone, or is made to look fussy and disjointed by the indiscriminate tacking on of plaster patches. In some cases a

brick building is faced with brickwork, but no attempt is made to work in any design into the plain brick face, which is more often than not spoiled by tuck pointing.

This was the way that brick design was treated until a few years ago, when some more progressive minds introduced diaper pattern design in brick building, and later brickwork was altogether more pleasing and some architects no longer cover their buildings up with stucco, but adopt a brick design.

As a result of this, brickwork now receives more of the attention that it deserves, and some well-designed buildings have been erected, among which is the church at Invercargill, by John T. Mair, A.R.I.B.A., which has some very interesting brick work, as will be seen from the illustration.

Until the present time timber construction has been used for domestic work, but now there is very little difference in cost between brickwork and timber, and within a year or so brickwork may be the cheaper, when it will be the more popular among clients, and will therefore require more study in domestic work by the architect.

Although brick architecture has been adopted here by some, and has advanced during later years, it still requires a lot more study before it is up to the standard of modern work both in England and America.

Part I—Historical Survey.

ENGLISH BRICKWORK

England has always been noted for excellence in the manufacture and use of brick, and thus the history of English brickwork can be written almost without a break from the building of the Roman wall, which used to surround London in the far distant past, to the late Mr. Bentley's magnificent Westminster Cathedral, or some of the more recent work including that of Mr. Lutyens.

Although English brick architecture never reached that high point of art attained in Italy, it never suffered degeneration, adapting itself to every change in style, and always preserved its admirable qualities.

NOTE

The following survey of English brickwork has been compiled from a prize essay by Mr. H. F. Murrell on "The Development of English Brickwork," which appeared in the Journal of the Architectural Association, London, a few years ago, and an abstract of which was published in the "American Brickbuilder" a few months later.