

central and prominent position for such an important branch of Government business, let me put forward for your consideration the premises of Messrs. T. J. Maling and Co., situated in Worcester Street, Cathedral Square West, almost adjoining the new premises being built for the Australian Mutual Insurance Company.

The frontage of the property is 67ft. 5in., with a depth of 85ft., two front entrances and a right-of-way at the back 15ft. wide. The building is of brick, with white-stone front, and of the most substantial character, having very strong walls with the view of, at a future time, adding a third storey to the height, which will make it one of the most prominent buildings in Christchurch. It contains spacious public and private offices handsomely fitted up, strong room, warehouse, large dry cellarage, and bonded store. Water-closets connected with the main sewer, and ample supply of water for all purposes. The position can hardly be bettered, being within a few yards of the post office, telegraph office, and customs on the one side, and the old provincial buildings, courthouses, and municipal offices on the other, and at the centre of the tramway system. The architect was Mr. J. C. Maddison, and the builder Mr. D. Reese, M.H.R. The title is freehold, subject to a mortgage of £6,250 at 7 per cent., and the price required for the equity of redemption is £4,000. If it were desired to let a part of the premises a tenancy can be arranged for what may not be at present required for Government purposes. To show that the position is considered an important one a prominent insurance company has already been in treaty for the premises, although the owners had not previously any idea of offering for sale, as the site was chosen and the buildings erected expressly for their own occupation. If you will appoint some one to inspect the premises Messrs. Maling and Co. will be very pleased at any time to give every attention and information required.

Sir Julius Vogel, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
J. T. BELL.

18. Who is the writer?—I do not know him; I do not think I met him at all.

19. Is there any other communication following—that which was made before you went to Christchurch?—No.

20. Was that letter brought back by Sir Julius Vogel when he returned from Christchurch, or when did it come into your hands?—I could hardly answer that question. I think possibly he may have given it to me when I went down to Christchurch. I recollect now the letter was given to me by Sir Julius Vogel before I went to Christchurch.

21. *Mr. Levestam.*] You got the letter at once, then?—Yes; so far as my memory goes, I think that is so.

22. *The Chairman.*] When you got to Canterbury, whom did you put yourself in communication with there with regard to the purchase?—With Mr. Scott, of Scott and Harper.

23. To what extent did the negotiations then go?—I saw Mr. Maling, and went and saw the property. I got it valued by Mr. Matson. No definite arrangement was made until the Board took it in hand. A Committee was appointed by the Board in the beginning of the year. Nothing was definitely concluded. The purchase was not concluded until the appointment of a Committee to inquire and report to the Board. That Committee was appointed to close the transaction.

24. Then, what recommendation did you make?—I recommended that the property should be bought.

25. On Mr. Matson's valuation?—After Mr. Matson's valuation.

26. What was that valuation?—Mr. Matson valued it at £10,350.

27. You recommended it to be bought on that valuation, did you?—No, not at Matson's valuation, because we had it offered at £10,250.

28. Did you consider the buildings suitable for offices at the time you made the inspection?—Yes; I was desirous of seeing a large building completed, with a sort of square tower erected on the vacant property. I thought that would bring the place into considerable prominence.

29. What was the tower for?—A four-storey building for office purposes, and also to draw attention to the offices.

30. With that addition, were the premises suitable?—They could have been made suitable.

31. At what additional cost would the buildings have been made suitable for the purposes of your offices?—I thought it was possible, at about £2,500, to build front offices on the adjacent vacant allotment. It was also proposed, or suggested at least, if we could arrange with Mr. Maling, that we might erect some additional buildings upon the vacant allotment to rent. No such building has been erected; nothing has been done.

32. Were not representations made to Mr. Maling that such buildings would be put up for him?—Maling himself suggested it.

33. Then, was it contemplated as part of the purchase that the property should be partly let to Mr. Maling?—Yes.

34. How much of it?—All the building that he might require except two rooms that we should have the right to secure in connection with the new building that was proposed to be put up for our own offices.

35. The new building, as I understand you, was proposed to be put up on this vacant allotment?—Yes.

36. Did this amount to an understanding with Mr. Maling, or was it only talked of?—It was talked of; there was no definite arrangement made.

37. Was anything said about the terms of such a proposed arrangement?—Not then.

38. Nothing definite at all, except that there was some idea held out that Mr. Maling might secure such occupation—is that what you mean?—Yes; that Mr. Maling would occupy a large portion of the property, including the bonded store and cellarage.

39. Was anything said as to what he was to pay for it?—No; the rent was to be afterwards arranged.

40. Did you give a report when you returned, accompanying your recommendation to the Board, in relation to the property; if so, have you it?—I think I did not make a formal report in writing. The Board decided to send down a Committee to inquire.

41. How did you report?—I think I just laid before the Board the facts and papers.

42. Verbally?—Yes.

43. *Mr. Levestam.*] Will that be on the minutes?—I could not say; I think so. At a meeting of the Board, held on the 27th January, 1885, it was resolved, "Christchurch freehold purchase. Christchurch. Resolved, That the Chairman, Mr. Graham, and Mr. Fisher be appointed a Committee to inquire and report as to purchase of premises, with power to purchase, reject offer, or