

totally groundless and unjust, and that it is, to say the least of it, extremely discreditable to a gentleman occupying his position, and having access to the very documents which prove my case, that he should make such a statement as he has done. That is all I have to say as a preliminary. This letter, which is dated the 23rd October, 1879, may be said to be the first step in this inquiry. I will read it. It is addressed to W. N. Blair, Esq., and says: "Sir,—My attention having been called to the moving of the foundations of the temporary lunatic-asylum buildings, Seacliff, lately erected, I have to state that it is urgently necessary, in order to prevent, if possible, further damage to the building, that drainage-trenches be sunk behind the same so as to intercept the under-current of ground-drainage which is causing the movement referred to. At the site of the permanent building I would also advise that similar but more extensive drainage-trenches be formed, so as to isolate the site and prevent any similar movement, which would be most disastrous to the proposed new building. I think this of such importance that no delay should take place in the prosecution of the work. While on the ground I pointed out the nature of the required work, and that it would be better to keep the trenches referred to open and to sink them as deep as possible, so as to obtain the result required. I hope steps will be taken to secure that this work is gone on with and completed as soon as possible." That was the 23rd October, 1879. With reference to the first part of it, that was attended to.

*The Chairman:* The temporary asylum?

*Mr. Lawson:* Yes. With reference to the second part of it I have had no reply, nor any reference from Mr. W. N. Blair until this day, as regards a reply to this letter. On the 16th January, 1880, I again addressed Mr. Blair: "I have again to draw attention to the urgent necessity for more speedy action being taken as to the preliminary work at the site on the new permanent buildings. You are aware that, through a slip of ground which has taken place where the new temporary building is erected, much injury has resulted, and may yet result, and in order to prevent the possibility of such a serious matter occurring at the new permanent building, the site should be much more widely cleared of timber, and all the excavations made, as well as drains inserted to prevent undercurrents, which might cause such slips as those referred to. It was intended that the excavation and levelling of site, as well as the clearing of same, was to be done by patients from the asylum; but it will now be seen by the ample trial of this system that sufficiently rapid progress cannot be made—in other words, that should it be continued it will be to the hindrance of the works, and probably much more serious results afterwards. I therefore now request you to be good enough to bring this matter before the Minister of Works, that it may be remedied by making arrangements with the contractor, under due restrictions, to proceed with these preliminary works with that necessary speed which their urgency calls for." That is the second letter referring to the slip. No reference was made to the latter portion—the portion that refers to the preparation of the ground—so far as the drain goes; no reply was ever received by me from Mr. Blair regarding it, by word or by deed. On the 29th June, 1880, I again addressed Mr. Blair: "I have the honour to acknowledge your memorandum of 23rd instant, numbered as on margin, with the accompanying reports of Dr. Hector, and correspondence, also indorsement to the Minister of Works, suggesting that work at the new building should be suspended meanwhile. With reference to the whole matter referred to I have the honour to report as under. First, regarding the slip of ground which took place at the temporary building, I have to state that it is now entirely stopped, and has been for several months, the building having been placed back in its original position, in which position it was when Dr. Hector, yourself, Mr. Hume, and myself visited the site on the 2nd instant. On the slip taking place a drain was cut down to the bed-rock, and partially into same, which had the effect of isolating the ground occupied by the building and draining it, and so causing an entire stoppage of the slip, so far as it affects the building. So far back as the 23rd October, 1879, I requested that this work of drainage should be attended to." And then I quote from the former letter, which I need not read. "At that time drainage-schemes and formation-works were carried on by the labour of patients under direction of an inspector—this being the system directed by the then Minister of Works—and it was months before the necessary drainage was accomplished, and then, ultimately, other labour had to be employed; but through this delay (a delay of a few months' notice) the greater part of the damage was accomplished. I would point out also that the site of the temporary building is all on one uniform slope, and that the ground also, in front as well as behind, has the same continuous gradient; whereas the site for the permanent buildings occupy comparatively a level plateau, having spurs or ridges spreading in front of same to a considerable extent, the ground having also a back-fall from line of proposed building. Second, having special reference to site of permanent building: it was selected after very careful survey and consideration of all requirements; and it is satisfactory to know that Dr. Hector reports that Mr. Cox, who thoroughly examined the reserve, considers it 'the best site that could be got within the reserve.' With regard to the steps intended to be taken to secure this site from any similar occurrence as that which took place at the temporary site—although, from its different position and structure, I do not think it liable to same—on the 16th January, 1880, I sent the following letter to the Public Works office: [which I have already read]. Upon this, as I understand, action was taken which resulted in the clearing and excavation of site being let by tender to the present contractor for the building; and, although not yet commenced, the drainage of the whole area to be occupied by the building was my chief object in writing the letter referred to, and this with the object as stated in Dr. Hector's report, part 4—namely, 'to cut off the formation from surrounding clay-formation, and isolate it from the effect of any motion to which that formation is subject.' (See sketch.) The plan indicates roughly the proposed main isolating-drain which has all along been contemplated by me, and if possible I would prefer if it could be so constructed as to be an open drain, well sloped on sides, so as to be rather a good feature in the general formation of the surroundings of the buildings; but if the depth should render this impracticable, then a tunnel might be driven at parts as might be