

*Mr. Blair* : May I ask if Mr. Lawson has read the whole letter ?

*Mr. Lawson* : I have read the whole of it : I have nothing to conceal. On the 12th May, 1884, I wrote on this same subject. This is in reply to a report from Dr. Grabham, now, alas ! not here. It is about the dampness of the walls. It is to Mr. Ussher : “ That the dampness of the walls observed by Dr. Grabham, chiefly observable on the female wing, arises in part from the fact that at this part of the ground there existed an old watercourse, but mainly because the drains around the building have so recently been laid, and that one of them is now only in the course of completion. The dampness will now gradually disappear. I have, however, to remind you that as far back as the 23rd of October, 1879, and especially and more explicitly in my letter to Mr. Blair of the 29th June, 1880, I urged that a main drain should be cut round the permanent building, isolating it and preventing all underground movement ; but that no action has been taken in this matter up to date.” On the 26th May, 1885, on another of Dr. Grabham’s reports, and also addressed to Mr. Ussher, I say : “ At that part of the report underlined blue and marked ‘ A ’ in the margin Dr. Grabham says : ‘ I have again to draw attention to the structural defects mentioned in my former report. The movement continues to take place in the foundation of the female wing, &c.’ Now, with regard to this item it must be clearly seen, and as clearly understood by any sane man, that the movement taking place in the strata at or near or under the foundation of any building can by no figure of speech be construed into a structural defect of such building. Such movement is entirely outside the building, and, however much it may affect it, can by no critic, however severe, be placed to the credit or debit of the building or its architect. The fracture in the wall caused by the movement of strata referred to is in no way serious, and, so far as I am aware, has not enlarged or extended since a trench was sunk intercepting the underflow of water-drainage twelve months ago, under the direction of the Public Works Department.” This is the first mention of drain No. 1. “ As regards structural defects in the building, it is only necessary for me to state that it has a contour or outline-measurement of considerably over half a mile—namely, 2,850ft.—of largely varying heights and solidity, and that, in spite of the nature and irregularities of the ground on which it is erected, not one settlement has taken place from end to end of the building.” And, gentlemen, I say so now. I can say the same at this day with pride to all concerned, myself, the Contractor, and the Inspector. That is the fact. “ I cannot leave the subject, however, without drawing attention again to the fact that ever since October, 1887, I have not ceased to urge in my reports from time to time (having in view the movement of strata which affected the temporary building) that a main back cutting or drain should be constructed so as to isolate the site of the main building, and so intercept the underground drainage. Nothing of this sort has, however, been done, so as to secure the whole building and prevent movements of strata in future causing fractures similar to those under remark.” That isolating-drain is not yet done. Then, on the 6th July, 1885, I wrote to Mr. Ussher : “ In reply to your memorandum stating that you were requested by Mr. Blair to obtain my report as to cracks and movement on the north side of the Seacliff, the same having been referred to in Dr. Grabham’s report, I have now the honour to inform you that from measurements recently taken on the spot I am in a position to state that no movement nor further extension of cracks in wall have taken place since, in company with Mr. Blair and yourself, I visited the building and examined the same. In other words, my former report as to this matter, of date 24th May last, is absolutely correct—namely, ‘ That the fracture in the wall caused by the movement in the strata has not enlarged or extended since the trench was sunk intercepting the water-drainage twelve months ago, under the direction of the Public Works Department.’ The trench hereinbefore referred to is shown on Drawing No. 2 accompanying Mr. Ussher’s late report on this matter, headed ‘ Cross-section at Slip, Seacliff Asylum.’ This work is in the direction of the main trench or drain advised by me from the first ; but I would still urge that one further back, deeper, and continued right across the whole distance, as also shown on Mr. Ussher’s drawing”—I do not know whether it is there yet ; I should like to see that drawing—“ as also shown on Mr. Ussher’s drawing, should be formed, and so thoroughly complete the isolation and solidification of the whole site.” Do I understand that that drawing will be produced ?

*Mr. Blair* : It was here the other day.

*Mr. Lawson* : Then there is one of the 2nd February, 1886. It is headed, “ My dear Blair,” because it is not written in the usual official style, but as it refers to public documents it can in no sense be called a private letter. I did not mark it private. “ As you will have heard from Mr. Turnbull, our efforts to secure his report officially were balked. As I told you in my last of 14th January, I got Mr. Stout to forward my letter to Buckley ; but he evidently did not think it necessary, and made the excuse at the time that he wanted to consult with Richardson. Subsequently, on Mr. Stout’s return from Wellington, I again saw him while Mr. Turnbull was here, and got him to telegraph to Richardson and Buckley on the matter, &c. However, Buckley, happening to meet Stout, had a chat on the matter, when he said that if I called he would give me a letter to Dr. Neill, asking him to show Turnbull over the buildings. I therefore called and got this, and, along with Turnbull and Wales, we together drove out to Seacliff. Dr. Neill happened to be in town that day, and I saw him and asked him to go out with us ; but he declined, but promised to telephone out that we were coming : and so he did. So they were expecting us, and we were shown over the now famous north wing—which was, however, in decent garb, being all plastered up and looking quite innocent ; but I will leave Turnbull to speak for himself as to the whole matter. But now I must tell you that from careful observation I am convinced that there has been extended movement since I was there last, and I am satisfied that the isolation from back ground and drainage is not complete. I can only say that I am very sorry that this is the case, but cannot blame myself in the matter, seeing that I wrote so strongly on the matter so long ago.” See letters of date 23rd October, 1879 ; 16th January, 1880 ; and 29th June, 1880. “ The southern half and central portion is already secured by natural formation and drainage, and, as it is my conviction that further trouble awaits the northern portion of the building unless