

effective steps are taken to prevent movement, I feel it my duty to emphasize what I have already stated to you on this point, and there meanwhile I must leave it. You may think you have suffered in this whole matter. All I can say is, it is my opinion that I have had the heaviest burden to bear in the same, while feeling thoroughly clear and innocent throughout, whatever others may think or say; and for this I am truly thankful." And so ends the personal correspondence as regards this slip-movement. As proving that the department were well aware that there was a slip in this ground, I will read three letters that I got from Mr. Ussher, headed respectively 26th May, 11th June, and 11th September, and I shall also ask that the correspondence between Mr. Blair and Mr. Ussher on this subject be produced.

*Mr. Blair* : We shall be very glad to produce it.

*Mr. Lawson* : The first is the 26th May : "A few days ago I received a private telegram from Mr. Blair asking me to request you to report on the slip now damaging Seaclyff Asylum." Mr. Blair says there is no slip. "Quite forgot to ask you, but will now be obliged if you will favour me with a report as early as you can find it convenient, as I have just received another telegram from Mr. Blair inquiring about your report."

*Mr. Blair* : Did I use the word "slip"?

*Mr. Lawson* : I am reading Mr. Ussher's letters. On the 11th of June he says—this is also addressed to me from Mr. Ussher—"Re cracks and movement on north side Seaclyff Asylum, I am particularly requested by Mr. Blair to obtain a report from you on the above matter. On the 26th ultimo I wrote requesting you to report thereon, and you replied that as I had seen the building recently I was better able to do so. I beg to say that I have done so from time to time, and am now endeavouring by means of boring and sinking shafts to find out the cause of the slip. I think it is absolutely necessary that you should visit the asylum and make an inspection for yourself, and report thereon as early as possible. I consider the matter a very serious one." Yes, it is, and has been before this. On the 11th September, also addressed to myself from Mr. Ussher: "Re Seaclyff Asylum: Will you please kindly supply me with a detailed drawing of the foundation on section-line I J of the Seaclyff Asylum, or, better still, a drawing of that portion of the building now affected by the cracks. I beg to say that I particularly wish this drawing, to obtain information therefrom to enable me to report more fully upon the movement of the ground." The movement of the ground is what he is to report upon. "The drawings of the building are on such a small scale that the depth, width, &c., cannot be accurately obtained therefrom; hence my reason for troubling you. I will be much obliged if you will let me have the drawing at your very earliest convenience, as the matter is very urgent." These are the letters that refer to the slip and to the movement of the ground.

*Mr. Blair* : Did you answer that letter?

*Mr. Lawson* : I answered it personally; but I could not answer it because I could not give drawings of a thing that did not exist.

*Mr. Blair* : You did not answer the letter?

*Mr. Lawson* : I tell you it is noted, "I saw Mr. Ussher personally on this matter." That is noted on the letter. These letters shall be handed in. There are twelve of them. [Letters marked A, B, and C were here handed in (Exhibit 19).]

*The Chairman* : Will you put in your letter-book now?

*Mr. Lawson* : I can put it formally now. It is my own letters that I go upon; I do not give any hearsay evidence. My letter-book contains every scrap of correspondence relative to my business, and I place it freely at your disposal, gentlemen. [Letter-book handed in, and Mr. Lawson proceeded to read, in the order of date given, the letters annexed and marked Exhibit 20, and, having done so, continued.] And here I most emphatically deny that up to that time, or that I ever, resiled from the position I originally took up—viz., that it was a matter of urgency that this main isolating-drain should be constructed. It has never yet been constructed. All sorts of things have been done, but not that. No. 1 drain is confessedly—it is so admitted by Mr. Blair himself—not low or deep enough. It is not an open drain. It is simply a burrow filled with stones and manuka scrub, which may be filled up within a year or two, and possibly is so now. Nos. 2 and 3 drains are both the same, and are most dangerous to the structure nevertheless. Instead of constructing a drain further up, as I requested should have been done, and as common-sense and prudence suggested should have been done—instead of making an isolating-drain by making it as open as possible, so as to see where these slips (if any) took place—they went underneath the foundation to a depth of 17ft., thus causing possibly a line of fracture at an angle of 45° all around the building. Not satisfied with that they came right over here [indicating on plan] and constructed what has been called No. 3 drain or gallery—of the same construction as the other drains—trying apparently to bring down the building. I had more common-sense than to do such a thing. What was done was done entirely without my knowledge. I never knew it was there, and I can assure you that I was very much astonished when I learned it was there: this also confessedly in soft ground—apparently the softest ground in the neighbourhood of the building. Mr. Blair has stated that he gave more drains than I asked for. In that he has stated what is quite true. He has given me these drains Nos. 2 and 3 more than I asked for—there is no question about that—and perhaps there will be more than the country will yet ask for. I urged that it was necessary that there should be a comprehensive system of drainage for the building. It was for the building alone I was speaking at the time; and that particular scheme would comprehend rain- and soil-water—the surface-drainage running in the immediate neighbourhood of the building. That was the comprehensive scheme I referred to. But that I resiled from my position of asking for an isolating-drain for the site of the building when I asked for the absolutely necessary drainage of the building itself, is simply ridiculous. The two things are perfectly distinct, and I am glad of the opportunity of speaking to those who can understand this matter. I am now prepared,