

kept private.—Yours truly, R. A. LAWSON.” As to the north-ambulatory wall being the cause of all the damage, as has been stated by the experts produced by Mr. Blair, it is somewhat remarkable that that particular wall was the only wall that the Commissioners took special notice of as standing right at the time that we first visited the building together. It is somewhat singular—not only singular, indeed, but striking—that that wall, which their experts say has caused all the damage, is, as a matter of fact, the wall which one of the Commissioners himself plumbd, and tested its accuracy in that respect. Yet we are assured by the expert I have referred to that the deflection there—the tilting of the northward top of that wall—has “bucked” the main north wall out at the top. That is in evidence, while we have it as a fact that the wall was plumbd on the spot by one of the Commissioners, who found it to be plumb. Mr. Hay has, however, distinctly stated that the north wall of the building in its foundations has not subsided, that it was perfectly right, and that there was no vertical settlement there—no more than anywhere else throughout the building. Mr. Hay also proved by figures, which I can refer to, because they are of the greatest importance, that the whole of that north wing had moved towards the east $16\frac{1}{2}$ in. at one point and $13\frac{1}{2}$ in. at another. I ask you again, what can cause that but the movement of the strata and the building going with it? No other adequate cause has been shown, and none other can be. As regards the building, I state here, and reiterate, that there may be imperfections in it—indeed, I know there are—but I never yet put up a building that was free from them, nor do I suppose have any of you gentlemen; but I assert there is good honest work throughout the whole of that building. I look with perfect confidence on the judgment that you will form on this matter, and will say no more about it. The truth is best, and I hope that you will find it. The whole of Mr. Blair’s contention as to defective foundations falls to the ground, because the experts he brought forward proved that there is no subsidence anywhere in the building, that there is no vertical settlement at any one point. The only thing which shows defective foundations, I again declare—and I am glad that experts have been called to speak to this matter—is vertical settlement. That is the only way you can prove defective foundations. There is no other sufficient cause to explain the position of the building in the north wing, there is not the shadow of one, except the movement of the ground. Of course, the movement has been irregular: it was more rapid in some parts of the surface than at others, and has taken the building down some 16 in. As to the other idea suggested by Mr. Blair, that one portion of the building has gone uphill, we shall have that explained very definitely by Mr. Brindley, who was present when it was erected. Now, I wish to say, before entering on this matter, that the charge made by Mr. Blair is one of “scamping.” I ask you, gentlemen, to consider what the term “scamping” includes—what it really infers. Does it not infer that the workmen, the Inspector, the Contractor, and I are accused of downright, barefaced robbery? That is what I take to be the meaning of “scamping”, and that is what it means if the word has any meaning at all—that there has been collusion between the parties in order to defeat the public, by putting in improper work. Does Mr. Blair mean to say that such was the case? because the word “scamping” can be explained in no other way. There are Mr. Brindley, the Inspector, who was always on the spot, faithful to his duty by day and by night, the Contractor, and myself; and it is alleged that we combined together in order to defeat justice. I hurl the insinuation back on him who uttered it, and it will yet come back on his own head. As this is a matter which touches my name, my professional character and probity, and therefore my life, I have to claim from the Commissioners some latitude, but at the same time I do not wish to overstep the bounds of prudence in further addressing myself to the evidence. I may inform you that all that I have prepared for this Commission has been prepared solely by myself, and entirely without legal solicitation. That may perhaps console Mr. Blair. I can also tell him, and I am glad to have the opportunity of saying so, that I have one friend, at any rate, who has placed Mr. Chapman at my side. I am very glad to be able to make public acknowledgment of that fact. On commencing my evidence I stated that it was with considerable difficulty that I had been able to obtain the present inquiry. I wish now to show the Commissioners that I have been kept totally in the dark as to any defects or supposed deficiencies existing at the Seacliff building up till the meeting of the Commission. There is this remarkable circumstance: that I never knew that there was anything wrong with the building until Mr. Blair took it into his head just now to say that there was. Therefore I have been taken completely by surprise in this whole matter by those in the Public Works Department who are responsible for it. For years accusations have appeared from time to time in the public Press of a disquieting nature regarding the Seacliff building. All sorts of accusations have been hinted at, and hurled indiscriminately at all in any way connected with it, until, in fact, it had become a sort of by-word and word of offence, and until the name of Seacliff was synonymous with the offence of scamping or something of that sort, as public rumour had it. No wonder, then, that the reports of inspectors (general and local) seemed to vie with each other in their broad descriptions of the state of the building. I will now read you an extract from the latest report, which was made by Mr. W. P. Street, as Deputy Inspector of Lunatic Asylums. I am quoting from the *Daily Times* of the 14th November, 1887; but the letter itself is dated the 29th October. It is as follows: “I inspected both the upper and lower buildings to-day minutely, and saw all the patients. A large number of the men were employed in outdoor work. I paid particular attention to-day to the dilapidation of the building referred to in my last report. In the female division, in a recess, refractory ward, there is a serious crack right across the ceiling, a part of it being a further extension of the old crack, which has been plastered up. The cracks in the wall are again yawning, and the wall bulging. The plaster on the ceiling of the recess ought to be knocked down at once, for fear of injuring the patients. In a room adjoining, the bricks are exposed, separated, and cracked. The cracks here are larger than formerly. The plaster on the ceiling of this room should also be taken down. The shutters to the windows are quite immovable. The next room is in a bad state: brickwork exposed and ceiling cracked. The cracks also extend to the mess-room. In the vestibule of this ward some of the plaster fell to-day. I found that some of the cracks extend right through to the outside of the building. In the basement of No. 3 Ward the concrete floor is broken.” Can you