

You therefore can see how much I have been kept in the dark in the whole matter. I again wrote to the Colonial Secretary as follows: [Letter read.] I, however, received a telegram from the Public Works Department on the 31st January “(Telegram.)—Wellington, 31st January, 1888.—Seacliff Asylum: Your letter of the 20th instant and telegram of to-day having been forwarded by Mr. Hislop to Hon. M. Mitchelson, I am directed reply that, as Commission has now been appointed to make full inquiry into the matter, Government does not think it desirable to anticipate their investigations in any way, and would therefore prefer laying such evidence as is procurable before Commissioners when they meet; but Commissioners have been asked to give you every facility for acquainting yourself with all facts which may be brought before them.—C. Y. O’CONNOR.” I also received a letter on the same date, which I shall read: “Public Works Department, Wellington, 31st January, 1888.—*Re* Seacliff Asylum.—Sir,—I am directed by the Minister for Public Works to acknowledge the receipt, through Hon. Mr. Hislop, of your letter of the 20th instant, in which you request that you may be furnished with particulars of any accusation which may be brought forward in the matter of the Seacliff Asylum. In reply I am to state that, although some investigations have been made into the condition of the building, they are not as yet completed and formulated, and will not be for some little time; and as, in the meantime, a Commission has been appointed to inquire into the whole circumstances of the case, the Government does not think it desirable to anticipate their investigations in any way, and would therefore prefer laying such evidence as is procurable before the Commissioners when they meet. Hon. Mr. Mitchelson, however, has no doubt that the Commissioners will give you every facility for acquainting yourself with all facts which may be brought before them, and he has specially requested the Commissioners to do this.—I have, &c., C. Y. O’CONNOR, Under-Secretary for Public Works.” Gentlemen, I wish to draw your particular attention to this passage in Mr. O’Connor’s letter: “Although some investigations have been made into the condition of the building, they are not as yet completed and formulated, and will not be for some little time.” To that letter I sent a further and final one on the 3rd February, as follows: “*Re* Seacliff Asylum.—Dunedin, 3rd February, 1888.—C. Y. O’Connor, Esq.—Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your favour of number as per margin, in which you acknowledge my letter to the Hon. Mr. Hislop of the 20th January. I have also telegram of the 31st January referring to same and my telegram of even date. I cannot help expressing surprise at the terms of your letter, in which I am informed ‘that, although some investigations have been made into the condition of the building, they are not as yet completed and formulated, and will not be for some little time,’ &c. Whereas, as a matter of history and fact, statements were made publicly in Parliament in December last as from the Public Works Department, and of such a nature as to cause the Hon. the Minister of Public Works to say, referring to same, that if they were found to be correct the Contractor would be held responsible for the consequences, &c. It was, as you well know, with reference specially to these that I requested information, as per the first portion of my letter to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary of the 20th January. In reply to your previous telegram I wrote under date 1st February to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, and now await the meeting of Commissioners; although up to date I have received no intimation whatever as to their meeting, &c.—I have the honour to be yours truly, R. A. LAWSON, Architect.—Under-Secretary for Public Works.” That brings us up to the present time. You will thus see that the Public Works Department, as such, had not even formulated or completed its investigations on the 31st January, 1888; in other words, the department had no accusations whatever against the building at that date. We have the evidence of the Under-Secretary of the department himself—there is the fact before you; there is his letter proving it—that up to the end of January of this year nothing whatever had been formulated against the building. How has it all come out now? The mystery is indeed great. And we have Mr. Blair, here present, affirming in his sworn statement that he became aware of “scampering” work in connection with the foundations and other deficiencies to the building as far back as the middle of 1885. Gentlemen, is there not a strange peculiarity in this. Is it not very mysterious that Mr. Blair should be in possession of this information, and that the department knew nothing of it in January, 1888. I shall leave Mr. Blair to reconcile these two statements. I will now shortly refer to some small discrepancies which occur in Mr. Blair’s statement as to certain letters said to have passed between his department and Mr. Brindley. In one part he states that there were only eight of these letters, and he specifies their subjects; but, apparently forgetting what he had said, he a little further on refers to other one or two letters in addition to those formerly mentioned by him as having been the only letters written by Mr. Brindley. I also leave Mr. Blair to reconcile that statement. One of the matters which I omitted to notice in my evidence yesterday was the cement. It will be remembered that this was a thing trotted out by Mr. Blair as if it were an attempted act of wrongdoing on the part of the Contractor and myself. Now, the clause in the specifications referring to cement says, “All concrete to be made use of in foundations, &c., to be mixed in proportion of five parts of broken metal of, say, 2in. gauge and clean shingle mixed together to one part of Portland cement—say White’s, Knight Bevan’s, or other approved brand.” And again: “When cement is used in place of mortar same to be not less in mixture than one of approved cement,” &c. You will thus notice that the cement may be of any brand, only it must be first approved. What was done in this case? I will read to you a letter referring to this subject that I wrote to Mr. Brindley: “Seacliff Lunatic Asylum, Dunedin, 5th July, 1881.—A. T. Brindley, Esq., Inspector of Works.—Dear Sir,—I have yours of the 1st instant reporting progress as to works, and asking what is to be done with over-projecting corbels. I have to direct your attention to the clause of specification referring to same, under ‘stone bearings,’ where it distinctly states that ‘projected work is to be carried on stone-bearings and built in cement, also parapets and finishings.’ Of course, I would not insist on the whole depth of projection being stone-finished, but the exposed portion must be so. Your letter to Mr. Ussher has been forwarded to me, and in reply thereto, first, as to machinery, &c., it will be better to have the whole revalued, and include that now forwarded; and, second, as to cement, as the brand is not known and has not been approved, let it be forwarded to the