

oath, for that matter, that Mr. Brindley would not pass defective work if he knew of it. He is not the man to do it; he would not, I know him too well. I have had ten years' acquaintance with the man, and honestly and truly has he served me while he was with me, and truly and honestly I believe he has served the Government. But Mr. Blair remains steadily untrue to his public duty; he is before you now to explain for himself how he came to obtain this knowledge so carefully hidden away in the stores of his secure Wellington quarters. If Mr. Blair believes what he now swears, he is manifestly incapable as a professional in the public service. But I do not think Mr. Blair does believe what he has stated. I am charitable enough to suppose that, being placed in a serious dilemma through his total neglect of repeated warnings, he finds it necessary to change his whole tactics and front as to Seacliff after he and all others in the Public Works Department who had any knowledge of the site had acknowledged that there has been a ground-slip and movement there; and, as a proof, I have shown to you it has been expressed clearly and forcibly in letters and documents, but much more forcibly still in pit after pit, trench after trench, and tunnel after tunnel, which have been put in there, and so undermining the building as I have already stated. No; I do not think Mr. Blair thought so much as he now says he did as to the scamping of the work; this is a new feature which has come up with him, he being placed in the dilemma I mentioned, and seeking a way of escape for himself, he now turns round and, after the manner of a well-known maritime creature which I shall not name, discharges a series of miscellaneous accusations against its architect, inspector, builders, and workmen generally, as if all had combined in one vast conspiracy to defraud the Government and the country, in the hope that in the midst of all this, with security, he might himself escape. I will not conclude at this time, as did Mr. Blair, by saying that he would offer no suggestion as to what further should be done at Seacliff. But I will conclude by urging most earnestly and respectfully that with all possible despatch the open or isolating drain or cutting—call it by what name you may—be executed, which I recommended eight years ago, and before the Seacliff building came into existence at all, and which, had it then been executed, would have prevented our meeting here to-day.

1981. *Mr. Blair.*] I wish to ask Mr. Lawson some questions. Mr. Lawson said that no reply had been received to his letters "by word or deed"; I took his words down?—No; I certainly admit that one part had been attended to.

1982. Now you withdraw it slightly. Do you say that no action was taken in consequence of these letters?—I say that action has been taken in the letters themselves.

1983. You say you have received no written reply whatever; but it would not be fair to put that question, for I have documentary evidence to prove it?—No official reply, sir. No.

1984. Did not Dr. Hector send you a reply to that main letter embodying the other two?—I have no recollection of it at all.

1985. You will not swear that he did not make a rejoinder?—I never saw it; he may have written a report and sent it to the Governor.

1986. The whole of Dr. Hector's report was a rejoinder practically, which rejoinder was duly forwarded him, and that rejoinder is duly acknowledged by Mr. Lawson in the papers?—I do not deny that at all: I am speaking of a reply from Mr. Blair. I addressed Mr. Blair, and no one else.

1987. Did not I send you back a reply to that?—I have no recollection of it. If I had such a document I should have remembered it. You may have sent the document, but I never had it in my possession.

1988. Do you deny your own signature?—I say I had no reply from Mr. Blair, and I say what I mean. Dr. Hector has nothing to do with it.

1989. Then you withdraw the statement in your evidence?—I say that I received no reply to my letter to Mr. Blair.

1990. I will ask you another question. Was that principal report of yours, that letter of yours which embodies the other two, with reference to the isolating drain, was that written of your own motion? I mean this report of 29th June, 1880?—So far as I know.

1991. Do you say that at that time you had nothing to do with Dr. Hector?—Yes, he was with me on the spot.

1992. I will ask this question: was this written on your own motion, or was it a reply?—I state in the opening paragraph.

1993. Was it a reply to Dr. Hector's report?—I did not look upon it as a reply to Dr. Hector's report.

1994. Was it a reply to Dr. Hector's report?—No, it was not a reply to Dr. Hector's report; it was written of my own motion.

1995. Then why did you acknowledge the receipt of my memorandum to you? What did that memorandum do?—I do not know.

1996. Did not that memorandum cover a report from Dr. Hector?—I presume it did.

1997. Did you initiate the correspondence at that time?—It was initiated before Dr. Hector came on the scene.

1998. That has nothing to do with it. On the 29th June, 1880, you wrote me a letter; did that letter arise out of previous correspondence?—You are merely trying to trap me.

1999. Was that letter a reply to Dr. Hector's report?—I see your trap, and I am not going to be trapped by you, my boy.

2000. If you see it there is no occasion to be afraid of it?—That is all the more reason why I should be afraid of it. The letter speaks for itself.

2001. I never can get a direct answer from Mr. Lawson. This is a question which can be answered, "Yes" or "No." I simply ask him again, so that it may be put on the records. Was that letter of Mr. Lawson's, of yours, sent in reply to a report of Dr. Hector's?—It was sent to you when you wrote enclosing me a report; the reason is there. I can give you no better answer. The letter speaks for itself plainly.