

any building of magnitude was to be carried out the department should employ a private architect. In accordance with this arrangement I was in communication with the Minister for Public Works as to employing an architect for the lunatic asylum at Seacliff, and I was authorised by the Minister to communicate with Mr. Lawson on the subject. After a conference with Mr. Lawson, at which we practically arranged the whole matter, I wrote him formally asking him on what terms he would undertake to act as Architect for the asylum. He replied to me, on the 17th July, 1878, that he would prepare all the plans and specifications required for the erection of the lunatic asylum and industrial school (at that time there was some idea of erecting an industrial school). He replied as follows: "I agree to prepare all plans and specifications required for the erection of the lunatic asylum and industrial school building, as proposed, at Seacliff; also to superintend and carry out the erection of the said buildings, furnish all copies of drawings and specifications, details and other particulars, to contractors and clerk of works who may be appointed; no charge being made on the contractors for any of the matters referred to; payment being made to me at the rate of 5 per cent. on value or cost of work done, and 2½ per cent. for preparations of plans and specifications of such portions of the same not to be carried out." That is an extract from Mr. Lawson's letter. I myself recommended the acceptance of this offer, and, having received the Minister's approval, I duly accepted it. In pursuance of this arrangement Mr. Lawson has carried out, designed, and superintended the building from first to last, and he has received therefor, in the shape of commission, the sum of £4,185 7s. 3d. It will be seen that under Mr. Lawson's agreement he was to provide all the detailed plans required and all the copies required by the contractors or clerk of works. This is a point that I specially wish the Commissioners to make a note of: I shall refer to it later on. After the contract was entered into Mr. Lawson applied to have a clerk of works appointed, to live on the ground, and superintend the erection of the building in the usual way; but, as the building was of so much importance, Mr. Lawson recommended that, instead of having an ordinary tradesman, such as is usually appointed, we should appoint a man of higher standing. He therefore recommended the name of Mr. Alfred Brindley, who was his assistant in his own office, and who, I understand, had prepared most of the plans for the asylum. Mr. Brindley was duly appointed. Mr. Brindley was paid by the Government; but from first to last in the matter of the building he was entirely under the direction of Mr. Lawson, the Architect. The Public Works Department paid his salary monthly, and, as a matter of convenience and to avoid circumlocution, he sent in to the District Engineer monthly a short progress-report, stating what work had been done during the previous month; but beyond that there was no communication of any kind between the Public Works Department and Mr. Brindley regarding the building of the asylum; in fact, the thing is put in a very positive way in the specifications by Mr. Lawson himself. The last clause in the specifications reads: "The whole works in all their departments to be completed to the entire satisfaction of Mr. R. A. Lawson, architect, Dunedin, or to that of duly-appointed inspectors under same." I wish particularly to direct attention to this, because it has been alleged that Mr. Brindley was acting, or had acted, under the direction of the Public Works Department, which is altogether incorrect. In a very voluminous correspondence there are only eight letters from the Public Works Department to Mr. Brindley: one is with reference to his employment, and another as to the transference of the laundry contract from Mr. Gore to Messrs. Gore, jun.; the other six letters refer to excavation and drainage. There is no allusion whatever to the building. I have a list of these letters here, and they can be produced if required. As I have already stated and shown, the Public Works Department had nothing whatever to do with the carrying-out of the works, or in giving directions to Mr. Brindley or to the contractors, or to anybody else except Mr. Lawson. On the 3rd December, 1887, Mr. Lawson published a pamphlet containing four letters in reference to the building. These letters are dated the 23rd October, 1879, 16th January, 1880, 29th June, 1880, and 2nd February, 1886. All these letters were addressed to me. The last letter—which I may say in passing is perfectly private—is addressed "My dear Blair." How it came to be published as an official communication is a matter of judgment and taste which does not, I presume, come within the scope of the inquiry. In the introduction to these letters Mr. Lawson says that they show that "two years before the portion of the building affected by the ground-slip was erected I urged the necessity of drainage-works being carried out, in order to prevent the said slip or movement, and pointed out what would occur if such matters were not done. At every available opportunity since I have called attention to this matter; and, although a partial stoppage of the movement was caused for over twelve months by a small portion of drainage-works being carried out, I still urged that the whole work was necessary for the security of the building; and, having previously proved the complete success of similar protective works at the temporary asylum on similar ground adjoining, I have the utmost confidence in asserting that nothing else will save the portion of the permanent building affected from further disaster." Taking the smaller points first, in reply to the statement in manuscript at the end of the letters, in which Mr. Lawson says that no reply has been given by me to any of the foregoing letters, I may remark that the principal letter, which is the third one (and this third letter embodies the two previous ones) is not a letter sent by Mr. Lawson of his own motion, as might be inferred from the tenor of the introduction, but is a reply to a report by Dr. Hector. This report, which referred to the site of the building, came to me, and I requested Mr. Lawson to make remarks upon it. I also indicated certain points which ought to be made clear. The letter was duly referred to Dr. Hector, who made a rejoinder, and his rejoinder was referred to Mr. Lawson, and the latter's acknowledgment appears on the papers. This is a small point, but I wish to make it clear. Mr. Lawson also takes credit for the successful stoppage of the slip at the temporary building, although there is neither credit nor discredit attached to the transaction. I may say that the work was not done by him, but by the Public Works and asylum officials. There is another point in connection with the introductory remarks by Mr. Lawson. In this introduction he states that he has the utmost confidence in asserting that nothing short of having the drain made completely round the back of the building