

“ will save the portion of the permanent building affected from further disaster.” Yet in his letter to me—the private letter, headed “ My dear Blair,” of the 2nd February, 1886—he states that “ the southern half and central portion are already secured by natural formation and drainage.” There is some inconsistency here. The letter of the 23rd October, 1879, printed by Mr. Lawson, refers to open trenches, to be cut as deep as possible. From the cross-sections it will be seen that at that time it was almost impossible to cut these trenches. Not only was the ground high, but it was occupied by the building operations then going on; in fact, the Contractor occupied the whole ground in making bricks and in otherwise carrying on the works. Another minor point in this correspondence occurs in the letter of the 16th January, 1880. Mr. Lawson certainly refers *inter alia* to these trenches, but, as will be seen, the main object of the letter, as stated in the first paragraph, was to push on the preliminary work at the site of the new permanent buildings, so that the building itself might be gone on with. Mr. Lawson refers, in his letter of the 29th June, 1880, to the drain being in a tunnel if necessary, but there is nothing to indicate that this would drain the strata that was supposed to be slipping, and, as subsequent events have amply proved, the drain would have been of no effect whatever. Mr. Lawson’s last letter with reference to the “ isolating-drain,” as he calls it, and which is not published—why it was not published I do not know—is dated the 29th March, 1881; and in it he speaks of this isolating-drain, and other works that are required. Dr. Hector visited Dunedin a few days afterwards. He saw Mr. Lawson and myself about the 3rd April, 1881, on the whole subject of the building and the suitability of the site. We then came to a decision as to the advisableness of going on with the rest of the building. Dr. Hector, who had been in doubt previously, was now satisfied that if certain minor precautions were taken with reference to the foundations of the northern blocks they might be gone on with; and, with reference to the isolating-drain that had been previously talked about, he said that it was not absolutely necessary to go on with it at that time. From that date Mr. Lawson entirely dropped the subject of the isolating-drain. That was in April, 1881, and we hear nothing more from him with reference to the isolating-drain until the 12th May, 1884—that is, for more than three years he said nothing whatever about the drain; it had passed out of mind and sight altogether until the cracks appeared in the building. Then Mr. Lawson, for some reason or other, revived this question, although he had been silent on the subject for upwards of three years. I point this out specially in order to show how much reliance can be placed on the statement that Mr. Lawson directed attention to the matter “ at every available opportunity.” After this interview in April, 1881, Dr. Hector made a memorandum to the Government. At this time he thought that the isolating-drain was of much less importance than previously. Dr. Hector referred to the necessity of surface-drainage. He said that it was necessary to go on with the surface-drainage, and Mr. Lawson apparently took up the cue from this; for, although he was perfectly silent on the question of the isolating-drain from March, 1881, till May, 1884, he brought up the subject of the surface-drain several times. On the 25th April, 1882, he wrote me with reference to the surface-drain. He said in this letter of the 25th April, 1882: “ I desire to bring again under your notice the pressing necessity of initiating and carrying out a *comprehensive drainage scheme*”—the words “ comprehensive drainage scheme ” are in italics, so that Mr. Lawson emphasised them—“ in connection with the above building. At present the foundations of the new building are being damaged by the drainage-water lying in all the trenches, and unless proper drainage is speedily carried out I will not be responsible for the consequences, as already indications of unequal settlement are beginning to show.” This was only one matter referred to in the letter. He also referred to the water-supply and the gas-fittings. It will be well to observe that in this letter he says that he desires to bring again under my notice the necessity of drainage. He says nothing about the isolating-drain, but talks of a “ comprehensive drainage scheme,” thus showing that the question of the isolating-drain had been abandoned; and, as a matter of fact, it had been so abandoned long previously. Mr. Lawson’s letter is dated the 25th April, 1882, and I replied to it on the 19th May as follows: “ The full purport of your remarks on the question of drainage did not strike me till this moment; otherwise I would have sent a special reply sooner. I do not concur in the position you now take up in the event of a ‘ comprehensive drainage scheme ’ not being carried out, for you have repeatedly informed me that any indications of unequal settlement were not attributable to the slips or want of drainage; and, furthermore, I understood that both you and Dr. Hector were now quite satisfied of the suitability of the ground. Arrangements have been made for laying a pipe to take away sewage, but, as you pointed out when I was reporting on Dr. Neill’s memorandum, it would not be advisable to put any drains round a building till it is nearly finished. Keeping the foundations free of water during the erection of the building, if that is what you allude to, is clearly a matter for yourself and the Contractor. I shall be glad to get from you further particulars of what you want done.” Although I pointedly asked Mr. Lawson for particulars of what he wanted done he did not reply to my letter till the 20th March, 1883, nearly a year afterwards, and this notwithstanding the statement made in his published pamphlet that at every available opportunity he has called attention to the matter of drainage. On the 20th March, 1883, Mr. Lawson replied to my letter of 19th May, 1882. It was not, however, a direct reply, for no reference is made in it to the previous letter. He, however, sent me a list of the further works required to be completed at Seacliff. He sent this list of works in pursuance of a decision come to at a conference with Mr. Dick, who was then Colonial Secretary. Mr. Lawson in this letter says, “ I further promised Mr. Dick to communicate with you as to the further works required to complete at Seacliff, so as to give possession to Dr. Neill, and which I understand had in part been authorised.” Amongst these further works was that the “ general formation of the ground should be pushed forward before winter sets in; also drainage, as being necessary for preventing probable settlement.” These are his actual words. Again, I would point out that, although Mr. Lawson wrote to me in fear of settlements on the 25th April, 1882, and although I asked him pointedly on the 19th May for particulars of what he wanted, he did not consider it necessary to send these particulars till the 20th March, 1883, nearly a year afterwards. This letter