

would have been very different from what they were. Now as to who is responsible: I have clearly shown that the foundations have not been put in in the way they ought to have been. I have also shown that these foundations are in all probability the main, if not the sole, cause of the settlement. It is now a question as to who is responsible for this great divergence from the contract. So far as the department is concerned, we have nothing whatever to do with it; the matter lies between the Architect and his subordinate—the Inspector. It would not, however, be right for me to leave it at this stage, for a large quantity of evidence has been collected with reference to the mode in which the work was carried out. Mr. Ussher will give evidence that he was unofficially aware of great friction between the Inspector and the Contractor, and between the Inspector and the Architect. The Inspector complained bitterly to Mr. Ussher, also to myself, that he was not backed up by the Architect; and I have here his letter-book, containing ample proof of this statement. I have only got the letters one way; I have not got the letters which he received from the Architect, but I have Mr. Brindley's letter-book containing copies of the letters he sent to the Architect. Once or twice the matter went so far that, although Mr. Brindley had no official right to correspond with the department, he did write to Mr. Ussher several times complaining of his treatment by Mr. Lawson, and the way in which his instructions were disregarded by the Contractor. I should also say, with reference to Mr. Brindley's position, that he (Mr. Brindley) complained that he was kept by Mr. Lawson making detailed drawings for the use of the Contractor, while he ought to have been out upon the works inspecting them. In the letter that I read of the agreement with Mr. Lawson, it will be seen that Mr. Lawson had out of his commission to provide these detailed drawings. These detailed drawings ought to have been made by himself or by his private staff in his own office; but, instead of spending a portion of his commission in this work, he utilised the man who was paid for by the Government—Mr. Brindley—to do this work for him. As a matter of fact, I believe that nearly all the detailed drawings were done by Mr. Brindley. He even prepared the plan of the drainage to which I have already referred, which is not a detailed drawing, but a new plan altogether. It is no wonder then that Mr. Brindley could not devote so much time to inspection as he otherwise would have done. I may say that I was not aware of the extent of this circumstance; otherwise action would have been taken long ago. I shall simply read a few extracts from Mr. Brindley's letters to Mr. Lawson. One is in reference to the stone packing.

*The Chairman*: In the concrete, you mean?

*Mr. Blair*: Yes. The specification was that stone packing may be used in the concrete with the Inspector's approval, and Mr. Brindley writes to Mr. Lawson to ask what proportion of stone he considered fair. In a letter dated the 13th December, 1881, he says: "Seeing that there is a question of the foundation of the north wings not being right"—this is the very portion now under discussion—"would it not be as well that some arrangement should be made to do away with the packing altogether?" You will see that Mr. Brindley directed attention to the ground being bad in this case, and that, instead of the foundation being scamped, he wanted the foundations improved. "The way Mr. Gore wants stone put in is about 3in. apart, which is simply ridiculous, and that, too, with 2in. metal. His price for concrete is 50s. per cubic yard."

*Mr. Skinner*: Did you say 50s. per cubic yard?

*Mr. Blair*: Yes. I am reading an extract from Mr. Brindley's letter. I did not check it by the schedule.

*Mr. Gore*: I presume that you will put the contract in; because that is not in accordance with the facts.

*Mr. Skinner*: The schedule reads: "45s. in trench and 50s. in boxes."

*Mr. Gore*: That is a different thing. That is including boxing. Will you please give the date of the letter you have just been reading?

*Mr. Blair*: It is dated the 13th December, 1881. The letter goes on to say: "My way of it is, the stone to be not less than 1ft. or 1ft. 6in. apart, according to size, and concrete put in lifts of 1ft. high at a time. Unless I am to stand by and see every stone go in, I am afraid there will be more go in than is good for the stability of the building; and should it come to an examination I am afraid that Mr. Gore would be the loser, as there would be no help for it but to have it taken out. Perhaps if you are up during the week you can judge for yourself, though it is certain the amount of stone cannot be checked other than standing by and seeing it go in." From what we have seen on the ground it is very clear to us that the Architect did not stand by the Inspector on this occasion, and on this point on the 1st August, 1882, Mr. Brindley again wrote with reference to the stone packing. The letter is not very legible, but it shows that Mr. Gore insisted on putting in the stone from 4in. to 6in. apart, and that he disregarded Mr. Brindley's instructions in the matter: in fact, Mr. Brindley on this account only certified provisionally to the work. He says: "I send this month's certificate provisionally that above is to your satisfaction; also owing to the inability of getting shingle to mix with metal. The concrete lately put in can bear no comparison with the north wing." This letter refers to the south wing, and if the concrete there is inferior to that which we saw in the extreme-north wing, well, it must be very extraordinary material. The concrete question again comes up on the 5th October, 1882. Mr. Brindley writes to Mr. Lawson: "I must again protest against the way Mr. Gore instructs his workmen to put stone packing in concrete. He insists on the stone being put 3in. or 4in. apart; and the man putting in concrete in trenches,"—I presume, without framing—"whether instructed or not I do not know, on the slightest chance puts them in anyhow. As it is impossible to be at different parts of the work where the concrete is being put in during the whole day, I shall refuse to pass any more concrete put in by aforesaid man and manner above described. I called attention to the matter not being satisfactory, and requested Mr. Gore's manager to remove the man. This he refused to do, as it seems he has not power to do, and also questions my right to require such dismissal. It is not the first time he had tried to scamp work. As concrete still continues to be put in, I have to take this course to protect myself, and also ask you to stop payment of the last certificate until such time as the matter is settled. At