

COUNTY COUNCILS' ASSOCIATION, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,  
JANUARY 24TH, 1906.

THE Secretary reported the receipt of certain detailed communications from the Local Government Board and the Lunacy Commission on the subject of the cost of providing lunatic asylums and isolation hospitals, and Mr. Willis Bund stated that he had received an important letter from the architect to the Lunacy Commission, which he was authorised to place at the disposal of the Association.

On the motion of the chairman, it was resolved :

"That the correspondence, including the letter from the architect to the Lunacy Commission, be printed with the minutes,<sup>(1)</sup> and that the matter be referred to the Parliamentary Committee for further consideration."

APPENDIX III.

*Cost of Erection of Isolation Hospitals and Lunatic Asylums.*

MEMORANDUM SENT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD AND LUNACY COMMISSIONERS.

The requirements of the Local Government Board and the Lunacy Commissioners with regard to these buildings might be modified in the following particulars:

- (1) In any isolated and well situated site, the cubic space of wards per bed might be reduced.
- (2) A barbed wire fence or hedge might take the place of the 6 ft. 6 in. wall or park paling which is required.
- (3) In small hospitals the irregularity in the number of each sex should be met by having three small wards instead of two wards of equal size.
- (4) The premises might be warmed by hot water pipes, heated from a central furnace, instead of by fire-places with coal fires, thereby saving prime cost and greater economy in maintenance.
- (5) Patent impermeable floorings should be allowed, they being cheaper than wood.
- (6) The internal walls, and in the case of hollow walls the inner 4½ in. brick-work, might be replaced by patent partitions, thereby reducing the cost of foundation and plaster, etc.
- (7) The window frames might be built flush with the inside wall, saving rounded angles, etc.
- (8) Door linings could be reduced and doors standardised, thus avoiding panels and rounded angles.
- (9) Windows could also be standardised and possibly made in cast iron.
- (10) Generally if the Lunacy Commissioners would frame and the Local Government Board approve an economical specification of cheap materials and standardised details on which tenders could be invited, a great saving of cost would be ensured, because builders and merchants would know there was a guaranteed market for such standardised details, and they could be supplied at very little over prime cost.

"HOME OFFICE, WHITEHALL, S.W.;

"July 7th, 1905.

"SIR,—With reference to your letter of the 2nd ultimo (62,638 K.), enclosing a resolution and suggestions of the County Councils' Association with respect to the cost of lunatic asylums, I am directed by the Secretary of State to acquaint you, for the information of the Local Government Board, that he has been in communication with the Commissioners in Lunacy in the matter, and to transmit to you, herewith, a copy of a letter received from the Commissioners upon the subject.

"I am, sir, your obedient servant,

"(Signed) M. CHALMERS.

"The Secretary to the Local Government Board."

(<sup>1</sup>) See Appendix.

"LUNACY COMMISSION,  
 "66, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.;  
 "June 22nd, 1905.

"SIR,—With reference to Mr. Byrne's letter and ultimo (62,638 K.), enclosing a resolution and suggestions of the County Councils' Association, I am directed by the Commissioners in Lunacy to say that they have given careful consideration to the matters referred to therein, and have also submitted them to their consulting architect for his opinion.

"As regards the letter containing the resolution, the Commissioners have no difficulty in agreeing with the Association that the housing of acute cases of insanity and chronic lunatics who are incurable in the same class of building involves an unnecessary expenditure for the care of the latter, who might be accommodated in cheaper buildings.

"This view the Commissioners have frequently set forth in their annual Reports and elsewhere, and they are glad to notice that local authorities are gradually arriving at the same conclusion. As regards the memorandum, which seems to refer altogether to isolation hospitals:—

"(1) The Commissioners have required the present cubic space to be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Board, who have to be satisfied with plans of isolation hospitals for the building of which loans have to be authorised by them.

"(2) It is not usual to erect fences of any kind round isolation hospitals for asylums, but barbed wire fences, with which patients could seriously injure themselves, would be quite unsuitable.

"(3) No isolation hospital for an asylum is ever sanctioned by the Commissioners for more than three patients of each sex, and the Commissioners do not press for even this number.

"(4) In such a building open fire-places are a quite adequate means of heating.

"(5) Patent impermeable floorings are nearly always used in such buildings, and are always preferred.

"(6) The Consulting Architect doubts if this suggestion would decrease expense.

"(7) The suggestion of building window frames flush with the inner wall is frequently adopted.

"(8) (9) (10) It is considered to be extremely doubtful whether any useful result would be gained by further standardisation more than is already done.

"But it must be remembered that these points have reference only to the very small comparative expenditure for isolation hospitals, and touch only the fringe of the question. This would also be the case if they referred also to the buildings of asylums generally. The Commissioners have, however, been very glad to learn the views of the County Councils' Association, and to recognise its desire to reduce to a working minimum the expenditure upon lunatic asylums, a matter which the Commissioners have constantly and anxiously before them in their consideration of the plans which are submitted to them by local authorities.

"I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"(Signed) A. H. TREVOR,  
 Secretary."

"35, PARLIAMENT STREET,  
 "WESTMINSTER, S.W.  
 "November 30th, 1905.

"DEAR MR. WILLIS BUND,—I have accepted your suggestion to write to you 'at my leisure' on the subject of the growing cost of lunatic asylums as discussed at a recent meeting of the County Councils' Association; but, owing to the more urgent claims on my time, I am afraid I have unduly delayed my letter to you.

"Turning up the other day a report I wrote a year or two ago in reply to a memorandum from a Principal Secretary of State urging the importance of curtailing expenditure on asylum buildings, I find it expresses generally my views on

the subject to-day, and I cannot do better than quote from it where pertinent to the present inquiry, enlarging where further explanation is desirable.

"Accepting the statement that the cost of lunatic asylums has increased of late years, and attempting to analyse the cause, I put aside, for the moment, the exceptional cases of excessively costly asylums designed by architects inexperienced in asylums construction, and who have possibly been tempted to compensate for the want of originality of plan by a lavish display of decorative art; and I am of opinion that the increased expenditure has arisen from the following causes:

"(1) The general increase of the cost of building; higher rates of wages being now paid than formerly and with less profitable results.

"(2) The exigencies of modern science, which demands *inter alia*:

"(a) A higher class of building and more costly internal finish by plastered walls, glazed brick linings, wooden dadoes, etc., introduced with a view to better sanitation and economy in maintenance.

"(b) A more luxurious equipment in the way of heating, ventilating, lighting, furnishing, etc.

"(c) Better sanitation, involving more perfect sewerage systems, with appliances and fittings of costly type.

"(d) Special construction to prevent the spread of fire and duplicate staircases throughout to allow alternative ways of escape.

"(e) More rapid and accurate means of inter-communication by electrical appliances.

"(f) The better accommodation for nurses and attendants than was formerly demanded when a lower class of imperfectly trained servants was employed.

"(3) In some cases by inexperience on the part of those responsible for the erection of asylums, and consequent waste or extravagance.

"While the above may count for much of the increased cost of asylums, it will be argued that these conditions are applicable to all classes of public buildings, and this is to some extent true, although with results generally in favour of asylums as compared with such buildings as infectious hospitals, board schools, and work-houses. The average cost per bed of a modern fever hospital is largely in excess of that of an average modern asylum, although the former is similar in construction and without the accessory buildings necessary to the latter, such as chapel, recreation hall, workshops, farm buildings, etc.

"Thus it must be conceded that the increased cost of modern asylums is no more than normal, and we must seek further afield if we are to discover a remedy for excessive expenditure.

"In the Secretary of State's memorandum above referred to, certain suggestions were offered as to the mode of housing the insane, classifying them as follows:

"(1) Dangerous patients, who should be kept beyond means of escape.

"(2) Hopeful cases, which should have special consideration.

"(3) Chronic, harmless, and tractable patients, who could be comfortably but plainly housed.

"If this classification were constant such difficulty would be removed, but unfortunately in the varying conditions of lunacy it is difficult to say when a patient can be classified as either hopefully curable, or chronic and harmless. The patient for years may belong to the latter class, but suddenly and unexpectedly make a rapid recovery; or, on the other hand, may as suddenly develop homicidal or dangerous tendencies; and, therefore, every asylum must provide accommodation for all classes of patients, who can be transferred speedily from one class of buildings to another.

"Still, much might be done to simplify the construction of asylums, particularly if some relaxation were allowed in the stringent rules laid down for the protection of patients.

"Prior to the Lunacy Act of 1844, terrible abuses prevailed in the treatment of the insane, but in the necessary steps taken to correct these evils very stringent regulations had to be enforced, which had the effect of surrounding the lunatic with such protective measures as to make it practically impossible for him to suffer accidental harm unless by a failure in the vigilance of those in charge of him; and woe betide the attendant whose vigilance fails at a critical moment.

"These protective measures are undeniably proper and salutary, but the effect has been to add to the cost of asylums by the introduction of new appliances for safe-

guarding patients and automatic devices for preventing accidents, together with modern inventions for insuring the vigilance of attendants, such as the tell-tale clock, or speedy means of communication between the staff by telephones or a telegraphic system of alarms indicating at once an outbreak of fire. Some of these and other special precautions are chiefly necessary with the acute and dangerous cases, and might be relaxed with chronic and harmless patients.

With regard to the second class of patients before referred to as "hopeful cases," considerable attention has of late been devoted to their accommodation and treatment, and in several modern asylums separate establishments apart from the main building have been constructed, where all patients showing any hopes of recovery are admitted and frequently discharged cured without ever entering the asylum proper.

These buildings, termed "Acute Hospitals," are constructed so as to offer special opportunities for segregation and treatment not possible in the main asylum, and, if more costly of construction, the outlay is justifiable on both humane and economic grounds if a greater percentage of cures is the result. With regard to the third class, the "chronic harmless and tractable patients," it has often been urged that provision might be made for them in asylums of simple and inexpensive form, and more than one attempt has been made in this direction.

In some of our most recent asylums detached villas of simple design have been provided, which, while perhaps not costing less than the ordinary chronic ward, will probably have the effect of showing that this class of patients can be relegated to convalescent homes under less costly administration than in an ordinary asylum.

"But to consider further the possibility of reducing the cost of asylum buildings generally, I am of opinion that something might be done if some of the principles already referred to could be sacrificed. In the early days of asylum construction lunatics were treated more like felons, and buildings were constructed of massive proportions and strength, and in the evolution of asylum architecture this idea of forcible detention has always more or less prevailed, and our asylum of to-day, while losing much of its prison-like features, retains much of its strength, and frequently goes far beyond the domestic buildings which these people occupy in ordinary life.

"Modern science has taught us that certain materials properly applied can be used in smaller quantities to produce as sound and durable results as our forefathers obtained by the lavish use of material on less scientific methods, and I am satisfied that one-storey buildings of lighter construction with less solid foundations, no fireproof floors or ceilings, and no staircases, could be erected at less cost per bed than the two- or three-storey wards now common to our asylums.

"This form of building would cover more ground and would therefore involve a totally different system of planning, in which some of our present ideas would have to be discarded, but I am satisfied that the whole of the chronic quiet and tractable cases, together with epileptics and a large proportion of the sick and infirm, could be housed in these wards at a less initial cost, and also, I believe, at a lower rate of maintenance, owing to the buildings being all on one floor level, than in our present two- or three-storey buildings.

"Special provisions of a somewhat more expensive character would have to be made for refractory cases, and also for such of the sick and infirm class as were under hospital treatment, the recent cases being treated in the separate buildings before referred to as the 'Acute Hospital.'

"The continued growth of lunacy, which has now reached an annual increase of more than 3000 cases in England and Wales alone, representing a capital outlay of nearly a million of money, makes it desirable that means should be devised for housing the insane at a moderate cost; otherwise, with the rapidly-growing debt of the country, it will be impossible to build isolation hospitals or do anything to promote the welfare of the useful and deserving classes, educationally or socially. When, therefore, we consider the costly finish and fittings of the present-day asylum, the question presents itself—Is it fair that such large sums of public money should be spent in the excessive protection and prolongation of life of a class who can never be of use to their fellow men, and who are little comfort to their friends or joy to themselves? Should it not suffice to provide them with accommodation as good as they have had in their own homes, with reasonable protection and

comforts, but without unduly prolonging their lives by the excessive care and luxury so generally insisted upon in the modern asylum?

"In conclusion, I wish to call your attention to a reference you made the other day about the cost of your new asylum, which was somewhat misleading. You said it would work out at a rate of £325 per bed. While this may be strictly true, you forget that the administrative buildings—recreation hall, workshops, laundry, etc.—are constructed for an asylum of double the present size, so as to allow of future extension, and as the patients' wards represent scarcely half the value of the entire building, you have already expended three fourths of the cost of an asylum for double the present number of patients, and therefore, when the additional wards are erected, the average cost of your building will be reduced to £240 a bed.

"Many asylums of recent date have cost no more than this, and even less, as in the case of the County of London, where, in spite of high wages, asylums are built perhaps more economically than in any other county in England. Two asylums quite recently completed by the L.C.C. have cost, in the one case less than £200 per bed, and in the other not very much more; while a third they are now building on similar lines bids fair to rival the other two in completeness and cost.

"I am, yours truly,

"GEORGE T. HINE."

*The County Council Times and Local Government Review.*

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#### COMPLIMENTARY.

Dr. JOHN B. CHAPIN.

We have received a handsome volume giving an account of a notable dinner in honour of Dr. Chapin, of the Philadelphia Hospital for the Insane, on the completion of fifty years' professional work. Dr. Chapin, as is very well known, succeeded that lamented physician, Dr. Kirkbride, whose name is held in especial reverence on both sides of the Atlantic. The chair was occupied by Dr. Edward N. Brush, who had occasion to say many fine things about Dr. Chapin, and the proceedings, which were most enthusiastic and widely supported, culminated in the presentation of Dr. Chapin's portrait, a fine photogravure of which adorns the memorial volume. We heartily congratulate Dr. Chapin and his friends on this happy occasion.

Mr. R. H. HEURTLEY SANKEY.

Mr. Sankey has retired after a notable length of active service at the Oxford County Asylum. Indeed, it may be doubted if there has been another medical superintendent so long on duty, with the exception of Mr. Humphrey at the neighbouring institution for Buckinghamshire. Mr. Sankey's residence at Littlemore stretches over fifty-two years, and we trust that he will favour us with his reminiscences of the many changes which he has witnessed during his professional life. It was Mr. Ley, of Littlemore, Mr. Sankey's predecessor, who proposed the establishment of this *Journal*, while he was treasurer of the Association; and for fourteen years these two gentlemen were associated as medical superintendent and assistant medical officer. Mr. Sankey was thus brought into contact with the Association in its early development, and can recall the memories of those we specially honour. His name is distinguished in our lists by the asterisk showing that he joined before 1855, and there is but one veteran, Dr. T. N. Brushfield, to bear him company. Long life and happiness to both!

We are glad to observe from the *Oxford Times* of March 10th that Mr. Sankey retires on a pension of £582 per annum, such sum not exceeding the amount of two thirds of his salary and emoluments. Some adverse comments were made at the city council meeting, but the motion passed with only three dissentients. The committee made handsome acknowledgment of Mr. Sankey's work which those of us who know him will gladly endorse, while his wide circle of friends will wish him many and happy days in his retirement.

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