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## MODEL JAIL ARCHITECTURE.<sup>1</sup>

W. CARBYS ZIMMERMAN.<sup>2</sup>

To be asked to speak on a model jail, without the location of the building being stated, is an architectural subject which is broad and somewhat vague, for it is evident that a model jail for one district administered under the laws and ordinances of one community may be far from serving the purposes of some other locality.

A community low in scale of social development, governed under laws fitted to this stage, would need a jail building quite different in character from that of a more highly developed people; and it follows that in that society towards which we are working, where the attempt at revenge and punishment of the law breaker will be replaced by the persistent aim at his reformation and education, the functions or administration of the jail would so change in character that the building or buildings for the purpose could most likely no longer be designated as jails.

There are, however, some general, well established laws and canons of architecture and good building which should be followed in the jail proper or cell house of any jail building, no matter where located or how administered, on which a few words may be said.

When one considers that only a limited number of those confined in a jail are proven guilty of the crime for which they were arrested, and that many are held there for very minor offenses, the planning and architectural treatment of the building becomes of peculiar interest in the problem it presents.

No fair-minded man will deny for a moment that the innocent and the one not convicted of crime should not be subjected to greater hardships than are absolutely necessary, during the time that he is deprived of his liberty by the state, and it is encouraging to notice that society has advanced to that stage where it is beginning to recognize fully that even the convicted criminal (during his good behavior) should not be subjected to any hardships other than those made necessary by keeping him in a safe place—a place in which he is under constant surveillance and from which he cannot escape to repeat his aggressions against established laws.

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<sup>1</sup>Read at the Annual Conference of State Charities and Corrections at Danville, Ill., Oct. 23, 1915.

<sup>2</sup>Chicago, Ill. Former State Architect for Illinois.

We all agree that the day of the dark underground dungeon has passed, and that even the lowest criminal is entitled to a full share of the essentials of life—fresh air and direct light, proper food, and clothing; that nothing must be done to undermine his health, and that every precaution must be taken to avoid his premature death, either from causes within the building or effects from without its walls.

The architectural problem of the jail is, therefore, no different from most of the other housing problems, except on two radical points, viz.: a jail must be so planned that escape from it becomes a most difficult, if not impossible matter, and it must be so constructed that it can withstand an attack from without.

But what fearful crimes against good architecture (I use the term in its full meaning) have been committed under the cry of "safety first!" Every demand of sanitation, proper light supply, efficient ventilation, etc., has been totally ignored again and again, and cast aside for the sake of ensuring an "escape-proof" jail.

It would appear that we have been planning our jails to suit the convenience and comfort of the jailer, and that little or no attention has been given to other matters of equal or greater importance. Under the excuse of building securely, we have standardized our jails so that now the prisoner is confined in a *cage*, which has insufficient direct light and air and such unsanitary arrangements throughout that any man who has the well-being of his horse or cow at heart would hesitate to use it for stabling purposes.

I had occasion to see the ruins of the jails built two thousand years ago in the Roman Forum. We have not improved on them. In some respects they are even better than many of those of today.

A certain new police station jail was recommended as being the last word in jail architecture. I found it the usual horrible example. The best cells were some 10 feet away from direct light and air of the windows, and there were others back of these without either of these two essentials. Ah! but the horses' quarters! They came nearer fulfilling the requirements of a proper cell house. Every horse had its own individual stall; every horse had its own window for direct light and air. The stalls were lined with glazed sanitary brick; there was fresh straw, bedding, etc.; the air was sweeter in the stable for the horse than in the house of the unfortunate human being.

In one of our southern jails I found the jailer (whose duty it was to take care of and watch the cell house) sitting in the adjoining stable, which was anything but inviting, but he was justified in preferring its air to that of his place at the cell house doors.

But do not blame the architects too severely in this matter. They

are all, as a rule, conscientious, and it is to their interest from every point of view to solve a given problem to the best of their ability. But what happens to them when the building of a new jail comes up? The architect entrusted with the work will, of course, peruse the limited and meager architectural literature to be had on the subject, and he will visit the latest and best buildings of this type that he can find. If he is fortunate and escapes the insidious arguments of the jail equipment salesman he may be guided through all the jails he visits by an attendant and get only the one-sided views of a jailer, who will expound by the hour on the wonderful locking devices and escape-proof qualities of his jail, but who will frown upon and denounce as impracticable any suggestions that may be made to improve the all-important arrangement of cells, and other construction. And as the architect does not, as a rule, dare to go contrary to those who ought to know, and try what those in authority might call an experiment, he, wisely or not, but at least naturally, plans his new building on the lines of those recommended as being the best of their kind.

An organization such as the Association of Charities and Correction can do much to bring about a better state of affairs by giving its moral support and by insisting that the architect design a jail that will come nearer to fulfilling the requirements. There is no special difficulty in doing so. It is simply a question of insisting that all laws of good building be as rigidly observed in the building of a jail as in the planning of an apartment building, and that, while it is all important that the cell house be escape-proof, this result need not be obtained at the expense of many other equally important considerations.

When planning a new jail, therefore, you will insist that the expert or architect be consulted at the very beginning and supported until the end, if the jail is to be a model one. For a great deal depends upon the site; and no site should be chosen without the aid of the experienced architect, as a model jail could not be planned on an improper site. The building must be so located that a full sun exposure is possible for the cell house. The importance of this point is self-evident. There is no better, or at any rate no cheaper, disinfectant than the direct rays of the sun, be it to dislodge or destroy the microbe in a man's body or soul. The site should be such as to insure unquestionable drainage, a good water supply, and should have the benefit of being in the line of cleansing prevailing air currents. In very large cities an ideal site is often-times difficult to obtain, but even under these conditions, the very best results may be had if con-

ditions are reversed and the cell house—instead of being on the ground floor—is placed on the roof of the building—a plan carried out so successfully in the Seattle building. The ideal site should, further, be of sufficient area to allow ample yard room and also for future additions to the building; it should be located as close as possible to the district it is to serve, in as inconspicuous a position as possible, and should be so situated as to make transportation to and from it the least objectionable and expensive to the state and the least degrading to those under arrest.

The building of a model jail must be according to the specifications of modern hospital construction, the conditions of its use being much the same. In other words, besides the unusually great window surface (duly guarded, as a matter of course), assuring unlimited light and air, the wall, ceiling, and floor surfaces must be of a hard, non-absorbing character, with all angles rounded, and as little woodwork as possible (and that as plain and simple as can be devised), to avoid breeding surface for bacteria or vermin.

The detail specifications for this construction would depend on the amount of building funds available for the purpose, but the cost of a simple type of hospital construction would not be much, if any more, than the ordinary jail cost. But it is evident that, even if the *first* cost is greater, this extra cost will be readily balanced by the lessened cost of maintenance and administration of a building constructed of material that does not require constant repair and replacing. It must also be borne in mind that every jail prisoner regains his liberty sooner or later, and carries with him, to cast abroad, any infectious disease, a seed of which was lurking in the dark, unclean cell house. A model jail, even if of high first cost, is a good business proposition. It means fewer public hospitals and smaller state penitentiaries.

That this construction must be entirely fireproof goes without saying.

The cell proper must be a fully enclosed room and not an open cage. This is an all-important consideration. The greater part of all the objectionable features of the present jail cell house is due to this "cage" construction. That the foulness, moral and physical, of one degenerate in a cell house can permeate without the least chance of control, through the entire cell house is an unpardonable outrage, when one considers that it can so readily be avoided by enclosing the barred doors with wired glass, and without interfering with their escape-proof qualities and the full view into the cell. What a shame it is that in almost every jail of today we force the

unfortunate, and possibly guiltless, occupants to breathe the vitiated air that flows in through the open bars of the adjoining cages! The jail of today is indeed the primary school of crime, when one considers that through this primitive cage scheme the first offender is in direct contact for contamination of his moral well-being, by eye and ear, with the habitual criminal.

How simply all this is overcome if the cells, fully enclosed on all sides, are placed along the outside walls of the cell house and fully lighted and ventilated by individual windows.

Most turnkeys will tell you that this arrangement is out of the question—that a jail so planned is no longer escape-proof. This is not so. In all Europe there is not a jail or penitentiary that I know of that does not have these cells on the outside walls, and the European criminologists fail to understand why the progressive American persists in planning his building on these antique lines, when he is fully aware that the strength of light is in direct proportion to the square of distance. In other words, a cell 5 feet away from the window gets only 1-25 the amount of light of a direct window. If the jailer claims that supervision of the cell is less readily obtained in the proper plan, a careful examination by the unprejudiced will show the opposite to be the case. The jailer, of course would feel justified in demanding that these windows facing the outside wall be of a design making it impossible for the occupant to communicate with those outside of the walls, and this can be done in more than one way, if the conditions of the site make it necessary.

The model jail is, then, to have its cells fully enclosed on all sides, each one is to have an outside window, and constructed according to hospital specifications, for the cell changes its tenants very frequently and must be of such character that its surfaces will not retain nor transmit any health destroying or even death giving bacteria. This model cell should be arranged to house only one occupant at a time. The size of the cell is of course dependent on its different uses and purposes, be it for the purpose of very temporary confinement without activity, or that of extended commitment with workshop possibilities. For minimum sizes it would be well to bear in mind hospital regulations, and allow about 1,000 cu. ft. of air space, and of such proportion as to allow free movement, viz.: proper "elbow room."

The artificial ventilation becomes of secondary importance in a jail in which the cells are individual rooms with outside window, as any ordinary steam or hot water system of heating can then take the place of the more costly forced hot air systems.

It is doubtful that any suggestion can be made to improve the escape-proof qualities of the cell and cell house. American ingenuity has developed these features so that they are near perfection, although it is to be hoped that the future will bring about improvements making these fixtures and appliances still more sanitary than even the best of them are now.

Those model cells are so placed that a full view into every part of them is possible from one point, without the observer being visible to the prisoner, and in this ideal jail the cells, at the same time, are so arranged that the occupant of one cell cannot see or hear the occupant of any other cell in the cell house. This can be done in different ways. A man falsely imprisoned can, under these conditions, retain a vestige of his self-respect when released, and others will not sink lower by the debasing and contaminating influence of hardened cell mates. It is, of course, desirable so to plan and arrange the cells that they can be formed into groups or departments for convenient separation and classification of different types of prisoners.

There has been so pronounced an advancement of late years in the special plumbing fixtures for buildings of this character that there is no longer any excuse, either on account of excessive cost or lack of supply, not to fit these model cells with modern, sanitary appliances in the way of toilets and wash bowls with hot and cold water. For the same reason, there is no longer an excuse for the lack of arrangement of a full quota of shower and tub baths, wash tubs, disinfecting appliances and rooms in connection with our model cell house.

This model jail should be planned to have an outdoor exercise yard, or courts so arranged as to be serviceable during all weather conditions, and so planned that classification would be made possible during recreation hours. This jail should have connected to it simple shop rooms, also, in which plain work can be given to those serving a sentence or those inclined to activity.

It goes without saying that if the jail must, through unavoidable circumstances, house both sexes and juveniles, their departments would be entirely distinct and separate—so arranged and so placed that these different groups cannot possibly come within each other's eye-sight or ear-shot from the time of entering to the time of exit.

Under no circumstances, of course, should the plans of this model jail be made without being subjected to thorough scrutiny by an expert trained jailer, for suggestions as to the general arrangement of the building. It is, however, of equal importance that full consideration be given to the suggestions to be made by the physiolo-

gist, the physician, and nurse, as to the arrangement and fittings of receiving rooms, hospital ward, kitchen, baths, laundry and disinfecting room in connection with the cell house.

The exterior architecture of a model jail is of secondary importance compared to its interior arrangement and construction, and if funds are not available, would be simple and straightforward in its design, avoiding if possible that excessively aggressive prison style which offends the sensibilities of those without its walls. A master might, instead, express in this architecture, through its very simplicity, the dignity, power, and human justice of the state. For architecture and building, good or bad, is, as we all know, more than stone and brick piled together, and always tells a true story to those who can read its language. The architect, consciously or unconsciously, expresses in his work the state of the mental and moral development of the society he serves, and let it be our aims to show future generations, through the planning, construction, and architecture of the model jail of tomorrow, that some of us, at any rate, have evolved somewhat higher than one is led to believe when contemplating the jail architecture of today.