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PLANS FOR A MODEL JAIL

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A DEPARTMENTAL PLAN
FOR A DETENTION HOME
FOR DELINQUENT WOMEN

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It is embarrassing to be asked to speak on a Model Jail, without the location of the building being stated. It involves an architectural subject which is rather 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 toward which we are working, where the attempt of revenge on and punishment of the law breaker will be replaced by the persistent aim of 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 proved 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 a 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 note 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 cannot escape from to repeat his aggressions against established laws.

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; namely, 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 insuring 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 with such unsanitary arrangements throughout that any man who has the well-being of his horse or cow at heart would hesitate to use 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 others back of these without any 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 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 assembled here today can do much to bring about a better state of affairs by giving its moral support and 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 then 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.

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 have the benefit of being in the line of cleaning, prevailing air currents. In very large cities an ideal site is oftentimes difficult to obtain, but even under these conditions the very best results may be had if conditions are reversed and the cell house, instead of being on the ground floor, is placed on the roof of the building, as carried out so successfully in the Seattle building. The ideal site should, further, be of sufficient area to allow for 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 so 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 similar 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 walls, ceilings, 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 it 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.

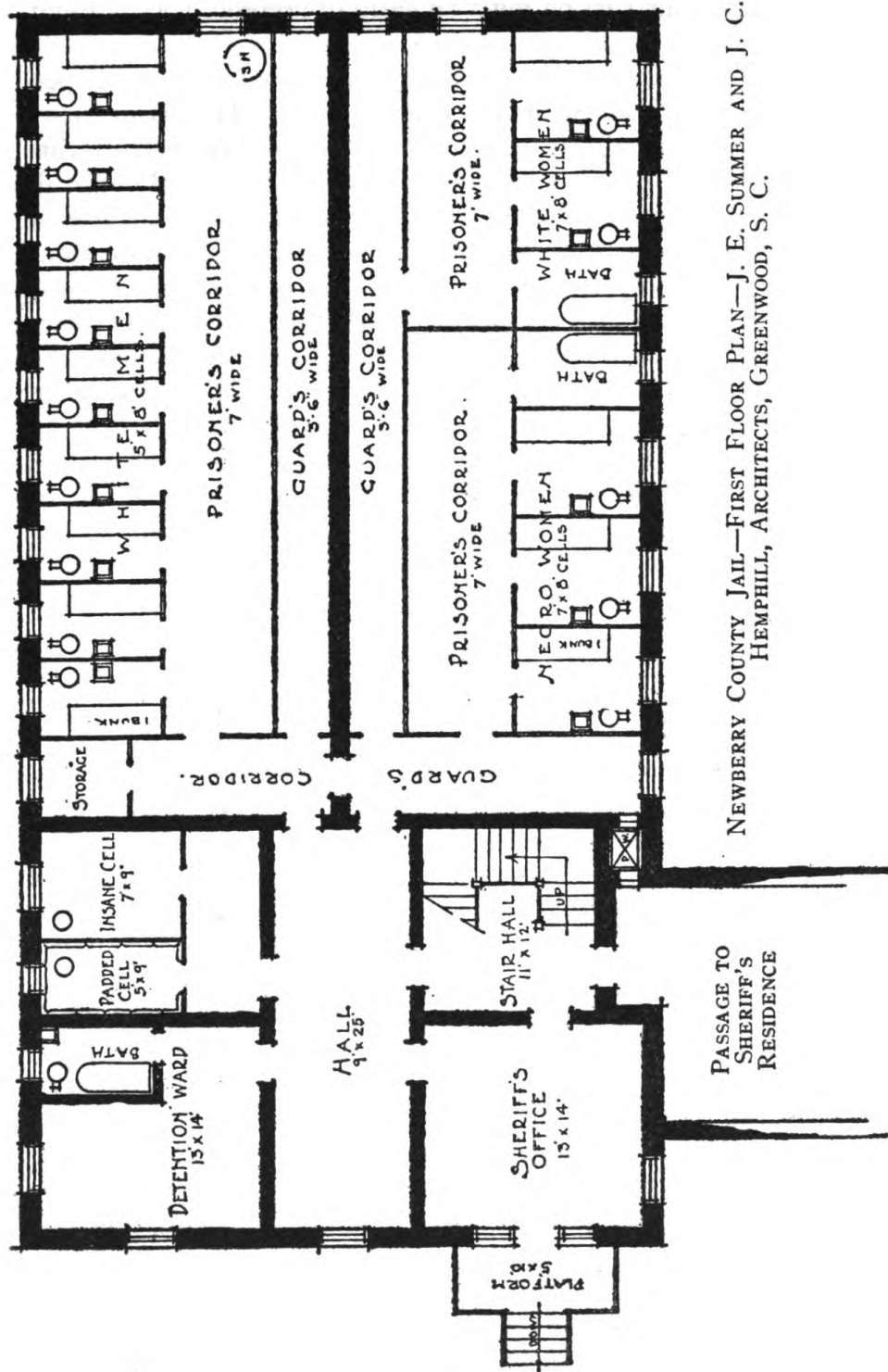
That this construction must be entirely fireproof goes without saying.

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; and 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.

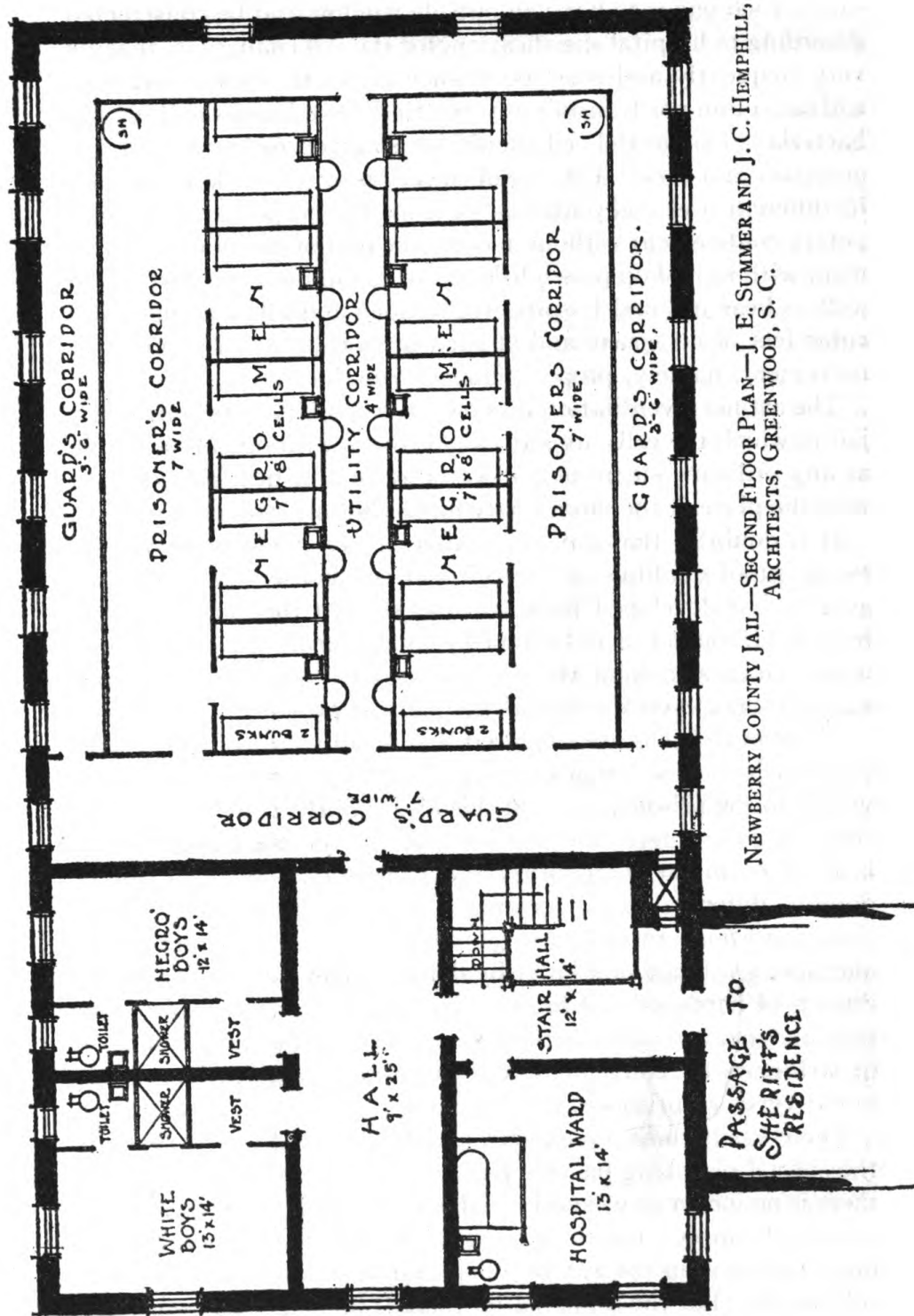
How simply all this is overcome if the cells, fully enclosed on all sides, are placed along the outside walls of the cell house and fully lighted and ventilated by individual windows.

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 the cells on the outside walls; and the European criminologists fail to understand why the progressive American persists in planning his building on these antiquated 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 one twenty-fifth 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



NEWBERRY COUNTY JAIL—FIRST FLOOR PLAN—J. E. SUMMER AND J. C. HEMPHILL, ARCHITECTS, GREENWOOD, S. C.



sides; each one is to have an outside window and be constructed according to hospital specification, 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 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 cubic feet of air space, and of such proportion as to permit free movement, namely, 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 better 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 at present.

These 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 debasing and contaminating influence of hardened cell mates. It is, of course, desirable to so 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 bath tubs, 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, so that classification would be made possible during recreation hours; and this jail would have connected to it simple shop rooms 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, these departments would be entirely distinct and separate—so arranged and so placed that these different groups cannot possibly come within eyesight or ear-shot of one another from the time of entering to the time of exit.

Under no circumstances should the plans of this model jail be made without, of course, being subjected to thorough scrutiny by an expert trained jailer as to the general arrangement of the building; but it is of equal importance that full consideration be given to the suggestions to be made by the physiologist, 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 ample funds are not available, it should 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 humane 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 aim 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 ideals than one might be led to believe when contemplating the jail architecture of today.

A DEPARTMENTAL PLAN FOR A DETENTION HOME FOR DELINQUENT WOMEN

By MAXWELL HYDE
Architect, New York

In order that the work done in a building of this kind shall be properly administered and the essential segregation, privacy, and control achieved, consideration must be given to those elements which are in the nature of special requirements and which make such a structure distinct from even those of a similar nature.

In general, the attitude of approach should be to consider the structure more as a house of detention or hospital than as a prison. Scant consideration seems to have been given up to the present time to the solution of the architectural problem of a building for the detention of women to serve the needs of a large city—at least as measured by structures erected to date—which could be used as model or ideal types.

The detention homes for children designed for small communities—often merely remodeled private houses—have little in common with the building under consideration from the viewpoint of architectural “part 1.” These children’s detention houses, if designed for this specific purpose, are often located on property somewhat removed from the heart of the city, usually separate from the court and on land not particularly restricted as to size; where, by means of a low building properly located on the site, and by use of surrounding walls or fences, privacy and safety are easily achieved. But the building under consideration, combining court rooms and detention building, is likely to be on a comparatively small plot in a closely built-up part of the city, bringing up questions which call for individual solution.

A detention house such as this would in all probability be a many-storied structure, the court room with its dependencies and

the receiving department in the lower part of the building, with as many typical floors devoted to rooms as may be necessary.

Inasmuch as privacy with security and prevention of outside interference or communication with a maximum of ventilation and outlook for the occupants are vital considerations, the ideal site would be a corner plot opposite a public square, park, or very wide boulevard, the flanking walls of adjacent buildings having few, if any, windows. On such a site it is evident that a plan can be developed either with or without exterior courts in which all rooms on the streets would have outside light and safety from outside communication. The dining room, kitchen, toilet rooms, locker rooms, etc., could be well located at the rear of building, leaving the entire street fronts for the rooms. If the lot is an inside one, about 100 feet wide and 100 feet deep, one large or two smaller exterior street courts may be used. The two smaller courts with a resultant larger perimeter of exterior walls will permit of a greater number of exterior rooms than the more conventional plan with one court.

The general character of the design of the exterior as well as the details of court room, waiting room, entrance, and main stair hall should, in my judgment, be simple and engaging rather than monumental, severe, and overimportant.

Inasmuch as the functions of the court with its dependencies and the detention house proper are diverse, they should be kept architecturally separate and this should be expressed in the design of the exterior.

It seems to be the consensus of opinion of judges and others familiar with this work that the court room should not be on the ground or entrance floor, but rather on the more important and quieter second floor, located where there will be less tendency for the idle and the curiosity seeker to invade the waiting and court rooms. A generous easy run of stairs should connect entrance hall and court room floor, as well as an elevator for the judge and public.

On the entrance floor there should be a generous lobby with adjacent offices and information bureau so located as to control passage of visitors through the building. The receiving section should have separate entrance so that automobiles may unload passengers and they may be taken to the court or to the receiving rooms in privacy. It should, therefore, be convenient to the

elevators which serve this part of the structure and should comprise receiving office, waiting room, a number of interview rooms in which the girl may receive her lawyer or a visitor; and, in close connection therewith, the receiving baths and showers. As there will be dining rooms on every floor the general kitchen can be either on this floor or the top floor, connected in each case to the serving pantries by dumb-waiters. Janitor's quarters and generous space for the storage of records can be located here, as well as offices for agencies or societies connected with the work of the court.

The court room floor should be of generous height, the court room being located in that part of the building which is likely to be most quiet. Consideration should be given to so establishing the relation of court room and waiting room that a perfect control can be exercised over people entering court room from waiting room or hall.

The elevator connecting the first floor and the court room floor should be distinct from those serving the detention house part of the structure so as to minimize any communication between the public and the detention portion. Natural ventilation should be sought for the waiting room and court rooms.

Adjacent to the court room should be the judge's room, large enough for small conferences, judge's toilet and shower, etc., and also the complaint room and record room and office for district attorney and public defender.

The group of rooms relating to physical examination, the rooms for physician, psychiatrist, finger printing, records, and waiting rooms should be located so as to be convenient to the court and at the same time be near the main elevators. Here also should be the office of the chief probation officer, with separate rooms for the necessary assistants, an office for stenographer, and waiting rooms and toilet, all located for convenience in communication between court room and complaint room.

Segregation by means of a large number of groups of different size, and control of communication are of the very essence of a practical workable plan. General segregation is achieved first by the natural division into floors. The use of exterior courts will divide the plan into a number of areas which naturally create a subdivision of the floor into smaller units, and by means of doors carefully located at various points in the halls additional sub-

division can be made and at the same time communication controlled.

There may be one or more dining rooms on each floor, depending on the number of beds on the floor. If more than ten rooms, there should be two dining rooms. There should be separate serving pantry connected with the kitchen by electric dumb-waiters, and the dining room should be designed so as to serve in off hours as recreation or sitting room.

Control of the various groups is simplified if there is more than one toilet and bathroom.

Locker rooms may be on every floor, or else general locker room provided in basement, the former being the more desirable.

The bedrooms should be not less than $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet in width, to permit of cot being moved parallel to window in hot weather.

One floor unit complete should be devoted to "police" cases; namely, where the arrested women may be kept between arrest and trial and where it is important that segregation shall be complete from those detained indefinitely or those held for future disposition. These rooms should all have toilet and washing facilities. A number of rooms on each floor for use of special cases where it is better for the occupant to be constantly confined to her room should be provided, with toilet and washing facilities.

Each floor should have a sitting room for the matron or attendant.

The kitchen, as before stated, may be on the basement or first floor, or at the top of the building. If placed in the basement the handling of supplies is facilitated; if on the top floor the kitchen is likely to be better ventilated and more attractive. The chief argument for placing the kitchen in the lower part of the building is that the upper portion is more valuable for such parts of the building requiring privacy and isolation.

The upper story of the building may well be devoted to hospital with small isolation ward, laundry for use of those detained in the building, matron's dining room, staff dining room, superintendent's quarters, class-room, physician's and assistant superintendent's rooms, and if possible solarium or open-air recreation room.

Conscientious study and skilful design of the exterior should result in a building which would in no way resemble the court house or jail building with which we are all familiar. The windows

being high above the street and as far as possible facing controlled courts may be of ordinary size, ornamental yet strong grilles preventing a possible accident. If any windows can be viewed from adjoining building, they should be provided with obscure glass screens set in adjustable frames, which can be set at such an angle as to prevent signalling or being signalled to, at the same time not preventing the window from being opened.

As regards details of interior finish of such a building, the most substantial material the market affords should be used, as wear and tear on such a building is very heavy; with sanitary trim and floors, and with rounded corners such as are used in standard hospital construction. Cheerfulness of interior can be achieved by well-studied color scheme and simple surface decoration.

In closing this brief description of a possible structure I should like to urge that it is of the greatest value to the architect that as large a body of information as possible be created by those doing work in this field—judges, superintendents, probation officers, etc., of their special needs and requirements and their desires, based on practical experience; formulating these requirements just as if they were about to have a building erected for their own community.

If those who have in view the erection of houses of detention for women and girls, or those who are interested in the development of such houses, will record their ideas and observations, a valuable fund of information will gradually accumulate. Suggestions along this line are invited by Dr. H. H. Hart, chairman of this committee, 130 East 22d Street, New York City.