

ANENT THE CORK LUNATIC
ASYLUM PLANS.

THE plans approved of by the board are now rejected, owing, it appears, to some alterations made in them by Mr. Atkins, to whom they were referred for revision. A rather unseemly discussion on the head of these plans took place at the April monthly meeting of the Cork District Lunatic Asylum Board. Until we learn further particulars it is, perhaps, better to say but little, as we do not wish to prejudice the case as it stands between Mr. Edwards, C.E., and Mr. Atkins. The annexed letters of the two gentlemen most concerned will possibly be sufficient for the present to afford an insight to the quarrel. Mr. Edwards handed in the following report as to the plans for the proposed new buildings :—

GENTLEMEN,—I regret being unable to report any satisfactory progress in connection with the new buildings. I attended each day when asked to go through the plans again, as requested by you, and the various suggestions as agreed upon were noted. During this inquiry a matter came under my notice which I considered ought to be brought before you. I found upon this re-examination that one of the plans, No. 17, which had been examined and signed by Dr. Eames and myself, and subsequently laid before you, and signed by your chairman, on the 13th March, 1874, had some important parts as regards the stability of the structure completely erased. This was done prior to last January, when I had tracings made of all the original signed plans, for the purpose of taking out the quantities. These tracings will show that certain struts under the longitudinal beams of the dormitories, which were upon this plan, No. 17, when I originally examined and signed it, have since been erased, but were replaced in pencil between the time I had the tracing made and when I saw them with Dr. Eames on the 18th ult. I consider it necessary to call your attention to this circumstance, in order to show how utterly useless it is for me to examine these plans if they are allowed to be altered afterwards by the erasure of important parts. I must respectfully but firmly decline any responsibility in connection with the plans, if such proceedings are permitted. I consider it an extraordinary thing that plans, after undergoing a close scrutiny on the part of Dr. Eames, and myself, and being signed by us, subsequently laid before you, signed by your chairman, and approved by the Board of Control, should be altered in the smallest particular, to say nothing of all important element in the structural strength of the building being erased. Why these struts should have been afterwards re-introduced in pencil has not been explained. Upon attending yesterday at the asylum by appointment to meet Dr. Eames and Mr. Atkins—as I understood to examine the revised plans showing the suggestions lately made—I was surprised to find that the original signed plans of the store buildings and the airing yards have been altered and erased to meet these suggestions, instead of the new plans or tracings being made to show them. Upon a very recent occasion, when some comparatively trifling erasures were made upon one of those documents, Dr. Eames and myself protested most strongly against any interference with them. The plans produced yesterday were so altered by additions to and erasures from them as to be unrecognisable, save by the signatures attached. It is now impossible to ascertain from them what the original approved designs were. This is too serious a matter to be passed over, without calling your attention to it, and is one to which I cannot give my assent.

O. C. EDWARDS.

Mr. Atkins thus replies :—

39 South Mall, Cork, April 1, '75.

DEAR SIR,—You will please mention to the governors that I have not been able to comply with the resolution passed at the last meeting, that "I should revise the plans and specifications of the new buildings, so as to enable Mr. Edwards to take out the quantities accurately," as I received a letter from you the day after requesting me to go to the asylum on the 9th of March "to proceed with an examination of the plans with Mr. Edwards." As certain changes have been proposed in the plans nothing of course could be done as to preparing them for contractors. These proposed alterations were subsequently laid before the House Committee, who I understood to have agreed to recommend them to the governors for adoption. As the committee expressed a wish that as little time as possible should be lost, and as I have to make entire new drawings of two of the sections, I could not have anything ready for the governors at their meeting to-morrow were I to make new drawings of the entire. So, thinking, it, under the circumstances, for the best, I altered the drawings of one of the sections into which the plans have been divided, the "store building" having accurate tracings of these, showing what they were. I cannot call to recollection having been present at the committee when anything was mentioned about altering the plans. In one of the sections, "airing yards," a slight alteration was made in pencil at the ends of the ball alley walls. There has been no other change in any of the original plans, except one in section of "Enlargement" made at once, after the plans were sent down from Dublin. This section differed from the others, inasmuch as no specification or regular working drawing's accompanied the general plans of it; and Mr. Wilkinson, when approving generally of the plans, alluded to this. Accordingly, when they were returned to me, to have Mr. Wilkinson's suggestion carried out, I made the specification and working drawings of this section, and while doing so it struck me that the manner of giving additional support to the floors by struts might be dangerous for suicidal patients. I thought it better to omit them and substitute iron fitch plates on the beams. This, of course, I fully intended to bring under Mr. Wilkinson's notice, and to take his opinion on the subject, as I consider that these floors can be carried out in a simpler and more economical manner without the use of irons. From the time that the plans came down from Mr. Wilkinson last year until the end of February I did not receive any intimation from the Governors either by resolution, or by letter from you, that they desired the opinion of Mr. Edwards upon them. Should the proposed change receive the sanction of the Governors, I can have the entire of the specifications and the plans completed in a short time, as I have all in a very forward state.

W. ATKINS,

At the board meeting, the Earl of Mountcashell moved the following resolution, which was agreed to :—

"That in consequence of the alterations and erasures made in some of the plans after they had passed this Board and were confirmed by the Board of Control, we can't consider them trustworthy documents and we therefore reject them."

At the last meeting of the board the subject of the plans came on for further discussion, and the question of what remuneration Mr. Atkins was entitled to on the head of his services. Some members were for allowing him 2½ per cent., and others were bold enough to say he should get nothing. We believe it was finally agreed he should get 2½ for the preparing of the plans. As a wind-up, the following resolution was proposed and agreed to:—

"That the House Committee be requested and authorised to make a final settlement with Mr. Atkins for the plans he prepared for the alterations in the Asylum; and that they shall have the assistance of our Law Agent in the matter. The Governors reserve for future consideration the appointment of an architect to superintend the proposed new works."

It is unnecessary for us to traverse some severe and odd statements made by members at both board meetings, but we will simply add that there were several utterances which no one could endorse. Mr. Atkins considers that he has been badly treated, but he admits that it was an error of judgment to interfere with the plans, and he regretted having done it, but he thought at the time he was doing what was for the best. The chairman and other members of the board consider Mr. Atkins's letter is no answer at all to the report of Mr. Edwards. We desire further information upon the subject than what appears in the engineer's and architect's letter or what has transpired in the proceedings of the board.

[Taken from *Irish Builder*, Vol. XVII, 1875, p.140]