

## **Statement by the managers of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.**

### **Contributors**

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Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

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EDINBURGH  
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STATEMENT

BY THE

MANAGERS OF THE ROYAL INFIRMARY OF  
EDINBURGH.

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# STATEMENT

BY THE

## MANAGERS OF THE ROYAL INFIRMARY OF EDINBURGH.

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THE original building of the Royal Infirmary, which is now occupied solely as the *Medical Hospital*, was commenced in the year 1738, and was partially opened for patients in the year 1741. The building was adapted both for a Medical and a Surgical Hospital, and it was announced to the public, to "be open to all the cureable distressed, "from whatever corner of the world they came, without restriction." And, in the statutes subsequently adopted by the Managers, it is stated, "diseased people of all countries or nations may be admitted "patients into the Infirmary." The only condition attached to this free admission is, that "every person applying for admittance must "deliver to the Physician or Surgeon, if required by him, an obligation from a responsible person to remove, or in case of death to "bury, that patient when required."

This catholic character of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh has been maintained ever since. It is believed that it is almost peculiar to this institution, and the register of patients shews how extensively the Hospital has been resorted to by patients from all quarters.

About forty years ago, on the occasion of the High School being removed from the Old to the New Town, the Managers of the Royal Infirmary purchased from the Town of Edinburgh, the building which was so well known as the High School, and which adjoined the Royal

Infirmery, and appropriated it as the Surgical Hospital. And, in consequence of the great demand for surgical patients into the Edinburgh Hospital, the Managers a few years ago made a large addition to the Surgical Hospital, affording in all accommodation for about 252 patients.

The old house remained for the accommodation of medical patients, and affords accommodation for about 258. There is also a separate fever house, which accommodates sixty patients. The total number of beds may therefore be stated at 570, and the daily average number of patients is seldom under 400.

Although the original building was erected under the advice of the College of Physicians for the express purpose of an Hospital, and every care was taken to make it convenient and suitable, it cannot now be said to be either convenient, or at all adequate to the requirements of the present treatment of patients, and it cannot bear comparison with any great modern hospital. But, besides all this, the building, notwithstanding a large annual outlay for repairs, is in many respects falling into decay. In these circumstances, the Managers have for many years felt, that it would be a waste of money to undertake any extensive repairs, and that it would be much better, if possible, to rebuild the house, and so obtain an Hospital that would afford more comfortable accommodation for the patients, and be creditable to the City of Edinburgh and the fame of its Medical School. Accordingly, last year, finding that very extensive repairs were becoming absolutely necessary, they resolved to lay the matter before the Annual Meeting of the Court of Contributors, held under the provisions of the Royal Charter, and in their Report they stated, "The Managers have carefully considered the suggestion of the Committee of Contributors in their Report of last year, that the three wards in the west wing, which still remain paved with brick tiles, should be floored in the same manner as the others; but they have delayed proceeding with this manifest improvement, and indeed have hesitated to do so for some years, from the conviction that the whole condition of the Medical Hospital is such as to call for the serious consideration alike of Managers and Contributors. For many years they have felt that the time could not be far distant when the Medical Hospital would require very extensive repairs; and, being well aware that the height of the wards and the accommodation provided for the patients were far behind those of the most approved modern hospitals, they thought it advisable a few weeks ago to ask their architect, Mr

Bryce, to examine that portion of the Infirmary, and also the building adjoining, occupied by the officers of the establishment, and to report upon their stability, their general state of repair, and their efficiency as a public Hospital.

“The whole of Mr Bryce’s report the Managers will be glad to lay before any committee the Contributors may be pleased to appoint; and they beg to recommend that it be carefully considered. Meanwhile, it may be sufficient to state, without entering on details, that Mr Bryce reports that ‘the whole building would require to be overhauled, remodelled, and a large sum of money spent to repair it.’

“As regards ‘the efficiency of the building as a public Hospital,’ Mr Bryce points out one very great defect, which he reports ‘cannot be remedied without pulling the house to pieces: that is, the lowness of the ceilings in the wards, which are only 11 feet high, and at least 7 feet too low for a building of the kind.’ He also points out the very defective arrangements in the Medical house, as regards baths and other requirements, the too limited accommodation for the reception and examination of patients applying for admission; and in the house for the officers, the smallness of the rooms provided for them, and their inconvenient distance from the wards. Mr Bryce thus concludes his report: ‘I am of opinion that as little money as possible should be spent on the present house, as I am afraid that if a large sum were expended in attempting to remedy so very defective an arrangement it would prove unsatisfactory. In fact, my opinion is that nothing short of a new building will answer the purpose.’

“The Managers were by no means surprised that Mr Bryce should have formed such an opinion. They have long entertained very great doubt as to the expediency of attempting to remodel the Medical Hospital, and have on that account delayed from year to year improvements which otherwise they would have had carried out.”

The Report of the Managers having been carefully considered by a Committee of the Contributors appointed at the Annual Meeting on the first Monday of January 1865, that Committee reported to an adjourned meeting of the Corporation as follows:—

“The Committee have anxiously considered the very important subject brought by the Managers before the Contributors as to remodelling the present Medical Hospital, or building a new Hospital, and they have carefully considered Mr Bryce’s report, and have also inspected the building. The Committee are satisfied from personal inspection that extensive repairs were at all events necessary; but

before reporting to the Contributors on the subject, they thought it desirable that the opinion of the Medical Officers should also be obtained. The Managers accordingly held a meeting with them on 9th current, and a copy of the minute of that meeting has been communicated to the Committee. The minute referred to bears that, 'The Medical gentlemen stated their opinions, and the result was that they were unanimous in concurring that the present House was defective in the particulars stated by Mr Bryce, and in others also, and not suitable for the wants of modern times, and gave their decided opinion that it would be much for the benefit of the patients and all parties concerned if a new house could be built, and they authorised the Managers to report this opinion to the Committee of Contributors.' The Committee met with the Managers on the same day, when full explanations were afforded, and they have to report that the Managers, who well deserve the entire confidence of the Contributors and the Community for their gratuitous labours, in the management of the Institution, are equally unanimous in their opinion.

"The Committee may state that this Hospital was opened for the reception of patients in the year 1737, so that with additions made to it at different periods, it has been in use for 128 years. The Committee having in view the combined testimony of Managers, Medical Officers, and Architect, against the renovation of the present building, in the soundness of which opinion they also concur, cannot recommend to the Contributors to expend any large sum for that purpose, as this would not remedy its many defects, and would in fact be throwing away the funds of the Institution upon an unattainable object. The Committee have therefore come to the unanimous opinion that the Contributors ought to give full power to the Managers to take all requisite preliminary measures, by careful examination of the most approved modern Hospitals, keeping in view the important sanitary objects of free air and ventilation, and whenever they see their way towards meeting the expenditure, to obtain plans, specifications, and estimates for building a new Hospital; and when these have been got, the Committee suggest that a special meeting of Contributors be held, to determine upon the whole matter."

The Report of the Committee was unanimously approved of by the Committee of Contributors, and, in consequence of the authority thus given to them, the Managers instructed Mr Bryce to take the whole matter into mature consideration, and to submit to them plans for a new Medical Hospital in two views: the one for a building within

the present grounds of the Royal Infirmary, and the other embracing the ground at present occupied by the buildings on the South Bridge, between the University and the Infirmary.

Before alluding more particularly to plans, the Managers think it proper to state, that they have, on consideration of the whole circumstances, laid aside all suggestions as to placing the new building in another locality, because, in the first place, the present site has never been objected to by the medical profession; in the second place, it would be most inconvenient for all concerned to have the Medical Hospital separated from the Surgical, and would entail a large additional annual expense to the Infirmary, as a separation would involve the necessity of two establishments; and, in the third place, no other site could be got which would be nearly so convenient for the University and Medical School, even if both the Hospitals were to be erected on it. Any idea of removing the Surgical Hospital is quite out of the question, as the extensive buildings are all comparatively new and very superior, and the expense would be greater than the Managers could ever hope to meet.

The Royal Infirmary must therefore remain where it is, and the question is, how it can be best improved. There can be no doubt that by far the best plan would be to acquire the pile of buildings opposite the University, and to make the entry to the Infirmary from South Bridge Street. Such a plan, while giving the Infirmary more open space, would make a great improvement on the City by opening up the University, which is at present closely built round on all sides, and ill seen, owing to the narrowness of the street in front.

Mr Bryce has prepared two plans, of which sketches are hereto appended, and it will be for the public to decide which the Managers are to adopt. The plan confining the buildings to the present grounds will involve an expenditure of about £35,000, while the other plan would raise the expense to about £41,000, irrespective of the purchase of the buildings on the South Bridge. In either case the building will be carried on by degrees, so as to cause as little curtailment of the accommodation for patients as possible.

The Managers would much prefer the more extended plan, as providing more accommodation, and greatly improved ventilation for the whole Hospital. Were the street along the north side of the College widened as is intended, and the buildings betwixt the College and the Infirmary taken away, the Managers believe that the present site of the Medical House would be quite unobjectionable. The ventilation of



the Surgical Hospital, which, being comparatively new, cannot be removed to another site, would also be greatly improved. And by keeping the Medical and Surgical Hospitals conjoined as at present, rather than erecting the new Medical Hospital on another locality, as has been proposed, a largely increased annual expenditure would be avoided. The expense of a new site also would be saved, and the Managers have reason to believe<sup>g</sup> that what would be required to purchase a convenient site for a new Medical Hospital would go far to purchase the buildings whose removal is necessary to the carrying out of the Plan No. 2. They beg to suggest also, that the removing of these would be a great improvement alike to the University and the City.

The more extensive plan would, of course, involve a larger expenditure, inasmuch as the purchase of the buildings on the South Bridge would cost about £45,000; but, considering the great improvement which their removal would effect, especially in connection with the proposed wide street between the Bridges, on the north side of the University and the Industrial Museum, the Managers hope that the public of Edinburgh would not object to an assessment for so desirable an object.

If the civic authorities shall see fit to include these buildings in their proposed Act of Parliament, the Managers have little doubt that within the time required for erecting the new Hospital, they will be able to raise the funds necessary for the building. It has been a matter of general regret that these buildings were ever erected so close to the University, and if the present opportunity of getting them removed be lost, it is to be feared no other will ever arise.

Considering the extensive use made of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, by patients from all parts of Scotland, and also from England and elsewhere, the Managers cannot doubt that a widespread interest will be felt in the scheme for rebuilding the old Medical House, and that contributions *from all quarters, and of all amounts*, will be cheerfully given for this national object.

As evidence of the general use made of the Hospital, it may be here mentioned, that in last year's Report the return of the usual residences of the patients treated during the year (amounting to 4594) shews that there were patients from *every* county in Scotland, to the number of 1983, exclusive of those from the county and city of Edinburgh; and that from England, Ireland, and other parts there were 232.

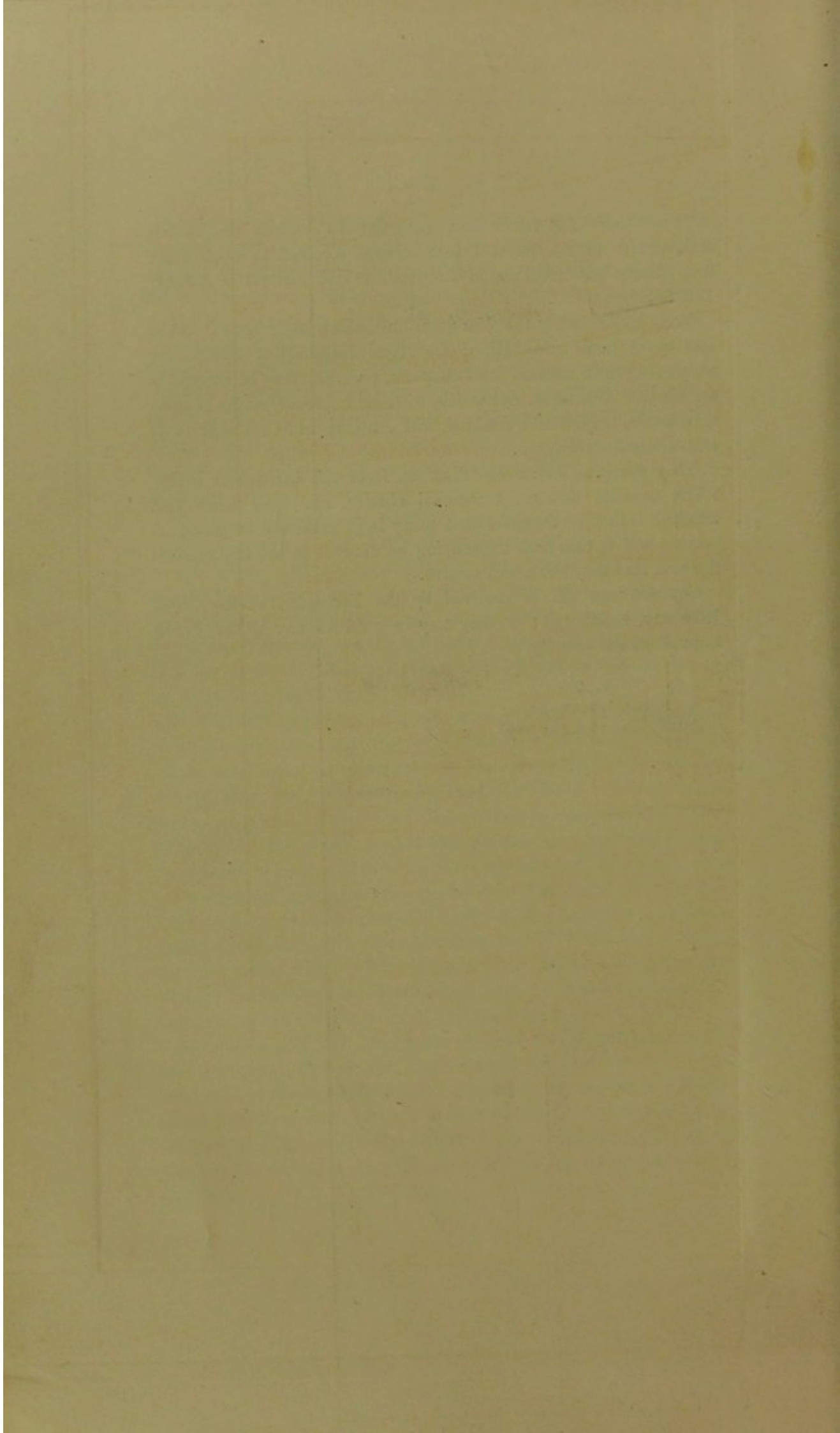
The Report also shews that Subscriptions towards the annual maintenance of the Royal Infirmary were received in small sums from nearly 200 parishes in Scotland, to the amount of £3441, 17s. 8d.

These facts justify the Managers in making their appeal to the country at large in behalf of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, which is open to patients from all parts, provided they be fit objects for hospital treatment, and which, with our improved means of communication, it cannot be doubted, will continue to be resorted to as extensively as heretofore.

They therefore invite contributions from the benevolent everywhere towards this great national charity, and they trust that although it may be expected that many large sums will be given, no persons will refrain from subscribing on account of the smallness of the sum that they can afford to give.

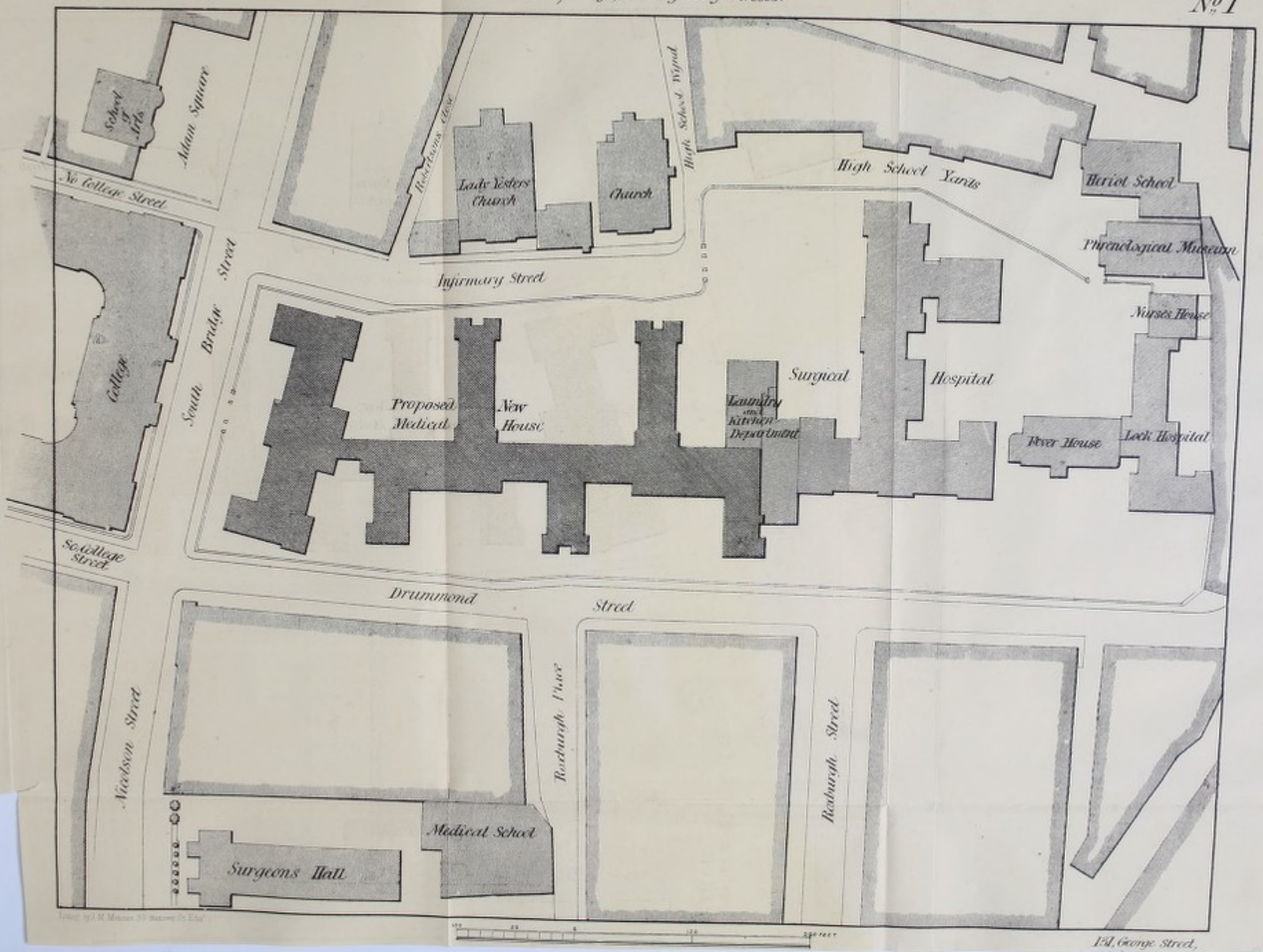
Contributions will be received by the Treasurer, at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh; or they may be paid to any of the Banks throughout the country.

ROYAL INFIRMARY,  
EDINBURGH, 29th Dec. 1865.



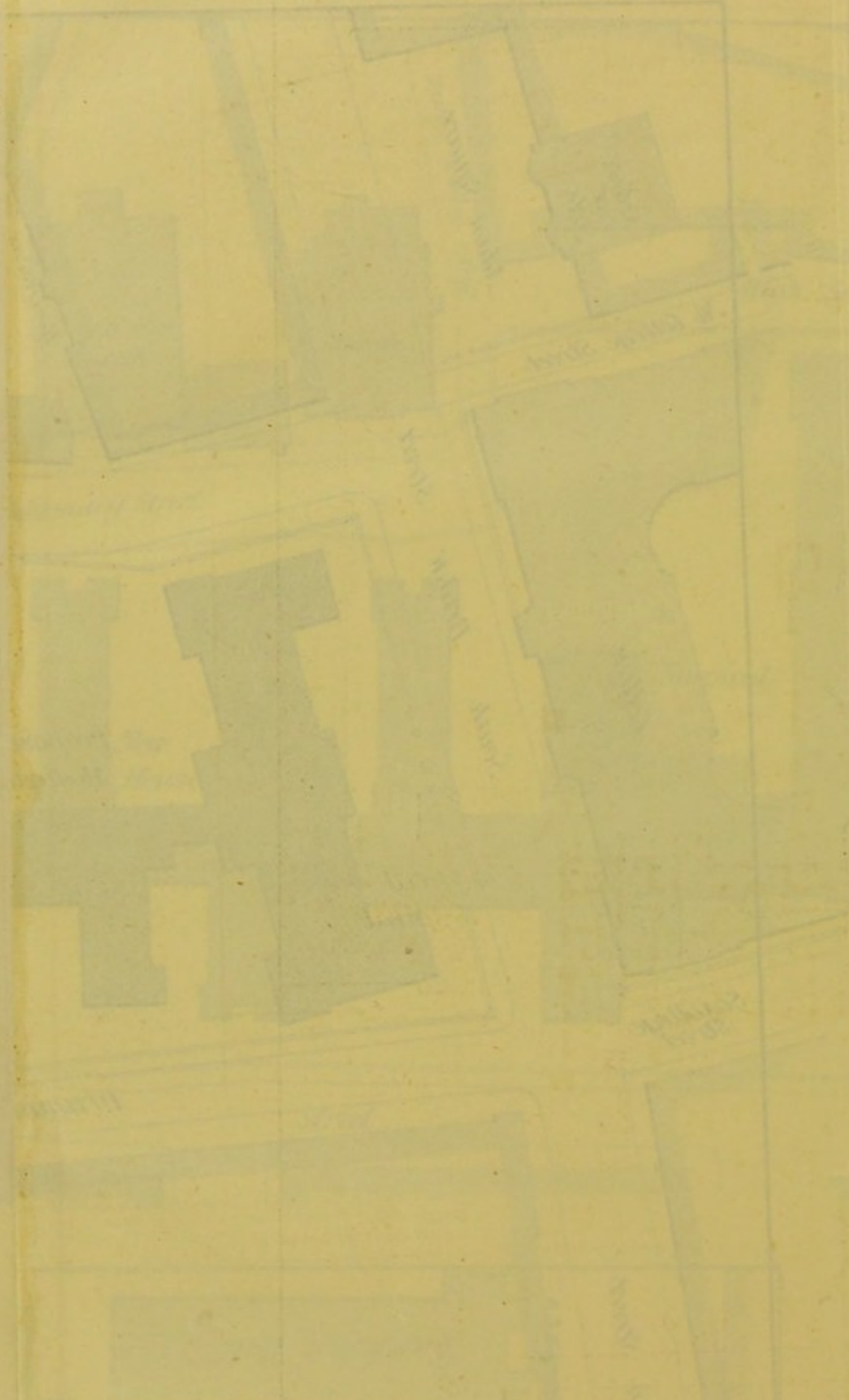
**BLOCK PLAN of Site of  
PROPOSED NEW MEDICAL HOSPITAL,**  
*Extending to South Bridge Street showing the  
Surgical Hospital, College, and adjoining Streets.*

N<sup>o</sup> 1



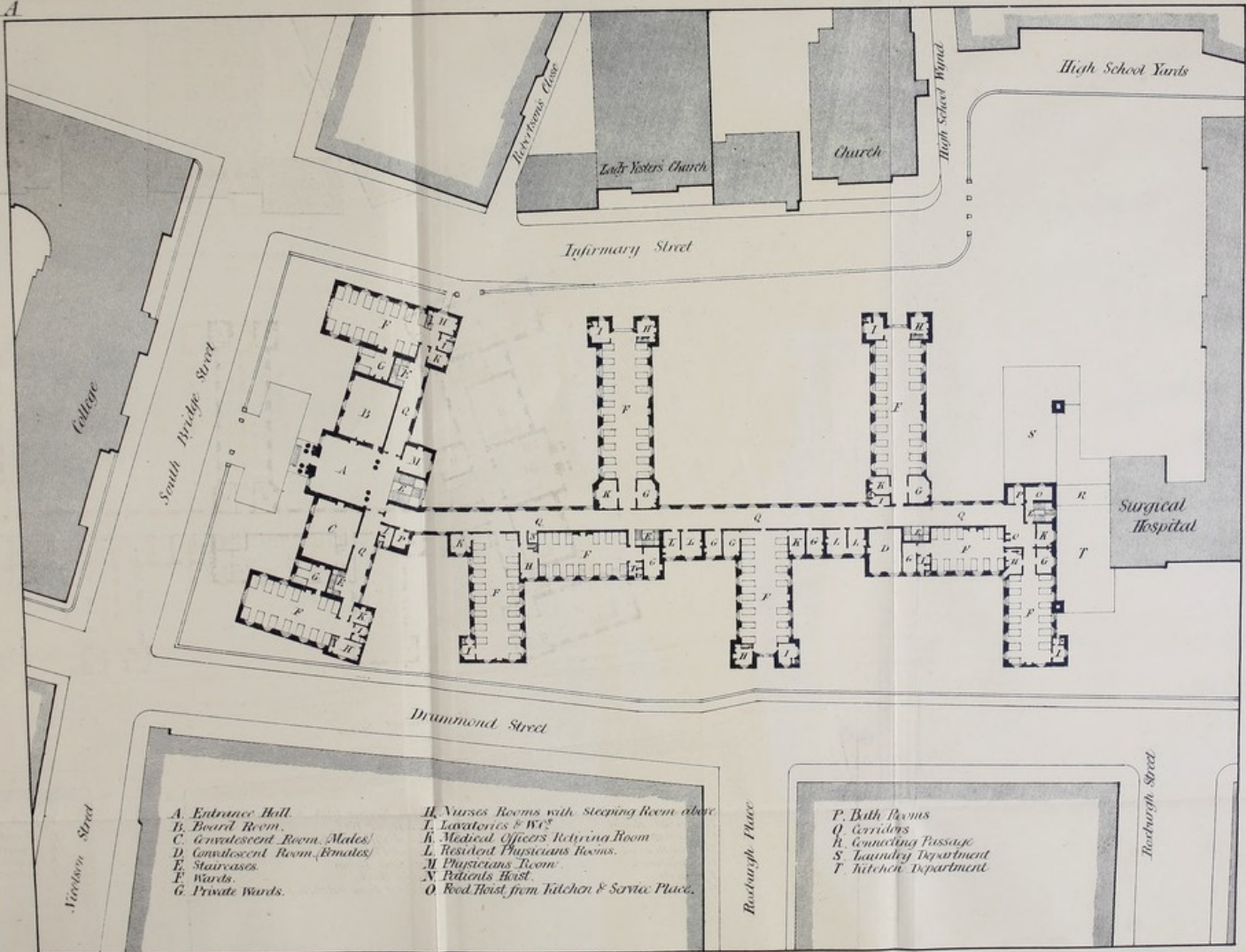
NEW MEDICAL HOSPITAL

... ..



PLAN of Principal or Street Floor of the  
**PROPOSED NEW MEDICAL HOUSE, ROYAL INFIRMARY,**  
 Showing the arrangement of the whole Area of Ground,  
 as taken in up to the line of the Front of the South Bridge Buildings.

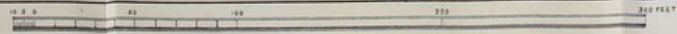
N<sup>o</sup> II



- A. Entrance Hall.
- B. Beard Room.
- C. Convalescent Room (Males).
- D. Convalescent Room (Females).
- E. Staircases.
- F. Wards.
- G. Private Wards.

- H. Nurses Rooms with Steeping Room above.
- I. Lavatories & W.C.'s.
- K. Medical Officers' Retiring Room.
- L. Resident Physicians Rooms.
- M. Physicians Room.
- N. Patients Hoist.
- O. Rod Hoist from Kitchen & Service Place.

- P. Bath Rooms.
- Q. Corridors.
- R. Connecting Passage.
- S. Laundry Department.
- T. Kitchen Department.



151 George Street,  
 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1895

PROPOSAL

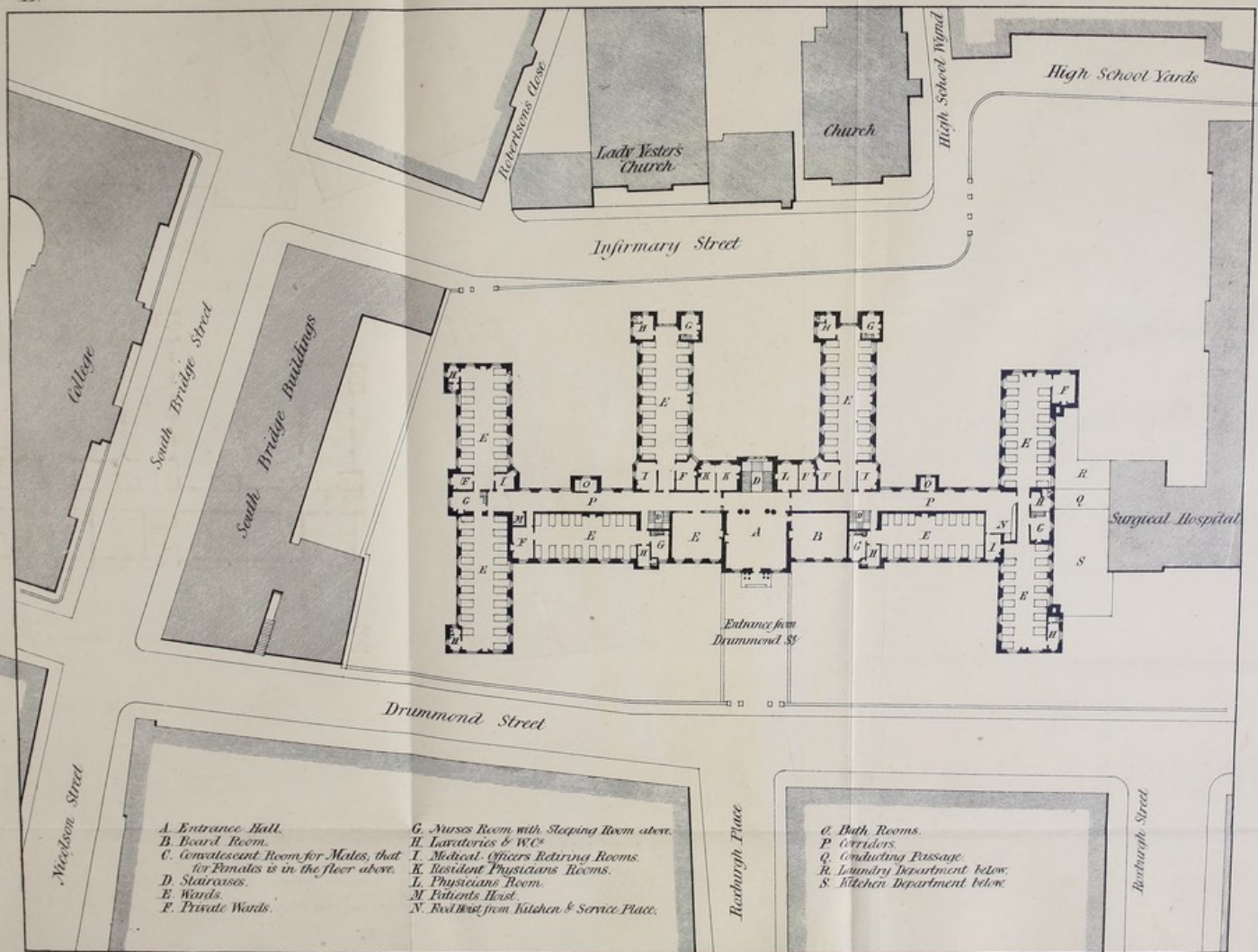
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW BUILDING



PLAN of Principal or Street Floor of the  
**PROPOSED NEW MEDICAL HOUSE, ROYAL INFIRMARY,**  
 Showing the arrangement of the Building as restricted  
 to the Present Area and the East Wall of the South Bridge Buildings.

N<sup>o</sup> III

B

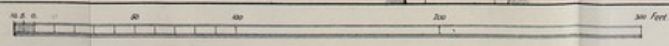


- A. Entrance Hall.
- B. Board Room.
- C. Convalescent Room for Males, that for Females is in the floor above.
- D. Staircases.
- E. Wards.
- F. Private Wards.

- G. Nurses Room with Sleeping Room above.
- H. Lavatories & WCs.
- I. Medical Officers Retiring Rooms.
- K. Resident Physicians Rooms.
- L. Physicians Room.
- M. Patients Hostel.
- N. Rod Rest from Kitchen & Service Place.

- O. Bath Rooms.
- P. Corridors.
- Q. Conducting Passage.
- R. Laundry Department below.
- S. Kitchen Department below.

Designed by J. M. Mansel & Co. Architects, Edinburgh.



131, George Street,  
 23<sup>rd</sup> Decr. 1865.



1870  
No. 100

