

dressings. Now, that is a very fair test of the amount of risk in a Hospital, because if a Hospital is in a fair state sanitarily, the amount of antiseptics used is comparatively insignificant.

1588. *The Chairman.*] They use them freely here?—You will find in this Hospital that there is a heavy bill yearly for antiseptics. I would like to make a statement here, and it is very important. Experience shows that the medical profession are divided into two schools: those who base their practice upon very careful attention to hygienic conditions, as represented by Lawson Tait and his followers, and those who put their faith in antiseptics—the disciples of Sir Joseph Lister. Previous to the adoption of Listerism, it was almost impossible to obtain anything approaching satisfactory surgical results with insanitary conditions. By the careful and thorough adoption of antiseptic measures, fairly passable results are obtained in surgery, even in the absence of good hygienic surroundings; but, of course, that means a very considerable addition to the drug bill, in the shape of antiseptic remedies. In the Dunedin Hospital, in one year, the drug bill was £1,000—out of all proportion to the general hospital expenditure—and of this total over £300 was for antiseptic remedies alone.

1581. Is that an annual bill?—It is of annual recurrence; and it is, I think, very strong proof indeed that the staff do recognise that there is a risk in the Hospital.

1590. *Mr. Chapman.*] I do not know anything about these things; will you please point them out to me?—Here is one item alone, “Iodoform, £43 10s.”

1591. How long did they take to use it?—I cannot tell you how long it was being used. Every year for aught I know.

1592. The drugs are supplied by annual contract?—I think they have a tender for them.

1593. You say that very strong evidence of the want of confidence by medical men is expressed in that drug bill?—Yes.

1594. In that item of iodoform?—No. Some of them are to keep the dressings on.

1595. Does it not strike you as very singular that, if there is evidence in that fact, that it should not have found expression among the medical men as want of confidence in the Hospital?—I do not know. I, however, remember that when this question was referred to the medical staff I very strongly expressed the opinion that the attention of the Trustees should be drawn to the fact that a considerable portion of this heavy drug bill was due to the fact that the Hospital was in such an unsatisfactory hygienic condition.

1596. *The Chairman.*] You pointed these things out to the other members of the staff?—I did.

1597. *Mr. Chapman.*] When the bill came in?—The bill was referred to the medical staff, who were asked to reduce it in some way. We framed some resolutions on the subject, but I forget what their effect was. But attention was not drawn to the point that I wished.

1598. What resolution did you pass with regard to this particular discussion?—These are the resolutions that were passed: “That the causes of the excessive expenditure were (1) want of efficient management in the dispensary department; (2) to the large use of expensive surgical dressings; (3) that surgical instruments are purchased in the colony; (4) to the large attendance in the out-patient department.” We discussed the matter of dispensary expenditure, as we all recognised that it was enormous.

1599. You have often told us that you recognised the fact. I want the expressions that you used?—I may say generally that Dr. John Macdonald was appointed to investigate the matter and report, which he did with certain recommendations.

1600. That was to prevent waste, and to effect reduction in the expenditure?—The only item of the drugs to which I drew particular attention was the charge for surgical dressings, showing that we recognised the fact that there was a necessity for the very free use of antiseptics. And that is my answer: the staff recognised that they were necessary; otherwise they would not have used them so freely. You could not have much stronger proof than this fact: that the surgical dressings for one year (1889) cost £369, which is tremendously heavy for a small Hospital like ours—that the surgical staff, at any rate, did recognise the insanitary state of the wards.

1601. I want to know when you gave expression to this opinion, which you say was unanimous among the staff?—What expression of opinion?

1602. For instance, I find it stated in one of these discussions: “Dr. Hislop quoted from the returns of deaths in the Hospital to show that there had been no mortality under the heading of diseases of the reproductive organs during a certain year,” and you replied that, “I had never had a death among my own cases, but I had had two shaves”?—I am glad of the opportunity of referring to this subject, because I have been accused of claiming that I have never had a death following operations for these diseases. This would be manifestly absurd. Dr. Hislop, who drew my attention to the fact, referred to one year only, and he held at that time a hospital report in his hand, which I took to be correct. Some medical men, from seeing the reports in the papers, jumped to the conclusion that I was claiming to have extraordinary results.

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Dr. WILLIAM S. ROBERTS sworn and examined.

[The following evidence, numbered with italic figures, was received too late for consecutive numbering.]

1. *Mr. Solomon.*] What is your name?—William Stewart Roberts.
2. You are a member of the staff of the Dunedin Hospital?—No, I am not at present.
3. By the way, what are your medical titles?—I am a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, England.
4. And entered on the roll of practitioners for New Zealand?—Yes, I am registered.
5. For some time you were House Surgeon of the Dunedin Hospital, were you not?—Yes.