

Register April 27 1889

ADELAIDE HOSPITAL BOARD.

The usual meeting was held on Friday afternoon, and there were present Mr. T. Graves, J.P. (Chairman), Drs. Robertson, Sprod, O'Connell, Way, and Stirling, and Messrs. F. Basedow and Alderman Kither.

HOUSE SURGEON.

The Medical Committee reported as regarded the appointment of House Surgeon referred to them by the Board. The committee recommended that advertisements should be inserted calling for applications for the position of both Senior and Junior House Surgeon for the remainder of the year ending December 31, 1889; that the salaries should remain the same as at present, viz., £300 and £200 per annum respectively; and that the duties of the Senior House Surgeon should commence on June 1, and those of the Junior House Surgeon on either June 1 or July 1 next, at the option of the Board. The committee had approved of Dr. Symon's suggestion as to the improved accommodation required for ophthalmic work at the out-patients' department, the alterations required not being of a very expensive nature. With reference to Dr. Thomas's letter, pointing out the necessity for proper electrical apparatus in the institution, the committee admitted that the present electrical appliances needed replacing and extending, and therefore recommended that the matter be referred to a committee of the staff, to consist of the four honorary physicians, with a request that they should state what was really required in their department, and that they should be empowered to get estimates of the cost involved, and report to the Medical Committee. Dr. STIRLING pointed out that the Board were left with an open hand. The recommendation in the report covered the case of the Junior House Surgeon if he were elected to the position of Senior House Surgeon, or in case he might be or he might not be so elected. They also removed the objection of having two sets of advertisements. Applications would be called for both posts, and the date would depend upon whether the present junior was promoted. The CHAIRMAN said the report was a good one, and especially as regarded the Senior and Junior House Surgeons. Report adopted.

A NEW DEPARTMENT.

Dr. WAY moved—"That it is desirable to establish an Outdoor Midwifery Department in connection with the Hospital." It was most important that the students should have the experience the management of such cases under a properly organized system of supervision would give, and the poor people to whom their services would be rendered would have the advantage of more skilled attendance than they would get from a midwife. There were no local means by which the students could get the training in the direction indicated, and there would be a double advantage if the scheme he proposed were carried out. He did not propose that it should be begun at once, but at a fitting time, say January 1. There could be no objection whatever on the ground of expense, because there would be no charges upon the Hospital. The scheme need not be commenced until the new arrangements for the Senior House Surgeon were in thorough working order. He proposed that the department should be placed under the special charge of one of the House Surgeons; there would be very little if any interference with the work of the Hospital, as the officer would not be called upon to consult with the students more than ten or twelve times in the year. He considered it most important that the department should be placed under some responsible head. It might be that on occasion the student might not be getatable if anything happened to the woman in her confinement, and there should be some one responsible to refer to: someone living in the institution. He therefore proposed that one of the House Surgeons should be responsible, and there should be an honorary officer who would have control of the work, supposing some individual case arose of a serious character, and the student was unable to manage. The student should always be able to fall back upon some one else of experience and judgment. The training of the best of midwives was not always of a very high order, and the student would be much more skilful, as he would not commence until he was well through his four years' medical studies. After the fifth year no objection could be taken on the part of the public, as he would be qualified. He looked upon this scheme as a gain to women, as they would be attended by young men with a considerable amount of skill; young men who knew what they were about and not likely to interfere in cases where positive risk appeared. On such a contingency they would send for more skilled assistance. This was no new thing so far as the practice was concerned in the old country, as it was the invariable rule to have a Midwifery Department connected with the Hospitals. He submitted the motion with every confidence, because it would be a distinct gain to the students and to the women whom it concerned, while at the same time it would mean no additional cost to the State. If the motion were carried he would move then that the matter be placed in the hands of the Medical Committee for

report. Dr. STIRLING seconded, and said the Board would look at the question of the experience elsewhere, and of the working of similar institutions. There were in some of the London Hospitals a Midwifery Department, and women near their *accouchement* were on application presented with a paper, upon which was written the name of a trustworthy student, and that student practically became her medical attendant for the time being. In most cases a four or five years' student was better than an ordinary midwife. The student always had a responsible officer to refer to, and if the case became a grave one all the students had to do was to apply to one of the medical staff. In any case there would be a valuable amount of medical attendance which would not be available under the ordinary arrangements. Although every medical man had a respect for trained midwives, still it must be admitted that there were many persons practising in this city who were not trained midwives, and some went to the extreme of risk begotten of ignorance, especially in the matter of neglect of sanitary precautions and the prevention of infection. He gave his entire support to the scheme proposed. The students of the institution were exceedingly well behaved young men. He was sure that Dr. Way did not wish to rush the matter on, and there was no doubt that the scheme would be thoroughly examined in all its bearings by the Board, who he thought were willing to approve generally of the idea, yet desired to discuss it fully in the concrete and in principle before finally adopting it. He thought it could be satisfactorily worked with the aid of the medical staff as pointed out, and there would be no extra cost, and, with regard to the students, no charge to the patients. The medical student was not always thought highly of by the public, but as far as the members of the Board could judge their students were of excellent character and conduct. There was no hesitation on the part of people in England to avail themselves of the services of the medical students. In the present case there was but a few months between the student and professional work, and he would be learning his work with some one experienced at the back of him. He (the doctor) anticipated no objection on the part of the public — if there was any complaint made it would receive attention. Dr. SPROD said he objected to the supervision of the House Surgeon on the ground that no surgeon should attend midwifery cases as there would be a danger to the patient in the doctor coming from the wards of the Hospital to the lying-in room—it might be hazardous to the woman, infection being so easy. Moreover, the House Surgeon might be a young man with no experience of such cases, and it might be a case of the blind leading the blind for the student to appeal to him. He also objected to attach such a department to the Hospital—it was getting in the thin end of the wedge towards making it a Government institution. His impression was that the students could get all the cases they wanted from the Destitute Asylum; and there were plenty of practitioners in Adelaide who could give them cases. Dr. O'CONNELL said that in the present instance there was a good deal in Dr. Sprod's contention as to the risk of conveying infection; every medical man knew that he must be very careful not to go to a midwifery case if he had just had anything to do with any disease. However, he admitted that it was most essential that students should have every facility for pursuing their studies, but he held that the midwifery should be distinct and separate from the Adelaide Hospital. If connected with that institution the results would be bad indeed. It would be far better if the institution were as distinct as that in Dublin. A Maternity Hospital, as suggested, would not afford the needy public the protection they had a right to expect. No matter how poor a woman was she should be guaranteed as great an amount of protection as if she were the richest in the land. What proof had we that she would be guaranteed the best supervision when attended by a student? If that supervision could be guaranteed it would be a benefit. (Dr. Way—"I would guarantee it.") This was a public institution, and while the Board acknowledged the University they must see first that the public were protected. If Dr. Way showed him clearly that the supervision would be guaranteed satisfactorily he would support the scheme, but not otherwise. He would be sorry to oppose the advancement of any University student, but he must be satisfied upon the completeness of the scheme before he gave in his support. Dr. STIRLING said it seemed that Dr. O'Connell's objection was affecting the propriety of students attending midwifery cases outside. Dr. O'Connell should understand clearly that the proposal now made was exactly the same as the practice in any other hospital. (Dr.

O'Connell—"Not in Dublin.") Almost all the London students, without exception, learnt their midwifery practice that way. The scheme proposed was similar to that favoured in every general hospital in London. Dr. Sprod knew that in every London hospital there was a person who stood immediately above the students, and over him stood a lecturer and a gynaecologist, who was the