

(No. 5.)



1867.

T A S M A N I A .

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

BENEVOLENT SOCIETY, HOBART TOWN.

REPORT FOR 1866.

Laid upon the Table by Sir R. Dry, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
August 20, 1867.



REPORT of the Committee of the BENEVOLENT SOCIETY of HOBART TOWN for the Year 1866.

OF all the Seven years during which the Benevolent Society of Hobart Town has been in existence, 1866 has been the most anxious one to the Executive Managers of the Charity.

When the year commenced there were 163 individuals receiving aid, mostly permanent cases: 27 of them were adult males, generally disabled by old age and other infirmities from gaining a subsistence by their own exertions; 49 were adult females, widows, deserted wives, and very old and infirm women; 87 were children, either orphans by death or by desertion of the father, or the offspring of parents unable to support them from sickness, accident, or undergoing imprisonment. Every year the permanent incubus upon the funds of the Society is being increased by cases of the foregoing character.

There were 237 applications during the year from persons who had never before been on the books of the Society: 63 were cases of illness, 27 were widows, 24 were destitute, 33 husbands were away, 10 husbands were in prison, 28 were aged and infirm, 16 were cases of accident, 3 were blind, 6 were waiting to be invalided, and 27 were out of work. After careful investigation 56 of these cases were rejected, and 181 afforded relief—being 76 adult males, 150 adult females, 229 male children, 212 female children, altogether 667 individuals, which, with the 163 before referred to, amounted to 830 individuals. Nevertheless the actual drain upon the funds of the Society was much greater than in the previous year, many more of the cases being constantly on the books, and others only off for a time and re-admitted several times in the course of the year, and when so re-admitted not counted as fresh applications.

There was issued during the year 71,405 pounds of bread, 26,502 pounds of fresh meat, 675 pounds of tea, 4264 pounds of sugar, 4343 pounds of oatmeal, 3255 pounds of rice. Some of these articles were less in quantity than in 1865, but the cost of meat was much greater, the contracts on the whole being at enhanced prices. Of soup there was issued 13,320 pints; soup tickets and soup were sold to the value of £14 3s. Lodgings for houseless and homeless families and individuals were provided at a cost of £8 8s. 6d.

The expenditure during the year amounted to £1750 3s. 7d., being more than that of 1865 by £186 19s. The receipts during the year from every source amounted to £1623 13s. 9d., leaving our account with the Bank of Van Diemen's Land overdrawn on the last day of the year by £126 9s. 10d.; for which, however, the Bank holds £500 worth of Debentures as a security. £400 was received from the Government as voted by Parliament, unconditionally, £400 more was paid on condition of an equal amount being raised by subscriptions, donations, &c. The latter, however, amounted to £669 6s. 5d., of which only £341 9s. 6d. was from annual subscriptions by 177 persons. The Committee cannot but express their surprise and regret that so small a proportion of the community should contribute regularly to the funds of a Society having such imperative claims on the charity of every member of the community. For an Institution of this kind to have to depend for so large a proportion of its means upon casual sources, only to be obtained by spasmodic exertions, is most disheartening to those who have to manage the Society, and entails an amount of anxiety and exertion on them which few individuals can be expected to continue long.

Collections were made at thirteen out of the thirty-two places of public worship in the Hobart Town district, and at two country churches out of thirty-two on the south side of the Island. Though this is much more than has ever been done in any former year, yet the Committee cannot but feel disappointed that any section of the religious community should not have responded to the earnest solicitations of the Committee on behalf of a charity which relieves the indigent both of town and country, "irrespective of religious creed or denomination."

When H.M.S.S. Curaçoa, with Commodore Sir William Wiseman, visited Hobart Town, the Officers and men gave an amateur performance at the Theatre for the benefit of this Society, and thereby contributed to the funds £77 2s. 3d. This generous conduct will preserve the memory of the Curaçoa's visit, with its gallant officers and crew, ever gratefully in the hearts of the citizens of Hobart Town. By a concert given at the Town Hall, by lady and gentlemen amateurs, the Society had its funds augmented to the amount of £31 8s. Another evening entertainment in the same building by the Amateur Christy's Minstrels realised £18 13s. At Spring Bay an evening entertainment contributed £4 17s. to the Society. A balance of £10 19s. 1d. from the Return Ball given to the Mayor of Hobart Town was handed by the Committee to this Society. Contributions of articles of food and clothing were received from many persons. Dr. Coverdale, the Principal of the Queen's Asylum, sent a quantity of old bed-ticks, rugs, boots, shoes, &c. which were thankfully received by many poor families.

No public measures have been taken to rescue the vagrant and neglected children on whose behalf we have so earnestly pleaded in every Annual Report. Greatly has this evil increased during the last twelve months; and the idle, vicious, and unruly conduct of great masses of the children and youths in Hobart Town, is matter of the deepest sorrow and apprehension to every reflecting citizen. There is at present no vista of hope opening before us that poverty and distress will lessen amongst us in 1867, the Committee therefore most earnestly solicit the friends of the poor and the afflicted to come forward promptly and liberally with their subscriptions, otherwise the Society must collapse, and the destitute be provided for by a Poor Rate.

During the year the Registrar, Mr. Witt, paid 729 visits in ascertaining the condition of applicants for relief, and in supervising those already receiving aid from the Society. All the duties devolving upon the Registrar have been discharged with the same satisfaction to the Committee which has been always before expressed in the Annual Reports. Many of the members of the Executive Committee have devoted much time in visiting families receiving or asking relief.

HOBART TOWN BENEVOLENT SOCIETY in Account with the Treasurer.

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Audited and found to be correct.

GEO. SALIER, }
HUGH M. HULL, } *Auditors.*

THOMAS GIBLIN, *Treasurer.*
December 31, 1866.