

(No. 9.)



1871.

TASMANIA.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

BENEVOLENT SOCIETY, HOBART TOWN.

REPORT FOR 1870.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Wilson, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
November 8, 1871.



*REPORT of the Committee of the BENEVOLENT SOCIETY of HOBART TOWN for the Year ending 31st December, 1870.*

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IN no year since the commencement of the Hobart Town Benevolent Society in 1860 have the labours of the Managing Committee been less onerous, or the results more satisfactory, than in 1870. The Treasurer's account will show that the financial condition of the Society was better at the termination of the year than at the end of any preceding one. At the same time, the Committee must state that this gratifying success was not achieved by any increase in the number of annual subscribers, or any addition to the aggregate amount subscribed. On the contrary, the year closed with the deficit of £20, to enable the Treasurer to draw from the Government the full amount it is authorised by Parliament to grant to this Society on raising an equal sum by subscriptions and donations. The experience, however, gained by the Executive Committee—for many years past consisting almost without exception of the same individuals—has enabled it to investigate and test the merits of every application so thoroughly that successful imposture is now almost an impossibility. Moreover, a great saving has been effected by supplying 20 per cent. bread instead of the finest, and the quality has always been so carefully examined and approved by the Committee, that the members of it would not hesitate to use such for their own family consumption. The cessation of meat supplies, otherwise than in good, palatable, and nutritious soup, has also diminished expense considerably. The composition of the soup is varied every day for three days successively, to avoid its palling from monotony; and its quality is frequently, but at irregular intervals, tested by actual participation by the Chairman and other Members of the Executive Committee. It has been stated on previous occasions, and is now again reiterated, that no human being in Hobart Town need hunger unsupplied, notwithstanding the assertion to the contrary publicly made at a meeting of the unemployed some months ago. Any able man suffering from want himself or for family can obtain a daily supply of food equal to the value of one shilling cost price by two hours' work in sawing and splitting wood in the Society's yard. Hungry children have always been fed on application.

During the year 140 applications for aid were investigated by the Committee, 30 of which were refused. Of the 110 relieved, 43 were cases of illness; 12 were widows; in 19 the husbands were away; in 10 the husbands were in prison; 4 were accidents; 15 cases of destitution from various causes; and 7 were for children only, where the parents were so worthless and negligent that their children's wants troubled them not, in comparison to their own cravings for intoxicating drink. 38 males and 93 females were adults. 111 were male and 124 female children: the total amounting to 366 individuals, being only two more than in 1869. These figures indisputably prove that the Society does not encourage lazy able men to become mendicants, as some parties roundly assert when excusing themselves from contributing to the Society's funds. The Records of the Society are open to the inspection of any person who wishes to ascertain the character and condition of any applicant relieved or any applicant rejected. The public would be saved from much annoyance of begging impostors were charitable individuals to withhold all alms until the character of the applicant was ascertained at the Society's Depôt. A suggestion was made to the Committee which induced the members to request the Secretary to send the Circular following to the Churchwardens or other Managers of the various Churches in Hobart Town:—

GENTLEMEN,

It has been suggested to the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Society that relief from the poor funds of the various Churches to the really destitute would prove more efficient were it given in food at wholesale cost price through this Society, and that it would at the same time be a check to the imposition of those habitual beggars who obtain at the same time charitable aid from different Churches as well as from the Government and from this Society: cases of this kind having been frequently discovered by our enquiries.

The Committee is willing to undertake this duty, and to pay in food at cost price whatever sum you may order for the poor on your funds, on your undertaking to repay the Society, after the end of every month, the sum disbursed, as shown by your vouchers produced.

Few were the answers received, and of those few not one was a consent to the proposition. In all cases, by whomsoever recommended, the Registrar of the Society visits at irregular intervals, and sees into the actual condition and conduct of the individuals or families. The Committee always obtain by these and other means the most reliable information, and is frequently enabled to apprise benevolent individuals of the false statements by which their sympathies have been excited.

Various donations in provisions, clothing, &c. have been made during the year, and the Committee takes this opportunity of thanking all the donors for their useful gifts, of which none have been more beneficial in every way than the 55 tons of wood and coal.

During the year the following supplies of food were issued:—51,800 lbs. of bread; 486 lbs. of tea; 3636 lbs. of sugar; 2224 lbs. oatmeal; 2053 lbs. rice; 8370 pints of soup. £1 17s. was received for soup, and £2 13s. more for soup-tickets purchased by charitable persons. Were all benevolent people to keep a supply of these tickets and distribute them to such beggars or other persons as they think deserving, instead of giving money, they would be certain that their alms would satisfy the cravings of hunger, and not be expended, as is so often the case, in intoxicating drinks. Persons who have adopted this plan have found on enquiry at the Society's Depôt that many of the beggars to whom they have given tickets have never presented them at all, their want being money alms, not food. When the begging fraternity find that any well-known charitable lady or gentleman has adopted this plan, they soon cease to importune relief from her or him.

The lamentable condition of the Arab children of the city, for so many years forced upon the notice of the Managing Committee, excites its most anxious attention. Notwithstanding "The Compulsory Education Act," and the Industrial, Reformatory, and training Schools, the Committee can see little improvement in the general condition of this much to be pitied and dangerous class. The temptations and trials to which children from the Queen's Asylum are exposed when discharged therefrom has frequently come under the notice of the Committee, and it was with alarm it read the draft of a Bill brought into Parliament controlling instead of enlarging the powers of the Guardians, and amending the constitution of the Board. The Committee hereupon drew up a Petition, which will be found appended, which was presented by one of the members for the City, Henry Cook, Esq., who is one of our General Committee. At the same time he also carried a motion for the production of all correspondence on this subject since 1st January, 1865, that had passed between the Government and the Executive Committee of the Society. The latter had not been complied with when Parliament was prorogued; the Bill, however, was so far altered, that, instead of the Colonial Secretary having individually the power to overrule the decisions of the Guardians, that power was transferred to the Governor in Council.

Very soon after the commencement of the Society £500 was invested in Government Debentures, with the intention that it should form the nucleus of a fund for the purchase of eligible permanent premises for the Society. The premises now occupied by the Society in Bathurst-street, having also a frontage in Market-street, and another at the rear, have been purchased for £750 from Mr. Symons, and Messrs. Allport and Roberts are preparing the necessary deeds on our behalf.

During the year death has removed two of our earliest and best supporters—Henry Hopkins, Esquire, and the Honorable T. Y. Lowes, M.L.C. The former was an annual subscriber to our funds of £5, and he has left us by will £100, thereby continuing his annual contribution for ever. The latter subscribed annually £25, always paid in the first week of the year without solicitation. By will he has bequeathed £2000 to be invested by trustees in behalf of the Society as long as it exists. It has been invested in Government Debentures, which will realise an income to the Society annually of £100, thereby quadrupling the annual subscription. The terms of Mr. Lowes' will, by which he directed that this bequest should take precedence of all others, was highly gratifying to the members of the Committee, as evincing the high estimation in which he held their labours. A neat Tablet has been fixed in the Committee Room commemorating these and all other bequests since the formation of the Society, showing that, though dead, the donors are still with us, and inciting others to do as they have done.

To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly of Tasmania,  
in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Undersigned.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

THAT your Petitioners are Members of the Executive Committee of the Hobart Town Benevolent Society.

That in this capacity your Petitioners have had voluminous correspondence at various times with the Executive Government of Tasmania respecting the inadequate protection afforded to the Children of the Queen's Asylum when apprenticed, and when discharged to immoral parents and other improper persons.

That the great success attained by kindred institutions in the United Kingdom in preserving Children apprenticed from moral ruin, and from becoming habitual criminals or paupers, has been mainly owing to the watchful care exercised over them when serving their apprenticeship by the visits of official inspectors armed with legal authority.

That in the Draft Bill for amending the existing "Queen's Asylum Act," now before your Honorable House, no provision of this kind is introduced, and your Petitioners pray that a Clause for that purpose may be enacted.

That your Petitioners pray your Honorable House not to pass Clause 4 of the Amended Draft Bill, by which the office of Guardians would be so nullified that independent persons with proper self-respect could not retain or accept such a highly responsible but really powerless appointment; but that the authority of the Guardians may be improved by making the Principal of the Queen's Asylum Secretary only to the Board of Guardians, and by appointing as third Guardian in his place a person unconnected officially with the Institution or the Government.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

E. SWARBRECK HALL, *Chairman.*  
T. J. CROUCH, *Hon. Sec.*  
JNO. WITHRINGTON.  
JAMES SMITH.  
WILLIAM JOHNSON.  
R. ANDREW MATHER.

*HOBART TOWN BENEVOLENT SOCIETY in Account with the Treasurer.*

1870.	Dr.	£	s.	d.
June 30.	To payments for 6 months	439	10	0
Dec. 31.	Ditto	436	3	8
	Balance	258	11	1
		<u>£1134</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>9</u>

Audited and found correct.

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

28th January, 1871.

1870.	Cr.	£	s.	d.
Jan. 1.	By Balance	7	16	0
Dec. 31.	Private subscription for year	339	16	7
	Government Grant (unconditional)	400	0	0
	Ditto account of subscription	200	0	0
	Repayments	186	12	2
		<u>£1134</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>9</u>

Jan. 1.	By balance	258	11	1
	Debiture	500	0	0
	Ditto (T. Y. Lowes' legacy)	2000	0	0

THOS. GIBLIN, *Treasurer.*

*HOBART TOWN BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.*

1870.	Receipts.	£	s.	d.
Dec. 1.	To cash paid for Bread	210	6	1
	Meat	22	18	7
	Groceries, tea, sugar, &c.	173	12	4
	Oatmeal	22	4	0
	Printing and advertising	7	10	6
	Fuel for soup kitchen	8	10	0
	Rent of Depôt	55	0	0
	Salary, Registrar	150	0	0
	Ditto, Cook for soup kitchen	39	0	0
	Government cases, rations, &c.	186	12	2
	Balance in bank	258	11	1
		<u>£1134</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>9</u>

1870.	Expenditure.	£	s.	d.
Dec. 31.	By Subscriptions	339	16	7
	Government grant	600	0	0
	Government repayments	186	12	2
	Balance in Bank, 1st January..	7	16	0

£1134 4 9

T. J. CROUCH, *Hon. Secretary.*  
W. WITT, *Registrar.*