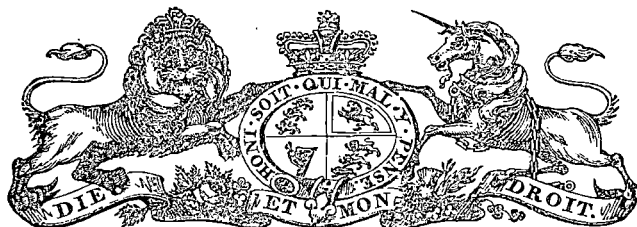


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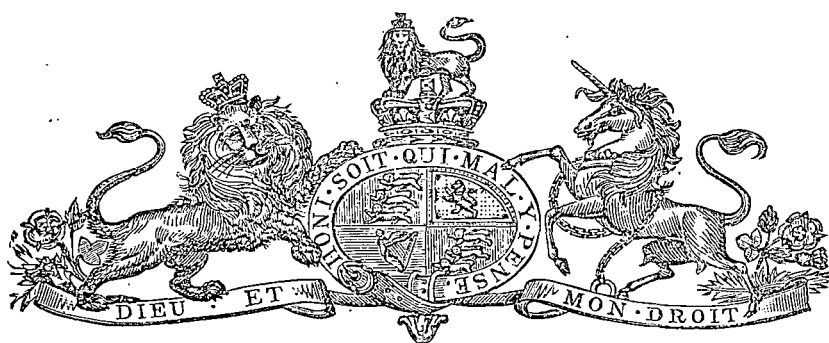
1893.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

DISCHARGED PRISONERS' AID SOCIETY,
LAUNCESTON :

REPORT FOR 1892.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



DISCHARGED PRISONERS' AID SOCIETY, LAUNCESTON.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1892.

BEFORE entering upon the business of the evening it is necessary to point out that by clause 16 of the Rules and Regulations it is imperative "that an Annual Public Meeting of the Society shall be held in October;" but as it (the Society) did not enter upon its work until from 20th November last, 1891, it was deemed best, so as to embrace a twelve months' work, to submit for your consideration the desirableness of altering the period of our Annual Meetings from October to November; and, with this object in view, the usual 21 days' notice for the proposed alteration has, as required by Rule 17, already been given.

During the past twelve months a large number of prisoners have been dealt with, attributable, no doubt, to many causes, and among others, by the depression prevailing, to the disturbed state of the labour market.

The discharged prisoners, in all 228 cases, (viz., men, 169, and women, 59), may be classified thus:—

1. Not requiring assistance, but promising to lead better lives.....	69
2. Forwarded by railway into the country, from the scenes of their former temptations, and promising to lead better lives; of these 34 were variously supplied with provisions, clothing, rugs, and, in some few instances, implements.....	41
3. Obtained employment for.....	5
4. Supplied with provisions, clothing, and rugs.....	29
5. Supplied with board and lodging.....	9
6. Sent to Invalid Depôt.....	24
7. Incurrigibles.....	31
8. Doubtful cases.....	8
9. Not dealt with.....	10
10. Died in gaol.....	2

Of the foregoing number, 31 "obtained employment." During the past twelve months the Society was greatly handicapped in their attempts to procure employment for these persons by reason of the great depression prevailing when the wants of free labour could not be adequately met.

7. "Incurrigibles." Among these are included one man and two women who gave a good deal of trouble to the sister Society in Hobart, and have now found their way north.

8. "Doubtful cases" are persons hardly responsible for their actions, but not considered by the medical authorities sufficiently far gone to permit of their entering a lunatic asylum or the Invalid Depôt, consequently they are allowed to go wandering about until taken up again as being idle and disorderly. The case of one of these, a Chinaman, was brought under the notice of the Government, when, after some correspondence on the subject, authority was given by the Hon. the Premier for the Chinaman's deportation to Hong Kong at the public expense; and by arrangement made with a Chinese merchant in this city, the poor man was sent by the s.s. *Pateena* on 8th July last, to be transhipped in Melbourne waters to the s.s. *Clytha*, bound for Hong Kong; but in consequence of the demented state of this man, the captain refused to take him on board; he was therefore sent back to Launceston by the return trip of the s.s. *Pateena*, and is now an inmate of the Invalid Depôt, New Town. So here is a man in the prime of life, with a wife in China, who has become a burden on the State.

9. "Not dealt with." During the absence of the Chairman in Hobart, a gentleman very kindly undertook the duty of looking after the prisoners, but through sickness and pressing duties he was prevented from carrying out his benevolent intention as regarded ten of these men.

10. "Died in gaol." Every attention was paid to these men, and their spiritual wants as Roman Catholics were seen to by a clergyman of their own Church.

It may be observed that the recommitments of prisoners during the past year have been small as compared with the large number of prisoners dealt with, viz., 39 cases chargeable against 29 prisoners, principally of the "incurable" class.

Your Committee are glad to report that the result of their labours has been of a satisfactory character. They believe that much good has been done, and that very many of those who have been helped and kindly spoken to have left the gaol determined, God helping them, to lead better lives. No case is passed by or considered too desperate to be dealt with; and adopting as our motto the divine injunction "Cast thy bread upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days," (Ecclesiastes, xi. 1) we have every confidence that this Society has a great future before it "in its work and labour of love."

You are of course aware that a Record Book is kept of prisoners discharged from the gaol, and in a separate column is entered the subsequent record. A perusal of these will show that in nearly every case these poor prisoners have expressed sorrow for the past, and thankfulness for the interest taken in their welfare; the causes of their trouble being, in most cases, drink; and among these have been men whose former positions in life should have guarded them from being found within the four walls of a gaol, and who have also made promises and expressed gratitude for kindness shown; and the following letter from one of these was received with feelings of satisfaction by your Committee:—"I now take the pleasure of writing to you, as I promised you that I would do so when I left Launceston, so as you would know how I was getting on. I can honestly say that I have turned over a new leaf and taken your advice. I am very thankful to you for your kindness to me when I was in trouble, and I will always do as you advised me to do. I sent some money home to my wife last week, but I cannot send much, as I only get one pound per week, and after my washing and other little things are paid it makes my wages very small. If you could possibly get me a situation in Launceston driving a grocer's cart, or anything like about £2 a week, I would bring my wife over and settle down in Launceston, and then you would see what a change there is for the better in me. You were the only gentleman that offered me a helping hand in all my life, and I am very grateful to you for it." This man, assisted by the Society, has now joined his wife and child in Melbourne, where he obtained a good situation, and is profuse in his thankfulness for the help rendered him.

In dealing with prisoners your Committee have been careful not to make paupers of them, but to let them feel that when without means or friends to help them, this Society only extends assistance to those who are truly sorry for the past, and are really in earnest to lead better lives, and from the Balance-sheet our Hon. Treasurer will lay before you this evening you will find that our funds have been economised and made to go as far as possible.

When our Society entered upon its work, the estimates for 1892 had been passed, consequently we lost the chance of obtaining a vote for that year, but an arrangement was made by which the Chief Secretary authorised us to indent upon the Hobart Society to the extent of £41 out of their annual vote of £100 on the understanding that should their subscriptions justify it we shall have to recoup them the difference on any sum they may raise beyond £59, so that our present balance is liable (but not likely) to be affected by this arrangement. You will, however, be glad to know that £50 has been included in the estimates for the coming year, £1 for every £1 this Society may raise by subscription.

The Committee feel that it is due to the ladies of their Committee to place on record an expression of appreciation of the noble work they are carrying on among the women and girls at the gaol, and the blessing they have been to them, and the following Report supplied by these ladies will, we are sure, be deemed most satisfactory:—"The Ladies' Committee report having dealt with 59 cases, and whilst realising that in this work it is as "bread cast upon the waters, which shall be found after many days," are yet not without encouragement. Each woman has been personally dealt with, and in several cases situations have been found for them. One young girl, through the influence of the Committee, was married the day she left the gaol to the young man she had been living with. Another who was in a similar position came to one of the ladies to help her. She also was married, and showed signs of deep penitence for her life of sin, drink having been her ruin. For some time she seemed very much changed, and with her husband attended gospel services, when she was suddenly called into eternity, the immediate cause being disease of the heart. Another case may be mentioned. An old woman who by drink had alienated her children from her was reconciled to them and returned to live with her daughter. In the case of another, an old offender constantly in prison for drunkenness, she expressed her desire to break away from

her surroundings, bad companions leading her to ruin. Through the help of the Salvation Army she was taken into one of their homes, and for a time gave every satisfaction, writing to express her gratitude to all who had helped her, and her desire, by God's help, to lead a different life. Many other cases might be cited showing the deep need for such a society existing, and the thankfulness expressed by most that a helping hand is held out to those who heretofore, in most cases, having sunk very low by drink, had none but those as low or lower than themselves to fall back upon in their trouble. To bring the gospel of God's grace before them, as the only power to deliver them from their lives of sin, has ever been the primary desire of those engaged in this work."

You will be glad to know that a library has been established at the gaol for the benefit of the prisoners and the poor people at the Invalid Depôt, who have expressed themselves grateful for the boon thus conferred, and for which we have to thank the Committees of the Mechanics' Institute and Young Men's Christian Association, also Mr. Fox, of St. Leonard's, and other kind friends for their liberal contributions. Mr. Augustus L. Loinsworth has kindly undertaken the duties of librarian, which he is performing very satisfactorily, and he will be prepared to receive any further contributions any kind friends may feel disposed to make to the library.

The Committee feel that they would be neglecting their duty did they not call your special attention to the consideration of two most important questions, the first having regard to the establishment of an Inebriate Asylum in our midst, and the other the passing of a bill by the Legislature of this Colony on all fours with the First Offenders' Probation Act passed by the New Zealand Legislature in 1886.

With reference to the former, the Premiers of the different colonies in the Australasian group were communicated with to give what information they could on the subject, to which they have all kindly responded; and with the exception of Victoria, there does not appear to be any Government Inebriate Asylums in the other colonies, whilst as regards private institutions of that class, such as the Hope Lodge, Balmarring, managed by the Rev. W. L. Morton, Malvern, Victoria; Echo Farm, The Sydney Inebriates' Home, the Belair's Retreat, South Australia, and some others—all very well managed in their way; yet the fact remains that these institutions have had to struggle hard for their very existence, a not very encouraging prospect in the present depressed state of things for anything of the same kind being attempted in this colony, and especially so with the announcement that the two Government Inebriate Asylums in Victoria are about to be closed, for the reasons set forth by the Honorable the Premier of that colony in his letter of date the 18th ultimo, which runs thus:—"In response to the request contained in your letter of the 26th ultimo, I beg to forward herewith the Inebriate Act of 1890, and the regulations thereunder, and also the Report of the Inspector of Lunatic Asylums for the years 1890 and 1891." "It has been decided to close these two asylums, which have been established in this colony under the above-mentioned Act, viz., one for males at Beaconsfield, and one for females at Northcote; the experiment having proved a very costly one for the necessity of keeping up a large staff for only a few patients."

It is obvious, therefore, with the foregoing warning of experience gained, that some other plan will have to be devised as regards this colony, and the Committee would therefore submit for your favourable consideration whether Inebriate Asylums might not be established on a small scale in connection with the General Hospitals in the north and south of the island, and under similar rules and regulations as regards payments by patients; and with this object in view your Committee placed themselves in communication with the Chairman, Mr. G. T. Collins, of the Launceston Hospital, as to the prospect there would be of their (the Committee's) suggestion finding favour with his Board, when they were gratified to learn that that gentleman not only approved of their scheme, but had already taken the initiative and was then in correspondence with the Government on this very important subject.

The other question, the passing of a "First Offenders' Probation Act" in this Colony, the same as that passed by the New Zealand Legislature in 1886, was well discussed, and received the warm support of the press of the Colony last year. It is therefore viewed that the time has arrived when further action should be taken in the matter, and your Committee believe that, beyond giving a few extracts from the Inspector-General of Prisons' (Colonel A. Hume's) Reports to his Government on the practical working of the Act during the past five years, nothing further will be required to commend this important question to your serious consideration. He writes thus:—

"It is with feelings of profound gratification that attention is invited to the ages of prisoners under Table D., from which it will be gathered that during the past year there has been a very considerable reduction in the number of juvenile offenders who have passed through the gaols of the Colony, those under the age of 10 years being 14, as against 22 in 1888; whilst in those from 10 to 15 years the numbers are 61, as against 88; and in those from 15 to 20 years the numbers are 219, as against 241, giving a total substantial decrease of 57 in young persons under the age of 20 years. This is very satisfactory as far as it goes, and is in a great measure due to 'The First Offenders' Probation Act, 1886'; but it does not go far enough, and the colonists should not rest content to find that, with the Act just referred to in full force, and with the industrial schools and similar institutions open in the Colony, there have been actually imprisoned 14 children of such

tender ages as under 10; but, as this matter has so often been drawn attention to in previous reports without leading to any decided action, it must be hoped that this is only the first of an annual substantial decrease, which may end ere long in the total disappearance from the gaol records of the names of persons whose ages befit them more for the nursery than a public prison, and whose detention in, or even commitment to, the latter-named institution is nothing more or less than a public scandal. In my experience it has too frequently occurred that by the mode of punishment hitherto adopted persons of naturally good propensities have been crystallised into criminals through the long and compulsory association with those who have lost all sense of shame. It is very often given as a cause of a young person's first fall that he or she got into bad company; and under the old system we say 'You have made a mistake through the unsatisfactory character of your associates; we will reform you by compelling you to live with worse?' The consequence is that when their sentence expires, and they are released from prison, they are at war with society and society is at war with them. It is not for a moment argued that reformation is the only thing to be considered in dealing with crime; but I think it will be generally admitted that it is fast becoming the most important question. Retaliation, which seems to have been the origin of punishment, has virtually been eliminated from civilised nations, at all events in theory; we now punish to protect society. But is not reformation the strongest protection? Society has one less to guard against, and one less to support.' As regards the 'First Offenders' Probation Act,' I cannot speak too highly of its usefulness, and I have no hesitation in stating that many a young and thoughtless offender has been rescued from a career of crime through its intervention. The Act continues to work smoothly and satisfactorily, and is proving year by year one of the most useful measures ever passed by any Legislature. The details of the working of the Act for the past year, as shown further on, speak for themselves, and need no comment from me. When this Act was first passed it was thought by many that it was a dangerous piece of legislation, and probably would do more harm than good; but now that its utility has been so thoroughly established, I am of opinion that its provisions might be extended with beneficial results to such cases as attempted suicide caused by excessive indulgence in strong drink, and that if the accused has the means he or she should be made to pay the whole costs of the trial. It may be argued that this would, in effect, be punishing a man for excessive drinking: but it seems to me that if a person will drink habitually to such excess as to lose all self-restraint, and in that state attempts to take his life, such person, and not the taxpayers, ought to bear the costs of the trial; and such an offender would certainly have no grounds for complaint if he were placed under some such wholesome restraints as those of the 'First Offenders' Probation Act.' As the case now stands a person who attempts to commit suicide is usually committed for trial to the Supreme Court, has, perhaps, to be detained in prison for two months awaiting the sessions, and then is probably discharged upon recognisances to come up to judgment when called upon, the State having to bear the expense of keeping the prisoner in gaol for two months, in addition to the cost of the trial."

We may be pardoned in calling your special attention to the arguments contained in the latter clause, and as bearing strongly in favour of the establishment of "Inebriate Asylums," and coming too from an officer of such extended experience as Colonel Hume, Inspector-General of Prisons, New Zealand, should receive careful consideration.

L. R. CASTRAY, *Chairman.*

Launceston, 28th November, 1892.

PRISONERS' AID AND RESCUE SOCIETY.

Treasurer's Statement for 12 Months ending 19th November, 1892.

RECEIPTS.			EXPENDITURE.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
To various Donations as per Cash Book	36	1 0	By Stationery, &c.	5	2 1
Government Grant	41	0 0	Printing	2	7 1
Interest	0	1 7	Expenditure on Prisoners	21	2 6
			Balance in Savings Bank	48	11 0
	<u>£77</u>	<u>2 7</u>		<u>£77</u>	<u>2 7</u>

W. FORDYCE, *Treasurer.*

Audited and found correct,
F. L. FYSH.
JAS. BRICKHILL.
November 25, 1892.