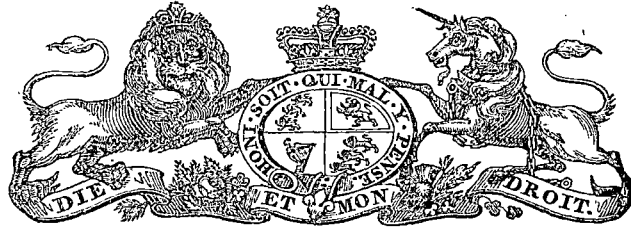


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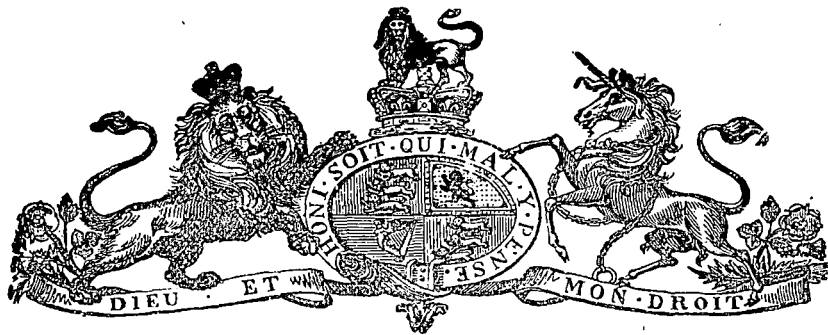
1889.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES:

REPORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN AND
REGISTRAR FOR THE YEAR 1888.

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



General Registry Office, Hobart, 11th July, 1889.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit to you the following Report on Friendly Societies in respect of the year 1888, as required by Clause 10 of "The Friendly Societies Act, 1888."

The new Act relating to Friendly Societies came into force on the 31st December, 1887. Among other provisions intended to place the finances of these valuable societies upon a more secure foundation, and to afford all necessary powers for the protection of the various societies and their members, the following duties (by Clause 9) are imposed upon the Statistician :—

- (1.) The preparation and circulation of model forms of accounts, balance-sheets, and valuations.
- (2.) Collect and publish statistics and other useful information bearing upon life and sickness and financial condition.
- (3.) Construct and publish tables for the payment of sums of money on death, in sickness, or old age, &c. as the Statistician may from time to time think fit, and, provided that they are calculable, *i.e.*, that the necessary information relating to rates or benefits and ages of members are furnished to base the calculations of the Actuary.

(1.)—*Preparation and Circulation of Model Forms of Accounts, &c.*

With respect to this provision I have to report that this matter received from me much thoughtful attention; and on the 13th of August, 1888, a complete set of forms, including balance-sheets for each specific fund, age and sickness forms, and tickets, &c. with ample instructions, were furnished to the secretaries of every known society in the Colony. I have also, by correspondence and by personal interviews with the officers of societies, entered into the fullest explanation of all matters bearing upon the preparation of the accounts and forms of particulars, and by printed circulars I have offered to supply any further information to the various secretaries, so far as it is within my power to do so. Copies of the forms and balance-sheets adopted, with the approval of the Governor in Council, are now appended to this Report.

(2.)—*Collect and publish Statistics, &c.*

This provision is largely met by the course adopted under (1) Preparation and Circulation of Model Forms of Accounts, &c. In addition, it has been my custom in every year to prepare and publish a very elaborate Report, showing in full detail for every society in the Colony—

1. Number of members on 31st December under each age-group.
2. Conjugal condition.
3. Numbers receiving sick benefit and average days' sickness.
4. Receipts under each specific fund.
5. Expenditure under each specific fund and for management.
6. Particulars of funds as regards amount, and the mode of investment, &c.
7. Deaths occurring during the year.

A copy of this Report is furnished yearly to each secretary.

Owing to the passing of the new law requiring the accounts of Sick and Funeral Fund to be kept separate from that of the Incidental or Management Fund, the secretaries of many societies either could not or otherwise failed to supply the usual annual returns for 1887, and even for the year ending 1888. Of the returns which, by the new law, require to be furnished to this office by the 1st February, only 52 out of the 101 societies or branches have as yet sent completed returns. I am in hopes that the remainder will be sent in shortly. I am averse to put in force the more stringent provisions, for the following reasons :—

The secretaries of many of the smaller societies are honorary, and the funds will not bear the expense of a skilled paid officer. Those of the members who cheerfully undertake the very onerous duties of keeping the books and preparing accounts are of great service to their respective branches; but few of them are skilled in accounts, and hence there is much difficulty and delay due to this cause apart from possible negligence. Perhaps if it were made imperative that the secretaries of district grand lodges should furnish the annual returns both for their grand lodges or districts as well as for the various branches belonging to each, the necessary requirements would be more promptly attended to. The most of the secretaries of districts are energetic, intelligent men, and well skilled in accounts. This would not entail much more labour upon them, for the branches must furnish accounts to the grand lodges at least annually. These grand lodges would simply exercise local supervision, and see that the returns for the Statistician were furnished *through* them in a proper form. These officers, too, being near at hand, could often personally give all necessary advice to newly-appointed officers.

(3.)—*Construct and publish Tables of Contributions.*

The adoption of such tables, even if the elements necessary to compute them were furnished, are optional, so far as adoption by any society is concerned. Apart from this, the construction of such tables in a proper manner requires the most abstruse calculations of a skilled actuary, and requires much more time and care than it would be possible to me (burdened as I am with many other important departmental duties) to bestow upon them. Of course, it is only mandatory that I should *cause* such tables to be constructed when the need arises; and should this necessity arise, I would recommend that powers be given me to commit special work of this kind to a skilled actuary—such as Mr. Evan F. Owen, the able Actuary for Friendly Societies attached to the Statistical Department of Victoria. This would involve only a little extra expense occasionally, which should be borne by the Government when it proffers such information. When it is sought for by any society such society should bear the expense.

There is no provision in existence at present to enable me to defray any expense of this kind should occasion arise for me to exercise the powers conferred upon me by the clause referred to.

In conclusion, I may observe that as soon as the accounts for the year 1888 are complete, I shall tabulate the results in a useful way, and shall furnish a copy of the same to every Friendly Society in the Colony.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

ROBT. M. JOHNSTON, *Government Statistician
and Registrar-General.*

The Hon. A. INGLIS CLARK, Attorney-General.

Public Buildings, Hobart, 17th July, 1889.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit to you my first Annual Report as Registrar under "The Friendly Societies Act, 1888."

I accepted this office as an honorary one at your special request, Parliament not having provided a salary for the payment of such an officer.

Prior to the date fixed by the Act (1st June, 1888,) I received from the Clerks of the Peace, Hobart and Launceston, the records of Friendly Societies then in their hands. As these records had never been systematically arranged or entered in a record book, I at once caused them to be properly classified and registered in a register with index. A press with pigeon-holes was also procured for their safe keeping, and I think I may fairly claim that the means of ready reference to these papers thus afforded is a work of value to the Friendly Societies of this Colony, and has already proved of great service.

Immediately upon my appointment I undertook the adaptation of Regulations under the Act of the Colony of Victoria to meet the provisions of our Act, and these Regulations, after having been approved by you, were gazetted on 1st October last.

The transactions registered under the Act up to 31st December last embrace five notices of appointment of trustees, four societies' rules amended, one society converted into a branch of another

society, and a new society registered. In the latter case the application for registration was made prior to the appointment of an Actuary under the Act, and upon your instruction I gave a Conditional Certificate, to be followed by registration when the Actuarial Certificate of sufficiency of scale of contributions should be supplied.

It is a matter of deep regret that since the passing of the Friendly Societies Act, 1888, no less than three criminal prosecutions of defaulting officers of Friendly Societies have been heard before the Supreme Court, in two of which the persons charged were convicted. The moneys entrusted to the care of officers of Friendly Societies in this Colony amount to a very considerable sum (in 1887, according to the official statistics, the capital was £52,468; receipts, £22,133), and it is worthy of most serious consideration whether the accounts of Friendly Societies should not be subjected to official audit. Provision for the appointment of public auditors exists in Section 35 of the Act; but as the employment of such public auditors is not compulsory on any society, it is questionable whether the section would meet the case if a public auditor were so appointed.

Some steps should also be taken to authorise enquiry to ascertain whether the provisions of Section 17 of the Act, Sub-section (1), with respect to securities to be given by officers of societies having the receipt or charge of money, are given effect to. The Act is silent as to the custodian of the bonds, and I would suggest for consideration the propriety of causing all bonds so given to be deposited with the Registrar.

Comparatively few of the societies have registered amended rules, and I would submit that measures should be taken without delay to cause all societies to bring their rules into harmony with the requirements of the existing law. Section 3 of the Act provides that rules of then existing societies shall continue in force "so far as the same are not contrary to any express provision of the Act"; but as most of such rules must necessarily contain clauses which cannot be acted upon, there is a danger that, unless altered, unintentional breaches of the present law will occur.

The Act is at present upon its trial, and sufficient time has not yet elapsed to justify the expression of an opinion upon the sufficiency or otherwise of its provisions to meet the wants of the Friendly Societies of this Colony. It is a very complicated statute, based upon existing legislation of other countries, but I think a more simple code might have been preferred to the present Act.

Some slight difficulties have presented themselves to me in administering the Act, which have at times caused delay in the registration of documents, but this is what must be expected in carrying out the duties of a responsible office in relation to a new system. It is my strong desire to be of service to the different Friendly Societies of the Colony, and no effort on my part shall be spared to render assistance or advice in any case where my services may be sought by any society or person interested.

Trusting that what has been already done has been of some service, and that I have executed my office to your satisfaction,

I have, &c.

PHILIP S. SEAGER, *Registrar Friendly Societies.*

The Hon. the Attorney-General.