

(No. 13.)



1882.

T A S M A N I A .

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HOBART BENEVOLENT SOCIETY :

REPORT FOR 1881.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
July 12, 1882.



TWENTY-SECOND Annual Report of the HOBART BENEVOLENT SOCIETY, for the Year ending 31st December, 1881.

THE desertion of wives and families is still going on, so that through the past year the Committee have had 23 cases of wife desertion brought before them,—an increase of three on the previous year.

It does not appear that any decided action has been taken by our Legislature to bring back wife deserters and to make them support their wives and families. A few cases of this kind reported through the press of persons brought back to support their families would do more than anything else to intimidate others from leaving their families, knowing that wherever they went they would in all probability be brought back again.

Upon the arrival of Sir G. C. Strahan, His Excellency was waited upon by a deputation of four gentlemen to ask the patronage of His Excellency for the Society, which he very willingly acceded to. His Excellency made many enquiries upon the object and work of the Society, and what it was doing, &c. His Excellency was informed that its work was as much as possible to prevent mendicity, and His Excellency was cautioned against begging-letters, and beggars in general visiting Government House, and asking him to refer all cases of the kind to Mr. Witt, our Registrar, who would thoroughly investigate any case forwarded. Two of the late Reports and the bound copy of the first ten years' Reports were left with His Excellency for perusal. His Excellency received an application shortly after, which was attended to by Mr. Witt and the Committee, and since the year has commenced there have been two letters, which Mr. Witt has attended to. There are many cases on the Society's books of begging letters sent to Sir J. H. Lefroy while administering the Government, which he invariably sent on to Mr. Witt, our Registrar, who always dealt with them as was needful, and reported to Government House.

It is with much regret that the Committee have to report the death of their long highly-valued friend, Dr. Hall, who has been on the Committee for over 21 years, and for a long period the Chairman of the Executive Committee, being annually elected. He only resigned when it was necessary in making arrangements with the Government for taking over the pauper and boarding-out cases, on 1st March, 1880, and which the Government approved. His long duties as Meteorologist and Health Officer are well known.

Your Committee have still the care of the pauper maintenance cases for Hobart and suburbs; the boarding-out cases having been handed over by the Government to a central committee for boarding-out children about the middle of January, 1881, but the cheques were signed by your Chairman until the end of the month. The Committee have also the duty of sending on poor people needing invaliding to the House Surgeon of the General Hospital, who reports upon their physical condition.

It must not be lost sight of that, up to the year 1866, all the poor of the city were relieved through one channel, and that was the Hobart Benevolent Society. At that time every legitimate claim was met; none were permitted to want.

It will be better to refer again to the mode of giving relief to applicants. The party seeking relief brings a letter to Mr. Witt or the Chairman of the Executive Committee. If to the latter, it is forwarded to Mr. Witt; to give temporary relief, and then to make enquiries into the case. The person is then requested to appear before the Committee on the next day of sitting; and to give the Committee an account of his or her circumstances, when they have an opportunity of individual examination, and it often happens that one or other of the Committee knows the person applying, and by the demeanour before the Committee of the party who is being examined a pretty correct conclusion is arrived at, which is very seldom erroneous, and also if there should be any doubt the party is given the benefit, and a further enquiry is requested by Mr. Witt, our Registrar, sufficient food being given in the meantime.

Your Committee commenced the year with 32 cases brought forward from 1881, consisting of 122 individuals. Two hundred and thirty-five cases have been investigated during the year, comprising the following:—88 on account of illness, 27 widows, 23 husbands away, 4 husbands in prison, 64 destitute, 4 for accidents, 8 for children, 10 for the aged and infirm. The number of individuals have been 552; viz.—107 males, 180 females, 138 male children, 127 female children. Casual relief has been given to 19 individuals going up the country to seek work, or going into the invalid depôts.

Work has been given in the wood-yard to 80 individuals, many of them with families. This is a very important labour test in connection with the Society of their willingness or unwillingness to work. Able-bodied men unable to obtain employment often ask to be taken on; if they are hungry they are fed prior to going into the yard, and then they are told by Mr. Witt to go into the yard for an hour or two hours, as may be needful. A man can earn in two hours as much food, which is reckoned at the cost price, as will suffice for a family of four; and then he has the remainder of the day to look about for other work, or do odd jobs here and there; if they have larger families Mr. Witt gives them a longer time to work. A man in February, 1881, came to Mr. Witt and was recommended by a minister in the city, and was offered work in the wood-yard, when going into the yard he turned back, saying "I will make shift without it this time."

In the case of a woman who was receiving temporary aid, her brother in Victoria sent her £10 to take her over to him, which she spent in drink. She charged a woman at the Police Court, who was drinking in the *City of Norwich Hotel*, Argyle-street, with robbing her, but from all the surrounding circumstances the case was dismissed. She had been drinking and dancing in the house.

The Committee are of opinion that the system of giving pecuniary aid to beggars at the door is very unwise, as in most cases it goes direct to the public-house; whereas if an arrangement was made by every respectable citizen with Mr. Witt, he would enquire into all the cases, and if needful give the required aid, and the party could buy soup tickets, and save the money from going to the public-house.

Ninety-four tons of wood and two tons of coal have been contributed through the year by kind friends, and 20 tons have been bought by the Committee for extra cases, and cases of sickness.

Of kindling wood 117 dozen bundles have been sold during the year. In preparing these bundles, boys, old men, and women can split up the pieces for them, sitting down during the work. When Mr. Weld was here he was a large customer. Orders were continually coming to Mr. Witt for a supply for Government House, which were promptly attended to. The kindling wood is sold at 1d. per bundle, sufficient to kindle two fires. The amount received by the sale last year has been £5 17s.

Thanks are due and are gratefully tendered for a donation of £10 for the purchase of blankets for the poor, to a kind friend signing himself "Sympathy," which have been supplied gratuitously in cases where Mr. Witt found it necessary to give such aid.

Blankets have been sold at cost price to the poor, to the amount of £11 1s. People are encouraged by Mr. Witt to lay by and prepare for the winter, which the poor creatures find a great help and comfort when the winter fairly sets in. They lay up in Mr. Witt's hands, as they can spare a shilling or two.

The amount expended for lodging-tickets and rent has been £12 5s. 6d., and for cab hire to convey poor sick people to the hospital, £3 7s. 6d.

The issue of stores has been—29,533 lbs. bread, 603 lbs. tea, 5174 lbs. sugar, 818 lbs. of oatmeal, 1216 lbs. rice, and 6030 pints of soup.

For making soup, 2990 lbs. of meat, 392 lbs. rice, 404 lbs. barley, and 436 lbs. of peas have been used; there is a variation made day by day with these different articles. The sale of soup has only amounted through the year to £1 6s. 1d. The Committee cannot understand how it has arisen that there is so little demand for soup tickets; it would seem that persons prefer to give money, that they will not be troubled to call for the soup tickets, though it must be obvious that money given in most cases goes for drink of some kind, which is most unsatisfactory and prejudicial to the recipients of charity, and fostering a craving which is most demoralising.

In cases of sickness relief is given at once, and is continued so long as the Committee see it to be necessary. Temporary relief is given at once to destitute persons, and the case is then enquired into whether it is needful to continue it, so that no persons are allowed to starve who present themselves to Mr. Witt, who has so long had to deal with these persons that he is not easily deceived. Children pleading that they are hungry are at once fed. In some cases parents cannot be entrusted with food for their own children, as they would make away with the children's food even to satisfy the craving for drink: in such cases the children are fed upon the premises. In all the cases that are transferred

THE Treasurer in Account with the HOBART BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

1881.			1881.		
<i>Dr.</i>			<i>Cr.</i>		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Dec. 31. To Government Grant for 1880 ...	209	0 0	Dec. 31. By Expenditure, per Pass-book...	901	4 2
Ditto, for 1881	400	0 0	Balance.....	169	13 8
Ditto, Repayments	96	14 0			
Subscriptions and Donations ...	154	3 10			
Interest on Debentures, &c. ...	220	0 0			
	<u>£1070 17 10</u>			<u>£1070 17 10</u>	
1882.					
Jan. 1. To Balance	£169	13 8			

Examined with the Vouchers, and found correct:

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

R. T. WESTBROOK, *Treasurer.**CAPITAL Account of the HOBART BENEVOLENT SOCIETY, arising from Legacies, Donations, &c.*

	£	s.	d.
Debenture—T. Y. Lowes, Interest on	2000	0	0
Ditto.....	500	0	0
Ditto.....	300	0	0
Ditto.....	600	0	0
Ditto.....	100	0	0
Ditto.....	500	0	0
Deposit—G. T. B. Society	400	0	0
	<u>£4400 0 0</u>		
Savings' Bank—Emergency Fund.....	150	0	0
Premises, &c., Bathurst-street.....	750	0	0
	<u>£5150 0 0</u>		