

(No. 15.)



1879.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HOBART TOWN BENEVOLENT SOCIETY :

REPORT FOR 1878.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Crowther, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
September 9, 1879.



NINETEENTH Annual Report of the Hobart Town BENEVOLENT SOCIETY, for the Year ending 31st December, 1878.

MOURNING and lamentation and woe serve to make up the records of the majority of the cases that occupy the attention of the Executive Committee of the Hobart Town Benevolent Society in investigating, and the time of the Registrar in making the necessary enquiries. The conclusion is continually being forced upon the Committee that the prevalent use of intoxicating drinks is the fruitful source of nine-tenths of all the vice, destitution, debauchery, and misery that exist among us. Responsibilities are ignored, natural affection is stifled, an entire recklessness or want of consideration for the interests and well-being of dearest relations is induced by the selfish indulgence in alcoholic drinks. The drunkenness of one or both parents makes wretched homes, drives lads to dishonesty, robs those who are striving to do right of their lawful earnings (not to add to the comforts of home, but to satisfy the cravings of a depraved insatiate appetite), and crushes out of them all incentive to labour and self-respect; forces many girls and young women into immoral practices as presenting an easy means of supplying the necessities of life, and enabling them to gratify the desire for display in dress. The state of our public thoroughfares is sufficient evidence of this, while the demand for servants continues, and no help is to be obtained. Any one desirous of ocular demonstration of the demoralising effect of the use of intoxicants, other than that which is daily before our eyes, need only take a walk with our Registrar on his daily rounds, and the most sceptical will be enlightened by seeing the sleeping places of families in one filthy apartment, with only rags or old bags for bedding, and nothing but their own clothes for covering, which are seldom changed.

It may be asked—Can nothing be done to stem the tide of evil? The answer is, Yes! Stop the supply of that which pauperises—which manufactures beggars—and which is sold at all the corners of our streets; and soon shall we have health instead of disease, wealth instead of poverty, sound minds instead of maudlin imbeciles.

The business of the Society opened with 32 cases from 1877, comprising 116 individuals. During the year 191 cases were relieved, and nine were refused. In the cases relieved there were comprised 69 males and 168 females, 128 male children and 118 female children, 483 individuals. The statistics show two hundred cases investigated, viz.—60 cases of illness, 17 widows, 27 husbands away, 57 destitute, 8 aged and infirm, 6 accidents, 8 husbands in prison, 8 for the children to have food on the premises, as the parents could not be trusted with food, 9 refusals.

Casual relief has been granted to 45 individuals going up the country to seek employment, or for persons who were waiting for invaliding.

Your Committee would again draw attention, as in former years, to the desirability of persons supplying themselves with Soup Tickets, so that persons begging can be supplied with a good meal, without any fear of the charity being misapplied. Old people from 60 to over 80 years of age are continually leaving our Invalid Depôts to infest the streets, or to wander through the country, begging their way from place to place, or they come immediately to the Benevolent Society with some plausible tale, when the records which are kept of the departure of these gentry inform the Registrar whence they came. The citizens of Hobart Town would be considerably in pocket, waste and drunkenness would be prevented, if they made the Benevolent Society their almoner instead of relieving persons at their doors.

A man named James Robinson, aged 78, lately came to Mr. Witt, having been only four days out of the Cascades; he was in a state of intoxication when he came, wanting relief and lodging. He handed in a paper which was a "humble petition" to His Excellency the Governor, stating that

he had been in the Hospital for three months; in his distress had been compelled to pledge his tools, and that he had no means of releasing them. Prayed His Excellency to enable him to do so. There was not a word of truth in his statement; he had not been in the Hospital for more than twelve months, but had been in and out of the Invalid Establishment several times. This petition was unwisely supported by the testimonial of a clergyman; the paper was withheld from him. Your Committee has privately helped several persons on recommendation of subscribers and members of Committee, without their cases being subjected to the test of examination before them. One, an aged and helpless widow, the relict of one who was once in a respectable business in our city, and one of our worthy citizens; she was relieved during the past year to the extent of £14 9s. 3d., and her last days were rendered as comfortable as possible by obtaining the help of a kind lady near her to look after her. Other persons, whose cases the Committee do not desire to make public, have been helped by special loans, or are having relief granted week by week.

The wood yard is still made a labour test to persons asking relief. Persons can earn sufficient in one hour to procure their food for one day, and have the rest of the day to look about for permanent labour. Sixty persons, mostly with families, have been employed in the yard until they could procure better employment, receiving payment in food for themselves and families. Persons who are unfit for general labour can work in the wood yard in preparing the kindling wood, as they can sit to their work and split up the blocks given them.

The wood brigade have sold and delivered 387½ dozen bundles of kindling wood during the year; these sales include large orders from Government House, but many more private families than do would also find it to be a great convenience to be able to obtain a supply of these packets, which they can do, and also have them delivered at their homes upon application to the Registrar.

Kind friends have supplied the yard with two tons of coal and 64 tons of wood, which made many a poor home comfortable during the winter. Your Committee purchased also for extra cases and for cases of sickness 32 tons. The wood is purchased in the log, for the purpose of giving labour to those asking relief, who being well able to work, if they will not get no food.

The Registrar received £14 11s. for blankets sold during the year. An account is opened so soon in the year as persons are ready to subscribe, and when they have completed their subscriptions, the blankets for which they subscribe are handed to them. Persons being too poor and destitute, whose cases are brought under the notice of the Registrar, are visited and helped by a loan of blankets, which are branded so that they cannot be pawned or sold.

The Superintendents of the Queen's Asylum and of the Cascades Invalid Dépôt have sent parcels of old clothing from those establishments, which have been duly acknowledged, and were distributed to those to whom they were useful.

Lodging tickets, and rent for casuals, and for invalids waiting for vacancies, amounted to a much larger sum last year than previously. £27 8s. 9d. was expended under this head, and for the conveyance of sick persons to the General Hospital £3 14s. was paid upon the certificate of the Secretary, or of some member of the Committee.

The amount received for soup sold was £9 0s. 10d. Notice has already been drawn to the advantages of persons providing themselves with a supply of soup tickets. The Committee are surprised that the citizens have not availed themselves of this mode of checking the imposition that is so much practised upon them. Those who pass from house to house begging want money that they may spend it in drink, and care for little else, whereas the ticket system would spoil all this, and ensure that no person need suffer from want of food.

The arrangements with the Government for lying-in cases of unmarried women is working satisfactorily. Married poor women are assisted by the Dorcas Society.

The children of parents who are receiving aid from the Benevolent Society are required to attend some school, and unless attention is paid to this rule, the parents are not allowed to take away food from the Dépôt, but the children are required to eat it there. When a certificate of school attendance is given, the children can have their food at home.

The Registrar, Mr. Witt, has, with the consent of the General Committee, been appointed by the Government as the officer for granting certificates for all persons requiring out-door medical charitable relief, either at the general dispensary, or by a visit of the medical visiting officer. This has been found to work well in preventing gross imposition upon the Government by parties who were well able to pay for any medical assistance, whose names, if the attempt is repeated, will most certainly be published. Many persons in very easy circumstances seem to think it no disgrace to attempt a fraud upon the Government, by asking and receiving, if permitted, medical aid as paupers. The number of orders issued during the past 10 months has been 1187, and 198 have been refused. Mr. Witt's report states that many persons finding they were to be subjected to an examination, and to sign a declaration of inability to pay, went off refusing to answer the questions.

Mr. Witt spares himself no trouble to help the deserving and the worthy poor, and he is most indefatigable in his visitations, and in searching for information to detect and to punish impostors. The duties of collector are performed by Mr. Witt without any extra remuneration or commission.

Thanks are due, and are tendered, to all kind donors and subscribers, who may rest quite satisfied that the Committee will exercise care and vigilance that no deserving person shall be left unrelieved ; and that, as far as in them lies, they will guard the citizens and the public from the imposition of the regular tramp and other impostors.

Thanks are due to the Superintendents of the several Invalid Departments for their regularity in sending the returns of those who leave the Dépôts, and upon what ground they do so, as from those returns a register is compiled to detect those who live without any visible means of gaining a living.

The following stores have been issued during the year, viz.—29,911 lbs. bread, 402 lbs. tea, 4163 lbs. sugar, 760 lbs. oatmeal, 926 lbs. rice, 6053 pints soup. For making the soup 4184 lbs. meat have been used, with the addition of 510 lbs. rice, 510 lbs. of barley, and 475 lbs. of peas.

The supply of bread from the contractors has been most satisfactory ; there has not arisen any occasion during the year to complain. The bread issued is what is commonly termed 20 per cent., very like home made, and is very sweet and wholesome. In cases of sickness, or when needful, white bread is also supplied.

THE Treasurer in Account with the Hobart Town BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

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THE Treasurer in Account with the Hobart Town BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

Dr.		Cr.	
1878.	£ s. d.	1878.	£ s. d.
Jan. 1. To Balance	259 8 10	Jan. 1. By Payments as per Pass Book.	
Receipts as per Pass Book ..	168 3 11	Amount received	311 2 4
Interest on Debentures	87 10 0	Deposit Bank of Van Diemen's	
Deposit Receipt due	300 0 0	Land	300 0 0
Interest on ditto	15 0 0	June 30. Balance	219 0 5
	<u>£830 2 9</u>		<u>£830 2 9</u>
1878.	£ s. d.	1878.	£ s. d.
July 1. To Balance	219 0 5	July 1. By Payments as per Pass Book.	519 0 8
Receipts as per Pass Book ...	69 4 8	Dec. 31. Balance	56 14 5
Colonial Treasurer	200 0 0		
Interest on Debentures	87 10 0		
	<u>£575 15 1</u>		<u>£575 15 1</u>

R. T. WESTBROOK, *Treasurer.*

Audited with the Bank Book, and found to be correct,

R. T. WESTBROOK, *Treasurer.*

Audited with the Bank Book, and found to be correct,

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

JAMES BARNARD,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.