

SESS. II.—1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES

(SEVENTH REPORT, BY THE REGISTRAR OF).

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to "The Friendly Societies Act, 1882,"
Section 5, Subsection (8).*

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1883.

In order to publish the operations of friendly societies for the year 1882 at the earliest possible date, a table embodying the chief features as to membership and funds, compiled from the returns which had up to date been received at this office, was printed and laid before Parliament during the session of 1883. The tables which are appended to this report are compiled from the returns, as completed and amended, for the same period, and show the transactions of the various societies in detail.

2. That societies are satisfied generally with the working of the Friendly Societies Act might at first sight seem to be evidenced by the large number of registrations effected during the year 1883. It is to be feared, however, in spite of this encouraging fact, that a considerable proportion of the societies are deeply dissatisfied with those sections of it which impose duties and obligations, although in the case of other societies the reverse can with confidence be affirmed. It is the earnest wish of the Registrar to remove, as far as possible, any real ground of complaint, but it has been his duty to carry out the Act faithfully. He has, however, been in correspondence with several leading members of friendly societies respecting suggestions they have made for modifying some of the provisions of the Act, and has recently had personal interviews on this matter with gentlemen in Auckland and New Plymouth representing societies in those localities.

3. It is satisfactory to be able to report that the advice given by the Registrar, as well as by the Public Valuers, who have been unanimous in urging the adoption of a sufficient scale of contributions, has not been offered altogether in vain. Some of the societies, which on valuation showed a deficit, have raised the scale; but it must be admitted that the majority do not appear to place faith in the actuarial valuations. On the other hand, the secretary of a recently-formed lodge of Druids, in the return for 1882, which showed a considerable number of lapses, stated, by way of comment, that many members had left the lodge, fearing that, at the low rate of contribution adopted by this body, a society would not be likely to fulfil its promises. Very lately it has been decided by the Grand Lodge of Druids in Australia to adopt a higher scale. Some of the reasons for the want of confidence displayed by so many New Zealand societies in the reports furnished by the Public Valuers are discussed below, and suggestions are made towards increasing their faith in the conclusions of actuarial science.

4. During the calendar year 1883 payments amounting to £236 16s. were authorized for valuations of societies; and Mr. Alfred Wiggins, of Wellington, a gentleman who had given evidence of the requisite actuarial attainments and rare logical power, as well as much familiarity with the practical working of friendly societies, was appointed a Public Valuer under the Friendly Societies Act. One of Mr. Wiggins's valuation reports is appended as Schedule I. hereto.

5. The St. Patrick's (Christchurch) Branch of the New Zealand Hibernian Catholic Benefit Society having neglected to furnish returns required by the Valuer, it was necessary to enforce compliance by prosecution. This was the only case in which legal proceedings were instituted during the year.

6. In consequence of applications from societies, the opinion of the Crown Law Officers has been taken on the interpretation of sections 13 (2) and 29 (1) of "The Friendly Societies Act, 1882."

In reference to the former, it is held that bank cheques *do not* come within the exemptions made in favour of friendly societies; and, in reference to the latter, that trustees are *not* included among the officers of a friendly society by whom security is required to be given.