

It will be seen by the foregoing that, while close on three quarters of the required returns were furnished during the first four months of the year, only 154 reached this office before the 1st April. Seeing that the figures embodied in the returns relate to the year terminated in December, it does not seem too much to expect that the whole of the returns should be sent in some time during the first quarter of the year.

A large amount of delay also arises in the compilation of the statistical tables, on account of the difficulty experienced in obtaining satisfactory corrections in the returns from a number of the branches of societies. It may also be pointed out that so long as one branch of a society withholds the particulars of its proceedings it is impossible to finally deal with the figures of such society, and that the dilatoriness of a few secretaries causes much loss of time in a variety of ways.

With a view of remedying this tardiness it is intended to move the Treasury to authorise legal proceedings against defaulting secretaries to enforce compliance with the statute.

The number of lodges* of the affiliated type whose returns are tabulated is 462, and of central bodies 35, distributed according to Orders thus :—

Society.	Central Bodies.	Lodges.	Society.	Central Bodies.	Lodges.
M.U.I.O.O.F.	17	167	U.A.O.D.	3	68
I.O.O.F.	1	32	I.O.R.	2	40
N.I.O.O.F.	1	2	S.D.T.	1	10
B.U.O.O.F.	..	1	H.A.C.B.S.	1	17
A.O.F.	8	113	P.A.F.S.A.	1	10
A.O.S.	..	1	R.E.B.S.	..	1

In Table I. details are given of the name, place, and year of establishment of each lodge, with the membership and funds of the same at the end of 1902. The funds under the control of the central bodies are also included in the district totals. In the final column is entered the average surplus or deficiency per member in each lodge, as shown at the last valuation.

Tables II. to VI. contain a summary of the details relating to the membership, mortality and sickness, receipts and expenditure, funds, and investments of each separately registered society, with totals for the several Orders. In Tables III. to VI. shillings and pence have been omitted, there being no apparent advantage in publishing the values more accurately than as shown by the nearest pound.

MEMBERSHIP AND TOTAL FUNDS.

The number of members in these 462 lodges at the beginning of 1902 was 41,886; the members admitted by initiation and reinstatement were 4,635; those admitted by clearance were 272: total admitted, 4,907. The number who left by arrears, resignation, and expulsion was 2,818; by clearance, 248; and by death, 319: total left, 3,385. The net increase for the year was 1,522, or slightly over $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and the number of members at the end of 1902 was therefore 43,408. The deaths of members' wives during the year were 146.

The total funds of the societies and branches as on the 31st December, 1902, amounted to £846,315, made up as follows: Sick and Funeral Funds (inclusive of amounts transferred to special funds out of surplus), £774,532; Medical and Management Funds, goods, &c., £71,783. Dividing the total funds by the number of members at the end of the year, it is found the average capital per member is now £19 9s. 11d.

Taking the several years 1898–1902, the number of members, total funds, and average capital per member at the end of each were as under :—

Year.	No. of Members.	Total Funds.	Average Capital.
		£	£ s. d.
1898.. .. .	35,501	678,746	19 2 5
1899.. .. .	38,202	728,249	19 1 8
1900.. .. .	40,257	766,480	19 0 9
1901.. .. .	41,236	804,753	19 10 4
1902.. .. .	43,408	846,315	19 9 11

The following balance-sheet gives the total funds (including those of the central bodies) as on the 31st December, 1902 :—

Funds.	£	Assets.	£
Sick and Funeral Funds	755,300	Investments at interest	665,879
Surplus Appropriation Funds	19,232	Value of land and buildings	129,265
Management Fund, goods, &c.	56,992	Cash not bearing interest	32,877
Widow and Orphans Funds	7,272	Value of goods	10,702
Distress, Benevolent Funds, &c.	6,866	Other assets	7,592
Juvenile Funds	653		
	<u>£846,315</u>		<u>£846,315</u>

* The word "lodge," when applied to all societies, is to be understood as embracing the synonymous terms "court," "tent," &c., as used in the various Orders.