

1878.
NEW ZEALAND.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES

(FIRST ANNUAL REPORT BY THE REGISTRAR OF).

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to "The Friendly Societies Act, 1877,"
Section 9, Subsection 6.*

REPORT.

THE short time that has elapsed since the date (1st January, 1878) when "The Friendly Societies Act, 1877," came into operation necessarily, to a large extent, limits this first report of the Registrar, required by the Act to be presented to the General Assembly, to matters connected with the organization of the office, and with the various duties involved in endeavouring to carry out the Act.

The office of Registrar was conferred upon the person holding the office of Registrar-General, the intention being that the two offices should be held conjointly, and that the duties appertaining to them should be performed by the staff of a single department. In effecting this arrangement no additional officer has been added to the staff of the Registrar-General to enable the extra duties imposed by the Friendly Societies Act to be fulfilled; but an existing vacancy that had occurred in the department was filled by the appointment of a gentleman as general clerk in the department who was competent to perform the duties of an actuary. Every effort has been made to carry on the multifarious and increased duties imposed on the department with a staff not numerically increased; but the strain on the office has been considerable, and it is evident that the arrangement was made under a misconception as to the amount of work imposed on the Registrar of Friendly Societies by the operation of the Act.

As the Act required that all societies should send their annual returns to the Registrar before the 1st day of April, and their quinquennial returns before the 30th June, 1878, it became necessary for the Registrar in the first instance to give his attention to the preparation and issue of the forms required for these returns. The forms previously used under the Act of 1867 were found to require modification, as they were not adapted for the requisite statements respecting funds under the control of the central bodies of societies.

There was also an immediate necessity to devise a form of register for societies. No register having been kept hitherto, there was not any available form for adoption. The most useful form appeared to be that which would show at a glance all the principal transactions relating to societies that it was necessary to place on record—the particulars to be entered in the register as occasion arose. The form adopted is that shown in Schedule II. It then became necessary, by examination of papers sent by friendly societies to the Colonial Secretary's Department, and by searching the *Gazette*, to ascertain what societies had been registered under the former Acts. This inquiry showed that the societies mentioned in Schedule III. had been duly registered, and these in the order of the dates of the original registrations have been entered in the newly framed register-book; for, although the 5th section of "The Friendly Societies Act, 1877," provided that "every society now subsisting whose rules have been registered . . . shall be deemed to be a society registered under this Act, and its rules shall, so far as the same are not contrary to any express provision of this Act, continue in force until altered or rescinded," the Registrar did not consider it necessary to refer all the rules of these societies to the Revising Barrister for a decision as to whether any of them were contrary to any express provision of this Act before entering them in the register: he deemed it the proper course that the societies should be regarded as registered, and be entitled to all the advantages thereof, leaving the question of any of the rules being *ultra vires* to be dealt with on its merits when any attempt should be made to enforce any such rule.

All the societies hitherto registered have been registered as distinct societies under the Acts of 1856 and 1867, for, although much correspondence has taken place with regard to the registration of societies with and without branches, no new registrations have, as yet, been effected. Several districts or central