

DR ROGERS' TRACT SOCIETY.

(From the British Standard.) June, 1866

Our attention has lately been called to a tract society which presents some of the most remarkable features we ever remember to have observed in any such institution.

In its first report it is styled the Naval and Military Tract Society; and its Secretary is the Rev. Charles Rogers, L.L.D. The Society is said to have been "fully constituted during the course of 1864, consequent on efforts vigorously prosecuted during the previous twelve months." "The business has been entrusted to a committee; two-thirds of whom are members of the Church of England, the rest belonging to other evangelical denominations." Very promising indeed; but, on looking at the names of the managing committee, nothing is more clear than that it impossible they could meet to manage, because they reside in such various and distant localities, from Kingoldrum, in Scotland, to a worthy gentleman in Falmouth. Whatever number may form a *quorum*, they would have to travel far to attend a meeting. We, therefore, at once free these gentlemen from any responsibility in the management of the business.

The next strange facts are disclosed in the following report of three gentlemen who investigated the circumstances of the Society, and published the results as an advertisement in the columns of a contemporary. Two of these gentlemen belong to her Majesty's Navy, and are not only gallant officers, but exemplary Christians; the third, Mr Robert Baxter, is a solicitor well known for his great mental powers and his equally great evangelical activity. The report of such men is beyond suspicion. It is as follows:—

THE NAVAL AND MILITARY TRACT SOCIETY—THE NAVAL AND MILITARY MISSIONARY AND TRACT SOCIETY—AND THE MISSIONARY MARITIME AND MILITARY TRACT SOCIETY.

"We, the undersigned, having met at the suggestion of the Rev. Dr Rogers (in consequence of unfavourable reports that were in circulation in reference to this Society), to inspect and examine the books and proceedings of this Society, beg to report:—

"1. We have been attended by Dr Rogers, and have learnt from him that there is no minute book of the committee of the Society; that the committee have only met on one occasion, and two persons only were present at that meeting.

"2. That there is no bank-book belonging to the Society, and the accounts produced to us were entered in one book, and, apparently, at one and the same time. On our inquiring for the rough books, in which the original entries were made, such a book was produced, but, on requesting to be shown the items appearing in the fair book as they were originally entered in the rough book, Dr Rogers informed us that when he had copied them from the rough into the fair book, he tore out the leaves from the rough book and destroyed them.

"3. The audit-sheet printed in the report purporting to be a report from the commencement of the enterprise to the 31st December, 1864, and which purports to be audited by Messrs Hunt and Co., was laid before us. We asked for the book showing the amount of contributions to be £785 11s 8d, as stated in the audited account, and were told by Dr Rogers he presumed the auditor so added up the amount, but it did not appear upon the book. We inquired for the book or papers which would verify the amount charged in such audit under the five several heads into which the disbursements were divided, and were told by Dr Rogers that there were no such separate papers or books, but that he distinguished the separate heads by marks in the one book produced to us, and he presumed the auditor extracted these and added them up, and so ascertained the amount; but he had not the papers upon which this was done. We asked to be shown the marks to which he alluded, and Dr Rogers told us he had rubbed them out. We inquired if any vouchers were produced to the auditor, and were told by Dr Rogers there were none. We asked for vouchers, but he stated he had none with him.

"4. The audited account charges the Society with £328 14s 3d. for tracts distributed at that cost; but, on inquiry, Dr Rogers stated that there was included in that sum at least £165 beyond the actual cost, which he had himself retained. The audited account also states the expenses in local agencies &c., from April, 1863, to December, 1864, to be £338 8s. 5d., and this sum Dr Rogers stated he had incurred in travelling expenses.

"These two sums of £165 and £338 amount to £503 out of the total receipts of £785. Included in the amount so charged for tracts, was a sum of £50, stated in the books to have been sent to the Soldiers' Friend Society, and we are informed by the Secretary of that Society, that he has not received any tracts whatever from Dr Rogers.

"The name of the English Joint Stock Bank (Limited), Blackheath, appears upon the report above alluded to as the Society's Bankers; in the report before us for January, 1866, the name of the City Bank, Threadneedle-street, London, is also added.

"The City Bank inform us they have no account whatever with the Society, or with Dr Rogers.

"The English Joint Stock Bank state that they have a private account with Dr Rogers but no account in the name of the Society.

"One of the auditors (Mr Hunt) states:—

"That no vouchers were produced to him; he believes his clerk added up the receipts, but he did not attempt an analysis of the account, but added up himself the audit sheet, and considered that he was auditing the account merely for Dr Rogers' satisfaction, as to the balance and addition of the account. That if he had been asked to audit it in order to prove its correctness, he would have required vouchers, and gone through the analysis."

"It appears the name of the Society has been four times altered within the three years of its existence. It appears to have begun in Stirling under the name of 'The British Christian Institute,' then to have taken the name of 'The Naval and Military Tract Society,' then the name of 'The Naval Military Missionary and Tract Society;' the last name assumed is 'The Missionary Maritime and Military Tract Society.'

"Dr Rogers stated that he had himself the management of the Society from its commencement, and we learn that the highly-respectable clergymen advertised in the last report as the convener and the travelling secretary, and also several of the committee, have dissolved their connection with the Society.

"We have expressed to Dr Rogers personally, and to his solicitor in writing, our readiness to receive any explanation, but have received none.

"Under the circumstances here stated, we do not think it necessary to do more than to make them known, in order to enable the public to form their own judgment upon the Society in question.

"Francis Maude, Captain R.N.
E. Gardiner Fishbourne, Captain R.N., C.B.
Robert Baxter.

"6, Victoria-street, Westminster,
27th February, 1866.

"P.S.—We have received intimations from the following gentlemen that they have desired their names to be withdrawn from the institution:—

"The Very Rev. the Dean of Canterbury.
Captain Bontein.

Rev. W. Guise Tucker, Greenwich Hospital.
Captain Symons, R.N.

Rev. Wylock Davis, Manchester.
Hon. Somerset Ward.

Rev. Frederick Whitfield.
Rev. Joseph Burns."

Subsequently to that meeting Dr Rogers published a second balance-sheet. It is signed by Quilter, Bail, and Co., and its figures therefore must be correct. It differs from the first balance-sheet in two important particulars. The first balance-sheet says, "Total amount of contributions, £785 11s 8d;" the second says, "Total amount of contributions from the beginning of the undertaking in January, 1862, to 31st of December, 1864, £790 16s 2d." The first balance-sheet says, "Tracts distributed at the cost of £328 14s 3d." the second balance-sheet says, "By tracts distributed at the selling prices,—the profits derived from which form the Secretary's sole remuneration, £324 17s 3d." From this corrected balance-sheet it appears that Dr Rogers received from the public in contributions, omitting shillings and pence, £1,478. Now, what have the public received? Tracts at the selling price to the amount of £554.

What, then, has Dr Rogers expended of his contributions, still omitting shillings and pence? Why, no less than £1,095. These are the figures:—

Paid travelling expenses	£530
Paid for tracts distributed half the selling price, which would be about the cost price	277
Office rent and clerk	87
Miscellaneous	201
Total	£1,095

Of this sum observe the share falling to Dr Rogers himself. Travelling expenses and profits as salary, £807; and if the office be his house, as is alleged, a large part of the £87, besides.

These are the facts. To secure an issue of tracts alleged to be worth £554, there has been expended £1,095, out of the £1,478, contributed by the public.