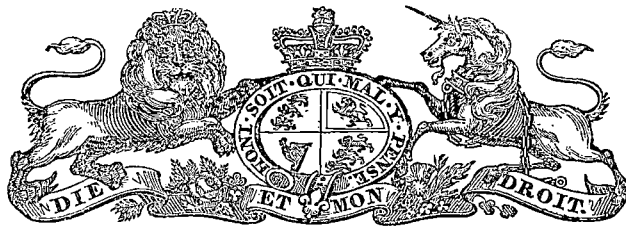


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1864.

T A S M A N I A .

QUEEN'S ORPHAN ASYLUM.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be printed, 24 August, 1864.



QUEEN'S ORPHAN ASYLUM.

10th December, 1863.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor, by direction of the Board of Management of the Queen's Orphan Asylum, to forward to you a Report of a Committee of the Board appointed to enquire into the general conduct and management of the Asylum, together with the evidence taken before it, and the other papers connected with the enquiry.

I may state that the Committee, whose Report I now transmit, consisted of all the Members of the Board, except myself; and that the Report itself was adopted by the Board at a meeting held on the 5th instant.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. NAIRN,

Chairman of the Board of Management.

The Honorable the Colonial Secretary.

R E P O R T .

THE Committee appointed on the 6th October, by the Board of Management of the Queen's Orphan Asylum, to investigate into the general conduct and management of the Institution, having proceeded to the consideration of the papers remitted to them, and having examined the Superintendent and Officers of the Establishment, beg to report:—

1st. That the Committee consider it desirable that alterations in, and instructions for, the special disposal of the children in their respective divisions, made and issued by the Superintendent, should be intimated by him to the respective heads of the different departments affected thereby.

Complaint of the Head Schoolmaster of certain irregularities, and the withdrawal of his remark from the Complaint Book.

2nd. That in reference to the proposed reduction of the Clerk, Mr. Henry Boyes, and the substitution of one of an inferior grade, the Committee are of opinion that the evidence adduced proves to it the necessity of maintaining the existing Clerical Staff of the Institution.

Letter of Superintendent suggesting the reduction of Mr. Henry Boyes.

3rd. That the Committee are of opinion that no alterations involving the removal of the boys from the School-room during the hours of secular instruction are desirable.

Letter of Head Schoolmaster forwarding correspondence in reference to alteration in Religious Instruction in Boys' Division. Complaint of Superintendent against the Second Schoolmaster for refusing to make a necessary entry in the Complaint Book.

4th. That, as regards the complaint of the Superintendent against the Second Schoolmaster, the Committee is of opinion that that Officer was guilty of no official neglect, nor was he responsible for the absence of the boys; but as it is essential that such absence from the Institution should be reported, it considers the order since issued by the Superintendent a judicious one.

Papers and correspondence connected with the complaint of Superintendent against Mrs. Bourne in reference to the removal of gratings from the Boys' Lavatory.

Mr. Shoobridge's letter tendering his resignation as a Member of the Farming Committee.

5th. That, in reference to the complaint of the Superintendent against Mrs. Bourne for neglect of duty connected with the removal of the gratings from the Boys' Lavatory, the Committee feel it their duty to report to the Board, that the weight of evidence is strongly opposed to the statements made and reiterated by the Superintendent.

6th. That, in reference to the letter of Mr. Shoobridge, transmitting his resignation as a Member of the Farming Committee, this Committee would observe, that the explanation of the Superintendent on all the points alluded to, with the exception of that referring to the employment of the men and horses when they ought to have been working on the farm, is satisfactory; but that, on this latter point, it is at variance with the statement of Mr. Shoobridge, and the evidence of Mr. Harding.

7th. That the enquiry made by the Committee into the general conduct and management of the Institution has disclosed the existence of such a lamentable state of feeling and want of cordiality between the Superintendent and the majority of his Officers, that it is compelled to record its opinion, that an effective administration of its several departments is impossible without some change in its administrative organisation.

The Superintendent complains that, from within a short period of his assuming his present office, he has never received that support and co-operation from the Officers of the Male division necessary to enable him to secure an efficient administration of it; and the personal and unseemly altercations that have occasionally occurred between himself and the Head Schoolmaster have been of such a character as to render it impossible, in his opinion, that any harmonious working between them can ever exist, and that he is not prepared to repose any confidence in him.

He also expressed a strong opinion as to the inefficiency of the Matron, on account of the absence on her part of energy, activity, and thoughtfulness,—giving her credit at the same time, however, for a desire to perform her duties to his satisfaction.

Letter of Superintendent, 10th November, 1863.

On the other hand, the Head and Second Schoolmaster complained of a great want of courtesy towards them in the general conduct of the Superintendent, impairing, in their opinion, the discipline of the Institution and their authority over the boys, and, as the Head Schoolmaster expresses it, preventing him performing his duties as he would wish. The Committee would here bring under the notice of the Board a written communication from the Superintendent addressed to its Chairman, complaining of a gross insult which, he alleges, he received at the hands of the Head Schoolmaster, but to which that Officer, on enquiry of him by the Committee, gave the most direct and explicit denial. The contradiction involved in the respective statements of Mr. Boyd and Mr. Latham precludes the Committee from offering any opinion as to whom untruthfulness is to be imputed; but they would draw the attention of the Board to former statements made by the Superintendent at variance with the evidence of other Officers of the Establishment, and beg to record their opinion, that this occurrence alone sufficiently manifests the impossibility of these Officers again efficiently or harmoniously performing any duties requiring their joint co-operation.

As regards the Girls' Division, the Superintendent expresses himself perfectly satisfied with the zeal and energy with which the Matron carries on the duties of her office, and testifies to her anxiety to rectify any irregularity that he may think it proper to bring under her notice. He also expresses the most favourable opinion of the mode in which the duties of the Senior and Second Schoolmistresses are discharged.

The Matron expresses herself satisfied with the general demeanour of the Superintendent towards her; but the Senior Schoolmistress complains of the want of courtesy evinced towards her,—preventing her, as she states, bringing herself into personal communication with him whenever she could avoid it.

In reference to the Infant School, the Superintendent expresses his general satisfaction with the management of, and the conduct of the several officers towards, the Infants. The Matron, however, complains bitterly of the conduct of the Superintendent in charging her with peculation and mismanagement, and refusing to bring the matter under the notice of the Board. The Committee are of opinion that the Superintendent may, in noticing some irregularities in the appropriation of the rations issued for the use of the Infants, have used language tending to convey to the Matron the impression that in his opinion she was guilty of this offence; but the contradictory statements on either side render it impossible for the Committee to decide whether she was refused the investigation she alleged she sought for.

Some of the subordinate Officers, viz., the Gardener, the Assistant Clerk, and the Beadle, also complain of the harsh manner in which the Superintendent conveys his instructions to them; but nothing has transpired in this branch of the enquiry of sufficient importance to make it necessary for the Committee to bring it under the notice of the Board.

The Committee would remark that the Institution appears (internally) to be clean, orderly, and well and economically regulated; and the children contented, cheerful, and healthy.

On the school examination of the boys, the Committee regret to find that, as a rule, they are seriously deficient in the primary branches of education. Boys at an age sufficiently advanced to be apprenticed, or to have the major part of their time employed in industrial pursuits, were unable to read with correctness, do a common sum in the compound or even in the four simple rules of arithmetic,—the compound rules comprising money, weights and measures. This was ascribed by the Masters to the fact of their being told off for industrial pursuits, and selected for apprenticeship, without any previous examination as to the amount of their attainments. The Committee are of opinion that the present mode of teaching is susceptible of great improvement.

On examining the girls, they were found generally to evidence a better system of instruction, and to have arrived at a superior knowledge of elementary education. Their reading was more fluent, their dictation more correct, and the arithmetic of the same character as that proposed to the boys was accurately worked by a large proportion; but the Committee desire to call attention to a similar fact existing in their division, as well as in that of the boys; viz.,—that girls selected for apprenticeship were very deficient in the earlier branches of primary education, so that attention could not have been called to such deficiency when they were selected and approved for apprenticeship.

The Committee recommend that the Board should bring the opinion thus expressed under the notice of the Superintendent and the other Guardians, in the hope that they may hereafter satisfy themselves that a fair knowledge has been attained in reading, writing, and the simple rules of arithmetic, before children are discharged from the Institution; and further, that application be made to the Government, requesting that the Inspector of Schools may, so soon as it may be convenient to him, be instructed to examine the children in the Institution, and report on their attainments in the elementary branches of education.

After due consideration of all matters and circumstances which have been brought under its review during the course of this investigation, the Committee have arrived at the conclusion that the Superintendent has shown, during his tenure of office, a great want of the necessary qualifications requisite for the ensuring of the good and efficient management and control of the numerous Officers necessarily attached to such an Institution, requiring in its Head great command of temper, and the exercise of tact and discretion, to enable him to secure a zealous co-operation of his subordinates.

It is, however, due to him to observe, that he has had difficulties to contend with in establishing due order and regularity in the Institution; in effecting which he has necessarily been brought into collision with many of the old officers, and has so originated a combined opposition amongst them, which has, doubtlessly, been the cause of many of those differences which have so unfortunately tended to impair his usefulness: added to which, the large demand upon his time, which the detail duties of Purveyor necessitates, has prevented him paying that careful and constant attention to the general supervision of the Institution which its character demands.

The Committee beg to append, for the information of the Board, minutes of its proceedings, the evidence taken before it, and other papers connected with this enquiry.

J. FORSTER, *Chairman.*