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1877.

SESSION IV.

TASMANIA.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

RAGGED SCHOOLS:

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S REPORT.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
October 2, 1877.



Hobart Town, 6th September, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to transmit herewith my Report on the Inspection and Examination of the Ragged Schools in Hobart Town.

I have the honor to be,
Your obedient Servant,

T. STEPHENS.

The Rev. JOHN STORIE,
Secretary to the Ragged School Association.

REPORT of Chief Inspector of Schools on the Inspection and Examination of the Cascades Road, Lower Collins-street, and Watchorn-street Ragged Schools, Hobart Town, between the 17th and 28th August, 1877.

CASCADES ROAD.

No. on Rolls	207
Average daily attendance	125
Present at Examination	160

PREMISES, &c.

The main building comprises an excellent school-room, in two compartments, with a good infants' room in the rear. The master's division is sufficiently furnished with the necessary desks and apparatus, but the mode of warming it by a stove is inconvenient, and the position of the stove is an obstacle to the proper arrangement of desks. A small group of desks is required in the other division. There are two closets very inconveniently placed in two opposite corners at the foot of the steps of the play-ground, where all the surface drainage collects in wet weather. They are not satisfactorily clean; and in one there were some indications of obscene writing. There are no separate yards for boys and girls.

MANAGEMENT, &c.

The order and discipline in the master's division are, on the whole, good. The children are kept actively employed; and the only noticeable defects are a habit of chattering in the desks, and a tendency to copy from a neighbour's slates, which have been contracted under less efficient management than the present, and are not entirely eradicated. There is a good time-table in use in this division. In the division under the mistress, and in the infant room, the general management appears to be highly satisfactory. In the upper division there is a recess from 11 to 11.15 A.M., when boys and girls are out in the play-ground together.

INSTRUCTION.

1st Class.—Boys, 15; Girls, 13: Total, 28.

This class is reading the old 4th Book (Irish Series), which is an unsuitable book for any elementary school, and quite out of place in one of this character. It is not right to lay any stress on the unsatisfactory results in this subject, for the corresponding classes in the other schools are reading very much easier and more suitable books. Writing in copy books was generally fair, on slates fair to good. Spelling fairly satisfactory. The class is well grounded in the simple rules of arithmetic, and about one-third well up to the money rules, working also in weights and measures, and as far as practice. Some general knowledge of the elements of grammar and of the outlines of Geography was exhibited. The class is, on the whole, equal to Class III. in a tolerably good public school, but beyond it in arithmetic.

2nd Class.—Boys, 4; Girls, 11: Total, 15.

The reading book is an easy one of M'Culloch's series, and well suited to the capacity of the children: the answering and general intelligence very fair. Writing and spelling fair to good. Arithmetic well taught up to simple rules inclusive. The class is about equal, in the elementary subjects, to the standard of an average Class III.

3rd Class.—Boys, 7; Girls, 6: Total, 13. *4th Class.*—Boys, 15; Girls, 20: Total, 35.

The reading books are Primers and the 2nd Book (Irish series); and the children read with general accuracy, and with fair intelligence. Slate writing good on the whole, but some of it much too small for this stage. The 3rd Class is advanced as far as multiplication in the simple rules; and the general character of the whole instruction shows unmistakeable signs of thorough and patient teaching.

Infants.

In the Infant Department there were 69 present, with 18 in the highest division reading the 1st Book. The rest of the work is quite elementary, but satisfactorily managed. Order and discipline good.

LOWER COLLINS STREET.

No. on Rolls	142
Average daily attendance	110
Present at Examination	129

PREMISES, &c.

Area of play-ground rather too small for a large mixed school. School-room good except in the planning of the position of fireplaces, and sufficiently supplied with desks, &c.; but all the forms are either too long or too short. Closets dirty and wetted, especially that of the boys. Class-room and infants' room fairly suited for their purpose.

MANAGEMENT, &c.

The management of the upper part of the school is at present in a transitional state. The discipline has evidently been very lax at no remote period, but is steadily improving under the present master. In the class-room the order, quiet control, and general management are very satisfactory. In the infants' room a young and inexperienced teacher has perhaps the most difficult task of all; and her general management is as satisfactory as could be expected.

INSTRUCTION.

1st Class.—Boys, 6; Girls, 3: Total, 9. *2nd Class.*—Boys, 12; Girls, 13: Total, 25.

The reading in both classes ranges from moderate to fair. The subject has been badly taught; and it will take some time to improve the defective style which the children have acquired. General answering and intelligence low. The writing and spelling have the same range, from moderate to fair. The 1st Class is well grounded in the simple rules of arithmetic, and the 2nd not far below; but the multiplication table should be more perfectly known in this division. The 1st Class showed some general acquaintance with the outlines of geography, but know next to nothing of grammar. There was some fair answering in the outlines of Bible history. There is a good time-table in use.

3rd Class.—Boys, 2; Girls, 9: Total, 11. *4th Class.*—Boys, 9; Girls, 13; Total, 22.

The reading, in books of a quite elementary character, was generally fair in the 3rd, and good in the 4th Class. Answering and intelligence highly satisfactory. The work in arithmetic is chiefly confined to easy sums in simple addition and subtraction, with fair average results.

Infant School.

In this department there were 61 children present, 14 of whom were able to read very easy monosyllabic sentences from tablets, and 16 more able to read a few easy words. About 10 were able to write tolerably on slates some easy words in large hand, and the same number formed the figures on their slates more or less correctly. The rest are merely beginning to learn; and the satisfactory teaching of so large a number is quite beyond the single teacher's powers. Some big boys and girls were noticed in this division, who appear to attend only at odd times. They are deriving little or no benefit themselves; and their presence in this part of the school is injurious to those who properly belong to the Infant School.

WATCHORN STREET.

No. on Rolls	149
Average daily attendance	117
Present at Examination	100

PREMISES, &c.

Area of play-ground much too small for a large mixed school. School-room very inconveniently planned, but capable of accommodating a much larger number than now occupy it. Class Room and infants' room well adapted to their purpose. One double closet, dirty and wetted, but not to the extent that has been noted elsewhere. Chalk writing on the walls, &c. Some of the desks in the school-room are attached to the walls, and some of the forms almost too high for a man. Class teaching in the desks is impracticable, from the want of proper arrangements.

MANAGEMENT.

Order and discipline in the school-room not satisfactory. In addition to the noise of work, which is quite unnecessary, there is a continual chattering going on, with other indications of idleness. This division consists chiefly of a somewhat difficult class of children; but, until more perfect discipline is established, the teaching of the school will be very much wasted. The management of the division in the class-room is on the whole highly satisfactory; and the order and discipline in the infants' division are also very fairly maintained. It seems to be customary for all the children to go out together at recess time, to which there are many objections.

INSTRUCTION.

1st Class.—Boys, 3; Girls, 8: Total, 11. *2nd Class.*—Boys, 4; Girls, 8: Total, 12.

Reading moderate to fair: general answering and intelligence low. Writing fair on the whole, but in many cases too small and irregular. Arithmetic, as far as simple rules inclusive, is practised by both classes; and there are unmistakeable signs of their having had good instruction. The work is rendered unsatisfactory in many instances through carelessness and inaccuracy, and is also much impeded by mutual help and copying. The knowledge of geography and grammar in the 1st Class is almost inappreciable, judged by the ordinary standards.

3rd Class.—Boys, 5; Girls, 10: Total, 15. *4th Class.*—Boys, 7; Girls, 10: Total, 17.

The reading lessons in these classes are very easy: they are, however, very well learnt, and the answering and intelligence satisfactory. Writing on slates, (large and small hand), is fairly neat and regular; but round hand should be substituted for small. In arithmetic the 3rd Class is well advanced as far as simple multiplication, and the 4th up to easy sums in addition. Oral answering to general questions quite satisfactory.

Infants' School.

There were 45 children present, of whom 12 could read easy sentences, and 14 were able to write out the letters and figures. The general system of teaching seems to be satisfactory, and the singing is much better managed than elsewhere.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Speaking generally of the condition of the elementary instruction in the Ragged Schools, I may say that the results which have been achieved, and the work which is being done, reflects great credit upon the teachers. For the exceptional cases which have been noted, very great allowance must be made. The children in the upper classes are mostly of an age at which the want of a well-ordered home and judicious parental influence begins most unmistakeably to show its inevitable consequences; and the difficulties of training them are sometimes increased by the changes in the teaching staff which the Committee is compelled to make. The question of attendance is an important one; and it would be well to adopt a uniform system of recording it in the several schools. A properly constructed and carefully kept register of attendance supplies an Inspector with a large amount of necessary information which he cannot obtain in any other way. At present there are at least three different forms used; and the system is not even uniform as regards the three departments in any one school. Time-tables of work ought to be based on one common principle. A uniform series of reading books, properly graduated, is also required.

There is a feature in the Ragged Schools which is somewhat anomalous, and therefore demands notice: the independence of each teacher in his or her department,—there being no responsible head of the whole school. I have no doubt that the Committee have decided wisely, under the circumstances, in adopting this arrangement, and believe that it has worked well on the whole. The principal objection is that it requires nine teachers of more than average ability, instead of three, to be perfectly successful.

I am sure that the Committee will cordially agree with me in considering the discipline and training of these schools to be of infinitely higher importance than the instruction in the elementary subjects. The essence of good discipline is that it be maintained without frequent recourse to corporal punishment; and the teachers are no doubt aware that the latter is to be avoided as much as possible. While I see ample evidence of a kindly and zealous interest in their scholars on the part of the teachers, I fear that their training is neutralised to a considerable extent by circumstances which I have noted under the heads "Premises" and "Management," some of which are beyond their control. The planning and construction of the out-offices require special consideration. If a recess is allowed during school hours, it requires special regulation; and at no time should the children be turned into the play-ground without efficient and responsible supervision.

I have been informed by the teachers of the Collins-street and Watchorn-street schools that the offences which I have had to notice in connection with the closets, and the injury to the school property which is occasionally committed, occur usually between the closing of the schools on Friday and the opening of them on Monday. The Committee will know whether there is any responsible person in charge of the premises at such times.

With regard to the details of improvements which I have pointed out to be necessary, I shall be happy personally to advise the Committee at any time that may be convenient to them.

T. STEPHENS, *Chief Inspector of Schools.*
Hobart Town, 6th Sept. 1877.

The Committee Ragged Schools Association,
Hobart Town.