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T A S M A N I A.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

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RAGGED SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION.

REPORT FOR 1876.

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Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Secretary, and ordered by the House to be printed, April 24, 1877.



## NINETEENTH Report of the HOBART TOWN RAGGED SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.

YOUR Committee have to report that the three schools under the care of this Association are now as fully organised and equipped with teachers as they can, with the limited resources at their command, fairly expect to have them. There are now in each of these three schools three distinct departments, under an infant teacher, a female teacher, and a master, each working on its own plan, and together carrying on the training and instruction of the children as their age and attendance will permit, and as far as may be according to a fixed programme; and your Committee have fair reason, considering the many difficulties encountered, to be satisfied with the efforts of the teachers during the past twelve months, with the scholastic progress of the children in the elementary branches attempted to be taught, and with their general improvement in cleanliness, regularity, and order. The average number attending in the three schools has been 440; the average daily attendance, 320; distributed thus: in Watchorn-street, the average number, more or less frequently present, 130, in daily attendance 99; in Collins-street 148, in daily attendance 101; in the Cascades Road 162, in daily attendance 120.

It will thus be seen that the attendance has maintained nearly the same level for the last five years; and it may therefore be concluded that these schools, together with the Free School in Murray-street, fairly estimate the number of children in the city for whom provision of this nature requires to be made.

The infant classes in all these schools are well taught and almost always full; and this early training and grounding is certain in a few years to exert a perceptible influence upwards, and to assist, it may be, in making the effort more successful to retain the children to a mature age. Meanwhile, there is teaching power in the higher classes considerably beyond the usual attendance.

In addition to the ordinary day-work there have been night classes during the winter months in each of these three schools. In Collins-street two young ladies devoted themselves to a class of elder girls. In Watchorn-street, under the care of Mr. J. R. Walker, and in the Cascades' Road, under the superintendence of Mr. H. L. Garrett, classes numbering from 20 to 25, and consisting of boys and lads from 12 to 20 years of age, have been conducted for two hours twice a week. By these means a good many of the old scholars have been kept in connection with the old places, continued under good oversight and influence, and encouraged to keep in practice their old attainments in reading, writing, counting, and work.

The Lady Superintendents have not furnished your Committee with any very full reports; but the usual amount of work has been done by the girls, and there were the usual distributions of school-made clothing in all the schools at midwinter. The Lady Superintendent at the Cascades' Road says: "I have pleasure in informing you that, having solicited subscriptions to our clothing fund from some ladies in our vicinity, they kindly responded to the appeal, and the girls are now preparing themselves articles of clothing from the proceeds of the ladies' assistance. Some of the ladies have visited the school and expressed their satisfaction. Ninety was the number of clothing articles distributed to the girls in midwinter."

It having been deemed expedient, in addition to the occasional visits made by members of the Local Boards, to institute a regular and formal inspection of these schools by one or two official members of the Executive, by means of which the state of each class and the attainments and progress of each child might be somewhat carefully ascertained, one such inspection was made this past year, immediately before the winter holidays, by the Secretary and the Rev. R. M. Webster.

The report of this inspection was communicated to the teachers, and the deficiencies then observed and noted were found, at the recent examination, to have been in some cases and to some extent retrieved. But besides this inspection in the discharge of their own duties, your Committee have long been of opinion that, in consequence of these schools receiving annually a considerable grant of public money, it is the constitutional right and duty of the Government to acquire and possess such a knowledge of their condition, management, and results, as to justify in the public interests the continuance of that grant; and your Committee have in consequence just completed an arrangement with the Hon. the Colonial Secretary that the schools shall be regularly inspected by one of the official Inspectors of the Board of Education, and his reports submitted direct to the Government, and by the Government communicated to your Committee.

Your Committee have been led by various considerations to the opinion that it might be expedient to make the salaries of the teachers depend, at least in some measure, on the numbers which they succeeded in maintaining in each department; and, as a first step to this new arrangement, they have prepared a new form of monthly reports, in order to ascertain with a more minute particularity the facts that might guide them in adjusting these payments fairly to the circumstances of each school. Irregularity of attendance continues to be in this, as in all else, the main and trying difficulty; but after making the due allowance for the seasons of fruit and hop picking and endemic attacks of disease, your Committee are satisfied that much of this pernicious irregularity is unnecessary and inexcusable, proceeding from the indolence of parents or the waywardness of children; and that it may, to a great extent, be abated. No doubt there is clamant necessity for more stringent legislation—and none are in a position to see this necessity more clearly than the members of this Executive Committee—but, it having been found impossible to bring the existing compulsory regulations into any practical operation, and the Board of Education having only as yet taken objection to the well-weighed suggestions and emendations placed by your Committee before the Government, and made no movement on their own side, your Committee have in the meantime adopted the resolution to require of their own teachers a certain amount weekly of regular domestic visitation. From this they anticipate, among other good results, a somewhat larger and more regular attendance. They very willingly recognise the unwearied efforts of the visitor of schools under the Board of Education to assist in securing the same end, and in drafting in children from the street; but beyond the moral influence he may be able to exert, even his power, in consequence of defective legislation, is next to nought.

There is one other important matter to which your Committee would venture to request attention, and that is the state of the Ladies' Committee. Certain ladies have been formally appointed from year to year to constitute this Committee; but for the last two years or more it has become practically inert and inoperative; and your Committee have now respectfully to suggest that the Executive for the ensuing year be instructed to take measures, such as they may deem expedient, by securing the co-operation of some new ladies or otherwise, to re-awake and resuscitate so important an element in the management and supervision of these schools.

Before closing this report your Committee desire to place here on record their own feeling of the serious loss the Association has just sustained by the removal to England of Mr. Philip T. Smith and his family. Only the members of the Executive can fully know and appreciate how deeply indebted these schools have been during the last two years to that gentleman's presence, his counsel, and his purse.

It will be found from the Treasurer's report that the pecuniary position of the Association is somewhat satisfactory and even encouraging. The expenditure for the last year has been £610, and the sums already received amount to £564 13s. 7d., leaving an apparent balance to debit of upwards of £25: but to meet this the Treasurer has still a portion of the Government grant to receive.

The annual expenditure is now considerable, and will during the ensuing year be, to some extent, increased: and the question may be put, what after all has been found the outcome of all this Ragged School effort; and can we point to results which can justify the continuance of all this expenditure of labour and of money? To this we reply: It may not be possible to gauge the exact results of good effected, of evil prevented. But meantime we have two facts to ponder; *first*, that of these 440 children few or none would receive any civilized teaching, we might perhaps say, any moral training or discipline, and, what is almost as important, few or none of them be off the streets or out of the way of evil example and temptation, but for these schools; *second*, that some 320 of these children are kept on the average for four active and perilous hours a day and for five or six days every week, under a teacher's eye and discipline, out of gross temptation and impure example, and learning to do some work with head and heart; and this other fact, now too well ascertained by your Committee, we have to put beside these two, that the children of the same class not attending these schools who have ceased to feel parental control or are under none, and have succeeded in evading the restraints of school discipline, are known to be fast becoming criminals—a ruin to themselves, and an oppressive burden to the colony.

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