

(No. 15.)



1874.

TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

RAGGED SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION.

REPORT FOR 1873.

Laid upon the Table by the Attorney-General, and ordered by the House to be printed, July 21, 1874.



SIXTEENTH Report of the HOBART TOWN RAGGED SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.

DURING the last year the three Schools of the Association have been conducted by the same band of teachers, superintended by nearly the same local boards, and assisted by nearly the same ladies who have for years past rendered help and countenance so important; and without any noise or demonstration, and without eliciting much sympathy beyond the immediate circle of those who give them their time, and service and superintendence, and many occasional donations, these schools are continuing to do within their special sphere an amount of good, and exerting an influence so beneficial as local institutions, as to make them sources of benefaction to the city and the country far beyond the actual amount of money that they cost.

The average daily attendance during the year has been 350; the average number on the books 490. The average attendance at Watchorn-street has been 108, on the books 150; at Collins-street, attendance 130, on the books 173; at Cascades Road, attendance 115, on the books 167. These numbers, though somewhat less than last year, are quite up to the teaching power.

Though nineteen years have elapsed since the foundation of the earliest of these schools, it is difficult, through the many changes in their management, to particularise or tabulate results. One teacher says:—"It is now nearly 15 years since I first took charge of this school, and I seldom walk the streets but I am recognised by some old scholar. I am able to report favourably of a great number who have left the school; though numbers leave of whom no tidings can be gathered except that they have gone to the other colonies, and in most cases are doing well. One lad served his time at Mr. Walch's to the bookbinding, and is now in Melbourne earning 35s. a week, age 19. Of some eighteen or twenty others in Hobart Town, some are with Messrs. Cumming, Fletcher, Perkins, Austin, Peacock, Wilson, Meech, &c. Nearly all of these lads attended no other school; and the time they have been at their places ranges from two to six years." Specific facts like these it is important to ascertain: and your Committee have been led to think that something more might be done by all the teachers in the way of watching the future career of the children that pass through their hands, and so laying the foundation of a school record with contents and results of considerable value.

There is one special case dealt with this last year that it may be interesting to name. A deaf and dumb girl, for many years a pupil in one of your schools, has been sent, through the influence of your Committee, to be taught and trained in the Sydney Institution. Some letters have been already received, reporting most favourably on this child as a bright and promising pupil. She had been taught in your school to copy pages of writing; and it has been very touching to read little letters from this child to her home; letters as yet dictated and set, but copied in a good firm hand by her own pen. The arrangement made is this: the Government is to bear two-thirds of the expense for five years; a few gentlemen undertake the remaining third; the parents provide clothes. The Steam Navigation Company, on the request of your Committee, granted a free passage to Sydney; and Mrs. James Salier saw to her outfit, which was provided at the expense of her parents and a few friends. By arranging the terms in connection with this first case, your Committee have been able to initiate what they think may prove a plain and easy method of dealing with such cases in the future.

The Ladies' Committee reports: "The work of the schools has gone on steadily during the last year; the progress made by the children has been satisfactory; the average attendance good. The annual treat took place in the Domain on 27th February, 380 children present; the day was fine and all passed off very favourably; the usual supply of sandwiches, meat pies, plum pudding, cake,

buns, and fruit was provided by the kindness of friends. The cost in money was £7 10s. 4d.; but, besides this, large contributions of food, fruit, &c. were sent by kind friends. The sum of £57 5s. 3d. has been collected by the ladies and paid in to the Treasurer."

The Lady Superintendent of Watchorn-street reports: "The girls have improved very much in needlework; 71 articles of clothing were given to the children last June, principally under-clothes made by themselves. There is now being made up 20 yards of material. The Hon. Mrs. Du Cane sent calico; Lady Officer print; and Mrs. James Salier print, calico, and flannel. The Lady Superintendent of this school expresses regret that so few visitors, particularly of the ladies, show their presence in it."

The Lady Superintendent of Collins-street reports:—"In July the distribution of clothing took place, when 190 children received one or more articles of clothing each; about 91 of these pieces were made by the girls in school. These distributions of clothing in the winter months are a great boon to the children, many of whom would otherwise be but poorly clad. The girls are now busy making up flannel presented by the Hon. Mrs. Du Cane, and other material given by Mrs. Woolley, Mrs. J. W. Clarke, and Mr. Mather. Contributions of clothing have also been received from Mrs. Parsons and Mrs. Webster."

The Lady Superintendent of Cascades Road reports:—"The number of children in attendance continues satisfactory. Mrs. Dear finds, on visiting the parents, that the services of Miss Mitchell and her assistant are much appreciated; 70 articles of clothing were given to the girls in winter of their own workmanship; 40 yards of print were some time since presented by the Hon. Mrs. Du Cane, which is being made up by the girls into frocks for themselves."

Your Committee would now in closing invite attention, as has been their wont, to certain measures of practical reform:—

1. There is in all the three schools a want of teaching power. No doubt your teachers do the best they can; but it is a mighty mistake to imagine that we ought to be satisfied with a lower and feebler staff in schools like these, than in those public schools which are composed of more disciplined and receptive pupils. Instead of less, there ought to be more teaching power maintained in them, and, if possible, of a higher quality, intellectual as well as moral, in order to secure among children, so much in a state of degenerated nature, that firm and watchful discipline, and that steady and quiet work which can alone lead to lasting and fully satisfactory results. For the Murray-street Free School, organised recently under the immediate supervision of Mr. Stephens, teachers have been selected of a high quality and thorough training; the staff is nearly twice as full; the cost in salaries more than twice as high; while the numbers are not more than in any one of your schools, and the prescribed programme of lessons no higher. In view of all this, your Committee beg respectfully to invite more and more liberal donations from the country districts, and to suggest to the ladies that they revise their collecting lists, find out omitted names, and endeavour to add from £50 to £100 more to the revenue.

2. There is a want in regular attendance and in compulsory power. One teacher says:—"My school is very variable. It is to be regretted that the parents of the children do not evince that desire to keep them regular which is necessary to the improvement of the school." And this is no doubt true. But irregular attendance has a more important bearing on the boys and girls themselves than on the mere lessons of the school. It affects their character and habits, exposes them to the bad training of the streets, and unsettles or undoes the better impressions that were beginning to be made. Something of this might be remedied by the ladies bringing their influence to bear on the homes and parents. But your Committee are reaching the conviction that some measures beyond this are essential or advisable. Since the meeting of last year, and in consequence of a representation made to the Administrator of Charitable Grants, the Inquiring Officer has had a printed form issued, certifying to the regular attendance of all children for whose maintenance a grant of public money was made, and has had this returned to him, signed by a master of one of these Free Schools, before making the monthly payment. This was done with very satisfactory results so long as money grants were made in any number. Since that meeting also the compulsion clause in the Public Schools Act, though vague enough and voidable still, has been made more stringent. But your Committee are of opinion that some further legislative provisions are yet expedient. They know that there is a class of children in the city over whom their parents have no control. They are of opinion that children whose education, and in many cases their maintenance, is thrown entirely on the community, the officials of the country ought to be enabled to deal with in the same authoritative way, as it is the duty and the usual custom of parents to deal with their own,—that is, to enforce obedience; and that the practice of boys and girls of from eight to twelve being allowed, through the neglect or incapacity of parents or otherwise, to take the law and guidance of their own conduct into their own hands, would not be tolerated in any heathen land, and is a public scandal in a Christian land. To this matter they are of opinion that the attention of the Government should be specially invited. They believe that a means may be contrived for bringing a power of restraint and compulsion to bear on the children themselves; that, if such a law be enacted, it should be the duty of the enquiring or relieving officer to set it in motion; and that an almost absolute discretion in

judging as to the validity of any claims of exemption, and in dealing with such cases, might be safely vested for a time in a Bench composed of two magistrates, of whom the Stipendiary Police Magistrate is one.

P.S.—Since passing the above Report, your Committee have got the statement of the year's accounts from the late Treasurer. By this they are informed that the subscriptions collected during the year have been no more than £78 14s. 11*d.*; and that the balance against the Schools at this date is £102 13s. 11*d.* These facts have come to their knowledge within the last week.

THE TREASURER in Account with the HOBART TOWN RAGGED SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.

Dr.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1872,	To Cash Subscriptions and						
Nov.	Donations	78	14	11			
26th,	To Cash from H.M. Go-						
to	vernment	300	0	0			
1873,					378	14	11
Dec.	Balance due Bank...	..			102	13	11
13th.							
					£481	8	10

Cr.		£	s.	d.
1872,	By Cash Balance due Bank.....	12	8	6
Nov.	Printing and Advertising .	7	0	6
26th.	Fuel	9	17	0
	School-books & Stationery	15	7	11
	Furniture	3	18	0
	Furniture and Repairs	27	0	2
	Hire of Alliance Rooms ...	1	0	0
	Tuition: Masters£252			
	„ Mistresses ..£126			
	„ Monitors ... £21			
		399	0	0
	Interest on Overdrawn			
	Account	5	16	9
		£481	8	10

THOS. WESTBROOK, *Treasurer.*

Examined and found correct,

J. W. WOOLLEY, }
CHAS. CROSBY, } *Auditors.*

December 18th, 1873.