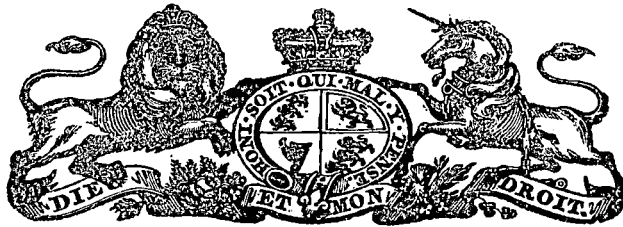


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R A G G E D S C H O O L S A S S O C I A T I O N.

R E P O R T F O R 1874.

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SEVENTEENTH Report of the HOBART TOWN RAGGED SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.

IN respect to the teachers, discipline, attendance, and working of these schools during the past year the Committee have nothing new to report. The schools have gone on as usual; providing a certain amount of instruction and training to about 400 children; visited and superintended by such members of the Committee as take a deeper interest in their results, and by certain well-known ladies who assist the female teachers in providing materials and preparing the work for the girls. The staff of teachers remains nearly the same; the number of children nearly the same; the average daily attendance 363; the average number on the books 504. At Watchorn-street, out of 158 on the books the attendance has been 106; at Collins-street, out of 159 the attendance has been 128; and at the Cascade Road, out of 187 the ordinary attendance has been 129. These numbers are quite beyond what has up till now been the teaching power provided, and quite beyond the size of the rooms fairly to accommodate. The schools were all examined as usual at last Christmas, and with, on the whole, satisfactory results—when the irregular attendance is taken into account—in so far as English reading, spelling, arithmetic, and a certain amount of religious instruction go; but in none of the schools could the written penmanship be viewed with any satisfaction. Something more also may be done in the way of moral training, and in the industrial training both of the elder boys and girls. The Lady Superintendents report that in each school the girls' work has gone on in a very satisfactory manner. "In Watchorn-street a distribution of clothing took place in July last, when 67 articles of clothing made in the school were given to the children. Lady Officer sent 40 yards of print to this school, and Miss Parsons also sent some work." "At Collins-street a distribution also took place in July. There were 190 children present, each of whom received one or more articles of apparel: of these 80 had been made by the girls under Miss Proctor's care. The materials were furnished by Lady Officer, Mrs. Woolley, and Mr. Mather. Contributions of clothes were also received from Mrs. Webster and other ladies." "At Cascade Road there was a like distribution in July, when each girl had a warm skirt. There were also given 16 frocks and other articles, all made by the girls in school under Miss Mitchell's care. Thanks are due for calico and other material to Mrs. Perkins, to Mr. P. O. Fysh, to Messrs. B. Mather, Brownell, and others."

But, if they have nothing beyond usual to report in respect to the arrangements, routine, and work of the past year, your Committee have to beg very special attention to what they have now to say as to the buildings, the teaching staff, the teaching arrangements, and the finances; with which they are now and have for some time been seriously occupied. Finding themselves in charge of so large a body of children—perhaps two-thirds of all those in the city who receive or require free schooling—they have set themselves to meet more effectively the responsibilities which in some measure they have been constrained to accept.

1. As to building.—Having felt the absolute need of increased accommodation—that the rooms may be less crowded, and the classes better arranged, taught, and trained—they decided to make the additions demanded; and have now to report that three new class-rooms with galleries are being built or provided, one at each school, and some thirty feet in length, for the separate management of infants of from 4 years to 6; and that the school premises in Watchorn and Collins-streets are being so altered as to provide two more of nearly the same dimensions for the female teachers, and the more peculiar duties that devolve on them. These buildings, and the necessary furnishings, will scarcely be completed at a less cost than £400. Towards this amount a public grant is to be received of £300, and your Committee confide in the liberal assistance of friends of these Institutions for the raising of the remaining £100.

2. As to the teaching staff.—Your Committee in their last Report submitted their matured conviction that, in view of the numbers now attending, more teaching power had become essential if these schools were not to be allowed to sink into mere nurseries for neglected infants and places of refuge, to keep elder children from the streets, but were to be maintained in a position to convey such a fair amount of elementary instruction, and to provide such an amount of individual oversight and moral and mental training, as to satisfy the judgment of an intelligent community that they were aiming at least at as much as can be fairly attained, and were doing, in return for the public confidence they enjoy, good service to the State. Your Committee have therefore decided to relieve the masters and mistresses of the juvenile schools entirely from the immediate presence and charge of the younger children, to constitute the infants a separate division in each school, and to appoint a new teacher in each with the distinct charge of that department. Here the system of infant teaching and training will be as far as possible carried out. They hope also to be enabled to provide a monitor or junior assistant in each school; and in the meantime they have decided to increase somewhat the salaries of all the teachers, in order to secure a high class of teachers, to encourage those who have proved efficient, and to be justified in requiring the devotion of their whole time and strength to their school duties.

3. As to teaching arrangements.—Your Committee are engaged in preparing a Programme and Time-table to regulate the division of labour, the lessons, the order, and the work in all the schools. They hope thus to secure more of system, unity, and appreciable results. They anticipate, too, that certain of their officials will be able to visit the Schools with more method and regularity, and to bring into operation something like a periodic inspection, not merely general and perfunctory, but specific and searching, so as to test the state of each class and the mental and moral progress of each child. They propose, also, that there should be henceforth kept by the teachers in each school a register of those children who finally leave it, in which, to some extent at least, the future career of each may be traced and recorded. They have not as yet been able to arrange any practicable system for the industrial training of the elder boys; but in respect to the elder girls they propose that, in addition to the ordinary sewing work, some of them should be regularly employed hereafter in the sweeping and cleaning of the schoolrooms; that a small weekly sum should be placed for this purpose at the disposal of the female teachers; and that it shall be part of their duty to superintend and encourage their girls in this branch of household occupation.

4. As to finances.—Your Committee have to speak hopefully and gratefully. Last year's report ended with announcing an unexpected debt of £102 13s. 11d., and with recording the almost equally distressing fact that the year's subscriptions had amounted to no more than £78 14s. 11d. By the efforts of the new Treasurer, the Secretary, and especially of one member of your Committee—Mr. Smith—the subscriptions received for the past year have been £226 6s. 1d.; the debt is nearly cleared off; and your Committee are inspired with hope for the future. The increased expenditure on which they now enter will entail the necessity of an increased income of £250; but in order to incite to the raising of the means required, and to encourage the supporters of these Schools in fulfilling more sufficiently the purpose of their institution, the Parliament has consented, in addition to the free grant of £300 up to this time voted, to give a subsidy of pound for pound in response to every pound subscribed up to £200. Your Committee have therefore to state in plain words that they now require in the shape of subscriptions £200 instead of the £100 heretofore subscribed; and they confidently anticipate that, in view of the great and good work now before these Schools, they will not appeal to their friends in vain for this doubled subscription.

To one subject of public importance, affecting materially the attendance at these Schools and pressing seriously on the Chairmen of many Local Boards, your Committee desire to invite attention before they close. It is to the fact that so many children of from 9 years to 12 are now being employed to work at wages so high as to be a great temptation to many parents, and to the frequency with which letters of exemption from attending school, in some cases hard to refuse, are claimed for them on this ground. Your Committee submit that it is a subject for very earnest consideration whether, in order to prevent the entire evasion, and on an extensive scale, of the compulsory clauses in the Education Acts, it may not be necessary or expedient to appeal to the Legislature to pass some statute of the nature of the Home Factory Acts to declare the employment on wages of children of such tender years unlawful.

