

(No. 18.)



1883.

T A S M A N I A.

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y.

RAGGED SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION :

REPORT FOR 1882.

Laid upon the Table by the Premier, and ordered by the House to be printed,
July 24, 1883.



Ragged School Association, Hobart, 5th June, 1883.

SIR,

THE state of the Schools, which are three in number, for the year ending December, 1883, as respects attendance, was as follows :—

	<i>Boys.</i>	<i>Girls.</i>	TOTAL.
No. on Rolls	237	245	482
Average daily Attendance	152	147	299
Present at Examinations.....	171	176	347

The Schools at Cascade-road, Lower Collins-street, and Watchorn-street, were, as usual, examined towards the close of the year by Thomas Stephens, Esq., M.A., Oxon., Chief Inspector of Schools; and from the Report furnished by him to the Government it will be seen that the Schools of the Association are in a fair state of efficiency, and that they will compare favourably with Schools under the Board reaching a similar standard.

From this Report it will also be seen that the discipline and general management of the Schools are highly satisfactory. When the class of children is taken into consideration, and when the entire absence of home training is borne in mind, the care of the teachers and their ability is made apparent.

The great majority of the children are of the most destitute class, the parents being, for the most part, in one or both instances, addicted to intemperance, and so steeped in vice and poverty that they are alike unable and unwilling to care for the education of their offspring; while in no case are any children admitted to the Schools who would not have a claim to be placed on the free list in any Public School. The greatest care is taken by the Committee attached to each School, by whom the children are admitted, to exclude such as are able to take advantage of the State Schools in the city.

It is also deserving of notice that, liberal as the provision is which is made by the Government to the Association, the children under their care, while they are as efficiently taught, cost much less per scholar to the State than the children who are educated in the Public Schools of the Colony. This is the result largely of the close supervision and immediate control which the Committee are happily able to exercise in the Schools. But apart from the economy of their working, and the actual saving thereby effected, the Schools of the Association are imparting secular instruction to, and bringing under moral training, a class of children who could not be reached by any machinery which the State could put in operation. The experiments which have been tried so earnestly and at such cost in England, in Victoria, and elsewhere, have entirely broken down in their attempts to bring into ordinary Public Schools the children of the dissolute poor. Hence Ragged Schools, which had been closed when a National System of Education had been introduced at once free and compulsory, are again being opened under the pressure of a stern necessity. The Committee of the Association feel that they are doing a work which is beyond the reach of a State institution.

At a recent Conference on Ragged Schools held in London, representations from all the great cities of England bore uniform testimony to the fact that the need for such institutions was never greater than at present.

The Committee strongly deprecate the idea that the work of the Association tends to foster pauperism; the result of experience, extending over a quarter of a century, enables them to affirm, on the contrary, that the result of their work has been to educate those who would otherwise have grown up untaught, and to fit for the discharge of the duties of useful citizens those whose social surroundings and home training would otherwise have prepared for a career of crime.

The Committee have much gratification in stating that the Schools of the Association are in a very satisfactory condition. No important changes have taken place in their management. The Teachers are the same as last year, and, by their continued zeal and the ability with which they have laboured in their several departments, they still retain the entire confidence of the Committee; and the regularity of the children in their attendance has been quite equal to that of former years. By the cheerfully rendered help of the visiting officer, Mr. Stuart, and the self-imposed labour of the Teachers in visiting absentees, numbers of poor children are induced to attend the Schools who would otherwise be roaming about the streets or attending only in the most irregular way.

The Committee regret to find that, while their efforts are securing education for a large number of children who would not be overtaken by the Public School system, there are still numbers of destitute and neglected waifs in the city who elude their vigilance. This is the result of the existing compulsory enactment, which neither defines the number of days during which children must attend School, nor visits with any penalties whatever those who give occasional or permanent employment to children of tender years and within the school ages. The Committee earnestly trust that some legislative remedy may speedily be found for this twofold evil.

The Committee desire anew to record their indebtedness to the ladies who interest themselves in the progress of the Association, and who have continued in the past, as throughout so many years, to provide articles of comfort for the scholars during the winter months. They desire also to make mention of the continued liberality of the numerous friends of the Association, by means of which the work of the School is carried on with the efficiency which characterises it, and to place on record its grateful thanks to their old friend and benefactor to the Schools, W. A. Guesdon, Esq., of Clapham Common, London, for his generous donations of £50 to the Cascade Road School, and £20 8s. to the Lower Collins-street School, to be invested at interest and to form the nucleus of a fund to be established for giving prizes to the children of these Schools.

As promised in last year's Report, the Committee proposed to afford the children an opportunity of showing their industrial capabilities; but the movement took a wider and much more important range than was at first contemplated, and the various products of the taste and skill of the children, as displayed in their contributions to the Juvenile Court of the Industrial Exhibition, reflected great credit upon all concerned, especially when the circumstances under which they were produced are taken into consideration.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

L. R. CASTRAY, *Hon. Secretary.*

The Hon. the Chief Secretary, Hobart.