

No. 6.

The COLLECTOR of CUSTOMS, Auckland, to the SECRETARY of CUSTOMS, Wellington.

SIR,—

Customs, Auckland, 27th July, 1875.

Referring to your telegram of Saturday last, the 24th instant, relative to the escape of certain boys from the Naval Training School at Kohimarama, and requesting me to make inquiry into the cause thereof, I have the honor to inform you that I yesterday visited the place above referred to, and on arrival there proceeded at once to the school-room, and had several of the lads brought before me one by one, each of whom I questioned as to their treatment at the school. The replies in each case were invariably to the effect that they were kindly treated, and had nothing to complain of. I subsequently went on board the schooner, where several of the boys concerned in the recent attempt to escape were employed under the charge of the ship-keeper. I had each of these brought before me in the cabin, and, in reply to my questions, they also gave similar answers to those on shore. I then made inquiries of Mr. Johnson, who lives in the adjoining allotment, and also of the ship-keeper, as to whether either of them was aware of or had witnessed any unkindness on the part of those in charge, and both replied decidedly in the negative. I may here mention that, in order to avoid any appearance of undue pressure, none of the officers of the school were present when the boys were examined. Several of the boys concerned in the recent desertion were from the Home Street School, and ran away from that place in the first instance. For example, J. Dansey ran away five times; John Donovan and George Kelly, each more than once; and John Woods stated plainly that he wanted to leave and go back to his mother. These lads, being of an unsettled and roving disposition, seem to have enticed some of the younger ones to desert, who otherwise would not have thought of it.

From my own personal observation upon frequent visits, and also from the evidence of the boys themselves, I am of opinion that there has been no unkindness shown to any of them, but quite the contrary; and that all, with very few exceptions, seemed happy and contented. The time provided for recreation seems moreover ample.

I can therefore assign no other reason for the late desertions than that already mentioned, viz. the bad example of a few insubordinate spirits among so many boys.

I append herewith the statement made by each boy examined, as nearly as possible *verbatim*.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS HILL,

Collector.

The Secretary of Customs, Wellington.

MEMORANDUM of EVIDENCE taken by COLLECTOR of CUSTOMS, Auckland, on a visit to the NAVAL TRAINING SCHOOL, at KOHIMARAMA, on 26TH JULY, 1875.

Depositions.

1. Charles Barnes: gets plenty to eat and drink; Captain kind and Mr. Speight kind,—very happy.
2. John Bates: likes being in the school first-rate; treated all right by both Captain Breton and the schoolmaster,—would not like to run; gets plenty to eat.
3. Henry Smith: gets plenty of play, and as much as he can eat; schoolmaster and Captain Breton both kind,—would not care to bolt; has nothing to complain of.
4. Charles Carter: has nothing to complain of; is well treated by both Captain Breton and schoolmaster.
5. Mortimer Kelliher: is well treated; Captain Breton is good to him; schoolmaster very kind too, teaches him well, and takes great pains; gets plenty to eat.
6. William McCormick: likes being in the school very well; is treated kindly by both Captain Breton and the schoolmaster; has nothing to complain of.
7. J. T. Lyons: has nothing to complain of; bolted once; was enticed to do so, would not do it again; Captain Breton and schoolmaster both kind.
8. Adam Morrow: is well treated, has four hours' play every day; every one kind; has no complaint.
9. Alexander Anderson: cannot say why he ran away; is well treated; both Captain Breton and schoolmaster kind; has plenty of play time.
10. John Donovan: is well treated by Captain Breton and all belonging to the school; would not bolt; had an idea of it once.
11. Edward Roberts: saw some of the other boys going off, which put it into his head to do the same; is well treated.
12. George Kelly: is comfortable here, they are all kind to him; ran away because he did not like to be there.
13. John Woods: wants to leave the school to go back to his mother; has nothing to say against the place; all kind to him.
14. Joseph Dansey: ran away three times; had no reason, will not do it again; every one kind, and is well treated.
15. Charles Clark: likes the school; is treated kindly; was seen talking with the runaway lads, and brought on board accordingly; has no complaints.
16. Frederick Charles Gray: was persuaded by another boy named Roberts to run away; is well and kindly treated; has no wish to run away again; would like to be on the ship always; has no complaints.
17. Patrick Donnacher: was well and kindly treated; has no complaints.

THOMAS HILL,

Collector.

Customs, Auckland, 27th July, 1875.