

is held in the afternoon. There is a fairly good band-room, and a room which serves very well for the purpose of a tailor's workshop. Store-rooms for clothes are rather small for such a large number of boys as there are in the institution (126). The boys were somewhat roughly clad, and I think it would be advisable—in winter, at all events—that they should all have somewhat warmer underclothing. Some had boots and stockings or socks, and some were barefooted. They did not seem, however, as far as I could see, to be suffering from cold. There were no fires in any part of the premises, except the kitchen. Dinner was being prepared when I arrived. Potatoes, which were sound but not of particularly good quality, were being scraped in a rough-and-ready manner in the yard. The dinner, which consisted of Irish stew, tasted better than it looked. It contained a sufficient quantity of meat, and there was an ample supply. The dietary scale shown me does not show sufficient variety (former inmates who afterwards came to see me informed me that puddings, although down on the bill-of-fare two days a week, were given only on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, but very little butter and milk were provided, and hardly any vegetables, except potatoes). Irish stew plays too prominent a part in the dietary scale. The boys seem on the whole well nourished. Their height and development are rather below the normal standard for boys of the same age. This may be due to the previous history of many of them. The Brothers and the Visiting Medical Officer informed me that there was remarkably little sickness among the inmates.

The training of the inmates seems to be too indefinite altogether. They should be more regularly trained in different kinds of work. The arrangements for holding school are open to criticism. The regular hours are from 1 to 4 and from 5 to 6.30, with an hour—from 7 to 8—in the morning during part of the year. I did not see the school in operation. Such indications as I could see of the character of the teaching did not impress me greatly; in fact, such a school should have a good teaching staff. There is no proper carpentry workshop, though there are a few tools in a shed that passes by that name. There is no regular instruction in carpentry.

The estate is a large one, with sheep and cattle, a garden, and some fruit-trees. The boys therefore have an opportunity of picking up a miscellaneous experience in various kinds of work.

In regard to the four cells referred to in the report of the surprise visit made by the members of the Nelson Charitable Aid Board, which has been the subject of correspondence with this department, one of these has since been removed. It was about 7 ft. 6 in. by 4 ft. by 7 ft. high, with a barred opening about 18 in. square looking into the room in the corner of which the cell was placed. This was situated in the tower. Two other cells have been used as a photographic studio, probably for some years past; the remaining cell, on the ground-floor, is somewhat larger and more comfortable than the first one referred to; the two latter, it was admitted, have been used recently for confining two returned absconders for a period of a week or more. This is contrary to regulations laid down by an Order in Council dated 14th October, 1895, for punishments in Government industrial schools, which regulations are held to apply to private schools also. It was likewise admitted that the regulations had been further transgressed by the use of a supplejack for corporal punishment instead of the prescribed strap. In my opinion, all punishments should be entered regularly in a punishment record, and copies of the same, as far as it applies to Government inmates, should be forwarded monthly to this department, as is done in the case of the Government industrial schools. From the admission of the Brothers it appears, moreover, that the regulations regarding deprivation of ordinary articles of diet—regulations prescribed by the same Order in Council—have not been strictly adhered to.

After my visit I saw the Very Rev. Dean Mahoney, official manager of the institution, who resides in Nelson, and I had a general conversation with him on the matters observed during my visit. I also saw four members of the Charitable Aid Board—namely, Messrs. G. M. Rout, J. Piper, C. Harley, and J. Baigent—who have made a complaint to the Minister of Education regarding alleged illegal punishments inflicted on inmates of the institution, and have asked for an inquiry into other abuses that are alleged to exist in connection with its management. These charges may be summarised as follows:—

1. Confining in cells for illegal periods.
2. Use of fetters, and irregular punishment in other ways.
3. Cruel treatment of inmates.
4. Improper and insufficient food.
5. Insufficient clothing.
6. Irregularities in respect of wages of inmates at service.
7. Unsatisfactory arrangements for the training and education of the inmates.
8. Illegal and irregular burial of deceased inmates in the grounds of the institution.
9. More serious charges of a more or less criminal character.

On these grounds an inquiry is asked for by the members of the Charitable Aid Board, the resolutions, I am informed, having been carried unanimously. The inquiry asked for is described variously as “an official inquiry,” “an open and full inquiry,” and “a public inquiry.” Opinions in favour of such an inquiry were also expressed by Judge Robinson, Mr. Tatton, and Dr. Mackie, who, with other gentlemen, on the invitation of Dean Mahoney, visited the institution shortly after the surprise visit of the Charitable Aid Board. Two only of those who came to see me considered an inquiry unnecessary. These were Mr. J. A. Harley, Mayor of Nelson, and Dr. Roberts, Medical Officer to the institution. The latter, however, qualified his statements by saying that the Medical Officer to such an institution ought to be appointed by Government, as he would then be free to criticize points in the management which might come under his observation. Several other citizens of known standing supported the request for an inquiry, though desiring that their names should be withheld. On the whole, there seems little doubt that a strong feeling of uneasiness as to the management of the institution has been growing up for many years past, and has now reached an acute stage. A large proportion even of those likely to form a sober judgment fear that there may be a solid substratum of fact for the suspicions entertained.