

the Home on a Tuesday, and is described by the Manager as looking thin and half-starved. On the Thursday she received twelve strokes of the strap. On the Sunday she complained of pains in the head, and was treated in the institution. On the Monday she seemed to be getting worse, and the doctor was sent for, and ordered her removal to the Hospital, where she was found to be suffering from appendicitis. She was cured of this, and returned to Te Oranga, but has absconded again during the progress of this inquiry, and is still at large. I have formed a very decided opinion that this girl was not in a fit condition to be strapped when she received that punishment, and, had medical approval been a condition precedent to its infliction, I do not believe that the girl would have been passed as fit. At the same time, I think the Manager ought to have refrained from the strapping when she herself admits that the girl looked thin and half-starved. It is impossible, of course, to believe that there was any connection between the punishment and the attack of appendicitis, and this opinion is indorsed by the Medical Officer.

Besides the strap, the other punishments made use of in the institution are these: Putting in a cell; putting in the detention-yard; wearing a punishment dress; putting to bed; keeping apart from other inmates; hair cut; and the minor punishments, not recorded, of bread and water, or depriving of a certain quantity of food. From the punishment register I have prepared a summary showing the punishments inflicted during the past two years, and the figures are interesting and important, as showing the apparent inutility of many of the punishments inflicted. The figures also show what I am very pleased to see, and that is that the number of girls requiring to be frequently punished is but proportionately small.

As I have already said, punishment was inflicted 153 times on forty-three inmates. Of these, one inmate was punished eighteen times, one was punished fourteen times, one was punished ten times, one was punished eight times, three inmates were punished seven times, two were punished six times, three were punished five times, two were punished four times, six were punished three times, nine were punished twice, and fourteen were punished once. These figures are worthy of some attention.

There is nothing in the cell-punishment that calls for any special remark. The cell is merely a small room, well lined, warm, and fairly lighted, and with fixed seats. I think, however, that there is clear evidence that the cell-punishment has not been strictly supervised, and unless improved might be seriously abused. I have very grave doubts whether the regulations in this connection have been strictly complied with. There should be no margin of possibility of abuse creeping into the infliction of any form of punishment. It must always be borne in mind that these girls are wards of the State, and that they are committed to the Home and detained there for the purpose, theoretically, of being reformed. They are at the mercy, so to say, of those in authority, and the most scrupulous care should be exercised to prevent any possibility of an abuse of power.

Considerable attention has been directed to the case of two girls whose hair was cut, in addition to other punishments. In the register the offence of one is described as, "Absconding, and the ring-leader of the absconders. Was constantly inciting a number of girls to abscond and join her in leading a bad life." For this it was decreed that she should be placed in cell and detention-yard from the 2nd November to the 10th November, should receive twelve strokes of the strap, and have her hair cut. The entry against the other girl is as follows: "Absconding. This girl also constantly inciting others to abscond and lead a bad life." For this it was ordered that she should receive twelve strokes of the strap and have her hair cut. It seems that on previous occasions the Manager had recommended that the hair of certain girls should be cut, but the Department then steadily refused to sanction it. In June, 1901, the Department refused to grant permission, on the ground that cutting the hair would be an indignity that could not be approved. Again, in July, 1905, the Department expressed itself as strongly opposed to cutting the hair of girls as objectionable and of no practical use. On this latest occasion the circumstances appeared so unusual and so grave that the required authority was given and the hair was cut. I can only assume that the Department considered, when recommending that the required sanction should be given to the Manager to cut the girl's hair, that, standing as it does *in loco parentis*, it would have sufficient authority over the girls to order their hair to be cut. I do not know what other warrant could be claimed for the act. I can find nothing in the regulations that, to my mind, can cover the position in any way. The only regulation that approaches the case would be No. 123, which runs as follows: "Punishment by the imposition of some badge of degradation, or of some special article of dress, may be inflicted, but not without the sanction of the Minister." It may be, of course, that the Department thinks that the words "some badge of degradation" cover the case. I can scarcely, however, think this; and, if I am correct in my view, I can only fall back upon my first suggestion—that the general power of a parent over his child is claimed. With this I am not now concerned; but it certainly does seem a matter for regret that the Department should, after years of refusal, have decided to recommend for Ministerial authority an act that, to say the least, has only doubtful authority for its execution. For myself, I do not profess to approve of this form of treatment,