

SATURDAY, 21ST MARCH, 1908.

THOMAS INGRAM SMAIL examined on oath.

1. *Mr. Russell.*] I think you are City Missioner and Lay Evangelist?—Yes.
2. I think for many years past you have been attending Te Oranga Home?—Yes, from the opening of the Home.
3. Are you there very often?—Yes. I used to go twice a week—on Wednesdays and Sundays—but my other duties took up too much time, so Mrs. Kaye takes the Wednesday class.
4. Have you had a good opportunity of watching the Home and all the details of its management?—The very best.
5. Broadly, what is your opinion in regard to the general management and administration of the Home?—It is one of the very best managed places I ever heard of.
6. And, so far as the Department is concerned, do you consider the Home is doing good work for the girls?—I do.
7. Have you noticed any appreciable change in the manner of the girls?—In many cases.
8. And in all cases does it tend to have a refining and bettering influence on the girls there?—I think, as carried out, the Home would better a girl if she was prepared to be bettered.
9. And if they are not prepared to be bettered it gives them a chance anyhow?—Yes.
10. Will you tell me if, in your opinion, the Matron looks after the girls as well as a mother could look after them?—I think so.
11. What is your opinion as to the feeling between the Matron and the girls?—Those who have spoken to me about her have always spoken of her as being their best friend. I may explain I have had opportunities of hearing them saying that when the Matron or anybody else has been out of reach. After service on Sunday nights the service girls return to town with me in the tram. Certain of the girls have been more outspoken than others, but in all the experience I have had of the girls, both in the trams and in town at entertainments with me, or when I have been at their entertainments at the Home, there has not been a girl who has not spoken to me in terms of the highest admiration of the Matron, and who has not looked upon her as her best friend.
12. You think the girls have affection for the Matron?—I am sure of it.
13. Have you had an opportunity at any time of noticing the Matron's treatment of the girls?—Yes.
14. And from what you have seen, what would you say?—In a kindly motherly way, putting before them their faults, and encouraging them to do better.
15. Do the girls generally appear to be happy at the Home?—Quite.
16. Have you seen them at their play and entertainments?—Yes; I have played with them.
17. You find them full of fun and life?—Yes. On what is called the Matron's birthdays, when two annual parties are given, I sit amongst the second-class girls, away from the Matron and the other visitors, and I have seen them, when the Matron came into the room, get up a little applause; and when any one has said a kindly remark about the Matron it has always been applauded to the echo.
18. Have you found as time goes on that the girls speak in a better way, and lose their coarseness?—You would not know them as the same girls in some instances; they become much more refined.
19. Taking the building as it is now, could the Matron or the Department do anything more to promote the welfare and well-being of the children?—No; I think they are as well classified as possible at the present time.
20. Have you ever had any complaints from the children about the food, or any hardships of any kind?—Never.
21. Have you seen them at work at their outdoor tasks?—I have not seen them at work, but I know the work they do.
22. Do you consider it beyond their strength?—I do not. It is most healthy. They must have physical work or you could not hold them.
23. Do you remember the girl named A— G—?—I do.
24. You have heard, no doubt, there was a difference between the Matron of the Samaritan Home, practically backed up by a lady, on the one hand, and the Matron of this Home on the other, for the possession of this girl?—When that girl was dealt with in the Court she was given to me to take to the Samaritan Home until arrangements were made for her to enter Te Oranga Home. I saw her at the Samaritan regularly twice a week. Then I remember when she was sent to Te Oranga Home. Then I remember when she was sent to the Mental Hospital, where I saw her regularly. I remember her when she came back to the Samaritan Home, and then I saw the whole of this difference in connection with her going to Mrs. Bean's house. I was opposed to it from the commencement, although I was asked by the Samaritan Home authorities if I could assist them. I was opposed to her going from the way the girl appeared to my individual self. She told me there exactly what she told the Matron in Te Oranga Home—that the girls were all against her—that she had no pleasure upstairs. Then she was continually telling me she was sick of life—that life was nothing to her. On one occasion she asked me if I could tell her why she was kept there, and I told her she had given her own answer, and that I could not be a party to putting out a girl who was sick of her life. The Home authorities spoke to me about it on more than one occasion, and I said I could not recommend the girl should go out, because she did not appear to me to be fit to go out. In addition to that, she used to get into very dour and sulky states.
25. Apart from your own intimate knowledge of the girl, if you knew Miss Early on the one hand and Mrs. Branting on the other, whose opinion would you rather take as to the desirability of letting out girls?—Mrs. Branting's.
26. Why?—I think Mrs. Branting has had much more experience, and I think Mrs. Branting carries responsibility more as it should be carried than Miss Early does.