

Mills, who was searching the road. I went then to see Mrs. Kaye, and was told of two more who were missing. However, they turned up, so you see it was a very anxious time. We thought we had lost H—— and G——. I spoke to the girls of the sin, &c., at prayer-time, and one girl—F—— B———appears to have been conscience-stricken, and asked me to take her to the office. When there, and before the constable, who had arrived, she said she knew where the girls were, and would take me to them. We found them through a manhole over the lavatories. They were going when the place was quiet. H—— has asked about ten girls to go out with her, and the four arranged to meet at a low house in town, of which H—— knew. I cannot keep this girl shut up continually, but, as an example, have I your permission to cut the hair of the two worst girls, H—— M—— and E—— S——? This would stop the trouble.—E. T. BRANTING.—“Hon. Minister,—The absconding of girls is a serious matter. The consequences may, and in some cases have been, exceedingly deplorable. I consider that in ordinary circumstances the cutting of a girl's hair would be an outrage that could scarcely be defended, but, of course, sentiment has its limits. H—— M—— is a very bad and unruly girl, as these papers show. E—— S—— has not hitherto been reported as particularly unruly, but no doubt the Manager has good ground for her recommendation. I recommend that she be authorised to carry out her proposals.—E. O. GIBBES.—7th November, 1907.” “Approved.—G. F.”?—Yes.

59. Apart from the sentiment altogether, do you consider it is a proper thing to do in the case of girls of this kind?—When it comes to a question between keeping the girls here and saving them from such a step as these girls were taking, I think there can be no question whatever about it.

60. Do you think if this E—— S——, who is away to-day, had had her hair cut it would have prevented her going?—Very likely.

61. It would make them more easily recognised?—There is no doubt about it.

62. In regard to corporal punishment generally, will you give the Commission the benefit of your ideas on that point?—The Department all through has been averse to corporal punishment if it could be avoided—that is, speaking particularly in regard to the elder inmates. The managers are very well aware of that, and they endeavour as far as they possibly can to avoid corporal punishment. I may say that at Burnham corporal punishment has been reduced very considerably. Here the number of cases is small, and it has been inflicted in only grave cases, as I think an inspection of the punishment register will show. A strapping is generally inflicted as the result of a long-continued course of action which is designed to upset the discipline of the Home, or in the case of absconding or attempting to abscond.

63. In the case of these girls who are now away, what punishment could be inflicted on them when they come back, short of corporal punishment, that would have any effect on them, and would tend to impress on them and the other inmates the seriousness of the business?—Supposing we had deprived a girl of all privileges and pleasures, and she deliberately endeavours to upset the discipline of the school, and behaves in such a way as only those who have seen it can appreciate, in such a case it seems to me, with the means we have at present, hardly anything else can be done. These offences are against the whole discipline of the school, and some means must be taken to maintain the discipline, otherwise you would simply have a mutiny.

64. If we had a building to put the worst girls in, would that help at all?—There is no doubt that would bring corporal punishment down to a minimum; but I thoroughly agree with Mr. Smail when he said he thought it would be a grave thing to entirely eliminate the power to inflict corporal punishment. If girls of this class in the Home now knew that had been done, well, I think the consequences would be very very bad indeed.

65. *The Commissioner.*] Do I understand the Department exercises no control over corporal punishment inflicted in the Home except by virtue of these regulations?—That is so.

66. Although you say the Department generally disapproves entirely of corporal punishment, it leaves it practically to the managers of these institutions to inflict it or not as they think fit?—We carefully scrutinise the copies of the punishment register that come to our office once a month, and if it appears in any case the punishment is beyond the offence we are not slow to call the Manager's attention to it.

67. The question naturally arises, if you admit that you are averse to corporal punishment as a Department, and yet think it would be a disastrous thing in the interests of the institution to do away with it, why not keep the infliction of corporal punishment entirely in your own hands?—Of course, there is the difficulty that the Manager could hardly act except by telegraphing. If she wrote it might take three or four days before she got an answer from Wellington, and it is difficult sometimes to say what is wanted in a telegram without making it of inordinate length.

68. I only suggest that as a sort of *modus vivendi* between the two extremes. The present outcry is against the indiscriminate use of corporal punishment by the person who is in immediate charge of the children, and the public probably would be generally satisfied if the control were kept in the hands of the Department?—Well, I think some such means might be devised to meet the case of big girls. I would not say it would be necessary in the case of big boys.

69. *Mr. Russell.*] Would it be better, in your opinion, if the question of punishment were remitted to the Magistrate, so that he could hear both sides?—I am inclined to think not. Our whole aim is to keep the children away from the Court. We constantly say to the inmates as soon as they are admitted, “Now, so far as we are concerned, we hope this is the last connection you will have with the Court.” Our aim is to put all that behind them. I think, therefore, the decision could be safely left to the Minister.

70. *The Commissioner.*] Upon the advice, perhaps, of the Manager, indorsed by the Medical Officer?—Yes.

71. *Mr. Russell.*] These are your ideas generally on the question of punishment?—Yes. I hope when we have this third-class building erected that corporal punishment will be almost eliminated.