Ragged Schools.

We cannot enter into the question of "Why should such exist," as a superficial observer in Sydney, or a stranger walking along amid the throng of any large city who has never felt the pinch of poverty or that deadening grip which hampers upon the very vital. That man was not less a man who sternly hammered on his last, while he gathered as the Great Master once did, those little ones round his feet.

John Pounds' name is one to be revered for the good he did when education was a thing to be bought, and so it is of Thomas Chalmers and Thomas Guthrie, who together stood on the bridge of Edinburgh and consulted on what could be done for the waifs, not only of Edinburgh, but of Great Britain.

Nor should we forget that noble efforts have been put forth by American men and women, by the late proprietress of the Bon Marché in Paris whose funeral was graced by her penitenciaries old and young.

Thinking of these things and our attention being drawn to a small object sitting the other day on the gutter kerb in Sussex-street we determined to find out whether such a thing as a Ragged School had an existence in this neighbourhood, where those who suffer from the effect of laziness or sottish waste might find a shelter. This was the result of our inquiries.

In Kent-street we came to a weather-board building on which was painted "Ragged School." The surroundings were not cheerful, a dilapidated fence showed the boundaries. Entering the grounds where some boys and girls were having their play-hour, the ground on which they played was the antipodes of those provided for any public school. The children like all other youngsters in this favorable climate, seemed contented with what was provided for their exercise. But we thought it would not cost much to make this play-ground a little easier for the little bare feet running over it. The school itself was clean, and furnished with all the necessary appliances for tuition, while the teacher and her assistant must love their work from a very high motive, to undertake it. The school derives no State aid, why we should ask. Are not these children as much entitled to it through the Managing Committee, as those attending public schools? Because they are ill cared for by those whose duty it is to look after them; is that any reason that they should grow up in ignorance? This very want of care is what debars them coming under the public Act, but while the Act provides for School Attendance Inspectors who are paid well for doing little, it ignores the existence of the philanthropic efforts of individuals to give these little waifs instruction. If the subscribers could but occasionally visit our Ragged Schools they could see the wan though in many cases the intelligent faces, the scanty attire, the evident wistful longing for freedom from their surroundings, we are sure the hands of the Committee would be greatly strengthened. Whoever has read Scott's 'Waverley,' must remember his schoolboy story of 'Greenbriars' in the fight.

We saw the facsimile of the Edinburgh waifs on our visit. His books must originally have been made out of some old green curtains, but there they were just reaching to his knees, the ends of them in strips as though they had been slashed purposely; the wearer of them a bright-looking boy about six.

The girls seemed quiet, and we should imagine gave less trouble to their teachers than those placed in more favorable circumstances. As we were leaving the corner of the building in response to the bell, came a young woman with a pair of basket sticks as long as herself, which set us amusingly thinking, that perhaps when Australia becomes a nation it is possible some of her best defenders may have in early boyhood received his first instinct of order and obedience at this school. We think at small expense the scholars could have a daily bath on the premises, and thus be better in health and stronger in spirit, for verily "cleanliness is next to godliness," but with children we think the first takes by a long way precedence.

Another matter deserving the attention of ladies is that donations of left-off clothing and particularly children's clothes would be most acceptable by the teachers for distribution among the more needy children. How often have we heard the expression 'I don't know what to do with these children's old things,' listen I send them to the Ragged Schools, where their receipt will work as great wonders as ever did Cinderella's slipper while the words will have a meaning 'Forasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me.'