

NEW PUBLIC SCHOOL, MOUNT KEIRA:

(From the *Illawarra Mercury*, November 13, 1877)

The picnic in celebration of the completion of the new Public School at Mount Keira took place on Friday last. Notwithstanding the threatening appearance of the weather, there could not have been less than between 500 and 600 persons present, exclusive of the children attending the school, who were invited gratuitously by the Local Board. Shortly before noon, the children, to the number of about one hundred, after having sung three of their school pieces in a very creditable manner, were seated upon the green sward immediately above the school and regaled with the choicest of picnic fare. Their youthful wants having been attended to, the adults were called upon to partake of the good things provided, the same being served in the schoolroom. The concourse was so great that the building was filled at least six different times before all present had satisfied the wants of the inner man. Although the attendance was so numerous and ample justice done to the creature comforts provided, the Committee seemed to have an almost inexhaustible supply on hand. The wants of the children and adults were most assiduously attended to by a committee of ladies, Mr. W. B. Green, the Secretary, Mr. J. P. Murphy, the teacher, and the various members of the Local Board, viz., Messrs. W. Shipp, T. Bode, D. T. O'Brien, M. Phillips, and D. Williams.

Immediately after all had partaken of the good things, the ceremonial part of the proceedings was commenced by Mr. W. B. Green taking the chair, on the motion of Mr. J. P. Murphy and Alderman Williams.

[The report then details, at seemingly interminable length, a series of speeches by the usual dignitaries; but as not one of them was guilty of an original thought or expression, we will spare you; merely remarking that they illustrate the (as it now seems) pathetic faith of the Victorians in schooling as a cure for poverty, idleness, drink, crime, and anything else you like to name—a delusion cherished even by Sherlock Holmes, who should have known better (after all, the Napoleon of Crime was a professor). The report concludes:]

Cheers having been given for the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Council of Education, Mr. McIntyre, Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, the Local Board, the Contractor, and the Chairman, the company dispersed to join in the abundant variety of amusements provided for the occasion, and which were kept up with zest until the shades of evening drew on. We should state that Mr. Theodore Bode discoursed music on the cornopeon for those who were desirous of indulging in dancing, which was carried on in a marquee erected for the purpose.

The scholastic duties were commenced in the school yesterday. The following is a description of the building and its appurtenances, all of which are erected of stone:— Schoolroom, 42 x 17 feet; classroom, 14 x 12; porch, 7 x 7; height of buildings, 12 feet from floor to tie-beams; lavatory, 14 x 6; Teacher's residence, 5 rooms, each 12 x 12, ten feet high, with passage. Two closets, one for boys and one for girls. A capacious well is also sunk upon the premises.