

# First Sunday School in Australia.

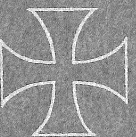


Centenary Celebrations,  
St. John's, Parramatta,  
May 18-25, 1913.

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The Founding of Sunday  
Schools in England  
and Australia.



with the Compliments of . . .

The Centenary Executive Committee.

# The founding of Sunday Schools in England and Australia.

## THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SYSTEM.

It is <sup>very</sup> thoroughly is the work of the Sunday School associated with the life of the Church that it is difficult in these days to imagine there ever was a time when the Sunday School system, as we now know it, was non-existent. Yet it is entirely a modern development. It is still more difficult to think how the Church could have done without this institution until what seems a comparatively recent date; for there can be little doubt that the Sunday School has met a need and achieved a conspicuous success. That it is one of the most fruitful departments of the whole field of Christian activity, that it has done noble service in the moulding and making of national character, that but for its endeavours thousands of men and women would know infinitely less to-day than they do of God's love and man's duty, are statements that need scarcely be affirmed: they are certainly beyond question.

But to say that the Sunday School is a modern development is not to assert that the Church had been oblivious or neglectful of the fact, the need, the importance, the problem of the child. No! The lambs of the flock had ever received the tenderest care from the Chief Shepherd Himself and from those who served under His direction. The Sunday School was just a new method of facing a pressing and a perplexing question. Its success, moreover, was not due to its being the ideal, the most effective method of imparting religious truths to the child and of planting and developing in him the highest spiritual aspirations. It succeeded because in the large majority of individual cases with which it had to deal, circumstances were such that it was the best, and sometimes the only, method *possible*. The older methods of the Church were ideal, but for their realisation they depended on the existence of ideal conditions. These conditions did not obtain. To wait for them was to postpone indefinitely, perhaps for ever, the problem of the rising generation—unless God in His providence vouchsafed a second Pentecost. No, some new method must be suggested, some new plan adopted if one generation neglectful of righteousness were not to be succeeded by another. That method was the Sunday School, and though at first it might have appeared to some in the guise of the rival of the older ways, such was appearance only. The hidden reality, only now beginning to be seen, was that the new way would lend no mean assistance in reviving the old, that the good would eventually re-establish the best, and that once again both Home and Church would actively co-operate in the highest interests of the child.

## SUNDAY SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND.

The Sunday School is not indebted for its initiation to any resolution passed by a synod, congress, committee, or other assembly. In England it seems to have been adopted almost simultaneously in various centres by several individuals as a good means of grappling with the spiritual difficulties with which they had to contend in their particular spheres of work.

The title "Founder of Sunday Schools" has been deservedly given to **Robert Raikes**, not because he actually originated the idea, but because it was he who, as the editor of a paper, "The Gloucester Journal," used his opportunities for making it widely known and combining all the individual efforts into a great national movement. He was born in Gloucester on September 14, 1736, and opened his first Sunday School there in 1780. The condition of vast numbers of children in those days was a problem which wanted courage to face. The circumstances which seem to have set Raikes to thinking out a solution are described in the following words:—"He had walked down one day to St. Catherine's Meadows to interview a man whom he hoped to engage as gardener. The gardener, however, proved to be out, so Mr. Raikes' talking had to be done with the man's wife. The conversation was not a little disturbed by the shouting and the quarrelling of a party of very ragged and dirty boys and girls, whose language, when the words could be recognised, was sad enough to hear in a Christian country, but more terrible still on the

lips of children. The good woman saw her visitor's dismay, and, shaking her head over the wickedness of the place, assured him that matters were often ten times worse than this; Mr. Raikes should come past on a Sunday, when the children employed in the pin factory were all abroad; little enough was there of Sunday observance among the boys and girls of this quarter of Gloucester; the noise, the swearing, and the fighting went far to spoil the day for the better-taught neighbours." This seems to have suggested to him the task of thinking out some practical method of helping the children. He soon arrived at the guiding principle of his reformatory work, viz, vice is preventable; begin with the child. He had laboured earnestly and assiduously for years among the elders, with little success and much discouragement. He now tried another plan. It not only proved the better way in the long run, but many a Sunday School child was soon to become a blessing to some father or mother whom other means had hitherto failed to reach. A little child would lead them.



**ROBERT RAIKES.**

While his thoughts were taking shape Raikes met the right man to help him. This was the Rev. Thomas Stock, Headmaster of the Cathedral Grammar School. With his assistance the First Sunday School was opened in England in Sooty Alley, Gloucester. The name of the street is suggestive. The first mistress of the school was a Mrs. Meredith and work was conducted in her kitchen. Headquarters were shortly afterwards changed to Southgate-street. Boys only were admitted at first. As may be expected, they were most unruly at the beginning. A story is told of one of them who brought in a young badger under his cap and let it loose in the school to make the teacher jump! When the girls were admitted we are assured that some of them were worse than the boys!

The subjects taught were reading and the Church Catechism. It was not till three years after the opening of his school that Raikes let the world know



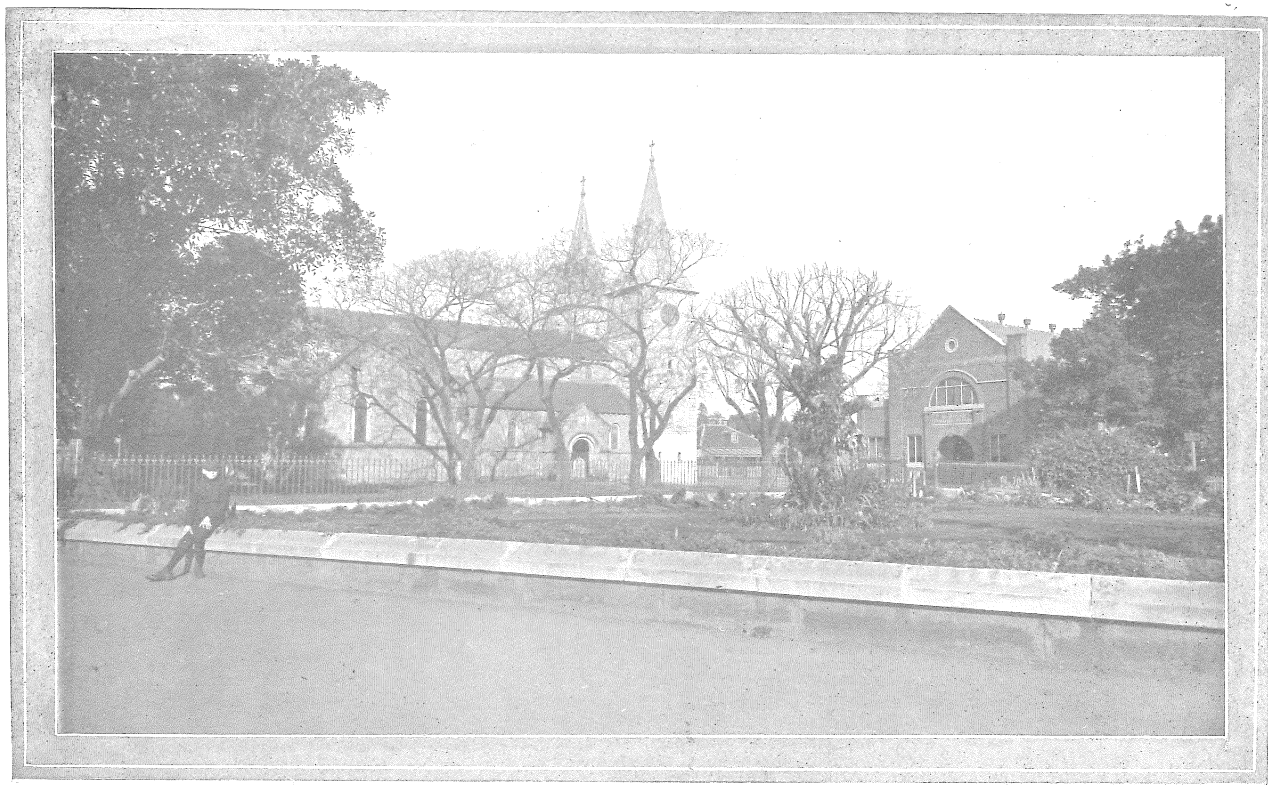
MR. W. P. NOLLER,  
Present Superintendent.



REV. THOS. HASSALL,  
First Superintendent.







ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, PARRAMATTA.

of the manner in which he proposed to bring blessing and happiness into the life of the children. He wished to give his experiment a thorough test. As soon as his results were made known he was applied to from all over the country to advise in the opening of schools in other places. Thus were laid the foundations of an institution which has become national and world-wide. Robert Raikes died on April 5th, 1811.

### THE FIRST SUNDAY SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA.

Two years after Raikes' death, in 1813, the movement had spread as far as Australia, and the first Sunday School was opened in a private house in Parramatta in that year by Mr. (afterwards the Reverend) Thomas Hassall. He was born at Coventry on May 29, 1794, and had the distinction of being the last survivor of the missionary ship "Duff." The circumstances under which he began his Sunday School work in Australia are interesting. It is stated that "on one hot Sunday afternoon he was resting and a fly persisted in trying to settle on his face; he continued to drive away the intruder until it became too much for him. Sleep was driven away, if not the fly, and with a little warmth of temper he walked outside the house. Here he saw some children . . . at play. It then occurred to him that he ought to find some better way of spending his Sunday afternoon. He took the children indoors, and told them Bible stories, and there he thought the matter ended. But no. The next Sunday afternoon they, with their companions, returned and asked him to "tell them more pretty stories." The numbers increased and Sunday Schools in Australia became a reality." Thus one man began in his own house a work which God has richly blessed since then. About two years later, we find the movement organised, and rules and regulations drawn up and printed for the guidance of teachers taking part in this great enterprise.

Shortly after this Mr. Hassall returned to England to study for the ministry, being the first young man from this country to do so. He was duly admitted to the diaconate by the Bishop of Ely in St. James' Church, Piccadilly, on April 15, 1821. It is an interesting coincidence that just fifty-four years previously, in 1767, Robert Raikes was married in this church. Mr. Hassall was ordained priest by the Bishop of London at Fulham in June, 1821. He then obtained an appointment as Colonial Chaplain under the sign manual of King George IV and returned to Sydney, preaching at St. John's, Parramatta on February 3, 1822.

The following extract from "The Sydney Gazette" of Friday, April 12, 1822, shows the numerical progress of the Sunday School up to that time, and the thoughtful and loving interest of Mr. Hassall during his absence in England:—"The anniversary of the Parramatta Church Sunday School was held on Tuesday last. A sermon was preached on the pleasing occasion by the Reverend Mr. Cartwright, in the Church of St. John. The children, between 80 and 90 in number, were then examined by the Reverend Messrs. Cartwright and Hassall, as to their proficiency in scriptural acquisitions during the past year; and the result was such as afforded ample satisfaction to all present. The children were conducted from the church to the residence of the Reverend Mr. Hassall, only lately returned from England, and who has the undisputed honor of being the first Sunday School teacher in this colony, as also the founder (we believe) of the above institution. The afternoon was wet; but the children, notwithstanding, were made comfortable and happy. Medals, books, tracts, and other appropriate rewards, many of which were brought by Mr. Hassall from England for the express purpose, were profusely distributed amongst all ranks and classes of the children."

It is very probable that during his stay in England Mr. Hassall had been in touch with the Sunday School movement there and studied its methods. It is interesting to note in the above account that at an early date the system of examinations and rewards had been adopted, that a service and sermon preceded the examination, and that it was followed by a Sunday School "treat."

In addition to his having opened and organised the First Sunday School in Parramatta, Mr. Hassall had other interesting associations with St. John's Church. He married in 1822 the eldest daughter of the Rev. Samuel Marsden, the first Rector. The clerestory windows in St. John's are also his gift.

It would be impossible to assess the amount of spiritual blessing which the Australian Church and people owe to work thus begun by this truly good and great man of God. It is fitting that everyone who has in any measure received light and a knowledge of the love of God through a Sunday School, should render thanks to our Heavenly Father for such a life and such a work, and honor, so long as Sunday Schools continue to be, the name of Thomas Hassall.

### ST. JOHN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL TO-DAY.

The Sunday School was for many years conducted in the old Grammar School, and then in the weatherboard schoolroom. On September 24, 1910, the foundation stone of the present substantial brick building was laid, the new school being opened on May 3, 1911, by the Archbishop of Sydney. As well as containing a large central hall, stage and gallery, the new edifice is provided with 18 class-rooms. When full it seats some 600 persons. The present superintendent, Mr. W. P. Noller, was architect, builder and contractor. The marks of his devotion to work among the young are everywhere visible in the construction. There are 240 children on the roll and 36 teachers.

The oldest teacher on the staff is Miss Wickham, who for 50 years has been a faithful and successful worker in the cause of children and young people.

The school now aims at modern methods of imparting religious instruction. The classification is by age. The Infants' School is divided into two sections, in which many of the classes consist of not more than two or three children. It has been found that this system (1) ensures individual attention to the spiritual nature and needs of the child; (2) makes discipline easier; (3) prevents the necessity of loud speaking; (4) reduces the visiting of absentees by teachers to a minimum; (5) abolishes the idea of Sunday School teaching as such a formidable task that many fear to take it up. The Senior School is divided into four sections, and children are carefully graded according to age and ability. An annual examination is held. Recent visitors to the school have been struck with the excellence of the conduct of the children present. The Bible and the Church Catechism are, of course, the chief books in the course of instruction. The elder scholars study missions, and Christian evidences systematically. A native teacher has been supported in the foreign field for several years. A monthly service is held in the Church, when the children are catechised by the Clergy.

The success of the school is in large measure due to the unrelenting zeal of the present superintendent and to the self-sacrificing devotion of the teachers.

That God may ever bless and prosper this work must be the prayer of anyone who has any idea of its worth and desires the coming of the day when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. ii, 14.)



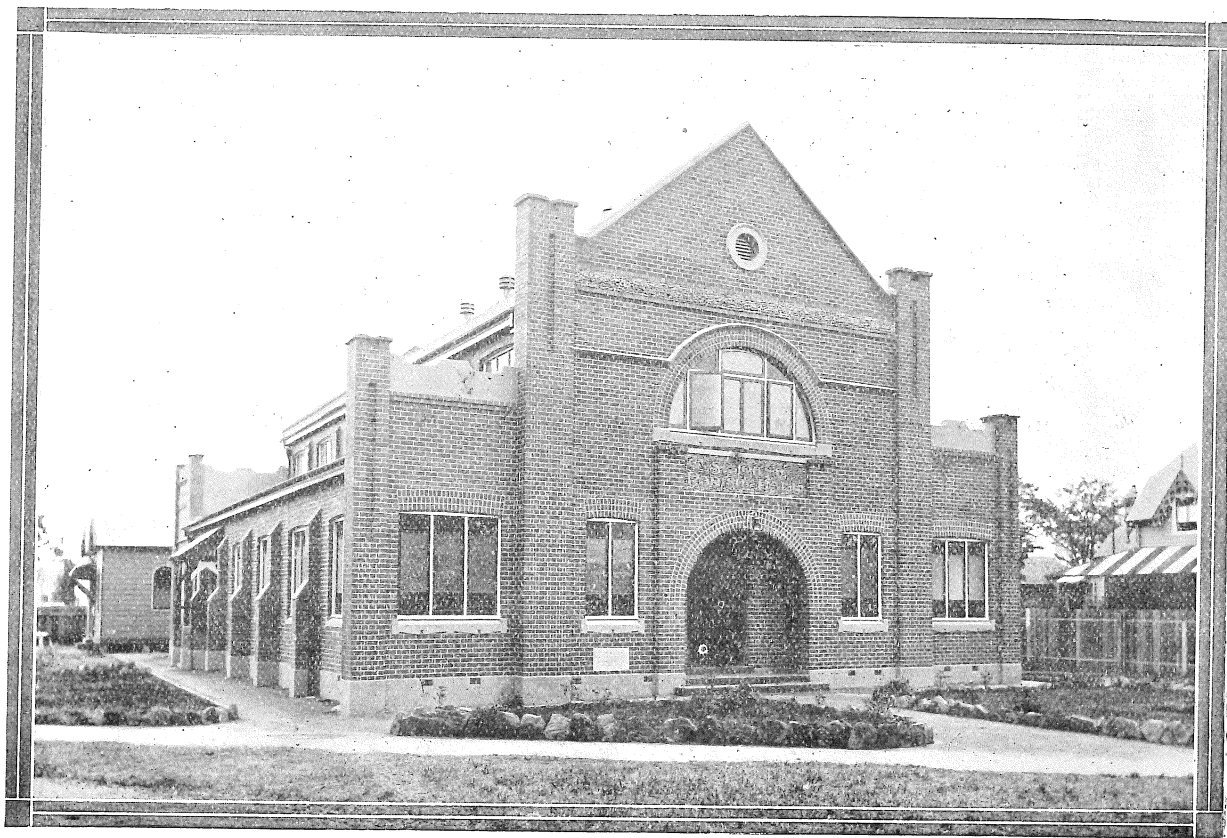
It is worth mentioning that the preacher at the Choral Festival at St. John's during the Centenary celebrations is a kinsman of James Digges La Torché, the banker, who was the First Secretary of the Sunday School Society in Ireland. He acted in that capacity from about the year 1812 to the time of his death, seventeen years afterwards, in 1829.

S. M. JOHNSTONE.

Parramatta, May, 1913.

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The sources from which the information in the above sketch is derived are as follow: *Robert Peckes*, by J. H. Harris; *A Company of Benefactors*, by M. H. Debenham; *A Short History of the Church and Parish of St. John, Parramatta*, by Archdeacon Ginnher; a lecture delivered before the Historical Society of N.S.W., by Dr. A. Houston; *The Sydney Gazette*; the correspondence of Thomas Hassall and other documents in the Mitchell Library Sydney; personal information provided by Mr. F. T. Watkins, Parramatta and by Miss E. M. Hassall of Ashfield, daughter of the Rev. Thomas Hassall.



ST. JOHN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL, 1913.



THE FIRST SUNDAY SCHOOL IN ENGLAND.





*Photo by Appleby,]*

**THE CLERGY OF ST. JOHN'S, PARRAMATTA, 1913.**

*[The Strand, Sydney.*

Rev. J. H. WILLCOXSON, L.Th.

Rev. W. KNOX.

Rev. S. M. JOHNSTONE, B.A.,

Rev. R. C. BLUMER, M.A., B.Sc.

Rector.



A GROUP OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, 1913.

## **St. John's, Parramatta.**

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### **SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFICERS AND TEACHERS AT THE TIME OF THE CENTENARY.**

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#### **ST. JOHN'S.**

Superintendent: Mr. W. Noller.

Superintendent Infants' School: Miss Watkins.

Hon. Secretary: Mr. Shackleton.

Bible Classes: The Rector, the Rev. R. C. Blumer, M.A., Miss Wickham.

Teachers (in alphabetical order): Mr. Ashley, Mr. L. Atkins, Mr. Augustsen, Miss Bayly, Mr. Bassard, Miss Burdett, Mrs. Clarke, Miss Colls, Miss Coutts, Miss Dawson, Miss Dick, Miss Fyall, Miss E. Harvey, Miss W. Harvey, Miss Hines, Miss Hobart, Miss Holland, Mr. Hooper, Mr. D'A. Macqueen (Sen.), Mr. D'A. Macqueen (Jnn.), Miss Miller, Miss D. Morgan, Miss Payne, Miss B. Phillips, Miss G. Phillips, Miss T. Phillips, Miss Rayner, Miss L. Readett, Miss C. Sattler, Miss G. Sattler, Miss D. Watkins, Miss R. Watkins, Miss Whitney.

#### **ST. PETER'S, WESTERN ROAD.**

Superintendent: Mr. L. A. Wickham.

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer: Mr. F. J. Goswell.

Teachers: Miss Barr, Miss E. Crowe, Mr. A. S. Davies, Miss E. Gazzard, Mr. H. G. Goswell, Miss L. Harvey, Miss E. Holmes, Miss P. Holmes, Miss D. Raines, Miss E. L. Raines, Miss N. Stephenson.

#### **ST. PAUL'S, HARRIS PARK.**

Superintendent: Mr. Watt.

Superintendent of Infants' School: Mr. E. W. Fitzpatrick.

Hon. Secretary: Mr. Cook.

Teachers: Miss Bardsley, Mr. R. J. Brown, Mr. G. J. Cook, Miss I. Cleasby, Miss M. Davies, Miss O. Davies, Miss R. Davies, Mr. E. W. Fitzpatrick, Miss T. Hughes, Miss Jamieson, Miss Jones, Miss D. Little, Miss I. Mumford, Miss E. Oberman, Miss E. G. Watt, Miss G. Watt, Mr. Watt, Rev. J. H. Willcoxon.

#### **WESTMEAD.**

Mr. Ashley, Miss King, Mrs. Knox.

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The total number of scholars in the four schools is 445. Teachers, 67.

# Programme of the Centenary Celebrations

held in St. John's, Paramatta.

**SUNDAY, MAY 18** (Trinity Sunday).—Children's and Young People's Sunday.

8 a.m., Holy Communion.

9 a.m., Holy Communion

10.30 a.m.—All children from St. John's, St. Peter's, St. Paul's and Westmead Sunday Schools to meet in the Parish Hall to receive badges.

10.50 a.m.—Children proceed to the Church.

11 a.m.—**Children's Service.** Preacher: *The Dean of Sydney.*

7.15 p.m.—Young People's Service. Preacher: *The Rev. H. S. Bagbie.*

All parents and friends are specially invited to be present at both these services.

**MONDAY, MAY 19.—Missionary Exhibition.** Children, 3 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.; Adults, 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.

Curiosities from Heathen and Mohammedan lands, illustrating the manners, customs, and dress of the people. Short descriptive addresses by Missionaries from the field. Admission Free.

**TUESDAY, MAY 20.—Grand Concert,** 7.45 p.m. Doors open at 7.15 p.m.

This concert, arranged by Mrs. Jordan, will be given by the S.S. children.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 21.—Choral Festival in St. John's Church,** 7.45 p.m.

Preacher: *The Rev. E. Digges La Touche, M.A., D.Lit., Trinity College, Dublin.*

Special music by combined choirs, under the direction of Mr. A. Barry.

**THURSDAY, MAY 22.—Picnic, Games and Sports** in the Park for children of St. John's, St. Paul's, St. Peter's and Westmead Sunday Schools.

All children to assemble at St. John's at 9.30 a.m.

Presentation of Commemoration Medals to the Sunday School scholars.

(The medal was designed by Miss D. M. Watkins.)

**SATURDAY, MAY 24.—Parishoners' Garden Party in St. John's Grounds,** at 3 p.m.

Presentation to Workers and Heads of Families of Illustrated Souvenirs. Unveiling of Memorial Tablet in School Hall.

**SUNDAY, MAY 25.—Special Addresses to Parents and Adults.**

8 a.m.—Holy Communion.

11 a.m.—Preacher: *The Rev. Principal Davies, M.A., F.R.H.S. (Eng.).*

4 p.m.—Church Military Parade; 18th Infantry, detachment from Light Horse, The King's School Cadets, Paramatta Trainees. Music by the Regimental Band of 18th Infantry. Preacher: *The Rector.*

7.15 p.m.—Preacher: *The Rev. W. F. Wentworth-Shields, M.A.*

N.B.—Children must wear at all functions the badge with which they will be presented on the first day of the celebrations.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.

God Save the King!

**KEY TO PHOTO OF TEACHERS.**—(Reading from left to right.)

**Back Row.**—Miss W. Harvey, Miss D. Morgan, Miss J. Holland, Miss G. Phillips, Miss L. Rendett, Mr. Ashley, Mr. Augustsen, Miss O. Davies, Miss T.

Hughes, Miss E. Harvey, Miss E. Crowe, Miss Jamieson.

**Middle Row.**—Miss E. Holmes, Miss Dawson, Miss Bardsley, Miss D. M. Watkins,

Miss R. Watkins, Miss B. Phillips, Miss Fyall, Mr. Shackleton, Miss O. Noller, Miss Watkins, Miss Coutts, Miss Dick, Miss Barr, Miss E. Raines,

Miss P. Holmes.

**Front Row.**—Miss G. Sattler, Miss Stephenson, Rev. R. C. Blumer, Mr. Hooper, Mrs. Clarke, The Rector and Geraldine, Miss Wickham, Mr. D'A. Macquenn (Son), Miss M. Davies, Miss Mumford, Miss Hines.

**On the Grass.**—Mr. P. Bassard, Mr. Cook.

The group represents only half of the total staff engaged in the four schools. It was impossible for all to be present.