

New Year's Day in Toowoomba.

AMONGST the few days set apart on the calendar as a general holiday the one most strictly observed is that of New Year's Day, when, as a rule, everybody able to move about at all, attire themselves in their holiday garb, and proceed to spend the day as fancy leads them. New Year's Day in Toowoomba, like every other town, was set apart as a day of general festivity, and rejoicing, and from an early hour in the morning strings of waggons, buggies, and every conceivable kind of vehicle might be seen flying about in different directions, carrying loads of passengers to picnics, and other social gatherings. The early train to Helidon was also well patronised, a large number of excursionists availing themselves of the holiday to take a day's outing in that locality. Considerable regret was, however, expressed that the railway department had not seen fit to put on a special train leaving Toowoomba at eight o'clock, and thus save the trouble of starting by the usual six o'clock train. Fortunately the weather was all that could be desired, and although rather hot about midday, a cool breeze sprang up during the afternoon which made the latter part of the day decidedly pleasant. The two principal events of the day were the handing over of the Thomas Memorial Fountain by the Hon. W. H. Groom, on behalf of the subscribers to the Mayor and Corporation of Toowoomba, and the Caledonian Sports—the latter event being attended by at least 3000 spectators, when everything passed off with the utmost eclat. Besides the events mentioned, a number of the members of the Baptist Church held a picnic at Picnic Point where a most enjoyable day was spent.

The Thomas Memorial Fountain.

An event of no little interest to the rate-payers of this town, was the handing over of the Thomas Memorial Fountain in Ruthven-street, to the Mayor and Corporation of Toowoomba. The fountain, as may be generally known, was erected by public subscription to commemorate the memory of the late Mr. Alfred Thomas, Civil Engineer, who was drowned in Mowman Bay, Sydney Harbour, on the 10th August, 1882. Of the real facts of his death but little is known, but it is surmised that while travelling on board the steamer Morpeth, with Mr. J. Garget, with whom the deceased gentleman was partner, he by some means fell overboard and was drowned. His remains were subsequently discovered in Mowman's Bay, and removed to Toowoomba for interment. During his sojourn in Queensland, he had officiated as Resident Engineer of the Southern and Western Railway, and as a faithful servant and an ardent member of his profession, he was admired and respected by his fellow civil servants. As an evidence of the general respect in which the deceased gentleman was held, meetings were held shortly after his death to devise some means by which his memory might be perpetuated, when it was decided that a drinking fountain should be erected, and that it should be placed in one of the most central positions of the town, as a token of the high esteem in which Mr. Thomas had been held during his lifetime. As a description of the fountain has not yet appeared in our columns, it will not be out of place to give a few particulars of it. The fountain, which is of a most massive description measures 8ft. 3in. square at the base, with chamfered blocks on the angles, and is constructed of fine grained freestone, obtained from Horrocks' quarry, Murphy's Creek. On each side are recesses, two of which have water jets and vases, fitted with drinking cups. At the angles, are red granite columns, 4ft. 8in. high, with bases and capitals highly polished, obtained from the firm of Messrs. Petrie & Co., Aberdeen, Scotland. The columns support a moulded cornice

projecting outwards from the firm of Messrs. Petrie & Co., Aberdeen, Scotland. The columns support a moulded cornice projecting to shade the water jets. A pediment rises over the cornice at each side, and into one of them a marble tablet is set bearing the following inscription:—"This fountain was erected by public subscription to the memory of Alfred Thomas, C.E., who was accidentally drowned in Sydney Harbor, 10th August, 1882." Below the tablet is the following inscription:—"The memory of the just is blessed." Above the pediment the column rises 15ft. by 3ft. square and diminishes at the break to 1ft. 10in., the total height being 25ft. 6in. The whole is surrounded by a row of steps which leads to the drinking basins. The contract was carried out for the trustees of the memorial fund by Mr. Walter Brane, monumental mason of this town, and he has certainly performed his work in the most satisfactory manner and to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. New Year's Day was considered a fitting occasion to formally hand the fountain over to its future custodians. The fact that the fountain would be transferred to the care of the Council having been duly notified through the press caused a large gathering of spectators to congregate shortly before ten o'clock, the pipes and members of the Caledonian Society occupying a prominent position in the group, while amongst those present were several leading townsmen who took an eager interest in the ceremony which was about to take place. Silence having been procured,

The Hon. W. H. GROOM, addressing the Mayor, said that he had been desired by the subscribers to the Thomas Memorial Fountain to hand over to him, as Mayor, the handsome structure which had been erected to the memory of the late Mr. Alfred Thomas. As he (the Mayor) was aware there was not a gentleman held in greater respect in Toowoomba during his life time for brightness of character and strict integrity than Mr. Thomas. With all the Government employes, with whom he had been brought in contact from time to time, each testified to the high esteem in which he was held. The universal respect felt for Mr. Thomas was evidenced in the large sum of money raised for that testimonial, and he (Mr. Groom) offered it on behalf of the subscribers to the Mayor and Corporation of the town, with the hope that it would remain as a memorial of one who had been much esteemed, and that his memory would as long remain green and be as enduring as the Aberdeen granite pillars supporting the fountain.

The MAYOR (Mr. Garget) in reply, said that he thanked Mr. Groom for the presentation, and he felt sure that he was only expressing the feeling of every Alderman that as a piece of architectural monumentation and as a fountain it would meet a want long felt in Toowoomba, and from its central position in the town the traveller would find it a great boon. He (the Mayor) hoped that before long a horse trough would be placed at the back of the fountain, so that man and beast might be served. He would again thank Mr. Groom on behalf of the Council for the presentation.

At the invitation of Mr. Groom, the Mayoress, (Mrs. Garget) in very graceful terms declared the fountain open to the public, and turned on a small stream of beautiful clear water, and took from the bowl provided for public use the first drink at the fountain.

Three cheers having been given for Mr. Groom, Mrs. Groom, the "little Grooms," and the Mayor and Mayoress the proceedings terminated.