

# PRINCE OF WALES' BIRTH- DAY AT NEW PLYMOUTH.

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[BY A. TRAMP, ESQ.]

THE Prince of Wales' Birthday of 1899 was no exception to the proverbial fine weather that especially favours our royal holidays. For weeks previously the ordinary everyday weather had partaken more of the character of a winter than a summer month, but on Thursday, the 9th, ye ancient clerk woke up, and, consulting his AUCKLAND WEEKLY NEWS calendar, was reminded of the loyal duties expected from him on this joyful occasion, and he allowed old Sol to shine forth and make a real summery day for Her Majesty's lieges to take their pleasure and express their loyalty.

The almost invariably fine weather prevailing on the royal natal days we celebrate probably tends, in some degree, to strengthen the devotion of the British race to its august head. Were the weather persistently bad on these occasions, we might cease to celebrate and possibly forget we have a Royal Family.

It has been the wont of New Plymouth citizens to celebrate the Prince of Wales' Birthday with a "floral fete," and invite their country cousins to come and view the

spectacle, but this year of Anno Domini 1899 a departure from the orthodox pattern of floral fetes was made, and took the shape of an "aquatic floral carnival" on a small scale—very small, a small baby sort of carnival it was—and quiet at that.

What the local papers aptly term a strong committee, consisting of some six and twenty dames and damsels, including a president and honorary secretary—they do not appear to have trusted themselves with an honorary treasurer—was formed to carry out the scheme of the aquatic floral carnival. The twenty and six are to be congratulated on the successful result of their co-operative labour. The entertainment provided was soothing, peaceful, and healthful, just the sort of entertainment the inmates of a certain asylum might be permitted to attend without fear of any mental disturbance or hurtful consequences arising from over-excitement.

The aquatic floral carnival was safely floated on the placid lake in the Recreation Grounds, and thither streamed New Plymouth and her country cousins, some 500 of them, glancing over their shoulders as they passed along at the New Plymouth-Hawera Stars cricket match then in progress, as something they had seen before, and scarce worth their notice; halting a few moments in front of the Punch and Judy show, a meek and mild merriment-making machine, in keeping with the general subdued tone of the aquatic floral carnival; then crowding up by the rotunda to hear the band play. It was the city band. New Plymouth boasts a brace of bands, besides the Salvation Army atrocity. The band was radiant in its new regalia, and played with vim and vigour, "when we first put this uniform on," "We've got 'em on," "We've got 'em all on,"

etc., etc. All the band wants now is a barber. From what befel the Wellington Band at Bathurst it would appear that a tonsorial artist is now a necessary adjunct to a band's equipment. After tasting the music, the crowd moved on around the shores of the lake, where they could take their fill of aquatic floral carnival.

A pilot boat, manned by Messrs. Newman and Cock, tugged the procession of aquatic floral decorations up and down the lake for the edification of the public, and to give the judges an opportunity of deciding upon the merits of the exhibits composing the carnival.

The award of the judges was not the popular verdict. The judges gave the first prize to a boat profusely and gaudily decorated with white and yellow flowers, and freighted with a gay and happy party of young New Zealanders, dressed and decorated to match the floral dressing of the boat, while the public's verdict went in favour of a very fair representation of a Venetian gondola, steered by a gondolier, resplendent in a red and black suit and gilt ornaments. A real swell gondolier, under the canopy, was the handsome lady of the gondola, and a pretty child, both costumed after the fashion in vogue in the city of the gondola.

Two ladies and a gentleman were the judges. The gentleman was outvoted of course.

In the flotilla of small yachts exhibit the nautical family of Hoods had it all their own way. Theirs was not the least interesting item in the aquatic pageant.

Taken on the whole the scenic effect of the procession on the lake was really pretty, but it did not seem to satisfy the spectacular craving of the country cousins. They

made up for this slackness, however, by blowing themselves out at the refreshment booths. After having their characters read, and witnessing feats of acrobatic skill by local artists, they eventually found themselves interested spectators of the cricket match. So ended the New Plymouth "aquatic floral carnival." By the time comes round again to celebrate good old Albert Victor's birthday, the committee will, let us hope, have their baby carnival in breeches.